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“Lean on your club a little more, son.” I shifted a little. “There ya go.” The photographer snapped the picture. After he developed the photos, they would be sent to the painter for our next family portrait; I hate family portraits. As he loaded more film, I stared past him towards our house. It stood there, on the edge of the golf course, in a long line of large estates, ours no smaller than the next.

I stood there, a spitting image of my father: a button down shirt and a sweater vest, much too hot for mid-May, pleated khakis, and my hair gelled and neatly combed back. Putter in hand, I smiled unwillingly as my dad held his hand on my shoulder, and my mom held her arm around my neck. Click. Click.

“Oh, I think I blinked on that one,” my mom said. “Let’s do it again.”

“It’s quite all right, ma’am, I’ve taken plenty already. It should be enough, but if I run into any trouble developing them, I’ll call you.”

A sigh of relief escaped as we adjourned and headed back to the house. A cool breeze whipped by, promising summer and reminding me how uncomfortable it was outside.

“I’m famished!” exclaimed my mother. “How about lunch at the club?”

“Excellent suggestion, my dear! Shall we walk?”

“No!” I said, almost pleading. My parents looked at me, a little confused. “I mean, it’s awfully hot, isn’t it? Let’s take the car.”

“I suppose you’re right,” said my father, “Jaguar or Beamer?”

My parents talked on endlessly, discussing which car would make a better impression during the less-than-desirable economic situation. People in Charlottesville, Virginia, weren’t afraid to show their wealth. In fact, they were perhaps a little eager to display it, and in every way possible too.

“May I at least change into shorts?”

“No!” they shouted simultaneously, and they went back to their argument.

When we reached the house, I sat on a patio chair on our back porch and awaited the verdict. I tugged at my collar and adjusted my vest while I wondered how many hours I had spent out there: swinging and chipping and putting away. I was just getting frustrated when my parents gave up the argument and decided we would eat at home.

I headed upstairs to my room but stopped by last year’s portrait. It sported a similar pose, scenery, and clothing. I looked at the painting and grew angry. I hadn’t changed much, but when I looked at myself, I saw an image of perfection: one that I could never live up to. I saw a confident, ingenious, handsome boy who could eagle a par five and play Beethoven’s “Fur Elise” without a mistake. I saw how my parents gazed upon that boy with such pride…I stormed up the stairs and into my room.

I sat down at my keyboard and stamped out a couple of notes, which slightly resembled Chopin’s “Nocturne,” but there were too many mistakes to tell. Again, I played, but I made mistakes in the same places as before. In a fit of frustration, I tore off the increasingly itchy vest, pulled my shirt out from my pants, and undid several buttons. I picked up my math book. I read the directions, over and over again, but never comprehended them. The numbers swirled off the page, taunting me. I broke out into a sweat. And then, the phone rang.

I took a deep breath and picked up the phone as my mom called out: “Eric, it’s for you.”
“Hello?”
“Hey Eric, it’s Jake.”
“Hey man, what’s up?”
“I was wondering if you wanted to come hang out for a while, ya know, play some video games or something.”
“No thanks, I gotta do homework.”
“Oh come on, it’s a Saturday.”
“Maybe another time, Jake. See you at church tomorrow?”
“Yea, I guess. See ya.”

I put down the receiver and went back to work. Calmer now, the figures began to flow, and I scribbled on. The phone rang again, but I ignored it. A couple of minutes later, my mom came in, carrying a bowl of tomato soup and a grilled-cheese sandwich. She set them down.
“What did Jake have to say?”
Not looking up from my paper, I said, “He just wanted to hang out, but I’ve got piano lessons in a few hours. I’ll just do homework until then.”
“That was your piano instructor on the phone. He’s not feeling well. You should call Jake back and get together.”
“I don’t know. I really should get some work done.”
“Honey, I think you’ve studied enough already.”
“Oh, all right.”

I dialed the number, and when Mrs. Stevens picked up, I asked for Jake.
“Hey Jake. I’ve got some free time. Do you want to come over?”
“Yea, I’ll be right over.”

My mom smiled and went back down stairs. Jake arrived soon; he just lived a couple of houses down.
“You want to play a couple of holes? I brought my clubs,” he said.
“Eh, I guess. I’ll go put on a polo.”
Soon we were standing at the eleventh hole.

“Think you’ll make varsity next year? I hear only a couple of sophomores ever have,” he said, as his ball flew through the air, short but straight. I grimaced as I shanked my ball into the rough.

“Maybe. If I work on chipping a little, I think I’ve got an OK shot.”

“You don’t sound very enthused.” I shrugged. A half-hearted swing sent my ball into a sand bunker.

“Hey Eric, why do you do all this?”

“All what?”

“Ya know: the clothes, golf, the piano, studying on Saturdays. You don’t like any of it.” We stopped walking.

“That’s not true,” I said, a little offended.

“Come on, it’s not that hard to tell. You don’t like golf when you play well, and you hate it when you don’t. The same goes for piano. And you always talk about how uncomfortable your clothes are, but you never change anything. It just doesn’t make sense.”

I suddenly realized how right he was. I grew uncomfortable, but this time it wasn’t because of my attire.

“Hey Jake, I’m not feeling too well,” I lied. “Let’s call it a day.”

“All right man. I’ll see you tomorrow.” He seemed concerned but headed off towards his house.

I did the same, not bothering to fetch my ball. I looked around at the course I knew so well, and wondered again just how long I’d spent walking those greens. At my house, I set my clubs down by the stairs. My dad looked up from the newspaper.

“Looking forward to golf next year?”

“No,” I said, perhaps a little hesitant. “I think I’m gonna go out for football next year.”

He smiled, and gave me a look that he had not given me before, or at least one I did not remember.

“Wanna throw?” he asked. I smiled.

“Let me go get changed.”

I leaped up the stairs, and stopped for the last time by the family portrait. I now knew why I could never live up to that perfect image. It wasn’t me.

I pulled on a grey t-shirt and some gym shorts, ruffled my hair, and ran downstairs to throw the football.
John Mellow -- Silver Award in Scholastic Art Competition

Tom Kaiser

Tom Bu
Honorable Mention
Scholastic Art Competition

Dylan Hall
I speak to this being very often, though many ignore him
And he responds in his whispery tone, like the fluttering of birds’ wings.
He sighs back to me of things that are years beyond my recollection
He informs me of the way life was when he was born
And of the way others of his kind are treated.

This scholar is clothed in a rough armor with his ceremonial spears held high
His skin is the color of a bright yellow sand-covered beach
And he is taller than a two-story building.

With all his wisdom, only one attribute stands out among his people
To the ignorant eyes of society.
These beings of stature are artists.
They paint their pictures once every year, one picture never the same as the next
Their paintings are spectacular collages of varied reds, yellows, and browns
But their rough drafts are created in greens of differing hues.

My friend, this great artist, keeps his way of life with a scheduled regularity
He dances with the wind, sighing as if he wishes he could fly with it.
But there he remains, rooted to the spot he has been for many years
My aged friend, the tree.
The Trophy

by Andrew Karpos

My first trophy
Golden and glistening like the sun
Forever frozen in his stance
He walks on a floor of marble
Indifferent to the rest of the world
He represents a passionate child reaching for success
His appearance is serene yet bold
Plain and normal to the untrained eye
He evokes feelings of joy
A reminder of my first victory
I see my hard work and long hours of practice
Evidence of a great moment
Where I felt like I could do anything
He is an eruption of happiness and relief
My first trophy sits there, day after day
Asking me to reminisce about the memory he holds

Writing

by John Mellow

The crisp sheet of paper,
Stares blankly up at me.
My pencil sails across,
A white, endless sea.

Blue lines are like the waves,
That my ship is sailing through,
An eight-and-a-half-by-eleven ocean,
That they call college-rule.

When Columbus set out on his voyage,
Did he see what I now see?
Did the water intimidate him,
As the page intimates me?

I try to navigate through,
But there are endless turns to take,
And the course of what I’m writing,
Is decided by turns I make.

My ship glides across the paper,
And I soon enjoy my time.
The writing relaxes me,
And the sea is looking fine.

As I lower the sails of my pencil,
And set a course for home,
The excitement builds within me,
For in the water I’ve left a poem.
Honorable Mention Poetry

The Photo Album

by Chris Hooks

The old album sits on the table,
Waiting for someone to flip through its pages filled with pictures.
Some pictures are old,
Depicting unfamiliar versions of familiar faces,
But this album contains not only photos,
But memories as well.
Physical things that almost seem to take you back, like a time machine,
Back in time to the minute the photo was taken.
Suddenly, there you are,
Right next to your former self
Holding the fish on the dock.
You can almost touch the rod,
Or feel the enjoyment of that catch.
But then you are sucked back into reality, as if through a wormhole,
And realize that these are only photos.
So as you set the photo album back into its place on the desk,
It transforms back into just a book, as if by magic,
As it awaits the next person to be absorbed by its photos,
And to travel through its time machine.

Evolved

by Wells Hamilton

Back in the days of yore
Right after the dinosaurs
Appeared the man of ancient lore.

Man took his first long breath
With the second he put his brother to death
By the stone in his right and the vengeance in his left.

Humans thrived
Metal pierced hides
And stones transformed into sharp, cold knives.

Man began his fatal exploring
Explosions in the mind were forming
And more complex weapons were storing.

Lead began to fly
The blood red sky
Violence set in the human eye.

Quicker now the lead
To put the enemy on his eternal bed
A human bloodlust to be fed.

The rockets’ red glare
Technology’s new flare
Progress if you dared.

Now the soldier looks in his mirror
Does he see any clearer
A gun or a rock in his hand in the mirror.
We all jostle our way onto the two buses. It is not that long of a ride, but everyone wants a good seat near their friends. A bunch of seventh and eighth graders can’t make it through a bus ride without socializing. And besides, laughing helps. I think and hope, probably because it makes me feel better, that everyone is as nervous as I am. I like to think that there are others in my boat. I guess all of them are in my boat today. Thirty to forty guys are all joking around, trying not to think of what’s to come. I love the race, but I hate the anticipation and build-up.

“Are you ready, John?”

“No, but I’ll try anyway”

We all joke around like this, trying to set our sights low so that we aren’t disappointed if something goes seriously wrong. But inside of me, I feel differently. I’m ready to tear the course apart. I’ve got my goals set, and I feel like I can reach them. Today my goal is to get under nine minutes and forty seconds; 9:40 won’t win me the race by any means, but it would be a personal best, and most of the time that is all I can shoot for. I’ve been doing cross-country since seventh grade at this school, and now I’m in eighth. For all of the seventh-grade season and half of this one, I had never broken the ten-minute mark. Well, one race, I had a time of about 10:02, and I decided that for the next race I would shoot for under ten minutes. I succeeded, and it was about the biggest achievement I had ever made during a season. That was four races ago, though, and since then I have improved, faster than ever before in seventh or eighth grade. Now my goal is set twenty seconds below ten, and I believe that I can make it.

Now the bus is driving alongside the course. There is a road that runs all the way along the side of the property that the course is on, and from the road the course unfolds beside us. I see it all. It is a mile and a half long, in a shape that looks almost like a figure eight. We will start on a flat expanse of land, running straightforward. We then we cross a creek and start on a loop that moves up around a hill and back down to the creek. We will cross the creek again on the same bridge, and move back to the flat land, only now we will be running in the opposite direction as when we started. We will run past the starting line, through a grove of trees, and continue straight for what feels like forever, until we reach a left turn at the end of the property, just before another road. We will then make another left a few hundred feet farther down, followed by another loop, and then head back towards the start. For the final stretch, we will make a dogleg right so that we avoid ending on the starting line, and then run for several hundred yards to the finish line, where we end in a chute marked with rope that narrows as you slow down and start panting your way to some water. At the end of the chute, the course officials tell us our place. From the bus, this whole course is visible, but I don’t like to look at it. A year and a half of cross-country and I am pretty familiar with it.

The bus pulls into the gravel parking lot, spraying up dust and pebbles onto the windows. Everyone starts to get up and move around. We pile out of the bus, and I can see all the kids on the other bus doing the same. Some guys take their backpacks with them, but I just leave mine in the bus. The bus will be unlocked
after the race, and I don’t want to worry about my backpack out on the field. We all move under some trees in
the corner of the field. I guess that this is just our school’s spot at this course. We followed the eighth graders
there last year, and the seventh graders follow us there this year. Backpacks are strewn across the ground, mainly
at the bases of trees. Everyone gets some water from the cooler. The coaches send us off on three warm-up laps
around a clearing tucked between the edge of the field and the woods that surround it. We then huddle together
in a circle for stretches. Two eighth graders volunteer to lead, and I make sure that I am not one of them. Not on
race day. I am already nervous.

“Feet together, down! One, two, three, four. . .”

The stretches continue for about five minutes, and we count to ten twice for each stretch. Afterwards, the
coach gives us his pep talk. I try to take his words to heart, but not long after the race, I can’t recall any of them.
I guess it doesn’t matter, since after this race the season’s over. Once coach’s speech is done, we scatter around
our team’s area. Coach doesn’t want us tired, so we can’t be running around the place, but I don’t think most of
us would want to anyway. Today, I rest with my head on someone’s backpack, looking up at the canopy above
me. The leaves have not started falling off the trees yet, and they still look green and vibrant. They calmly sway
like one large breathing creature, and the sunlight falling through them has a beautiful greenish hue to it. I am
mesmerized by the leaves above me, and for the first time since getting on the bus, I forget about the race. Every
once in a while, someone talks to me, and I respond, but then I am sucked right back into the scene above me.

After awhile, I get pulled back into reality. The girls’ race is winding down, and we are going to see the
finish. There’s a red uniform, then a white one, then red, then green, then a white one with a different logo, then
blue. It continues like this for awhile, and I hope it drags on forever because the boys are up next. After about
seven minutes since the first girl, the last girl has arrived. By now I am walking away, preparing to race. I swing
my arms back and forth and take deep breaths. We are all herded onto the starting line, and we all bunch up three
or four, even five deep. Our team huddles together and gives our cheer so everyone can hear. I don’t think that
a cheer intimidates the other teams that much, but it boosts our morale. Now the team spreads back across the
starting line. Today I am successful at securing a spot up front. In English class, we read about a boxer who gets
a ball of ice in his stomach before every fight, and right before the fight begins, it explodes in him and spreads
throughout his whole body. I have that ice-ball in my stomach right now, and it is about to explode. The man with
the gun explains the rules, but most of us don’t need to hear them for the last race of the season. He then steps
back and the ball of ice explodes. Before I can react to it, the man pulls the trigger. We are off.

The start is the hardest. I have to navigate my way through a sea of people. Everyone is funneling together
into a tight pack. Behind me, someone stumbles and then crumples to the ground, taking with him two others. I
weave my way between competitors big and small alike, and try to avoid the same fate. Soon we are approaching
the bridge across the creek. It is a big bottleneck, and almost impossible to get across in such a pack, but somehow
all of us manage. By the time I am on the other side, I can see to the top of the hill that we loop around and the
leaders are already there. The two out front are on my team, as I expected; they are leading in every race. Behind
them the chase gradually thickens and right now I am in the middle of it.

As we start trudging up the hill, I start to pull away from one of my friends, and as I do so I mutter, “Good
luck.”

“You too,” he responds under his breath. Messages like these are always short, quick, and quiet. There is
not enough energy for a conversation. Cross-country is a team sport, but it can be extremely solitary out on the
course. You can’t make many friends when you are breathing too hard to speak full sentences.

I round a tree at the top of the hill, run downhill a little, and then make another right. Now I am headed
back for the bridge. This time, though, there are only a few people crossing with me. The pack has thinned out
quickly. After we cross, we are headed straight across the flat ground again. There is no shelter from the sun, and
the sun that made the leaves so beautiful before the race began is now my worst enemy. Dust is being kicked up

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by everyone, and it fills my mouth. I am powerless against it because if I close my mouth, I cannot suck in enough air to continue. I am used to the heat and the dust. In August, we ran in 100 degree weather. Yet it is still torture to experience these things in a race. I am approaching the grove of trees now, and soon I shall have shade. When I reach the shade, I also reach all of the fans. All of the racers’ parents are here to support them, in the cover of the trees. I see my mom and my sister here, cheering me on. My sister looks surprisingly happy to be here. I desperately want to spit out all of the dust in my mouth, but I wait until I have passed all of the parents. The dust is not that bad from here on out, so I hope that this is the only time I have to spit. I pass the buses and move into a lonely field. Now I can see all of the competitors before me, in a long line stretching around a bend farther down in the course. We are running beside a road, and I wonder if the people that are driving see us and realize how lucky they are to have air conditioning. I reach the bend and turn left. Soon I have to make another left, and now I am headed towards the finish line. I start to speed up, but I still try to save some energy. Then, I make the dogleg right. It is full sprint from here to the finish line. I pass someone on my left and then on my right. The boy on my right tries to sprint back past me, but I outrun him, and he soon gives up. Someone else comes from behind and passes me. I can see the clock at the finish line now. 9:31. 9:32. 9:33. The seconds are ticking away, and I release everything. 9:34. 9:35. I am hurdling down the final stretch. 9:36. I reach out, head first, and cross the line. 9:36. I have beaten my goal. A new personal record. I feel terrible. Yet, at the same time, I am overjoyed. I take a popsicle stick that the lady at the finish line hands out. It has my place on it. It says 26th. That might not be first, but it is enough for me. Out of over a hundred competitors, I am proud of 26th.

We won the championship last year, and with runners in first and second, it is obvious that we will again. The awards ceremony after the race only acknowledges the top fifteen, but I am excited to be there anyway. This is the part of cross-country that makes me feel like I’m on a team. After the awards are handed out, we disperse. The championship meet is done, and with it, the season. As I walk away from the field, I look back at the canopy that caught my eye earlier. The sun has moved on in the sky and is not shining through the leaves anymore. They don’t look as nice now. They don’t look as alive. They seem sad. Cross-country is over.
Prologue: I have a path that is not straight, not common, not perfect, but it is mine. I have walked it for my life. Fallen half the time, simply walked a quarter, and laughed for the time. I remember being in the car at a young age asleep for it was late, when my brother would open the door, and an icy wind would blow throughout the car. This event was the introduction to my path.

As I grew, the path stayed the same. It never developed flaws or renovations but waited for me as if I were to set it free from its bounds to the earth. I arrived one day not knowing where to walk and honestly just trying not to break anything. The path welcomed me first with concrete, pushed me through the doors, and kicked me down a grey carpeted hallway, into yet another red hallway, out another pair of doors on stairs, threw me onto a black walkway, to one of the most beautiful things I had ever seen.

I still walk the path, but not for long. This is my last time, but it seems as though it is my first. I do not rush myself because that would be foolish; however, I would rather be a young fool instead of having my last walk. I could walk the path blind-folded, but then I would miss its beauty. I start out on the concrete where I was introduced. I remember the coldness of the night, but knowing the sun would soon rise gave me enough warmth to survive. I started my walk here and will never forget the excitement, the energy, and the desire to grow up so fast. The path taught me patience while waiting for a ride. I saw a whole new world from here, but now I see nothing except the past. I now lay these memories down and let them rest. I know they will rest in peace for the entrance is unblemished.

My walk is now like a crawl as I desperately try to savor my memories. I look down at the gray carpet and see faces. Those that fitted me with pads and those who sweated along beside me, encouraging me throughout the workout, their faces talk to me. They say, “One more rep let’s go, let’s go.” This hallway shares the anxiety of my first practice to my first game. How proud I was, knowing the game was in the hands of my teammates and me. I had felt like a king strutting down his royal carpet to his domain. IPod music is in my ears, as I think about the game ahead of me. I now lay these memories down and let them rest. I know they will rest in peace for this gray hallway is unblemished.

I am away from one hallway and onto another. Three locker rooms catch my sight. The first on the right I stayed in for my first year, the left holds my middle three years, and finally the middle holds my last two years, but more importantly the near future. I meander down the rows of lockers. No one is here yet for it is much too early, and the game is in a few hours. I put down my things and sit on the bench near my locker with my eyes closed. I think of how I had forgotten my combination, but a coach unlocked it for me; or how I had let all of my equipment fall out, but a teammate had helped me pick it up. My mind flashes away from memories and back to plays and formations that we would run tonight. I now throw the memories down and let them rest. I know they will rest in peace for this locker room is unblemished.

With one blink I find myself walking along the long black road that seems to be forever wanting more. I think back to lunges in the winter across this endless road. My knees barely skimming the cement before they would be right back up again, or my thighs telling me to not go on, give up, it is worth nothing in the end, nothing. They would scream bloody murder, but the men beside me would not let me go down. If I finish, it

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The Buckeye is for the pride of accomplishment and the pride of the team. The legs would not get a say in this matter but would hold on for dear life if nothing else. The body functioned as one unit with one focus but with a variety of strengths. Knowing that we could cover each weakness with a strength made the body an unstoppable creation. This philosophy was the reason to do battle, and to do battle was the reason to create such a philosophy. I now lay the memories down and let them rest. I know they will rest in peace for this road is unblemished.

I do not go on but stop in my tracks. A ferocious wind now blows me back to the locker room. Here is where I wait with no memories to look back upon and no present time interests. I can only look into the future with an unsatisfying bitter taste in my mouth. At last some walk in, then more, and finally the whole team is in the locker room. However, it is still silent. The clock ticks faster and faster till at once we are all on our feet. Swept by the rest of the team, I find myself running alongside the men from the summer out on to the black road, and finally I see it. The field shining in the sunset with an orange glow that one cannot only see, but when warming up, also feel. One feels the power of the field, the history, and the fans. With five minutes till game time, we jog back into the locker room. We are met by the coach who says his speech, but no seniors hear it. Each is in his own mind set that makes it plain and simple: win and go to the championship; lose and we are done. Either way we go down, this game is our last at home. I now throw the thoughts down and let them rest. I know they will rest in peace for this locker room is unblemished.

The sun has set and the lights are on. We walk until the end of the road, where we are welcomed by fans yelling, jumping up and down, and patting us on the shoulder pads as we run out. All seniors hold hands and go up to the coin toss as captains. As individuals we are just players, but as one, we are the first defense to repel the visitors from entering this field, this stadium, and this campus. There is finally the kick off, then big touchdowns, interceptions, and after a blink it is halftime. Again Coach makes halftime adjustments, and we warm back up. Through another set of plays, and it is the fourth quarter. My pants are dirty; my helmet sweaty; and we hold up a four sign with our hands. This quarter is it. The last time for everything is now. Nothing matters more than a few minutes on the clock. Without warning, it turns to seconds and finally the horn sounds. A missed field goal with two ticks on the clock kills us. The team is stabbed, and we are still in shock. After breaking it down one last time in a huddle, I walk to pick up a pylon from the far end zone. I stand there. It was just a game. Some say a child’s game. However, I did not see it that way. I saw it as an escape from life and a refuge area of school. I do not want to take off the shelters of this world, nor do I want to take off the shelters of this game. I realize the path has taken me to the end and that it is now time for it to be passed on. These memories are those that I will never let touch the floor. They will stay with me, and they will not perish for memories last a lifetime.
I was a drifter. I rolled into the town like the tumble weed, and a few weeks later I was gone with the wind. The town knew me as Rusty, but deep down inside I was an everlasting ember burning with life called Shooter “Widowmaker” McGavin. I don’t do much all day. But at night I hustle at casinos playing Black Jack. I guess you could say I’m nocturnal. What I do to win is called counting cards. I usually have connections after a week at a casino. I’m going to tell you the casino story of my life. It started out in a little town with a lot of trouble. I started to like that little town in Tombstone, Colorado. I was startled that night when it grew sour. But anyways, on with the story.

It started out like this. I rode into the town on a cheap, raggedy, and thirsty old horse. The horse’s head had hung down with a fatigued expression. At the time, I had ridden the horse bareback for I couldn’t afford a saddle. The town had seemed to be a nice town at first with freshly painted buildings and happy townsfolk. I had ridden in observing the town with curiosity. I recall seeing a blacksmith wearing a leather apron with sweat and ash smeared across his face through an old dusty window. I remember seeing the Sheriff’s Department. There was a fine dressed young man on the porch in a pin-striped suit and bowler sipping from a tall glass of lemonade. I had seen a weapons shop with an intelligent looking man chatting heartily with a customer about a weapon. Then I remember seeing a small house with chipped paint and broken windows with a “Rooms for Rent” sign. That is where I stayed. During the day I would explore the town planning escape routes in case I ever got in trouble. During the night, I would be hustling at the Grand Plaza, the biggest casino in town.

This casino was bigger than the town hall. It had colorful red, white, and blue paint all over it with an unnecessary amount of flashing lights. The inside was even better. The carpet was a bright green color that had given me an extravagant sense of luck and relaxation. The chairs were covered with warm dark red velvet that had made my blood rush through me which had given me a sense of anxiety. And the beautiful show girls were all hussied up with make-up, cheap perfume, and beautiful blonde hair, dancing and singing on stage to the piano player who was playing “The Entertainer” on a black licorice, smooth, polished piano. The casino had the sweet typical casino smell of liquor, whiskey, warm bread, and cigars mixing and wafting in the air. But my favorite part about that casino was the sound of Black Jack chips being poured onto the table. Every night I would come in and act like I didn’t know anything about Black Jack, start counting the cards, and win big. The money I would win in an average night at that casino would range from 100 to 200 dollars. On good nights I would make at least 500 dollars. An average three weeks at that casino would bring in around 12,000 dollars. Now I know that’s a lot, but having connections in almost every casino in the West wasn’t cheap. The problem was in every town you never know who you’re going to run in to. There are crazy drunks, temperamental freaks, and many other types of crazy people. But the most dangerous encounter happened in that town. It was with a group of drunk bandits.

The boss had come walking in with a weird swagger in his step and had a hot red face. At the time, I was praying that he wouldn’t join my table. He joined it. I had started to get up, but he had told me to sit down and play. So I sat down and put my hand on my pistol, a black Widowmaker with gold lines running all over it like vines on a tree. I played Black Jack and counted cards like I usually do. The deck had been heavy so I bet a large sum of money. He had doubled my bet. I won. I took the whole pot. He became furious and erupted into a red hot ball of anger and hate. He jumped up on the table and took out a knife. He grabbed my cheeks and squeezed real tight and told me to give him his money back or else. He had been so close that I could feel his hot breath.
on my face. He smelled like a wet dog that had rolled in something dead and was still drying. His breath smelled heavily of whiskey. I shoved him off the table and gave a loud whistle. All the bandits started to pull out their guns. This is where my connections paid off. Everyone who worked there pulled out a gun. The piano player pulled a Winchester Rifle out from under his bench. The bartender pulled a double-barrel shotgun out from under the bar. Even the show girls pulled out small pistols from their undergarments. I pulled out my Widowmaker and fired the first shot. After that, there were bullets zinging everywhere. The total outcome of that fight was a group of dead bandits and one wounded bartender. I decided to run outside and hop on a bandit’s horse. I rode off into the sunset. And once again, I was gone with the wind.
“How much longer?” I asked, looking out the window and seeing the green hills blur into one another.
“Should be there any minute,” my mother replied.
“Oh.” There is only one place you can be going in the back hills of New Hampshire, and that place is camp. It’s supposed to be fun, a summer that will be full of memories, but I could only feel the apprehension of going someplace new, meeting new people, and being far from home.
“There’s the sign,” my mom said jubilantly. It was a blue rectangle, with an Indian head facing the yellow words that read “Camp Pemigewasset.”
The car pulled onto the steep, short embankment and onto the bridge that bottlenecked the lake. Straight ahead I could see some basketball courts, to the left, a muddy marsh, and to the right, a medium-sized lake dotted with sail boats.
As we pulled in, a guy with a clipboard stopped us. My mom rolled down the window, and the guy said, “Hi! Welcome to Pemi! I’m Rob Grayden.” He looked at me and said, “You’re in cabin Upper-1, up the road and to the right.”
My mom pulled forward, and a row of cabins appeared, perched high on the grassy hill. I counted seven. There were four more near the bottom of the hill, equipped with porches overlooking the lake. One of them was marked U-1.
Mom stopped the car right out front, and the counselor walked out. “I’m John, the counselor of Upper-1,” he said to me. My mom introduced herself, and then we unloaded my supersized duffel bags. I followed John into the cabin, and he pointed out a bunk, a top one, to me. “That’s yours.” It had a window, but there was no glass or screen, just air.
My mom had to catch a flight, so we said the usual goodbyes, and she left. I was alone.
Back in the cabin, there were some clothes strewn around on the floor.
“Hurry and get unpacked. You have to go take a swim test,” John said to me. I hate swim tests.
Overall, it wasn’t too bad, and the water wasn’t too cold either. Walking back into the cabin, my new cabin mates were sitting playing cards.
“I’m Simon,” the one on the left said. “Where are you from?”
“Tennessee. Nashville.”
“You like country music?”
“It’s not my thing,” I say defensively.
“What’s Luke, and that’s Andrew,” Simon said, pointing out each one.
“When is dinner?” I asked.
“At six. Are you a waiter? If you are you need to get going,” replied Andrew.
“Yes I am. What do I do?”
“I’ll show you. Let’s go.” Andrew went off to the mess hall.
It turns out that as a waiter, we had to set up the table we are assigned too, serve the food, and clean up after the meal, at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was kind of fun, but a little demanding when somebody wanted this or that. 

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Dinner ended well, no mishaps. Immediately there was flag lowering, which was long, but still lively. I had to go finish cleaning up.

We had some free time, and then it was opening night campfire. There would be singing, magic tricks, and stories. In the background there would also be the lake reflecting the setting sun, an orange and red glow rippling on the surface.

When everyone had gathered at the circle, Rob Grayden got up and started the campfire. “Welcome everyone! This should be our best summer season yet! To start, let’s have a song from Tom and Betsy Vines!”

They are the camp patriarch and matriarch, both nonagenarians.

At the end the Campfire Song was sung, apparently a tradition. It was the type of song that makes you think about life, the past and what lies in the future. Tattoo, the bugle call that signals fifteen minutes before lights out, immediately blew. The whole camp rushed back to their cabins to get ready for bed. Taps blew precisely at nine o’clock. It was the slowest bugle call of them all.

I woke with a jolt, hearing Revelry blowing through the camp. Rob Grayden was on the center of the hill, trying to get everyone to do jumping jacks, but everyone was too tired, so he just told us to do polar bear. Polar bear is where you go take a dip in the lake; it’s like a wake-up shock.

I hurry through it, because I have to go set up for breakfast. It was a good breakfast, with hash browns and eggs. Next there was flag raising, a short lively tune. Back to the cabin for inspection.

My cabin was in a hurry, sweeping, brushing teeth, making beds. A counselor came and inspected the cabin for cleanliness at the appointed time, and if all went well, you would get a good score. If all went really well for a week, your cabin would get candy.

“Sweep over here. Now!” demanded Simon, who had a large pile of dirt. There was dirt everywhere.

Our cabin never won inspection. Now it was time for occupations, our daily activities. First hour I had tennis, and it was pretty fun. Second hour I had sailing, which I thought was unbeatable, until I came to shop. Shop was what everyone called the wood shop.

The instructor, Trevor, asked me what I wanted to make. I couldn’t think of anything.

“How about a box?” Trevor asked.

“That sounds fine,” I replied.

“Okay then, get some wood, measure out pieces to the size you want, and then I’ll cut them for you.”

I ended up making a nice wide box. It was really cool looking. You could create almost anything in the shop, with a rhythm of power tools to work to.

I signed up again the next week, and I had in mind a baseball bat. First, you get a long rectangular block of white ash that has edges you have to plane down. That alone took awhile, but when it was ready, I put it on the lathe to shape it. It took a two weeks, shaping, and after that putting several coats of lacquer on. It took awhile, but I finished it.

What I hadn’t realized was that camp ended in a day. Three weeks gone in a flash. Over this time I had met many new people, made some friends, and gained some new skills. The shop stood out though, like a shining beacon at the top of a mountain.

The next day, my mom drove up to take me home. She asked me how it was, and I replied with a “fine.” “Good, good,” she said back, as she started talking to another parent.

I knew I would miss the shop, and the camp, but I also knew that I would come back next year, and have even a better time. I just knew it.

Watching that sign fade into the distance after driving out of camp, I already had started to reminisce on three weeks’ worth of memories.
Friday October 13, 2006 - Terrance took a quick glance at the paper. He already knew what the result would be but wanted to make sure. As he eyeballed the 59, he saw his best friend and fellow football star Joey Lambert doing the little dance he always did after getting a good grade on an important test. “Typical Joey,” thought Terrance to himself. He then momentarily pondered his semester average in math, which had to be below failing before letting his mind drift. After all, he was a handsome, 6’5”, super senior recruit coveted by universities from across the country at the position of wide receiver. Just a few hours from now, he would be out of the awful 8th period pre-calculus class he was currently in and would be donning the red and blue of the Wilmington Christian Academy Patriots. Then, he would take the field and let his natural ability take over; wreaking havoc on the opposing defense. “Mr. Clark,” shouted his teacher suddenly. “Are you aware that you have the lowest average in the class? If I were you I would pay attention.”

“Yessam,” responded Terrance, glaring over at a smirking Joey. The remainder of the laborious class went by slowly, and Terrance found himself sprinting out of the class at 3:00. He walked outside into a sauna with sweltering humidity, rather unusual for a North Carolina October. He placed a St. Louis Cardinal hat atop his hazel colored hair, which was swaying in the gentle sea breeze. “Ready for tonight?” asked Joey as he came up beside Terrance.

“Heck yeah, I am. We gonna destroy them.” They both got in Terrance’s black sedan and drove off towards their neighborhood, letting Chamillionaire blast from the radio and out the open window. After dropping Joey off, Terrance arrived home and entered his peaceful two-story home, which he shared with his sixteen-year-old sister and his mom. As he devoured a fruit salad he had made for himself, his mother walked in the room and said to him. “Wake Forest called today. They want to offer you a full scholarship.” Terrance stopped eating and looked up from his snack.

“Mom, I already told them I wasn’t interested. I clearly stated to their athletic program that I’m gonna go to Clemson, UNC, or Ohio State. That private school ain’t never produced an NFL player.” Terrance’s mom came up and gave him a hug which was not uncommon because they were such a close family.

“Honey, you know that I will always be proud of you no matter where you go to school or whatever happens to you.” Terrance smiled lovingly at his mother and then walked off to his bedroom to take his customary pregame nap. He allowed thoughts of a crowd cheering and chanting his name as well as sounds from the WCA marching band to caress him to sleep.

Two hours later Terrance woke up and drove to the stadium, picking up a much fiercer looking Joey along the way. The quarterback and the wide receiver entered the parking lot and then jogged to the locker room. Terrance slipped into his silver pants and his tight Under Armour undershirt. He then attired himself with his bulky shoulder pads, which had seen more their fair share of contact, and his solid black cleats. Finally he turned on his iPod to full volume and stared pensively at his red helmet and visor. Mere minutes later, he put his most menacing look on and took the field. The first half went by rapidly as Terrance struggled to get free from the physical defensive back that was covering him. He did manage to beat him deep once though, which quickly resulted in a touchdown for the home team. However, the score remained at a deadlock of 7-7 for the next three quarters, and WCA found themselves in need of a score with little time left. Terrance trotted to the huddle to hear Joey bark, “Slam 7 Clark middle screen.” Terrance knew that the ball would be coming to him and prepared himself to make a play. He snatched the ball out of the air with his left hand and swiftly turned up field. He saw a
defender approach from the corner of his eye and knew that there was likely another right behind him. He looked up field and saw yet another defender charging him head on, and before he could make a move, he was hit by all three simultaneously. All at once, millions of knives entered his torso, and Terrance’s body exploded in a world of pain. Then Terrance fell limply to the ground, and everything went black.

*   *   *   *

Terrance woke up in an unfamiliar bed and tried to get up. To his shock, he could not get up, he could not move any of his limbs, and he could not move any of his fingers. It was a colossal struggle for him just to get a gasp of breath. However, he did hear his mother speaking in a hushed tone to a strange voice. “What happened to my boy, Doctor?”

“Severe spinal injury, Mrs. Clark, temporary paralysis, also some broken ribs.” The pair walked into the room, and upon seeing her son awake, she dashed to him and they shared words. “As-Ask him if I will be able to play foo-football again, Mother.” Mrs. Clark opened her mouth as if to say something to her son but then turned to the doctor. The doctor gravely stated, “No chance, Son. We’ll consider you lucky if your ever able to walk again.” At this Terrance slipped back out of consciousness. Days of intense rehabilitation turned into weeks, and the weeks seemed to turn to months. Occasionally, Joey would visit with a stunned and devastated look on his face and say things like, “C’mon man we’ll make it through this together,” and “We gonna win state for you, T.” Eventually Terrance began to walk slowly and was released from the hospital, but life resembled nothing of his former glory. He decided to finish his senior year in high school and vowed to try and give a better academic performance than he had for the last three years. As he returned to WCA for the first time since his injury, he looked at the building, and even though it had been his home since kindergarten, it looked like an entirely different world.
Lacrosse

by Houston Morris

So many hits coming from left and right, but you have to keep running to win the fight.

The window of opportunity rarely comes around, where you can light someone up and watch them fall to the ground.

The ball gets tossed all over the field, though you try to keep it in the stick that you wield.

The score goes up, as the time goes down. The middie shoots it up, and the goalie knocks it down.

As the time runs out, and the crowd begins to die. One team will be looking down, and one with their heads in the sky.

As the teams shake hands, the players are too ashamed to say to their friends, family, and teachers, that they got beat by MBA.

Snow Day

by George Swenson

Silently covering the ground, Not able to go to school, Only a fire to warm us, Wondering if it will subside, Feeling the powdered sugar on my nose, Lazily coming to rest, Appearing from the sky, Kindly resting on a tree, Enjoying the descending snow, Sighing when it stops.

Failing to stay long, A period of dirty slush, Leaving for good, Longing for more.
Apple red and pale white, fire on the track
Found from the depths of a black Nike bag
Strong metal that digs into the rubber
After the race, cleaned carefully with a shabby rag
Will these carry me to victory like the goddess Nike
Or lead me to the deeply depressing, gloomy defeat?
Although currently very used and worn
They were once fresh from Fleet Feet
The leather is slightly ripped and frayed
But the love for them remains the same
Memories for the races, the pain, the ache
All come back at high school football games
Long ago I picked the grass from the metallic spikes
Now the shoes sit like unused garbage in the absence of light
Forgotten, ancient history, but once spring rolls around
They will once again be on my feet, snug and tight
Hopefully for another successful season
And, for running, there is only one good, unexplainable reason--
Pleasure.
Life Is a Mysterious Thing

by JeTarii Donald

Life is a mysterious thing
You live and you die
Life can be sweet as the smell of fresh apple pie
Life can be bad like the devil with horns
It can throw at you rose petals or thorns

Life starts with you as a child
Loving and caring
But when you become an adult true life shows
The mystery behind life nobody knows

Life has an end
Its name is death
This is the end of life
Facing death isn’t a smart fight
Why?
Because it is inevitable
There is no stopping it
But do you know what lies behind death?

Ask yourself this question
Do you know what the mystery of life is?
DO YOU?
Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for a friend. – John 15:12. In laying down his life for his friend, Sam Davis displayed the greatest love possible. He is the epitome of the compassion we should have toward our friends and those around us here at Montgomery Bell Academy.

Sam Davis was born on October 6, 1842, in Rutherford County, Tennessee. As a child on his family’s farm, Sam grew up honing his horsemanship skills and learning the landscape of the Middle Tennessee area. At nineteen years of age, Sam left home to attend Western Military Institute in Nashville, which is present-day Montgomery Bell Academy. When the Civil War began in 1861, Davis joined the “Rutherford Rifles” and fought under the command of Robert E. Lee. In August of 1862, he became a part of the group of cavalry known as “Coleman’s Scouts,” led by Henry B. Shaw. Using the skills and knowledge he had obtained from his life on the farm, Davis became an exemplary Confederate Scout, but it was not until November of 1863 when his courage and honor respectfully earned him the title, “Boy Hero of the Confederacy.”

On November 19, 1863, a squadron of Union “Jayhawkers” captured Sam Davis while he was scouting in Giles County. During a search of his person, confidential information intended only for Confederate General Braxton Bragg was revealed. After an interrogator realized that he was one of Coleman’s Scouts, Davis was escorted to Union General Grenville Dodge immediately. Dodge questioned him repeatedly about the source of his information and warned him of the danger he was in, but Davis’s only reply was, “General Dodge, I know the danger of my situation, and I am willing to take the consequences.” General Dodge was moved by the courage Sam Davis exhibited and pleaded with him to reveal the man who gave him the information, but Davis refused. Because of his refusal, Davis was sentenced to death by hanging after a court marshal convened on November 20. Minutes before his execution a few days later, he boldly said, “I would rather die a thousand deaths than to betray a friend or be false to my country.” Staying true to his word, Sam Davis lost the one life that he had rather than betray his friend.

Sam Davis was a true friend. He was a man of integrity, so courageous and noble that he was willing to sacrifice his life for another. There has never been a greater love than this example. Sam Davis’ life may have ended the day he was hanged, but the remarkable story of his love and loyalty will live in our hearts forever!
My Pearl

by Lucas Littlejohn

As I walk downstairs
to the frozen basement
sometimes in my bare feet, sometimes in my Nikes, or Sperrys, or even Clarks
stepping through mounds of forgotten things, unimportant to me
assured by few that they are pertinent
I finally arrive at that wine-red machinery,
adorned with shining bronze crashes, and rides, and hats
I have been anxious for this moment
I grab my sticks, my tools
and I sit down to play.

At first, I go through the normal routine:
warm up, play something boring in a boring book that only teaches me boring lessons
this book is passionate about forcing me to play
with perfect form, beat and timing
I trudge through this blandness, unable to wait for what is to come
and then comes the moment I’ve been waiting for
I whip out my iPod
and select my favorite track
whether it is out of my league,
or far too easy for me
I play tirelessly,
beating it into my brain through practice,
adrenaline pumping
I nick my finger on the sharp rim of the snare,
caught up in some complex fill, roll, groove, lick, or shuffle
blood slowly trickling out like a leaky pipe
but I don’t care
I’m in heaven.

Most think that drums produce an intolerable racket,
a distraction, they disturb the peace
but I dare to think differently
because I truly think
with a good drummer,
and a good set of noise-cancelling headphones,
you’ll come to find
that drums
are sweeter than the sweetest Mozart.
Thoughts on a Caribbean Sunset

by McKay Proctor

If the Lord had held a paintbrush and shaped the landscape thus
Did he do his work for expression or for the impression it would leave on us?

The sun sinks behind my head and the tide rises before
The white caps blazed in red as they crash upon the shore

This is where I contemplate the Good Lord’s reason for Art
The timer rings and from this placid scene, I am torn apart

Kevin Wang

This Computer

by Clay Ramsey

It’s the grand opening to the new millennium of the year 2000
The Dell is top of the line with HD screen and Intel inside.
Years passed as we did games, Internet, homework and IM,
On the veteran of computers, lacking the skills.
It’s received four Purple Heart medals from viruses,
Unexplained configurations, and automatic downloads.
Now adding Comcast and McAfee to it we thought
It was like one of those FBI computers, but no,
It’s more of a typewriter now.

The screen freezes making it feel as if I am looking at
A picture without a theme to it. I might be the criminal
Who caused the slow reaction time to this by kicking the
Computer telling it to hurry up. After telling my mom
To get a Mac, she said, “No, too expensive,” or “Too
Hard to figure out.” I thought she was biased.
The wires in the background are hairs of an uncombed scalp,
Cram everything up, time to go bald and get a new laptop.

Collin Bishop

Frank Vest
The Buckeye is a magazine of writing and art from seventh and eighth grade classes at Montgomery Bell Academy. The title was inspired by the buckeye tree that stood in the grove on the north end of campus. It was once a familiar gathering place for both faculty and students.

Round Glass Table

by Jackson Flora

A place warmed by the fire
In the middle of our living room.
A round glass table filled
With slips of paper,
Put together like a collage.
All shapes and sizes.
All stand for something,
And bring back memories.
A table where we, ourselves,
Also make memories together.
Playing board games, eating, and talking,
Yelling, laughing, shouting, and cheering.
Although they are just scraps of paper,
They make up someone’s life;
My life.
Yelling, laughing, shouting, and cheering together,
The story of my life.

Memories

by Will McFadden

Memories are thoughts
Stored in one’s brain
Some will be shared
Others locked up by chains

The good and the bad ones
They’re all in your head
They’re there in the morning
And when going to bed

Some memories forgotten
Some are just foggy
Others are clearer
Than any camera could copy

They can make me feel
Scared, Worried, or Sad,
Happy, Excited,
Bitter, or Mad

They bring back good times
Spent with family and friends
Joyful moments I hoped
Would never end

Holidays, sleepovers,
And all the rest
Are some of the memories
I consider the best

They carry the Good,
But also the Bad
The death of a loved one:
My dear old Granddad…

These thoughts are events
You’ve seen in your past
The moments go by,
But the memories last