Diamond Journal
Fall 2000 - Spring 2001

Nani Lēʻahi, he maka no Kahiki
Beautiful Leahi, object of the eyes from Kahiki
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Kūlia i ka nuʻu
Strive to Reach the Highest
Motto of Queen Kapiʻolani

Kapiʻolani Community College
Summer & Fall 2000
Diamond Journal
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Special Thanks to
Winifred Au
# Table of Contents

## PCC 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unforgettable Moment</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Situli Liss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rodney Redor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Corolla GIS</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Michael Cabe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## English 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Rock of Gibraltar</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>Debbie Baker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temptations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Glenda Corpuz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait and Think Twice</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Farrah Chiang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick's Dangerous Life</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nguyen Thanh-Xuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be All You Can Be</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Kerwin Wells M. Tugas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Loss of My Sibling</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Lianne K. Mercado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts of Prison</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>William Morris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Eulogy To My Father</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Raymond Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moe Gets a New Look</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Kristle Itagaki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## English 100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freak Accident</th>
<th>37</th>
<th>Natalie S. Mar Bunao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Woman of Strength</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Dolores Hale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Are All The Same After All</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Scott Hovey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'll Do It Myself</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Sheri Layosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent Shores</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Nikki Sasaki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E Waimānalo e

by Braddah Kaleikini

Kahi e pā aheahe ai ke Kumuma'oma'o
Ma ō e hi'iipo ai ka makani na Ko'olau
Lau wale ke ola o ka'i kipa mai
Pae I ka poli pumehana o Waimānalo
Eia la ke heele'e'i ka ua 'Apuakea
A pua na mala pua o ka 'āina
Ka 'āina o, ku'u 'iewe ku'u 'āina hānau
Ua hānau kuu Waimānalo hiehie

0 Waimānalo
Where the Kumuma'oma'o winds blow
In the mists of the Ko'olau Mountains
Where the life of the seas come to visit
The shores of Waimānalo
Where the 'Apuakea rains fall
And the children of the land grow
The land of my Ancestors, my birth
My beautiful Waimānalo

I composed this chant to honor my genealogy and the place where my family is from, Waimānalo, Hawai'i. Waimānalo is on the windward side of the island of 'Oahu. My chant shows my respect and love for this place. This is the first chant that I've ever written, and as I worked on it, the meaning became personally significant because the chant is for my family and me. However, when one translates a chant composed in ʻōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language), much of the deeper meanings of the Hawaiian words are lost in the translation. The English language is incapable of capturing the more complex meanings behind the Hawaiian words. Hawaiian poetry is filled with “kaona,” which is defined as “hidden meaning ... concealed reference, as to a person, thing, or place; words with double meanings that might bring good or bad fortune” (Pukui). Often times the English translation of an ʻōlelo Hawai'i chant may seem “one-dimensional,” but only to those who do not speak ʻōlelo Hawai'i. To honor my home and family in this chant, I describe the particular winds and rains of Waimānalo. The chant will be representative of my past, present and future.
PCC 20
Ho'ole i ka 'ai a ka u'i
Show What Youth Can Do
An unforgettable event occurred during my junior year in high school. Our school held special events once a year, and different schools from the two islands of Samoa would get together to compete in track and field events. I had never run in a track and field event before, until one of my teachers noticed that I could run. We were participating in a running trial to see which girls would represent our school. I went to these trials, with no clue that I would be one of the girls chosen. I ran well in these trials, and the other girls were shocked when I beat them, especially our school sprinter.

The next day I came to school and discovered my name on the list of our school athletic team. I was so shocked and happy at the same time, that I couldn't wait to go home and tell my family.

Each school was given about six weeks to prepare their teams for the finals. My coach trained us every day. He would make us run five laps around the field, and then we would run short distances. All of the practice exercises were timed. My event was the four-by-four relay. Four people participate in this short distance event. Each athlete runs 100 meters and then hands off the baton to whomever is the next runner. Our coach pushed us to beat the school's record time, which was approximately twelve seconds for each leg of the race. Training was hard, and I was in pain for weeks, until my body finally got used to running every day. I was close to giving up, but my teammates encouraged me not to give up. A lot of people were depending on me, especially my school. I gave this a lot of thought and decided my teammates were right. Day after day, our team would practice very hard whenever we had free time.

The day came when our hard work was about to be tested. I was a nervous wreck as I walked into the park and saw the many different teams and all the people watching. I watched the girls from other schools run, which made me feel even worse as I saw how fast they were. My coach noticed my reaction, so he stayed by me and didn't leave my side, until I convinced him that I believed in myself. He told me that I could do it if I put my heart into it. I took his words with me out on to the track. I was determined to run with all my heart.

After warm up, our relay team was called to go to our position for the race. I was the last person on our team to run, meaning I would be our last hope to win this race. My heart was beating so fast. I felt like I was invisible as I walked to my position. I tried hard to remember the words my coach taught me, which were "you can do this if you put your heart into it." The audience went wild screaming at the top of their lungs for their own teams and motivating us to give it our best shot.

I got into my position and prepared myself for the race of my life. I started to walk back and forth to stop my legs from shaking. Finally, I found the confidence in myself. I knew that whatever happened in this race would be for the best. A few
seconds later, I heard the gun go off. I saw my teammates run and put all of their strength into the performance. The first and second runner finished, and I saw my third teammate run straight towards me. I shook both hands and wiped perspiration on my bright red shorts. I touched my yellow tank top to see if my upper body was still there. I started to run as fast as I could after my third teammate handed me the baton. My feet felt like they were flying as I put all of my energy into my running. In the background, I could hear people screaming, “Go Situli, go!” This gave me more determination to run, and I caught the girl that was in front of me. I concentrated on the finish line. My feet started to run even faster as I got closer. I knew the girl that I had passed was right behind of me, and she was running as fast as she could. But I crossed the finish line first.

As I was approached by my other teammates, all I could hear them say as I collapsed to the ground was, “You made it!” We hugged and congratulated each other for the best team effort. I felt tears of happiness roll down my face as I hugged my coach. I was proud of myself, and I was happy that all of my hard training was worth it. I especially thanked my teammates and my coach for never letting me lose hope in myself. If it weren’t for them, I wouldn’t have made it. I felt so blessed and loved by my fellow classmates, friends, teachers, and all the people that knew me. I mostly thanked the Lord above for blessing me with such talent and for helping me to make it through. I was very happy to have my coach and teammates by my side through the most memorable event of my life.
Domestic Violence
by Rodney Redor

When I was nine years old, I witnessed an incident that made me feel as disturbed and upset as the witnesses mentioned in Martin Gansberg's essay "38 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call The Police." It was eleven o'clock in the morning when I saw a couple fighting not far from my house, which is next to the West Loch Estate Golf Course parking lot. I felt disturbed, because I had watched someone get badly injured. To make matters worse, there were other witnesses who saw what I saw, and they didn't do anything to help.

First, I heard arguing outside of my window. I looked out the window, and I saw a woman who may have been in her late twenties standing next to a car. Inside the car was a man who was slightly older sitting next to the woman. They were arguing about something, but I could not understand what they were saying. I was too far away. I looked around to check if anyone else was watching. Not far from the car, I saw a security guard standing next to his truck. The security guard was at least a five minute walk away from the fighting couple. I also saw one of my neighbors, who was a few years older than I was, watching the couple fight. He didn't do anything to help too.

The couple's shouting got louder. The lady swore at the man in the car, and the man screamed back at her. After a few shouts, they stopped yelling, then all of a sudden the lady snapped. She reached into the window of the car and tried to strangle the man. He started up his car, and his car went in reverse. The lady was still choking the man while the car was moving. He went even faster in reverse, and he hit the light pole that was behind of the car. The lady was hanging on to the man's neck even tighter. She wouldn't let go, and as the car moved, her feet left the ground. The car started to speed forward, and it weaved back and forth across the road. Finally, the lady fell to the ground, tumbling face first onto the asphalt. Luckily, there weren't any other cars on the road behind them. Then the car made a real wide, reckless U-turn and headed back towards Farrington Highway.

Finally when the car was gone, the security guard who was standing by his truck approached the lady and asked her if she needed help. The lady got up slowly and walked back to the side of the road, sat down on the grass, and asked if she could use his phone. She called someone to pick her up and gave the phone back to the security guard. My friend, who had been watching from his back yard, left and went into his house. I was wondering why the security guard did not do anything to help while the couple was fighting. After all, he was the security guard. After a couple of minutes, someone came to pick up the lady and drove off.

I still feel really disturbed by this incident, because it was like the Kitty Genovese case. Thirty-eight witnesses watched as Genovese was murdered, but no one called the police. I believe the Genovese case witnesses did not call the police, because they were scared and did not want to be involved in other people's problems. I also felt scared and nervous when I saw the couple fighting, because I was a child and did not know what to do in that kind of situation. Even today, when there is no one in that parking lot, I still look out to where the couple had fought, and I am haunted by the images of the lady who was hanging from the window of the car.
Project Corolla GTS

by Michael Cabe

One of my biggest accomplishments was buying my 1985 Corolla GTS, which I bought for fifty dollars. The car wasn't well taken care of when I bought it. There was a lot of visible rust, faded and peeling paint and a severely damaged motor. I knew from the moment I saw the car that it still had lots of potential. It took several steps to get it where it is today, and with the support and help from family and friends.

The first step was to find a way to get money to repair the motor. I was glad it was summer, because I worked at the Academy of Arts Center as a teacher's assistant. I made enough money to buy the parts. I also worked with my father on the weekends doing general repairs on other people's houses. Another way that I got money was buying used performance or stock car parts. I would clean or repair the parts if necessary, and then sell them for a higher price than what I bought them for.

After the motor was finished the next step was to replace all the rusted or damaged parts on the car. So I called my friend Blayne, who had several Corollas lying around his house. I was able to get a new driver door, a new trunk, back bumper and several other parts. I also went to a local junk yard to find some interior parts that my Corolla was missing. I was able to find what I was looking for after going to several junk yards around the area.

After all this, I was able to start the body work on the car. First, I had to strip the car of its interior. The lighting and trims of the car had to be removed, which also meant trying to get rid of all the rust that was infesting the car. Not only that, the dents and scratches also needed attention. Little welding was needed in some areas of the car because of rust. After all the rust, dents and scratches were removed, I was able to apply the primer onto the car which would fill in all the areas that the body filler didn't cover. Final step before the final painting was to guide coat the whole car, and sand the whole car down till smooth.

Finally, when all areas on the car were done, it was ready to be sent away for a brand new paint job. I went to see a friend at High-Line Distributors to buy the supplies I needed to paint. Then, I sent it to another friend who paints cars for a living. The painting process took about four to five hours. The final result was a flawless white Corolla, I didn't expect the car to come out that nice.

With the help and support of my family and friends, my Corolla came true. My brother helped out as much as he could. Whenever he'd come home from work and see me working on my car, he'd always lend a helping hand. He would also lend me money if I was short of cash. As for my friends, they too would help. My friend Pat helped me do some of the welding that was needed to be done, another friend by the name of Jessie helped me with some of the body work that was done. My parents supported me and helped when ever they could. With out their support and help I think I would still be finishing the car up today.

I still have more plans for the future of my Corolla. I plan to replace the stock motor with a Japan spec 20V motor. This motor produces thirty to fifty more horsepower than the stock motor that I have. I also plan to put a full body kit that is only available in Japan and maybe a front-end conversion to make it look more like a Japan spec Corolla. Suspension upgrades and Japan Racing Rims will be done to make the car handle better and look nice. I will not consider my car done until I have all this work done.

Working step by step, I am able to get things done faster than expected, instead of trying to do a lot of different things at one time. Help and support is something I really needed to get the car looking as good as it is, but I still have more plans for my Corolla. More things are needed to be done before my Corolla is considered completed.
Recognize and be recognized, help and be helped; such is family life
My Rock of Gibraltar

by Debbie Baker

My husband Brent may appear to be a cold and insensitive person, but, he is actually a very caring guy. We met a long time ago in 1979 at a friend's house. We grew up in the same small town, so I knew who he was but had never met him before that night at our friend's home. He and my sister were in the same grade at school. He had quite the bad reputation in those days for being a troublemaker. One day he came riding up on his motorcycle and asked me if I would like to go for a ride with him. We have been together since.

We recently circumnavigated the globe aboard our 44' sailboat with two of our three teenage daughters. The girls and I got seasick for the first two or three days into the crossing. Brent had to do most of the work by himself, since we weren't of much use during those first days.

During our stay at Canton Island, which is two degrees north of the equator, I had experienced a day that I can still remember as if it were yesterday. It was a lazy day. The sun shined brightly, and the trade winds blew softly. Brent had gone for a dive to clean the bottom of the boat. When he was done, he had asked me to turn off the generator that was running his dive equipment. I headed for the back of the boat not realizing that our newly installed wind generator was installed too low for me to safely pass under it. The next thing I remember was waking up and wondering what had happened. There was blood all over the front of shirt and all over the boat. I didn't feel any pain, just a light-headed, sick feeling. Our wind generator had hit me on the head and seriously cut me in two places and fractured my skull. I was terrified and could only think, am I ready to die? I remember hearing my youngest daughter Connie ask her father, "Is Mom going to die?" I tried to calm myself down to reassure that I was going to be OK.

There were only twenty Gilbertese living on the island at the time. There was an old gentleman who the islanders considered their doctor. By our standards, he was more of a witch doctor than he was a physician. He gave us some dressings and antibiotics; however, it would be culturally inappropriate for him to put his hands on me. This meant that Brent had to be the caregiver. His mother had been a nurse while he was growing up; therefore, he took great care of my fears, which were many, as well as my wounds. Unfortunately, Brent wasn't a very good barber, so I looked a little strange for awhile. He had cut some of my hair back in order to get a closer look at the cuts and to be able to keep them clean.

He radioed the coast guard in Honolulu from a fellow cruiser's ham radio. The coast guard and the other cruisers tried to convince him to have me medi-vaced to Honolulu. He was worried that if they took me to Hawaii, I would be stranded there with no where to stay once I was released from the hospital. There would be no way for me to get back to my family, so I decided to stay on
the boat and take my chances. I found this to be one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Eleven days later, the United States Coast Guard vessel Sassafras pulled into the lagoon on a routine buoy check. They had been advised of my medical condition while they were still in Honolulu, so they were authorized to administer whatever medical attention I needed. The crew of the Sassafras put on a video show for the islanders, and the islanders gave a feast for the crew. Meanwhile, I was on board having surgery. Brent stayed with me during the five hours that it took to complete the procedure. We were both uneasy when we learned the medic wasn't a doctor. The medic had to talk on the radio with a doctor in Honolulu to find out how to treat a head injury as severe as mine. While I lay on operating table, all I could see were feet because of the cloth the medic had draped over my head. I could also hear whatever was being said. The medic had given me a local anesthetic as opposed to a general one. Periodically Brent would step in and suggest that I take a break, which gave the medic a chance to calm down without having to admit to being nervous. Brent kept reassuring him that I was tough, and if there was a problem, I would certainly let them both know. I was very scared, but having Brent beside me made me feel safer. When the surgery was finished, they gave us painkillers, soda, eggs, and a lot of bandages. The medic recommended highly that we sail to American Samoa, which was about 1200 miles south of Canton, and visit the Lyndon B. Johnson Medical Center. The coast guard vessel met us in Pago Pago, American Samoa a couple of weeks later to make sure our trip had gone well and my cuts hadn't gotten infected.

The doctors in Samoa were very impressed with how well my wounds had been cared for, which meant that if Brent had done things differently, there probably would have been an infection as well as a few ugly scars. Head injuries should never be taken lightly, and I was lucky not to have gotten an infection. The scarring was minimal thanks to the way Brent had initially handled the situation. He had used my hair to tie the cuts closed. The doctors were pleased that Brent had used both peroxide and alcohol to clean and sterilize the wounds. The doctors mentioned that the peroxide was good for cleansing, and the alcohol helped to keep the tissue healthy. My stitches were put in without having to cut much of my skin off. My hair was extremely bleached out after a month of peroxide and sun.

When I see or feel one of my scars, I am reminded that Brent quite possibly saved my life. I tease him by saying that it was the least he could do, since he was the one who had asked me to go on the back deck in the first place. We stayed in Samoa for a couple of weeks to allow my cuts to heal completely. The other cruising family that was in Canton have kept in touch with us, and we have seen them in various foreign ports.

Brent is one of the most caring people that I have had the pleasure of knowing. Imagine the Rock of Gibraltar standing tall looking out over the straits and guiding the ships that pass through the water. Imagine a safe haven in a storm or a landmark for the captain and crew to watch for while looking for homeport. Brent is only 5'8" and 175 pounds, but in my eyes, he is a big man. He is my safe haven, my Rock of Gibraltar. His age is beginning to show. His hair is turning gray, and his beard and mustache are the colors of salt and pepper, but his blue eyes still sparkle with mischievous youth. He is my husband, big brother, and very best friend all wrapped up into one loving person.
Temptations

by Glenda Corpuz

I was in intermediate school when my first experience with peer pressure kicked in. During lunch, my friend Suzie offered me a cigarette.

"Mary, here, you like?" Suzie asked.

My mind went blank when I saw the soft, two inch long hand rolled joint that Suzie had offered me. I thought it smelled like toe jams. My other friends took turns smoking as if it didn't matter what would happen to them. I was speechless. I thought that if I said no, they might think I was a nerd, but if I said yes, I was afraid I'd become addicted and get into big trouble with my parents.

"Nah, das okay." I said, turning down Suzie's offer.

"You sure? Da ting not 'goin hurt you!" she said.

"Nah, 'foreal, I no like."

Instead of smoking with my friends, I had become their watch guard looking out for any school security guards who might come by to bust us.

My friends continued to smoke throughout our intermediate and high school years. When we finally reached our senior year in high school, we had had the time of our lives. We knew that once we graduated, we would have to go our separate way, so we thought we'd make the best of our time together. My friends started to party hard.

I was invited to my friend Lani's eighteenth birthday party. The party was held at a karaoke club at Pearlridge on a Saturday night and since I didn't have any obligations on Sunday, I had planned on staying out very late. On the night of the party, I arrived at 9:00 p.m., and the place was packed. Disco lights were flashing, and the music was intense. The night went well, and I met so many new people. By midnight, many people had already left the party. My friend Nanette brought out some beer and wine. I wasn't surprised that she drank liquor. Everyone who stayed past midnight started drinking too, except me, of course.

"Mary, you like?" Nanette said. "Just take if you like. No need be shame!"

I felt as if I was the only person on earth who didn't drink. When I saw everyone drinking beer from their frosty green bottles, they looked like they were having fun. I wondered if I would have just as much fun if I had just one drink. But I thought to myself, if I had a drink, what would happen to me by the end of the night? What would my parents think if went home smelling like beer?

"Nah, dats okay!" I said.

As always, I was the good girl in our group of friends. Ever since Lani's birthday party, my friends continued to go out to clubs to drink and smoke. Night after night, they'd get together to drink and smoke. Little did they know that their partying would eventually affect their school work.
Some of my friends started to skip classes, which really ruined their grades. A few months before graduation, two friends of mine dropped out of school. All their drinking and smoking made them lazy and irresponsible. I felt sorry for them. Although they seemed happy about not going to school anymore, I felt an emptiness for them. I knew how much they were missing.

On May 26, 2000, our graduation day had arrived. I was wearing my white cap and gown and was so excited about walking through the crowd of family and friends. I was happy that I wasn’t going to be in school anymore, and yet, I was sad because my friends and I weren’t going to spend time together as a group anymore.

A few years have passed, and I have learned that being cool isn’t about smoking and drinking. My family plays a big role in teaching me this lesson. Through discipline and love, they have shown me the right path. They taught me that smoking and drinking heavily can come between school work and my personal life. My peer pressure experiences have also shown me how fortunate I am to have been raised by such a strong family. What I learned about myself is that I can prevail through any problem on my own and conquer peer pressure with the help of my parents. I don’t have to be follower and act cool by drinking or smoking.
Wait and Think Twice

by Farrah Chiang

I sat and waited for Jennifer. Our meeting will have been the fourth time we tried to schedule an interview. The last three times we had tried to meet, she called at the last minute and apologized for having to cancel the interview. We were scheduled to meet at 3:00 p.m., and by 2:48 p.m., I began to wonder if she was going to cancel on me again. This time, instead of making arrangements to meet somewhere inconvenient for her, I told her to meet me somewhere close to where she lived. Time passed. I waited. I got impatient and started checking my watch several times.

"Sorry!" A voice came up behind me. I turned around and finally met my interview subject. She had a baby in one arm, and a huge diaper bag in the other arm. She seemed to be struggling with her load in more ways than one.

"Jennifer? Are you okay?" I asked her, as I stood up.

"Yeah, I'm sorry," she said. She seemed out of breath. "Nobody could watch the baby so I had to bring him along."

I felt guilty about having to disturb her. I apologized and thanked her for coming to meet me. I sat down and watched her put down the diaper bag and sat down across from me. The first thing I had noticed were the dark circles underneath her eyes, which were very noticeable because she had such a pale complexion. Jennifer looked exhausted. She was also very skinny, so skinny, that I couldn't believe she had given birth to her baby only six months ago. She seemed so thin and frail that if someone were to touch her, she'd probably fall over.

The baby started crying. Jennifer fumbled through her bag, pulled out a bottle of milk and gave it to her baby. I hadn't even started the interview, and I already understood why she had canceled our meeting three times in a row. I found myself wanting to help her.

"Okay, I'm ready," she said, smiling at me.

During our talk, I discovered that Jennifer had been all of seventeen years old when she discovered that she was pregnant. She and her boyfriend were very happy about the pregnancy, because they had wanted a baby. They actually planned the pregnancy. They were so much in love that they thought having a baby would be something special. I smiled at the thought of that.

"So was it special?" I asked her. "Were you happy with the decision you made?"

At first, Jennifer rolled her eyes, but then she stared at her hands for a few minutes as if she were in deep thought. Although she was exhausted, she took the time to carefully find the words so that I would understand her story. She told me that her and her boyfriend's relationship had been so ro-
mantic and sweet while she was pregnant. There had been so much love between them. The pregnancy had brought her and her boyfriend closer than they had ever been before. She remembered those moments when her boyfriend would feel the baby moving inside of her belly. Those moments made the both of them very happy. But during Jennifer’s pregnancy, she and her boyfriend didn’t have very many responsibilities. They didn’t know what parenthood was going to be like. She thought having a family was going to be like an episode of the Brady Bunch. When the baby was born, their lives was nowhere near what they had expected. Not even close.

The baby had fallen asleep, so Jennifer shifted her body to get a little more comfortable without waking up the baby. She explained to me how hard life had become. The baby cried constantly, especially late at night. She and her boyfriend had started to argue more often. They became distant because her boyfriend started to go on fishing trips. Sometimes he would be gone for as long as a month. When he came home from a fishing trip, he’d try to carry the baby, but the baby would cry. He’d get angry, frustrated, and hurt. Jennifer tried to keep the baby and her boyfriend happy, but it was difficult.

Tears started to form in her eyes while she was talking. I could feel her frustration.

“Jennifer don’t cry,” I said. “You don’t have to continue this if you don’t want to.”

“No, it’s okay,” she said. She smiled and smile such a weak smile.

“Do you get the help and support you need?” I asked.

“Not really,” she said.

Jennifer explained how her boyfriend’s parents were always at work, so there really wasn’t anyone else at home who could help her take care of her baby. Consequently, she doesn’t have time to do anything. If she isn’t washing bottles, she’s taking care of the baby. She never gets enough sleep because her baby keeps waking up in the middle of the night. And because she and the baby live with her boyfriend’s family, Jennifer cannot leave the house without her boyfriend’s father saying something negative. She has to follow her boyfriend’s father’s rules because she’s living under his roof. Jennifer and her boyfriend can’t afford to move out on their own.

“I’m trying to make everyone happy, but I’m not happy. And I can’t even turn to someone to talk to because there’s no one to talk to,” Jennifer said.

She started crying, which woke up the baby. I didn’t know what to say. She brushed her hair off her face and tried to make her baby comfortable. At the same time, tears were streaming down her cheeks. As difficult a time she was having telling me her story, she continued talking. She realized that she wasn’t ready to be a mother. She doesn’t know if she is doing the right thing.

“I don’t even know how to be a mother,” she
said. "Sometimes, I don't know what to do. The only thing that keeps me going is my baby. I always think things will get better, things will get better, but they haven't."

Jennifer told me that there are times when she wants to leave her boyfriend

but she can't. She has a six month old baby, with no money, no job, no family.

I didn't know how else to ask her if going through all of this was worth it. I didn't want to say anything else that might make her more depressed, but she answered my question without me even asking.

"I wouldn't say it wasn't worth it. My life is better, or it got worse. But if I could do it all over again, I would have waited and thought about this more seriously," she explained to me while playing with her baby.

"There's like a twenty-four seven responsibility, that you can't just run away from. But this is the most special thing I could ever ask for in life because there is always someone that is a part of me. I love my baby more than anything else in the world. It's hard but you know. We planned it, so well, I can't turn back time. I don't regret it though. No."

I watched her as she tried to make her baby laugh.

"Is there any advice you would like to give?" I asked.

"Yes! Make sure you're financially stable! It's something special between you and the person you love, but wait and think twice about it. Make sure you can give your baby the attention and love they need. And girls my age, don't have a baby yet! You should go out and have your fun first. Being responsible for another human being is not easy and is a big responsibility," Jennifer said.

I thanked her for her time. I personally learned a lot from interviewing her. I didn't really get a clear cut answer on whether or not having a baby at her age hindered or enriched her life, but I understood what she meant. It's a little bit of both. Having her baby in her life, enriched her life, but the responsibilities and obligations had hindered her life.
Patrick's Dangerous Life

by Nguyenb Thanh-Xuan

Patrick told me about the time he had walked his girlfriend to their car, when all of a sudden a gang of five to ten guys started running towards them with huge knives. He had no idea who they were, but he ran away. When the gang caught up to him, they beat him with a bat, which had left scars that would last a lifetime. From that experience, he learned that being a gang member did not enrich his life.

Patrick is the sweetest guy I've ever known, but he never dressed right and he always looked as sloppy as a trash can. When I called him up to ask for permission to interview him, he agreed to meet with me after work. I had expected him to be wearing his usual baggy pants and an oversized T-shirt. I was so shocked to see him dressed in perfectly fitted jeans and a work uniform shirt. His hair had been cut short and neat, and his bangs weren’t bleached and long enough to reach his mouth any more. I got out of my car and was shocked. He had gone through a complete make-over.

I got straight to the point and asked him if he was still in the gang. He proudly said no, which I was glad to hear.

“How did you become and gang member and why?” I asked.

“Because I wanted to be able to stand up for myself,” he said. “Most of my friends were in a gang. I had to first get mobbed by my “crew” to join the gang to show that I could get used to that kind of living.”

I was surprised to hear that, because even though we were close friends, I never bothered to ask him what he did in his gang. I guess I knew he was in a gang, but I was never really comfortable enough to ask him for details.

“Oh my gosh, so what are the usual things you gotta do in there?” I asked him.

“Fight, hang out with the ‘crew’, smoke, drink, and collect loans.... Don’t worry, I don’t do those no more,” he answered.

“Glad to hear that,” I replied with relief. “Did being in a gang affect your personal life?”

“Yeah,” Patrick said. “Cuz it’s pretty scary sometimes. You can get shot or killed anytime even if you’re with your family or friends. Since we gotta do a lot of fighting and make lots of enemies, when I’m by myself or with my girlfriend, I always gotta watch my back. I hate those kind of feelings. Also, sometimes we gotta go jack people’s cars, and if we get caught, we get bad records.”

By that time, I was feeling really sorry for him. His gang life was like living a life in darkness. I saw right through his regrets and saw that although he's out of the gang, his life is still in danger. He also told me how his being in the gang had caused arguments between him and his girlfriend. She hated it when he was with his friends, so they ar-
gued a lot about the things he did. He had to balance time with her and his ‘crew.’ Since he had so many enemies, he was always afraid and worried that something might happen to her.

When he told me about his relationship with his girlfriend, I imagined what it would feel like to be his girlfriend. I would definitely be pissed off with him, and I’d probably dump him the minute I found out he was in a gang. If he were my boyfriend, I’d know for sure that I’d have to accept a life of danger.

“Does this affect your family and you?” I asked.

“Of course, it’s hard ‘cuz I don’t go school. I go out a lot. I sleep, wake up, and go back out again. Cops have come to my house and arrested me plenty times, and my parents are always wondering if I killed somebody. They hit me a lot, so I ran away from home many times. My enemies tried to break my car, and my parents ended up paying for the damages. I disappointed my parents a lot so we grew farther and farther apart,” he said.

Hearing him describe his home life made me feel worse for his parents than I had felt for him. I knew exactly how his parents must have felt. I’m only nineteen years old, and I have to look after my younger sister who is twelve. I get really worried whenever she comes home late from school. All sorts of bad thoughts enter my head about all the awful things that might have happened to her. Maybe she was being bullied by others or even offered drugs. I could imagine how worried sick his parents must have been.

Next, I asked him how long he had planned to stay in the gang. He replied with a quiet laugh, and said, “I was actually planning to stick to ‘em for five ‘cuz my leader promised to buy me a car, find me a good job, and will always back me up. But I quit ‘cuz for five years that I was in the gang, I didn’t get nothing but trouble.”

“I see what you mean, nothing but fights and problems with family and girl friends huh?” I said.

“Yups,” he said.

“So did you have any regrets from joining the gang?” I asked.

“Well, there were some good and bad things about joining the gang. The good thing is I learned how to stand up for myself and not to be a coward and experience life outside in the real world. But it’s bad ‘cuz I fight with people I don’t even know. I was just following the leader you know. I get arrested a lot and get bad records for the future, and I make too much enemies. But I get to be known and respected by more people now,” he explained.

“Even though you get to be known by a few more people and learn how to stand up for yourself, you can get killed any time. My gosh, you are so dumb,” I said. “So what made you quit the gang?”

“I guess as you grow older, you just know what’s good for your future and you just grow out of what’s bad. I found out being in the gang took me nowhere. I wanna settle down for my girl, for her safety and for our relationship. And oh yeah, I needed to get back where I left off with my family, too. I wanted to spend more time with my parents and get more involved with family activities you know.”

I couldn’t help it. I reached over to give him a hug. I was so proud of him for being so strong and for picking his loved ones over the gang. Still, I knew that he and his family weren’t safe from the danger of his past.
It was nine o'clock when my alarm made that annoying sound which wakes me up every morning. As I fixed my bed, I could smell the strong aroma of coffee coming from our kitchen. I was about to go downstairs, when I decided to check to see if my brother was in his room. I knocked a couple of times, then let myself in.

"Manong," I said softly. He wasn't in his room, so I wandered around. His bed had already been fixed. I looked on the floor and noticed that his army boots had shined as if hadn't worn them. The floor was so clean, that I almost slipped on my way out of his room. My brother used to be a sloppy teenager, but he had suddenly transformed himself into "Mr. Clean."

I was about to go to the kitchen when I saw him come in the front door. His shirt was drenched with sweat. He had just finished a two mile jog. I walked up to him and asked if he could do me a favor.

"Sure, why not" he replied. He sat down and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"What is it?" he asked with a curious look on his face.

"Nothing serious. I just want to know how you changed your ways?" I answered.

"Ways? What ways?" He questioned.

"No offense, but you used to live like you didn't care about anything." I said.

He laughed. I rushed into the living room to search for paper and pencil. My brother was the perfect subject for my interview assignment.

"So are you ready to travel back in the past?" I asked.

"I'll do the best I can, bro."

I noticed that since my brother had joined the army, he was more responsible and neat. His things were organized, and his room was clean. I remember when he was still in high school. My brother's room was a mess, until my mother would clean it for him. He wouldn't even throw his dirty underwear in the laundry basket. He would let his underwear pile up for days, until my mom cleaned the bathroom. Before my brother joined the army, he didn't have any obligations in our house. All he did was make my mom suffer. My mom would come home from work all worn-out, without energy left to do anything, but she would force herself to keep things organized. It wasn't that my brother didn't love my parents. He was just irresponsible, and he was too busy being a teenager.

After graduating with a 2.34 GPA, he signed up for the army active. My parents were so proud of him, because they didn't know what he would do with his life. I thought joining the army was the best decision he had ever made. He couldn't go
to college, because he didn't study hard enough in high school. He would have had a hard time in college.

"So, why did you join the army" I asked, as I wrote the questions down.

"Not because I wanted to. I joined because I needed to. I was just so tired of being nothing in this family, I wanted to do something different with my life. Fortunately, it turned out in a positive way," he said with a smile on his face.

"But why the army? Couldn't you just do it by yourself without their help?" I asked.

"I don't know. Maybe Mom and Dad couldn't reach inside me, because they are too busy working?" he answered, as if he wasn't sure what he was saying.

"You mean they didn't care for you?" I asked again. I felt like a psychologist helping him search his past.

"No. It's more like I was the one who didn't care for them," he said.

"So you needed someone more powerful than you?" I asked.

"Yeah!" he responded.

He told me that during his training, he was required to follow every command his drill sergeant gave him. During the training, he was also required to wake up at 4:30 in the morning. He had to run ten miles everyday, and he did push ups and sit-ups. He was forbidden to eat sweets or junk food, because that would make his body heavy. After the meal, he would do another set of push ups, so his body would feel lighter for the next training. He was treated like a prisoner and surrendered his rights.

"Whoa! That must have been hard training," I said.

"In a way but it was very helpful for me and for everybody in this family," he said.

He was right. The training really helped him a lot. It helped him to be a better person. Now that he earns money, he is currently studying at the University of Hawaii majoring in nursing.

My brother and I have never been that close. He had been too busy with his girlfriend and work. But that doesn't really matter to me. I'm happy as long as I can see that he is happy. I personally believe that no matter where a person comes from, or how bad a person has been, that person can change for the better.

"Thanks for helping me bro" I said as I finished writing down the details.

"No probs" he said, and he went to his room.
The Loss of My Sibling

by Lianne K. Mercado

It was in late April of 1988 on a hot Sunday afternoon. My mother, sister, and I were helping my aunt organize her fun-run walk on Tantalus Drive. My father had decided to stay at home, and my brother had just spent the previous evening in Waikiki. He had gone to a prom with his girlfriend. While we were helping the runners and walkers on Tantalus, my mother received a call from my father. She turned white almost instantly, as if she had seen a ghost.

"What's wrong mom?" I asked.

"That was Dad. Dickie Boy got into a car accident, and they have him at Queens Hospital" she said. She was crying.

My mind started to think at warp speed trying to figure out what had happened to my only brother. All I wanted to do was hold my brother and protect him from the world. But I was helpless.

The entire family arrived at the emergency room. We were pacing anxiously up and down the hallways waiting to hear something. The doctor finally came out of the ER and pulled my parents to the side, so that he could talk to them privately. I couldn't hear what was being said, but my gut told me that something was seriously wrong. From a distance, I saw my parents take hold of each other. My mother burst out into a loud cry that made everyone stop dead in their tracks. All I could hear was the sound of family members weeping in sorrow. As my parents turned around, I could not help but notice how pale and weak they both looked.

"Dickie's brain has swelled, and he's gone into a coma. The only thing that seems to be keeping him alive is a respirator," my father said, as he tried to hold back his tears.

My heart stopped. I was desperate. I prayed and pleaded, "Lord, please, don't take my brother away. He's just a 17 year-old boy who has his whole life ahead of him, please don't take that away, please!"

Three days later, the doctors told my parents that there was no change in Dickie Boy's condition. If he was left on respirator, his body would eventually deteriorate. My father and mother asked to speak with my sister and me in the waiting area.

I thought that there might have been good news regarding my brother's condition, but to my despair, we had to make the hardest decision that my family has ever been faced with.

I started to think about how much I would miss not seeing Dickie Boy's face or hearing his voice everyday. I thought about the way he tried to comb his brown wavy hair. I thought about his dark but passionate brown eyes. Although he was a simple person, he took pride in his physical appearance. He weight-lifted almost everyday. I could picture him in the garage wearing his surfer shorts and a white puka shell necklace. He would be ready to do his daily workout routine with the sounds of Bob Marley and the Wailers coming from the boom box. I realized that my brother would not be able to attend his graduation ceremony at Damien Memorial School. Reality had hit me square in the face; my brother was gone, and he was never coming back.

It's been twelve years since Dickie Boy passed away, and I can still see that day as clearly as if it were yesterday. In spite of all of my pain and fears, he's given me memories that I will cherish forever. Through all of this, I realize that I should never take life for granted. I've learned to cherish the time that I have with my sister and to never wait until it is too late to tell her how much she means to me.
Thoughts of Prison

by William Morris

Prison. What would it look like from inside the barb wire fences? How do the prisoners feel having doors rolled closed to their cells and sleeping in a confined area? How do the prisoners feel when they are being watched constantly by guards with armed weapons? These are some of the questions I had asked myself, when I watched a movie on Alcatraz in high school back in 1982. I told myself that I didn't want to be in that type of environment during any part of my life.

In 1990, I moved to Fort Pierce, Florida, from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Fort Pierce is a small city on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The weather was a dramatic change. Minnesota is cold and windy with temperature that drops below zero degrees part of the year. Florida is hot and dry with temperatures ranging from 66 - 85 degrees year round. Fort Pierce is about forty minutes north of West Palm Beach and two hours south of Orlando respectively, if you're driving.

The first several weeks are always kind of hectic when moving to a different state. I stayed at my cousin's place for a few days while looking for an apartment. Several days later, I found a studio apartment for a reasonable monthly rate. I moved in, bought some furniture, and settled down in my own place. While laying down relaxing, I had decided to rest and enjoy the next couple of days. I drove around town in my 1988 navy blue Monte Carlo car to familiarize myself with the area. I went to the beach, which was about a twenty minute drive from home. The sand on the beach was soft and great for jogging. The ocean was beautiful and the water was warm. I guess it felt warm, because my inner body was still used to the cold weather in Minnesota. After a week of what seemed like vacation, it was time to face reality and look for a job.

Employment in Fort Pierce was mostly low pay work as a laborer or cashier, unless you are a professional in medicine, law, or have your own business. I found out that Fort Pierce had the highest drug problem per capita in the nation. The state was hiring Correctional Officers. I thought to myself, this might be the only option for me. The state provides good benefits (health, sick leave, vacations) and a decent salary. My head started spinning again. What if they hired me? That meant I would be inside those barbed wire fences with the prisoners. After a day of weighing my options, I decided to pick up the phone and call the prison's human resource office. I spoke to the receptionist and she said they were still accepting applications. She gave me the address and directions to the prison.

The prison was located about thirty minutes from home. While driving to the prison, I was kind of nervous. I began mumbling to myself, what will it look like? Will it be like Alcatraz? I thought to myself, William, you can still turn around and go back home. No William, you can handle it. Ten minutes later, I was on a stretch of highway with
nothing but trees along the road. I drove a few more miles and reached an intersection. I pulled my car over along the shoulder and stopped. I looked on the map and the directions I had written down. According to both, I was on the right track. A few more miles and two turns and the prison should be in sight.

Twenty minutes later, I was parked in the parking lot of the prison. I sat there in awe. Before me was a big oval double barbed wire fence with electrical sensor wires along the fence. The perimeter had four guards. Each guard stood by a truck. The guards were armed with 12-gauge shotguns and revolvers in holsters. There was a guard tower with three spot lights at the top overlooking the prison grounds. A truck constantly drove around the perimeter of the prison. I could see part of the inside of the prison from where I was parked. The guards were wearing brown slacks and tan shirts. The prisoners were in blue pants and shirts with a name and a six digit number on the left front pocket. There were also men in whites with a name and number on the left front pocket. At the far left corner of the prison, I noticed a big blue bus parked inside the barb wire fence. There were six guards standing by the bus and five armed guards directly outside the fence. One by one, men in blue with handcuffs on their wrists and shackles on their ankles exited the bus. I could hear the chain from the shackles dragging on the ground from where I was parked. Man, I thought, I will be inside the prison with those guys if I’m hired.

I went into the human resource office, which was a hundred feet in front of the fence line. I completed the application and gave it to the receptionist. She went through my application and told me to have a seat. She exited the office and went into another office. She came back five minutes later and told me to please wait. I was thinking what is going on? I just have to try and maintain my composure. She got a phone call, then told me to follow her. No, this is happening to fast, I said to myself. She knocked on the door and a low voice with a southern accent said “come in.”

I entered the office, and there were four men in uniform sitting around an oval table. The four consisted of Colonel Sanders, a big belly cowboy looking guy with a piece of chewing tobacco in his mouth; Captain Jones, a lean skinny 5’10” and 155 pound man; and a Lieutenant Miller, a muscular, bald headed black man; and Sergeant Strong, who was a tall man about 6’8” and 260 pounds. After introductions, the Colonel said, “Mr. Morris, welcome, please have a seat, and tell us about yourself.” I shook hands with all four gentlemen after what seemed like thirty minutes of interrogation. The Captain said, “Mr. Morris, that was your oral board, give us a week to check on your application. Please go back and see the receptionist.” I stood up and left that office like a lightning bolt.

The receptionist gave me three appointments for the next three days. First was the medical exam, then the psychological exam, and finally the physical. Once the application process had been completed, I had to go through the agony of waiting. I kept wondering how I did at the oral boards. Did I give them the right answers? I remembered in particular the question, “would you shoot to kill to protect a life?” I had answered, “yes.” That question was on my mind during the entire waiting period. Two days later, I got a call from the prison human resource office.

“Mr. Morris, you are hired. Will you accept the position?”

“I am sorry, can you please repeat what you said? I am getting a bad reception.”

The receptionist repeated it again and again, and a second later, I said “Yes, I will accept the position.”

“Well then, please come in tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. to pick up your uniforms and information packet. Congratulations Mr. Morris. We will see you tomorrow.”
A Eulogy For My Father

by Raymond Lee

The last time I saw my father was at his funeral. His cold lifeless, shell of a body lay there in his casket. His hands were folded over his heart. He was dressed in a formal blue tuxedo and a black tie. I couldn’t see anything below his waist -- only the top half of the casket was open. His pale skin was covered with some sort of make-up to give him the glow of life. His eyes were shut, and it didn’t seem like his eyes were in the sockets; his eyelids seemed caved-in. The hospital must have taken his organs along with his eyes during the autopsy. I didn’t even know he was a donor. Maybe I didn’t know him as well as I should have.

I knew that I would never see him again. He was not going to see me graduate from high school or college. He would not be with me to get my permit or teach me how to drive. He wasn’t going to be a part of my life anymore. As I stood over him, I felt that I never really got to know him at all, and that maybe I should have spent more time with him while he was alive. But he was dead, and my chance to bond with him was gone. I regret that.

Still, I can remember the little things about him. These were things that I saw when I was younger. These memories are still clear to me. I remember when he took me along with him to buy groceries in Chinatown. We strolled around all the major stores to see what goods were in. Everyone seemed to know him. Friends called out his name. They had addressed him in a formal Chinese manner on that good morning when we walked by. He was quite popular and had many friends that I never knew he had.

There was another time that I will never forget. We were in Chinatown again; he bought me some candy at a well known shop. He was left with quite a bit of change after he had paid for the candy. We left the store, but after we had walked a few blocks down the street, he stopped to give the change to a homeless man sitting on the sidewalk.

“Who was that man, daddy?” I asked.

“No one,” he replied, and we continued walking.

We got to the busy part of Chinatown, which was filled with busy people caught up in their own needs. This part of Chinatown had a stench in the air which smelt like a blend of expired produce: fish, meat, fruits, and maybe even urine contributed by the homeless who used the streets as a restroom. No one seemed to mind, but I did. Everywhere I had looked was crowded with people. They were purchasing fresh produce in stores and on the sidewalks in front of the stores while they chatted and laughed loudly. People were jaywalking through dangerous traffic. It’s amazing that no one got run over. There was this blind man on the corner selling newspapers. He was waving today’s newspaper over his head.

“Fifty cents, only fifty cents,” he cried.

I knew he was blind by the sunglasses he was
wearing. Everyone seemed to ignore him, as if he wasn't even there. The blind man hadn't sold very many newspapers. He still had two whole stacks next to him. I think my dad knew this, because I saw him slip some money into the blind man's fanny pack. I don't think the man knew what my dad did.

My dad was a kind man to everyone that he met. He was kind even to strangers on the street. Just those few experiences is all I know about my father. I know nothing else about his life back in Hong Kong before he moved here. I don't even know what he did for a living to support my family. I will never know.

When the funeral was over, the monks closed the casket and the grounds-keepers at the cemetery slowly lowered the casket into the ground. The monks chanted and banged on gongs to bless my father's trip to the afterlife. I stood there watching the monks chant, and I wondered what my life will be like without my father. While he was alive, he didn't teach me very much through words. Everything he taught me was by example. He taught me that the most important part of life is to spend time with the people you love.
Moe Gets A New Look

by Kristle Itagaki

In the article, “The Eye of the Beholder,” author Grace Suh writes about how she wanted to get a total make-over. She walks into Neimen Marcus Department Store looking for someone she can trust to make her beautiful. Suh chooses the Estee Lauder counter. After “Estee” makes her over, Suh looks in the mirror and can’t even recognize herself. However, she still buys the make up, even though she knows the powder, lipstick, and mascara make her look fake. In the end, she realizes that “Estee’s style” wasn’t her style, and that she was better off being herself. Just as Grace Suh wanted a make over to be beautiful, cartoon character from the television sitcom, “Simpsons”, got plastic surgery to improve his looks, attract women and get revenge.

Moe, a bar tender and restaurant owner in the TV show “The Simpsons,” felt ugly and wanted to get a new look. He had won a bar-tending contest and appeared on a “Duff Beer” calendar. When the calendar was completed, he got a glimpse of his face and realized how awful he looked. Moe is an average height kind of guy. He somewhat resembles a gargoyle or a monkey. He has short curly blue gray hair with a small rounded shape face. He also has black beady eyes and a small pig-like nose. Moe’s high forehead protrudes farther than his nose, and he has high cheekbones. He also has a large over bite with bulky lips. Moe asked his customers what they thought of his looks. One customer replied that Moe’s face was ugly, which made a rush of sadness come over Moe. One customer suggested that Moe get plastic surgery. Moe took that advice and went to see a plastic surgeon. The surgeon told Moe that a lot of work would have to be done. When the bandages came off, Moe saw his face and was pleased with his appearance. Moe looked many years younger, he had fewer wrinkles, his face was longer, he had bigger eyes and over all he looked more proportioned.

Moe wanted to attract women. He felt that if he changed his looks, more women would like him. After his surgery, the nurses told him to come and visit. One nurse had called Moe handsome. This was something new to him, and he enjoyed it. When Moe’s friends came to his bar to get a drink, they saw things there they never had seen before: a bar full of women. More women were attracted to Moe, so he had no regrets about getting the surgery. He felt handsome and on top of the world. Moe went to see a girl who had turned down his advances when he was in intermediate school. He then rubbed in the fact that he was now handsome, and she would have been kissing his face if she hadn’t turned him down. The girl felt bad for what had happened and apologized to him. He didn’t expect that reaction from her, because he was rejected by women his whole life.

Because of all the rejection he had received in the past, Moe wanted to get revenge. He was finally handsome, and this was his time to shine. He went to the television studio to tell off the producer that had once put him down when he was
trying for a part as a doctor on a soap opera. After the interview, Moe had over heard the producer say that he was too ugly for the part. Remembering the incident had made him more anxious to tell her off. As Moe stood up to the producer, she quickly replied that he in fact got the part.

He took the part without even thinking about what she had done to him years earlier. One day at the studio, he received the new script. He looked at it even though he wasn't supposed to. He found out that his character was supposed to die in the next episode. Moe figured he would change the script and have a little fun, since he was going to get fired anyway. But the character's death was supposed to be just a dream. Since he messed up the show, Moe got fired. As he was leaving, the set fell on his face. When he stood up he looked like his original self. He ended up with the same face he had been born with.

Just as Grace Suh assumed that a change in her looks would make her feel more beautiful, Moe, wanted to be handsome, attract gorgeous women, and get revenge on the people who had once put him down and made him feel ugly. Although Suh had no desire to get revenge, she had the same yearning to change her looks just as Moe did. Even though Moe is a cartoon character and Suh is a real person, they have a great deal in common. Moe thought he would be happier if he looked more attractive and so did Suh. They were both influenced by other people's opinions: media, customers, cosmetic companies, etc. They both realized that putting on make up or getting plastic surgery didn't change who they were deep down inside. They had realized that it was too hard to maintain a fake image. In the end, they found out that it was just better being themselves.
English 100

I ka ʻōlelo no ke ola, i ka ʻōlelo no ka make

Life is in speech; death is in speech
Words can heal; words can destroy
I can still remember what it was like to be in a neck brace while strapped to a gurney. I can remember hearing my mother’s words of comfort and seeing my grandparents’ concerned faces. It is so hard not to recollect the scenes of my traumatic car accident which happened on January 20, 1998. The accident happened just five months before I was to wed Rossano Bunao, which was a day we had been planning for what seemed like forever. This accident changed the way I looked at life.

My mom picked me up early that morning to drop her off at work, so I could use her car to run some errands. I went over to my grandparents’ house on Kapahulu Avenue. Once I got there, my grandmother made me something to eat, while we talked story about the wedding and errands had to do that day. My grandparents listened as I complained like a stressed-out bride to be. I had so much to do! The invitations needed to be revised. I had to go to another fitting for myself and Latisha (just one of my eight of my bridesmaids), and then finally, later that day, I had to meet Rossano at the credit union so that we could sign for the loan that was to pay for the wedding of our dreams.

I felt anxious and nervous. I had wedding jitters. Nothing was going right. My grandparents reassured me that I was doing all I could and that everything would work out. However, I was still concerned about the surmounting details that were not finalized. I kissed my grandparents good-bye and reassured them that I would drive carefully. My intention was to make a fast stop at a gas station, gas up my car, and then go straight to Ward Center. The Chevron on Monsarrat Avenue is just down the street from my grandparents’ house. As I was driving, I riffled around in my purse for money. I found a few bills, and placed them on my lap, but the money slipped off the seat and fell to the floor. I reached down to the floor of the car to pick up the money, and in a blink of an eye, I was upside down.

Still strapped in my seat, I could see the road outside of the shattered windshield. Visions of television programs with cars blowing up after a collision flashed through my mind. Oh my God, I whispered to myself, I’ve got to get out of here. I pressed the seat belt button to release the seat belt, and “whump”, I fell on the steering wheel. I crawled out the window as fast as I could.

The scenario seems clearer and even more meaningful as I recall what had happened that day. The moment I had reached for the money on the car floor, my car drifted to the right and hit a parked car. Startled by the impact, I turned the steering wheel to the left (away from the collision), which made my car flip over on to its roof and slide about six car lengths down Monsarrat. I remember the sounds of scraping and screeching and being bounced and banged around.

I was worried. The car had belonged to my mother. The windows were shattered, and the surf racks on the roof were smashed. In fact, there were
gouges in the pavement where part of the rack had dug into the road, probably slowing down the slide and preventing what could have been more damage.

After I had crawled out of the window, I realized that I wasn't wearing shoes. I looked in the car, and I could not believe I had been in there. I saw broken glass everywhere. Was the seat where I had been sitting looked as if it were on the roof of the car. A weird sight. I couldn't believe I didn't get cut or killed! The entire windshield had caved in and was shattered. I still couldn't find my shoes.

I slowly backed away from the car. I stared at the car for what seemed like forever. All I wanted to do was get the car back on its wheels and drive away. I actually had thought about how I might do that, but later I realized that it wasn't going to happen. I could only think about how pissed my mother and father were going to be.

I walked up the street to see what I had hit. I hadn't even thought about whether or not I had any toes or fingers missing. I just walked away. The car I had hit was a maroon, four-door Nissan Maxima. The only damage the Maxima suffered from was a medium sized dent on the corner of the left bumper. I looked at the dent, and then I looked back at my mom's upside down car, and then back again at the dent in the Maxima. I thought to myself, is that it? There was nothing else wrong with the Maxima.

I noticed blood on my shirt. I saw a big gash on the inside of my forearm. It was pretty big, but it didn't hurt, and I couldn't even feel it. I realize now that I must have had been in shock. What baffled everyone about this injury was that it could only have happened if my arm was partly out the window as the car turned on its side before flipping over on its roof. It took three months for the gash to heal, and I have the scar to remember it by.

Then something weird happened. Everything was quiet. The street was empty and there was no one in sight. Everything seemed to move in slow motion. I saw a man, who looked like he had been jogging, run towards my car. He looked in the car and then looked around. He saw me standing by the maroon car and ran towards me. He asked me if I had been the driver of the upside down car. I said, yes.

"Oh my god, this is a miracle," he said. He said he was a doctor, and started to ask me all kinds of questions. He asked me for my name. He kept telling me to sit down, sit down. I could not sit down. He couldn't hear me, so I ignored him and walked back down the street to my car.

A woman came out of her house right where my car had turned over. She invited me in to her house, and I graciously accepted. She asked me if I was okay. I nodded my head. She told me to relax and asked me if I wanted anything. I remember looking around her house. Everything was so calm. Her stereo was playing a Cranberries CD, and everything was so white, especially the carpet. I asked to use the phone, and I called my mother at work. Mom answered the phone.

"Mom," I said, as if I had expected her to hear something in my voice that said I had just ruined her car.

"Mom," I said again.

"Oh my god Shia-Mei. You got into an accident!"

I didn't answer her.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"On Monsarrat."

"Don't move."

I called my grandparents' house, and I gave the phone to the girl and walked out of the house. I had to take a look at my car. I needed to see if what had happened was real. About twenty people were standing around my mother's upside-down car. Some people came up to me and started to ask questions. Some people just stood there staring at me.

Firemen arrived. The ambulance arrived. The police arrived, too. I saw my grandparents running down the street. My Auntie Dayna came running too with my two cousins. Then I saw my
mother. She was crying. She ran up to me and hugged me. I wanted to cry too, but the tears did not come.

The paramedics put a neck brace on me and then strapped me onto a gurney. They said I shouldn't have been walking all over the place after I got out of the car. The paramedics and firemen couldn't believe that I had survived the accident because of the damage to the car, which was classified as "totaled."

The paramedics said if I had not have had my seatbelt on, I'd be dead. They asked me if I knew how lucky I was. They called this a "freak accident," because it was so bad and yet I was conscious, alert, and in one piece. The only visible injury I had was the scrape on my forearm. I was whisked to Queen's Hospital.

Being preoccupied by wedding jitters is nothing in comparison to a near death experience. I really appreciate life now, and I never take life for granted. Actually, the real accident was that I had a seat belt on that day. Call it "freak," but before the accident, I never used a seat belt. And my shoes were finally found. They were stuck underneath the dashboard.
When I was fifteen years old, I was hired to care for two boys named Scott and Michael. Carolyn, the boys's mother, was a nurse for Castle Medical Center, and Ron, a CPA for Davies was the boys's father. This couple's active lifestyle kept me very busy. Although I most of my time was spent with the boys, I became part of their family. During the summer, I would take the boys to town for summer school and other fun activities. And since Ron worked long hours, I want to help Carolyn out by occasionally picking up after the boys, doing laundry, and having dinner made. Although everyone in this family was special to me, it was Carolyn who made the biggest impact on my life.

Carolyn was not a woman of many words. Her assertive personality and body language communicated all she ever needed to say. Carolyn did not look like a model; however, when she walked in the room, her presence was noticed. She carried herself with so much class, she made a simple scarf look like a work of art. Out of all of her attributes, it was her inner strength and spirituality I remember most. I believe Carolyn's wisdom and ability to stay calm and think things through really helped her in personal life and career. When Carolyn was nineteen years old she had a bout with cancer. She was treated, went into remission and was confident that the cancer was gone for good. However, when she turned 35 years old, the cancer returned with a vengeance. I was eighteen and working full-time. Even though we still kept in touch, I only baby-sat the boys occasionally. While I knew Carolyn was sick, I did not realize how serious the cancer had become. She never complained and was so nonchalant about her illness. I felt certain she was going to win this new battle. Carolyn tried for one year to remain positive. Knowing she had Scott, who was ten years old at the time, and Michael, who was eight, she fought in her own peaceful way. Amazingly, she showed no apparent anger, but being a nurse, she must have known what her odds were.

In September of 1978, she was admitted to St. Francis Hospital. I would visit whenever possible. We had many good conversations. She always told me “you only go around once in life, make sure you live like you want to, and never let anyone stand in the way of your dreams. Because it may all be over tomorrow.” I will never forget her words. One Tuesday Carolyn asked to see me after I got off from work. When I got home, I was tired and did not feel good, so I moved my visit to Wednesday. On Tuesday evening Carolyn succumbed to her battle with cancer. I was devastated; I never expected her to die. I never got to say good-bye. I didn't go to the hospital, because I really thought she was looking better. Maybe I was just too young and selfish to see what was really happening. I badgered myself for many years over this question. Carolyn had asked to see me, and I did not make it.

After the funeral, I had the opportunity to speak
to Carolyn’s mother. We talked about how awful I felt. I told Carolyn’s mother that I had let Carolyn down. Carolyn’s mother immediately put me at ease. She said Carolyn just wanted to tell me how special I was and to remind me to make every day count. Carolyn wanted to tell me to always stay true to myself. What Carolyn’s mother told me next has amazed me up until this very day. Two weeks prior to her death, Carolyn told Michael and Scott that she would not live long enough to spend Christmas with them. She also told her boys that she loved them very much, and that she would always watch over them. It was that kind of strength and compassionate honesty that made Carolyn so special. Her body may have succumbed to the cancer, but her mind and spirit remained as strong as ever up until she finally passed away.

Twenty-one years later, I am working at Castle Medical Center. Some of my shifts are in the Oncology Department. Being on the Oncology units gives me a clear picture of what Carolyn experienced. I see how powerfully cruel this disease can be, and I am constantly reminded of how strong Carolyn was. Often, when a terminally ill patient dies, that patient’s death can be so immediate there is no time for closure for the patient or that patient’s family and friends. Carolyn faced her fate with courage. She died with dignity and most importantly, she provided closure for her sons. She dealt with cancer on her own terms and did not let her inner strength and spirit be broken. She was able to say good-bye to the cherished people in her life, and she made sure we all knew how much we were loved by her. Till this day, I am in awe of this woman’s strength.
It was a hot and muggy July afternoon, and there I was stuck in the middle of downtown Manila searching frantically for a taxi to get me to the airport. The combination of heat, rain and pollution, along with a week of hard work had left me exhausted, and all I could think about was going home. Even on the best of days, the short ten-mile drive to the airport could take hours, and it looked like I would be missing my flight. Just then I noticed a small yellow taxi parked on the side of the hotel. All the doors and windows were open, and the driver was in the back seat fast asleep. Perhaps he would rescue me. I politely woke the driver up and we exchanged a few short words. Evidently, he was waiting for his daughter to finish school. He was expecting her at any moment and offered to take me to the airport on his way home. He assured me I would be there on time to make my flight. So in desperation, I decided to accept his generous offer. Needles to say, I made it to the airport on time. But something else also happened on that short trip to the airport. With the unwitting help of this affable taxi driver and his young daughter, I began to understand the Philippines and its people as I never could have before.

How could it be possible to travel to a foreign country for nearly ten years without learning anything about its people, customs and culture? Looking back, I find it hard to imagine that it had actually happened. I had visited many different places and made many lasting friendship, but these were always business related, in one way or another. While traveling, most of the people I met were business travelers, just like me. I would run into them at the airport, in the hotel lobby or sitting around the pool. Come to think of it, I really never strayed too far from the hotel unless it was for a business meeting, dining out, or shopping. Another major deterrent to my venturing so far from the hotel was the horrific stories I heard about American businessmen that had been robbed, kidnapped or murdered. These stories, either real or imagined, played an important part in my social isolation during my many visits to the Philippines. But this isolation was about to come to an abrupt end.

As we left the hotel and wound our way through the crowded streets to the airport, I discovered that the driver’s daughter was just one of several children in the family. She was attending one of the most expensive private universities in the country, and her father was dropping her off at home, so he could go back to work. He had parked by the hotel that day so the other girls at school wouldn’t know that her father was “only” a taxi driver. Nobody cared that this humble man was working sixteen or more hours a day just to support his family, and this fact didn’t seem to bother him in the least. He didn’t care what others thought; he simply wanted to give his family the opportunities he had never had. Then it dawned on me, although he was making much less money and lived thousands of miles from my home, he was no different from me. When we reached the airport, the driver refused my offer of payment, and
I quietly slipped a small amount of money to his daughter. I thanked them and went on my way. Over the next five years, I made many visits back to the Philippines. I spent every free moment available learning all I could about the people, culture and customs of this great land, first hand. I no longer stay in expensive hotels, and I make every effort possible to mingle with the local people when I have the chance.

Most people are unaware that the Philippines is the third largest English speaking country in the world, and education is paramount to the Philippine family. I have never seen a country where so many people are college graduates. Even the most mundane jobs require all applicants to be college educated or currently enrolled in a major college or university; these include fast food establishments and even department stores. With this high level of education and strong knowledge of written and spoken English, the Philippines has embraced technology like no other country in the Far East. Unlike Japan, where most business desks are cluttered with large stacks of paper and virtually no computers, even the smallest of Philippine businesses will have several personal computers along with a contingent of highly trained personnel to run them. Many of the largest hi-tech firms in the United States have opened factories in the Philippines to take advantage of its highly educated populace.

Despite this, progress has been slow in raising the standard of living for the common person. This combination of technology and education has been the overwhelming factor in shielding the Philippines from the disastrous problems that plague so many other developing nations.

Over the last fifteen years I have been able to experience the growth of technology in the Philippines personally. With the high price of computers in relation to wages, many Filipino families will suffer great sacrifices to have a computer in the home, and there are Internet cafés on every corner in the cities. There was a time when I received calls from my friends or suppliers in the Philippines asking me to bring my old fax machines, cell phones and computers on my next trip. But now they are asking me for prices on the latest hi-tech equipment. I recently found that the University of the Philippines has established an Internet study program that offers bachelors and postgraduate degrees through on-line studies. Even though many are faced with poverty, the people of the Philippines have not let this keep them from the benefits of technology and education. The Philippines is truly becoming a land of opportunity for those who take advantage of the resources available to them.
I'll Do It Myself

by Sheri Layosa

Where could she be, I whispered under my breath, maybe she had forgotten about me. I tried to make a joke out of what ironically might be my reality.

“No sweetie,” my kindergarten teacher Mrs. Brennon answered with a sympathetic voice. “Your mother would never do a thing like that.”

Everyday when school was over at 2:00 PM, Mrs. Brennon would walk us down from our classroom to the front of the school so our parents could pick us up. Almost everyday, I was the last kid to leave. I brought my slim wrist up to eye level and squinted my eyes to make out the numbers on the clock. 2:54 PM. According to mom-time, she was probably running right on time, but to the rest of the world, she was 54 minutes late. I thought to myself, she’s shooting for a record this time.

I leaned against the rusted chain link fence that barricaded the school, and I rubbed the my aching lower back. I tried to look in the direction of oncoming traffic, but Mrs. Brennon’s body blocked my view. Even if she wore white low top Reebok sneakers everyday, which meant she must walk a million miles a day, she still had hips that could eclipse the moon. Mrs. Brennon yapped on and on about our school pets and picture-taking and open house.

“So, are you excited about open house?”

She asked me the question completely out of the blue, while pushing a lock of her short brown Carol Burnett hair behind her ear. My ears perked to attention.

“Yes,” I blurted out. “I want to stay in school that day, so I can help you roll out the calendar and put up all of my pictures and bring out Fluffy and...”

I stopped speaking in mid-sentence. After a long pause, I sighed. My smile turned into a frown.

“Okay Sheri, I could really use the extra help,” Mrs. Brennon said. “Your mom will your drawings,” she said.

Mrs. Brennon was always good at pick-me-ups. I tilted my head and stared blankly in the direction of oncoming traffic. I looked at my watch. 2:58 PM. A gray Honda Accord pulled up to the sidewalk and stopped abruptly. My chariot had arrived.

“Thank you for waiting with me Mrs. Brennon,” I chanted in a flat monotone voice. I had uttered those words so many times that the words had lost their meaning.

Mrs. Brennon took a step toward my mother’s car. Her white Reeboks teetered on the sidewalk’s edge. My mom rolled down her car window and began apologizing profusely for her tardiness. Of course, Mrs. Brennon said that it was no problem and reminded my mother about the open house. I opened the car door, took off the pink ‘My Little Pony’ backpack and plopped myself down on the cold vinyl seat. Mom stroked my hair with her soft manicured hand and looked sympathetically into my eyes. Her brown eyes looked old and tired. Her business suit jacket had been thrown on to the back seat. I stared at that jacket, waiting for the routine apologies to take place. She’s sorry because a meeting went over time. She’s sorry that I had to wait so long. She’s sorry that I’m always the last person to leave. She better not be sorry tomorrow at open house, I thought to myself.

“Mom. Just don’t forget about open house tomorrow, okay? You swear mom? Do you swear that you’ll be there on time?” I felt tears welling up in the comer of my eyes.

“Of course I will honey. I will absolutely be there, I promise,” she assured me. She patted me on my head. That was that. She had a fresh slate. I was no longer mad.

The next morning I woke up to find my whole
room filled with morning light. Even the morning birds were chirping. That's weird, I thought. Usually when I leave the house in the morning to go to school, it's still dark out. I rolled over to my right and looked at my clock to see what time it was.

"Oh god. I'm late for school!" I said angrily. I jumped out of bed and ran to my Mom's room.

"Mom! It's 7:30. Mom?" I shook her. My hand looked like a cat paw on her big body. Finally, I rolled her over like a burrito.

"What? What? It's 8:30?" she mumbled, half sleeping, half awake. I walked out of her room and went to wake my younger sister. She had preschool.

In preparation for open house, I strung up my paintings and helped a few of my classmates with their pieces of art. Then I went over my speech that I was supposed to read to introduce my mom and little sister to the entire class. Soon, my classmates's parents began to arrive, but my mom was still absent. I looked at the clock. It was 4:55 PM, and the program starts at 5:00 PM. My stomach began to burn with anger. The classroom was full of voices and laughter. The classroom was closed and told me it was okay because open house was supposed to be. "She's not here yet," I said in the bravest tone I could muster. I quickly sat down.

My throat burned from the tears that I swallowed. I hated open house. After the circle meeting everyone took their parents to various corners of the room. I dragged my feet to the closest chair and sat. About half an hour later, my mom came. I was sitting down on a tiny red chair in the corner. I was alone. I didn't notice that my mom had finally arrived; I didn't even care. Then the routine began. She's so sorry that she's late. She's so sorry that she broke her promise. She's so sorry, and it'll never happen again. I wasn't angry; I wasn't sad. I told her it was okay because open house was stupid anyway, and she scolded me for swearing. I thought to myself, I don't ask her for much, and I won't ask her for anything ever again. You know, I don't really need a mom anyway. All she needed to do was be there.

"OK parents and children, let's begin. I'm Mrs. Brennan the kindergarten teacher."

Everyone clapped. Mrs. Brennan told the class to prepare for our speeches. I clamped my jaw shut. She started with the kid opposite of me. My eyes kept focused on the door. I thought for sure my mom would come before it was my turn to speak but, before I knew it, my turn came and she hadn't arrived yet. Almost ready to cry, I stood up shaking fumbling with the lining on the bottom of my red flower dress. I looked out at everyone with dull eyes.

"Well, my name is Sheri Layosa and my mom's name is Wendy," I poked out my thumb like a hitchhiker toward the direction my mother was supposed to be. "She's not here yet," I said in the bravest tone I could muster. I quickly sat down.

"Her mom fixed her hair as she sat down and Leslie squirmed and tried to bat away her mom's fixing hands. Other moms were talking with the parents of other children and making hand motions of the scolding they gave their children when they misbehaved. The circle's perimeter was full except my empty link. I sat there alone. Mrs. Brennan tapped me on the shoulder to make room for her, so I did. She put her arm around my shoulder and told me I did a great job helping everyone else out.

"I'm Mrs. Brennan the kindergarten teacher."