

# DIAMOND JOURNAL



**Fall 2004**

# DIAMOND JOURNAL

Published by The Board of Student Publications  
University of Hawai'i - Kapi'olani Community College

*Fall 2004*

## **Acknowledgements**

A very special word of appreciation goes out to those members of the Kapi‘olani Community College family who have helped in the production of this issue, particularly the faculty who continually encourage their students to submit their writing, including: Francisco Acoba, Jane Calfee, Kathy Chang, Leigh Dooley, Tom Gullikson, Mavis Hara, Gail Harada, Krista Hiser, Raffaella Negretti-Holland, Susan Inouye, Lisa Kanae, Davin Kubota, Gunnell Lamb-Tamura, Judith Kirkpatrick, Kristen Kelly Lau, Mark Lawhorn, Phoenix Lundstrom, Jill Makagon, Dawn Oshiro, Catherine Primavera, William Reisner, James Robinson, James Shimabukuro, Carolyn Skinner, Kristine Korey Smith, and Lee Tonouchi.

We thank David Behlke for once again providing watercolors from his “100 views of Diamond Head” series to grace the covers of this issue.

We appreciate the hard work of all the writers who submitted their work for consideration and applaud their creativity.

### **Editors**

Jessica Novak  
Keri Iwahiro

### **Advisor**

Mark Lawhorn



## **The Scope of *Diamond Journal***

*Diamond Journal* specializes in publishing works of nonfiction that take the form of personal narrative. The two types of writing that most commonly appear in these pages are the personal narrative and the personal narrative essay. A personal narrative is an autobiographical story about a specific incident or series of related incidents in a writer's life which reveal conflict and often growth in the writer's character. Personal narrative may be defined as a true account of personal experience. Rather than "autobiography," which implies a rather comprehensive account of one's life, the term "memoir" might more suitably describe this type of narration. The writer of this genre, who must inevitably be highly selective in choosing details to share with the reader, strives to draw the reader as fully as possible into an experience that is largely communicated through creative use of the following:

- Effective pacing and blending of summary and scene,
- Sharp, believable dialogue,
- Distinctive characterization that "brings characters to life,"
- A palpable setting (time, place, even atmosphere, and the details to give them meaning) that places the reader in the world of the story,
- Action verbs and concrete nouns that show instead of tell,
- An organizational structure and focus that help the reader stay with the story all the way to the end (usually, but not always, chronological).

In the personal narrative essay, experiences taken from one's life are connected to an idea. Because a personal essay may be more idea-driven than story-driven, however, storytelling techniques used in personal narrative may be somewhat less prevalent than in the personal narrative. Occasionally, a good bit of research from secondary sources may be incorporated into a personal narrative essay in order to explore the subject more fully. Such essays, with their scholarly elements of textual citation and bibliography, are often identified as personal critical essays.

The common thread in all the types of narrative writing mentioned here is, of course, the word "personal." Sharing personal stories is one of the oldest, most valued rituals of our species. Taken as a whole, these stories celebrate the diversity of our students at Kapi'olani Community College. They also reaffirm our common connection with any brave, thoughtful person anywhere, anytime who has taken the time to tell a story worth sharing.



## Table of Contents

<b>Leaving My Home and My Mother</b> <i>Michelle E. Agonoy</i> .....	6
<b>The Red-Haired Stranger</b> <i>Karlee Anderson</i> .....	10
<b>What Will It Take to Change the Way You Live?</b> <i>Alex Bayudan</i> .....	14
<b>Ready, Set, Panic</b> <i>Simeon Bourim</i> .....	17
<b>Give Me One Bum-Bye</b> <i>Regina Chang</i> .....	20
<b>Words of Wisdom</b> <i>Amber Cortes</i> .....	23
<b>A Night Out</b> <i>Kari Doran</i> .....	26
<b>The Power of a Hike</b> <i>Kari Doran</i> .....	29
<b>King of Insight</b> <i>Ross Fujimoto</i> .....	32
<b>It's a Girl!</b> <i>Lisa Hamilton</i> .....	34
<b>Brand New Purpose</b> <i>Aubrey Hillman</i> .....	37
<b>If My Baby Can Survive</b> <i>Mitsuo Kishi</i> .....	41
<b>Very Tender Moment</b> <i>Jimmy T. Nguyen</i> .....	44
<b>One Life to Live</b> <i>Joan Padron</i> .....	46

<b>The Tradition of Baking Hawaiian Sweet Bread</b>	
<i>Lisa Marie Perez</i> .....	49
<b>Freedom of Life: When You Need a Getaway</b>	
<i>Christopher K. Sanders</i> .....	52
<b>My First Day Back at Work</b>	
<i>Anyaa Sinclair</i> .....	55
<b>My Grandfather's Hands</b>	
<i>Michelle Sisson</i> .....	59
<b>Miss Deaf Hawaii</b>	
<i>Aileen Solem</i> .....	62
<b>The Greatest Influence on My Life</b>	
<i>Maria St. Sure</i> .....	65
<b>Summer of 2003</b>	
<i>Porsche Leilani Kauanoë Strom</i> .....	68
<b>The Most Beautiful Day of My Life</b>	
<i>Anthony Vallejo-Sanderson</i> .....	72

*Diamond Journal*, a publication of the Board of Student Publications (BOSP) at the University of Hawaii at Kapi'olani Community College, is produced once each semester. Funding for BOSP is provided by student fees. The written works included in *Diamond Journal* reflect the experiences, opinions, and views of their authors, not those of the BOSP, journal editors, advisors, or staff. Authors are solely responsible for the content of each submission. While *Diamond Journal* invites all submissions, selection for publication is entirely at the discretion of the editors, who also reserve the right to edit for grammar, punctuation, and length.

# **Leaving My Home and My Mother**

Michelle Agonoy

Have you ever left home and felt that there was no turning back? Well, I have. I left for college on the mainland on September 24, 2002. I was excited, but at the same time, it was the hardest transition I had ever made in my life. I came from a well-rounded family with two older siblings and a younger brother. My mom is a very amiable and caring person. She would always be there to listen to my problems and help me to become a better person. Truthfully, I can say I have the best mother-daughter relationship with her. I can be open and tell her everything that's going on in my life. So how could I survive without the people I love?

There is never a dull moment in the Maglaya household. I live in an eleven-bedroom, green and red two-story house with nineteen of my family members. There are five generations in the house, so it is pretty noisy with my eight little rascal cousins running around, singing on the balcony, or playing house. My eighty-seven year old great-grandmother is always either in the garden or cooking in the kitchen. The house is always permeated with the smell of delicious Filipino dishes such as pinakbet or balatong.

Did I truly want to leave all this behind?

As I reminisced about my past and my family that I was leaving behind, my mom tugged at me, waking me from my nostalgic dream, and said, "Let's go; they're calling our rows." Where was I? Then I realized I was sitting in the cold airport waiting to fly off to some distant land. Hesitantly, I stood up and grabbed my overstuffed gray and black backpack and headed to the door. I wore faded jeans with a black long-sleeve shirt and a khaki-hooded zip-up jacket. My long black silky hair was tied up in a ponytail. As I walked through the hallway towards the plane, I felt like turning back. Emotions began to build up inside me. I looked up at my mom and she smiled. My mom always had the ability to make me feel good inside. The walk to the plane seemed like a mile long. I was in doubt and I felt I wasn't doing the right thing.

We finally reached the door of the aircraft. As I stepped onto the plane, I looked beneath me and could see a small strip of land through the little slit that separated the plane from the jet bridge. I wanted to be on that land, soaking in the sun and feeling the cool, gentle breeze touch my soft, brown skin. I didn't want to leave; however, there was no turning back. I took a deep breath and followed my mom to our seats. I looked around the crowded plane and wondered if there were people like me who were also leaving home for the first time. We squeezed our way through the narrowest aisles I had ever seen. After



many exchanges of “excuse me” and “thank you,” my mother and I finally got to our seats. I was happy to find out that I had the seat next to the window, for it would be the last time in a long while that I would see the island where I was born and raised. I moved the courtesy blanket and pillow off my seat and sat down. Then I put my overstuffed backpack under the seat in front of me. At that moment, I forgot about the past and became more anxious about the future than ever before. Going to school on the mainland was the decision I had made, and I felt that I was wrong for doing so. I was jittery and nervous inside. It was hot; I felt as if I was standing next to a barbecue. My palms began to sweat and my heart began to race.

“Are you okay?” my mom asked.

“Yeah, I’m okay,” I replied. Was I kidding myself? I wasn’t okay. I was scared. How am I going to survive without my mom telling me what to do? What if I don’t like it up there? All these thoughts danced around in my head. I needed to relax.

Next the plane started to make its way towards the runway. I looked out the oval window and saw blurred images pass by me. As the plane accelerated, I held onto my armrest. Then the plane lifted slowly, higher and higher. I felt lightheaded and my ears popped. I looked through the window at the blue skies while the last rays of Hawaii’s sunshine beamed onto my face. The houses below seemed to be shrinking by the second. I could glimpse beautiful Diamond Head and the clear, blue ocean sparkling below. The island was fading before me. Images of my grandma telling stories as we ate and the fun and crazy times with my friends were fading away. I missed home even more. When I couldn’t look any longer, I closed the window, turned away, and slouched in my small blue chair.

The plane was crowded, as usual, but quiet. Everyone looked so squished in the small blue cushioned seats. The tall and physically fit flight attendants were making their way down the narrow aisles to serve ice cold drinks. Beside me, my mom was asleep. On her delicate hands I noticed how the veins bulged out and slithered to just below her knuckles. The texture of her hands looked soft and smooth, yet it had a roughness underneath it all. Her hands represented her personality. From the outside, she looked cheerful, friendly, and caring. But on the inside she was strong, firm, and independent. Her hands reflected the years of abuse from my father and the perseverance and hard work to get through life. As a single parent, she had done so much for me and my siblings. Later I looked at the other passengers and noticed that everyone was preoccupied with their own affairs. A man casually typed away on his laptop. He looked like a businessman who spent a lot of time in his office and who had no time for his family if he had one. I scanned around again and saw a girl reading a magazine; she looked about my age. She looked content as she sat up with confidence and held her head high. Was she going to college too? She couldn’t be because

she wasn't like me. She looked carefree and happy, and I looked worried and scared. What could she be happy about? I was frightened by this picture. Such independence and such confidence were what I needed in college. I felt lonely, as if there would be no one to rescue me when I finally lived on the mainland.

I was in my own world, remembering the place and people I had left behind. My heart began to hurt as though it were twisting inside me. I wanted to cry and could feel big blobs of tears bursting in the corners of my small, almond-shaped eyes. I tried to stop these tears, but I couldn't. They were pouring out and dropping into my lap, streaming down my face the way water does on a car's windshield on a rainy day. Each tear dampened a perfectly round circle onto my jeans. I tried to hide my face from my mom; however, she was awakened by the sniffing noises I had made. Her eyes glistened at me, and the corners of her mouth turned up.

"Are you okay?" my mom asked, putting her hand on my shoulder.

"No, I miss home. I miss everybody," I sobbed.

As a tear blossomed in the corner of her eye and rolled down the side of her face, my mom said, "We'll be here for you no matter what." Seeing her cry made me cry even more.

My mom continued, "I know, Michelle, it's going to be hard, but I know you'll be okay. I'll always be here for you. We have faced so many obstacles, and yet we survived and made it through. Your dad, he was never there; he gave me no child support, and look, you guys turned out perfectly fine. I know you can do it, Michelle; I have faith in you. I am so proud of you. Everything will be fine."

Her comforting words sank in me like water seeping into the soil. I felt much better. The next three words that came out of my mouth were hard to say because I don't normally say them to her. This was the time to say these words, however. I didn't want the moment to pass me by without telling her how I felt. "I love you, mom, and I appreciate everything you have done for me," I told her with a smile on my face, although my voice weakened.

The corner of her eyes wrinkled and she smiled. "I love you too," she replied. Her smile was one that I would never forget. The creases on her lips smoothed and her pearly white teeth showed. Her small nose widened and her eyes sparkled like flawless diamonds.

She reached over and hugged me. When I buried my head in her arms, I could smell her Victoria's Secret Love Spell lotion on her light-brown skin. It reminded me of sweet lilikoi that I used to pick in my great-grandmother's garden. It was a strong but sweet, tropical, fruity smell that brought great memories. As we cried together, my tears fell onto



the black jacket she wore. I held her tight, not wanting to let go. My mom's presence made me feel good inside. She was like my blanket and I felt warm and cozy in her arms. Knowing there was no turning back, I grabbed a tissue from the pocket of my jacket and wiped my tears away. Then I leaned back into the small uncomfortable chair and wrapped myself in a blue fleece blanket. Its softness and warmth made me feel safe, as though my mom were still wrapping her arms around me. She was my comforter and I was secure. I closed my eyes, hoping that my mom was right and everything would be okay.

Family is a big thing for me. My family has gone through many ups and downs, but we managed to overcome them. I look at my mom for inspiration to get through each day. She overcame a terribly abusive marriage with my father, who took drugs. My mom shaped me into who I am today. I do well in school to make her happy because it's worth it to see that smile on her face. My experience of going to college on the mainland has taught me that family will always be there, even if you are 3000 miles away from home. My mom was right; she continued to be there for me and to support me in my decisions, even when they went against her wishes. She wants the best for me and would go out of her way to give me the world. She's the best mom anyone could ever have.



# **The Red-Haired Stranger**

Karlee Anderson

One Saturday afternoon, when I was eight years old, my mom and I were running our usual errands. One of these errands was to go to the DMV and renew the registration on our 1987 Toyota Celica.

“Do you want to stay in the car? I will only be gone a minute.” My mom was asking me to do the impossible. Stay in the car on a sweltering day like this? She must be crazy! As I thought about the pros and cons of staying or going, I remembered that I had a brand new toy to play with. This would help me not to focus on the heat so much. Besides, she would only be gone a minute.

“Are you sure?” my mom asked.

“Yes, Mom. I’ll be fine!” I replied.

Opening the door, she called over her shoulder, “Make sure you lock the door!” I quickly did as I was told since I was eager to play with my new troll! This troll had a round nose, large bulging eyes, and lavender hair that stuck straight up in the air. It also had a sparkly purple diamond in the center of its potbelly stomach. If you rubbed it while making a wish, your wish would come true.

As I was playing, not thinking about the heat, I heard someone whistling behind me. I looked in the sideview mirror and saw a man with rusty red hair walking in my direction. Not even thinking twice about him, I continued playing and examining my new possession. The whistling grew louder until it was finally next to my door. The man glanced down at me and turned away.

Not even a second later, he whipped his head around and lowered his entire body to my eye level. He looked in my window . . . right at me! His gaze was piercing and very strange. Despite the heat, a chill ran up my spine and thought my nerves. I didn’t need anyone to tell me that this man was dangerous.

He was stout and chubby and his face was unshaved. After slight hesitation, he must have realized that he had been staring at me for a curiously long time. He slowly turned and walked away. I saw him getting into his old Chevy pickup truck.

“That’s weird,” I thought. He was just sitting there. Minutes went by, and the man never moved a muscle. As he stared out the mirror on the side of his truck, he reminded me

me of an animal waiting to attack its prey.

I was shaking with fear and dripping with cold sweat. My first reaction was to roll up the windows as fast as I could. The doors were already locked, but I checked them anyway. As I slid down in my seat, I glanced diagonally to my right to see where the plump, hairy man was. Little had changed. He was still in his rusty old truck.

“At least he isn’t staring at me anymore,” I thought. His behavior still frightened me, even though all he was doing was moving around in the truck’s cab, doing who knows what.

Since I was so scared, I felt like my brain was on fire. I imagined escape routes and plans of action, what I would do if he came back. I started to look around me, checking to see if there was anyone that I could ask for help. There was no one to my right or behind me.

To my left there was a family with children riding their new bikes around in the parking lot. At the moment, I wished so badly that I was one of those kids. They were not faced with this looming ball of fire as I was. They were “normal,” playing with their own new toys.

After I was done feeling sorry for myself, I noticed that the man was staring at me again. I thought, “If I can just get out and run to those kids, I will be safe.” I planned everything out in my head; I would just get out and run as fast as I could to the family. Then I began to doubt myself, thinking what the invading pair of eyes and the body attached to them would do. “He would probably catch me,” I worried. A wave of hopelessness swept over me. Realizing that he was much stronger and faster than I was, I had no choice but to pray that my mom would come back soon.

“Okay, Mom, it’s been longer than a minute,” I said to myself. Grabbing my troll, I started rubbing its jeweled belly and making wish after wish that nothing would happen. I tried reassuring myself that everything would be okay and that I was just imagining the man’s danger.

Sweat rolled down my face. Suddenly I realized just how hot the car was. I looked at the rolled up windows. I yearned to feel a cool breeze blowing through them, but danger was still lurking close by. Closing my eyes, I began to say a silent prayer.

A tap on the window interrupted my silent prayers for help. I opened my eyes and looked to see who was tapping. I was the man, the threat. “How did I not see him get out of his truck?” I worried. “What does he want?” We stared at each other for a moment. I didn’t



want him to see that I was afraid.

“Hey there, little girl!” He said in a forced cheerful voice.

I said nothing.

“It’s pretty hot out here. Why don’t you roll down your window?”

I didn’t move.

“Here. I got this Pepsi. Do you want it? It’s nice and cold!”

The man held up the Pepsi. I looked at the can and noticed that it was already open. Images of the chubby man moving around in his truck came flashing into my head. My imagination went haywire, thinking that he had been putting drugs in the Pepsi. Reality came back; I knew this was a trap to try to get me to open the door. I shook my head to decline his offer.

“Okay,” he said. He walked away slowly.

“A moment later the sweaty man leapt back to where he had been standing. He reached for the door handle. “Click.” The door was locked. He tried one more time. “Click.” Then he ran to his truck, climbed in, and sped off with tires squealing. Although he was gone, I did not feel relief instantly, not even when my mom got back.

“Sorry,” she said. “There was a longer line than I thought.” She started apologizing even before her whole body was in the car. She looked at me and could see that I was pretty shaken up over something. She asked, “What’s wrong? What happened?”

I quickly recounted the events that had just taken place, leaving out no details, no matter how minor.

“What?” she exclaimed. “Who, when . . . ahh,” she stuttered. My mom was in a state of shock.

She held me in her arms to comfort me. My brain felt fuzzy, like it was numb. I could hear my mom talking, but couldn’t quite make out the words. All I could see was that man’s face. I was shaken about the possibilities of what could have happened. My biggest fear had always been of being kidnapped, and the fact that my biggest fear almost became a reality was too much for me to handle.



On the way home, I broke down crying, overwhelmed with the fear I had felt and the relief that quickly followed when I saw my mom's face and felt her arms around me.

I don't know if the wishes I made on the magical jewel in the troll's belly saved me or not. I would like to think it was the grace of God. Needless to say, after that experience, I never stayed in the car while my mom ran an errand, even if she was "only going to be gone for a minute." There was no way that I was going to risk having another close call like I did on that day.

## **What Will It Take to Change the Way You Live?**

Alex Bayudan

What would it take to change your lifestyle? Would it take an accident or the loss of someone's life? One of the worst things that could have happened did. My friend Jerecel got shot. The bullet pierced through his back and out his chest. He died a few hours later. I never thought it would happen to any of my friends, but it did. It was hard for me because I was just two years younger than him. He wasn't a bad person, but he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Even though we were alike in many ways, our lives were completely different.

When I was a teenager growing up in Waipahu, life was very hard. All I saw were gangs and fights. The next thing I knew, I was hanging out with gang members. I knew what I was getting myself into, but I didn't care. I thought at the time that was the life I wanted. It also seemed like it was the only option I had. I was young and dumb and didn't think my life over. I started to think that no one could stop me, not even the police.

I started stealing, getting in trouble, and doing drugs at the age of thirteen. "Why pay when you can get it for free," I'd say to myself. I was making two hundred dollars within five minutes a day. Stealing was easy money, but I was getting out of hand. One day I was caught and arrested, but that didn't stop me. At the same time, I was getting into fights and not going to school. I hated going to school, and I thought it was a waste of my time. So my friend Joey and I would always cut class and go to his house or another friend's house. I would always come home late, and I never listened to my parents. Within two months into the first quarter of freshman year, I was expelled from high school for truancy. Although that's when everything started going downhill, I did meet someone special during that time.

My life started to change when I met Marilou. I spent most of my time with her, and she made me feel better about myself. Our relationship went well for awhile. Just a couple of days after I broke up with her, however, I was arrested a second time for stealing. Everything started getting worse fast. One night two men were outside my apartment on Leowahine Street, and one of them was pushed or shoved through my window. Another night a man was getting beaten up right outside my door. He was hit so hard that he hit my door, and my door popped open even though the door was locked. Growing up in that neighborhood wasn't so great. There were many nights I was afraid to step out of my door. A lot of my neighbors disliked me, and most of my neighbors were drug dealers.

It was obvious that the house next door sold drugs. I saw a lot of different people

there every night. My sister and the drug dealer's girlfriend were good friends, so she would always be there. My sister's ex-boyfriend started going there a lot and was a drug user. My sister also hid things for the drug dealers or druggies. She hid their drugs and their guns in our home. There were times when the druggies would come over and ask for their drugs, but I didn't know where my sister had hidden them. One day I woke up because someone was pounding on my door. I opened the door to see my sister's friend crying. "Where is your sister?" she asked, barging in to where my sister was sleeping.

They both went next door to see her ex-boyfriend on the ground, shot in the head. My sister came back crying and told her son, my nephew, who was only about nine months old at the time, "You don't have a father no more, he's dead!"

I felt like someone had punched me in the stomach and I couldn't breathe. I almost cried because I didn't want that to happen to my nephew. It's not easy growing up and seeing things like that. Growing up without a father is something that shouldn't happen to anyone. Even though your sister's ex-boyfriend didn't act like a father, he didn't have to die. His getting shot made me think about changing.

When I was about sixteen years old, my lifestyle had not gotten any better. My friends started to show up on the news on TV, not for something good but something bad. One friend gotten into a fight and was stabbed in the leg. My friends had guns pointed at them a few times. We were just getting into trouble everyday. It was getting so bad that some of my friends were locked up in jail. Everything seemed like it wasn't going to end.

When I looked back and thought about Jerecel, I could see myself in him. I didn't want to end up dying at a young age. Although he might not have gone through exactly what I did, he was quiet like me and had friends in the wrong crowd too. He would never cause trouble, but trouble would always come to him. When I looked back and thought about the things I was doing, I decided that wasn't the life I wanted to live. I had to do something that my friends thought I would never do.

Recently I enrolled at KCC. I never thought to see myself in college. Just being here makes me feel a lot better about myself. It was a big step for me. I'm still unsure of what to do in the future, but I decided to go to college anyway to change my bad habits. My friends thought I wouldn't make it to college, but that didn't stop me. I knew I had to change.

One day I decided to get a job so that I could save up to buy myself a car. I was the first one among my friends to have a car. When I got my car, a Honda Civic, life started slowly getting better. I've lost many friends because of my trying to be away from all the fights and the stealing, but they had respect for what I was doing for myself and understood. I stopped smoking, drinking, doing drugs, and hanging out very late. Sometimes I asked myself, "Can I live like this all my life?" As a way to get away from all the violence, I



started hanging out with new friends who are all currently going to UH. Even though I don't do the things I did before, I am still having fun.

This story is dedicated to my friend August because we went through everything together. I knew him more than half my life. We both wanted to change, and I started right after Jerecel died. I regret most of the things I did in the past. If I could turn back time, I would. But I can't. I look at things differently now. I think about what I'm doing before I do it.

## Ready, Set, Panic

Simeon Bourim

It was still early afternoon, and I was dashing through Point Panic channel, dodging parasailing speedboats cruising back and forth with their pilots thick with sunscreen, pink hats and big sunglasses. Busy trying to impress the tourists, the pilots were going way too fast in a “no wake” zone. I looked back toward “Extreme Leroy,” who was holding a string of bloody fish in his left hand and a loaded spear gun in the other. He was swimming like there was no tomorrow. “Ah, damn Leroy!” I thought to myself. “He and his damn fish!” He was apparently unconcerned that a shark could take his arm off at any moment.

That morning, I had refused to get up early because of a late session trying to conquer Argentina on my computer. A few people had called, but I had refused to answer the phone until my friend Kaipo refused to give up and kept yelling on my answering machine, “Sam! Get up! Let’s go diving!” I rolled out of bed and agreed to meet him at Ward Center at 11 a.m. to go free dive off Point Panic near Ala Moana Beach. The dive group consisted of me, Kaipo, his brother Kanu, and “Extreme Leroy.”

Kaipo and his brother resembled each other a lot; both were wide-shouldered, mixed Polynesians in their early thirties. Weighing roughly 300 pounds and about six feet tall, they had wild curly jet-black hair. On their left shoulders, each sported black gothic tattoos of crosses, a sign of sailors. The easiest way to tell them apart physically was a small moustache that Kaipo’s brother wore. Both were very experienced professional divers who knew each other’s patterns. Extreme Leroy, on the other hand, was the ultimate Lone Ranger diver. He had a very good down time. He could hold his breath and swim very fast, was a good shot and did some of the craziest things a diver could do. He could be free diving alone at night during high swells surrounded by sharks and call it home. In his thirties and skinny, he was maybe 5’ 11” tall and about 185 pounds. His voice was soft; he sometimes appeared to be a shy person. Although he wasn’t an adrenaline junkie, he did have wider ideas of what constitutes scariness. He would never be a poster boy for teamwork. Fearless as he was, diving with him was tough as he would leave partners behind if they didn’t keep up, and then disappear into some underwater cave only to reappear five minutes later.

When we arrived at the parking lot, the day was gorgeous and sunny. The ocean was blue and the surf was rolling in—not the best for diving—but still a pleasant sight as surfers danced up and down the curling waves. We unloaded all our gear on the grass, slightly dry from the summer sun, and as we prepared to go, suddenly a gust of wind opened a slightly ajar door on the car and slammed it against the nearby parked car, leaving



a nice dent. We exchanged glances for the dent was a bad omen. Nevertheless, a short time later we were busy examining our feet, trying to avoid eye contact with the driver who was boarding his car, apparently unaware of the damage.

With gear ready and wetsuits and masks on, we descended into the ocean down a slippery staircase overgrown with seaweed. Jumping in was like jumping into a bucket of cold water even though my watch recorded the temperature as 80°F. Crossing the channel and dodging the first set of speedboats, we found the water murky yet inviting. As we moved past the break into calmer water, visibility improved; we could see about 40 feet of white sands with patches of reef below where small reef fish darted back and forth like multicolored sparks. Having come in earlier, Extreme Leroy was nowhere near us; he was already diving. We continued across the water, diving down, the three of us close together. After about 30 minutes, we spotted a couple of large ulu, big blue and green fish with large foreheads. I knew that I didn't have Stalin's chance in heaven to get them with my rusty three-prong, so I proceeded to hunt smaller reef fish.

After the second fish wiggled off my spear, I decided to come up, get back in formation, and watch as Kaipo and Kanu stalked the large ulu with their six-foot long spear guns. Kanu brought up his gun and slowly dropped in behind the fish, very calmly, slowly dragging down by the weight of his belt, without a sound. Ironically, also without a sound, a large gray reef shark was gliding in behind him about fifteen feet away and closing. I jerked my spear up and with my open hand quickly tapped Kaipo. As he looked at me, I smacked my open palm perpendicular to my forehead on my mask to represent the shark's fin. Then I pointed in the direction of his brother. Kaipo reacted quickly, trying to get Kanu's attention by bringing in Kanu's tagline, a plastic rope that connects Kanu to his floater. Giving up, as it would take too long, Kaipo brought up his spear gun and, coming down almost on top of his brother, he aimed at the shark. I gripped my spear tighter, watching the situation unfold from the surface. The shark glanced up at Kaipo, who was steadily approaching it. With one swift lunge, when it could have sunk its teeth into Kanu's head, the shark made its retreat. After he had surfaced completely calm and unaware of the danger, we told him what had just happened. "Why didn't you just shoot the goddamn shark?" Kaipo screamed. Kaipo calmed his brother down and suggested that we stop arguing and watch out for the shark instead.

We got back into formation, eyes closely examining the water around us as the fish slowly disappeared into the white murkiness. Some people say these situations make you feel alive; they actually make you feel like bait. We needed to warn Leroy, who was probably testing his luck with underwater caves. We steadily made our way in his direction, changing sporadically because of his undetermined movement. Finally we caught up with

him. He had had a good day; the line tied around his belt held almost a dozen fish. As we told him the news, a grin spread over his face and he said, “Don’t worry. It’s only a small reef shark. Until they start ganging up, we don’t have to worry.” Therefore we continued diving as if nothing had happened—not an easy feat, as ignoring a shark in one’s general area is like ignoring a tornado in your town. So each time before we dove, we looked around to make sure that two of us were keeping watch. We stayed close, nerves on edge; none of us, with the exception of Leroy, wanted to catch a face full of shark. We proceeded into the dark blue mist of the ocean, keeping our eyes peeled for the shark, yet always distracted by dark shadows that were playing tricks on our eyes.

After swimming around for over an hour, I heard a faint yell through the splashing waves, “Mmaarkk! Marrkkk!” The yell continued as I tried to peel a fish off my spear. “What the hell is a Mark?” I wondered as I surfaced. I glanced at Kanu, who looked at me and showed me the shark signal. In the distance I could see Extreme Leroy up to his waist *out* of the water, screaming, “Shark! Shark! There is a big fucking shark!” “Great,” I think to myself, yelling, “What kind?” Leroy pauses as if to catch his breath, glances in the water, and with his hands form a “T.” “Even better,” I think to myself, “a tiger shark.” By this time, Kaipo had already ripped off all the fish we had caught and tossed them back into the ocean.

Then the race to shore began. We realized that if Extreme “Lone Ranger” Leroy was afraid, we should all be afraid. We were. Nevertheless, we didn’t panic. We withdrew in tight formation, although we were fast enough to overtake Leroy, who refused to let go of his fish, proving his insanity once again and compromising the safety of all the divers. Once out of the water, we were relieved that the shark had not decided to become the janitor of the sea and go after Leroy’s dead fish. However, we still suggested that if he decided to be reckless next time and refuse to throw away his line of fish, he should wear it as a lei.



## Give Me One Bum-Bye

Regina Chang

One of the memorable events of my life happened not long after I arrived in the United States. At that time, like many recent immigrants, I couldn't speak or understand English very well. Because I had no prior work experience of any kind in America, a friend of mine found a job for me at the Japanese restaurant where she was working. The restaurant was open for lunch and dinner. However, because of my lack of knowledge of the English language and of the local Hawaiian dialect, I had a somewhat interesting introduction to my newly adopted country.

During my second day of work, after the tables had been set for the lunch crowd, a customer walked in while a co-worker and I were sitting and talking at the counter. He wanted to order a drink while waiting for his guest to arrive. After showing him to his table and serving him a bottle of beer, I returned to the counter. When about ten minutes had passed, the bartender told me to check the table to see if the customer would like another beer. Before returning to the dining area, I asked, "What am I supposed to say?"

"Say, 'Would you like to have another one?'" she taught me.

After having repeated the question to myself several times, I turned around and walked slowly back to the customer's table, repeating, "Would you like to have another one? Would you like to have another one? Would you like to have another one?" I kept repeating it in my head very fast and nonstop all the way back to my customer's table. Finally reaching there, I said loudly with confidence, "Would you like to have another one?"

"Bum-bye," he replied.

Again I kept repeating his order, "Bum-bye, Bum-bye, Bum-bye . . ." all the way back to the bar area to place my customer's order. Again full of confidence, placing my tray on the counter, I said, "The customer wants one Bum-bye please."

The bartender looked at me strangely. "Bum-bye what?" she asked.

"One Bum-bye," I said. She kept scratching her head and finally ordered me to return to my customer to ask him once more what he wanted to drink.

Totally confused by then, I had forgotten what to ask. "Would you like to have another one?" the bartender repeated impatiently.

Feeling somewhat defeated, I returned to my customer's table. Putting on my best smile, I asked, "Would you like to have another one?" Again he repeated, but with more emphasis this time, "Bum-bye!"

"I knew it!" I said to myself on the way back to the bar area; I had been right the first time.

The bartender seemed to be anxiously awaiting my return. "See? I knew I heard it right. Give me one Bum-bye!" I said proudly in a loud and clear voice.

She shook her head and without smiling went directly to my customer's table. My heart dropped suddenly when I heard the loud sound of laughter coming from the dining area. While all this was going on, my customer's guest had arrived and sat himself. I knew I would have to take his order too. Asking him, he pointed to his friend's bottle of beer and said, "Same, and a bucket of ice."

I thought it was a strange order, but I was sure that I had heard it correctly; a bottle of beer and a bucket of ice. "I'm going to get this order correct this time," I said to myself. So after ordering the bottle of beer, I dashed to the back room where the ice machine was. Earlier I had seen the bartender fill the beer cooler with ice using the five-gallon plastic buckets next to the ice machine. Filling one of the containers to the top, I returned with the ice to the bar area to pick up the bottle of beer. With beer in one hand and bucket in the other, I returned victorious to my customer's table.

Placing the beer bottle on the table and the bucket of ice on the floor, I pointed at the bucket and said, "Ice!" Without saying anything, with eyes and mouths wide open, they kept looking at the bucket, back to me, then to each other, finally bursting out in laughter that seemed to shake the entire restaurant.

Turning bright red, I thought, "Now what did I do wrong this time?" I felt tears coming to my eyes and felt the urge to run, which I did, straight for the ladies restroom. I locked the door and sat on the covered toilet and wept for several minutes until I heard someone knocking on the door. It was the manager, bartender, and one of my co-workers. Trying to keep from smiling, they explained what had happened and apologized for not being more helpful. They said what had happened wasn't my fault. I was simply another victim of the local dialect of Hawaii known as "pidgin English." "Bum-bye," I was told, meant "by and by or later on," and "one bucket ice" referred to a small glass filled with ice only. I couldn't stop laughing for quite awhile after learning this.



This experience helped me to be a better listener and student of the English language, although I still have difficulties separating pidgin from English. It also made me somewhat of a celebrity. As long as I worked at the restaurant, I would often hear someone telling someone else about my “bum-bye” story. Soon I was responding to nicknames such as “Bum-bye,” Bum-bye Girl,” “Auntie Bum-bye” (by children) and so on. I made a lot of friends from this experience and even had customers that I had never met before ask me, “Which one is the Bum-bye girl?”

## Words of Wisdom

Amber Cortes

I let out a sigh of relief as we approached a large building and a sign labeled First Circuit Court comes into view. I had been concerned if we could even be able to find the place, because although I have lived on Oahu for a few months now, I still don't really know my way around very well.

My boyfriend and I make our way up the steps and into the entrance. I couldn't make it to the hearing my class went to because I had to work, but today is my day off. I am glad to have someone to go to court with me. I feel a little nervous as we go through the security check. As I go through the security frame, the alarm sounds. I feel like I'm at the airport. I always forget about my Hawaiian bracelet and get stuck at security check, while some security guard waves his detector around me like crazy. But here, I just take off my bracelet and go through the frame once more. Silence. My boyfriend and I proceed past a waterless pond and make our way to the bottom of the staircase. My boyfriend Keoni reads aloud, "third floor-serious offences." I take a moment to look up at the ceiling. The sunlight enhances the many unique designs on the beautiful colored glass. The patterns look as those in a kaleidoscope.

We make our way up to the third floor. Off to the right, up on the wall there is a bulletin board full of case descriptions, courtroom numbers, and times of their hearings. We stand before the board for a while, reading each hearing and description to decide which one to sit in on. I find this assignment quite exciting and felt a little like a reporter covering a story. I've never been to court before, and this is all new for me. There are many cases to choose from on the bulletin board, but we come to the conclusion that we will sit in on an assault hearing at 2:00 p.m. in courtroom number 5.

Keoni and I enter through the doors of the courtroom. We take our seats in the fourth row. The room is smaller than I imagined, but the set up is exactly how it is on court TV. The room is quite chilly, and I'm glad I've worn jeans and a sweatshirt to this hearing. The room is awkwardly silent. There are only three other people that enter the room. I recognize one man as the defendant's attorney, and he takes a seat to the right of the courtroom. The man looks very business-like and fumbles through the papers he takes out of his brief case. A woman sits at the table on the left, and I assume that she is the opposing party in this hearing. Another nicely dressed man stands near the woman and they have a friendly conversation. In his hand is a gavel, which he tosses casually around.



Finally the man we had all come to see, Mr. Lewis Martin, walks in with his head down and his hands behind his back, secured by heavy silver metal handcuffs. He is wearing a pale green collared shirt, which looks a bit too large for a man his size. And it looks like he's due for a haircut. He has a slender build and looks at the ground as he makes his way to his seat. He is closely followed by a sheriff who then releases the steel handcuffs from his wrists. He is seated next to his attorney, who will defend him in a case that could determine his freedom. A few others enter the room. Minutes after the defendant arrives, the judge enters the room. The chatter ends instantly and everyone freezes in position. "All arise for the honorable Judge Derrick Chan." Everyone obediently stands. A few moments later, he announces, "You may be seated." Shortly after the bailiff addresses the case number. The state against Mr. Lewis Martin begins.

The prosecutor begins by stating reasons why the defendant should be given jail time. Mr. Martin was given probation in the first place for assault of a family household member. At the time, he was on methamphetamine, better known as "ice."

The defendant had not been attending anger management classes, which he was required to do as part of his probation. The defendant is given the opportunity to speak on his behalf. The defendant responds, "The reason I haven't been going is because I've been taking care of my 73-year-old disabled mother and there's no one else to take care of her. And I also attended 8 out of 11 anger management classes, but if you give me a second chance, I'll do better." The prosecutor gives information stating that Mr. Lewis Martin had already been given a second chance once before, even after failing to report to his probation officer. "I had problems with my ex-wife, things having to do with our divorce, and I've just been having a lot of problems with people and work at the time. But now everything is okay. It was just that everyone was causing problems for me," Mr. Martin responds.

After a few moments of silence, the judge replies, "Since everyone is causing so many problems for you, maybe you're better off going to jail, where no one can cause you problems." The defendant blankly stares back at the judge. He pleads a few more times for his freedom, but the judge does not give in. At the end of the hearing, the judge announces that Mr. Martin is sentenced to spend a year of his life in jail. The sentenced man shakes his head slightly and his eyes lower to the ground. I am saddened by the whole situation, thinking about Mr. Martin being deprived of his freedom for a year. Yet I understand the judges ruling. At least this man will have some time to think about his direction in life. Maybe with time, he will realize that blaming others for the problems he encounters in life will not make it better. Taking responsibility for his actions will help him to better himself, and then he'll be able to be there for his family.

This experience at the First Circuit Court for me was really interesting. It gave me



chance to observe a court hearing and get an idea of the whole process. What I've learned from this experience is that when you have many issues to deal with in your life, turning to drugs is not the solution. That could actually make your situation worse and you could end up hurting the people you love most. Blaming others is also not the answer, because you are responsible for your own actions and your own life.

## A Night Out

Kari Doran

It was rare that an important event, complete with an invitation and personalized envelope, would present itself in our mailbox. Therefore, when the invitation arrived describing the event as, "A delightful and elegant evening," it seemed to be an evening that should not be missed. It had been almost too long to remember when my boyfriend and I had an evening out since the birth of our son. There would almost have to be some catastrophic event or natural disaster to even tempt us to leave Tyler for one evening. We had not yet succumbed to our selfish desires to go out without him. The thought of leaving him, even for one evening, was almost unbearable.

In my own childhood, it was a much different scenario. My mother was a single working mom, and went back to work almost the day after I was born. Her sisters, my aunties, took care of me to the best of their abilities. Of course they loved me, but not like a mother should love her child. My aunties were young and played with me like a doll. They would dress me up in little lady's outfits and sometimes even boy's clothes just to get a laugh. I have photographs of these fun little experiments. I also remember being fed different kinds of food so that they could see my reaction; pickles were their favorite. I still hate pickles to this day.

We decided to attend the event and try to resume an "adults only" activity for one evening. I think I am the only one of my friends who does not have a list of babysitters! Although I knew it would be a daunting task, I had to select one. How could I leave him with someone I don't know? When my good friend Kristy would talk about how much fun she had at some party, or some great new restaurant I should try, I could hardly listen without thinking of what horrible things the babysitter might have done to her son while she was out selfishly enjoying herself! The thoughts seemed to not even cross her mind. After going back and forth with the decision, we finally decided to go. We also agreed that the best thing to do would be to have my boyfriend's parents take on the duty of watching Tyler that evening. Of course, they did not live down the street, they lived in a different state. It would be a vacation and a night of babysitting all in one trip. They were happy to comply and were very surprised that we would actually leave Tyler in their care for an entire evening!

Soon after his parents arrived, I started to have second thoughts. They looked a lot older than I remembered them. They were a nice old couple, but they were certainly too old to care for a young active child. I observed the way they were with Tyler and it did



not make me feel more comfortable. In fact, it did exactly the opposite. I nearly missed the giant piece of bread dipped in some indistinguishable sauce going into my son's mouth from the hand of grandma! Later that same day, I found out it was beer! They had put beer in my son's cup disguised as juice! Needless to say, I was petrified!

I decided that there was no turning back now. Instead, I would forge ahead and show them through example exactly what they should do while Tyler was in their care. Since the event started in the early evening, the tasks to be carried out by the grandparents would include dinner, bath, and bedtime. These were the most difficult of all the daily routines! Tyler had an aversion to bath and bedtime and was not the most cooperative of eaters. The next day, I showed grandma and grandpa exactly what to do. I even predicted potential hazards and gave instructions on how to deal with them. My son had not taken a bath in the kitchen sink for months, but I thought this would be a better choice for him this evening and I placed all of the necessary items for bath there. The bedtime routine was tricky and needed to be covered very carefully. Tyler's bedtime routine was something adopted over the course of the past year, night after night, hour after hour, so it was not easy. Dinner would be prepared and waiting with labels in the refrigerator, as well as drinks that accompanied dinner. I removed the beer from the house for that evening.

After painstakingly making sure everything was prepared, I dressed for the evening and went over everything one last time. I could have been talking to myself because it seemed like the routine I was reviewing was a little redundant at this point. My boyfriend kept looking at me like I was insane and I had completely lost the attention of the grandparents. I didn't care because I needed to make sure everything would be handled in the correct manner.

We left the cell phone number posted everywhere and also handed it to grandpa on the way out. Grandma was busy distracting Tyler so that he would not see us leave. Every time Tyler thought we were leaving without him he would scream as though we were never coming back! I had even started carrying him to the mailbox with me so that he would not have a fit!

Grandma and grandpa started shuttling us out of the house like they were scavengers awaiting a chance at some fresh caught prey. We reluctantly stepped down from the porch and got in the car.

My thoughts wandered, and my body stiffened from nerves. Would everything be alright? Could those people handle an evening in my shoes? It felt like I was stepping away from my life, my purpose, my responsibilities. I was carelessly indulging in a selfish act at the risk of losing my life's work and my reason for existing on this planet. This would

not be the choice of a good mother. I could see Tyler crying for me and see him wandering around the house looking in every room to see if I were waiting around the corner. Once he realized I was not there, he would throw himself down and scream as if he could not bear the pain he felt from my absence. My boyfriend seemed oblivious to everything that I was feeling. I was alone in my concerns.

I felt as though I had just taken a step to break a bond that should never be broken; a bond my mother had broken with me. I had left my child for myself. Could I ever repair the damage I had done? Would Tyler ever forget this night or forgive me for leaving? My guilt was overwhelming.

After what seemed like an eternity filled with a sea of nameless faces, old acquaintances and sequins, we were finally returning home. As we entered the driveway everything looked normal, although the porch light was not left on for our anticipated arrival and the house seemed so dark. I wondered what disaster could be waiting inside. Grandpa was sitting on the couch with a book and grandma had fallen asleep in the chair. They both barely batted an eye to acknowledge our return. Of course I proceeded directly to Tyler's room. The nightlight was on and Tyler seemed to be sleeping peacefully. He was not wearing his pajamas, and he didn't look bathed. I examined him closely to make sure he was breathing and that he wasn't too hot. Everything seemed alright, but was it? How could I tell? Tyler was too young to tell me all the sordid and frightening details of what could have transpired while his parents were out.

This tiring evening had left my nerves frazzled and my heart heavy. I lay in bed and thought about my role as a mother, and my mother's role in my life. How could she leave me so easily? How could she leave her duties and responsibilities as a mother to someone else? How could she throw away the bond between mother and child that only comes from nurturing and giving of herself? These questions will haunt me for some time to come.

I will never really know what happens when I leave Tyler alone. At some point I realize that I will have to give up some of my control and learn to trust. I am certain that whatever the circumstance I will always have an acute awareness of my son's needs and concerns, and I will always do my best to be there for him as a mother.



# **The Power of a Hike**

Kari Doran

At the bottom of the trail I could see the first step of the hike about 20 feet in front of me beyond some kiawe brush. Old railroad tracks are used as steps to ascend Koko Head Crater. The steps are very far apart and hard to manage. Looking up towards the summit of the crater, the large tracks looked like tiny sticks piled on top of one another climbing into the clouds and then disappearing. It was like a footpath for a giant to walk to the entrance of his castle.

I am so glad I have taken the time out of my busy schedule to enjoy some of the beauty Oahu has to offer. I feel like my everyday routine taken over my life! There are so many amazing things I have yet to discover about this island. I am making myself a promise right now to do things like this more often. This hike already feels like something I have been missing.

One step up and three steps in between, over the tracks and through the rocks, I pace myself and focus on the rhythm of my steps. As I hike through the thick brush on either side of the trail, the area begins to open up to an amazing view. The gray and brown bushes turn green and the air becomes fresh. I turn around and look back to realize I am already so high! Beautiful blue sky above and brilliant turquoise water below, the scenery is stunning. The relative size of my surroundings becomes so clear from up here. Koko Crater is a huge rock in the middle of a gigantic ocean with some very tiny houses and buildings scattered in between the land masses. Even Costco looks tiny from up here. Standing on the side of this crater and looking at what I see as my life below begins to put things in perspective for me.

I press on and distance myself further from the reality below. The rhythm of my stride becomes routine and I start to thoroughly enjoy my surroundings. The smell in the fresh air is green and bittersweet and the antique tracks seem to blend into nature just as they do in oil paintings.

I begin to ponder the history that accompanies Koko Crater or Kohelepelepe as it is known in the Hawaiian language. This crater will forever be a part of Oahu's landscape. "Koko Crater is a cinder cone remaining from the last active volcano that occurred on O'ahu approximately 10,000 years ago" ("Koko Crater"). Ten thousand years of history associated with this place was a little difficult to comprehend. The population of Oahu will continue to grow as well as the man-made portion of the landscape, but some things will

never change.

I wonder how many people had climbed this peak before me and how different it had been when the railroad was actually being used. The trail is steep and long with a bridge about halfway up that carries the tracks over a deep ravine. I can't imagine how many people must have risked their lives building and using this railway as a transportation device. Why does this peak have so much significance in Hawaiian history? When I have viewed Koko Head from sea level, it doesn't look significant at all. It looks very dry and barren with no outstanding land markings or remarkable beauty. It's when I am physically confronting the base of this cinder cone that I begin to feel the magic in the air. The historical significance then seems to pass through me with every fresh breeze blowing through my hair. Some of the Hawaiian history of this crater, including the discovery of petroglyphs, dates back to 1899:

Discovered in 1899, these petroglyphs originally included some thirty seven figures, mostly human, cut into the rough, slanting basalt floor of the cave shelter. Today only a few figures remain, the rest having been destroyed by weather and vandalism. The figures that remain are cut one-sixteenth to three-quarters of an inch deep into the rock and are three different sizes: six, nine, and fifteen inches in length. The human figures all point their arms downwards. A sail, a dog, and a surfer on his board were some of the other themes which appeared among the carvings (Van 92). These petroglyphs are not visible from the trail, but knowing that they are here makes my climb even more significant to me.

I am completely exhausted! My head is pounding and my legs are trembling. I keep going on. I want to reach the top and feel a whole body connection with this landmark as the Goddess Kapo did in this Hawaiian legend:

Kohelepelepe is the open eastern side of Koko Crater. The site recieved its name, which means "traveling vagina," from a clever act of the goddess Kapo who exposed her genitalia in order to save her sister from the clutches of the pursuing pig god, Kamapua'a. The ruse apparently worked, for Pele got away, and Kapo left a *pali pohaku* (rocky cliff) resembling her private parts as a monument to her deed. (Van 91)

Thinking about this legend and the power of the goddess makes me feel stronger and I quicken my pace to the summit.



I take the last few steps and I am finally here. A short dirt path leads to a concrete platform that gives me a 360 degree view of my surroundings. The air is spectacular, and the view astounding. I feel so exhilarated! I have absorbed my surroundings and I feel I have become part of this legendary crater. I am no longer caught up in the hustle and bustle below, I am up here experiencing the legendary Hawaii, the true Hawaii.

I vow to never take Hawaii for granted again! I want to stay here as long as I can and try to feel the power of this place. I really do not want to start the treacherous climb down. I need to rest my weary legs and body; this was quite an exhausting trek. I will just lie here for a while and try to summon the strength of Kohelepelepe to help with my descent back to reality.

#### Works Cited

“Koko Crater.” HawaiiWeb.com. Hawaii Web, Inc. 2003. June 7, 2004.  
[http://www.hawaiiweb.com/html/koko\\_crater.html](http://www.hawaiiweb.com/html/koko_crater.html)

James, Van. Ancient Sites of O’ahu. Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1991.

# King of Insight

Ross Fujimoto

Today was the day. Payday. There we were, Chucky and me, just two eight year olds with some big plans. Well, actually, I was the one with the plan.

It had all started when we had gone to the pet store a few weeks earlier. As we were looking at the fish in the tanks, we saw a few that we wanted for ourselves. There was only one thing stopping us. We had NO money to buy them. As we were walking out of the pet store, I saw an empty fish tank with a few sticks and leaves in it and three green chameleons. There was a big sign that read, "One dollar." I grabbed Chucky and told him to look at the chameleons. He just turned to me and said, "So?" They were selling them for only one dollar each.

Chucky didn't get it but I did. This was going to be the way to get those fish that we both really wanted. I asked the man at the pet store about the chameleons.

"How did you get them?" I asked.

He told me that he had bought them from someone. Just like all the other pets he sold in his store. But he wished that the person he bought them from had sold him more, since they were selling really fast. I asked him how much he would pay for more chameleons. He told me that he would be pay twenty-five cents per reptile. I quickly calculated that four quarters equaled one dollar. My eyes were getting big and I was getting excited.

By now, Chucky was on the other side of the store looking at the cats. I asked the man if he would buy chameleons from us since we were "the best chameleon catchers on Oahu". Well, at least Chucky was. He asked me how many we would catch. I told him about forty. Forty quarters would equal ten dollars. He agreed but would only pay for those without broken tails. Now all I had to do was convince Chucky that this was a good idea. After all, ten dollars was like a million to us! Not only could we afford to buy those fish, we were going to be rich too!

After we left the store, I told Chucky about the plan. At first, he wasn't thrilled. When I told him we had to catch forty chameleons, he asked if I was crazy. But I knew I couldn't do it without him. Not only was he better at catching chameleons than I was, he was actually the best I'd ever seen. The way he would sneak up on them, be very still, wait

for the right moment and then, with his right hand, that magical hand, would extend like a praying mantis and snatch them up. Bam! Just like that! He was my cash cow. Besides, he was my best friend.

One. Four. Fifteen. Twenty-nine. Thirty-three. Thirty-eight and finally, forty! We did it! All with no broken tails just like the man wanted. I think Chucky caught about thirty-two of them.

When we went back to the pet store, we saw the man walking toward us and we just smiled at him. We did it! Ten dollars! Wow! After we thanked the man and collected our payment, I picked out four beautiful blue and orange-striped fish for my tank. Chucky picked out a couple of the Angelfish and a few smaller white ones for his tank. We paid for our fish and headed home. Later, as we watched the fish swim in their tanks, I told Chucky that we should start working on catching our next batch of chameleons. Maybe we could even “hire” one or two of our other friends to multiply our profits. But he said he didn’t want to catch anymore for awhile. I was disappointed because I couldn’t understand why he wanted to stop. We argued about it for a little while. Why wasn’t it as clear to him as it was to me? Or maybe it was...

I remember how it ended. He told me that “money wasn’t everything.” Even though I was the one with the plan, the so-called “brains” of the outfit, the one with the gift of understanding how big business worked and the riches it would bring, it was Chucky who truly taught me a valuable lesson that day that I wasn’t able to comprehend until decades later. He was truly the King of Insight.



## **It's a Girl!**

Lisa Hamilton

My sister-in-law Keiko brought Little Miss Alexandria home the day after Christmas. Little Miss Alexandria was the most precious thing that I had ever seen. Some of her exceptionally unique qualities included a heart-shaped face, rosier than red chipmunk cheeks, a teeny-weeny button nose and tender diminutive pink lips. Alexandria's flesh was soft as butter. Her unblemished skin was creamy white like milk.

Alexandria was dressed exceptionally incongruously. She was wearing a pastel multi-colored jumpsuit decorated with baby zoo animals. I started to remove her lemony yellow daisy printed beanie from her head, so that I could softly graze my recently sanitized hand over her smooth heavenly head that was bald like an eagle. I then took off her tiny red and purple polka-dotted mittens embellished with orange chiffon lace trimming to reveal her long slender petite fingers. I proceeded to chuck her turquoise and olive green horizontally striped booties, so that I could take a peep at her ten little piggies.

I carried her ever so gently in my loving arms and walked around the entire house. I strolled into the patio, cleared my throat and began my rendition of "Rock-a-bye-baby." My sister-in-law was in tears, rolling on the carpeted floor while holding her stomach. She could not stop laughing. I immediately stopped my incantation. I felt uncomfortable in that situation. I decided it was time to take Little Miss Alexandria back into the house.

A lively vibrant feeling gushed through me. I was getting my second wind. I joyfully announced that it was playtime. I took Little Miss Alexandria back into the living room and began to throw her up into the air. I was starting to have so much fun. I was enjoying an almost multi-orgasmic adrenaline rush that I could not explain. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see that my sister-in-law was getting a bit concerned about my exuberant antics. She finally asked me calmly to refrain from my actions. Her nonsensical statement went in one ear and out the other. I was in my own little world.

I went outside to play. The sun was still shining. I continued my titillation. I now was able to throw Little Miss Alexandria higher into the sky. I threw her higher and higher. To make things more interesting, I alternated hands while catching her.

"Be careful not to hurt her. It is dangerous to toss her around. She may get shaken baby syndrome," my sister-in-law said.

"Stop worrying, she loves it. Look at that huge painted smile on her face," I said.

A youngster approached and I tossed Little Miss Alexandria to him. He laughed and tossed her back. It was like playing hot potato. A few of my curious but conciliatory neighbors started to flock outside. It must have been a remarkably impressive sight to examine. The neighborhood children were beginning to cheer me on. The adulation from the spectators made me feel extraordinarily spectacular. My sister-in-law started to scream at the top of her lungs. Her shrieks startled me in an abominable way. I got distracted, lost my coordination and dropped Little Miss Alexandria onto the rough jagged charcoal black pavement.

There was a still silence. The unthinkable had happened. Time briefly seemed to stop. Little Miss Alexandria was on the ground.

"What were you thinking!" my sister-in-law screamed, as she rushed to Little Miss Alexandria's crumpled body, sighing quietly like a audio cassette tape.

Everyone could see that her limbs were broken. I interrupted the noiselessness and mumbled that I was truly sorry. My sister-in-law was on her knees crying her heart out. I tried my best to console her. I told her that I would take full responsibility for my irresponsible infantile actions. Of course, I was awfully repentant. Accidents happen. Sometimes things go wrong. Not too big a deal.

Without any further hesitation, I grabbed my car keys from the kitchen counter and jumped into my vehicle. I drove as fast as a speeding bullet with the pedal to the metal. I went through countless red lights. My palms were sweaty. I held the steering wheel as tight as I possibly could. The drive to town that would normally take approximately twenty minutes seemed to take an eternity.

On the way to my final destination, I regretted my inconsiderateness. I should have been more cautious with my actions. I prayed to the heavens that the ultimate outcome would be somewhat satisfactory. How could I let something so callous happen? What kind of sister-in-law was I? Will my sister-in-law ever be able to forgive and forget? The sorrow that I had felt inundated me enormously. I was beginning to have suicidal tendencies.

I parked my jalopy in the loading zone. I hopped into high gear and ran frantically through the large spotless revolving glass doors. I expeditiously approached the first person I saw. She asked me if I needed help. I informed her that I was in immediate need

of a mismatched dressed porcelain doll called "Little Miss Alexandria." Unfortunately, the mismatched dressed porcelain dolls were an after-Christmas door buster clearance special. They were completely sold out.



## **Brand New Purpose**

Aubrey Hillman

Hawaiian mother, Malu, at the corner of the bar where I worked. She sat to the left of me in her post office uniform, shirt untucked, drinking her Miller Genuine Draft and tomato juice on ice, smoking her GPC cigarettes. The music was cranked up too loudly and the booths were packed with people trying to be heard over the noise; the air was hazy and brown with cigarette smoke, and the beer tasted staler than last month's bag of tortilla chips. Out of nowhere, Malu turned and looked at me, and then her brown bloodshot eyes opened wide as she leaned forward and told me I was pregnant. Where did that come from? How could she possibly know something like that? I thought about the Feng-Shui book she always had in her bag; she would refer to it when she was trying to decide whether or not to go to Vegas and gamble. She used to tell me about her Hawaiian Auntie's healing abilities; she would cure colic by rubbing a baby's belly, or use plants in different mixtures to cure various illnesses. Her statement was so uncomfortably strange that I tried to put the thought of being pregnant out of my mind. Laughing nervously, I dismissed the thought of Malu having psychic powers; after all, she was probably just drunk. The choice to go home was an easy one to make; the beer was bad and Malu was acting creepy.

The next day as I rolled out of bed sometime around noon, I started to get a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. Why do I feel sick if I only had a couple of beers last night? Can it be true? Am I pregnant?

I rushed to the bathroom, and the irony is I had just gotten over my compulsive need to EPT so there was a stash of EPT's under the sink (Early Pregnancy Test). I fumbled with the zip-lock bag, the kind with the little plastic zippers that never work when you need them to. Finally giving up and tearing it open with my teeth, I managed to snatch one out of the air as the entire contents of the bag went flying. I scrambled to pick them all up and threw them under the sink slamming the doors with a dull thud.

My heart was pounding; my hands were getting clammy and I broke out in a cold sweat as I stared at the toilet in front of me. I slowly peeled the shiny plastic wrapper away, noticing the static cling; it was as though the wrapper didn't want to come off. It reminded me of opening a credit card bill that you know is going to be exorbitant. I thought about telling my boyfriend but realized it was ridiculous, as he was probably sick of this routine already. He had even walked in on me doing the EPT before and didn't even blink as he grabbed his toothbrush and started brushing. "Okay, I've done this at least a dozen times in the last year, no big deal." Nevertheless, I could not pee to save my life. Sitting on the

toilet feeling paranoid, I started the EPT and thought, hadn't it always come out negative? I began to calm down and decided to try again. As I urinated on the little absorbent tip, I thought about all the abuse I had done to my body. My lungs were black with tar from too many years of smoking, my liver pickled with alcohol. I always feel guilty while peeing on an EPT.

Waiting for the results isn't suppose to take that long, usually five minutes. Five minutes seemed like hours as I thought about not having accomplished or acquired anything substantial in my life. I felt the grainy texture of the tiles beneath me; the cold seeped into my fingertips as I stared at the wall, and, during this time, the light acquired a hospital fluorescence that I had never noticed before. My chest was tight as I stood up and glanced at my watch. Four minutes till I could read the results, I started scrubbing the tub, then the sink, and then the toilet. I checked my watch; a minute and a half had gone by. I dusted. The top of the toilet tank, the shelves filled with towels, the windows and the counter. I trudged over to the EPT and looked. I can't remember now what color it was, just that it read positive. "What! No way! I can't be pregnant, it must be a mistake!" I dived under the sink grabbing one of the EPT's scattered around. "maybe there was a hole in the bag and some water got in the ruined EPT's; I'll try another," I told myself. As I sat there waiting for the results of the next test, I hated myself for getting off the birth control shots that I used to take. They made me bleed constantly and I had become anemic. "Damn, I'm so stupid, I could have stayed on the pill," but I could never remember to take them on time so I always had to double up which meant I was taking way too many chemicals that affected my hormones. "I thought we used a condom; we always use a condom." These self-deprecating thoughts and excuses went on as I stood up and cleaned the floor. I regret having cleaned the mirror; I tried not to look at myself as I sprayed the glass cleaner on the mirror, the blue liquid swishing in the bottle, little bubbles floating around like tiny boats tossed on the waves. The paper towel was crinkly and dry, drawing my eye along with it as I put it to the glass. I looked older than dirt, with my dark brown hair hanging lank around my pale and ashy face, my nostrils pinched, pupils dilated, eyebrows drawn up and towards each other as though they were trying to prop each other up. I noticed wrinkles for the first time that day. I don't know what broke the trance but I glanced at my watch, noticing that five minutes had gone by and it was time to check the results. POSITIVE.

I had planned to get my fallopian tubes tied so I wouldn't be able to get pregnant; however, I was always too busy partying or, I hate to admit it, too scared. "Now it's too late," I thought, "Maybe having an abortion is a good idea." Every rational thought I came up with supported having an abortion: I have no degree, I don't own home, I'm not married, I work at a bar, I don't take care of my body! However, the idea of killing my baby was like a punch in the gut; it made my belly feel like an open wound and my face got hot as the pressure behind my eyelids built. My throat constricted and tears finally trickled

down my nose as I hung my head and cried.

My feet were leaden as I slogged down the hall to my bedroom to tell my boyfriend I was having a baby. Entering my room was like walking through a wall of water, the weight on my shoulders pounded me into the ground as I thought about the words about to come out of my mouth. Nothing felt real—it was like watching T.V. or maybe this is what being a goldfish feels like. I took his hand and squeezed, and as I spoke, his face took on a flat aspect, then suddenly I could see the emotions running rampant over his face: disbelief, confusion, humor, disbelief...

The days that followed were full of activity as the acceptance of my child coming into the world became an observable fact. There were endless doctors visits, yoga and other exercise classes, shopping for baby, shopping for maternity clothes so I could be presentable at work (argh!), rearranging furniture, cleaning every square inch of the interior of my house that was within reach, work, and finally Lamaze classes. I was determined to be as ready for my daughter as I could be within the shortest nine months of my life.

I announced the beginning of my contractions at 5p.m. in the middle of eating dinner with my family on November 22, 2002. I spent a lot of time packing, unpacking and repacking a suitcase and two duffel bags full of stuff to take to the hospital. Finally at 2a.m. my boyfriend said, "I'm so tired of watching you run around here like a chicken with its head cut off. Let's just go already before I fall asleep and I'm too tired to drive." The part of being "in labor" that really sucks is when you are having contractions and have to wait, and fight yourself not to push until you are finally dilated; for me, the waiting took about 14 hours from the time we got to the hospital. After less than an hour of actual pushing, I gave birth to a seven pound, two ounce, baby girl. I'll admit I was tired but it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. Despite having warded off the nurses toting painkillers galore, I felt no pain. I looked down at Storm lying on my deflated belly, oblivious to the doctor giving me stitches as I gazed into my daughter's eyes. I still can't believe something so precious and beautiful came from me; Storm is 19 months now and can smile with her whole body! It is the most incredible sight a mother could ever see and I get to see it everyday. The smile usually starts at the eyes; they get luminous and start to squint as the corners of her mouth turn up. As the smile gets larger, tiny little squiggly creases begin to appear over the bridge of her nose. Her little cheek turns pink like my mother's roses and round like apples. By the time her face is done smiling, you can't see any of the white in her eyes because they turn into little downward curving crescent moons and the smile at her mouth threatens to engulf her face. She jiggles her little body up and down when she laughs and slightly hunches her shoulders, pulling her hands into her chest, wrists slightly bent and then throws her arms out. If she is sitting down, she might even kick up her little feet which have so few lines, all pudgy with baby fat, toenails every color of the rainbow



from the nontoxic washable-ink pens I bought her; she likes to pretend she is painting her nails. She sometimes leans back as she laughs, tossing her head back, her baby fine warm brown hair floating around in what seems like slow motion; it is usually a mess since I don't really like making her sit still when she doesn't want to. I just want her hair out of her beautiful eyes. They remind me of the look in a calf's eyes or warm chocolate pudding, but a baby cow could never get that sassy mischievous look in its eye the way she does when she knows she is being naughty and getting away with something, or the sad puppy look when I drop her off at the sitters. Her laughter is a clean, clear sound like a bell's chime.

I resolved not to allow myself to go back to bar life and I've come back to school to get my BSN (Bachelor's degree in Nursing). For the last two semesters and a summer session I've been a single parent, going to school full-time, and getting straight A's, and working in a smoke free environment. I've never been healthier or happier in my whole life.

Thank you, Storm.

## **If My Baby Can Survive**

Mitsuo Kishi

It happened when we were about to leave home for dinner on January 17, 1995. I was in the other toilet downstairs.

“Mitsuo, please come here now. What am I gonna do?!”

The scream came from upstairs, alerting me that some kind of emergency had happened. My wife had been pregnant and the due date was March of the year. We had been careful not to miscarry our first baby whom we supposed would be our most precious gift from god. Unfortunately, I was in the toilet downstairs and I couldn't come to her right away, which made me more frustrated. I wrapped up the last process as quickly as possible and dashed to her upstairs. She had a small amount of bleeding on her underwear, over which I didn't worry so much, but my wife became really pale and convinced that this was really unusual as a soon-to-be mother.

I called our obstetrician, Dr. Kouhung, however, because it was at night, it took ten minutes for him to call me back. The ten minutes felt like hours. He asked us if she felt pain at certain intervals and, if so, how long. She had the recurring pain about every ten minutes. He advised me to drive her immediately to Lutheran General Hospital which the doctor was using for delivery. I drove my car to the hospital in the ice cold Illinois darkness, feeling bleaker than the winter night.

In June 1994, I parted from a trading company that I had been running as a partner and chief responsible figure in the U.S. By selling my entire portion of stocks, I was not in pecuniary difficulty. However, I also could not afford to start a trading company to deal with construction equipment, which I was really good at but required a lot of capital. At the time, the Japanese bubble economy had just burst and many economists expected Japan to suffer much more from that time on. It was my first experience standing on my own without any preparation. It was in such uneasy circumstances that I had learned that I would become a father. I had never wanted to have a child because I had been so busy concentrating on my business, and I couldn't afford the time to be a father. Besides, the divorce of my parents when I was fourteen years old had made me hope for no child in my life because my parents had forgot us as kids. In order to live life freely without future commitment on family, I believed I should not have a child to be fair. Thus, I was supposed to be mad at the news from my wife, and she was crying when she told me the news with apology. Wonderfully, I genuinely became happy about the news, knowing I would have my own child, and holding her hands, I praised and encouraged her to have a baby and raise the baby together with me. I felt a sense of destiny about the news. If I hadn't quit the



job, definitely I would have asked my wife if we would make our kids later. I know many couples who couldn't have a baby when they decided to have one long after the marriage, and they are struggling or have given up having a child. Somehow to me, the news was like a lotus flower that blooms in the muddy pond.

When we arrived at the hospital, a receptionist told us that the obstetrician was heading for the hospital, and we waited in the lobby. The television in the room showed a devastated scene of smoke and fire. Soon I found the program was from Japan, and was revealing the news of the Kobe earth quake that killed almost 6,000 people. Our anxiety caused us to view the news as an ominous portent.

The obstetrician clearly instructed the hospital and advised us that it was too early by at least two months to bear the child and that the goal was to postpone the childbirth as long as possible. Fortunately, the water had not burst. Yet the diameter of the birth canal was already so large that the child might be born prematurely. Soon a birth deterrent injection was given to my wife. My wife had been with me from Japan for less than two years. She went to English school in the suburb of Chicago and had no problems with her daily chores. But medical English was too much for her in this situation. I explained to the nurse about my wife's language problem and was permitted to sleep in the same room with my wife only for the night. I slumbered with my baby's heart beat sounding through a machine that night.

Two days passed without any special news, and I was with my wife in the daytime and slept at home with indescribable anxiety for my baby's birth and our future. On the third night, I was woken up by a telephone ring. My wife had bled again at night. A nurse had told her it was no problem, but she was worrying about the amount of bleeding much more than the first day. She asked me to call and explain the situation to the doctor. After I discussed the situation with the doctor, I hurried to the hospital to meet the doctor. He had very gentle characteristics, but he was furious with the nurse who had said "no problem" to my wife and didn't inform the doctor about such a serious event. He even asked her name so that he would report her to the hospital manager. My wife was moved to ICU again, and I decided to stay at the hospital again. With this incident, the doctor advised that we might have to let the baby be born sooner than the initial goal and that he should test whether the baby's lungs had already developed enough to survive in our world.

Two days had passed since the incident happened and the test result showed that the lungs had already developed enough. My wife was relieved with the news, and almost at the same time, her labor and excruciating pain started. Still not being able to prepare yet, the doctor decided to prolong my wife's delivery till the next day, and made the arrangement.



Even though she got the deterrent pill and painkiller, the strength of the medicine became much weaker this time. She moaned with pain. I could do nothing for her pain but hold her hands, which really made me frustrated. The pain continued through the night and lasted until late afternoon of the next day when an anesthesiologist injected strong anesthesia into her spine. I was relieved by the ceasing of her moans.

It had become already dark and was snowing outside when the doctor moved my wife to the delivery room. I also went into the room, wondering if the baby would be all right, and praying for it from my deep heart. Whenever the doctor instructed to push, I repeated after him, raising my voice, "Push! push! push!," and holding her hand because she felt numb due to the anesthesia and didn't know when to push. After several attempts at pushing, our baby came out, glaring at me with eyes like mine but in miniature. I tearfully praised my wife. The fresh feeling of joy gushed up from my heart. Our baby girl weighed only three pounds but was feisty.

Today, she is nine years old and a little bit chubby. My wife and I have had a couple of serious fights and gone to the verge of divorce several times. But remembering the day when my daughter was born, we have gotten through together, praying together. The crystal of our love was permitted to live through a tough situation. Our mutual prayer for our daughter on these days saved our husband and wife relationship, and I will never forget it.

## **A Very Tender Moment**

Jimmy Nguyen

I can always remember those barbecues I had with my friends. It usually starts with me having a huge craving for steak. It's like a temptation that I'm unable to get rid of. As I go through my day, my brain constantly gives me signals that lead me to crave it more. I can literally taste and smell steak, when I just picture it in my mind. Although cooking a steak might be common to some, I find the process to be a beautiful thing.

One summer afternoon, after partying hard the night before, I woke up with a huge headache. To relieve such a terrible feeling, I went to the bathroom to freshen up a little bit. Later, I thought I was perfectly fine from the relief of my headache, but I was wrong. I suddenly got this sharp and twisting pain in my stomach. Not knowing what it was, I finally came to the conclusion that I was hungry. Then, suddenly in my head I pictured a slide show of foods I might want to eat. After a prolonged moment of thinking, my mind suddenly stopped on the image of a humongous, tender-looking, juicy grilled steak.

Although it would have been nice to enjoy this occasion on my own, I figured it would be even greater to have a little get together with a few of my friends. So, I made a few phone calls and then it was set. We were going to have a barbecue that afternoon.

After getting ready, I quickly drove to the grocery store and raced towards the meat and poultry section. From there, I chose the best rib-eye steaks on the rack. I prefer rib-eye steaks because they are more tender than other steaks, but still for a reasonable price. After purchasing this fine meat, I brought it home and began to prepare it.

I first started to tenderize the meat with a wooden mallet by pounding it. This method also flattens the meat, which in turn cuts the cooking time in half. Then I seasoned it with a secret seasoning my mom made. After that, I made little slits and stuffed some potent garlic in them. Now, the steak was ready to be cooked. After the preparation of the steak, I sat down and waited for my friends to arrive. After having to wait a while, which felt like days, my friends finally came.

After putting everything down, the guys ended up lounging in my living room talking about cars and playing video games on my PlayStation2. While gossiping, the girls helped each other set up the food and utensils on the table. As for me, I was isolated out back with just my grill.

I turned the heat on the grill to full blast. The flames from the grill were blazing

high as I could feel the heat streaming on to my face. I tossed the raw slabs onto the grill, and suddenly they began to sizzle and crackle as loud as fireworks. I could see the steaks slowly cook, and I began to feel my mouth water spontaneously. As the aromas filled the air, I slowly took deep breaths through my nose as if it were the cleanest air I could ever breathe. When the steaks were done on one side, I slowly flipped them, as the juices from the steaks started to drip and make the fire roar even harder. I could see that the steaks were scored beautifully with black grill marks on one side. After a few minutes, I sliced the meat to see if my steaks had been cooked to perfection, dark on the outside and a touch of pink on the inside.

I brought the steaks in and invited everybody to dig in. They all went at it as if there were no tomorrow. It was a good thing I had saved me a piece before hand. Before eating, I wanted to see how my friends liked it. They were speechless, as they were stuffing their faces, so I took it that they really enjoyed it.

Finally the moment I had been waiting for had arrived. I quickly grabbed my fork and knife and cut a nice-sized slice of my wonderful masterpiece. As I put it into my mouth, I could feel the juices held within the meat. As I began to chew, the juices from the steak began streaming out of the steak, letting me taste that fresh, beefy flavor in my mouth. It was so tender; it felt like it was melting in my mouth. It felt like I didn't need to chew, but I did anyways because I didn't want to take the risk of choking. I sat there eating as my friends were talking about random topics. I didn't talk much because I was too busy eating. I guess getting stuffed was the goal I was trying to reach before I did anything else. I guess I'm one of those who "Live to eat" and not "Eat to Live."

After eating we all just sort of sat there like stuffed pigs with the mess all around us. I felt rewarded when they all started to compliment me on how delicious the steak was. After our stomachs digested most of the food, we all began to clean up the mess. While I was cleaning I thought it was funny how my little craving for steak had turned into a pretty big get-together. Anyway, I was glad that I had been able to share it with a bunch of my friends. This is what I call one of my very tender moments.



# One Life to Live

Jona Padron

Are twins telepathic? If you don't have one, you might think not. But I was born with a twin brother, and there were times when our relationship became very close. I'm very close with my brother Mike, and I could never imagine losing him. Our relationship wasn't always that way, and there was a point in my life when I felt I had almost lost him.

When we were growing up, we would constantly fight. Sometimes our disputes would erupt into violent episodes, which would leave one of us crying. Most often I felt like the victim, although I would antagonize my brother first. When he would get fed up with my teasing, he would lose it and hit me repeatedly. The punches that I received weren't just love taps; they were painful. On one occasion he pounded me so hard that he left several dark bruises on my arms and chest. My muscles ached where they had become black and blue. It felt like pins and needles under my skin when I would touch them. It would take many years for those wounds to heal.

It wasn't until high school that our relationship became better. Mike and I became good friends with the same group of people. We were becoming older and started to understand each other a little better. We didn't argue as much as we did when we were kids. We started to hang out together more often now that we shared things in common. Then our mother bought us a brand new Ford Ranger truck for our birthday. It felt like some kind of reward for becoming closer.

I'll never forget that day. It was the month of April 2000. My best friend Sela was having trouble at home so she wanted to get out of the situation she was in. Things escalated that day. She asked me for help, so I discussed it with my mother. We decided that Sela could stay with us for awhile until things got better for her at home. My brother offered to pick up Sela's belongings at her house later that evening. A couple of our friends went along with him to help.

I was at work around five-thirty that evening when all of a sudden I felt this uneasy feeling flow through my body. Out of nowhere, I had this bizarre thought. "Oh my god! My brother has been in an accident!" I knew there was something wrong. The hair on my forearms stood straight up. I could see the chicken skin forming. I never believed that twins could have telepathic powers until that moment. I was in denial and tried to convince myself that nothing was wrong. I truly thought I was imagining things, so I decided against making any phone calls and continued on with my work.

When I got off work at eight-thirty, I went outside to meet my brother at our usual meeting place. I noticed it had been raining earlier. The concrete parking lot was drenched, and the wet, pungent smell of rain lingered in the air. I also noticed that my brother wasn't there waiting for me. I had an icy cold shiver run through my body again. The hair on my arms stood straight up again. I was looking forward to seeing my brother and my friends after work, but they weren't there. I waited and waited, but they didn't show. I started getting mad because I thought that they might have forgotten to pick me up. But in the back of my mind I kept replaying that scary thought that I had had earlier. About thirty minutes later, my sister and her husband pulled up in their car. I got into the car and the words that came out of my sister's mouth echoed through my ears.

"Mike's been in a car accident."

So many emotions went through my mind. But most of all, I never felt so terrified in all my life. I asked my sister if Mike was hurt. My jaw stuttered as the words left my lips. She didn't reply. There was an uncomfortable silence all the way to the hospital.

When we reached the parking lot of the hospital, my adrenaline began to flow through my veins. I got out of the car and began to run towards the brightly-lit emergency room waiting area where my mother was waiting with my injured brother. I embraced him and began to cry. I cried so hard my cheeks were drenched in tears. I felt nauseated and almost fainted. I tried to talk to him and ask him what had happened, but I couldn't even form words. My emotions took control of me, and I continued to cry endlessly.

Mike was still in shock. I could see it in his eyes. He looked like a lost little boy in some unknown world. My brother just sat silently and shook his head when someone spoke to him. The only injury he had was that awful memory of the truck spinning over and over. He didn't even try to explain what had happened. Slowly, our other two friends came out of the emergency room. They were also okay, just a few stitches here and there but nothing major. I felt relieved to know that everyone was alive. I finally stopped crying.

It took a few days before Mike said anything about what happened that day. He told me as they were coming out of the Wilson tunnel, he lost control of the wheel. The truck flipped several times. He described the accident like it was the Ferris wheel losing its screws and rolling out of control. They thought they had gone over the edge of the cliff but luckily, they had rolled away from it. If circumstances had been any different, I probably would have been attending a funeral for my brother and my two friends.



Having an experience like this has really given our relationship more definition. Almost losing my twin, my other half, has changed the way I see my brother now. Those sibling rivalries that once existed don't even matter now. We have both discovered the connection that binds us together. We're not inseparable, but if something were to happen to one of us, I think the whole world would seem to end for the other. I tell him once in a while that we should enjoy what we have now because sometimes I think he forgets what happened that day. But I remind him not to take chances that we have been given in life for granted because one day, we could lose it all, love, life, happiness.



# **The Tradition of Hawaiian Sweetbread**

Lisa Perez

To describe the history of Portuguese sweet bread is to describe the history of my family. The family recipe, passed down through generations by word of mouth, was brought to Hawaii from Madeira, Portugal on a British ship with our Great Great Grandmother Francisca de Freitas Barruta on June 13, 1884. *The process of making Portuguese sweet bread parallels, and is symbolic of the journey our ancestors made to Hawaii.*

In 1420, a Portuguese navigator named Joao Goncalves Zarco discovered the Island of Madeira and found the island without human or animal habitation. Zarco informed his sponsor, Henry the Navigator, of his findings and Henry ordered the Portuguese colonization of Madeira to begin right away. Portugal is located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Spain; to the west-southwest of Portugal are the islands of Madeira and the Azores. Madeira Island is off the coast of Africa near Morocco. In 1871, after returning home to Germany from a vacation in the Hawaiian Islands, Dr. William Hillebrand, a respected German physician, moved to the island of Madeira where he resided for a few years. It was while living on Madeira, that he discovered the similarities between Madeira and Hawaii. Dr. Hillebrand drafted a letter to the Hawaiian Government suggesting that the similarities in climate, agriculture-based economy, and the work ethic of the people would make for a good source of human capital for Hawaii's growing sugar industry. By 1881, word of Dr. Hillebrand's letter reached King David Kalakaua. The King stopped in Portugal while on a world trip to explore the recommendations of Dr. Hillebrand's letter. Satisfied with his inspection, the King then ordered a diplomatic agent to Portugal to negotiate with the Portuguese government for the first shipment of Portuguese migrant laborers (Nelson 7).

*Like the discovery of Madeira, the Portuguese discovered that the combination of water, yeast, flour, milk, sugar and eggs made for a delicious food that was filling and relatively low-cost. Historically, the gathering process was quite long and laborious. Unlike modern times, they often needed to collect each ingredient from the farm and field.*

Life in Madeira was difficult for the Barruta family. The Plantation owners offered workers a great incentive package that included transportation, relocation, and employment for the first year. The package also included wages of \$10.00 per month, free food, housing and medical care for each family member (Nelson 12-14). The opportunity for a better life looked promising but required a dangerous trip across the sea. Francisco and Francisca weighed the benefits and risks they would face and decided it was worth the chance they were taking if doing so meant having a better life for their children and the generations that followed. Francisco and Francisca de Freitas Barruta and their three young children



Antonio, Vicencia, and Maria, ages 4, 2 and 6 months respectively, boarded the steamship City of Paris bound for the Sandwich Islands to begin a new life (Nelson 13). The only means of transportation from Madeira to Hawaii during this time was by ship, and it was very dangerous due to the length of the voyage and the route around Cape Horn, through the Strait of Magellan (Nelson 13). During the journey to Hawaii, there were 10 births and 60 deaths, bringing the grand total of Portuguese workers and family members surviving the trip to 863 (Nelson 10). Upon arrival to the Sandwich Islands, the ship was docked off the coast of Oahu to allow the Hawaii Health Department to inspect the passengers. The passengers were quarantined for seven days at Sand Island for having lice (Nelson 16). During this time at Sand Island, the Immigration Office spelled the family name incorrectly when processing the paper work; the correct spelling is Barruta but they logged it in as Barretto (Nelson 16). As a result, our family name was changed and no effort was made to change it back.

*After gathering the ingredients, they are placed in a large mixing bowl. Like the relentless pounding of the waves on the ships hull throughout the long journey, at least two family members tirelessly and continuously knead the ingredients to create the raw dough.*

Following the quarantine at Sand Island, the Portuguese workers were disbursed to different islands to work at various sugar plantations (Nelson 13). The Barretto family was brought to Kauai to work at the Makee Sugar Company located in Kealia (Nelson 14). Francisca and her daughters cooked for the unmarried plantation workers and cleaned their living quarters. Our cousin Madeline told us that, "The plantation owners wanted to make the Portuguese workers feel at home so they built a stone oven for them to bake their breads in" (Nelson 14). While living on Kauai, sweet bread was still considered a staple due to the lack of food and being poor. Thirty-two years after arriving in Hawaii, Francisca's second child Vicencia, gave birth to our grandmother Cynthia Rodrigues. Forty-eight years after the arrival of Francisca and Francisco their granddaughter who is our grandmother gave birth to our mother June Montayre; grandma was sixteen years old. By the age of eleven, the recipe for Portuguese sweet bread was engrained into the memories of each female family member up until the next generation. Our mother June was born in Kauai and lived there for ten years until her father accepted a job on Oahu. Our parents met while attending Farrington High School and married at the age of twenty. They had seven children during the first sixteen years of their marriage.

*Like the families placed on separate islands, growing with each generation, the dough is placed into separated pans and put in a warm room to rise over the course of two days.*

Once the sweet bread rises to a certain height, it is ready to be baked. The ingredients

are the same as those used in the original recipe, however, we use a conventional oven instead of a stone oven for the baking. The best part of making the sweet bread is being able to smell the scent of the bread rising throughout the house. Our grandmother and mother would stay up late baking the sweet bread the night before Christmas Eve day and the night of Christmas Eve. The children would bake during the day for the family members and the elders would bake for the neighbors. Everyone in the neighborhood knew when our family started baking. They could smell the sweet aroma from blocks away. On Christmas morning, the neighbors could hardly wait for our special delivery of grandma's famous sweet bread.

No matter where we are in the world, the aroma of bread baking brings back memories of Christmas the same way the scent of a Christmas tree does to most people. Ellen Vinta Murota remembers, "It brought back such nostalgic memories of the carefree days of my youth at Kohala Sugar Plantation...and Mama" (F1). Anyone raised with the tradition of making Portuguese sweet bread takes comfort in the memories evoked by the scent of bread rising or baking.

The recipe for making Portuguese sweet bread is a process that parallels the long journey our family had taken so many years ago. It takes a lot of hard work to create the sweet dough, and a great deal of patience to watch the dough rise over time. Our grandparents didn't become wealthy during their lifetime, but they took comfort in knowing that the fruits of their decision would benefit their children and grandchildren. I discovered a great deal of family history regarding the journey and the couple that began this life for us here in Hawaii. I appreciate the risk that they took and realize that every bread making session we share makes me thankful to the young couple that traveled half way around the world in search of a better life for themselves and their progeny.

#### Works Cited

Murota, Ellen Vinta "...Of bread so sweet." The Honolulu Advertiser. 3 Dec. 1995: F1.

Nelson, Madeline Freitas Barretto. The Tree Has Grown. Hawaii: Kauai, Lihue 1987



## **Freedom of Life: When You Need A Getaway**

Christopher Sanders

Growing up in the city can lead to a humdrum life with no sense of escape; consequently, we find ourselves infested by life and compare it to a disease. We become frustrated with the most frivolous of things, but what can we do? There is a cure for this disease; it is called R & R (rest and rejuvenation). Everybody needs this for complete sound operation of the mind, body and soul. Without this healthy time-out, our body becomes a personified machine without maintenance; constantly overworking yourself will push you on a daily basis closer to a system meltdown. On the other hand, utilizing this needed bodily retreat, we will be at the top of our game. I've found that perfect place that promotes R & R--a secret retreat tucked away in the south shore of Molokai in a countryside town called Kaunakakai.

After soaring in a crackerjack-box-toy-sized-plane for twenty minutes, we land on the island of Molokai. (A serene island covered in vegetation and plant life, rural and very country-sided, almost void of human life. Though the human population is minimal, the island is overabundant with animal habitation and botanical life.) Molokai is beautifully covered in a luscious green coating despite its 3 year draught. "Commonly called the 'Friendly Island' by the rest of the state, Molokai's population, which is yet to exceed 10,000, is comprised of almost half native Hawaiians"(Brocker 04). Molokai's nature and friendly inhabitants will help in your freedom of any clutter that would detour you from complete relaxation, giving you the repose you need and the separation of the disease feeling.

Upon your arrival to Molokai, you notice a homemade sign as you drive away from the airport that says, "Aloha, slow down, this is Molokai."(Brocker 07) This sign is a perfect summary for the laid back atmosphere of the island. Allow that sign to speak to you, hear the call to be refreshed and begin to shed the city-aura; push the imaginary pause button on your "real" life and allow this fantasy to envelop you. Cell phones are near extinction on Molokai for lack of signal. There are no fancy supermarkets. Even clouds are never present to hide your day-only sunshine. Molokai doesn't even have any traffic lights, allowing you to take your turns and drive at a slow pace of 20 MPH, giving you a chance to release your tensed muscles and relinquish your stress and having to only think of yourself ("Beach Landing"). Satisfaction-simple, sweet, solace--this beautiful island replenishes souls. You are ready to journey further towards your "nirvana", the southern end of the island, to Kaunakakai.



Kaunakakai, known as “Molokai’s most important lifeline” because of the town’s harbor, gives the residents of Molokai their connection to the rest of Hawaii (Brockner 50). Even though Kaunakakai is the largest town on Molokai, you can’t still drive through from end to end in a matter of seconds. This town is known for its luscious flowers, breathtaking sunsets, family activities and the secret to “disease-free” R & R spot, the Molokai Oceanside Retreat.

The Molokai Oceanside Retreat is a perfect example of a home away from home. The retreat has a camp-like atmosphere with an ambiance of renewal. This is my favorite place to relax and get away. Upon arrival, you begin by treading down a dirt road that takes you to a main parking lot--sparse gravel fused with mud, bugs, roots and rocks. Through the gravel parking lot you come to a lodge-like dining hall complete with fireplace and stonewalls. This rustic hall can fit about 100 people. From the dining hall, you can walk outside and enter a simplistic covered lanai that expands into a magnificent outdoor stage. The acoustics in the stage area are superb, giving perfect tone and reverberation that echoes through the camp. The main reason for these amazing acoustics are because of the aid of a massive 40 foot banyan tree. This banyan tree is a symbol of nurturing and growth and is a focal point of the camp. Finally, just to the south of the marvelous banyan tree, is a scenic ocean bank. Walking on the ocean bank, you see as many crabs as there is sand. You can smell salty breezes that enamor your senses as your ears dance to the sound of the waves lapping against the shore. The ocean is indescribably beautiful and crystal clear, imitating a giant panel of glass. In the distance, through the foggy haze, you can see Maui, Lanai and Oahu. The atmosphere of this retreat makes you feel like time is cloaking you in a mantle of peace as you turn to look at the banyan tree again. Each leaf is massaged by the wind and the realization sets in that you are relaxed. Finally.

Although the Molokai Oceanside Retreat is a perfect place for tranquility, this retreat has not always been such. About 15 years ago the retreat was an inn called Pauhana. The Pauhana Inn was notorious for its variety of musicians and gay couples. If anything was happening on Molokai, chances are that the Pauhana Inn was where it was happening. The history of this place was bleak and had nary any form of R & R. The Pauhana Inn promoted restlessness and not restfulness like the retreat.

Now, the land has changed, with new leadership and new direction. This inn has been transformed into a place that gives restoration to lives. Although the retreat is exclusive, you are only able to get in with a group or special invitation, once you have gotten through, you are halfway to rejuvenation. You can use the many recreational group activities offered to you at the retreat such as paint-ball. This is a fun sport that causes bruises, pain and exhilaration. It’s great for relief of stress or use of masochism. Extreme mountain biking can be enjoyed on a beautiful and revitalizing trail. Guides can take

you through dirt hills and harrowing drops and turns. There is also a 10 mile kayak race-going around the outskirts of the island and paddling all the way back to camp. You learn a lot about yourself in the stillness of calm ocean water with multi-colored tropical fish swimming around you.

If the group activities are not for you and you need the solitude of your own cabin, you can take in the scenery and activities provided at the camp such as the swimming pool which is located between the cabins. It has a remarkable themed beach-like setting. The 2 am bread run for the most scrumptious bread in the world, Molokai bread, baked fresh, is a must do for anyone. Finally, one of the best benefits of the retreat is seeing clearly the Milky Way Galaxy, an inky black sky painted with twinkling dots. The night sky seems to expand infinitely and is blanketed with three layers of stars dancing and playing with your gaze. Leaving the edge of the ocean bank with the banyan tree acoustic stage, you can walk to the cabins under the guidance of moonlight, to prepare yourself for a calm and peaceful night's rest.

Though there are a lot of ways for everyone to find their own safe haven of rest, I have found mine in the simple solitude of a retreat on the little island of Molokai. I have returned from that place a refreshed person ready to take life head on. The Molokai Oceanside Retreat is my place of freedom and escape from "real" life and I hope to take many more journeys there. There is a lot of history in the camp, but there is only one goal of this camp now--to refresh our lives.



## **My First Day Back At Work: I Don't Want To Go, Seann!**

Anyaa Sinclair

Monday morning, 7a.m. and I'm feeling very anxious. I'm going to work and it's my first day back since the birth of my son. I didn't expect to go back so soon. I'm not ready to let go of those days that seemed as if time stood still. Those days were bright and lustrous. The weather was always warm and comfortable—even the rain would blanket our world in sheets of moist protection, leaving the air pure and sweet.

Since the moment my son was born, we have been together, except for a few moments after I lay recovering from labor. He has changed my life forever. I don't own my life anymore. There is a definite force that keeps me connected to him. I want to protect him from anything that would bring him harm or sadness. I know that's not possible or even the best idea. But that is how I feel.

Seann's father quit his job and soon after fell into depression. Those days, ones that used to leave me with a feeling of contentment now became darker, heavier, almost uncomfortable--like a reptile's skin growing too tight for its body; consequently, the reptile desperately needs to shed its hide. Those days took forever to end. It was horrible watching his father lay across the rattan sofa sleeping, insisting on leaving on the television with the volume blaring. Despair kept him company on that sofa, nightly.

I am going through my own circle of emotions. Anger and blame, guilt, sadness, helplessness and then acceptance at this stage. I hate him for taking me away from my son. I hate him for quitting his job. He claims he wasn't happy at work, even though he worked for his brother and got away with all kinds of irresponsible things. He was never really satisfied with the way things went for him. He had to have my happiness, too. Those mornings I greeted with awe, waking and wondering about what new things I would experience in the growth of my child. Seann usually woke first. He woke me with little whimpers that seemed to say, "Mom, are you there? I'm hungry." The corners of his eyes would turn up into a squint, as his toothless grin greeted my face. His arms would reach out to me, asking to be picked up. My lips would find that little sweet spot on his head and kiss it. My nostrils would seek out that smell that only babies possess—a soft, powdery smell that seems to ignite innate feelings of motherhood. Seann's father, who deceived himself into thinking that he could enjoy these moments, stole all this from me. They only sank him deeper into a cache of emptiness and too much responsibility.

This is all his fault. I have to leave that place that feels right. I am content here. It's his fault for being so selfish. I shouldn't have to go to work so soon. We talked this over. He knows what I want and he knows how I feel. Maybe I should have saved more money. I could have stayed home longer and not relied on him. But how could I have known?

Will my child be fed, get his diaper changed? Will someone play with him? Will he be okay? I haven't even left and I'm missing him. I'm already missing our mornings. My little baby in my arms, at my breast. Those mornings when we would enjoy the gently, rhythmic gliding in the only chair that occupied my living room. Nuzzled against my body, all I can see are his eyes. Soft, innocent, brown eyes that greet me with trust and love as unconditional as a puppy greeting its master at the end of a day away. Eyes that shut tight and squeeze little drops of salty water out when pain or discomfort visit him. Eyes that shut tight from chubby cheeks that make way for laughter. I have had many conversations with these eyes, for the only words out of his mouth are the gentle, sometimes excited, coos and babbles of a baby just starting to discover the sound of his own voice. "Gaaahhh," he says.

There is a spot between his eyes, on his forehead, just below his fuzzy hairline. This is the softest, smoothest skin that I have ever felt. I love to rub my face against his flawless, olive-colored skin and take in his smells. It's a sweet baby scent. Sometimes his skin is sour, if his milk does not agree with him. But it is always a smell that is comforting to me. It's euphoric. It is a smell that I know will not be there forever. I try to get as much of this fragrance as possible now.

On those mornings, that have now come to pass, my baby would fill himself up on milk. His light brown eyes examining my face. I watch these eyes move over my face and I know that he knows me very well. I know that he is content and feels secure. Then I watch his brown eyes close sleepily and I try to catch up on sleep that is never long enough.

This morning will be different. There will be no lingering moments, as there is an appointment that needs to be met, money to be made, work that has to be done, rent that needs to be paid and food that needs to be put on the table. Okay, my precious baby, hurry up and eat. I have places to go. This sucks! I can't seem to think of any way out of this. Maybe I should hide under my covers and pretend this isn't real. Maybe if I pray really hard, his father will think about finding a job. Maybe if I pray hard enough, Ed McMahon will call and tell me that I've just won the Clearinghouse Sweepstakes and I can stay with my child a little longer and watch him grown, take his first step and maybe even utter his first word.

I actually enjoy my job as a massage therapist, though there have been many days when I have left the office physically, mentally and spiritually drained. There have been days when I have massaged so many arms and legs that they become so similar that I cannot remember if I worked on them or not. There have also been very rewarding days when people come in bent and sore and leave my office pain free.

The anticipation of who my next client would be has always kept me interested. I have met people from all walks of life. From the very wealthy to the very poor. From the young to the old. From the very educated to the not so educated. From the bitter to ambassadors of aloha. From people who take responsibility for themselves to people who would suck the life out of you if you let them. I should appreciate having a job that challenges and stimulates me. The human psyche is an amazing piece of work. But today, my heart wants to be at home with my child.

Seann wakes up. We greet each other. I change his diaper and sit down in my dark blue glider to feed him. He knows something is different this morning. He feels that I am not comfortable, relaxed. My sadness seems to flow into his hungry body. His brown eyes look a little worried, a little confused. His tiny body, one that usually melts and molds into my arms and breast, now feels agitated. My son's arms and legs and head squirm about, unable to find any comfort. His sleepy face turns to me to let out an occasional wail of disapproval. This is not a good morning. I try to pretend that everything is good, that it's just another morning but he doesn't believe me. After he eats, he wants to fall asleep. "Sorry baby. I gotta go." In my mind, I make a mental wish. Maybe your dad can comfort you? I need to take a shower before work. I try to listen to the sound of the water rushing through the showerhead and hitting the tile floor instead of the muffled crying outside the bathroom door. My stomach knots up. It feels like someone reached inside my gut and twisted it into a ball. I take a few deep breaths and finish my shower.

Getting dressed is no different. I tell my son that I'll be home soon and that things will be okay. His chubby little body tightens, his little hands turn into fists, his legs with the little rolls of fat on the thighs and knees, start to quiver and kick. He rebels against our routine being broken. He squeezes his eyes and starts to cry. This isn't getting any easier! Putting on a pair of jeans and a blouse feels different to me. I've been wearing frumpy old t-shirts and shorts. Clothes that I don't mind getting pee, poop and throw-up on. It's really not that bad, having decent clothes on again.

It's 8:00 am. I pick up my baby, making sure to put a baby blanket between us to keep my clothes from getting dirty. Walking down the short hallway with the off-white walls and a few pictures, I reach the kitchen. I have 15 minutes to eat something. I am not hungry. Maybe I'll feel better by lunch and I'll get something to eat then. I wasn't always



happy to go to work before my child was born but this feels like a part of me is being ripped from my body, leaving me nauseous.

It's time to go. I call his father into the kitchen. My son stiffens and cries as I give him up. I turn and walk out the kitchen door, muttering my good-bye's. I just keep walking to the car and don't look back. I start up my old silver Mazda and drive off, turning up the radio to drown out the sad little cries that are echoing in my head.

# **My Grandfather's Hands**

Michelle Sisson

The summers in the San Joaquin Valley are hot and dusty. I leaned my head against the car window and stared out into the endless fields of tomatoes and cotton. Farmers on their tractors churned up soil, leaving behind a brown dust cloud. I let out a deep sigh.

"We're almost there, Shelly," my mother chirped. The drive to my grandfather's place took forever.

We finally pulled up to my grandfather's. The house, surrounded by flowers, peach trees and just about anything that would grow in the summer heat, stood out like an oasis. I jumped out of the car onto the hot pavement and ran towards my grandfather, who is wearing his typical outfit of earth stained pants, cotton twilled shirt and worn leather shoes. A tall, white haired and very muscular man, he pulls me in close for a bear hug and lifts me clear off the ground.

"How's my girl doing?" he asks.

"Good, Grandpa. I'm eight now."

I knew what was coming next. My grandfather wrapped his arm around my neck, pulling me in close. I giggled and laughed.

"Time to thump your bean."

He reached down and with one of his huge, thick, paw like hands, he flicked the top of my head with his pointer finger three times. Thump, thump, thump! It amazed me how it never hurt, especially considering how big those hands were.

"Sounds like your bean is doing good." He smiled. I giggled again.

"What were you doing when we got here?" my mother asked.

"I was just working on my tomatoes." My grandfather grows the biggest and the best tomatoes in the area.

"I'm getting out of this heat and into the house to make us some lunch," my mother

said. "Shelly, you help your grandpa. I'll call you all in when lunch is ready." My mother does not fair well in the valley's heat. Neither do I but Grandpa's backyard was cool and covered by giant elm trees.

"Before we go out back, how 'bout collecting some walnuts with me?" my grandfather asked. My heart sank a little bit.

"Ok, I guess." Grandpa took my hand in his. I waited for his huge hand to crush mine. I noticed how small my hand was compared to his. I could feel the toll that years of farming had taken on his hands. They were cracked from the sun and from digging in the earth. His skin was thick and calloused from gripping tools and pulling on tough roots. They were naturally strong from the constant use, yet, despite all these things, his grip was gentle and kind. I always felt safe holding his hand.

We entered the walnut grove with a bucket. I was happy to be wearing shoes because the sun had parched the dark, rich soil. I could feel its heat trying to seep into my shoes. We started to pick up the walnuts from off the ground. I found one walnut with its shell half open. I tried prying it open to get the nut out. I pulled. I yanked. I even tried smashing it against a tree but nothing worked.

"Those shells are tough." Grandpa walked over and took the walnut from my hand. "You have to do it like this," he continued. He proceeded to crush the entire walnut whole with just one squeeze of his hand.

"Wow!" I exclaimed. When he opened his hand, what was remaining of the shell fell into tiny pieces onto the soil. There, in his palm, sat a perfectly unbroken nut. I smiled and took it from his hand.

"How did you do that?" I asked.

"Its those vitamins I take," he replied. I believed him. He had a drawer full of all kinds of vitamins.

When we finished collecting walnuts, we headed to the garden out back. I couldn't wait to get into the shade. It was only ten-thirty in the morning but the sun was already beating down on me. The garden in the back was green and lush. It was a far cry from the walnut grove and its surroundings. Growing in the garden were green beans, onions, peaches and in the only sunny part of the yard, grapes and my grandpa's prized tomatoes.

"Let's pick some tomatoes for your mother," Grandpa said. "Maybe she'll slice some up for lunch." Grandpa walked over and knelt next to a hearty, green tomato plant



and began to scrutinize each tomato carefully.

"How do you know they're ripe?" I asked.

"They're ready when they are bright red, slightly firm and fit in the palm of your hand," he answered. "Like this one right here." He picked a perfectly round, red tomato. It fit in his giant palm like a baseball in a mitt.

"Can I pick one?" I asked excitedly.

"Sure you can."

I reached into the bush and found a tomato to my liking. I tugged a bit but it wouldn't come off of the vine.

"Pull just a bit harder but not too much mind you," Grandpa said calmly.

I tugged too hard and the tomato came off alright but, one side burst in my hands and its insides oozed out all over me.

"I killed it!" I yelled.

My grandpa took the tomato out of my hand. He reached into the bush again, grabbing hold of a small tomato with his giant hand.

"You have to hold it gently but with enough pressure so that it doesn't burst," he said.

I watched as his hand wrapped around the fruit. He could barely fit all five digits around the tomato, yet they flexed a little and with a quick, gently jerk, the tomato was plucked neatly from the vine.

"It just takes some practice, that's all." He smiled and patted me on the head.

"I guess so." I replied.

Just then, my mother called us in for lunch. She happily took the tomatoes from us and began to slice them for lunch. As we sat around the table, I noticed a small framed picture of my grandpa in his prime when he trained with weights. There he was, muscles bulging and looking intimidating. What caught my eye, however, were his hands wrapped around a phone book as he tore it in half. Those hands hadn't changed. They were still big,

## **Miss Deaf Hawaii**

Aileen Solem

On March 30, 2003, there were four contestants running for Miss Deaf Hawaii. Shana, Rallie, Chanel and me, and from the months of April through August, we spent our summer meeting once or twice a week at the Deaf and Blind Center at Diamond Head, or at Kapiolani Community College. The previous Miss Deaf Hawaii 2001-2003 showed us how to walk like models, how to be poised and how to act professionally. It was a lot of work, especially for me since I have cerebral palsy. I really had to concentrate to hold my balance, but it was a lot of fun and gave me memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

The night before the pageant, we were busy training and practicing our talents, platforms and onstage interview at the Prince Kuhio Hotel in Waikiki. We all had a very busy night before the pageant. Finally the day that we had been preparing for arrived. I thought I was ready, but in reality, I was never ready. I felt butterflies flying around my stomach and squeezing my abdomen, and I felt bundles of nerves twisting and turning like little tornadoes in my body. I tried to relax, eat breakfast, and then I socialized with parents and peers waiting for the evening to come so that the pageant would begin.

In our hotel room, I watched as the sunset began to fade into the horizon, and I gathered all my clothes together because it was time to leave the safety of the hotel room and jump into the hostile environment of judges and spectators. Noticed how I said the word “jump”? That is how I felt going into the ballroom. I was “jumpy” but I believe that I shared this feeling with all the contestants. We gathered our outfits for the pageant, our gowns and talent costumes, and placed them behind the stage. Then we dressed in business suits for our first formal interview with the judges.

Behind the stage, we stood in line according to our placement, which was done alphabetically, and since my last name starts with an S, I was the last one to be called on stage by Mark, the announcer for the evening’s events. Mark is also deaf and from the mainland, and, although he did say which part he was from, I was so nervous that I forgot it instantly. However, I do remember Mark saying that he was part Hawaiian and part Portuguese, and he had been in the islands for three months and was now home permanently. The Miss Deaf Hawaii Pageant was his first job with the deaf and hard of hearing community. He was dressed in matching aloha shirt and shorts; he had fancy island style sandals on his feet and his hair was in a ponytail. In between his announcement of contestants, he came with jokes to entertain the audience while waiting for the next contestant to arrive, and since



there were many hearing people in the audience, a female interpreter interpreted Mark's signs and gestures. Many of his jokes were funny, but there were boring ones. However, I was happy when he took his time on the jokes because it gave me time to do breathing exercises to prepare myself for when it was my turn on stage.

When Mark finally signed my name, I took a deep breath and walked toward the stage. Although I felt very nervous and my body had started to shake, I just kept walking up to the stage looking straight at Mark. Mark signed to me and said "Good evening, how are you feeling?" I signed back to him, "Good! I'm feeling very positive!" Mark signed, "That is good. Are you ready for a question?" I smiled at him and signed, Yes, I am." Then Mark removed a question from a small book and showed it to me. The question was, "What does ASL mean in all countries?" I looked at Mark and signed, "Thank you." I walked forward on the stage and looked out at the judges sitting at the table in the front row. They sat very close to the stage. As I looked out at the audience watching me, I took a deep breath and started to give my answer in front of the judges in sign language.

In sign language, I told Mark and the judges that ASL is an acronym for American Sign Language that is used by individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing nationally. It is acknowledged as a language and a means of communication. Without ASL, it would be difficult for the deaf and hard of hearing to communicate. Then I signed, "Thank you" to Mark and to the judges while hearing the audience clap and yell. The deaf audience lifted up their hands in acknowledgment and support. I walked off the stage feeling proud of my accomplishment.

After the formal interviews, we changed into aloha shirts or muumuus for our first informal introduction to the audience. Shana and I had aloha shirts and pants and the other two contestants wore muumuus. We held each other's hands, clapped and danced around on the stage with the former Miss Deaf Hawaii of 2001-2003.

After the dance exhibition, we went backstage to change into our gowns. I had what the sales person at Macy's classified as a "hot pink" colored gown. It had sequins on the top, and the sequins made the top glimmer and shine in the dimmed light of the ballroom. My dress sparkled like an array of colored candle lights. The skirt was lighter than the top, more of a pale pink, and I had accessorized my gown with a pink scarf that draped around my neck. The ends of the scarf flowed freely in front of my left shoulder and behind my right shoulder. I could feel the quietness as I walked on the stage, and I could feel the audience's admiration, the hearing people's claps and the deaf people waving their hands in the air. I knew that my gown was beautiful; I went from one store to another for several days to find a gown that would reflect me. I wanted it to match my aura and my personality. All the contestants had beautiful gowns.



After the showing of gowns, we changed into our performance costumes, and since I was going to perform a song from the movie *"Titanic"*, *"My Heart Will Go On"*, by Celine Dion, I was dressed in a red gown similar to the one that the actress Kate Winslet used in the movie. With my hair pulled back like a Spanish senorita and wearing make-up of pink eyeshadows, red lipstick, eyeliner and mascara, I stood by the stage getting ready to be called out again, as one of the contestants finished her performance. I took a deep breath and walked onto the stage with as much poise as I could. Then I looked at the judges and smiled. When my music started, I walked slowly back and forth doing my sign song for less than three minutes. As I stopped and smiled at the judges, I noticed that the judges and the people who were sitting behind them seemed shocked and amazed at how well I had done my song. Then I turned around and walked off the stage, hearing people cheering and clapping.

When all of the contestants had finished the talent show, and all the competitors had changed into their "pageant" dresses, we waited backstage for Mark to call our names. As he called our names, we lined up in a specific formation according to where Mark placed us. We all lined up on stage facing and smiling at the judges until finally Mark got their votes and announced Rallie as the third runner-up. Then he announced Chanel as second runner-up, and he began to tell another joke. I was not paying attention to what he was saying because I misunderstood the whole situation. I thought I was the last runner-up, and then it dawned on me that Shana and I were the last two competing for the title of "Queen of Miss Deaf Hawaii." Shana and I were excited to see which one of us would win. Then Mark announced my name as the first runner-up, and I received a big "First Runner-Up" in a frame.

Finally, Mark announced in sign language "Shana Shimizu" as the new "Miss Deaf Hawaii Queen" of 2003-2005, and she walked forward on the stage, smiling and waving to the judges and to the audience. We all cheered and clapped for her as the winner. She received her crown from Lovely Joy Lopez, who had been the previous "Miss Deaf Hawaii Queen" of 2001-2003. Lovely hugged and congratulated Shana. Later, all of us and the new Queen, Shana Shimizu had pictures taken by photographers as we were waving to the camera and to the people surrounding us.

I had a great experience in joining the "Miss Deaf Hawaii" pageant, and I am proud to be the first runner-up. I won't be joining again next year because I am getting married, and I cannot take on the responsibility. Although, I am not "Queen", I have functioned as the queen because Shana is in college in Gallaudet, Washington, and I take on her responsibilities and representations in the Hawaii Deaf Community. My parents, families and friends are proud of me for having this once in a lifetime experience and for my accomplishment in representing the queen.



## **The Greatest Influence of My Life: My Mom**

Maria “Beth” St. Sure

As I pondered a possible topic, I decided to choose to write about who had been the greatest influence of my life. Recently, I have made a momentous career change, one that involves a reduction in my income in order to prepare for that career. My decision to switch careers was greatly influenced by the vivid memory of my mom, especially the last few weeks of her life.

Some time ago, during a beautiful, sunny Saturday morning, my husband and I drove to one of our favorite places on Oahu—Haleiwa. We each had some of the shaved ice that Haleiwa is famous for and then proceeded to the Haleiwa Boat Harbor. I love the sight of boats and the ocean (my dad used to own a boat in the Phillipines). It was the third anniversary of my mom’s death. My husband and I had prayed a special rosary for her the previous night. She was only 59 years old when she died. As we walked along the beach at Haleiwa Boat Harbor, I looked out upon the sea where some boats bobbed up and down amidst the brilliant blue of the water and a hot, cloudless day.

There was a large Hawaiian family—a father, mother, 4 boys and 3 girls, swimming near the pier. With their joyous swimming, dark brown skin and black hair, they reminded me of a Filipino family. I told my husband it was as if my family was brought back from the past right before my eyes! Tears fell upon my face as I watched a very energetic little Hawaiian girl with jet black hair swim like a fish! I closed my eyes. A magical transformation took place as I went back in time.

I was born and raised in Cebu, an island in the Southern Phillipines. It was a beautiful hot and muggy day in Cebu and I was with my family. My mom, dad, 5 brothers and 6 sisters. We were all swimming not far from our home. Mom called me “a little fish.” Physically, we were very different. As I grew older, I would be inches taller than her and thin, whereas mom was stocky in stature. Her skin was dark brown from years of hard work in the sun. My mom’s eyes were amazing. They sparkled with joy as we all swam together that day, yet her eyes could also show tiredness. She taught me that our lives are fragile and a gift from God. We should treasure our happiness, for we do not know how long it will last. Mom’s greatest gift to me was my deep religious faith, which gave her strength, as it does for me.

As children, one of our great joys was to jump off the pier in Cebu. Every time I did so, with that dramatic flair dad taught me, mom would embrace me, as she did all of



us. That wonderful, nurturing love she exuded as she hugged us and touched us has been of the utmost importance in my life and part of the reason for my recent decision to change careers and become a nurse.

During times when I was afraid or upset, or worried about dad's health, mom would cradle me in those wonderful, powerful arms, rocking me to sleep as she sang a Filipino lullaby. She radiated a magical calmness, especially during periods of trial.

At night, as we all heard the pounding of the surf and ocean and we knew that dad was out there sacrificing his often frail body to provide for us, mom would lead us in saying the rosary. Mom and I shared a deep, special religious bond, more so than my other siblings. I would help her prepare everything, rounding up my brothers and sisters. I sat next to her as we all said the rosary. I watched her gnarled hands clutch the black beads of the rosary.

After all of us were asleep, mom would get up at about one am to prepare food for my dad, as he would return home from fishing. This meant that she would often only have a few hours of sleep, for she would go to the market and sell fish at around three am. She never complained about such sacrifices. She would return home a few hours later to help wake all the children to get them ready for school.

One of my fondest memories of growing up in the Phillipines was the image of coconut trees with the palms swaying in the breeze. My siblings and I would climb the coconut trees. We all loved the taste of coconut milk and the white coconut meat. Mom especially loved the cool, invigorating coconut milk on a hot day in the Phillipines. As I would climb the tree and look down, I would see her smiling face and a reassuring look telling me that I was safe and could accomplish my task. How much joy I had as I came down the tree with a coconut for her and dad! Even today, here in Hawaii when I see a coconut tree I think of her loving presence, and know that I can do a lot in life.

Mom taught me the tremendous power of the human touch. As I now study to be a nurse, I find a lot of literature on how important it is to touch. Yet I knew this long ago because of my mom's example. Her hugs were so wonderful! Those hands of hers, which had become hardened by many years of work, could convey a feeling of acceptance and peace. My work in a nursing home has enabled me to use those skills to comfort people who are often afraid. The greatest medicine many frail and sick people need is human acceptance and love.

Her love, courage and sacrifices continue to live in my heart and mind. During the last few weeks of her life, I would often hold her in my arms, as she used to do to me,

returning some of the strength and nurturing love she had poured into my life.

A few years ago, my mom developed pneumonia. One lung showed up completely white on the X-rays. Her fragile body looked so still, her breath was weak and shallow. I felt the coldness of her hands and her skin was pale. I knew the time was near. She began to cry softly. She told me she wanted to die rather than to suffer. She especially missed my dad, who had died a few months before. My heart sank. I still clung to the childhood hope that if I wished hard enough, it would all go away. The cancer and the drugs took their toll on her. It was very difficult for me to watch her health decline, yet this has given me a great empathy for others who suffer.

As I left the Phillippines, I had an instinctive feeling that I would never see her again. During the long flight back to Honolulu, I felt a deep dissatisfaction with my present career in advertising. I knew I had to leave a job that required so much of my time to be spent in front of the computer. Now, as I work in a nursing home, I can employ all the qualities my mom had taught me such as being compassionate to the elderly and the sick. Her love lives on in my work at the nursing home and I dream that one day I will be a good nurse. My mom's life continues to be a blessing to me and through me to others.



## **Summer of 2003**

Porsche Storm  
For Samantha and Christopher

I took the bus up to my friend's house in Palolo Valley one morning. Samantha was doing the dishes as I let myself in.

"Call up Chris and see what we're going to do," she told me.

Ever since graduation, Sam, Chris, and I stuck together like glue. All of our other friends were either on their way to the mainland for school, or had started their lives as newly-born adults. But the three of us didn't feel the need to do any of that. We just wanted to have fun for the rest of the summer.

We spent the entire summer at the beach. Almost everyday Samantha and I would catch the trolley down to Waikiki and meet up with Chris, who would catch the bus from his home in Kane'ohe. We had the same routine everyday. First we would grab something to eat from Jack in the Box, (the cashiers could have memorized our orders by the end of the week, it was always the same), then we would hang out at the usual spot, "Walls," and make our way down to "Tracks." Just as the sun started to go down and illuminate the sky with the vibrant array of oranges and purples, we would get out of the water and rinse off in those freezing cold showers. I hated the feeling of that ice-cold water trickling down my back, especially since the sun was no longer out to keep me warm. After cruising around Waikiki for a little while, it was time for Chris to suggest we go to the "big couches." So the Pacific Beach Hotel was the final spot of the night. We would rest on their giant red couches in the lobby, jamming on the ukuleles. I picked the phone up off of its charger and dialed Chris' number.

"Hey Chris, it's Porsche. So what we gonna do today?" I asked as if I didn't know already.

"I dunno, but I don't want to go to Waiks. You guys come down to my beach."

"O.K...wait," I turned to Sam, "Chris don't wanna catch bus into town, he wants us to go out there."

"Tell him no. It takes too long." Sam said with a hint of laziness in her voice.

"I always come down to see you guys, but you never come out to see me." Chris has that quality that will make you do what he wants you to do. Samantha calls it "complaining."

"Kay, fine, we'll go out to one of your beaches. Which one you like go?"

"Um,... Waimanalo?" he suggested.

"Shoots, as long as there is gonna be some fine guys out there! Ha! Ha!" I could feel Chris rolling his eyes at me on the other side of the line. "But we don't want to get lost on the bus."

"You guys aren't going to get lost." he said impatiently, "Just take the nine to Ala's, den get on the..." Chris' directions were going in one ear and out the other.

"Can't you just meet us somewhere?"

"Fine, I'll meet you guys in Kailua. When you see the 'Welcome to Kailua' sign, get off the bus. It's a big sign on the left. I'll be at the bus stop."

"Kay, give us an hour and a half, Sam still gotta get ready."

"Kay den."

We were on our way to Kailua, hoping that we remembered Chris' directions correctly. Then it came to one of those moments when you think about something too hard that you start to confuse yourself.

"Wait, did Chris say get off at the "Welcome to Kailua" sign or the "Kailua Towne" sign? Cause that sign says "Kailua Towne." I asked Sam.

"I dunno, but I don't see him at any bus stop. Are there two different signs?" she replied.

"I have no idea!"

This is exactly why we wanted Chris to come see us in town.

"Lets just go a few more stops, maybe there is another sign." Samantha proposed.



Five stops later we got off the bus and asked around about the “Welcome to Kailua” sign. People looked at us like we were crazy. Either that or just two ditzy girls from Kaimuki. We soon realized that there was only one sign, “Kailua Towne”. We made our way back and found Chris sitting at the bus stop without a care in the world.

“What took you guys so long?” He asked, as if he had been there the entire time.

“Chris!” we both yelled. We scolded him and that was that.

We finally got on the Waimanalo bus, but got off one stop later because Chris changed his mind. “I don’t wanna go Waimanalo, we go Lanikai.”

Chris wanted to take us to a secluded beach he knew about, so we agreed. We hopped on the seventy bus; the only one that goes into Lanikai. By the time we got to Kailua Beach Park, I really had to go to the bathroom.

“You can’t wait till we get there?” Chris asked.

“No, I gotta pee now!”

“Me too.” said Samantha.

So we got off the bus, again, and used the restroom. Chris neglected to mention that the seventy bus only runs about once every hour and a half.

“So now what?” I asked.

“We walk.” Chris said.

Samantha, being the sluggish person she is, pleaded that we stay there at Kailua Beach. “I don’t want to walk all the way down there.”

“Its not even that far.”

So again we listened to Chris. Why? I always try to answer that question, but I really do not know. The walk seemed to be a lifetime and a half. With Chris always ten feet ahead of us, we would ask the repeated question, “Are we there yet?” The sun was pounding down. My legs felt like they were melting into the pavement. With every step I took, they got heavier and heavier. Until finally we reached the spot. Just past a little white fence was a sand walkway that lead to the tiny, isolated beach. The crystal clear water with blue and green hues looked so refreshing.

water became choppy. All of the sudden I felt little shocks on my face and arms. It became more and more intense and I quickly jumped out of the water. Sam and Chris followed. The pain shot up my arms like a bullet piercing its victim. It felt as if the circulation in my upper arms were being cut off. Both arms went numb. Samantha said it was Portuguese Man of War, and Chris told me I needed to rub sand on my arms to get the stingers out. Chris went back into the Man of War infested waters to get me a more fine grained sand which he said was better. What a hero! They each rubbed one arm, but the pain didn't seem to go away. I decided to just sit down for a while. Sam and Chris swam for a little while longer. I watched as they shared the open ocean with a curious honu. I remembered thinking to myself that these long summer nights I spent with them were the time of my life. I was so fortunate to have those two.

They got out of the water, and we joked around for a little while. We left soon after. Samantha and I dreaded the walk back. Chris was yet again walking ahead of us. "Why won't you slow down?" We called out to him. He just kept looking back and smiling. "Fine," we shouted as he disappeared into the horizon. I loved that about the three of us; everything was always so consistent.

Sam and I were so tired of walking. We started shouting out to every car that passed, "CAN WE HAVE A RIDE?!?" Finally this girl asked where we needed to go.

"We just gotta get to Kailua Beach."

"O.K. hop in."

"For real?" Sam said, astonished and relieved that we didn't have to suffer any longer. We jumped in the back of her truck.

We arrived at Kailua Beach and waited for Chris. We planned on messing with his head by hiding from him, but he was taking quite a long time. We began to get worried, but sure enough Chris had taken a different path, climbing up the sand and boulders from the beach. He too had the same childlike idea in his head. He finally showed up just as the seventy bus made its way around the corner. We all ran across the slick grass just in time to catch it. When we were on the bus Chris didn't say too much. We parted ways. "Kay den Chris, we do Waimanalo tomorrow!" I said with a smile, then left with Sam. But we never made it to Waimanalo. That was the last time all three of us hung out together. There were a few phone calls after that, but that was it. Things were changing. As the summer ended, we grew up and grew apart. Traces of us are still there, like the permanently discolored fabric of the "big red couches" we once sat upon in our saltwater soaked towels; some pictures that captured our smiles forever in time, and countless stories that will be passed on for years to come. That was the summer I loved, the summer I miss, the summer of 2003.



## **The Most Beautiful Day of My Life**

Anthony Vallejo-Sanderson

It all began that one night I had that weird dream. It was one of those flying dreams, where the more I flapped my arms like a bird's wing, the higher and faster I flew. So far the dream was happy. I was so graceful with my flight, like a finch that had been set free from his cage. Between buildings and above trees I flew with joy. I flew close to the ground then flapped my arms as hard as I could and shot straight up as high as I could. I flew so high that the earth looked like a giant blueberry. In my awe of the beautiful earth, I started to get tired. I gasped for air but it was too thin to breathe. I immediately started to panic and fell back to earth desperately needing air. My descent back to the blueberry fell in a spiral of panic. My chest swelled with pain. I gasped and gasped for air and my lungs burned for oxygen. My chest tightened as if a knife was pushed into it. The ground rushed beneath me so quickly, that cars no longer looked like ants, and I could see people looking up at me. I tried to yell but no breath came to make a noise. I flapped harder to slow down my plunge to no avail. In a few seconds I was to hit the hard earth. Then, I woke up with a jolt and found myself sweaty and gasping for air but safe in my soft bed. And that was the night it all started.

"Beep, beep, beep," sang my alarm clock. "Crap, it's seven o'clock already." I didn't get a good night sleep as result of that disturbing dream. I hit the snooze button. If I had my way, I would have slept till noon. But I can't afford to be late to work for at least another three months. Today's not special, there's nothing to look forward to, and it's the same as any other day. Wake up, work, stare at the wall mounted calendar and pretend it's the ocean horizon. Then come home and sleep till the alarm clock speaks to me. That was my routine and in that routine I had another routine, a routine within a routine, so to speak.

It starts off with a verbal talkback fight with the alarm clock. "Shut up!" snooze button, but seven minutes later the alarm clock wins and I'm awake. Well, half awake. I've strategically placed towels around the base of the toilet to sop up any misfire in my morning "half awake" tinkle. I have three different types of toothpaste: Colgate, Aqua Fresh and Mentadent. All promising whiter teeth, a better smile and thus a better life. That morning I used Colgate "with total plus whitening". I am feeling spontaneous. I then shower, no longer than five minutes. I try on three different shirts before I decide to go with the dark blue one.

Then I get to the highlight of my routine within a routine: breakfast. Eggo waffles, apple cinnamon, blueberry or in this case, original home-style. It's important that the second



the toaster releases the pair of golden bronzed waffles, butter is applied from the center out. Let it sit for twelve seconds and cut following the tic tac toe (#) pattern. Gracefully drizzled maple syrup completes this work of art I call breakfast. A full glass of milk compliments my morning feast like a red wine that complements any Italian meal. I always sit at the head of the table with my milk, waffles and yesterday's crossword puzzle. *Twenty four across an eight letter word for favoritism of one's family members.* The most important part of breakfast is the first bite. By now the butter has soaked deep into the waffle especially the center piece. The syrup has been marinating long enough to be enjoyable. With my milk in my left hand and the premium cut of waffle on the tip of my fork in my right hand, I eat. Chew, chew, chew, mouth full of milk and swallow that delicious morsel of breakfast. I eat my waffles and milk like a classy steak and red wine. But not this morning; it was the moment I swallowed the bliss of this perfect meal that it became bitter in pain. As the chewed waffle and milk slid down my throat, it felt as in my dream, a knife jabbed into my esophagus. It hurt every time I swallowed. The awful feeling of pain during my favorite ritual within my ritual devastated me. Because of my painful position, breakfast took twice as long and made me late for work.

Day in and day out, my life revolves around my job. I have a desk, a file cabinet that's empty, a phone and an office chair that has the swivel option. All this is pleasantly placed under a pale florescent light bulb that hums in 1.5 hour intervals.

What do I do at my desk? I call your house at the worst possible time and try and sell you credit cards, magazine subscriptions or solicit donations for the Kidney Foundation. Yes, I hate my job. I use the bathroom an average of five times a day. I don't really use the bathroom; I wash my hands. It helps me pass the time. I take my "bathroom breaks" once the humming light above me pauses for 1.5 hours and starts again. Between the humming, the pale lights, gray carpets, white walls and the one window that's heavily tinted, day light and life are kept outside of the still aquarium of an office.

Even my lunch breaks have become pitiful. I've resorted to my favorite single serving restaurant: McDonalds. Filet-o-fish, fruit punch, large fries and three single serving catsups. Maybe it was because I was a little sluggish from my uneasy sleep and the fact that I was hungry, but, I forgot about my chest pains that threatened me earlier at breakfast. I took that first bite and that same excruciating pain, like a knife straight through my esophagus, in the middle of my chest.

The weird thing was that it only hurt when I swallowed food. Lunch was so painful, I could not help but contort and convulse my body and moan in pain after every swallow. I finished my painful meal and I was late again to work from my break. I couldn't figure out why my chest hurt so badly when I ate. And why I felt perfect when I'm not eating. Work



finished and I went home. I didn't eat dinner that night; I was too scared to face the pain. That night I slept on the couch watching an infomercial about food dehydrators. I dreamt of eating beef jerky that I made with dried fruits that night.

"Beep, beep, beep". No snooze this time. I had to walk from the couch to the alarm clock. However, same routine: bathroom, Aqua Fresh, shower, then breakfast. I ate with the same pain; it hurt just the same to eat. The same pain for lunch and I skipped dinner again. This horrible beast of painful nuisance haunted me at every meal for four days. I was losing weight, not that I needed to. My body wasn't getting the energy it needed. I fell asleep early, often in front of the TV. I had vivid colorful dreams those nights. Dreams of being trapped in a house made of pizza and I couldn't eat my way out because of the pain. It was more like a nightmare.

I finally called in sick today and went to see a doctor. He couldn't figure out what was wrong with me either. But he did say it could be one of two things: a muscle strain or a torn esophagus. Thirty minutes later I'm waiting in the radiology room to get x-rayed. A nurse came and handed me a hospital gown to change into. I looked silly in my socks, underwear and a gown that ended just above my knees. I sat on the cold x-ray table waiting for the doctor. The florescent light above me and to the left also hummed.

In walked this short, older fellow. He was wearing a red cardigan sweater under his white lab coat. He shook my hand firmly and introduced himself as the doctor. His presence gave me this peaceful relief, like he had the answer. I was no longer nervous or scared. I trusted the doctor, he listened to my pain. I almost immediately expected his conclusion. He could have just said, "You are fixed," and I would have believed. But he said nothing; instead he fiddled with the x-ray video camera. A nurse pulled in a TV screen, a much larger TV screen than mine, and turned it on to a blank dark screen. The doctor sat me up straight and pointed the x-ray video camera at my chest. The doctor spoke a word and the nurse flipped the switch, and the TV screen lit up. All I could make out were thick curvy lines that seemed to blur around the edges. The doctor adjusted the machine to focus. He pointed to the screen and said "those are your ribs". He then moved the camera to my lungs and I watched them fill and release air. The doctor then pushed the x-ray video camera to the left side of my chest; I was looking at my heart beat on the TV screen. I didn't accept the fact that I was watching my heart at that moment. It took me a second to realize that I was watching my heart pump blood and keep me alive. As the nurse started talking to the doctor; I just kept staring at the image of my heart. The nurse's and doctor's conversation volume slowly faded, everything in the room suddenly disappeared except for me and my heart on that TV screen. And then the most amazing thing happened. As I watched my heart beat, I slowly felt it thump in my chest. Thump, thump, thump, thump. I could actually feel the blood rush through my veins as I watched my heart pulse with life. The only noise I



could hear was the beautiful beat of my heart as I watched it give me life on that TV screen. I accepted what I was seeing and feeling. I had a moment with my heart, my very reason of life. That was the most beautiful day of my life.

The next morning my chest pains were gone. The doctor called and said my pains were due to a muscle strain that should fade away soon. I ate four waffles that morning and a foot long subway sandwich for lunch with ease. I felt like a new man; I was alive and well. "Life is good" seemed to be my new motto. I thought a lot about seeing my heart beat and I constantly replayed the event in my mind. I thought a lot about my life after I had that moment at the doctors. How could something so beautiful be inside of me, this bland, complicated being that lives a routine ruled life? How could something so beautiful make such a lovely noise while I watch infomercials and rot on a couch in front of a TV? It's not fair that something so amazing gives me life even when it knows I'm not worthy to hold it in my chest. Since that most beautiful day forward I had a choice: find comfort in routine and structured concrete walls or choose life.

I chose the latter. I quit my job that day; not that I had an important role there, besides I hated that place. My boss will hire one of his nephews and pay him better than I ever was for the same duties. *Twentyfour across an eight letter word for favoritism of ones family members: nepotism.* So I quit and went surfing. Surfing is something that hasn't been in my routine in a while. I wanted to feel the sand and touch the water; I wanted to get sunburned and dirty my car up with sand and wet towels. I wanted surf wax to melt on the carpet of the floor. I want to be free and unconfined. So, I waxed up my board, took off my shirt, strapped on my leash and ran into that immense ocean. That cool yet comfortable water that completely surrounded me was refreshing. My feet and toes dragged in the water behind me relieved to be out of shoes as I paddled out to the waves. I swam in that water, much like a fish would when freed from his aquarium, and put into the ocean. The warm orange sun kissed my cheeks and the cool blue water washed away society's dryness that I had let crust over me. Then I paddled hard, stood up and caught a wave. And this movement of water pushed me along as I floated on the surface. I picked up speed, quickly turning and carving the surface of the water, just like in my flying dream I was so graceful with my flight, it was beautiful. I smiled so hard it hurt my cheeks, but that pain felt good to have. As I paddled back out to catch another movement of water, I swam under an oncoming wave. I dived deep down and through the face of that wave. And just like when I saw my heart beat, everything went silent and slow motion. I could feel the energy of the wave rush all around me as it pulled back my hair. Completely surrounded by the water, I was free and detached from reality for a moment. Just as when my heart sang to me. It felt like that feeling you get when someone who loves you gives you a hug. And all you can do is take a deep breath, close your eyes and accept that love. For that split moment under the water I was close to God. So close that I could see the wrinkles on the corner of his eyes when he



smiled back at me.

I once heard someone on TV say “life’s not fair,” and I agree. Every morning I wake up and face two decisions. I choose the one that’s “not fair,” the one whose grace beats within me. That grace I don’t deserve but receive fully. I sleep well now; my alarm clock still wakes me up. When I do wake up, I’m faced with two choices. I choose life.



*University of Hawaii-Kapi'olani Community College  
Board of Student Publications*