

Fantabulous!

Edited by David Bruce

“Fantabulous”: a portmanteau word created
from “Fabulous” and “Fantastic.”

Sometimes, exactly the right word has not yet
been created. When that happens, create your
own word.

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Josephine Saturday Bruce

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A Glory Moment

By Grant Burkhardt

Reporter: *“Mr. Burkhardt! Mr. Burkhardt! How’s it feel? How’s it feel to be a champion?”*

Oakland Athletics Number Four: *“Oh, man, it feels great. There’s nothin’ quite like it.”*

Reporter: *“What were you thinking on that last play?”*

A’s #4: *“Honestly? I don’t even know. There wasn’t much goin’ on up there. I just knew that I wanted the ball.”*

Let me straighten out a few facts about the interview excerpt you just read. First, we weren’t playing to be champions of the world; we were simply playing to finish on top of a Little League in a little baseball suburb of Pittsburgh. But, today, that championship game still feels like Game 7 of the World Series. From the outside looking in, that’s exactly what this game was: The Oakland Athletics against the St. Louis Cardinals. In reality, however, these two rosters weren’t filled with over-paid megastars; they consisted of (sometimes) highly talented eleven-year-olds playing only for eternal bragging rights. “Number Four” was me, nicknamed “Clutch” for the number of game-winning plays I made that season. The “reporter” was my best friend’s dad, using the neck of his celebratory beer bottle to conduct a very-fake-but-very-awesome mock interview. The “last play”? That, ladies and gentlemen, is the story longing to be told.

As an eleven-year-old baseball player, I peaked. I experienced my best days as an athlete in many sports before or near Y2K. Now, every time I hear Bryan Adams sing of the “Summer of ’69” or Bruce Springsteen rock his “Glory Days,” I think of my own. This game. This play. This moment.

The A’s took the field on a sweltering June afternoon as regular-season champions. We were nearly unblemished, falling only once in twenty games. Our opponent, the Cardinals, gave us much trouble in an early season victory at “The Park,” the site of that day’s league championship game. The atmosphere was just as hot as the still-rising temperatures. Everyone was excited to get the game started. After our coaches helped us cool off with a garden-hose-to-the-spine shower, we raced onto the diamond and prepared for the first pitch. Our flamethrower, a kid named SP, toed the rubber and heaved the ball toward home plate.

“STRIKE!”

“And now we go, boys!” was the message from the dugout. Our signature chatter began, loud as ever, before every pitch.

“Hey nonnnnn, one-five! Give it to him again!”

“Atta-boy, SP! Sit him down!”

He did just that. One, two, three. We couldn’t have paid for a better start.

We didn't have any luck at the plate in the bottom half of the first, though. Our leadoff man walked, but was stranded at second after three straight groundouts. The second inning ended exactly the same as the first. The score after two: nil-nil.

In the third, the offenses picked up some momentum. First, the Cardinals' best player crushed a high heater over the left-field fence for a solo home run and a 1-0 lead. After the inning, we got a speech from our coach: *"Boys, Vegas just called and they want their money back. They wanna know where the offense is. Show them why you're the champs."*

After another team cool-off, we went to work. I led off by cranking a fastball into the gap in left center for a double. Then, after a walk and a hard liner was caught by a very alert first baseman, our best hitter, Greg, stepped into the box. He worked the count full. Three balls, two strikes. Runners on first and second. Then, he got his pitch. Change-up, right down Broadway. I took off at the sound of aluminum striking leather, so I didn't see the ball hit the fence, but that didn't matter. I scored, and so did the runner on first. The real drama came after the second run touched home. The Cardinals defense missed its mark trying to catch Greg at third base, so while they were busy tracking down the ball, he was frantically sprinting home. It was going to be a close play. The ball got there just as he slid in...

“*SAFE!*” said the blue-clad umpire.

We celebrated the inside-the-park home run and a two-run lead, 3-1. But this game was *far* from over. The Cardinals didn’t reach the championship game by accident. After the exciting bottom of the third, the Redbirds started to pick away at our lead, scoring once in the fourth, and once more in the fifth to tie the game at three while our offense sputtered.

They had picked up some serious momentum, and we knew we were going to have to score in the bottom of the fifth to make sure we were at least tied going into our last at-bat.

Our half of the fifth inning started like every other one (except for the third) up until this point. The first two batters took their respective seats on the bench in order. But then, something remarkable happened. Out of nowhere, our bats awoke.

The first to arise was a very unlikely source, the last batter in our order, a kid named Joey. He found the courage to stand in against the Cardinals’ best pitcher and slap a base hit through the gap between first and second. His next task: steal second base to get into scoring position. If there was one thing I could say about Joey, it was that he had phenomenal speed. He got the sign from the third-base coach and when the pitcher dealt to the plate, Joey took off. The throw from

the opposing catcher was too late and Joey succeeded again. Now came the tough part, we had to drive him in.

The next pitch, to our leadoff hitter, was right down the middle, and he took advantage. Our bench leapt up and grabbed the fence while the ball soared toward the fence, struck it, and fell to the grass. Joey rounded third and crossed the plate, completing our two-out rally and giving us a 4-3 lead. That was all for the inning, however, as the next batter was too excited to make contact with the ball and struck out.

We had the lead going into the last inning and all we needed was three simple outs. I ran out to my position as it had been all year, third base, and prepared for the most nerve-racking twenty minutes of my athletic career. Our new pitcher, Christian, walked the first two Cardinal batters, most likely out of nervousness, and then settled in. He recorded two straight outs to move us within one batter of a championship. I think he realized the hugeness of the moment because he promptly threw the ball ten feet over the catcher's head, allowing the runners to advance to second and third. Now, we were all shaking a bit.

The situation: Two outs, red jerseys on second and third, and the count was worked to two balls and one strike. I stood at my place near the runner at third base and waited for Christian to throw the ball. The only words going through my mind were, *"I want the ball in my glove. I want the ball. I want the*

ball.” The batter, ironically the same one who crushed the third-inning home run, was anxiously awaiting the pitch as well. Christian set, and delivered.

CRRRACK!

The sharply hit ball took a hard hop in front of the plate and barreled my way. I pivoted hard to my left, engulfed the ball on its short hop, grabbed it with my right hand, and threw as hard as I could toward a championship. The ball zipped through the air toward the first baseman’s outstretched glove.

At that moment, time simply stopped.

Everyone froze, just waiting to make sure that the first baseman had actually caught the ball. There was a painfully long moment where there was a collectively skipped heartbeat. No one moved. No one breathed. But he caught it.

Exhale. And excitement. We celebrated on the field as we dog-piled on the pitcher’s mound. The feeling was absolute jubilation. I will never forget that moment: the moment when the world stopped turning as we won a championship.

The best story inside the story is what I heard at the party afterwards. A friend’s mom had taped the famous last play: the play that defined my “Glory Days.” But I still have such a vivid mental filmstrip of the play that I don’t plan on ever watching that video.

The moment in my head is way too good.

The Day I Didn't Listen To My Parents

By Chad Chambers

I have many great memories of when as a child but a not-so-great day occurred on a day in 1992 when I was six years old. It started out as a day of fun with my mom, my mom's friend and her daughter. My mom had been friends with Loddie since they were in high school and it just so happened that they had kids around the same time. My dad used to work during the day for about the first six years of my life so my mom would always hang out with Loddie and Genna, her daughter. Growing up, Genna and I became good friends; we really had no other choice since our moms were always together.

The day started off well with my mom telling me that Genna was going to come over to play. Genna was always a good playing partner because she was a tomboy and was willing to play anything that I wanted. In exchange for Genna to come over and play, we had to go run errands with our moms. This was the painful part; running errands consisted of going to the shopping mall, going to the Flower Factory and looking at all different kinds of flowers and decorations, the stuff kids hated. In order to play with Genna, I was stuck doing these mind-numbing errands. Genna and I would make the errands as fun as possible by playing hide and seek in the stores, which drove our moms crazy, and playing with the

toys that we found. We were mischievous kids, always trying to get into something and always wandering around the store without our moms' permission.

I don't know if our moms were ready to go home or they were just fed up with our antics, but we left the store and went back to my house where the moms would cook dinner. We were to have hamburgers on the grill and French fries. By this time my dad should be home and our moms would pawn us off on my dad so they can have a break from us. So that's what they did.

When we got back to my house, our moms started cooking up something in the kitchen while they talked about soap operas and other stuff that no one cared about except for women. My dad was in the back firing up the grill for the hamburgers, when Genna and I went out and asked him to pass the football with us in the back yard. He was always willing to spend time with his son and loved to play sports with my friends and me. So I walked around the house and grabbed the football out of the garage. We would pass the football until my mom would yell "dinner's ready" from inside the house.

Genna and I would take our food into the living room and watch Nickelodeon while the adults ate at the dinner table. After we finished dinner we took our plates into the kitchen for my parents to wash. While they were washing the

dishes, I thought that it would be a good idea to play tag in my living room, something that my parents would yell at me not to do in the house. They would always say, “Chad, you’re going to hurt yourself.” But just like most kids, I didn’t listen to authority. So since they were occupied washing the dishes and not paying much attention to us, I thought I would be slick and get away with it this time. The thought backfired on me.

We would run around the coffee table in my living room and try to catch each other. The coffee table was very close to my brick fireplace, so if you were to slip and fall, you would bust your head on the bricks. It was my turn to try and catch Genna and we had run around the table a couple times and I couldn’t seem to catch her. Being a competitor, I started to run a bit faster. As I was running around the corner of the table, I slipped and fell right against the brick fireplace. Blood mixed with tears were running down my face. Right when my head hit the bricks my parents could hear the impact and crying from inside the living room. Genna yelled at my parents to help. They were very scared and my mom was yelling, “We have to go to the hospital.” She kept asking me, “Did you hit your eye?” and “Can you see?” I was in such pain that it was hard for me to talk through my crying, so I didn’t reply. When my dad saw the cut, he went into the kitchen, grabbed a towel and applied pressure on the wound. On the ride to

the hospital, I was in extreme pain. I didn't know the effects that it would have on my sight, so I was very worried. When we arrived, the lady at the desk saw the pain I was in and immediately showed me to the doctor. Still in tears and intense pain, I lay down on the bed and the doctor went to work to patch up my cut. I had a gash about an inch long and two centimeters above my eye. In the end I ended up with 16 stitches right above my eye and had to wear an eye patch for two weeks. I was the talk of the school and had to explain my story what seemed like a hundred times.

What was supposed to turn out as a good night with one of my good friends turned out to be a night that I will never forget the rest of my life. There is a permanent scar above my eye so every time I look in the mirror I will always be reminded of the day I didn't listen to my parents.

Taco Ring

By Jessica Cibik

I can't say I even knew about the bakeoff until I was a part of it. That's just how my mom is, though; she finds something she knows we will enjoy and signs us up. And that is exactly what happened in March of 2000. I was in the fourth grade, enjoying the rights entitled to every kid, when I came home one day to my mom saying, "Hey Jess, how was school today? You are cooking dinner tonight."

"Moooom," I whined, "why can't you just cook dinner like normal?"

"Because," she replied, trying to mask her excitement, "you have one week to learn how to make a Taco Ring before the Second Annual Kid's Pillsbury Bakeoff!"

At the time I had no idea what she was talking about; however, based on her enthusiasm I knew enough not to question her. All I knew was I was in some sort of contest requiring me to cook dinner for the next week. I was thrilled, especially after I learned all the steps going into the preparation of the dish. For those who have never tried it, Taco Ring starts with a ring of crescent rolls which you pile ground sausage, diced onions and peppers, and shredded cheese onto before you run a roller over the crescent rolls to make a ring of tacos. Before this Pillsbury Bakeoff event, I always thought it was incredibly tasty.

After a little more explanation of the Pillsbury Bakeoff, I became more excited. I learned it was going to take place at the Great Lakes Science Center in downtown Cleveland, Ohio on March 18th. Kids between the ages of nine and thirteen could participate, but most of the kids were twelve or thirteen, which put me at a slight disadvantage because I was only ten years old. To enter me into the Bakeoff, my mom had to buy a Pillsbury product (she chose crescent rolls in order to make our family favorite Taco Ring) and put in my application at the Customer Service desk at our local Giant Eagle. At random, fifty contestants were drawn and placed into the Bakeoff. Unfortunately, I was not one of the lucky contestants chosen.

A week before the Bakeoff, however, one of the contestants could not make it and they notified us that I was the runner-up. So with a week to prepare, my mom and I went grocery shopping. We picked up about ten packages of Pillsbury crescent rolls, sausage, cheese, onions, peppers and Old El Paso taco seasonings; then we headed home. An hour later, my poor kitchen looked as if a stray dog had gotten into our fridge, freezer, and pantry and a caveman had attempted to use the stove top and oven. I was disheartened, but my mom insisted it would become easier with practice. "I'm not sure about that," my dad choked as he tried to swallow his only bite of burnt crescent roll filled with dry ground meat.

As usual, my mom was right and by the end of the week my Taco Ring was better than hers. Unfortunately, by the time I had perfected it my family had grown disgusted with it. “This again,” my five-year-old brother complained, “why doesn’t mommy cook dinner anymore? You need to learn a different dinner, Jess.”

Finally, my big day arrived, or our big day I suppose I should say because my mom was probably more excited than all the kids there...combined. We walked into the Great Lakes Science Center and immediately knew where to go. The common area, which was usually set up with fascinating experiments, now contained fifty conventional ovens. We carried our supplies over to my designated work area and one of the administrators came over to give me my Pillsbury backpack. Inside I found a Pillsbury t-shirt, apron, hat and \$50. My mom and I joked these were enough reasons to participate. Ten minutes before noon, we were instructed to wash up and ready our utensils. Since we were given only one hour to have the dish prepared and baked, time was as precious as nectar to a hummingbird. We all watched the clock tick to the top of the hour, and on zero a mad scurry of kids started chopping, peeling, dicing, stirring and mixing. I practically knew how to prepare the Taco Ring in my sleep thanks to my mom’s conditioning the prior week, but preparing it in a different environment was slightly disruptive. Since all the par-

ents were instructed to watch from behind the line of ovens, I was entirely on my own to cook this time. Also, the *Aurora Advocate*, my hometown newspaper, was there to write a story about my experience (again at the request of my all-knowing mom). After my own part of chopping, peeling, dicing, stirring and mixing was complete, I placed the dish in the oven and waited for the golden brown color to appear.

During the cooking time, at last I was able to fully answer the questions of the reporter from the *Aurora Advocate*. About the same time, Dan Deely, a well-known Cleveland radio host, saw the interview occurring and decided to ask me a few questions of his own. Thanks to the perfect timing not only did I appear in our hometown paper but I was on the radio as well. Talk about a big day for a ten-year-old. Towards the end of the interview, though, I saw my mom pacing back and forth with her neck craned trying to see inside the darkened oven. She was not allowed to physically help me in the process, but I knew what my mom in distress looked like. I ran over to my cooking area and sure enough the Taco Ring was finished. Later, mom had her own interview with the reporter in which she stated how nervous she was because we were using the newer ovens; she was convinced that because I had used the older oven at home to practice I would not bring the dish out in time.

I clearly remember carefully lifting my final masterpiece out of the oven and proudly placing it on the counter in front of me. One of the judges glanced over and smiled, “Wow, does that look tasty.” I smiled from the inside out; that was all the judging I needed. Third place won \$250, second place won \$500, first place won a desktop computer and the grand-prize-winning contestant won a trip for a family of four to Florida. We all longed for that Florida vacation, or even the \$250, but I think anyone who attended will agree that the experience alone was priceless. Another perk to the contest was a free pass to the Science Center for the day and a ticket to see a movie at the OmniMax theatre.

My mom and I raced around the Science Center excitedly chatting about all the day had included. We were not paying very close attention to the science exhibits scattered throughout the rest of the Center, because we were so anxious for the judging to start. Finally, the time had come and we ran back to the baking area. Unfortunately, even though one judge complimented my Taco Ring, his opinion was not enough for my dish to place. Mom and I were not so disappointed, though; we had a great day and were able to now sit calmly through our OmniMax movie, *Everest*, and relax. Being there, with all the excitement of the kids, the approval of the judges, and the anticipation of the results along with the free Pillsbury items and the \$50, made all our hard practice seem

worth it at the end of the day. However, my family refuses to eat Taco Ring ever again.

From Homecoming Court to Saturday School

By Lauren Fett

Everyone dreams of having the perfect senior homecoming. The date-of-your-dreams, the eye-popping dress, and the perfect hairdo. And of course, every girl wishes to be nominated as her class's homecoming attendant. To ride through the homecoming parade as if you're the queen, smiling and waving at all the spectators. To stand on stage at the bonfire wishing your team good luck in hopes that they'll pull out a victory.

All the girls at my high school fit this description to a tee, with the exception of my friend Taylor and me. It's not that we didn't love to dance. Every chance we had to bust a move, we would take complete advantage of the situation and let loose. Our favorite place to dance was in her shiny, red Ford Mercury, which we appropriately titled Roxy. It's not that we didn't enjoy finding the perfect dress and the one opportunity a year we had to get all dolled up either. In fact, Taylor always had the most expensive, glamorous dresses. She comes from a wealthy family and loves to show it. I loved dances; I just dreaded all the drama that went along with it.

It was sixth period and Mrs. Haviland was just about to make the highly anticipated announcement on who the attendants for each class were going to be. We had previously voted that morning so of course the hot topic that day was

whom you voted for and why that girl was on the list. Mrs. Haviland was the type of lady who had to be in charge of every organization and she was coordinating our homecoming dance this year. With great excitement, she came over the public announcement system and began to list the lucky ladies, starting with the freshman attendant. Seeing as how I really wasn't interested in finding out who won, I was busily talking about my weekend to my friend, and soon-to-be escort, Elliot, when I heard my name from over the P.A. I immediately paused. Was I really on court? A chorus of "Congrats" sung through the room as my classmates congratulated me. Great, I thought. Just what I need. Another reason for the already vicious girls to hate me even more. I was the goody-goody girl at school. A 4.0 student, standout athlete, highly involved in school organizations, and worst of all, I was nice to everyone. Many of the girls in my grade hated me for this and were extremely jealous, but it didn't bother me. I had my best friend, Taylor, and that's all I needed. After I was nominated, the vicious remarks started flowing and cutting a lot deeper while being more personal than before.

After about two days, I couldn't stand to be at lunch with everything that was being said behind my back, so Taylor thought it would be a great idea to skip lunch and eat at a nice Italian restaurant, Carmine's, instead. I was all for this idea. First of all, I never got in trouble for anything; second, we

had a new principal; and third, our lunch-period teacher was gone. It seemed like the perfect opportunity. So instead of eating the drab cafeteria food, we started walking to the parking lot where we ran into a few football players. We asked them if they wanted to join us; however, they all laughed in our faces and said they hope we don't get caught. I got nervous after that, but Taylor kept reassuring me everything would be fine and there was no way we could get caught.

We sped off in Roxy towards Carmine's, rocking out to our favorite car jams. Inside Carmine's, we happily ordered and laughed about how lame everyone back at school is and how no one knew we were skipping. While we were eating our delicious meals, I noticed a familiar car parked outside by the building. It was exactly the same car that my cross-country coach had. "Oh no!" I yelled. "Tay, I think Coach Saner is here!" Our eyeballs shot out of our sockets as we devoured the rest of our meal and snuck out the back door in case Coach was up front. The entire way back to school, I'm freaking out, hoping that wasn't my coach. I knew skipping was a bad idea.

When we got back to the high school, I scanned the parking lot for my coach's car. I found it in the usual spot by the stadium and breathed a sigh of relief. Taylor was mad at me for being so paranoid about everything, but we thought it was funny and we laughed as we hurried back inside. There were a

few minutes left before class started so we ran around telling everyone what happened. We thought we were so cool. No one would expect Taylor and me to break the rules. Our glory was short-lived, however. The new principal, Mr. Morton, stepped into the hall and called Taylor and me into his office. My heart sank all the way to my gut and my throat became so tense I didn't think I could swallow. Taylor insisted that he just wanted to talk to us about a leadership conference. I, on the other hand, knew what he wanted as we slid inside. Tears were already beginning to well in my eyes before I could answer his first question. With stern eyes and a stiff smile, he was waiting to sentence me to my death. When he asked us where we had gone, Taylor thought she could play it cool and pretend like nothing happened. He then broke the news and I felt like a complete idiot. Our school had recently installed cameras in the parking lot and there was even an article on it in the paper the day before. Not only did he have us on tape, he also had a student and teacher tell him that they saw us leave the building. I immediately broke down sobbing and told him every detail. Taylor looked at me horrified, but he already knew so there was no sense in lying. He told us how disappointed he was. Teachers had been telling him that we were two of the best students and he had us in his office ready to set disciplinary actions. He proceeded to put the

dagger through my heart with four simple words, “I’m calling your parents.”

Taylor’s parents were going through a divorce at the time so her receiving a Saturday School was the least of their worries. My parents were the complete opposite. Dad’s a teacher and hard-core disciplinarian while Mom just follows what he says. As Mr. Morton is on the phone with my mom, my eyes were bleeding puppy-dog tears as I could sense the disappointment through the phone. After it was all said and the paperwork was filed, we were set to serve our Saturday School the morning of homecoming. I was so frustrated! The worst part was Taylor wasn’t even crying; she was smiling! I put an end to that. “Taylor! Why aren’t you crying?” I sobbed. “Cry! It will make them think you’re sorry even if you aren’t.” She obeyed my request when she realized how upset I was.

That weekend was one of mixed emotions. Friday night I walked down the field as senior attendant, and then woke up early Saturday morning to serve my punishment from 8 a.m. to noon. After several attempts to reschedule my hair appointment and a change of dinner plans to accommodate my punishment, I was finally at the dance. Taylor and I were too tired from our early morning, so we sat on the sidelines the entire night. I realize now that getting a Saturday School really wasn’t that bad, but at the time I had never gotten in trouble

before, so it was a really big deal to me. To this day, I still get sassy remarks from my friends about how much I cried that day. Taylor and I look back on it and laugh. It was definitely a homecoming weekend to remember.

Hide and Seek

By Alexa Frazee

I spent most of my senior year of high school being grounded. If I wasn't grounded, I was doing things that my parents hadn't yet found out about that would've probably *gotten* me grounded. One such occasion was when I had already gotten in trouble for breaking curfew, and my parents condemned me to the house for a weekend with no visitors. Although this didn't seem terribly unreasonable, I didn't see why I should have to waste a weekend sitting in my prison of a house.

That Saturday night, my good friend Bryan, a varsity wrestler, was having a party at his frat house on the Baldwin-Wallace campus. I wasn't about to miss it, especially since kegs were promised to be present. So while my family was watching their last few television programs, I pouted and stomped up to my room pretending to be very disappointed at not being allowed to attend this party. I immediately turned my lights off, and began to arrange my pillows so that it looked like I was fast asleep in my bed. My parents were prone to coming into my room, so for extra precaution I tucked my American Girl doll into the top of the sheets so that some of her blonde hair was sticking out of the covers on the pillow where my head was supposed to have been. After I felt satisfied with my craftsmanship of the bulge be-

neath my sheets, I lay down on the floor beside my bed listening to my i-Pod and checking every so often to try to detect if anyone was still awake.

After I heard the last person get into bed, I threw my purse, a party outfit, and my car keys out my bedroom window. Then I crept downstairs very slowly trying not to wake anyone, but knowing that if I did I could always pretend I was just getting something to drink (which really wasn't far from the truth.) Seeing that I was still in my pajamas, there would be no reason for them to suspect anything. I crept so slowly and stepped so lightly that it took me about fifteen minutes to make it down the small flight of stairs. My heart felt like it was pounding through my chest, and I was sure that my heavy breathing was going to wake someone up if the creaking steps didn't. Eventually, I made it all the way down without anyone waking up, and then proceeded to tippy-toe over to our laundry room, which had the quietest door and led straight to freedom: the outdoors. I very carefully opened the door, and then made sure to leave it unlocked so that I could make my silent return early the next morning. I picked up my clothes on the opposite side of the house and changed into my outfit in the shadows of my house. Then I quietly opened my SUV door, and put it into neutral. Pushing it into the street by myself was quite a challenge because we have a relatively long driveway, but when I finally made it far enough

away from the house to start it up, I got a huge boost of adrenaline.

I raced over to my friend's frat house and found it brimming with gorgeous guys, and I was the only girl there for them to focus their attention on. Because of the circumstances, I was able to step right up to the beer pong table without waiting in line. Throughout the game I kept receiving annoying phone calls from my other guy friends who were pissed that I wasn't hanging out with *them* instead. Eventually I started ignoring their calls, and sent them straight to my answering machine. What I didn't realize was that I had forgotten to change my voicemail back since the last time my phone had gotten taken away, and I was directing anyone who wanted to get a hold of me to call me at home. The perturbed boys thought that it would serve me right to call my parents and inform them that their sweet angelic daughter wasn't in bed like she claimed.

Unaware, I continued running the beer pong table and beating team after team. Apparently the first call that was made to my house my parents took as a prank call, and hung up on them. The second time, they looked in my room and told the caller that they must be mistaken because they saw me in bed. The boys didn't give up, though, and told my parents to see what happens when they try to wake me up. When my mom went to touch what she thought was my shoulder,

her hand sunk into the makeshift body of pillows. She was terrified and furious. She threw down the phone and sent my father on a mission to search the Baldwin-Wallace campus for me, and then to bring me home using whatever means necessary.

An hour into his search my dad hit a dead end and had to turn around in an alleyway. Unfortunately for me, this alleyway led directly to the backyard I was parked in. He drove through and shined the spotlight he had brought onto my Mazda Tribute. It was unmistakable because of the strip of duct tape we used to tape the back window-hatch closed. He pulled around to the front of the house, and sat in the driveway trying to call me to give me a chance to come out and save a *shred* of dignity.

I had already turned my phone off by that point so that the annoying group of boys couldn't keep disrupting my night, but my dad took this as a "come and get me" attitude. He marched up to the door, just as my two opponents had finished their loser lap around the house, naked. They scurried into the house, with no idea who this large balding man was. Then they ran laughing down into the basement, where the festivities were going on and described the man they had just run into. I froze. The man they described sounded way too familiar. He started pounding on the front door. All the guys were terrified and no one wanted to be the one who had

to answer it. I hid in a nearby room crouched beside a refrigerator, underneath a cabinet. One guy finally mustered up the courage to answer the door (probably because all of the other guys were throwing him up the stairs shouting that since he lived there, he should have to do it). The boy talked to my father and then yelled down to me “Alexa, I’m sorry, your dad saw your car out back. He’s threatening to call the cops. You have to leave.”

I waited, hoping that this was a big joke and that my dad wasn’t really at the door. Then I heard his threat. He yelled it down to the whole basement. “Alex, if you don’t get your ass up here right now I’m calling the police!” I slumped out of my hiding spot and sheepishly made the walk of shame to daddy’s car, overcome with embarrassment and disappointment while all of the frat guys watched and snickered from the windows. He waited for the yelling until both of our doors were closed. As we drove away, I was shocked to find that he didn’t start screaming. He didn’t say one word actually. We just drove -in silence- until we got back to our house. I solemnly got out of the car, and walked into the house like it was death row and my name had just been called. My mother was waiting for me at the door, hands on hips. She more than made up for my dad’s silence on the car ride home. She sat me down and reminded me for what seemed

like an hour how much grief I caused her and how bad of a parent I made her feel like.

Needless to say, the weekend grounding was extended, and my phone was put back into hiding. I had secretly removed the SIM card while I was tucked away next to the refrigerator in the frat house so that I could still maintain communication, but my parents found out that later that night when they tried to turn the phone on and it wouldn't activate. I had already transferred it into a replacement phone, which they found me texting on when they busted open my door to question me about it. Once again, the grounding was extended even further.

Fortunately for me, my parents broke before I did. By the end of senior year I had no more rules to abide by, and my mom had to increase her frequency to the hair salon to hide all of the new grays that were rearing their ugly heads. Within time the lack of rules proved to tame me, because there was no one to rebel against anymore. I still did the things that I wanted to do, but I didn't do them just to spite my parents; I did them for me. I learned a lot about parenting from all of the attempts that they made with me. I learned what works, what almost works, and what makes matters worse. I think my high school years were a good character-building time for all of us. We learned a lot, and we're closer now because of it.

I'm a Big Kid Now

By Alexa Frazee

Ashley and I were halfway through our sophomore year of high school when we started to really feel the onset of rebellion. Ashley was my best friend and partner in crime. Every day before class she would drive her car over to my house, and we would either walk to school or have my dad drive us, depending on the day of the week. One day we were feeling particularly restless with the monotony that defined our lives, so we came up with the idea to play hooky. Neither of us had ever done it before, so we wanted to plan out every detail with the hopes of making it a successful first time.

We pushed our homework aside and mapped out a game plan. Ashley was going to bring over a six-pack of Mike's Hard Lemonade, and we were going to stay home from school the very next day. It would work out perfectly because neither of us had any tests, and it was one of the days that both of my parents would be leaving early for work. Although we didn't have to worry about my parents, we would have to wait outside for about an hour after we "left for school" so that my grandma, who would come over on mornings that my dad was not there, could help my younger brother, Carter, get to school. His classes started later than ours, and as soon as the big yellow bus encompassed him and began to drive away, my grandmother would return home to

tend to her own life and return to her husband. After that, it would be smooth sailing for us to relax and spend the day drinking and watching movies while enjoying the total lack of supervision.

The day had come: it was time for us to execute our well-thought-out plan. Ashley came over at the usual time and hid the drinks in my room until we “finished getting ready for school.” Then we walked outside, and casually sat on the side of my house as we dialed the necessary numbers to call ourselves in sick. It was quite a task not to burst out laughing, and it took at least five trial runs each before we thought we had our excuses committed to memory. Once we had both finished and hung up our cell phones, we felt extremely relieved and started goofing off while waited for my grandma’s car to pull away.

Carter had already left for school when it started getting colder outside, and time kept ticking but Grandma’s car didn’t budge. We decided to give it another half hour, and if she didn’t leave, then we were just going to sneak back into the house anyways. Of course nothing ever goes as planned, so after the half hour was up, we crept into the house, only to be intercepted by my grandma. We explained to her that it was a testing day and that because we had finished early, we were allowed to go home. The kind old lady just clapped her hands together and shouted, “Oh, how wonderful! I’ll just

leave you two girls alone then. Have a good day!” Ashley and I, pleased with our quick thinking, proceeded up to my room with an armful of junk food while trying not to burst out laughing.

While we were eating and reminiscing, we started to talk about all of the things that we wanted to do before we graduated from high school. I got out a notebook and a pen, and we started to write them all down. First on the list, and first to be crossed off, was “skip school.” We listed it mainly as a trophy of our recent accomplishment that we wanted due credit for. Following it, were things like “get a detention,” “go to school drunk,” “buy condoms,” “go skinny dipping,” and a bunch of other silly things that rebellious teenage girls would find fascinating.

Since we were already able to cross one item off the list, we decided to make it a productive day and try to knock off another. We had an entire day with no supervision, so Ashley and I ransacked my mom’s closet, put on one of her work suits and a pair of stilettos, and stood side by side as we stared at our reflections in the mirror. Today, I think that we looked like we were trying too hard, and that it wasn’t working. Nevertheless, after we put the finishing touches on (too much makeup and some dark lipstick), we were very satisfied with the results. Then, Ashley and I, feeling confident that we

didn't look like silly girls playing dress-up, headed off to the local store and headed straight for the condom section.

We felt extremely nervous as we made our selection, Warming Sensations, and could feel multiple sets of eyes on us as we made the march of shame in Mommy's clothes to the cash register. Of course, we had to grab a few other things so that it would look like we had more of a purpose for being there. We settled on a *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and some more junk food (something every "successful business woman" needs for her lunch break). Items in hand, we went to the checkout counter. We had previously decided who would have to carry the items, and who would have to claim them as her own to pay for. I had to do the latter of the two. After a few minutes of blushing and giggling as our items were rang up and bagged, we walked out the front door feeling victorious. It's funny how such a simple purchase on a day off can make you feel that way when you're so young. We drove back home, and were able to cross one more thing off our list.

The next day at school all of our friends were asking where we were, but we just snickered and pretend-coughed and said almost simultaneously, "*We were sick.*" We handed in our fake notes and were feeling confident that we would be "feeling sick" again very soon. Halfway through the day I received a text from my dad saying that he got a call from the

school verifying the note that he had allegedly written for me. He lied for me so that he could handle the matter himself after he got out of work. Ashley's parents, on the other hand, were not so kind. They threw her under the bus, and shortly after, Ashley was called down to the office to be sentenced to a day of in-school suspension.

Ashley was in tears and grounded indefinitely, and I had a stern talking to with a week of no cell phone. Just like that, our most perfect day was crushed, and it took only a couple of phone calls. After that, we got better at breaking the rules. And by graduation, we had crossed everything off of our silly little list.

Snow White, Snow Bright

By Chanel Glenn

“Look, Chanel, I don’t think he’s coming. It’s been over an hour!”

Aurea was right. I’d been waiting long enough, and this wasn’t the first time Shawn had stood me up. We were supposed to go to prom together, maybe even start dating before that. But how could I expect those things to go well if he couldn’t even meet up with me on a regular day?

“I’m gonna call him one more time,” I said with little optimism. “Maybe something happened. I don’t understand how we could’ve talked 10 minutes before he asked me to meet him here, and now he just decides to NOT answer the phone? That just doesn’t seem right.” So, I dialed again, and the phone rang again, and he didn’t answer...again.

Reese chuckled. “All right, listen. I’m gonna call someone else to come over and keep you company. I just don’t wanna see you sittin’ here alone while me and Aurea cuddle and stuff. That’s not right.”

“Well, just wait a few more minutes longer, he might call...” I couldn’t understand why I just kept on trying when I knew he wasn’t coming.

“No, I’m gonna call my boy Jordan; you’ll like him, don’t worry.”

After some brief consideration, I gave in. Reese called his friend from Mayfield, who was a little skeptical at first. Apparently he'd been put in a similar situation before, and his friends had dealt him short.

"Yeah she's cute, don't worry! You know I wouldn't let you down like that...just come down!" persuaded Reese. I honestly didn't think this Jordan guy would even bother driving 20 minutes in all this snow for a blind date, but when Reese hung up the phone with a reassuring grin, I knew it was official.

He had us waiting for much more than 20 minutes, and I was sure that he'd be another no-show just like Shawn. Thankfully, after almost an hour, Reese's phone vibrated and he went downstairs to unlock his screen door.

"Is my hair okay?" I panicked to Aurea. "Oh God I hope he's cute, he BETTER be cute..."

Within a couple minutes of Reese being downstairs, the door slowly opened and in strolled in two guys, one lingering behind the other. He seemed tall enough, and pretty skinny. There wasn't a drop of lint visible on his black thermal, which matched his black skullie, which barely hid his long black braids that drifted past his shoulders. Afraid to look at his face, I eventually worked my way to what was a surprisingly familiar yellow complexion, and as both our eyes widened in

recognition, he quickly declared, “Oh shit, you’re Shawn’s girl!”

It was true, we had met before, and I was with Shawn. The one and only time he kept his word on one of our “mini-dates” was when he came to pick Aurea and me up from a basketball game. All of his friends rode in two separate cars, and the one he was in happened to be Jordan’s all-black 2007 Monte Carlo, paid in full. Shawn introduced us as we entered his car, and during the whole ride to his house all we could talk about was how cute the driver was.

“I think he went to school with us.”

“He’s so cute! And his car...wow!”

“I know, but I’m talking to Shawn, so I guess I gotta let you have him. UGH!”

Despite our planning, neither of us ever got to say much to him. Aurea wound up meeting Reese, who was driving the all-red Monte Carlo behind Jordan’s, and I was with Shawn, of course. He did wind up taking us home, but that car ride was just as quiet as the first. Neither of us thought we’d ever see his gorgeous face or car again, but we were obviously wrong.

“You’re Shawn’s girl!” Boy, if I were as light as him I’d have probably been red as soon as he said that, but luckily my embarrassment wasn’t as obvious.

“Oh goodness, no I’m not!” I answered, “He’s just my prom date! He stands me up too much for me to ever be his girl. We just talked that’s it!” If you couldn’t hear it in my voice you could see the shyness in my smile, especially since the inch-deep dimple in my right cheek was barely visible.

“Oh! I forgot you two met before! My bad,” giggled Reese, and Aurea was laughing right along with him. I had no idea how this would play out with him knowing I was supposed to be there with his friend. I didn’t even think we’d be able to hold a conversation.

To my astonishment, we did exchange words, and several of them. After breaking the ice with the basic questions of how old we were, what school we went to, and things like that, we were able to comfortably talk and laugh about how I met Shawn and what was supposed to be happening between us.

I was still very shy, and everyone could tell. While Aurea and Reese cuddled and watched TV., Jordan started making hints towards us doing the same thing. I felt a little uncomfortable for obvious reasons: he and Shawn were friends, and I didn’t want anything getting back to him that could ruin reputations or relationships; we were almost complete oppo-

sites, and light-skinned boys weren't exactly my type (I felt like they were out of my league since I was so dark-skinned, and they usually go for light-skinned girls with long hair anyway). I also kind of felt like he was just doing his friend a favor by coming in the first place, and knowing who I was made it more likely for him to be taking one for the team.

After a few hours of hanging out, Aurea's mom called and wanted her home before her suspicious father got there. We rode home in Jordan's wonderfully gorgeous Monte Carlo, and after dropping her off it was my turn to go. Jordan, however, had other plans.

"So, what do you wanna do?" he asked me, a question that I wasn't expecting at all.

"Um, I don't know," I whispered. "It's pretty bad out here and I can't think of anything. What do you wanna do?"

"It's up to you, sweetheart. I don't come down this way too often so I don't really know either."

I suggested that we just park somewhere and talk since neither of us could think of anything to do on our first outing, so I directed him to the church parking lot near my house. As we pulled up, I was reminded of how much snow would be covering the lot.

"Wait, I don't think we should park here anymore. I forgot they don't shovel it too often since no one comes here on weekdays, and it looks pretty deep."

“Well, we’re basically here now, and we won’t get stuck. Trust me.” So I did, but as soon as we parked I knew it was a bad idea.

I tried to remain optimistic through our conversation. He kept me smiling and laughing, which was always a good thing, but in the back of my mind I kept thinking that we would have a hard time getting out of this snow. Eventually my mother called and asked me to come home because of the bad weather, and I agreed. Jordan started his car and put it in drive, but it wouldn’t move. He calmly chuckled, then put it in reverse. Still no movement. After trying this about six more times, his gorgeous all-black Monte Carlo moved only about eight inches either way.

“It’s cool. I’ll get us out,” he reassured me. And with the utmost confidence, he stepped out into the almost knee-deep snow with no coat or gloves, and began shoveling the snow from around each tire with his bare hands.

“You can’t be serious,” I laughed. “I hope you don’t expect to get anywhere like that.”

“We’ll be fine, I’m gonna get us out of this. Just watch.”

“But it’s still snowing, and you can’t do it alone. At least let me help you.” As I opened the door to get out, he jerked upright and panted, “No! Don’t get out! I want you to stay in the car where it’s warm. I’m very stubborn and I’m GOING to get us out. Please get back in the car.”

A little startled, I said okay and closed the door, listening to the radio and trying to enjoy the heat. I thought it was really cute that he was so stubborn, but realistically I knew he couldn't do it alone. Finally I got out and started kicking the snow from the other side of the car, and he decided to let me try and help.

“Do you know how to drive?” he asked me.

“A little,” I answered, knowing I'd never driven in any weather this bad. He told me to get in the car and press the gas while he pushed it from behind. So I did, and the car moved about five feet forward. Then it stopped again, and the tires began rotating wildly in place. I opened the door and shouted, “I'm going to get some shovels.”

“No!” he howled. “I'm GONNA get us out of this! I told you I would.”

“But, Jordan, I live right around the corner. I'll be right back and we can shovel the snow the *right* way. Trust me, sweetheart, it's the only way.”

“Man, I'm tellin' you I'm stubborn, and if you leave I might not be here when you get back.”

“I know, Jordan, but it'll make things a whole lot easier,” I said sweetly. He ultimately gave in, but not without repeating his warning.

“Okay, Chanel, but I might not be here when you get back...”. I nodded, and began my now knee-deep journey to my big yellow house around the corner.

On the way there I saw neighbors everywhere trying to do the same thing we were. They were frantically shoveling around their cars that were parked randomly all around the street, and some even had their dogs kicking up snow. I finally reached my house after about a five-minute walk that should have been only one, and my parents questioned me as soon as I slid into the house.

“Where have you been? And what took you so long to get here?” my mother demanded.

“C’mon, Mom. It’s bad out there! Can you open the garage so I can get the shovels?”

“What do you need those for? I don’t know where you think you’re going to go with them.”

Knowing she wouldn’t approve of me rushing out into the snow to help some boy, I thought of a lie. “My friend Alexis is stuck in the parking lot and I need to get her out. She’s the one who brought me home.”

“Mmm hmm...,” she moaned skeptically. She was pretty good at knowing when I was lying, and I could only hope her senses weren’t tingling now. “I don’t believe that. She can get herself out the same way she got herself in.”

“But, Ma, she can’t, and I’m going to help her. Please! We’ll talk about it when I get back, I promise.” We continued like this while I made my way to the garage, and it wasn’t long before she was yelling at me from afar while I dragged our two shovels through the snow. It was so cold that even *my* nose was turning red, but I was determined to show Jordan that I would come back for him.

There was a problem, however. The closer I got to the church parking, the harder it was to see his gorgeous all-black Monte Carlo, and I thought it was simply the falling snow blurring my vision. But to my disappointment, it wasn’t. The car was missing, and so was he!

He had really done it. He had shoveled himself out of the lot with his bare hands, and he had warned me he would. I couldn’t believe it, and as I stood there in wide-eyed amazement, all I could do was smile in disbelief. My eyes lowered to my misty white knees, and I slowly pivoted myself and headed back home.

I wasn’t upset that he’d gotten out without me; I was upset that he’d left without saying goodbye or exchanging phone numbers. We had no other possible way of getting in touch with each other, and I couldn’t call and ask Reese for his number because his cell phone was broken. I knew our whole day together meant nothing if we couldn’t talk to each

other. I was in honest despair, and my parents immediately saw it as I staggered back into the house.

“Well?” exclaimed my mother.

“She got out,” I mumbled, and crept upstairs without saying much more. I sadly removed my cold wet layers of clothing, and as I laid down facing the ceiling, I tried to forget the gorgeous all-black Monte Carlo and the even more gorgeous face that drove inside. I was sure it was over, and I had nothing to show for it.

Suddenly my phone vibrated and rang beside me, and it showed a number I did not recognize. I jumped up and answered.

“Hello?”

“Hello? What’s up?”

“Who is this?”

“It’s Jordan.”

It *was* Jordan, and I couldn’t believe it. He said he’d called Reese’s house and got my phone number from him after he asked Aurea, and that as soon as he’d gotten out of the lot he circled a street near mine trying to find me walking. He’d looked for almost ten minutes, but since he didn’t know exactly where I lived, he’d driven up a hill next to my street until he’d reached the top and figured I was gone.

I was so excited and happy that’d he’d done all that for me! I was even more excited that we had each other’s phone

numbers that we could use whenever we wanted. It was a miracle to me that things worked out the way they did, and within a month afterwards he'd asked me to be his girlfriend, and I couldn't have been happier.

Weight Watchers

By Chanel Glenn

Coming out of high school, I was a very active person and considered to have a high metabolism because of it. I played three different sports all year around, and although I was a very picky eater, I still ate like a homeless person. Pizza with no cheese, chicken with no sauce, cinnamon rolls drowned with icing, McDonald's french-fries covered in salt and pepper, apples and peanut butter, strawberries and sugar—my diet wasn't exactly balanced, but it seemed to keep *me* healthy and in shape. As a result, the thought of college food didn't bother me as much as it did my parents, particularly because of my already strange eating habits.

“I sure hope they have enough things you like to eat up there and you don't starve to death,” they would often say to me. “Gaining the freshmen fifteen should be the least of your problems.” So on my first day at Ohio University, gaining weight really *was* last on my list of expected occurrences, and all I could do was hope that my parents were right about the food selections.

Determined to beat the infamous freshmen fifteen, I decided to do what I did best—play a sport. After my first full week of school, I tried out for the Club Volleyball Team, which did its job with keeping me actively in shape for about a week and a half. Unfortunately, I didn't make it past the

third cut, so I decided to switch to plan B. I started going to the Ping Center, the school's local fitness building, every other night to run and lift weights. This seemed like a great idea until I started telling myself that it was okay to miss a day or two because of homework. One night turned into three, three into four, four into a week, and before I knew it I lacked the motivation to work out anymore. I was quickly running out of options and decided to do what I hadn't planned on doing until my sophomore year—join the university's Varsity Track and Field team.

I joined only a week after the team had started practicing, so I wasn't far behind at all. The 8 a.m. lifting and afternoon running quickly put me back in my previous mode of fitness, and along with longer days and sleepier nights came what my family and I had previously feared. I started eating like an athlete again, and breakfast and dinner ultimately became my two favorite times of day. To my surprise, I never had much of a problem finding things to eat around these times, having an obvious infatuation with French toast and pasta with marinara sauce while squeezing ice cream in every night after dinner. In my opinion, I was living the dream: eating what I wanted, drinking what I wanted, and staying in shape while doing it. Everything seemed to be working out perfectly, until the eighth week of our fall quarter.

A major party was going on one Friday night, and I hadn't been wearing much but sweatpants and T-shirts because of practice. I was so excited to finally dress-up again, and so I went through all of my jeans until I found the ones I wanted to wear for the night. I had to jump a little to get them over my hips, which wasn't anything new, but the major problem came after that. I couldn't seem to zip them up all the way without lying down on my bed, and when I finally did, the buttons couldn't reach each other. I was a little surprised, but realizing how old the pants were, I calmly took them off and tried on my second choice of jeans. Still no luck. Before I knew it, I had gone through four pairs of jeans, and none of them fit anymore!

I didn't think it could happen to me, but it did. Despite all my attempts to stay active, I had still managed to gain weight. I hadn't gained the entire freshmen fifteen, but I had still put on enough of it to change my pants size. It wasn't until talking with my weight lifting coach that I realized the cause of this unexpected change. He explained to me that I wasn't getting fat—I was gaining muscle. Our intense morning lifts and practices did what they were supposed to do by making me extremely hungry, and combining that with eating so much at dinner made me gain muscle, which weighs more than fat. He said it was happening to the entire team, and was hitting me harder than I thought because I was a freshman. The quarter

wasn't over and I hadn't quite figured out how to properly balance my meals, so eating what I wanted whenever I wanted caused me to unknowingly gain weight. I believed I was gaining some fat as well as muscle, so my coach recommended I try to fight my enormous hunger and watch what I ate a little more carefully.

It all made sense—while I didn't quite look or feel bigger, I actually was, and it wasn't because I had almost become fat and lazy. Going into my second quarter I understood that no one is exempt from the freshmen fifteen, and you can't just go into school assuming that since you're focused on one aspect of being healthy you're free from the other. In order to avoid gaining the weight, you have to evenly spread your focus to both sides of wellbeing: physical fitness and a good diet. Just because you work out a lot doesn't mean you can eat what you want, and just because you're "on a diet" doesn't always mean you don't have to exercise.

I followed my coach's advice, and when I returned from winter break people were asking me if I'd lost weight. I started eating healthier on top of exercising, and although I couldn't and didn't want to lose the muscle I had built, I did lose the fat. A few weeks into winter quarter I saw someone I had met in the fall—she was so big I asked one of my other friends if she was pregnant. When they answered no, it was only a reminder of what could have happened to me if I'd

have not joined the track team and used the advice I received from it.

Don't make the same mistakes I did by just merely working out or thinking the freshmen fifteen can't happen to you. Take advantage of the different exercise facilities and food choices that are available to you. By finding a balance of the two, you can successfully fight the expectations of the infamous freshman fifteen, all before you wind up like the girl I thought was pregnant!

Friend or Foe?

By Kevin Haas

Many people have impacted my life significantly, yet it is my older brother, Dan, who has influenced me like no other person has. Dan has played a powerful role in my life, which I believe has helped shape who I am today.

During early childhood, both my brother and I fulfilled the typical younger-brother, older-brother stereotypes. I fulfilled my role by being consistently annoying; I did everything from following Dan everywhere he went, to snooping around his room, to constantly asking him questions such as “what rhymes with orange” to “how come chickens can’t fly.” Irritated and frustrated, my brother would attempt to get away from me, which was no easy task. My brother, on the other hand, used his position to its full capabilities. At any dispute, he would use physical means in order to get his way. These means ranged from, countless wrestling positions to a plethora of noogies. He also initiated several different mental attacks, my least favorite being “bug attack.” At random times, my brother would look at me in a wide-eyed expression and say, “Kevin, you have a bug in your hair.” After hearing this, I would run around screaming with my hands viciously rummaging through my hair, looking for the bug that did not exist while my brother observed in full delight! However, our

relationship is much more complicated than the average little brother-big brother routine.

A long-lasting tradition we both followed was playing *adventure*. Adventure was very simple. Dan and I would simply go outside and aimlessly wander to wherever we desired. Our favorite area to explore was the forest in our backyard. Our exploits differed each time; one day we may have ventured to a pond, and another day we would follow deer tracks to see if we could catch the herd. We even overturned old stumps to see what kind of bugs we could find (this was my least favorite adventure route we chose). The adventures all shared a very similar pattern — my brother led, and I followed obediently after. I would often have to lug whatever items we required in order to prove my worth as a follower. I carried things such as interesting-looking rocks, berries we weren't sure were edible, colorful weeds we pulled, and several other interesting, often-random objects. The tradition still lasts today. We now often drive to parks and go hiking randomly. The only difference is we are older and use a compass now.

Another shared childhood pastime was Legos. My brother and I were both very enthusiastic in playing with Legos, but our play styles were like fire and ice, very different. Dan would make elaborate creations, such as buildings, cars, and other complicated realistic designs. I, on the other hand, played Legos with complete chaos. I would make monstrosi-

ties such as a wall made entirely out of wheels, little Lego men, robotic arms, and other random pieces. Then I would make my abominations destroy my brother's perfect creations, which usually was followed by a physical dispute. Our brawls and fights were also very worthy of mention.

One time, my brother had a school project to do, and throughout the whole process I was being as annoying as a mosquito. I would steal the pencils he was using, and shoot spit wads at him from distant locations and then run away. I was constantly doing everything in my power to make his work impossible. Why would I do this? The answer is simple, for pure entertainment at my brother's frustration. As one would expect, Dan inevitably retaliated and sprinted after me. I instinctively ran immediately to my room, closed and locked the door, and pushed myself against it to reinforce it. Three minutes later the door was broken, Dan had a bruised shoulder, and I was pinned underneath the door. After that, my parents made sure I saw my room a lot more.

However, Dan and I have had plenty of enjoyable times together. One rainy night, when we had nothing to do, we decided to rent a videogame from the local video store. The game was *Godzilla* for the original Nintendo Entertainment System. The game was fairly simple one player played as Godzilla, and the other played as Mothra, the giant moth. We began playing the game at around eight pm and we were in-

stantly hooked. We played one level after another, each accompanied by angry yells, cheers, and long moments of silence during intense boss battles. It wasn't until four in the morning that the final boss was destroyed, and we both erupted in roars of victory, thus causing our parents to awaken angry and force us to go to bed. However, we both knew the accomplishment we achieved that night, and slept contently with the knowledge of saving virtual Earth.

Those are but a few of the countless experiences we both had during our childhood and beyond. Sadly these days we are much busier as most would expect, but our past has affected who we are to this day. I am still the action-packed little brother who likes to go head first into things, and my brother still likes to carefully plan each of his steps and execute them accordingly. We are still close, and still do things together when we can find the time. I'm sure even as we venture into our adult years, we will still play a significant role in each other's lives.

Cousin?

By Michael Lupsa

At three years of age I didn't know where babies come from, nor did I understand why they are baptized. But the day when my mother's best friend moved here from Romania, bringing her newborn daughter with her, I knew only one thing: she had brought me a new friend. "This is Dominique," said the baby's mother as she presented her new baby to the guests as if she were presenting the Hope Diamond to a group of wide-eyed spectators. This child meant more to her mother than anything on the planet, and in time she would mean very much to me as well.

Other than first seeing Dominique brought home for the first time, one of my very first memories involving her was my attendance of her baptism. Naturally, since we are of the Eastern Orthodox religion, the process of baptizing babies in our church is slightly different than what most people from the western world are used to. And probably the most striking occurrence at this ceremony is when the priest dips the baby three times in a bath of holy water, almost always causing the baby to cry. I felt pity at the sight of seeing my new friend cry, not knowing that this was actually supposed to be a beautiful ceremony with positive symbolism.

At the time when Dominique and I were becoming young children, my family had still been living in Connecticut, very

close to her family. Every few weekends our families would get together at each other's houses, and Dominique and I would be the crazy kids running around and causing commotion. Whether it was dressing up in strange costumes, playing games like hide and seek, or throwing balls of toilet paper at each other, I always looked forward, with much anticipation, to the next time Dominique's family would show up at my house.

Years went by, and when I was ten years old, my father had found a better job in Cleveland, Ohio. From my eyes, the end of the world had come. Not only would I be leaving behind a beautiful house, the wonderful scenery of the mid-Connecticut hills, and the multitude of friends I had at school and daycare, but I was also leaving Dominique behind. Little did I know, however, that our friendship would continue onward to grow and include more memories than it had ever before.

For approximately two years the only time I ever saw Dominique was for maybe a week or two over the summer when my family would briefly go back to visit friends and other relatives on the east coast. However, a summer came when my mother and her best friend had decided to allow Dominique to spend a month with us here in Ohio. My excitement upon hearing this news was unimaginable. I wanted to share my video games, toys, bicycles, and anything else

imaginable with my friend from Connecticut. And when the time came, we did just that.

Board and video games were just the beginning. A major reason why Dominique and I have so much fun together is not only because our friendship has lasted so many years, but also because we also have very similar personalities. We can find fun in absolutely anything, no matter how stupid people may think we look. For example, simply riding bikes can be fun. The exercise is good and the speed you obtain when you pedal quickly can be a rush. But for us, riding our bikes around the apartment community that I used to live in had a bit more significance.

From our perception, random areas around the community, like garages, the tennis court, and the trash compactor weren't what they seemed. Instead, they were bus stations. And we were the busses taking passengers from one station to the other. Even names like "Tennisia" and "Lupgar" were coined for these stations, and just like any transportation service, each time we rode our bikes there was a set itinerary as to where we would make stops.

The bus game wasn't the only game we invented. Along with that there was the "spy-game," which was basically a game of hide-and-seek involving sunglasses and "spy-clothing" and throwing bombs (Q-tips) at the newly discovered spy. And other than the spy-game were just simple fun-

times like going to the pool, amusement parks, and spinning around my bedroom with pillowcases on our heads until one time I tripped over the leg of my chair and fell with my head going straight into the trash can.

Many summers, winter vacations, and on occasion even spring breaks that added on to the many fun memories that I had with Dominique. And as our friendship developed, so did the idea that we shouldn't just call each other friends. By all intents and purposes we were like family, and upon much thought, even though the blood-relation isn't there, Dominique and I have decided to label ourselves as cousins.

To this day, Dominique and I still remain very good friends, and keep in contact quite often. Though we have grown up and no longer play the same imaginative games that we used to, one tradition remains: running around like the crazy kids and causing commotion whenever our families get together.

Love at First Catch

By Katherine Massey

My grandpa Michael Kinney is 75 in age, but an up-to-no-good 15-year-old boy at heart. Ever since I can remember, every time my family and I made our monthly trip to Ironton, papaw Kinney had a new story to tell us from his childhood. They usually had the same plot; he and his buddy Billy would put tacks on the teacher's chair or would put a frog in a desk across from them to scare girls. It was obvious Michael was the ornery Irish boy. But out of all the stories he told me one sticks out in my head in particular: how he and my grandma Bernadette fell in love. Nothing ever seemed to be boring in his life, and this story was no exception.

Michael Kinney was just like every other typical high school boy; he played on the football and basketball team, he was muscular but not too built, he was smart enough to be in the regular classes, and he was attractive enough to have a girlfriend. The only thing that really set him apart from the other kids was his bright red hair and his good sense of humor that went along with it. Bernadette Boll was the youngest of 12 kids, and the most beautiful of them all. She was the jaw-dropping-to-the-ground kind of gorgeous. She was extremely well known around town not only because of her big

family but also because she was the girl everyone wanted to date.

Michael and Bernadette had gone to school together since the 3rd grade when Michael moved to Ironton, but never became friends until their freshman year at St. Joe. They had chemistry together and Sister Paulette placed them together to be partners. Michael always had an unspoken crush on Bernadette but never acted upon it. He thought this would be the perfect opportunity to show her his sense of humor.

“Bernadette Boll, can I ask you a question?” Michael asked in a serious tone on the second day of class.

“Of course, what is it?”

“Will you pull my finger?” he said while trying to hold back his laughter.

“How dare you!” she screamed, turning around but still trying to hold back a smile.

This was how Bernadette and Michael had their first official meeting, and it didn’t turn out quite as Michael had planned.

“What in the world were you thinking?” Billy yelled to Michael after chemistry.

Billy was the oldest of three boys who lived out in the country. He and Michael had been inseparable since the day they meet; both were red heads, and both were up-to-no-good.

“What did I do?” Michael spat back, obviously knowing the answer.

“Do you even know who you just asked to pull your finger!”

“Ha, what is it to ya? It’s all in good fun.”

“Well, if you don’t mind me sayin’, I think you ruined your chances with that one,” Billy said with a smirk.

“All in good time, Billy, all in good time.” Michael then reached around and gave Billy a noogie.

In a way Michael was right; after the pull-my-finger incident,” Bernadette and Michael became friends, but nothing more than a friendship looked promising. They ended up hanging out in different cliques as time went on but kept in contact through random classes throughout their years at St. Joe. Bernadette obviously was involved in the “popular” crowd and Michael found his way into the jokester crowd.

One day during their senior year, Lucy, Bernadette’s best friend, turned to her with eyes wide open, “Do you realize that Irish boy is always staring at you? It’s really starting to give me the goose bumps.”

“Oh, stop, Lucy. We’ve been friends for a while. He means nothing by it,” Bernadette responded nonchalantly.

“Which I don’t understand—all he does is goof around! He put gum in my hair last week in math—GUM,” Lucy shot back.

“Is that why you got that ridiculous haircut?” she said with a smirk.

At that Lucy got up and left the lunch table saying, “Well, I would be careful if I were you. He might get the idea to ask you to the senior prom.”

“You know we aren’t all perfect!” But Lucy was already out of the lunch room by the time Bernadette started shouting.

Billy overheard this conversation and decided to pick on Michael about it.

“So I’ve got a chance!” Michael boomed after he heard the story.

“Haha, in your dreams, pretty boy. Charlie has his eyes for her, and who could turn him down.” Billy said with his eyes gaga, mimicking the girls around town. Charlie was the Ken doll in real life, and boy, did he know it. He was the quarterback of the football team, point guard on the basketball team and not to mention the son of Ironton’s Mayor.

Prom was just around the corner. Billy was right; Charlie asked Bernadette the next day to prom, which made Michael a little uneasy. But of course Michael had a Plan B.

Billy ended up asking his cousin, well third cousin twice removed. And Michael thought it would be a great idea to ask Lucy, knowing how fond of him she was. He did in a way she couldn’t say no. He held a match close to her homework. Of

course he would never light it on fire, but she didn't know that and that's all that matters.

It was set. Michael would be taking Bernadette's best friend, so he knew he would have to run into her sometime throughout the night.

The night was magical—to everyone besides Michael and Lucy. Lucy was complaining the entire time, and Michael wanted to take Lucy to the prom so that he could execute Plan B. As soon as they entered Ironton High's gym, the two split so fast they didn't realize they were both trying to get rid of each other.

Michael found a perfect spot by the punch bowl where he could figure out how to execute Plan B: Getting Bernadette's attention. He had a few tricks he came up with to pull on Charlie but decided at the last minute that wouldn't go unnoticed. Michael was thinking so hard that he didn't notice Billy stumble up to him until he nearly knocked over the punch bowl.

"You are hammered, aren't you?" Michael said more as a statement rather than a question.

"You expected me to come to this thing sober?" Billy slurred. "Word on the street is that your little date has the hots for Mr. Big Stuff...Charlie."

Just then, Michael had one of his best ideas yet. He ran off to find Lucy without another word to the half-passed-out Billy. He found her in the girls' bathroom by herself.

"Hey! You can't be in here!" she screamed as she started towards the door.

"Wait a minute, I have the perfect idea. You like Charlie, right?" This caught her attention.

"Well, yeah," she said hesitantly.

"You obviously know, I've been crushing on Bernadette." Lucy started to smile after this comment, and at the same time they shouted: "LET'S SWITCH!"

Plan B was on its way; all they had to do was pull Charlie and Bernadette apart. Lucy and Michael walked into the gym together and spotted them right away. They were dancing in the middle of the floor with a group of girls flocking Charlie and a group of boys flocking Bernadette. They looked at each other and walked confidently onto the dance floor. This was Michael's last chance. Lucy, with such grace that it even surprised herself, pulled Charlie aside and swept him off his feet. It was now Michael's turn; he was more of the jokester, not the romantic type. For the first time in his life he felt nervous, so he slowed his step. By the time he reached Bernadette she was off with another group of guys. It was over; Michael had missed his chance with Bernadette and he would never again be able to confess his love to her.

Suddenly there was commotion from where Bernadette was standing. Michael turned around so quickly he almost lost his balance. She seemed to be crying with her hands cover her face, he started to walk closer towards her—no, she was not crying; instead, she was going to sneeze. Out of nowhere she let out the loudest sneeze anyone had ever heard and something seemed to pop out of her hands. Michael knew this was his last chance—he ran and dove for whatever she was holding and caught it like it was a baseball and it was the last play of the championship game. To his surprise and everyone else's, he caught it. Michael looked down to see what it was, and almost dropped it once he realized what he had just caught. Looking back in his hands was a beautiful blue eye. Bernadette came running at him, grabbed the eye without a word and ran out of the gym. No one seemed to know what had happened except for Michael and Bernadette. He didn't want to embarrass her, so he didn't say a thing. Ten minutes later Bernadette returned, but avoided Michael to hide her embarrassment.

Michael now grumpily returned to Billy who now had the entire punch bowl dumped over his head.

"I'm not even going to ask," Michael said with his head down.

"Yeah, it's a family thing," Billy said, hiccupping.

“Well, looks like my night’s over.” The band had just announced the last song. Just then Bernadette approached Michael.

“Do you mind taking me home? It looks like my date has found a new love.” She said as she pointed to Charlie and Lucy making out in the corner.

“Of course!” Michael replied a little too quickly.

As they were walking out, Michael had a confused look on his face that Bernadette picked up on.

“I know I need to explain myself,” she paused as Michael looked up at her, “about the eye. I’m so sorry.” Michael cut her off before she could say anymore.

“That’s not why I’m confused. That could happen to anyone,” he said with a smirk.

“Then what is it?” she replied with a laugh.

“Out of all the guys that were hitting on you, why did you choose me to take you home?”

“Well, in all honesty, you were the only one who caught my eye.” Then she winked at him and they haven’t been apart for over 50 years.

Two Lessons Well Learned

By Alysia Murray

It was a summer afternoon just like any other. Mom was in the kitchen making lunch or something along those lines, dad was at work, and the kids were all playing around. Kelsey, my older sister, asked reluctantly, “Alysia, do you wanna play Barbies?” As any younger sibling would do, I agreed. With much excitement, I ran upstairs to set up my Barbie world. Kelsey followed soon after. Barbies was of course one of the most entertaining activities to play, except for the fact that I was the younger sister. I received only a few accessories for the Barbie with the tangled hair and ugly clothes. We usually had different story lines each time we played. Sometimes we played with the pool and other times the ice cream parlor, but that day it was the hair salon. We dipped our Barbies in water, shampooed and conditioned their hair and then proceeded to meticulously cut the dolls’ long plastic strands of blonde and brown.

Meanwhile, the neighborhood was teeming with children, some riding bikes and others meandering about. My fourteen-year-old sister, Meghan, and her friend Ann Marie were riding bikes around the neighborhood while my younger brother, Ryan, was practicing popping wheelies in the driveway. Ryan, being the naive six-year-old that he was, stopped riding, and watched curiously as Meghan and Ann Marie used a wrench

to adjust their bike seats higher. After the girls were satisfied with the heights of their bicycle seats, they proceeded on down the driveway and out into the cul-de-sac. Left behind, Ryan carried on popping wheelies, but each time he circled around and passed the garage, his eyes became glued to the wrench.

As Ryan continued to play outside, I was upstairs playing with my newly styled Barbie. She looked so pretty; at least that's what I thought at the time. I continued to play until my sister got bored with me and moved on to playing outside with everyone else. For some reason, maybe the fact that I was at the vulnerable age of eight, the scissors that were sitting so innocently on the dresser enthralled me. In a bit of a hypnotic state, I walked over to the dresser and picked up the scissors. I held a chunk of my hair up and took one snip. "Oh my gosh," I said in a quivering voice. I quickly shut my eyes and opened them, hoping the hair in my hand was back on my head. Much to my dismay, the hair was still in my hand. In shock, I ran to the back of my dresser and put the hair and scissors behind it.

Pretending nothing happened, I cautiously walked down the stairs and into the kitchen where I saw my mom. "Mom, I have something to tell you," I said, trying to keep my legs from shaking, "I think I twirled my hair off." My mom came running over, looked at my hair, and said, "What did you do

to yourself!” I was not sure what to say. “Where is it, Alysia?” Mom said. I shrugged my shoulders. “Where is it?” Mom said again impatiently. “I twirled it off,” I said. Quickly and sternly, Mom replied, “Don’t make me get Dad!” I led her upstairs to my room and showed her where I had hid my hair. She was upset, but knew I did not really know better. My mom, being a cosmetologist, set up the chair on the deck and got ready to cut my hair. Right before she went to work, my mom was interrupted by my brother. He wanted to show everyone how he could pop a wheelie while going down the driveway. Little did anyone know, right before we all went outside, Ryan had done some mechanical work on his bike.

While I had been cutting my hair, Ryan had been wandering about in the garage. He had picked up the wrench, walked over to his own bike, and looked for any place to turn a screw. The handlebars looked like a good place to him, so he used the wrench to loosen the tightly bolted screw and removed it. Right after, he ran into the house to gather everyone in order to show off his new tricks.

All of us went outside to watch him. He was so excited and loved all of the attention he was getting. “Mom, Dad, watch me pop a wheelie,” he said. “Let’s see ya, Ryan!” my mom said with enthusiasm. Off Ryan went, down the driveway. Just as he went to pop a wheelie, his handlebars flew through the air. “Ahhhhhh!” Ryan screamed as he quickly

tried coming up with a solution to his problem. He stuck his two pointer fingers into the hole where the handlebars once were and tried steering. “Help, help!” he cried. It didn’t work—Ryan landed in the neighbor’s yard. Crying, and in shock of what had just happened to him, Ryan ran to my mom. Luckily, he hadn’t gotten hurt.

A little while later, after everything was calmed down, my mom fixed my hair. I ended up with a boyish haircut that was punishment enough for me. My mom could see this by the way I looked at myself in the mirror right after.

That day was quite eventful. Ryan riding his bike without handlebars is the funniest thing I have ever witnessed. As for the most memorable, my haircut is a close second.

The Beginning

By Jason Robertson

This was my second year of hunting deer. I didn't kill one the first year that I hunted, so I was still looking for my first one. All deer hunters know that the first one is one of the most important ones because it gives you your beginning.

It was October 27, 1997. I was nine years old. My dad and I were going deer hunting. That evening was warm when we got to the woods. We were hunting with crossbows at the time, so we cocked our bows, got our tree stands on our backs, and into the woods we went. As we walked into the woods, we talked about where we were going to hunt for the evening. My dad thought that I should hunt in the front of the woods, in a little spot that we always saw deer early in the year. I wasn't sure about the spot because the woods were open, but my dad talked me into putting my tree stand up in this little tree that I could get my stand about eight feet off the ground. This was not as high as I normally go; I normally would go higher than that. I was a little worried about the deer smelling me. If the wind is right, a deer can smell you a long ways away. By getting higher into a tree, you get above the scent line, and it makes it a lot harder for the deer to smell you. My dad decided to go hunt the bigger part of the woods. He was going to be a hundred yards from me. So he started walking away from me, and I started putting the stand

on the tree. Once I got the stand on the tree, I started up the tree. I climbed the tree until I got to a limb that stuck out of the tree and had to stop there. Then, I secured the top of the stand to the tree, and I was all set up now. My dad called me on the radio a few minutes later and told me he was set up and made sure that I was set up. The only thing to do now was to sit and wait for a deer to come by.

I sat there in the tree watching some birds flying around the brush that was in front of me, when I thought I heard something behind me. It sounded like something was in the saplings behind me walking my way. The walking sound was getting closer, so I stood up and turned around; now I was looking behind me, and whatever was in the saplings was getting even closer. I still couldn't see anything down in the saplings. The walking sound quit, and I didn't hear anything. I thought that maybe it was just a squirrel playing in the leaves. But then the leaves started to rustle again and I could see some movement—it was a deer and it was coming my way.

I put the safety in the fire position and got ready. It seemed like the deer stayed down in the saplings forever, but really it was only a few minutes at the most. Finally, the deer came out in the open where I could see what it was. It was a little three point (a buck with one horn on one side and a spilt horn on the other side) but I didn't care, it looked like a trophy to me. The buck moved its way toward me slowly. I

found an opening that he was going to walk through, and waited for him to walk through the opening. When he did, I whistled to stop him. He stopped, I aimed my twenty-yard pin (the aiming device on the crossbow) just a little high on him because he was about twenty-five yards away. I took a deep breath and when I exhaled I squeezed the trigger. The arrow took off right at its mark and then disappeared right behind the buck's front shoulder. The buck's hind legs kicked out, and he took off running toward my dad.

I was so excited. I got on the radio as fast as I could and told my dad, "I just shot a deer, and it's a buck—HURRY and come over here." My dad tried to calm me down but it was no good—I was just too excited. He told me to stay in the stand until he got there, but of course I didn't listen.

I started to get down out of the tree. First, I let my bow down, and then unfastened the top of my tree stand. When I had the top unfastened, I was going to start down the tree. I got all ready to come down the tree and with all the excitement I dropped the bottom part of the stand all the way to the bottom of the tree. Now, I had to wait for my dad to come so he could lift the bottom back up to me. It took my dad only a few minutes to get to me, and I think he was more excited than I was. When we got the stand down out of the tree, he told me some great news. My dad said, "I saw the deer go down!" That was the best thing that I had ever heard.

My first deer was down and it was a buck. He took me over to where the deer had died. We sat there and checked the buck out for a minute. Then my dad went up to the truck and got the camera. When he got back, I told him the story over and over, as he took pictures of me posing with my first deer.

It was a great evening that I will never forget, as long as I live.

Entertaining Yourself in a Car

By Audrey Stumpp

My brother, Tommy, and I have not had what I would call the typical brother-sister relationship. He is three years older than I am, and no wiser. Before I was born, he couldn't wait to have a new baby sister. My mom, after having one boy, for some reason assumed I, too, would be a boy, so she was constantly telling my brother that he would have a baby brother, not sister. Whenever he would pass the nursery in the hospital, he would look in and say, "There's my baby sister, Sally."

"Tommy, you're not getting a sister, you're getting a brother, and he won't be Sally," my mother would wearily respond. No one is really sure where he got the name Sally from, but I do give him credit for being the only one who knew I would be a girl.

When I was finally born, and to almost everyone's surprise I was a girl, Tommy took it in stride. Toddlers rarely feel the need to revel in victory or say, "I told you so." For the first few years of my life, though, he still called me Sally.

He was my caretaker for the beginning of our relationship. He would follow me around making sure I never got hurt. He loved explaining what he knew of the world, happy to have someone who would listen to him. He quite gladly

stepped into the position of mentor in the very early days of my life, but quickly realized it was a thankless job.

As a toddler, I was extremely ornery. After I had colored all over the walls, my mom would offer me the choice of apologizing or receiving a spanking. My answer was, without exception, a spanking. I would apologize to no one; rules were suggestions that I chose not to take. At the age of three, I knew what I wanted in life and I was going to get it. My brother, on the other hand, was a big softy. He would cry if you looked at him the wrong way. To him, rules were the absolute and final law. I would lie for sport, and he would admit to things he hadn't even done, just because he didn't want to be questioned anymore. If one of our parents said no to something, that was good enough for Tommy. If they said no to me, I did it anyway, so being denied really had no effect on me.

In most sibling relationships, the older child beats up on the younger one in the beginning, and then eventually the stronger one just beats up on the weaker one. This was not the case for Tommy and me.

I grew up in central Ohio and my grandparents lived in Michigan. This meant a lot of long car trips. If you've ever driven through northern Ohio, you know it's like looking at the same piece of minimalistic art for three hours. Trees and

fields are pretty much all you get. Boring. As a three-year-old, I found ways to entertain myself.

On this particular trip, I found Tommy to be an easy target and my best chance at amusement. As nice as he was to me, and as much as he loved following the rules, he knew my ways by then and wasn't afraid to fight back, as long as my parents weren't watching. This was a weakness in my eyes. I leaned over to my napping brother ever so carefully, grabbed a fistful of hair and yanked as hard as I could. Naturally, he punched me. I then started bawling as if I had just broken a bone.

“TOMMY! Leave your sister alone!”

This was the real pay dirt for me. As soon as the yelling began, I was all ears. Nothing was quite as satisfying as hearing him get yelled at, mostly because I knew he couldn't stand it.

So I would let a few minutes go by – I knew how to play the game at the age of three. I didn't want my parents catching on. After a suitable amount of time had passed, I would try again. And of course it worked seamlessly. Again and again, he would get yelled at for hitting me back.

After the fourth or fifth time, my dad wised up. He adjusted the mirror so he could watch the phenomenon first hand. My dad, much older and wiser than I, moved as sneakily as a seasoned spy. I didn't notice this change in my envi-

ronment. The game had become too fun, and I had become cocky. When I reached over for what turned out to be the final time, my father immediately yelled, “AUDREY! You stop right now! What do you think you’re doing?”

Busted. But in my ever-optimistic view, I figured this was just the big hurrah at the end of the game. While staring directly into his eyes, I continued to reach over and grab the biggest handful of hair yet. I pulled harder than I had ever pulled on anything. My behavior warranted my dad’s pulling the car over, taking me out of my car seat, and spanking me right there on the side of the road. I can’t say I really blame my dad. I was a malicious little girl with no respect for authority. But that was the greatest car trip ever.

Needless to say, that marked the end of the “Sally” years for Tommy.

Adventures With Bruce Almighty

By Tom Wagener

He was absolutely terrifying. The thought of having to read thick nonfiction books written by dry historians; the thought of having to write long, scholarly papers with words we have yet to learn; and to top it all off, a year's-end exam with essays that determines whether or not we got college credit—all this was terrifying. And that's what taking a class with Bruce Dzeda meant. High school had been easy for the first two years. In 9th grade, students took Western Civilization with either Jack Fisher or Bruce Dzeda. I was lucky and got Mr. Fisher. Mr. Fisher's class was famously easy, if a bit boring. No problem, bring it on. Tenth grade passed, mercifully, without a history class. However, I knew what was coming. I strolled into 11th grade, shaking in my boots, because in no way was I prepared for Bruce Dzeda.

The year was 2003 at Theodore Roosevelt High School. The class was Advanced Placement United States History (referred to as "APUS"). It started with the first permanent settlers in the New World, and it ended with the Clinton-Bush transition in 2000. Dzeda was the only teacher who taught it. Anyone who considered himself one of the "smart people" at school took this class. Everyone was scared of it, but there was no avoiding it. After all, who wanted to be the pile ("pile" was our term for a worthless bum) who had to say,

“Yeah, I’m just taking regular history.” Uh-uh. No. I was part of a select crowd at my high school who took being smart seriously. So one by one, we shuffled into Dzedza’s classroom on the first day, knowing only marginally what to expect. His classroom looked more or less like any other. Ugly beige tiles, ugly fluorescent lights, and for reasons I have yet to understand, an ugly mud-brown chalkboard. Like most history teachers, he decorated his room with various maps and portraits of famous historical subjects. The item that made his room particularly memorable was a 7-foot mural of Queen Elizabeth I. Fortunately, it made his room very easy to identify for those not quite sure of the location on the first day. Dzedza was a big fan of British culture and British humor. He came into class, right on time, carrying a newspaper. I had seen him before, but never studied him closely. He wasn’t an incredibly scary-looking man. Six feet tall, conservative gray haircut, conservative sweater vest, conservative tie. There the conservatism ended.

He tossed the newspaper down on his desk and said, “Well, look at that, Bushie has made an ass of himself yet again! Did anyone read this garbage today?” No one knew quite what to say. First of all, teachers didn’t swear. There were rumors that Dzedza would swear in class, but I’d had trouble believing that. No one was brave enough to admit whether he had read the article about George W. Bush in the

day's paper. Most were too surprised at his use of "ass." But he was only getting warmed up. When no one responded, he continued. "WELL. Who's ready to learn some early New World history? Let's learn about how we victimized the Indians first. Everyone likes a story of a relatively peaceful people being called savages and then being destroyed by a bunch of god-damned white honky bastards!" Finally, the terrified silence was broken by a few chuckles, then out and out laughter. He smiled broadly and spoke again: "Well, that's better! I was worried that you were all too scared to actually function."

That was a defining moment. That was when I realized that I would survive his class. Make no mistake about it; it was a difficult class from the start. However, many things made it bearable. I was surprised that I had managed to hear only negative things about Dzeda. I loved him! He had a very dry sense of humor, which I loved. He asserted that Cleveland Heights, Ohio, the place of his birth, was indeed God's favorite city on Earth. Dzeda loved to talk about "fine things," such as England (the Queen's birthday was an official class holiday, albeit a strictly historical holiday), Scotch Whiskey, and politics. He was unabashedly and unapologetically liberal, like me, and loved to make political jokes and debate with his students. He quickly established that all views were welcome in his class, but you'd better be able to justify your beliefs if you were going to debate with him. He expected a

lot, but gave a lot in return. The breadth of his intelligence was surpassed only by his willingness to share it. He is one of the smartest people I've ever encountered. Everyone was scared to disappoint him. He earned the nickname "Bruce Almighty" from his more dedicated students, a reference to the 2003 Jim Carrey film *Bruce Almighty*, in which Jim Carrey is endowed with God's powers.

Not all of his classes were pleasant. We had to write practice essays called DBQs for the AP exam. I would tell you what "DBQ" stands for, but I don't really remember. How about "Diabolical Botulism Query"? Yes, I like that. DBQs were awful. I'd rather be punched in the face than ever do a DBQ again. I'd rather have cholera—wait. I don't know what cholera is. I'm going to look it up ... okay, never mind. Cholera is fatal. Anyway, DBQs were bad. Though Mr. Dzeda made it quite possible for us to do well on them, not everyone prepared adequately. He wouldn't hesitate at all to give abysmal grades to those who deserved them. I remember one fateful day when Mr. Dzeda was returning graded DBQs, and this kid named Sean didn't get his back. After all the other papers had been passed out, Sean asked, "Mr. Dzeda, why didn't I get my paper back?"

"Here," replied Mr. Dzeda, who then proceeded to throw Sean's ungraded paper at him from his desk. It fluttered in Sean's face and fell on the ground. By the time he had picked

it up, Dzeda was towering over him. “You misspelled thirteen words. The same thirteen words were misspelled in this paper I downloaded from the Internet last night.” Dzeda lifted up a paper in his hand, and then threw it in the trash. “In fact, the other thousand or so words you wrote were also the same as in that paper from the Internet. You plagiarized the whole thing, and barely even attempted to write your own introduction. Don’t EVER turn in this kind of crap to me again. You have one day to rewrite it.” That was a quiet day in class.

Another time, Mr. Dzeda handed back a DBQ to me with a D grade. He said he was disappointed that I hadn’t adequately prepared, since I usually did. He was right; I hadn’t prepared properly. I felt terrible for letting him down. I felt like I had wasted a gift. I vowed at that moment never to be unprepared for his class again. He offered me the chance to rewrite it to make up some of the grade, which I gladly accepted. I worked hard for three days and gave him my new paper. He told me that he’d upgrade me to a B. “It’s a wonderful paper, Tom, one of the best I’ve gotten in years. I wish I could give you an A+ on it. If you had been prepared the first time, you would have gotten it. I hope that next time, you do.”

The next time, I did.

My strongest memories from that class are positive. After the AP exam, Dzeda let us relax instead of continuing to

teach dense lessons. We still learned, but we learned the more entertaining facets of history. He took us on several field trips and showed several movies. One field trip, to the large cemetery across the street from the high school, was particularly memorable. He showed us several important local historical figures, as well as his own reserved burial plot. Then came my shining moment in the yearlong class: Mr. Dzeda asked, “Tom, one day, I’ll be dead. I’d appreciate it if you’d come by my grave when that happens and pour a bottle of fine Scotch on my grave.”

I said, “Sure, but do you mind if I filter it through my kidneys first?”

He laughed uproariously, as did the whole class. That is his favorite joke of all time. He told it to every class he taught until he retired just two years ago. After my year in the class, he always asked me to chaperone his field trips with his younger students, even though I wasn’t really allowed to be an official chaperone. He made me retell the joke many times.

I learned how to learn from Mr. Dzeda. Lots of teachers harp about the importance of applying yourself in your work and being prepared daily. Mr. Dzeda made me believe it. I finished the year feeling ready to take any difficult class. I knew how to read, how to write, how to discuss, and how to have a good time in the process. Bruce Almighty was asked to speak at our class’ commencement ceremony. He asked me to

write his introduction, which was an honor. He was moved by my brief introduction and asked me to frame it and sign it to display in his home. I had it printed, signed it, and delivered it with a bottle of his favorite Scotch (which my dad purchased, of course). As a little bonus, I had the joke printed on the back of the frame so he'll see it whenever he cleans or moves it. I hope he knows that I have every intention of fulfilling my version of his request.

About the Editor

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy—me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name—David—ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a master’s degree in English and a master’s degree in Philosophy. Currently, and for a long time to come, I publish a weekly humorous column titled “Wise Up!” for *The Athens News* and I am an English instructor at Ohio U.

Shameless Commerce

Visit David Bruce’s storefront at

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By the way, this storefront offers free downloads of collections of my students’ autobiographical essays. For example, one such collection is titled *Love and Friendship: Stories About Growing Up*.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)