



# Verbal Equinox



A WSU Writing Center Publication, Spring 2005

## 2004 Writing Contest Winners

*Each fall, the Writing Center sponsors a contest to reward students who have written original pieces. Submissions are accepted in the categories of Poetry, Fiction, and Non-Fiction. Winners receive cash prizes. It is Verbal Equinox's privilege to publish the winning pieces each spring. Enjoy.*

### Non-Fiction Winners:

1st Place: McCall Erickson

"For a Modern Soul"

2nd Place: Todd V. Call

"Chili and Bryn"

3rd Place: Misty Hearnberger

"How To Use a Motorized Wheelchair"

### Fiction Winners:

1st Place: Jennifer Ryujin

"You Must Remember"

2nd Place: Matthew Lewis

"How Samson Met Delilah"

### Poetry Winners:

1st Place: Nicholas Shellabarger

"The Finger Crossers"

2nd Place: Michael Coiner

"Salubrious Sammy"

3rd Place: Hannah New

"Three Days Later"

### Honorable Mention:

Non-Fiction: Jennifer Ryujin

"Not a Whiff of Magnolia"

*Congratulations to the Writers!*

## Coordinator's Comments

by Claire Hughes

Writing Center Coordinator

"Oh, what good it does the heart to know it isn't magic!"

Mary Oliver

As the new Writing Center Coordinator, I am in a unique position to be awed by how insightfully and beautifully Sylvia Newman has created and run this program over the past seven years. Through Sylvia's work, the Writing Center has grown to serving over 20% of Weber State University's student population and has established a strong reputation with local schools and organizations as well as among national and international writing communities. I am delighted to join this vigorous program with the continued vision of our director, Carl Porter,

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**This issue is your guide to  
tools and services available  
from the Writing Center.**

## Writing in the SPA by Anne Thompson

Stop right where you are! Put down the thesaurus and slowly step away from the computer.

Before you dive into this paper, which hopefully isn't due tomorrow morning at 8:00, how about a visit to the SPA? Take a minute to answer just three questions (SPA) that will turn a C paper into...a better one.

### SPA - Subject, Purpose, Audience

Many students believe that the key to a quality paper is using as many five syllable words as possible; please rid your minds of this catastrophic myth. While they may be a nice addition to your paper (if used correctly), fancy words are not what gets an A; it's what is behind the words that makes the grade, at least a large part of it. So let's go to the SPA to understand what constitutes a good paper.

### Subject

Ask yourself, "What is my subject?" You may think you have a vague idea of your topic in your mind, but asking yourself directly may improve your paper in several ways. Knowing your topic keeps you from going off on irrelevant tangents. If you're writing about the dangers of heroin and have a personal use experience to illustrate the horrific nature of the drug or the unsanitary injection of it, including the example in your paper may drive home your point. However, simply telling about the time you fainted when getting a flu shot, and how you've hated needles ever since, will only confuse your reader and decrease your

credibility and, most likely, your grade.

Having a solid, clear vision of your subject will also allow you to form a good outline and thus a strong, cogent paper. If you know you're writing about capital punishment, you can then ask your elf exactly what you want to say about it. This leads us to our next SPA question.

### Purpose

"Why am I writing this paper?" Many students find themselves answering this with, "Because I have to," or, "My professor is making me." But we want to wipe the tears away and look past that. Hopefully, in every paper you write, you have some interest in your topic or at least desire to author a quality paper. With this in mind, ask again, "Why am I writing this paper?" Is your intent to persuade, inform; narrate? Once you establish the *Why* in your mind, you can present your information in the appropriate mode that will effectively achieve your purpose.

Simple so far, right? One more to go.

### Audience

So now you know what you're going to talk about and how you're going to talk about it; all that's left to figure out is *Who* you're going to talk to. "Who is my audience?" Understanding and targeting your audience is one of the most important parts of writing, especially in argumentative essays. When arguing that gay marriage should not be legalized, supporting the thesis with something like, "Being gay is evil and wrong," would be a weak claim for

many reasons. For our intent and purpose, unless your audience is comprised solely of people who share this belief (which is rarely the case, and if it ever were, your essay would be futile), the argument is ineffective and unpersuasive. No data can prove such a claim, and involving so much emotion may make the reader feel attacked and defensive. Always remember, the idea is to invite your audience to reason with you.

Additionally, use jargon with much caution. In general, jargon should only be used when the paper is directed toward an audience that belongs to the community that understands such jargon. Medical and scientific papers are good examples of this. Do you know who your audience is?

That's it! Subject, Purpose, Audience. Know your What, Why, and Who, and you'll be proud to put your name on the cover page. Thanks for visiting the SPA, and please... come often! ■

### Need to cite sources?

The Writing Center has current manuals for the following documentation styles:

—MLA  
—APA  
—Chicago  
—Turabian

## Grammar Keys by Kristie Kerkman

So, you have now become a college student. Congratulations. You are now entering a place that has a completely different game plan than you are familiar with. It takes time to get used to all the changes that will occur around you, but there are two aspects that will never change: you still have to write papers, and grammar becomes an essential part of your grade.

Therefore, here are four keys about grammar to assist you throughout your years in college. I hope they will be a guide when you begin your first official college paper.

### The Basic Rule: Write First; Edit Later

This is the most important rule to remember as you begin your first college paper. Writing is a process, and if you are frustrated about where to put a semicolon or a comma, you will lose the thrill of writing. There will be times when you will feel that you don't understand a concept, but don't worry about that at this stage.

Your whole goal is to get something down on paper so that you will know where to lead your thoughts on a certain topic. So write out your thoughts on paper without any thought of punctuation or grammar, and just have at it. Once you have an idea as to what your paper will be about, go back and edit. This rule may not seem important for grammar, but it is one of the essential elements of writing in general.

*It has taken me until my senior year in college to realize that my professors' red scratch marks were there to teach me what I needed to improve on rather than to make me feel as if I didn't know how to write.*

### Clarity Speaks Out

Once you have something down on paper, it is time to clarify what you have written. If you don't know where you stand on a certain topic throughout your paper, then there is a high chance your professor won't know either. A general tip for clarity is to read your paper out loud as you go through the writing process. Whether you are in front of a mirror or in the bathroom (trust me, your roommates won't mind), your ears will pick up on areas that need to be revised faster than if you read your paper silently. Clarity is a major part of grammar, for without it you won't be able to make sense of what your position is within your paper.

### You Can't Learn All the Rules At Once

I haven't yet met anyone who knew *all* the grammar rules of the English language. I certainly don't know them all and have to refer to grammar books constantly. Therefore, perfect the rules you do know, then go from there. Taking it one step at a time

is the best way to conquer the grammar "monster." With each step you take, you will understand more how complex grammar has become. Remember, take it slow, and work on what you know for certain; then move at your own pace.

### Practice, Practice, Practice, Practice...

This is the final key I can give you about grammar because grammar is not so much about the rules; it is about the writing process. It has taken me until my senior year in college to realize that my professors' red scratch marks were there to teach me what I needed to improve on rather than to make me feel as if I didn't know how to write. So make mistakes, but learn from them, too.

Overall, remember it takes time and practice to get down the nitty-gritty rules of grammar, but *you know more than you think you do*. Take a deep breath, pick up a pen or pencil, exhale (it is important to remember that part), and begin to write. College life is all about writing, so go out and experience it. ■

**Not sure when to use a comma? Try looking at the "Comma" and "Punctuation Pattern Sheet" pages in our growing collection of online handouts. Our website address is <<http://departments.weber.edu/writingcenter>>.**

## Poetry Winners

### The Finger Crossers

by Nicholas Shellabarger

They say it's good luck,  
this act of pulling one finger over another

hiding a shy knuckle  
veiling a wrinkled bride  
holding back an impolite pointer  
or occupying the deviant middleman.

You may catch someone  
working with both hands,  
forming a symmetrical balance  
of innocence and naivety.

Or you may come across  
some youthful zealot  
pulling one arm across the other  
twisting knees and ankles  
crossing the knobiness of elbows  
going cross-eyed from the effort.  
A tangled, twisted knot of good fortune.

They say it's good luck-  
It works for everyone just the same.

### Three Days Later

by Hannah New

He bucked me off  
and ran down the street,  
the reins gathered on one side of his neck.  
Galloping away, he kicked out  
I saw him scramble,  
dragging his back legs as he regained  
his balance.

The blood left stains on his white tail.

Three Days Later,  
I stuck my finger  
into his wounds  
to dig  
the infection out  
with my nail.

I thought of the  
Resurrection. People  
thrusting their hands  
into His side. Not  
to clean, but to  
Be Cleansed.

He stood so still.

### Salubrious Sammy

by Michael Coiner

Salubrious Sammy was a very clean fellow,  
So rightly clean it kept mommy mellow,  
"Sammy my dear!" she'd say with such glee,  
"You've remembered to make your bed, I see!"

Yes, Sammy was just as neat as a pin,  
But that neatness began to quite annoy him,  
He longed to dump his toys on the floor.  
He longed to not make his bed anymore.

He longed to squish in the mud with his cat...  
...and other such naughty naughty mess things like that.  
But doing those things he wouldn't dream!  
For perhaps it might make his mother scream!  
His father would look in his room and fall flat!

Then Sammy thought to himself: "Who cares about that?"

"If I want to make a mess, I should.  
What difference does it make to the damn neighborhood?  
As long as I clean it up later, who cares?  
This is MY bedroom at the top of the stairs!"

Sooner or later the room was obscene!  
Sammy's mom said "Get that room clean!"

"I understand how you think cleaning is tedium,  
But for the love of God Sammy, find a happy medium!"

"I suppose I could" Sammy said sullen-hearted.  
Soon he and his mess had completely parted.

Mommy said "I don't expect perfectly neat,  
just leave a little room on the floor for your feet!"

"Your father and I will love you, no matter!"

"Just don't eat so much Sam, we've noticed you're fatter."

Is APA still making you feel queasy?  
After your tutoring session, take  
home a copy of a full-length sample  
APA-style paper and a copy of our  
APA quick reference sheet.



## Fiction Winners

### You Must Remember

by Jennifer Ryujin

There had been other accidents. The girl's father had permanent bruising that stretched from the tops of his feet to just above his knees, making his legs look as if they had been smeared with grape jam.

The girl remembered how when she was young, she would watch for her father from the large porch window. She would count all the red cars that passed, too many. She would finally hear the door springs, while lying in bed, at once feeling anger and relief.

His legs were bruised and his arms always sore; he would not play ball with her or mow the lawn, or do much else besides work at the airbag factory all day and watch television at night. When he came home he sometimes would say things at her. But he never talked to her. She, the girl, belonged to her mother.

*Mama has only spoken to me about the accident twice, on account of me being the oldest, and because when she and my father do battle, Mama says I'm always the first soldier to stand in front of her.*

Before the first accident, the girl had found several things on top of the bookcase in her father's "work" shed, among them magazines of women, white, thin paper in which to roll green stuff that smelled like the wet forest burning down. "You promised you stopped," the mother cried. "You promised." The girl's mother held her head between hands that shook. "Thank you," he said to the girl, tipping his head toward her, as if signaling victory. The girl nodded back.

That drive to find something to incriminate her father was unlike the many accidents, past and those to come. That was intention.

The first accident had involved beer and absurdity. A dim contest between the old man's sports car and her father's RV. Some people perusing the paper found comfort in that the old man was indeed elderly and not entirely coherent. It was not as if her father had crashed, head on, into a mother and child, or a foolish youth. It was a seasoned old man out for a Sunday drive in the canyon.

It was not as if her father had killed anyone really. The old man was on the wrong side of the road and her father was drunk. The cop was a friend of the family. Therefore the situation was deemed negligent, not homicide. The situation was rendered ACCIDENT on the typed report, not to be discussed.

So when the girl came down the long staircase (*it had been three hours or more since Mama woke me to tell me and told me to not tell my sisters yet, to let them sleep*) she tried to imagine what he might look like.

There had been a scarecrow in their garden. Made from bits of rag and paper sacks, its face shriveled and sagging, the crows picked at it continuously. The scarecrow reminded her of her father. It was beginning to get dark out. She crossed over the grass, stepping over the vegetables. The girl walked up to it. Whispering *I am not afraid*, she put her nose on its sack face and stared through it, looking at all the small insects that had gotten in, and the bits of leaves that crunched as her mother called for her.

*Mama warned us that he looked quite terrible.* The girl's mother had a tendency to exaggerate, so the girl thought it best to reserve any judgment until she finally saw him for herself.

Or at least until she began to make the trek down the staircase, which was made of wood and creaked so that in her mind it evoked Christmas Day, for it was early and cold, and snow covered the walks. She and her sisters were in their pajamas. She was the firstborn, so she lead and her sisters followed, with eagerness in their eyes.

The mother waited at the bottom of the staircase. She quickly gave the girl a pat on the head and kissed her sisters' small foreheads. The woman paused for a moment. They all looked to her for reassurance. She glanced at the girl once more; a look of fear stayed on her face as she turned back to them.

*You must remember*, she told them quietly, *that even though he does not look like your father, it is indeed your father. His face is terribly bruised and cut and he can't move his arm yet. His face looks as if it has been...its been sleeping. It kind of sags to one side, do you understand?* She said this to none of them, staring past them. They all nodded their heads. *Do you understand?*

And though they told her they did, the girl felt she understood very little as she entered that dark room, their bedroom. And upon entering the doorway, she tried to remember a time when she did not look at her father with distrust. She tried to remember a time in which her parents were not doing battle and could think of nothing. There had been no time for the girl to look up at the two, to guess at what it was, what sort of ancient ritual they were re-enacting. She thought of the thousand times she tried to look upon her father while his mouth contorted in screams, and had fixed her eyes indefinitely on her mother, whose fists were perpetually tight and straining with vigor, shaking.

Her mother's fists were closed once more.

Her father was as he had always been.

No, he had been changed. His face was altered. *I am not for this time*, the girl thought.

She looked to her mother, who had wrapped her fingers across her mouth. Gasps. She looked to her small

-----Continued on Page 6

## Fiction Winners

### How Samson Met Delilah

by Matthew Lewis

Samson Nurdwel, a professor at Elite University, is old and leathery. His skin hangs from his lanky, bony frame, like an old t-shirt. The pocket of his sport jacket contains notes, bran muffin crumbs, and chewed-on pencils without erasers. His eyes are small, dark, and contain sparks of intelligence. The three curly wisps of smoke on his head slant to the left and tend to claw passersby.

One morning as his feet clanked across the yellow-stained floor of the darkly lit hall, his thoughts were immersed in the formulas of one of the books he carried. He didn't notice her walking towards him. The gentle squeak of her nurse shoes drifted past him like a warm breeze. They almost didn't notice one another. Almost.

As they passed, there was a silver flash, and a sharp burn that caused her eye to shut, as she fell to the linoleum. Startled by the sound of her screech, and rocketing six feet in the air, he let go of the books in his arms and came crashing to the ground like the meteors they depict.

"My eye!" she howled, "I can't see!"

Looking up, he was strangled by the beauty before him. She was clad in white laboratory clothes. Her long hair was rusty-white and pulled back in a tight bun. Thick, black glasses encircled and magnified her chocolate eyes.

"Why don't you watch where your hair is going," she said.

"Um, yes, well I am very sorry," he stammered, "please excuse my hair, I hope your eye is not too badly hurt." He ran his hand across his now sweating brow and pushed his hair back. "It tends to go where it wants. It has a mind of its own, you know, I am very sorry." "Let me assist you," and with bones creaking, he helped her to her feet. "Allow me to make it up to you, may I purchase you a bran muffin from

the commons? They are quite delicious."

"Uh, no, thanks, I have to get back to the lab," she said, and gathering herself, shuffled down the passage.

Samson watched as she rounded the corner. "Gone," he thought. His frail heart nearly beating out of his chest, he picked up his books and continued down the hall to his office.

The next day, Samson arrived to his office early. He rushed to the hall where he had seen her. He proceeded to walk down the passage, hoping that he would run into her again. Sweeping his hair back, he reached the end, and frustrated, he returned to his office resolving to return in five minutes. For three days, he kept up his routine of walking up and down the yellow tile. But he failed to see her again. Downhearted, he returned to his formulas and charts, and forgot his run in with the angel in white.

Two months had passed, and while gnawing on his daily bran, and studying the effects of comet dust on the atmosphere, someone spoke;

"Excuse me, is this seat taken?"

"Huh? Um, no," he grumbled, not looking up.

"Thank you," the voice replied.

Looking up to drink from his prune juice, his heart stopped. There she was, sitting and smiling, her eyes staring into his soul. His heart stopped, and he tried to speak, but the only thing that came out was air.

"May I have a piece of your muffin?" she asked, and before he could answer, she grabbed it from his claw-like grip, and shoved it in her mouth. "Hello, I'm Delilah, I believe we've met before," she chewed.

"Um, yes, I," he started, "I'm Professor Nurdwel, uh, Samson Nurdwel."

And that's how it began. They say that Samson's strength lies in his hair, well, you be the judge. ■

Hey, Creative Writers:

-Poetry

-Fiction

-Personal Essays

-You name it!

The Writing Center is happy and anxious to read and offer feedback on your creative writing as well as your academic papers.

Remember, the pen is mightier than the sword, except of course when cutting through bone.

*"You Must Remember," Continued from Page 5*

sisters. Tears and shutting eyes. Their fingers across their cheeks. Sighs. She looked to her father once more, to his face. Her hands did nothing and everything in one swift motion. Repentance. The man who was her father, her enemy, bent his eyes downward, flooding the floorboards with his own regret. Misery.

*Remember it is your father,* the mother told them through parted fingers. *Go to your father;* the woman commanded through parted fingers. ■

## Non-Fiction Winners

### For a Modern Soul: Uncovering the Costs Women Pay for Self-Discovery through the Works of Wharton, Glasgow, and Porter

by McCall Erikson

For what we call the woman's movement is a revolt from a pretense of being-it is at its best and worst a struggle for the liberation of personality.

-Glasgow, *New York Times*, 30 November 1913

Constitutional amendments, Jazz music, The Great Depression, The Great Migration, leftover Puritan ideals and industrialization sandwiched between World War I and World War II constitute the great age of Modernism-an age that revolutionized America's culture. Writers seized opportunities afforded them through cultural upheaval to write about social, political and gender issues never before addressed in American literature. No longer could readers reassuringly cash in on authors' sentimental and romantic views of the world. William Faulkner cynically evoked happenings of the past to justify its gloomy outlook of the future. Henry Adams attacked widely-held Puritan views, labeling sexuality as the ticket to saving the future of art and literature. Somewhere between Faulkner's obsession with the past and Adams' expectations of the future, writers such as Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow and Katherine Anne Porter depict the present condition of life in the modern period through the use of women characters.

The modern period presented women with opportunities to explore new roles in and outside of the home. Newfound freedoms such as voting, drinking and dancing in public gave women opportunities to explore formerly repressed aspects of themselves. One may argue that increased self-awareness undoubtedly yielded increased happiness for women. However, through the women characters in their short stories, Wharton, Glasgow and Porter outline the painful costs of self-discovery.

In Edith Wharton's *Prisoners of Consciousness*, critic Evelyn E. Fracasso claims that Wharton's heroines are "either happy or disillusioned at the beginning of the narratives, but by the conclusion, they find themselves hopelessly entrapped in a situation that is, ironically, of their own making" (12). Indeed, Wharton creates characters who go through processes of enlightenment and self-awareness, but not without paying the painful prices of disillusionment and imprisonment.

In her short story, "The Lamp of Psyche," Wharton begins by situating protagonist Delia Corbett in a state of complete bliss-undeniably happy to "have been given the

one portion denied all other women on earth, the immense, the unapproachable privilege of becoming Laurence Corbett's wife" (42). Then, showing how social shifts in modern America brought women closer together in their relationships with each other and, in turn, heightened their sense of awareness, Wharton juxtaposes Delia's delusional enchantment against Mrs. Hayne's realistic outlook during a visit together. Mrs. Hayne, having already discarded her illusions about love and marriage, holds up a mirror for Delia as she asks her to tell her more about her husband. Delia successfully supports her claim that her husband is "perfect" until Mrs. Hayne throws the question, "Then of course he was in the war?" (52). Delia stops coldly, unable to answer in the affirmative, realizing for the first time that she may have married a coward.

As Delia attempts to return to her daily affairs after having tasted reality in the company of Mrs. Hayne, she fails to regain the false sense of security and happiness she always had in her marriage with Laurence. "Formerly he had been to her like an unexplored country, full of bewitching surprises and recurrent revelations of wonder and beauty; now she had measured and mapped him, and knew beforehand the direction of every path she trod" (57). Such disillusionment leads her to the painful realization that she is imprisoned by her knowledge of herself and of her husband. Facing walls on all sides, Delia eventually trades "passionate worship" for "tolerant affection" in her marriage. No longer comforted by illusions, Delia indeed becomes a "prisoner of love and marriage" (Fracasso 11).

Unlike Wharton, who depicts women's process of self-discovery within the context of marriage, Ellen Glasgow shows the process happening solely outside of marriage. In "Ellen Glasgow as Feminist," Monique Parent Frazee claims Glasgow "audaciously" holds the position that women must claim the right to remain unattached from marriage and maternity to achieve intellectual, moral and emotional emancipation (175-180). However, Glasgow may "audaciously" fight for women's rights outside of marriage, but she is unable to rectify the romantic losses that she feels such professional success brings.

In "The Professional Instinct," Glasgow proves Frazee's claim by creating character Judith Campbell-the epitome of a woman who has reaped the rewards of intellectual discovery outside of marriage. She makes a professional name for herself as a professor of philosophy and is eventually offered a position as the president of Hartwell College. However strong Judith's instinct to accept the prestigious position may be, she faces an equally arousing instinct to be with her lover, Doctor John Estbridge. Haunted with having to make the terrible choice between a love life and a professional life, Judith cries to John, "I wish I had no ambition." John replies, "Judith, would you give it up if I

## Non-Fiction Winners

asked you?" Unable to blend her professional life with her romantic life, Judith eventually gives in, saying, "I haven't any ambition-any future-except yours" (1 006). Here Glasgow introduces the idea of inevitable betrayal that ensues self-discovery. No matter how liberating personal exploration and discovery may have been for women in the modern era, Glasgow claims that a choice eventually had to be made between a professional and romantic life, leading ultimately to an ironic betrayal of instincts discovered during the process of self-liberation.

Although Wharton and Glasgow succeed in revealing the costs inherent in self-discovery, Katherine Anne Porter uniquely depicts the inner-life of a woman during self-discovery with a magnification beyond that of her contemporaries. In her short story, "Theft," she uses the nameless protagonist to show the ultimate price women pay for self-discovery: isolation.

The onset of "Theft" reveals an already self-aware woman so caught up in her independence that she no longer holds interest in love or in relationships with others. In his essay "By Self Possessed," critic John Edward Hardy agrees that the central figures of Porter's stories are "people whose desperate preoccupation with themselves cuts them off from effective communication with all other human beings" (62). In "Theft," Porter skillfully alludes to the central character's aloofness by conveying most of the action through a series of recollections all taking place in the woman's mind while she is alone in either her room or bathroom. The only action that takes place in the present is when the janitress steals and returns the woman's purse to her. At the moment the janitress returns the purse, the woman realizes that the uncomfortableness of the incident has nothing to do with the stolen purse, but rather the other things she has lost in her life:

She felt that she had been robbed of an enormous number of valuable things, whether material or intangible: things lost or broken by her own fault ... words she had wished to hear spoken to her and had not heard, and the words she had meant to answer with; bitter alternatives and intolerable substitutes worse than nothing, and yet inescapable: the long patient suffering of dying friendships and the dark inexplicable death of love-all that she had had, and all that she had missed, were lost together, and were twice lost in this landslide of remembered losses. (64)

Eventually, the woman realizes that her quest for independence and self-awareness has led her to complete isolation. She has become her own worst enemy as she realizes she has robbed herself of a balance between the love and friendships of her former life and her current state of self-awareness. She admits, "I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing" (65).

Again, in describing the protagonist in "Theft," Hardy summarizes the theme of self-discovery with a price relevant not only to Porter's works, but also to Glasgow's and Wharton's as he says, "She discovers by the end of the story that to love oneself, to the exclusion of all other things and person, is ultimately to despise oneself-indeed to lose one elf. We are to understand that once she has glimpsed the hell of her self-imposed loneliness, the protagonist can never again escape it" (68).

Disillusionment, imprisonment, betrayal, aloofness and isolation in the name of self-discovery represent the results of advancements made in women's issues during the modern era. Perhaps Wharton's, Glasgow's and Porter's commentary make the fight for independence and self-actualization look dreary. Perhaps they are only warning against extremity in thought and action. Perhaps they were ahead of their time, knowing that in eighty years American women would still be paying painful costs while moving forward in love, marriage, careers, child rearing, social expectations and political rights.

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**Yeah, thesis statements are hard to come up with. Try looking at some well-crafted examples in one of the many handbooks in the Writing Center. You can do it!**



## Non-Fiction Winners

### Chili and Bryn

by Todd V. Call

Bryn's six now. But I met her at a time when I needed severe comfort. Several parts of my life had ganged up to test me. Sitting on the edge of mourning, I wasn't ready to leave its shadow. My marriage was running rough. The business was using more than it was producing.

I was running a soup shop at that time. The soup choices alternated weekly, with one long exception. From October through March, I made chili, and it was GREAT. You see, Tomato Vegetable was the best soup I made, but chili, especially mine, was in a class all by itself. That's when little Bryn came into my life.

I openly admit that I am not a chili-zealot. I've never been to, or entered in, a chili cook-off. I simply wanted the best product for my shop. But chili was just *another choice* in the rotation before her first visit. After Bryn came, making chili was a more refreshing endeavor.

Her parents and I had known each other for about two years. Mommy was in college full-time; Daddy had a 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. janitorial shift. Free lunch from their friend was inevitable as well as convenient. Then Bryn was born. They would come to my restaurant and stay for an hour or two. For the fee of a few bowls of soup, I was allowed to baby-sit her. And it was a bargain in my eyes.

She had the timing of a Texan. Every time Bryn showed up, I was making chili. So she helped me. She would sit on the counter in her car seat and I would chop onions or green peppers, or soak beans, or prepare tomatoes and spices. I would pick her up and hold her near me while cooking the vegetables or boiling the beans. At any point, I would be spouting cooking facts and tips, all for the benefit of my four-month-old counselor.

Dickens said, "It is no small thing when they who are so fresh from God, Love us." She was small and delicate and, in my eyes, a reflection of God's concerns for me. I loved her, and she loved me, and I thanked God for the solace that accompanied her stay.

Of course that's where the thanks belong. Bryn didn't *do* anything for me. She just sat there, cooed, smiled and grabbed her toes. But there was a higher power at work. And He knew no adult would be able to calm my heart. What I felt she did was give me hope, allow me to have faith and share her strength for life. When she was done with me, I was human again.

The winter ended. Her parent got real jobs. I sold the restaurant. Bryn grew up. We're still friends, but it's not the same, not like it was. Although I do have this recurring fantasy about when she grows up: she loves chili. "I don't know why. We never ate chili too much at home, but it comforts my soul." ■

*The chili-related views of Mr. Call do not necessarily reflect the views of Verbal Equinox, except for the part about Frank's Red Hot Sauce. That stuff rocks (in a literary sense, of course).*

### Todd's Chili Tips

I did lots of research and ate lots of chili that wasn't right. So I made my own and mine was better than all the others. Of course, ever since the second cook mixed up a batch of meat, spices, peppers and maybe some beans, the great chili debate was on: Which was better and why. For this reason, I will not give you my chili recipe. You'll just take it and mess it up, add carrots or raspberries to it, or maybe you're from Texas and think all the beans are "chili-apostasy." Too bad. You make chili your way; I'll do it the right way. But I will give you some pointers...

Chili should have kick. In the words of Pecos Bill, the inventor of chili, "I call it chili, 'cause it's anything but." But if you are not the fire-breathing sort, just tone it back some. Make it sizzle instead of scald, or quiver in place of quake. To get that kick, I use two types of peppers: Jalepenos (seeds removed) and Serranos (seeds left in). Cook them well. Chili does not crunch.

Choose Frank's Red Hot Sauce rather than other cayenne pepper sauces. It adds flavor as well as heat. If the choice is another cayenne pepper sauce or nothing, use it sparingly.

Ground beef, beans and layers of flavor. Use small amounts of seasonings. I'm talking about one or two teaspoons per two gallons or so. Un-taste-ably small amounts of spices will give you a great hint of "Hmmm, what is that unique flavor? I can't quite put my finger on it." Right after high school I worked at a local chicken shack. For every two pounds of flour and spices, add one cup of cocoa. The chicken certainly did not taste like chocolate, but you couldn't tell *why* it tasted different. You can soak the spices in with the tomatoes and sauce, overnight, or sauté them with your vegetables.

Serve with hearty, heavy bread. My personal favorite is the "small hub cap" rolls they produce in SLC at Curtell's Bakery. I used them as bread bowls, but to each his own.

NEVER serve chili the day it was made. This chili heresy. ■

## Non-Fiction Winners

### How to Use a Motorized Wheelchair

by Misty Hearnberger

This essay is for those of you who are starting with your motorized chair. Here are some scenarios you may encounter:

*Bumper Car Scenario:* When people are not aware of where you are, they suddenly stop and you have to stop fast. Beware of the small halls and herds of people. I ask you this: Should you in the wheelchair have to move to one side, or should the able-bodied person use common sense and move? Check owner's manual for appropriate operation and use. Find seatbelt; you are going to need to use that in case of sudden stops. Try to be aware of your speed at all times. Just like in a car, you have to adjust for flow of traffic. Sometimes it can get away from you. When reaching for your bag, glance down at the "ON/OFF" switch and make sure it is "OFF." If you are removing your bag and the chair is "ON," the weight of the bag on the joystick may cause the chair to go crazy like a maniac out of control. Not to mention you could accidentally hit someone. In this case, if you can think of it, turn it "OFF."

*The Four-Way-Stop Scenario:* When two chairs meet and try to go for the elevator at the same time and there is only room for one. If there is a lady present, mind your manners; let ladies go first. Going up or down? "Wait, catch that door!" Getting in the elevator is like trying to parallel park a Lincoln in a small space. Watch for swinging doors; it is more like a game of dodge ball. In this case, be quick on the joystick and swerve out of the way.

*Juggling Scenario:* Time for lunch. Stop and pick up sandwich, chips and water. Ask for help when needed. Do not forget your juggling skills. They are necessary because it is a balancing act with both hands full. It is like a circus clown juggling flaming batons. If you drop your chips, your chair could run them over and smash them on the floor. You would not have chips anymore; you would have crumbs. Hold all of your stuff and move the chairs out of the way. Remember, you are trying not to drop anything because once you drop something, you will never see it again.

*Battering Ram Scenario:* All of a sudden, you realize you need to go ram the restroom door. Be careful; it can be hazardous to your footrests. They are liable to fall off at the most inconvenient time. If able to, find a willing participant who you can teach wheelchair maintenance 101. Suggestion: always keep an allen wrench handy. On the way back out from the restroom, you have to pull the door open with one hand, and drive with the hand opposite of

the one you are used to. Or, try to push with one finger.

*Four-Wheel Drive Scenario:* Driving a power chair in snow is like going ice skating without the skates. When you are headed to your bus stop, beware of the path you take because it could lead you into a duck pond. For example, try to slow down when the weather is being violent. I hit a bump in the sidewalk and tried to save it but over-corrected and slipped down an embankment and got stuck in grass. Fortunately, I stopped sliding just before I hit the pond.

*Avoiding Arrest Scenario:* Caution to wheelchair owner: you may receive suggestions to speed up your chair. You might want to stop and think about this because more power does not lead to a good result all the time. It just may be more trouble than it is worth. For example, you might modify your motor by installing a lawn mower engine. This may cause you to overpower yourself. You cannot control it. One of the consequences-you get pulled over for speeding.

*Launch Scenario:* Always have cell phone handy. For me, the launching scenario happened when I was exiting my laundry facility. I tried to line up for the ramp and got caught on a piece of metal and I took an unwanted trip off the side and almost tipped over.

*Transportation Scenario:* Call Handy-Trans the day before and tell them the time and place you want to go. The next day be prepared for anything; if you are lucky they will do it right and you will get dropped off at the right bus stop.

*Bus Scenario:* Sit at the bus stop; wait for the right one. When the one you want shows up, wait for fellow passengers to board or unboard. Wait for the lift to come down, board the lift and hang on! Wait at the top so the driver can set up station. Avoid running over anyone's toes. Make a sharp turn, turn off chair, place restraints and away you go!

I hope this piece helps you avoid some of these scenarios. If for some reason you find yourself in a similar predicament, just remember you are not the only one. Just laugh it off. Good luck! ■

**Tempted to use a thesaurus? Don't feel guilty. Writing Tutors use them all the time. Stop in and find the best word when you need it most.**

-----Continued from front page

guiding my hopes and ambitions for future student and Tutor success.

Often I watch people around me perform, seemingly seamlessly, and I am glad to be awed. At other times, I am refreshed and encouraged to discover that an end I admire is the result of a process that is comprehensible to me.

I marvel sometimes that Tutors accomplish as much as they do, not only in their careful, attentive work with students, but in their scholastic and personal lives: they publish papers, create workshops, tour with the orchestra, submit poetry, present at conferences, and join clubs and organizations that put on banquets, host conferences, and print books. Then I see how tired they are, how equally invigorated, how committed to setting up one more meeting, showing up one more time, as many times as it takes to get the job done, and I see it isn't magic. It's process, desire, commitment. They just keep going, keep producing, keep caring.

In much the same way that Tutors care about their own growth and development, they care about the students who come to them to talk about writing in all its forms and methods. That's the only magic. Predictable steps compose the path to effective writing, and Tutors are glad to discover that predictable processes also compose the path of explaining those steps to writers.

Tutors explain and describe their analyzing process as they review students' papers with them, scanning for structure and organization. They look up style details they don't know by heart, role modeling the process for their peer students. Tutors discuss the ways and why of grammar principles, demystifying the usage process for writers across the curriculum.

That's how Tutors help. They guide, inform, and encourage their fellow students toward the discovery that writing is a process anyone can learn. Skills, tips, and tricks work like magic, but they're not, and I love being a part of a program for helping students to discover that.

I heartily thank departments and instructors across campus and across the curriculum for your support in helping us reach and personally remind students to come and talk with our Tutors about their writing this semester. Already, I recognize many of you as I tromp across campus, posting flyers, in search of our best and brightest to recruit as Writing Tutors. I look forward to coming to know many more of you well in the coming months.

It's good to be back where I started life, here in Ogden, and while seeing senior tutors and students graduate and leave us tugs at the heart, it is good to be involved with people who care about helping students succeed and go on to all the other non-magical and still awe-inspiring accomplishments of their lives. ■

**It's not goodbye; it's see you this summer. The Writing Center reopens May 23rd to assist students, whatever their writing needs may be. We look forward to seeing you soon.**

## Publication Information

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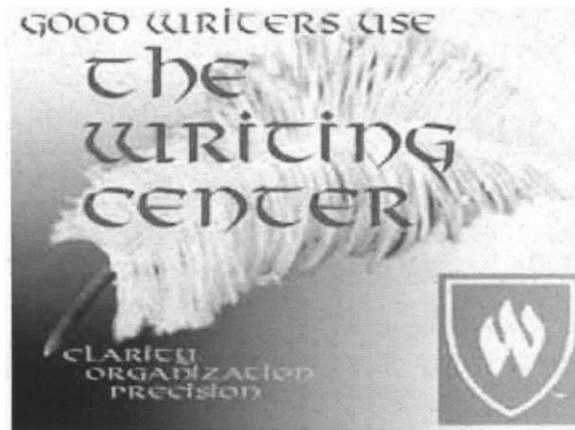
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*Verbal Equinox is aimed at helping students improve their writing and become more aware of the writing resources available on campus. We would love to hear from you. Please direct suggestions, comments, and questions to Claire Hughes at [clairehughes@weber.edu](mailto:clairehughes@weber.edu) or call the Writing Center at 801-626-6463.*

## the writing center



*The Writing Center is located in the Student Service Building Room #261*

*Monday–Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.*

*Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.*

*Summer Hours: Monday -Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.*

*You may reach us during these hours at 801-626-6463.*

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