



CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2001



ESOL VOICES

NOVEMBER 2001 VOL. 10, NO. 2

Contents

- A Cuban Perspective, *Ritzis Garrido*
- The Night the River Came In, *Lyuda Kuchma*
- Thief, *Vladimir Sushko*
- I don't have your watch!!!, *Mateo Rincon Mora*
- Saved, *Meera Balasubramaniam*
- Nightmare, *Theiva Nagarajah*
- Knowing My Grandmother Better, *Juliana Camy*
- A Move That Changed My Life, *Roman Fendikevich*
- Let's Party!, *Julianna Camy*
- Angelo, *Vlado Kominovski*
- Shah, *Farha Najam*
- Destiny, *Vera Palamarchuk*
- A Big Change, *Tzu-Chi Vickie Lin*
- The Day, *Ronaldo Ameida*
- Nothing Lasts Forever, *Sumedin Celik*
- Temporary Friend, *Shiantia Wong*
- Unlucky Girl, *Cuong Nguyen*
- Ova, *Guniz Maden*
- Three Days That Changed Her, *Serge Chiley*
- The Scariest Night, *Tatyana Kuchma*
- Friend Irene, *Yelena Poplavskiy*
- Impressions About America, *Angela Tang*
- The Neighbor, *Ze Huang*
- The Colombian, *Mateo Rincon Mora*

ESOL Voices is prepared by the students of English for Speakers of Other Languages at Monroe Community College, Rochester, New York, under the supervision of Suzanne El Rayess. This collection of articles presents the personal experiences and ideas of ESOL students in their own words. It also presents their ability to write. We hope you will find it interesting. We are thankful to the students and teachers who put their great efforts to make it complete and successful.

We wish you success and happiness.
The Staff



A Cuban Perspective

by Ritzis Garrido

In September 1994 my husband and I left Cuba by raft. We had many dreams and goals that we could not achieve living there, as life in Cuba is very hard because of its totalitarian system. We became immigrants in 1995 when we arrived in the USA.

The differences in culture and language were clearly visible from the first day, but our greatest shock was discovering how most people live in America. People buy things all the time even though they do not need them, taking things for granted. Purchases usually end up in the basement or in the garage. Spending money is part of the subculture, "I need this" or "I need that."

In Cuba, however, poverty is increasing every year. Getting food is a major problem. Basic necessities such as clothes, food, and medicine are the nightmare of thousands of Cubans as these basic needs are very scarce. Professionals make between \$9.00 and \$16.00 a month. Food is regulated monthly by the government, and it only lasts a week and a half. The government runs grocery stores where you can buy extra food if you have American dollars, but few people can shop there.

On the other hand, Cubans can obtain food on the black market with Cuban pesos. But again, most of the people cannot afford it either. Now our families back in Cuba have a better life because we support them from here; they have access to those stores. Now, I can eat without thinking that my family has nothing to put on the table. In Cuba, we never throw out food; we eat it until it is gone. People do not have furniture if they have a house in Cuba. Walking on the streets in America and seeing all the objects and furniture that get thrown out amazed us and still does.

We are very grateful that God led us here. We enjoy all the little things in life. Waking up every morning and knowing that we do not have to struggle for food and clothing is a blessing that we never take for granted.

We hope that when we have children, we will teach them the same values we have. Many children in America seem to think that they deserve everything, and they take almost everything for granted. They do not know any other way. Many Americans are not only materialistic and wasteful, but they take their freedoms for granted. If they could only experience living in Cuba (or another third world country) they might be more thankful for what they have!

Ritzis Garrido is majoring in Nursing.

The Night the River Came In

by Lyuda Kuchma

It happened during the fall, and the fall in Ukraine is a very rainy season. What I experienced was terrible, awful; I wouldn't want to have it happen again for the rest of my life!

The weather that day was not nice; it was raining a little. I had planned to go back home the same day. So, when I came to my sister's house I was very happy to see them, especially her children. I always had a good time with her children; they loved to play with me. At the end of the day, when I was getting ready to go home, the weather became brutal.

The sky got dark and soon a very heavy rain started. Of course, I couldn't drive back home to the city in such weather. I called my mother and told her about the weather. I decided to go home the next morning.

Although it was only five o'clock, outside it was very dark. We heard a strong wind and rain beating on windows.

I was scared even to look out the window. The rain was a wall of dark gray water that seemed would never stop. The howl of the wind mixed with the beating of the rain on the windows made a sound as if the house could fall apart at any moment. Suddenly the light disappeared. The children started to cry. We reassured them, but we were worried too. The problem was that my sister lived close to a big river that was known to overflow if it rained for a long time. We were afraid of a flood.

The rain continued to fall faster and faster. A neighbor called us and told us the bad news: the river was started to overflow. The water was going up more and more, faster and faster. The first thing that we did was check our basement; we noticed that the ground was soggy. Everybody started to panic. Most of the people had a lot of cattle, because it was a village. During the storm the cattle had started to make terrible noises, making the sound of the storm even more dreadful. I thought to myself, I wished I had stayed in the city; at least they might have light there. Nobody could move because the river had begun flooding all the roads in the village.

When day was breaking, the rain stopped. Through the windows we saw our street. It was covered with water - a river of mud. People used boats and rafts to move from one place to another. The neighbors were visiting each other for help. People were very friendly like never before; a common misfortune made them closer to one another. Thank God we had no water in the house, just in the basement, because my sister's house was on a little hill. However, people who lived very close to the river suffered a lot of damage; water came into their houses and destroyed their floors, walls and furniture. Instead of just one day, I was in the village for three days.

Since that time I have had a fear of water. I know that water is a necessity

Before she left, my neighbor warned, "Be careful! Next time it won't be as easy as this." She was like a ferocious tiger.

That night my mother told me to stand behind my door and read a book aloud until I recited the whole text. It was a cruel repercussion of my earlier conquest.

Today, I still do not understand why our neighbor wanted to cause trouble. Maybe the reason was because she was so lonely and she did not like people making noise. However, I regret about what I did to her. I hope she eventually forgave me. It would make me feel better.

Ze Huang comes from China. Her major is International Business.

The Colombian

by Mateo Rincon Mora

MCC's hallways have many people during college hour, especially the coffee shops where everybody sits to talk and criticize. A friend of mine called Iris was sitting at one of the tables. I decided to go and say hi.

It was then she introduced me to him, a young man about six feet tall, with black curly hair and a Hispanic accent. I introduced myself and waited for him to give me a chance to ask him where he was from. Finally, I could ask my question. He was from Bogota, Colombia!

I had just met a co-patriot, a Colombian, here at MCC! It is very unusual to find Colombians here and maybe that is why this encounter was so special. Soon I discovered a student with an interest in music, especially the guitar. However, I recognized in him the same fear I felt when I first arrived to this intimidating, unknown country and also the same great desire for success. His first name is Nicolas, just like my

son and he is nineteen years old. He is taking classes to improve his English now, but his goal is to graduate in music and then go to California to study for his Bachelor's at the University of California.

He saw snow three months ago for the first time in his life. "I could not believe there was so much snow in any place besides the North Pole or the Antarctica!" I told him, "Well now you can go to the Antarctica and deal with the weather there with no problem." He responded to that as a good Colombian, saying, "As long as we can find aguardiente, no weather will make us cold." I agreed. Aguardiente is a very common drink in Colombia. It is made of anise and tastes like the Italian Sambuca. When you drink it, it makes your chest feel very warm. Back in Colombia, everybody drinks aguardiente no matter the occasion. It is like the vodka in Russia or wine in France.

Nicolas says that he could spend days in his apartment just drinking aguardiente and playing his guitar. His first guitar was a gift from his mother. When he was little, she used to play a very expensive one that she had purchased on one of her trips as a journalist to Argentina. Nicolas could not stay away from this guitar, and every time he could, he would sneak in and take the guitar, then go to the roof and play it there so his mother could not hear. After being so persistent, Nicolas convinced her to give him a guitar for his 13th birthday. That is the guitar he has been carrying with him ever since. Unfortunately, he had to leave it in Colombia because he was afraid that the INS agents would damage or destroy it while checking for hidden drugs. When Nicolas told me this story, I felt really connected to him because when I first arrived in the US, an INS agent checked all my bags and even took a knife and cut apart two special pairs of shoes that I had with me. He was very smart to leave that very special guitar back at home.

Nicolas wants to be very successful.

He dreams of becoming a producer, a singer, a musician. He compares himself to many important artists in the field and he is very confident he will make it. "California is where true talent is appreciated and well paid for," he said. As with any young person, his plans and ideas are bigger than his head and heart. But then, he knows everything will come, little by little, day by day.

We talked for almost an hour and it felt really good. He reminded me of my little brother and myself. Many memories of when I first came to this country came into my mind and many feelings, too. Nicolas made me remember the fear and uncertainty that one feels when arriving in a different place. He reminded me of the frustration I felt when I was treated like a drug lord at the airport the first time I came to the US. However, he made me see how strong we are and how easy it is for us to overcome all these feelings to pursue a living, our living. I hope he does great in his career.

I promised him I was going to invite him and his girlfriend to my house some day to play the guitar, drink aguardiente, and talk about soccer so we can feel at home, at least for one afternoon.

leave him again. Wu told me that there was a time change. I asked him, "Why do we need to change time in America?" He explained. "In China, we set all our clocks according to Beijing time. That may seem easy and convenient to remember; nevertheless, there are different time zones in the States." And he added, "When it's twelve o'clock in Los Angeles, it's already three o'clock in Rochester." How strange this new world was to me. Still, I knew I had to accept it because I might live here for the rest of my life. Two hours later, the airplane touched down at the Rochester Airport. When I got off the airplane, I saw that there was snow everywhere. The weather was bitter cold. "Oh my God! The season had changed again," I thought to myself. I remembered my husband told me that there was about six months of winter in Rochester. I was not afraid because I had not seen snow in many years. Now I had the chance to play in the snow and stay outside the whole day. I was excited.

When I think about those memories now, I feel so funny. My perceptions changed. I never did go outside, not even for half the day. The wind and chill stung my skin. The weather was much colder than the weather in my hometown. I stayed at home and looked at the snow from inside. Almost two years have passed. All those images of my trip to America remain in my memory. My English has improved. I like Rochester more and more.

"Has America been nice to me?" I ask myself. "Yes, I am so glad."

Angela Tang is majoring in Business Administration.

The Neighbor by Ze Huang

I believe that everyone has his own childhood with exciting, scary, interesting, happy and sad memories. My

childhood was filled with as many adventures as the hairs on an ox. The earliest memories that I can remember were during the summer I got in trouble with my neighbor. I was twelve.

I remember my neighbor's kitchen and her hens in the yard. The hens seemed big to me then. I remember her dark evil eyes always looking through the kitchen window to keep a close watch on me. She was about forty with gray hair and an ugly mouth missing two front teeth. She lived alone in that big town house that her parents left her. I heard other people say that she had never married because she had a boyfriend. However, that boy joined the army and never came back again. Someone said that he married. Others said he died. No one knew the answer.

It was a fine day in August. I walked by the kitchen window with my friends. We decided to go to my home to play hide and seek. Our parents were at work so it was our playtime. We were enjoying the game, laughing with each other. When my friend Jin was running by the kitchen, we heard, "splish-splash." Water came out from the kitchen window onto Jin's head. "What's going on?" I yelled. I was shocked. "I'm wet; my mother will yell at me," Jin cried. I looked at the window as a shadow dodged. "We have to change our clothes first. Come with me." I said. I brought Jin to my house with the other kids. I took out some of my clothes and gave them to her to try on. My clothes fit her. Then I put her clothes in the dryer.

We returned to the yard and discussed how to pay back my neighbor. At the same time, we heard the hens "chirp-chirp-chirp". We looked at each other and discussed our plan. I went back to my house and took some firecrackers from a bag in which were stored all kinds of matches and incense used to worship Buddha. I ran back to the yard and gave the arsenal of firecrackers to Lin, my cousin, who was the oldest in our group. "Is it enough?" I asked jokingly. "Ok,

we need a bottle also," he said, looking around the yard. "Here we go," he exclaimed, as he picked up a plastic bottle from the garbage can. He put the firecrackers in that bottle and said, "Give me the matches." I really didn't understand what he wanted to do. He lit a match, lit a stick, then threw the stick into the bottle. Finally, he closed the top of the bottle. He was systematic in his approach to his mission.

"You stay here and be quiet," he said. Then he walked softly to my neighbor's hen house. He threw the bottle into the coop. "Come on! Go Hurry up!" we screamed. After that we rushed into the house and closed the door. "Bang-Pow!" We heard the explosion outside. We bent out the window to look outside. There was a great disturbance. We heard shouts from the next yard. "Ha-Ha!" We were in a jubilant mood after our victory.

In the evening, Mother came back from work. When I heard her bicycle stop, I ran upstairs and hid in my bathroom until she called me to have supper. "Did you finish your home work?" she asked as she passed me the rice. "Yes," I responded sheepishly. I did not look her in the eyes.

During dinner, my neighbor brought her broken eggs over to our home. "You have to discipline your kids. I have never seen such abominable kids. Look at those broken eggs! I want you to pay me back," she shouted like a shrew. "What happened?" my mother said. "Ask your darling girl," she scowled. My neighbor retold the events of our day. "I am so sorry," my mother responded. "I will give my eggs to you. How many eggs were broken?" My neighbor asked, "What? Don't you know my eggs could have become chickens, and some maybe even twins!" "Ok, I will give you double the amount," my mother said politely. I knew that she did not want to argue with her. I was so worried about what would happen after our neighbor left. I thought I would be in big trouble.

of life, but water has a lot of power; it can destroy everything that people have. I have seen on the news floods in other parts of world which were much worst than the one I experienced, but those images make me afraid of water even more.

Lyuda Kuchma is studying Business Administration.

Thief by Vladimir Sushko

A snowy cold Ukrainian winter. In such weather everybody is just sitting in their homes and never walking outside. If we take a closer look at one house, we can see there are many people inside, children of all ages and their parents. In the middle you can notice a boy with big eyes, a wide-open mouth, alert ears listening to the story of his grandfather. Let's listen to what he is saying.

It was a long time ago when I was a little boy and my granddad was alive. In the village where we lived, there was an old orthodox church. And it was falling down by itself. "We need to reconstruct our church. Let us donate whatever we can and save some money so we can rebuild our church," said the priest after one worship service. In a few days people brought a lot of stuff to sell, and when it was enough for the reconstruction, people packed everything in one big box. They chose my grandfather and sent him to sell everything at the market. Just like every time, my granddad took me with him. The city where we were going to sell our goods was so far. It took almost one day to get there. When we were close to the city we decided to spend the night at a nearby village. As we were on church business trip, we went to the priest of this village to ask him for a place to sleep. He listened to us very carefully and said, "Sure, you will sleep at Thief's house." He gave us directions and we went to

find our motel. In a few minutes we arrived at Thief's house, knocked at the door, and there he was, a tall scrawny man with a friendly, smiling face. He extended his hand for a handshake and asked, "Who are you and where are you going?" Granddad said so and so and we needed a place to sleep. "Welcome to my house! It's always open to strangers," invited our new friend and we followed him in. He placed us at the table and gave us a bowl of very tasty food. As we were eating, Thief started telling his story.

"Everybody in this village and around it call me 'Thief' and I truly am." I saw how my granddad moved a little nervously. At that time a few young men were bringing in our stuff. But Thief continued his story. "When I was a young boy, I was working on a farm, as a herdsman. It was a nice job and also not very hard. However, I couldn't save any money, so I was very poor. The salary which the farmer paid me was just enough for food and clothes. One day I decided to quit my job. I went to the farmer and said, 'I'm going to leave.'" "Okay, that's your business," replied the farmer. The next day I left, and as a gift I took with me two bridles. On the road when I went out, I saw a few horses that were grazing. There was nobody around them. I sneaked up to them and chose the two largest, came up on one, took the other and ran away. The next day there was a fair in the city, so I went there and sold my goods as the best quality. This was a great business, and I liked it.

In a very short time I bought a nice house and a fairly large piece of land. And as happens to every single boy, I fell in love with a pretty girl. Very soon my love ended in marriage. So now I had a very good family. But I still did my best business. After I got married, people started to talk about me- good, bad, true and false. One time my wife came home from church and said, "You must stop your business because I can't

go to church any more. People look at me, talk about me, and I can't pray, can't listen to the preacher's sermon. I can't go among the people. You must stop doing this and become a good person." And I stopped my business. I started going to church. Then people said, "You see, since he started going to church, he's changed." But actually I was going to church just to see how to rob it.

One day I made up my mind. I chose a very foggy night and went to the church. The watchmen were sleeping. I removed the door, got in, opened my bag and started to put in everything that I could see. Put in and put in. But at the icons I didn't look. When my bag was full, I put it on my shoulder and ran away; the watchmen were still sleeping like before. I started to run in the direction of my house. As usual I thought I knew where I was. But this time everything looked the same. After running and running, I stopped, scratched my head, looked around and saw that I was in the cemetery. Again I ran and ran, then stopped and looked around. I was still in the cemetery! I kept running until morning. When morning came the watchmen woke up and saw me. They caught me, and gathered the entire village to judge me. Somebody said, "Destroy him." Others said "Send him to penal servitude." After all had spoken, the orthodox father stood up and said, "You know him and what he has done. If we destroy him or send him to penal servitude, we will not have any benefit. I think we should leave him here, and give him a job. My proposition is to give him a job in the church." And they all agreed. I would clean the church ten years and any visitor who visited our village would live in my house. And for ten years I will have the family name of "Thief".

So I have been working for ten years. The first few years were very hard. But as I continued, I started to love it. And when ten years were done, they gathered again to set me free. But I said, "Let me

continue to receive all the visitors who will visit our village, and call me Thief forever.” Now I do my best job.”

And to this time this hospitality house is there and still receives all visitors. But the real Thief is not there; he died. His son has taken his place. Everything is like before except one for one thing: nobody calls him “Thief.”

This is the story I heard on the radio about five years ago, in Ukraine. Possibly, it’s true. I liked it very much. And I think I will tell this story to my children and to grandchildren.

Vladimir Sushko is a Computer Information Systems major.

I don’t have your watch!!!

by Mateo Rincon Mora

It was a Saturday in the afternoon when my brother, twelve, and I, fifteen, decided to take a walk to the mall. Going to the mall was the coolest thing you could do at that age in Colombia. We used to put on our best clothing and wear our father’s best cologne. And so we did. My brother grabbed my father’s watch and I wore his Carolina Herrera cologne from top to bottom. To get to the mall we needed to walk about ten blocks, passing underneath a bridge and crossing a little lonely and dark street.

Once we got there, we ate ice cream, went to the movies and even bought a couple of music albums we wanted. We were having a lot of fun and we could not imagine what was about to happen to us on our way home.

I was bigger and faster than my brother so I was walking a little bet faster than him. Soon I was about ten meters ahead of him. As we crossing underneath that bridge, two men poorly dressed young men in on bikes approached us. They asked for directions to get to the mall. It didn’t take them more than ten seconds to pull out their knives and threaten our

lives. They wanted our watches, our jackets and our money

The one that grabbed me was a little bit smaller than me and the first thing he screamed was: “the watch now!” I was so gullible that I thought he was asking me to give him back his watch. I thought he was accusing me of having taken his watch and I did not imagine for a second that he was robbing me. I pushed him back, yelling “I don’t have your watch! Leave us alone!” He stepped back and jumped on his bike. As he was leaving, he said, “Keep walking and leave your brother behind.” By then the other guy had already taken my brother’s watch or, you could say, my father’s watch. When they finally left, my brother ran towards me and told me what the thief had gotten from him and what he had said to him. My brother was very scared and nervous, and so was I. We had been robbed for the first time and we didn’t know how to handle it.

It took us ten minutes to get home. My father could see from our faces that something had gone wrong. He asked us what had happened, so we told him the story. At first he was worried and frustrated, but after a while he could not stop laughing. He couldn’t believe I had thought the guy was asking me for his watch. In the end we realized how lucky I had been. I had just pushed a guy who was robbing me with a knife and he had done nothing to me!

Mateo Rincon Mora is in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts.

Saved

by

Meera Balasubramaniam

War had started in my country. Two different political parties were fighting for control of the land. It was the 30th of October, 1995. That day my sister Meena and I were at our uncle’s little

store, talking and laughing with our friends. It was crowded. I felt I couldn’t breathe so I went outside.

When I looked down the road, I was shocked. It was full of people screaming, “Leave at once. Get out. Save yourself. The army is killing everyone!” I ran inside and tried to tell my aunt and uncle what was going on outside, but I couldn’t speak. My aunt ran outside and saw the chaos herself.

That week was very bad for the Tamils. We knew that we had to get out of our city Jaffna, but no one expected it would come so soon. We used to visit our house in the daytime and nights we slept some safer place.

Quickly we left the store and went home. We thought we might be safer there, but suddenly there was a big noise. We ran outside, it felt like an earthquake. The Srilankan army had started to bomb our city. It happened in a minute. Lots of houses were flattened and lots of people died. In the street we heard loudspeakers telling us to abandon our homes. We all found that there was going to be war, so we each took one bag and started our journey.

We each had a bicycle. The road was covered with millions of people. We couldn’t see the ground. Kids started to cry; the old people couldn’t walk. We moved like a crocodile. I was so sad because my dad was away at work at that time. I hadn’t seen him that whole day. At the same time my grandfather didn’t want to come with us, so he had stayed at home by himself. I felt very bad because we didn’t know what would happen to both of them.

Suddenly, an army plane flew over, dropping bombs on us. The road became red. We were all stuck in there for hours until the ICRC (International Committee of Red Cross) cleared away the body. Then we started to move again. We missed our relations. This didn’t only happen to us. It happened to everyone. Everyone started to call their relations by name. Some of us found them. Some

there with me.

Unfortunately she moved from Rochester to South Dakota. It’s too far away from here. I was very sad about her moving and I still am. But we still contact each other. Sometimes she calls me, and sends me some cards for holidays or birthdays.

How good it is to have a friend like Irene! I still picture her in my mind all the time even if I can’t see her. But I hope to see her again. It is very good to have a friend with whom we can share joy and sadness. I had other friends who I couldn’t seem to cross that bridge with. But what I learned from Irene was that it was so important to give each friendship a chance. Friendship can cross bridges and worlds.

Yelena Poplavskiy is from Ukraine. She is studying Health Information Medical Records.

Impressions about America

by Angela Tang

After ten hours, the airplane was finally landing at the Los Angeles Airport. I was so tired. Through the window, the weather was sunny. Many planes flew up and down. In front of my seat, two little boys with their grandmother were playing games. They were laughing and talking aloud. Their grandmother said, “We have arrived. You guys can see your mother and father soon!” The boys were happy. They stopped the game and waited to disembark from the airplane. Most people began to pick up their belongings, except me. I just sat on the seat thinking about one thing. Will America be nice to me?

Wu, my husband’s friend, lived in Rochester for many years. He had just returned to China to visit his parents. My

husband asked me to take the same flight with him. If we flew together, then my parents and my husband would not worry about me on the trip. Wu stood up and asked, “You already miss your parents, right?” “Oh yes!” I responded. I thought about my poor mother and father. I could even hear my mother say, “Take care of yourself! Don’t forget to call us when you arrive.” They waved goodbye to me, and they cried. How could I leave them alone? How could I do this? I am their only child. Tears came down my face. I could not control myself. “Don’t worry about it. In a few years, you will see your parents again.” Wu tried to comfort me. I did not know if what he said was true or not. “America will take care of you, and so will your husband. After a few hours, you will see your husband. So you must be happy!” Wu spoke softly. I gave him a little smile. I thought about my dear husband. After a whole year of waiting, we could finally stay together. I must be happy. I would not think about sad things anymore. This was a happy time. I stood up and picked up my belongings to get off the airplane.

Although it was December, it was so hot outside. Just after a ten-hour plane ride, the season had changed! Wu had already changed his clothes. Everyone on the street was wearing T-shirts or skirts. Only I wore a thick sweater. No one noticed me, but I felt so strange. It was my first feeling about this country. “I am a stranger!” I thought.

I looked around the city of Los Angeles. There were only a few people walking on the street. At that moment, I thought about Shanghai’s streets. Every time I went to Shanghai, I needed to hold my Mom’s hand. It was so easy to get lost in the crowds. However, it was different here. Everyone looked busy and nobody had time to talk. They walked fast and drove cars fast. I thought maybe this was part of the reason that America was the richest country in the world. I asked Wu, “Why are there so few people here?” He laughed.

“When you arrive in Rochester, you will notice even fewer people.” When I heard his answer, I was confused. He explained. “If you like the quiet lifestyle, maybe you will like Rochester. But if you don’t like solitude, you will find it difficult to survive a year there.” In fact, I do not really care about how many people lived there. I just wanted a better sense of where I was going.

As we waited for the second plane to arrive, Wu asked me if I wanted to call my husband. “Sure, that’s a great idea. But I don’t have a phone card.” I answered excitedly. “That’s OK. I have one.” He said. He gave me a card and told me how to use it. There were many telephones and every telephone was inscribed with English words. I only could read a little bit. I followed the instructions and heard a woman speak to me. I could not understand what she was saying. I hung up the phone and tried again. Still, it did not work. At that time, I felt frustrated. I had been in this country for only a few hours, but I had already done two stupid things: wearing the thick sweater in the summer time and dialing the phone incorrectly. At first, I wanted to tell Wu the truth. Yet I changed my mind because I did not want to reveal my mistake. After I went back, Wu had already bought dinner for me. Dinner was from Burger King. That was my favorite food in China. I had eaten fast food from Burger King many times in my country. We were now in America and it was my first dinner in a different country. I felt so different when I ate Burger King in the States. That was a really wonderful taste! Although two years have already passed since my first dinner in America, I can still remember the taste.

Our next boarding began. I could see my husband in two hours. I could eat homemade food again. I could take a shower and have a good sleep. Suddenly, I felt so tired. There were too many things I wanted to discuss with my husband. I wanted to see him and never

wanted to kill me and I was trying to run away, but couldn't. Behind me I was chased by very big, black dogs. Suddenly I work up and opened my eyes. I couldn't see anything in the dark. There was just the noise of the strong wind and rain. I wanted to close the door, but I was afraid to move or breathe. Suddenly, I heard a sound like somebody opening my door. I looked at the door and saw that it was slowly, slowly opening. I kept looking and I saw a tall figure that was from the top to the bottom dressed in white. The ghost, I thought, and began to cry. "Stop. It's me," the white figure said in the voice of my mother. "I thought you were sleeping. Close the door and go to sleep. Don't you see it's raining and blowing so hard?" After that she left.

When I settled down for a little, I decided to close the door. Coming up to the door, I bent down to look it at the bottom. When I stood up, I saw that somebody was standing in front of me on the balcony. I was shocked! I couldn't even cry. I heard my heart pounding. Maybe it was just my imagination because I was so nervous that night. But when I looked again, I saw that there was really a person. The person looked at me and put his finger to his mouth, signaling me to be quiet. After a couple of minutes I recognized my brother. I opened the door and realized that he had gone out and forgotten his keys. Of course, he couldn't get in through the door, so when he saw my balcony door open, he decided to climb up. And he did so exactly when I was closing the door. After that I couldn't sleep any more, so I came here for groceries and there those cans scared me again."

"Wow. That was really terrible! I feel so sorry for you. I feel so guilty about those cans."

"Oh, no. Don't worry. Now I'm fine, believe me."

"Are you sure? How about a coffee?"

"Oh, thanks. That's a wonderful idea! Let's go." And we went to the Starbucks

across the street.

Tatyana Kuchma comes from Ukraine. Her major is Business Administration.

Friend Irene by Yelena Poplaskiy

Friendship is a particular intimate relationship developed by two people who know and like each other. Friendship makes our lives interesting and happier because we are no longer lonely.

I met a woman named Irene three years ago. Her age was fifty-five. She had brown hair and green eyes. The first time I saw her she looked very friendly, and she has a nice soft voice. She was born in America, but her grandfather and grandmother were Ukrainian. They taught her how to read and speak Ukrainian. She was working at the Park Ridge Hospital as a translator, when my husband was there as a patient with lung cancer. At the time I met her she wasn't only my translator; she also became my good friend. She did help me to understand what the doctors were trying to explain to me, about my husband's condition.

At that time she helped me a lot. It is very helpful to have a friend to talk with, to talk about your problems or anything to release your stress. After my husband's death she offered me her help. I could call her anytime if I needed anything. She would be able to help me. It was a very difficult time for me. I met her mother and daughter. They were very nice people. She told me a lot about her life. When she was thirty-five years old she became a single mother. She raised her daughter alone, and she took care of her mother and was working two jobs. It wasn't easy. She had in her youth something in common with me.

I remember a phone conversation with

another friend of mine, several months after my husband, Peter's death. She was telling me about something...though I can't recall what. Then she paused for a moment and said, "Yelena, you don't sound like yourself". My reply came out of my mouth before I could choose it. "I am not the person I was three months ago, and I will never be that person again."

Surprised by my own response, I relayed it to my new friend who was helping me work through issues surrounding my husband's death. "Of course you're not," she said. "And one of the best things you can do for yourself is to know that you are a different person now."

A fear set in shortly after that, though. I suddenly wondered how I could relate to all my old friends when I now felt so different about the world, life and myself. Things my friends and I had once discussed seemed trivial. Their work problems and love life issues that I once discussed intensely seemed silly. I felt like yelling at them. I wanted to say, "Trust me, if you are breathing, life ain't so bad." Though my friends were sorry for my loss, they couldn't fully understand. No one understands the effect of tragic loss unless they go through it firsthand. One day I told Irene that I didn't think I could keep any of my old friends, because they just wouldn't understand my feelings. She told me to give it time. But I withdrew from friends and didn't call to set up lunches and didn't show up for any invitations, because I didn't want to pretend to be the person I used to be before, that my all friends would expect.

One afternoon my dear, understanding friend Irene stopped in. She invited me to go with her for lunch together, or have a cup of coffee, and after that she brought me back home. I smiled at her determined attitude. We talked about my husband Peter, about work, about my week, children. We talked and she listened and she absorbed and she was

of us didn't, including my family. Finally, at about 11:00pm we arrived at one of my dad's aunts' houses.

We were all so tired from the long trip we all went to bed in half an hour. When I woke up in the morning, all of my relations were there! At about noon my dad and grandfather arrived. We were so happy. All together fifty of us there were. That was our last day. That day was a strange day for us. It started in one day and it was finished in one day.

In our life we can't always make plans because we don't know what will happen, or when it will happen. Now I am in Rochester. I would never have believed this could be my future that day.

Meera Balasubramaniam is from Sri Lanka and is majoring in Computer Information Systems.

Nightmare by Theiva Nagarajah

"Fire! Fire!" she was screaming as she banged on my door. When I opened the door, she dashed into my house, her face full of fear, and shouted, "They are killing the people and burning their houses." I could hear men, women and children screaming and crying for the safety of their lives. Inside there were fifteen people whose hearts were pounding faster than the guns outside. We were frightened and scared.

We didn't know what to do as we belonged to the minority community. Somehow, we climbed the six-foot concrete wall in our backyard to the neighbor's, a Singhalese man with a kind heart who took us in for the night. He and his family protected us from that terrible, dangerous night.

There had been an outbreak of ethnic disturbances between the majority community, the Singhalese, and the minority community, the Tamils. A curfew had been imposed for several days, for nearly twelve to fourteen hours daily.

That same night, while my husband was far away from us on his duty in another city, in our city due to a bomb explosion, the electricity and the telephones went dead. There was a lot of vandalism and the houses owned by the minority community, Tamils, down our road were set on fire.

The rest of that night was longer than any other night. We couldn't help being afraid and wondered whether we would live to see the next day, fearful that all of my family members or I would disappear. We couldn't imagine what had happened to our abandoned house.

The following morning we all decided to go to our uncle's house inside the city of Colombo, which was five miles away. Since there was no transportation and because of the curfew, we started walking toward the main road. Many others were trying to leave our city in the morning hours too, so they would not be in danger either.

As we got on the main street, we realized the frightful situation and that it was not safe to proceed. On the way, most of the Tamils' houses and shops were on fire. I couldn't breathe seeing those buildings. However, as we had no choice, we determined to walk, even with the guns and armed forces' trucks running up and down constantly.

Luckily, we arrived at our uncle's house safely without facing any problems. We stayed there for a week and were able to contact my husband by phone as their telephone was working. He promptly contacted the police, and finally, we were able to go back to our own home.

Truly, 'Love is stronger than hate.' One kind-hearted Singhalese man had risked his life for my family. I carry that knowledge with me every day. It motivates my actions towards others. "Sathya Sai Baba," the reincarnation of the Hindu God said, "With love we can be united." I hope that the Tamils and the Singhalese can some day live together in peace in Srilanka.

However, that terrifying time is still

vivid in my memory. I'm horrified by the scene of four, seven, and nine year old children terribly shocked, jumping over the neighbor's wall. I've learned first hand that anything is possible and that difficult times are inevitable.

When I recall all that had taken place including the generosity of a friendly neighbor, I still feel that "Love is stronger than hate."

Theiva Nagarajah comes from Sri Lanka and is undecided as yet as to her major.

Knowing Better My Grandmother by Juliana Camy

I was always curious to know a little more about my grandmother's life. I admire her strong personality; she always says everything that passes through her mind. She is that kind of person that doesn't want to bother anybody ever. When I asked if I could interview her, she just said, "I don't have anything interesting to say; my life is so simple and unadorned." And after a lot of insistence, she finally agreed.

It all started before World War II, in Germany, where my great-grandfather was born. He was still young when he was forced to leave his country and his family because of the communists. He was born Catholic, and the communists were pressuring young people to become one of them.

He joined the navy and when his service was over, he went to Argentina and then to Brazil. He ended up in the city of Londrina, in southeast Brazil. There he started to work like a peddler, then later in a brick factory. Soon he met his wife and after the marriage, they went to the central west of the country where my grandmother was born.

My grandmother's family used to live at a brick factory farm. She had eleven brothers, but three died. One was born

dead; another one died dehydrated, and the last one died with meningitis.

She was one year old when her parents and brothers moved to another farm called Bandeirantes, still in the central west region that later became a village and then a city. This was where she spent all her childhood. She remembers that all the family used to work in the brick factory, but the only thing that she helped with was drying and taking the bricks out of the kiln. She worked from six in the morning to six in the evening.

Her relationship with her father was very complicated. He used to be wild, aggressive and drink a lot. When he came back home from the bars, he used to break everything that was in front of him. Then he would sit at the dinner table and read the newspaper out loud. Everybody was scared of him. Nobody could ask anything. His Portuguese was not good and he used to speak a lot of German.

When the girls wanted to go to a club, he had to go together with them to make sure the place was good. If he saw a woman that was not a “lady” in the club, he would not let them go in. He just let the girls dance with guys who were dressed in suits, and if they were dancing with somebody, they were not allowed to talk with the person.

When she was a child, her toys used to be a cheap plastic doll, small pig bones shaped like little animals, and a dried cornhusk doll. She used to go into the middle of the cassava plantation, a place forbidden by her father, to take a cassava branch to make her own little animals. But what she loved to make most were little animals from clay. She used to mold them by herself and then dry them in the brick factory kiln.

The walls of her house were made of clay and wood, and the roof, of huge leaves. The stove was made of clay, and the beds, of pieces of wood. She just studied until 4th grade because at that time the village school only went that far. To study more, she had to go to the

capital, which was a problem because her father didn’t have enough money. He had to send her older brothers to the seminary; this way they could continue their studies without paying.

When my grandmother married, she was sixteen years old. But what really surprised me was when my grandmother said that before her, my grandfather had asked her sister to marry him! When she didn’t accept, he asked my grandmother! In twenty-four years she had five children and nine years later the last one.

My grandfather was the only man in the city who had an accounting diploma, becoming then the only accountant of the village. When the village became a city, Camapuã, they needed elections for mayor. My grandfather was one of the candidates. He lost the first election and became a justice of the peace. But he won the second one, and was three times mayor and town councilor!

A few years after my grandmother married, her father died of cirrhosis. Her mother moved to her house and lived for a long time until she passed away from an infarction. Now my grandmother is a widow; my grandfather died nine years ago of a stroke.

Maybe this is not an amazing story, but for me it was because it satisfied my curiosity to know her, her family and my great-grandfather better. I used to hear from her that her father was a German and really mad, but now I know how his personality really was and why he went to Brazil. Now I admire her even more!

Juliana Camy’s major is Travel and Tourism.

A Move That Changed My Life

by Roman Fendikevich

May 30th, 1997, 5:30 P.M., our plane touched down on the landing strip at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York

City. After a twelve-hour flight, my parents’ lives and mine were about to restart in a totally foreign country. After owning a huge house, farm, many animals, and many acres of land, we were about to start a new life in America with only a couple of suitcases and handbags.

February 4th, 1979, I was born into a Christian family in Ukraine. I was the youngest of three. I have a sister, the oldest and a brother. My parents were middle class people in the Ukrainian society. My father was a carpenter working for a small company. My mother was a boiler room operator for the same company. From early childhood, my father taught me to help him in the little carpentry shop he had a home. I was always happy to help him. I was always glad to hold something in place or hand a tool over to him. My main job as a helper in the shop was to pick up all scraps and wood chips and clean up after the day’s work was done. I didn’t appreciate that job for too long. I always hated the dust that was in the air from all the wood. I later thought, “When I grow up, I will work with metal instead of wood.”

When I turned six, my parents sent me to school. In Ukraine, the starting school age is six instead of five because children start right into first grade. I liked school a lot. I was mostly a good student with good grades and a good attitude towards school. But being a boy, there was always a need to skip school once in a while. Sometimes instead of wasting a beautiful day in school taking a test or getting yelled at for missing assignments, my friends and I would go fishing or camp out in the woods for a day. When school was over and students were going home, I would also show up at home as after a day of school. Sometimes when I was a little older, I stayed home from school went to work with my mother for the day or helped my father with his work, when they needed me to.

My school years flew by very fast.

a working mother she always showed us love and care, while maintaining a successful career.

Mom is a rare person who can manage many tasks. Although, certain ailments are definitely affecting her during the last years, she still leads an active life. Nowadays, she passes time by going to the beach, walking her little dog “Yumos” and attending social events. She is very involved in handcrafts and gardening.

Until the day of my marriage, my mom and I shared intimate mother daughter feelings and issues. She meant so much to me from my childhood years to my adult life. In spite of having a strong demeanor, she becomes helpless and somewhat weakens when I leave her and return to the USA. I know those are the hardest times for her, but she is a very strong mom.

I have been living in the USA for more than 4 years but I still miss chatting with mom. I try to call her every week. Thanks to her, I learned the meaning of love, sharing and caring. I am now in my seventh month of pregnancy. My daughter is going to be one lucky girl.

Guniz Maden comes from Turkey. Her major is Economics.

Three Days That Changed Her

by Serge Chiley

Her mother could not recognize her at all. She wondered, “What happened? How was my daughter totally changed?”

Marina was born on August 11, 1979, together with her twin brother Alex. After that, her parents had two more sons. Her mother had sometimes two, sometimes three jobs. Her father usually traveled. Up to thirteen, she was a child, but after that, she suddenly became an adult. She became lecherous and lewd. She learned to argue. By that time, she

was already drinking wine, smoking cigarettes, smelling glue and gas. As a result, she got sick with colitis and gastritis. Marina even taught her twin to drink and to smoke. She knew nothing about God.

In 1993, a doctor said that she had alcohol intoxication. Although she tried to stop drinking, she could not. Her boyfriend did too, but he was not so bad as she was.

In 1994, she killed her boyfriend in a drunken stupor. As a result, she got ten years in prison. Christians often visited that prison and there were a couple of women who became Christian there. Marina often argued and yelled, and sometimes fought with other prisoners. She didn’t like the Christians. She felt something inside against them, but she didn’t know what this was. Later she understood that the “devil” was working inside her.

Once something happened that made her think. A bad woman, like Marina, spat at Valya, a Christian woman, in the face, but the Christian didn’t spit back in revenge. Marina thought, “Nobody can act like these Christians can. How can it be?” She couldn’t understand this reaction. She grabbed Valya and said that she wouldn’t release her until she explained her reaction and answered all her questions. This lasted three days. Valya told her about God, and how God had changed her heart. Marina had always wanted to be changed, to be freed from alcohol. Valya told her that she could pray to God and God would help her. Marina prayed, asking God to free her from all bad things. And God did. She experienced in her soul that God was really alive.

After a while, when the Christians came back to the prison, Marina asked them to pray for her. They did. She became a totally new person. God changed her heart. When her mother came to visit her, she couldn’t believe that her daughter had totally changed. But Marina was different. The next day

her mother also became Christian.

Praise the Lord for His love, His mercy, and His salvation! Everyone who prays to God for change will be changed!

Serge Chiley comes from Ukraine. He is studying Computer Information Systems.

The Scariest Night

by Tatyana Kuchma

It was early morning; I walked into the supermarket to buy some things. It was almost deserted inside; only the cashier was enjoying his dream. I was going slowly, looking for the things I needed. Suddenly, I got a hold of a big can of olive oil and the rest of the cans began to come down, making a terrible noise. When the noise stopped, somewhere not far from me there was still the noise of a screaming woman. I rushed to see what was happening over there. I saw a girl with wide-open eyes.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, what was that noise about?”

“Oh, it was just cans... falling down cans. I’m sorry. It was my fault.”

“No, no, don’t worry. I’m okay now, but this was the third time I was scared this morning. If you want, I can tell you what happened to me earlier.”

“Of course. Go ahead!”

“And she began to tell me her scary story.

“You know it was very hot yesterday, so when I went to sleep, I left my balcony door open. When my mother came to my bedroom to say goodnight, she also told me to close the door because of a storm that was coming soon. After she left, I went to the balcony to look at the sky. It was so dark I couldn’t even see any stars. The warm air blew into my face, and ignoring my mother’s advice, I left the door open and went to sleep.

I had a very awful dream that someone

like having an annoying friend. No going outside to visit you except the doctor. No seafood, just porridge with vegetable soup or oatmeal with milk. I had to eat that stuff to avoid a fever.

Chicken pox was usually something we got when we were children. Because I was special, I had got it when I wasn't a kid anymore. Thus, my family wasn't really worried about taking care of me and they didn't have enough time to stick around me. The unique thing was I didn't get the usual fever and itch. And because I felt well, I decided to eat other stuff besides porridge and friends without my family knowing it. I still ate everything that they served me, but I added some additional food, especially cooked meat from a can. "How bad I am!" I said to myself, but I kept doing it.

Although I didn't get fever, I had a lot of small bumps all around my body. At that time, I didn't use a mirror often because I always saw a witch in it, a young one. If you had been there and tried to touch my skin, you would have felt like you were touching the ground between the railway tracks which is covered with gravel. "Don't scratch, or you will live forever with your scars," my pretty dictator told me. I listened to my mother's advice, but I scratched one or more bumps in my sleep. And I had to accept my destiny to have a few scars because I couldn't ever think about plastic surgery. I thought I could go crazy if I stayed any longer in my room without TV. It was the air. I felt I couldn't breathe. I whined like a baby to my parents all the time. I wanted the TV to be moved to my room, or "Let me buy a portable television!" I knew that it was a hard decision for them because they would never allow me to waste my money on unimportant stuff, like a TV just for me. However, I did succeed, and soon I had my own television in my room.

Chicken pox has gone, but left some memories which are still fresh in my mind. I still remember how the rock group Queen accompanied me. Their

songs flew out from the tiny radio just for my chicken pox and me.

Shiantia Wong comes from Indonesia. Her major is Computer Information Systems.

Unlucky Girl by Cuong Nguyen

"Would you forgive your mother if she came back?" I asked Tieu Phung, a seventeen year old girl who was born in a small village near Da Lat City. Her father had been a soldier in the Vietnam War. After the war, her family was allowed to leave Vietnam. They came to the United States and settled in San Francisco, California. Coming to the United States was their dream; they wanted to start a new and better life.

This dream was broken when her mother abandoned the family. At that time, Tieu was very sad because she had lived with her mother a long time. They had a very good relationship. She missed her mother very much. She couldn't sleep at night. She wished that her mother would come back. It was a hard time for her because she always longed for her mother.

She told me emotionally that her father had been terrible since her mother left him. He usually drank at night because he missed her so much. Sometimes, she asked him to get married to another woman, but he didn't want to. She guessed that he was still waiting for her mother. She realized that her mother wouldn't come back because she had left her and her father too long. Now she doesn't need her mother anymore. She can live without her. She just feels pity for her father. He struggles to live and support them. He works very hard like a mother. Now she just hopes that she and her father can have a good future and live better for the rest of their lives. She doesn't expect her mother to come back. "No, I won't forgive her," Tieu Phung answered. Although I have never

been in this situation, I know it is very hard to live without a mother or father. There is nothing more valuable than having parents. I just hope that she and her father will have a good life together.

Cuong Nguyen is studying Computer Information Systems.

Ova By Guniz Maden

It was a lovely summer morning; the family finished a healthy breakfast prepared by Oya. A few hours later, she called out. "Is there anybody who would like a cup of Turkish coffee?" I realized that she was inviting all to her daily ritual.

She is my mom. After twenty years working as an accountant, she retired from the banking industry. Now, she knows that she is at the age where she has to enjoy life to its fullest.

My mom can be considered a petite woman, slightly overweight for her size with a fragile bone structure. She is a well-groomed woman who always told me "If you are well groomed, it will bring out your morale and confidence." Mom has always been my confidant and role model.

This middle-aged woman is recognized by her unique roaring, jovial laughter. Her brand of laughter makes rather lively and energetic conversations. If you ask anyone who knows mom personally "How would you describe Oya?" It is sure the answer would be related to her "laugh". Mom is gregarious. She loves to converse and she is good at it. When I was a child, I would try imitating mom's laughter but I can't be like her.

My mother is an only child. Having no siblings gave an excuse to my grandparents to spoil her rotten until she got married. Within the first year of her marriage my brother was born. A year later, I was part of the family. After this point, the former spoiled person became full time working mother. She never neglected her children and husband. As

After finishing high school, I decided to be a car mechanic. My parents sent me to a small mechanical technology college not far from home. I enjoyed college a lot. I had many new friends and a lot of free time. My friends and I shared an apartment together. The two years of college flew by very fast. The easygoing life came to an end. After college, I had to face the problem of finding a job. At that time, the economy was going down and people all over were losing their jobs; so to find a job was almost impossible.

At that time, my sister was living in the United States. She was always asking my father to move to the United States. Earlier, my father wouldn't even talk about moving anywhere. But later, after he lost his job, he agreed to move.

The move would not be an easy one, and neither was the final decision itself. We had to leave all personal belongings that weren't that important behind and bring only what was needed and what we could carry. We left many close relatives, friends, and neighbors behind, not knowing if we were ever going to get a chance to ever see them again. When we arrived in this foreign country, I felt like a child again. I couldn't go anywhere nor do anything without someone that knew the language. After a couple of months, I decided to go to school again. I decided that even though I was older than the normal high school age, it was worth going for couple years to at least learn the language a little bit. Through school, I was able to get into the apprenticeship program in Kodak. This is where I am currently working.

Every person's life puts itself together differently. Some people spend their lifetime in one country while others move from country to country seeking a better way of life. I am one of the people that had the opportunity to move from one country to another and begin life from the start again.

Roman Fendikevich is in the program of Precision Machining.

Let's Party! by Juliana Camy

The most important day of our week is Saturday. It's when you hang out or get together with your friends or family without having to wake up early next day to go to work. Every body expects something from a Saturday, mainly at night.

I always had fun on weekends in my country. But when I got to the US, it completely changed. The nightlife here is not the same as in Brazil.

Usually in my country on Fridays, after class, I used to call a few friends and make plans for the day or for the weekend. We used to meet at a bar around ten o'clock, drink for a while and when it was midnight, we would all go to a club to dance until it closed, usually at four or five o'clock in the morning.

The good thing is that in my country we don't have laws saying at what age we are allowed to drink. I started to drink when I was twelve and I know when I have to stop drinking.

The bars, restaurants and clubs close very late at night, restaurants at two or three in the morning and bars and clubs at four or five in the morning. And when you are starving after a good night of dancing, you can find a bar open at five o'clock in the morning and eat something before going home.

We have a lot of options of places to go; everything is open on weekends, I mean, on weekdays too. Sometimes my weekend started on Thursdays. But what we most enjoy doing is a barbecue; it's different from the US. We eat a pretty good roast, not hamburgers and hot dogs, but most of the time when this happens we buy more because nobody wants the party to be finished.

The parties at home are usually very good. People just go to drink and talk and dance a lot. It takes the whole night,

just ending in the early morning. Drugs are not often seen, and the drunks are always kicked out of the party by the security guards. Most people are more interested in knowing other people and having fun rather than having trouble or creating obscene scenes.

Now, when I went out here in the US for my first time, I could not believe it. I was twenty years old and I felt like I was ten years old. I could not drink or get into the bars and so on. When I became twenty-one and I started to go to bars and clubs, I used to get very upset because everything used to close at two o'clock. Everywhere I had to show my ID. "Am I in prison or not?" I never felt so discriminated against, so marginal.

One time I went to a college party with my boyfriend. He had told me about these parties but I went there just to see how it really was. When we got there, I was surprised at how everything smelled like pot; everybody was smoking all kinds of cigarettes and drinking. I remember a girl that was dancing with a guy. She was not dancing exactly; she was having something else that we do between four walls in our bedroom. I was shocked! "How come she does it in front of everybody?" I wondered. It was disgusting! I was shamed for her.

Everything that you hear in those parties is who is going with whom. Just about sex! I remember a day that I was leaving in my parents-in-law house with my boyfriend while we were looking for an apartment. And one weekend his parents went to Toronto, leaving with us their teenage son. He decided to call a few friends to have a little party. My boyfriend and I were upstairs preparing to go out. When we went downstairs, the house was full of teenagers. You know what was the first phrase that I heard from a teenage girl? "I'm not going to f... anybody today!" I thought, "What the heck?" So my boyfriend and I went back upstairs and locked all the rooms because we knew what was going to happen later, and then we went out.

This is not a healthy way to have fun. I understand that the weather can influence our way of life a lot because where can a teenager, who is full of energy, go in the wintertime? Not to a club or bar, a place that he or she can't come in. What can they possibly do to have fun? Maybe find something to do inside of the house. And what do the teenagers think about when they have nothing to do? Drugs and sex. It's the opposite in my country, Brazil, which has nice warm weather the whole year, with beautiful beaches to go to to have fun.

It can be the fault of the society and environment because teenagers follow what their parents and the media say. It is a cultural issue that we, immigrants, can't do anything about because if you come to a different country to live, you have to start to accept their culture and way of life.

* * * * *

Angelo

by Vlado Kominovski

Look at him! We were going fast into the hospital. He was going as fast as I was. In the same time I was both, happy because he was okay, and I was frightened because his blood pressure was too high. Finally we were in front of the elevator area.

"O no!" I said. Both of the elevators were busy. I didn't have any more time to wait, so we turned ourselves to the stairway. Just after the fourth step up, he turned to me and fell on my body. Feeling his two hundred and fifty pounds, I grabbed the rail of the stairs, while trying to keep him on his legs. He had a very hard shock. In that minute, I had a thousand feelings in my soul. First I was lost in the situation and very upset. Then, watching him with tears in my eyes, I felt the power of his

father's love towards me like never before.

Because of my father's character, I never felt too close to him. But now when he needed help, I saw how close we were. His strict character made me a little bit frightened of him when I was just eight years old. Later when I was in middle school, he started to change his relationship with me, but he still was strict about school. Only the first one in the class was good enough for him. When I had some low grades, he never gave me a chance to explain. His answer was, "Do not explain to me; I know that the professor was wrong." That answer made me never try to blame the professors ever. On the other hand, he would promise me a big present at the end of the school year if I had all "A's". He always fulfilled his promised present.

When I started Mechanical Engineering College, he was a little bit unsatisfied because his wish was for me to study medicine. Although he had never gone to college, he still wouldn't understand my wishes. However, when I finished college and I got my degree in engineering, he was awfully proud of me.

Angelo was a very powerful man. His strong body was full of the energy to finish every thing that he was planning. Every job that he started he did not stop until he finished. Watching his temper, later I started to believe in his rules and he became my idol. But his black eyes always were turned to me, telling me that he never believed in me. "You can't make it; you can't finish college!" He was always fighting with me even when I had very high grades. Many times I was not sure if he wanted to make me more aggressive in school, or if he really did not believe in me. Deep in his soul he was proud of me, but he never told me that. Sitting on the hospital bed next to him, once I asked him if he ever believed in me. Telling me the truth, he hugged me kindly. "I was trying to make you stronger than the others." Now old enough to understand him, I finally

discovered his kind character. He was strict in his rules, but very loving and kind in his soul.

Today I am missing him a lot. I am missing the father's love and even his strict protection of me. The emptiness in my family is so great without him. His place next to me is empty because the person who was my idol was left in my country, lying on a hospital bed. His sickness left him to wait for his death in bed, paralyzed for the rest of his life. Now, too far from him, finally, I feel what a father's love truly is..

Vlado Kominovski is from Macedonia. He hopes to have career as an engineer some day.

Shah

By Farha Najam

If we think about a person, who cares, adores, loves children without any greed and devotes her whole life, it can't be any other person but a mother. I believe that a mother's role is very crucial in everybody's life. When I think about my past life, abruptly a smiling picture appears in my mind. That picture is undoubtedly nobody else except my beloved mother. Although she passed away, she is still alive in my heart and will stay there as long as I live.

Shah is the one whom I adored and loved the most. She was from a farmer's family in India and lived there in an extended family with her aunts and uncles. Some of her childhood pictures, which were taken around the countryside, really attracted me a lot. I frequently asked her to let me look at them; however she did not want to see them any more. Those pictures made her glum because there was lot of severity in her life, which those pictures reminded her of. She escaped from India to Pakistan with her grand mother and grandfather and three siblings when she

because everybody was partying. We could go to a pub, but we wanted a big party. We decided to go to the Avenida Paulista, which is a big avenue, the most important one in Sao Paulo and maybe in Brazil. But we had a problem; we couldn't reach the place by car because the police had closed the streets around the area. There was a huge party going on, with more than a million people. A big stage was set up where famous Brazilian musicians and singers would play. We had to take a bus and walk about a half mile to reach it. When we arrived, we started to drink more and dance. There were many people selling beverages, making a lot of money. In Brazil, nobody worries about drinking on the street. We were so happy that everyone became a friend; we could hug everyone. But, of course I preferred to hug the girls. We had a great time. It was so good that the party stayed alive until 7:00a.m.

At 3:00a.m. we decided to go home, but there was no bus. We had to wait until 6:00a.m to get a bus, or walk about eight miles to reach home. I don't know how, but we decided to walk back. We started along the large avenue. It was dangerous because cars passed by at a high speed and if they had lost control, they could have run over us. That night, there were many people driving drunk and many accidents happened. When we were half way, a black sports car lost control and almost killed us, going over the sidewalk and crashing into a house. Immediately, we tried to stop some passing cars to get help. A friend and I ran towards the wrecked car to see if someone needed help. But neither of us wanted to look inside. "Go ahead, look." "No, you look first." When I did look in, I said to him, "There's nobody here," and he said, "I can't believe it. How come?" Then next to the car, we saw a man in his thirties, dead. I can still remember; his head was smashed and his eyes were open. There was a lot of blood around him and he didn't have his

right shoe on. It had been blasted away by the crash. We couldn't have done anything to help. It was over. He was dead. After a while, the police and some people who had heard the noise arrived. Then a television channel crew arrived to film the accident scene.

After a while, we started to walk again and I got home after 6:00a.m, alive. I wanted just my bed. I think we should have waited for the bus. But we had luck on our side because nothing bad had happened to us. It was a long day.

Ronaldo Almeida is interested in International Business.

Nothing Lasts Forever

by Sumedin Celik

The echo of howling dogs from outside came into a semi-dark room full of people. They were mute, looking at each other listening to the dogs. My mother tightened her arm around me wanting to protect me. All of us were waiting for the news from Dayton, Ohio where Bosnian politicians were tailoring our fate.

"It's time" mumbled Ibrahim, a neighbor, a prematurely grown old man. His face I could see through the smoke of his cigarette. He moved slowly to reach the radio and turn it on. People were watching him, hypnotized. Uncertainty had filled the room.

A reporter said that negotiations were continuing, which meant the agony of the Bosnian War would continue too. As the old man turned off the radio, my mother stood up ready to go home. I stood up too. When we were leaving, I heard the voice of Ibrahim, "...nothing lasts forever..." he said.

After that night, in the morning, the density of dew was covering our city, giving us the possibility to go and get some water. I went to the well to renew our supply. When I came home, one of my brothers was there. I called his name

and he turned around; his eyes were filled with the tears. Surprised, my mom asked him, "What's wrong?" Through the tears, trying to catch his breath, he replied, "Satko is dead." Satko was my other brother. My mom fell down, while my knees started to grow weak. I couldn't say a word. He was only nineteen years old when death cut down his dreams.

I started to believe that we all in Bosnia are going to die. Ibrahim, our neighbor, couldn't wait for "them" to kill him; he committed suicide. He wasn't the one who turned on the radio, when the peace agreement was signed in Dayton, only two days later.

Sumedin Celik is a Liberal Arts major.

Temporary Friend

by Shiantia Wong

My eyes blinked when the sun shone on them. I opened them and stared at every corner of the room. Why was it still quiet here? No one came in, so no one left, but the scary thing was no one was here. What a pathetic room it was! Nobody wanted to be here. No TV, but thank heavens for a radio which always sang to me. No heaters, but thanks again for the nice warm weather today, probably just for today. Why did everybody leave me alone every day? Why did everybody let me be a friend of loneliness? Why was I trapped here? I wanted to cry, but I wasn't an infant anymore, who always cried when it needed something. I was twenty, and I should be expected to keep my tears back. It wasn't a big deal to be lonely for several hours, but three weeks in a row? No! I never saw anyone from when I opened my eyes till I closed them again.

"Be patient" was my motto during my isolation. I never forgot that moment, staying together in my room with my temporary friend, chicken pox. It was truly a nightmare. Having chicken pox is

A Big Change

by Tzu-Chi Vickie Lin

I still can't believe it. I am an international student in America. I still remember three years ago when my father and I had a short talk. "Tzu-Chi, I know that you felt a lot of pressure when you were studying in middle school. I think it would be better for you to study abroad after high school. You have proven your English now and I am going to let you go to a special high school, one for the students who want to study abroad, called Chia-Yang High School." My life to prepare study abroad was beginning.

The first year, I started to learn formal English. Because my school was special, they employed some Canadian teachers to teach us English. I also studied math in English. Our school even had a speech contest in English. I had a chance to participate, but didn't do a very good job and I lost.

At the end of my first year, the school took my classmates and me to study in Canada for two months. We spent one month in Victoria and another in Vancouver. We also spent one week camping in Banff. We did many exciting activities such as rafting and climbing. We had lots of fun during those two months and my English improved, especially my speaking ability.

Now I passed to year two. I learned more English and started to prepare for the TOEFL test in Taiwan. This was our busiest year in high school. Teachers started to teach us chemistry, physics and math. I started to search for the school that I wanted in the USA and I sent e-mails asking for application forms. This year, I took a big step towards studying abroad!

The last year in my high school, I knew my life would soon change. I was going to go to America to finish my education and make my dream come true. I would leave Taiwan, so I treasured and

cherished the family, friends and things around me. I had a really great time in this period. One day, my father told me that he had a friend who lived in Rochester, NY, and he had asked her to find a school for me. Soon, I had the MCC application for and the I-20 visa for international students.

Last June, I came to America by myself. I began my new life, in an unfamiliar country, by myself. Now I have to become staunch and independent. I can't be brought down by being lonely because I have a mission to complete. I can't let my dad worry about me. Even though I am alone in this country, I still have many friends and family who care for me and keep in touch with me. My friends and family are not only my motivation for staying here. They also provide me with the energy to keep working. I will get used to this country and be successful here!

Tzu-Chi Vickie Lin is a Liberal Arts major.

The Day

by Ronaldo Ameida

It was a gorgeous Sunday of 1994. The sun was bright, the sky was blue and the temperature was about 95°F degrees. In Brazil it is not difficult to see days like that. But this was the most important day in that year for Brazilians because it was the soccer World Cup final between Brazil and Italy. Actually the country stops for such a day and those days are part of history to us. You cannot imagine how much we love this sport and how important for us it is to win a world cup. You can see the Brazilian flag in every window and car. We also paint the streets green and yellow, the color of our flag; we make balloons and you can hear the firecrackers all day long.

I woke up early that morning because I couldn't sleep with the noise people were making and also I was anxious. The

first thing I did was put my uniform on, a shirt of the Brazilian soccer team. Everybody must wear a uniform in those days.

During the morning some friends and relatives came to my house to see the game and after a little while, you could see twenty-five of us, of course bringing some beer, flags and firecrackers. We started to drink at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday and stopped at 3:00 a.m. on Monday. How drunk we were!

The game started at 4:00p.m and we had already sung the Brazilian Nation Hymn awhile before that. Everybody was very nervous and in absolute silence, focused on the game. The people couldn't blink their eyes because they might miss something. At the end of the first half, the score was 0 to 0. It made us more nervous than before. And the scoreboard stayed 0 to 0 until the end of the game. We almost died from so much tension. The overtime started and we were praying at that time because we couldn't lose that game. If we lost, we would stay in mourning for one month, at least. Overtime-finished 0 to 0 and now we had to go to penalty kicks. It meant the World Cup was going to be finished like a lottery! The Brazilian team kicked the first ball and lost the penalty. You could see the sadness on people's faces. But it was not over; we had a chance if the Italians lost more than one penalty kick. The Italians kicked their first ball and lost too. Oh yes!! We were still alive. After that, the Brazilian team made goals on the next four penalties. And when the Italian player kicked the last ball, our goalkeeper defended it. The whole country bust with emotion. In my house, there were people screaming, crying and hugging each other. On the streets, you could see cars honking and waving the Brazilian flag. We were the only country to win the World Cup for four times.

After a little while, we decided to go to somewhere to celebrate the victory. We had many places to choose from

was only thirteen years old due to the riots between Hindus and Muslims. Her parents and the rest of the siblings couldn't manage to escape and were left behind. They were able to reunite when she visited them after fifteen years but still those tragedies of life left severe impact on her life that not only made her tough but also a responsible person.

Despite this ordeal in her earlier life, she had a magnificent and charming personality. She was a tall almost cylindrical woman with black, lightly curled hair, which sparkled, on her fair-colored skin. Her voice was very soft and melodious and likewise her conversation style was impressive and polite.

My mother was a competent and well-spirited woman in everything she did. She was very fond of gardening along with socializing. She loved flowers and trees and also had quite an interest in botany. In summer vacation she would keep us busy in the garden of our house with her and also she had an unbelievable imagination about landscaping.

When she turned eighteen, she got married. She proved to be a very loyal and caring wife. She changed her life style and cooperated with my father where he needed her. I remember when I was twelve years old, my father had an accident and his condition was very serious because he had an internal head injury. The doctors had been losing hope but my mother stood strong. She used lot of effort in contacting different doctors and got their opinion as well as keeping good hope from God, and finally my father came out from the serious condition. It was the time when I realized what an active, swift, brave and intelligent woman she was.

Along with being a wonderful wife, she was also a dedicated and loving mother of two daughters and two sons. She was an ideal mother and we were proud of her. She behaved to us as if we were her friends. Whenever we had a problem or

concern about any thing, we would discuss it with her without any hesitation. She always taught us useful lessons that we should learn to control our anger and be patient after working hard, which would help us to be successful and have a better life. She had no opportunity to get higher education after graduating from high school, but she had made a purpose in her life to provide her children with the best education. She was adept at teaching children and helped us study.

Now that I am in America, I have an enormous power of freedom and wisdom I inherited from my mother. I am trying to fulfill her dreams the dreams that did not come true for her. She always told us "Knowledge is like an ocean; you can never conquer it, but if you keep trying, you will have enough knowledge to live on". She gave me lessons on how to interact with people and still keep self-respect. I always wish that I could be as wise, understanding, and encouraging for my children as she was.

Farha Najam is from Pakistan. She is studying computer science at MCC. She hopes to work in the computer field.

Destiny

by Vera Palamarchuk

Isn't it beautiful when people can play music? When you can't imagine how to live without music? When you and music are one?

I was born into a middle class family. Nobody in my family was a musician, so I don't know why my mother decided to send me to music school. I passed the entrance exam very well, and the teacher proposed that I take violin classes because, they told me, I had perfect pitch. But I refused to study the violin because I wanted to play the piano. In my family, we discussed about my future and unfortunately, the music school had no free classes in piano (our school was very small). Therefore, I agreed to study

the violin. Why did I agree? Because later we found out that all students who play violin must study a piano. After half a year I felt very comfortable in this field and I was happy to study in the music school. The next year my girlfriend, Irina, began to study in the music school too, and we enjoyed music lessons together.

I was a good student, so I didn't have a problem because I studied a lot. Sometimes our neighbors asked me to give them a rest. One day, Irina decided not to take classes anymore. She told me, "It is very hard to study in two schools at once." I agreed with her, and I told my mother that I wanted to withdraw from music school too. My mother was shocked, but she said that I have to think about it.

Two days later my mother and I were going to go to the capital of Ukraine, Kiev, for a weekend. We bought tickets for the early train that left at 5 am. We didn't have a car, and in those early hours in our small town the buses hadn't started yet. As we walked to the train station, we saw a garbage man, who was doing his job. My mother told me, "If you are not going to study, you will be a garbage man too. What do you think?"

I realized she was right and I didn't try to drop out of school because I didn't want to be a garbage man... In a while I understood that music was my destiny, my future. I couldn't live without music, even at night in my dreams I imagined that I was playing in a big symphonic orchestra. After graduation from high school and music school my dreams came true.

It is wonderful if your mother is your best friend, the one who can support you and give you good advice. Unfortunately, my mother passed away three years ago, but I have always remembered how she pointed me towards my future.

Vera Palamarchuk is studying Office Technology, preparing to be a Medical Secretary.