Waynessence, the literary magazine of The University of Akron Wayne College, is published for the campus community to provide an audience for aspiring writers and artists. All materials are published with the consent of the contributors, who accept full credit for their work.

Artists, photographers, and writers have produced their own work independently. Their proximity in Waynessence does not reflect the intentions of authors or artists.
Special Acknowledgments from the Staff:

God, for guiding us
Susanna Horn
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Sam Sheller
Lara Kerr
All the English Faculty
Everyone who submitted to Waynessence

Editor's Note

It has been a pleasure putting together this semester's edition of the Waynessence, and to have been able to work with the tremendous talent that has been contributed by the Wayne College community.

Advisor's Note

Written contributions to this semester's Waynessence reflect the serious tone that characterizes much of our nation. May we learn from loss and appreciate the gifts we are given each day – among them, the gifts of life, love, and grace. And may we share them all.

Susanna K. Horn
Waynessence Advisor
The Smucker Learning Center

Lucky
by Marissas Minor
Note: The Waynessence staff reserves the right to choose and edit written submissions as well as art and photography based on length, technical accuracy, and audience considerations.
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**Abby Hughes**

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**Abra Morgan**

**Amanda Morrison**

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**Jeannette Thompson** of Lodi, majoring in early education.

**Kelly Topovski** of Wooster is a Barista at a local coffee house. She enjoys skiing, music, and photography.

**Andrea Tracey** is a single parent of two majoring in Health Administration.
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When I Lost My Way in the Darkness
by Mandi L. Grumbling

The day my three year old cousin Shawn died, the ground beneath my feet started to break. Shawn was born on a hot summer day when the sun was shining brightly and the air was so thick you could cut it with a knife. I suppose he was born like any other baby is born, but there was something terribly wrong. At first the doctors did not know why he was so sick; they thought it might be cancer. The doctors found out that he had a very rare affliction called Schwalmans disease. My aunt gave the family the news that the all-knowing doctors thought Shawn would not make it to see his first birthday. “Isn’t there anything they can do, anything to make him better? That is their job, isn’t it?” Everyone started talking at once like the droning of a thousand killer bees. I just sat there on the comfortable blue couch and didn’t say anything at all. I, the one who always had something smart to say, was speechless. I no longer can remember who was crying and who was yelling. All I can remember was the uncontrollable pain and anger that was consuming my body and seeping into my soul.

The doctors began administering experimental drugs to Shawn, trying to stop the disease from devouring his small and fragile body. It was heartbreaking to watch this beautiful and happy baby lose the battle for his life. Every time anyone would softly touch him, a green and purple bruise would leave an ugly mark. I remember the doctors and nurses saying he was a small miracle because he lived longer than the doctors predicted. What do doctors know anyway? Since I lived in Illinois at that time, it was easier to step back from reality. For short periods of time, I could put Shawn in the back of my mind. It made things easier for me if I could forget and feel numb. Feeling nothing allowed me to function normally; I still had to go to school and study. I could not sit at home and wallow in my own self-pity. After all, I was not the one who was dying. During the three precious years of Shawn’s life, my father, mother, and I would travel back to Ohio a countless number of times. When my aunt or uncle would call to tell us that Shawn was back in the hospital we silently packed our bags and put them in the car. It was a long and lonely ride. I was stuck in the back seat and none of us would say anything at all. I guess my parents were thinking to themselves because they did not want to break the silence. The silence was hanging around me just waiting to be broken by the sounds of normalcy; one little sound and the jagged little pieces would cut my skin, making me bleed.

I began to dread the telephone ringing; this anxiety was starting to consume me. I told my friends that I did not want them calling my house anymore. I was pulling away and they did not understand why. I never told anyone how I was feeling; everything was just simmering inside me, waiting patiently to boil over. I would never tell anyone the secret hope I was pondering, that Shawn’s pain and suffering would just end. Not that I was hoping he would die, but that God would grant him a miracle and heal him. Just like in the Bible my whole family believed in so much. Maybe that is why they say hope was in Pandora’s Box because it is a plague on mankind; it breaks the heart and shrinks the soul. I never allowed myself to cry in front of anyone; tears were meant to only come out at night when the darkness could hide my weakness.

Sensing Calms
by Rachel Lawrence
The Girl
by Amanda Conley

Again she sits in the corner,
alone,
placing nervous,
birdlike bites into her mouth.
The dreary day creeps in
through two glass walls
like nothing more than air between them.
Her chestnut hair,
prim behind each ear,
silk below her shoulders,

deserving to be noticed,

yet unseen
by boys too busy to stop,
too timid to approach.

Afraid of Myself: Portrait
by Megan Berkey
Again
by Lara Kerr

The good is gone
It’s all over
I’m like a book
With no cover
Everyone knows
Everything ’bout me
I feel as though
I can never be free...
again
Life is like a model train
It goes around
Again and again
Circling, circling
Forever more
And I’m in love
To the core...
again
There is no life of mine
That I can see
If I want one
There will be a fee
I would have to become
A different person
But I couldn’t become
His or her son....
again

"Oh No, Tata"
by Marissa Minor
Are Our Children No Longer Safe?

by Andrea Tracey

Being a parent is not an easy job and no one ever said it would be. We parents try to protect our children from strangers as well as those we know. Wayne County residents have a lot of unanswered questions that we deserve answers to! The first question, and I speak on behalf of Wayne County residents:

1. What kind of people would release a convicted rapist from prison before completing his time? Was it due to “good behavior”? If that isn’t a joke, look what happened!

2. Do these people have a daughter or even a son? They must not!

Those of us who do have children know these kind of sick people do not care what age, race, or sex our children happen to be; they do whatever they desire to our innocent children. We are unable to let our children play outside alone; it used to be a safe place to live here in Wayne County.

Our children are our future. What has happened to our society? Who is able to explain this to its residents? Probably no one. If a person does not acquire good judgmental skills, then he/she should not be on the parole board!

What do I tell my neighbor, who is from Detroit, who thought Wayne County was a safe place to raise her children? She now has second thoughts! Thanks to the people who released a convicted rapist from prison where he should have stayed for life!

Our hearts and prayers are and will always be with the Jackson family!

God Blesses You!

Wayne County Will Never Forget!
TheDancer
by Katherine Schweitzer-Carney

The dreams she once held have all faded away
as she dances in the darkness of light.
Hope’s been so elusive for too many years,
but she smiles and disguises her plight.

Unaware, they proclaim her a beautiful sort
though she struggles each day to survive.
She lets the brash music drown out wishful thoughts.
On the stage she is scarcely alive.

Her cherubim grow and her world has changed
into a dance she has come to despise.
She knows the answers, she knows the truth;
as the music plays on ‘til she dies.

Acoustic Waves
by Kelly Topovski
Rousing
by Amanda Conley

These libidinous thoughts
burn rampant,
Thomas Harris
never dreamed
Lecter could awaken.
Those pierce me eyes
and hissing lips
electrocute my scalp.
Birthed between two covers,
delivered to my mind,
a perfect blend
of gentility and sin.
Like backseat necking
capturing my breath,
his velvet tongue,
a dagger
lunging for my heart.

Matt
by Abby Hughes
The steady drip of saline
coursing through your veins.
an added morphine cocktail,
supposed to ease the pain.

White stickers smeared in gooey muck,
wires streaked your hair.
The EEG buzzed silent,
for waves that were not there.

A doctor’s empty promise
of how gently you would go.
The suffering rang inside your head.
That he could never know.

A constant, rhythmic whistle
as the breaths labored out.
Blue tinged lips and sallow skin.
I felt Him lurk about.

Tomblike walls encased us,
slathered in putrid green.
When Death walked in He must have matched,
not a trace was ever seen.

There never came a tremble;
a calm look stole your face.
Your time here almost over;
too soon to be replaced.

He let you linger for a while
before He took your breath.
Silently you surrendered,
and fell away in Death.
But Jesus called them to him, saying,  
“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them;  
for to such belongs the kingdom of God”. Luke 18:16

The Gift of Little Mikey  
*by Katherine Schweitzer-Carney*

Early one morning my mother telephoned me to share the news of little Mikey. I was still pretty groggy and did not fully absorb the impact of her words. We discussed how I would ride with her to the hospital immediately following my daughter’s eighth grade promotion ceremony that morning.

When I first saw my nephew I was awestruck. He looked impossibly tiny. A light-blue oversized crocheted cap covered his head and a blanket was wrapped snugly around his body. Mikey’s face was the only part that was visible.

My maternal instincts took hold of me as I picked him up, gently holding him close to me. I rocked back and forth, pressing his cheek against mine (an act I reserve for the most precious of things)—my way of sending my deepest affection.

I studied each perfectly formed finger, his long nails, his hands and skinny arms. Mikey’s feet and toes were given the same close inspection. I pulled back his knit cap to find a hairless head, a trait I saw in my own three children at birth. His ears were detailed with creases, curves and folds in all the right places. He was perfect.

The face of this little one captured my attention most, as I committed this picture of pure innocence to memory. Mikey’s eyes were closed tightly, but the faint outline of light-colored eyebrows and lashes were emerging. I knew he would have a full face by the roundness of his cheeks. His pouty chin, pursed lips, and turned up nose were complementary to one another like those on a baby doll.

A beautiful boy.

I can never dispute this baby was a gift from God, but His intention for giving little Michael to our family has been a hard thing to decipher.

Anyone who has ever known my older sister also knows her long-held dreams for children. So ten-years-ago when her first child, Megan, was born too premature to live longer than a couple of days, we all knew she grieved hard over the loss. And we prayed God would give her a child she could keep. When their daughter, Nicole, came along, happy and healthy, the joy she brought could be seen radiating throughout the new family.

As time passed, hopes for a younger sibling for Nicole seemed like an impossible dream. While many of us prayed for my sister’s longing to have more children, we reluctantly accepted the idea Nicole would be the only child to fill her parents’ day.

Mother’s Day was when the news of my sister’s pregnancy with little Mikey was first leaked to Grandma. My sister had intentionally waited to share the news of her condition until every imaginable test was performed to confirm the health of Nicole’s baby brother. Nicole’s reaction to learning the good news was to sit for hours at her computer and work on birth announcement designs.

I was so happy for my sister that I could not sleep and spent my sleepless time thanking God for answering the prayers of many. I also spent much time picturing the addition of a little boy in the escapades of his sister and cousins.

The scenes in my mind were magnificent in every way, so when my mother telephoned me early that morning to share the “news” about little Mikey, the words I heard were not the ones I’d rehearsed while lying awake at night. As I listened to my mother speak that morning, my gogginess instantly transformed into a hyper-alert shock. My mother tearfully explained how my sister, only 23 weeks along in her pregnancy, had awakened during the night and had been rushed to the hospital by her husband. Our baby Michael had died and my sister’s life was in serious danger.
The flawless little boy that I held to my cheek, loved, and rocked in that hospital room could not look into my eyes because they would never open. Mikey weighed just over one pound and his body was a miniature-scale replica of a newborn.

As I held her son in one room, she was across the hall mourning Mikey and Megan and the other children she dreamed would become her family over the past ten years.

Just fifteen minutes. That is how long I spent with the precious little child. My sleepless nights filled with dreams of his presence in our family attached themselves to the lifeless baby. I was over-powered by the feeling I had known little Michael forever. In fifteen minutes my heart was captured and my life changed forever.

More overwhelming still was the response I received as my sister implored God to tell her why he had taken her son. The most reassuring, gentle, and sympathetic voice I have ever heard said to me, “I did not take him away. I gave him to you.” Accompanying this message was a strong feeling of peace and love.

During the weeks that followed, the birth announcement created by my young niece was transformed into a cover for the bulletin used for her brother’s memorial service.

My sister’s body began to heal even though her mind, heart, and soul have not been so quick to follow her body’s lead. I think that, in spite of prayerful intentions, God has His own plans for using my sister’s love for children.

Time has passed, life has moved on. My memories of little Mikey and the heavenly acknowledgment that he was a gift given remain in my heart, and I find myself pondering the whole experience often.

I know how hard it was to send Mikey back home to God. And I think I understand, like never before, how difficult it must have been for God to send His Son to us. Christmas will never be the same.

Perhaps the new-found knowledge gained since Mikey’s death is part of the reason he was given to our family. Whatever God’s reasoning is, there is no doubt—little Mikey has been a gift.
Life Changing Events
by Raechel Jarvis

There are many things that have changed my life, but only one significant event. That event was the death of my older brother, Jon. Jon passed away at the age of fourteen, on August 26, 1996, the night before school was to start. He was riding his bike home from the store when it happened. The train that was going through the small town of Loudonville, Ohio, where we lived, struck Jon. Jon was not paying attention and the gates were not down. The conductors of the train had not realized that they had reached Loudonville, so they were not blowing their horns.

Jon was doing my mom a favor by going to the store to get her some tea bags. She asked him to do so because dad was not home yet. He was taking a long time to get home, and my younger brother Scott, age ten, and myself, age twelve, were beginning to worry. Scott decided to take my bike, for Jon took his, to see what was taking him so long. While I was waiting, I heard several ambulances go by, but thought nothing of them. We had a factory that was right up the road, and they called them often. My step dad Mike pulled in the drive and jumped out of his truck. He started asking where the boys and bikes were, so mom told him. He explained to us that the train hit a boy on a red bike. Instantly I knew it was Jon. As soon as Mike got done speaking, Scott pulled up yelling. He screamed, “Jon was hit, he was hit by the train!” My mom looked at me and we started to cry. The Chief of Police J. C., who was also our youth group leader, was the next to pull in the
drive. He confirmed that Jon had been hit, and instructed us to get to the hospital quickly. When I asked J. C. if Jon was going to be all right, he said that he didn’t know. I knew then that things were really bad; he would have told us if things were going to be okay.

As we were getting into the car, our neighbors came out and suggested that Scott and I should stay with them, and so we did. Mom and Mike left for the hospital around seven p.m. They were going to call us once they knew anything. Hours went by and no word came. Scott and I were going crazy; we couldn’t sit still. People kept coming to the house trying to find out what was going on. They knew just as much as we did: Nothing! Around midnight a car pulled in our driveway, but we didn’t get up to go see who it was. We were fed up with people coming to see how we were, and to talk about the accident. The next thing I knew, my father, Charlie, was standing at the door. He asked that Scott and I go over to the house with him. I didn’t want to go; I knew what he was going to tell us. We all went over and sat down, and then my dad told us that Jon had passed away.

It was about a half-hour later when mom and Mike returned. At this time, we started calling the family and close friends to let them know what had happened. None of us could sleep, and around three a.m. my mom forced me to take some pills to help me sleep. The pills didn’t help very much because I was too scared to fall asleep. While I was lying in bed, it felt like there were demons all around me waiting for me to fall asleep to hurt me even more. The next day I found a stuffed animal of a Charlotte Hornets doll shoved in my brother’s closet and began to sleep with it at night. It made me feel like I had a shield around me, and the demons couldn’t get me through it.

The doll made me feel stronger, and from then on I was the strongest one in my family. At the funeral, I had to force my mom to eat and convince her that it wasn’t her fault. Then I had to convince Mike that it was not his fault either. Scott went into a state of depression, and it has taken us years to get him out of it; and we are still not quite there. My half sister and brother have dealt with everything pretty well. Every now and then, I have to take my sister out and spend time just with her so she will open up and tell me what she is feeling. She doesn’t really trust anyone else, and she gets depressed when she can’t talk about things that are bothering her. My dad never really showed me any of his feelings even before Jon passed away, and it hasn’t changed.

My mom was unable to handle living by the tracks, so we had to move. I asked them not to move me during school, and said that I didn’t want to move to Wooster. I wanted to stay closer to Loudonville. That was so I could try and talk them into driving me there to still go to school. Mom and
Mike ended up moving to Wooster in the middle of the school year over Christmas break. I held strong in front of everyone but broke down every night in private. My first day of school at Wooster was the day everyone came back from Christmas break. I faked being sick after that because I didn’t want to go there; I missed a week of school.

I eventually started rebelling against my parents. I did everything they told me not to do. I didn’t care how they felt, or what anyone thought. They didn’t care about what I had to say or how I felt, so I just didn’t care anymore. I spent all of my free time back in Loudonville. After school was over I spent the whole summer in Loudonville and only came back to Wooster when they made me. My eighth grade year things got better, and I made really nice friends that made me want to stay in Wooster.

Now my life is okay. It’s better than it was before. I used to break down all the time; now it is every once in a while. It is still hard around his birthday and the day he passed away. I can talk about it a lot more. But you will never see me drive fast over railroad tracks. I almost come to a complete stop before I go over them. Jon’s death is a continuing factor in my life. It makes me live day-by-day, not afraid to try anything once. I live now as if I could be gone any day or at any moment. My brother’s death will always be with me and everyone that knows me. This event has shaped my life to what it is now and to what it will be in the future.

My Grandpa and His Friend
by Amanda Morrison
In Remembrance – 9/11

by Megan Berkey
The Barn
by Marissa Minor

Busy Bumble Bees
by Clete Schafrath
Feathers

by Lara Kerr

These feathers have tasted the tears
These feathers have weathered the years
They have even felt my fears
And witnessed many ears
Turn red

Winter’s not the one that always bereaves
Even summer can be one of someone’s pet peeves
But in fall we always know the leaves
Turn red

Wars are generally caused by "me"s or "we"s
And can sometimes be blamed on one’s fees
But wars will always make our seas
Turn red

Sometimes I pray and sometimes I weep
Often I look at things too deep
But they always seem to keep
Turning red

These feathers have tasted the tears
These feathers have weathered the years
They have even felt my fears
And after many years
Turned red

Demeter

by Derek Frautschy
Speak Unto My Heart
by Nikki Dennison

Speak unto my heart;
Or speak not at all!
For the words of truth must be known
Before my heart makes the call.
Should I love you or are your words fallible?
Please, love, make the truth known;
Woeth me, for I am wary of all this—
And this heart cannot decide alone.

Brinkley
by Laura Imhoff
by Abra Morgan

How can I?
Why should I?
When will I?
And how about you?

Words, never flowing,
Seem to grant an empty
feeling,
But someday,
I will tell you.

Laughing, smiling,
Crying, shouting,
But it’s all a joke,
To you.

Love growing.
Deeper mourning.
How I long,
For you.

Silence haunts me.
Sickness taunts me.
When will I,
Tell you?

Sorrow ending.
We are drifting.
The doors are closing,
And I can’t tell you.

Nighttime creeping.
Family weeping.
Endless sleeping.
Too late to tell you.

Pall covering.
No breathing.
No thinking.
Someday I’ll join you.
Life After  
2/20/01  
by Abra Morgan

The burial shroud has covered me as I lie in my home. The coffin, a home for my flesh. The pall, a threshold for my soul. Now I shall join you in a forever forgotten warmth He has brought through blood. However, my costume lies in the sepulcher, tangible to everything they know. Yet, I could never reach it. Nor could I escape the prison-like home it provided me. In it, shallowly, I felt safe. Safe from the cold chill they breathed upon my brow and in my heart. I was fooled like the rest. I thought I could never escape this hollow tomb, my flesh, and I had no knowledge of any gaining them entrance to this home, my only. But now I find peace in the one place peace belongs, where the sun is a mere candle and diamonds are rubbish. No, nothing matters here, not of the physical sense. Yet, I mourn for them; they know not of this place and NEVER shall see it. One day, they too will leave their costumes and everything tangible to those of whom they know. They will leave their wretched tombs of hate and weary but wish to return for an eternity. They will never know the love you and I know or taste the peace you and I taste. Instead, they will not end but begin in a way that ends so much. Peace, love, joy, sorrow, or grief they shall never see again; they shall not feel at all. Or, at least for their sake, I hope not. What horror will be laid upon their backs had no name, for there is not a word suitable; there is no word ghastly enough to describe the depths of their nakedness and the exposure to their own, personal Hell.

Safari  
by April Nussbaum
“Memories”  
6/1/01  
by Abra Morgan

Scattered pictures,  
Of empty heads.  
Mellow thoughts,  
Filled with dread.

A melancholy premonition,  
Of something mentioned.  
Foretold, behold,  
I’ve been shunned.

Life is so wide,  
On a vertical horizon,  
But the world is trapped,  
In a sepulcher of tunnel vision.

An oddity among the norm,  
I was shunned.  
I used my mouth peace too late;  
He pulled them under.

Now a light shines,  
On the dark side,  
Of the moon;  
They know he lied.

Scattered pictures,  
Of empty heads.  
Mellow thoughts,  
Filled with dread.

What they were,  
What they could be,  
It’s too late, times up;  
Now they’re just a memory.

A New Day  
by Esther Hodgdon
Abused No More
by Penina Okel Baker

I want a man for love and care.
I cannot stand to be pushed around.
A hand to hold and love abound, to be as one,
yet to be alone.
A friend, companion, and lover to me.
Not to brutalize, nor control me.
Lovers and friends we will have to be, he will have
to let me be free.
I am woman, to myself, and will never give up on
future dreams I have.
To build anew what I want to be, the true woman
that is inside of me.
God created me, the only one.
I lived for years as someone else, never knew who I was.
Now I can be myself, always to be free as
the bird inside of me.
No more chains and broken vows, I am one
with myself.
I am Okel now.

On the Rocks
by Amanda Conley
Bored
by Jeannette Thompson

Andy 1142
by Rachel Lawrence
**Autumn Leaves**  
*by Liz Mess*

*If Autumn leaves*  
Then Winter stays  

With dry wind  
And bitter smiles.

And if Winter stays  
Then Spring begs  

To let her rains drop  
And dews to sit on top.

So Summer can peak  
And ever so slowly begin to speak  

Of Autumn’s comings  
And of Autumn’s leaves.

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**Overgrown Bench**  
*by Abby Hughes*
Me
by Katherine Schweitzer-Carney

I am many things that people don’t see.
I am good.
I am kind.
I’m a spirit that’s free.

I am a person who lives to care,
   and to give
   and to love
doing my best to share.

I am a person who’s faithful and true;
   who loves God,
   who loves people
and probably you.

I am someone who’s worthy to never be harmed;
   to be heard,
   to be honored,
to be cherished and charmed.

I am also someone who hurts and cries;
   with emotions,
   with feelings
who hates living lies.

I am my garden’s delicate rose.
   I have beauty.
   I have thorns.
So, be careful when close.

But I can be reached if you know the way;
   with caution,
   with compassion
given every day.
Lady Night  
by Mike Gear

She calls me like a lover  
Lost to all  
But known to none.  
Wrapping her dark  
Sinewy arms around me.  
Welcoming me  
Her fingers wrap through my hair  
Her chilled hands cling to my face  
With such passion  
Holding me tight.  
I feel…  
I feel weightless in her arms  
As I step from the light  
Into her grasp  
She clings like a child  
Welcomed by its mother.  

She knows me…  
How I feel.  
I welcome her frosty breath.  
She is always with me  
Always…  
Some fear my love  
Some scorn her  
Some even curse her evil,  
But I know the night  
A strong and solemn friend.  

Her eyes, like stars  
Bright and shining,  
Watch us from afar.  
The moon her heart  
Guides me with borrowed light  
A light that does not spoil the darkness,  
But on the contrary enriches it.  

When the sun sets  
She rides like a youthful stallion  
Excited, exhilarating, and free!  
Through sacred darkness  
Through calm cool air  
I see she beckons me  
I open my arms to her  
And her chill wind envelopes me  
And my love and I dance…  
We dance unrestricted and free….  
We dance…
Papa,

I am sitting in your blue chair right now, rocking gently, back and forth rhythmically as you so often did when I was young. I am listening carefully, waiting for you to speak to me, waiting for you to cough softly, but I don’t hear you. I do remember, though. I remember sitting on your lap in this blue chair watching the news with you, feeling you pat my back and twist my hair through your fingers. I can hear it, the faint clicking of the chair and the grinding sound it produced on each glide, and it renders vivid images and profound emotions. You always had time to sit and rock me, even when I became almost too old and too heavy to snuggle next to you. I remember the day this blue chair was taken out of its place in your living room to make room for your hospital bed. I'll always remember that day.

The day you died, I sat on the couch in your living room, staring at your defeated yet victoriously beautiful body. I remember how your mouth hung open a bit, in a wonderfully toothless grin. Your mouth symbolized the loss of your body to the cancer your job as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army had caused, but simultaneously, it screamed of joy, freedom, and eternity. I had not seen you look more peaceful in months. Although I felt as if my heart was torn to bits and scattered to the Four Corners of the Earth, I was reassured by that grin that you died peacefully and finally in your sleep. I couldn’t stop the shower of tears that fell hopelessly from my eyes, and I didn’t want to stop them because if I stopped crying, I would stop feeling you with me.

A hospice nurse that took care of you when you became nearly comatose had her hand on my shoulder, telling me about grief counseling and group sessions I could attend if I wanted. Do you know what I did? I pushed her away from me, sobbing most uncontrollably and staggering closer and closer to a corner of the room. I collapsed in that corner, feeling exhausted and relieved, angry and numb, depressed and liberated. Memories and visions from the past played in my mind’s eye like a slide projector. I can still hear your voice narrating every picture that flashed across the movie screen in my head.

On July 4, 1993, I came to Doylestown from Akron to see you march in the local parade. That was the first time I had ever seen you in your military uniform. I never
understood why you never really spoke at great lengths about your honorable days in the Army. You mystified me for so many years, humbly holding onto many stories and many tales of adventure and terror from your years of high-ranking service in the United States Army. At the tender age of eight, as I observed you marching plainly down the main street in your little town, I learned to admire your meek and humble personality, your desire for hard work and pure effort. From then on, I listened more precisely when you reminisced on your days gone by, and I certainly began understanding what it meant to be a true hero, to be a person like you. You were quiet, courageous, intelligent, and brave. It took me years to decode your personality, but one day it was all revealed to me. I saw all of your deepest and most protected qualities being displayed with pride and dignity when you laid motionless and still, wearing your uniform for the last time, in your coffin. I'll always remember that day.

You made the best hot chocolate. When I was barely three, I would march down from my room in the morning, blanket and bear in hand, feet tightly snuggled in footie pajamas, politely ordering hot chocolate in a sippy cup . . . please. You would promptly bring my perfectly prepared drink to me, sit down, and read me a book (or the newspaper, depending on the global events, which always took precedence over Cat in the Hat or Cinderella). You never, ever, had to do all that for me. You spoiled the heck out of me, and I loved it. I loved your constant attention, your bottomless pit of...
affection, and the valuable time you invested in my growth.

I could have grown into one obnoxious, rude, demanding child, but I didn’t. I could have taken your love and abused it, but you never let me do that. I could have been terrible, awful, and haughty, but I always cared too much about you to do any of that. Your limitless love and attention, the thousands of nights you pushed me on the swing-set and even recited all the silly rhymes like, “One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four . . . to . . . go!” when you launched me down the hill in my backyard on a sled in the freezing winter air proved to me the depth and capacity of your heart.

I love truly because of your life. I live with more honor and more excitement when I think of how you lived and what you gleaned from every solitary situation you ever faced. It has been gut wrenching these past few years without you. The hardest event I have had to deal with has been sorting out all the feelings I have for you and placing them in proper places in my heart, storing every last minute detail and image I have of you in my mind, and then letting you go and relying on myself alone to remember you properly and justly. Papa, I desperately cling to your words, your memoirs and letters, the twenty-six cents you had in your pocket when you died, your love, and even your blue rocking chair. I know I am not nearly done learning from you, for your death has been the most profound and revealing moment in my life.

I still find myself sitting in the quiet of the basement, cuddled comfortably in the blue chair, waiting for you to begin talking. I still listen; I still wait. A stirring inside my soul tells me you’re still rocking in that chair, stroking my hair and guiding me with your soft, quiet words.

With love that will endure,

Rachel
Dream
by Lara Kerr

I dream
As I see objects
Whizzing past me
Clouds rolling by
Tracks clattering
Underneath me.

I see
My future,
a new friend
My present,
a faithful companion
And
My past,
a guide

To guide me through
The perils
and dreams.
If I can move
Without moving
I can
do
anything.
Teapot, If Only You Would Speak

by Evelyn Glick

It sits above my cupboard with a few other precious dishes. This white, metal teapot, with colonial blue edging and pastel flowers adorning its middle, could tell many a story, I think. Wanting to ask it about Grussmommy, I lift the teapot down from the shelf.

“Teapot, you sat on my grandmother’s shelf to the left side of the window above her kitchen sink. What did you see as she prepared the meals and washed the dishes? Did she sing as she worked? Did she talk or pray out loud? How did she relate to Grussdaudy?”

I move the teapot in front of me now. It does not say a word. I wish it would. My own memories are hazy, but maybe as I touch this gift that holds her fingerprints, the memories will be pulled into focus. Lifting the teapot’s lid, I reach inside. I pull out two notes, both in my grandmother’s writing. The first one, in pencil, tells me how this teapot came to Grussmommy: “Suvilla Kauffman, Iva’s wedding.” The second one, in ink, says, “From Grussmommy for cleaning, June 6, 1991,” reminding me how the teapot came to me.

Unexpectedly, tears blur my vision. I can see her face, slender, wrinkled, with those kind eyes. June 6, 1991 . . . only three months before I said my last good-bye to Grussmommy. This is the last personal note that I own from my grandmother. That day of cleaning . . . yes, it was probably the last time that I spent the day with her. I wish I could remember that day more clearly. What did we talk about as we cleaned her house together? “Teapot, you were there. Oh, if only you would speak.”

Did we talk about El Salvador? That would have made this teapot jump off the shelf, for Suvilla tells me that is where it came from. On one of her trips south, she brought this gift along home for her cousin, my Grussmommy. Did we talk about Suvilla’s daughter Verda, married to my uncle Eli, and how I wanted to go to El Salvador to assist with their mission? Did Grussmommy encourage faith in me that day, telling me she was praying for me? She often said those simple words, especially when I shared dreams with her or told her of travel plans. “We want you to be where God wants you,” she would affirm. And when I returned, she would want to hear all about it.

That support and prayers buoyed me up as I said good-bye to her on September 3, 1991. I can see her humpbacked, rather frail, five-foot-tall figure as she stood there in the driveway with Grussdaudy, looking down at the ground through her wire-rimmed glasses, as she often did. Ready to crawl in the car to head for the airport and El Salvador, I hugged my grandparents farewell. Grussmommy seemed especially sad, and Grussdaudy said something about maybe not seeing them again in this life. Those words caught me a little off guard, but I brushed them aside. I was southern-bound.

Yes, six weeks later on a hot, October afternoon in Zacamil, El Salvador, someone knocked on my kitchen door. I went to the door, expecting to find the neighbor kids. Instead, there stood Marvin, a friend who lived two hours away in the city of San Salvador. “I have message for you,” he said soberly. “Your grandmother died.”

Looking at him in shock, I croaked, “Not Grussmommy! My mom’s mother?” He nodded and stepped inside the door. I collapsed at the kitchen table, sobbing.
Out of the memories that wet my cheeks and back to the present, I pick up the two notes, stuff them back in the teapot, and close its gaping lid. I open it again. “Teapot, would you like to hold my tears? If you had gathered all the tears I cried that year Grussmommy died, we could boil them to make some tea.”

Why did I cry that year? “Teapot, do you know?” No response. I close its lid.

Do I know? That year she died tears came often, yes, simply because I loved her. A stable, quiet presence in my life all the way from birth through childhood, adolescence, and my teen years, Grussmommy gave me a place of deep belonging in her warm heart. She was always nearby, just up the hill through the meadow from our house. Miles away in Central America, I could not imagine life without her. I could not imagine Grussdaudy surviving without her. Those were my tears, simple plain grief at my first personal loss of a loved one.

I did not come home for the funeral. I wept alone, and without closure, it seemed, until I came back to the States for a visit one year later. Then I cried with Grussdaudy, and with my mother, her siblings, and my cousins as we reminisced. We visited her grave together, and we wept. After that, the memories could come without so many tears.

Opening the teapot lid once more, I take out the notes to find more clues. The writing is a mere scribble, two misspellings, no flairs. That is how she was, nothing fancy, always basic, but ever quietly loving me.

“Teapot, how did I know she loved me? Do you know?” My mind struggles to zoom in on memories. Yes, the haze is clearing . . . “Good job, teapot.” Various scenes flash before me.

I must be about four years old. I walk up the hill through the sheep pasture to my

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Lonely in the Kitchen

by Esther Hodgdon

life without her. I could not imagine Grussdaudy surviving without her. Those were my tears, simple plain grief at my first personal loss of a loved one.
grandparents' green house. Grussmommy quickly answers my knock on the door. “Where is your note?” she asks first. If I supply a paper scrap with a time written on it and my mother’s signature, I can stay. If not, I know I’ll be sent right back home.

Next scene, maybe I am five. “May I sit with Grussmommy today?” I ask Mom on the way to church. When we arrive, I know where to find her: the second bench from the front and three places in from the center aisle. She smiles warmly when I press in against her. I’m looking forward to the moment when she reaches into that mysterious pocket somewhere underneath her apron and pulls out a tic-tac for me.

I am six or seven years old. My mom, siblings, and I sit in a circle on the front porch shelling peas, and, of course, Grussmommy is here. “Let’s play a game,” she suggests. “How about the name game?” Peas drop quickly into our buckets as our minds go to other places. Work is fun with Grussmommy.

Now I am probably nine. She supplies me with embroidery thread and accessories. I struggle with the stitches. “Try, try again. If you don’t at first succeed, try, try again,” she quips. Wanting to give up, I hear another favorite idiom, “Whatever you do, do with your might. Things done by halves are never done right.”

Between one of these scenes, I scrape my knee. Grussmommy gets the “lily bleuta” out of the medicine cabinet to gently apply to my wound. Her special concoction of wine with white lily petals, picked from the flowerbed behind the house on the east side, holds magic healing powers.

Then I’m a teenager. Her love of games flourishes as she competes with us in Racko, Parcheesi, Chinese checkers, or carom. Dressed in dark blue or gray, she may be sober on the outside but some sort of vibrant life sparkles underneath.

Did she ever cry? A faint memory comes from somewhere in those teenage years. With tears in her eyes, she comforted me regarding my older brother who was struggling with life, impacting the whole family with some of his choices. I do not remember her words, but I can see the tears.

Through my own still misty vision, I gaze at the could-be-tear-holder once more. “If only you would speak, teapot, I’m sure you could tell me so much more. But I’m grateful for what you did bring. Grussmommy seems close again, and I think I know my own self a little better because of these memories.” Gently, almost reverently, I return the white tin treasure to its home on the shelf.

Lonely Bridge
by Aaron Miller
A Ride in the Park
by Kelly Topovski

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