

Baylorian 2005

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Melinda Hawkins, Let's Go... (Cover Art)
Bud Beltz, Three Bullets for Brad... (Prose Piece)
Melanie Nott, Valor... (Poetry Piece)

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The Baylorian is produced by students in the Department of English at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Submissions are accepted from members of the UMHB community (faculty, staff, students, and alumni) each year.

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Tara Jones

SOMEONE IN TEXAS LOVES YOU

The harshness of the lonely pew swallowed me as I realized the finality of it all. Alone, I wanted nothing more than to step outside of the cold reality of my world that day. The naïve pact of “Best Friends Forever” resonated in my head.

We sat in our secluded area of the funeral home while one by one, people passed, declaring sympathy for our loss. We loved her and missed the presence she had in all of our lives. Almost all of our lives.

Her mother sat on the front row of the family section. She sat there as if she had been there to take part in her life, as if she had provided for her needs or wiped away tears when a little girl cried out, wondering why a cancerous monster had invaded her body.

Crystal was a vibrant child with sun-kissed brown hair that waved like the ocean tide. Her eyes spoke loudly as they sparkled with curiosity and wonder. Inhibitions were absent in her mind. She knew no stranger and she trusted everyone, even her stepbrother, who once dared her to grab the hotwire fence, saying it would “tickle.”

In the earliest years of her life, she lived with my grandparents in the middle room of their quiet house. Her dolls were placed strategically around the room (her Alf doll hid behind clothes in the closet because of the nightmares he caused).

Papa required her bed be made to perfection every morning before breakfast, but the room was still comfortable and cozy. One detail stands out even today, though.

One lonely bear was stuck to the top panel of her bedroom door. This brown bear with a friendly face and a huge pink heart held the phrase “Someone in Texas Loves You.”

She wasn't a mother—a real mother wouldn't selfishly abandon her child the way she did. Now, she dared to be upset, to care after so many years...

A year apart in age, we were the best of friends. Whether we were dressing our new Barbie dolls or imitating the news anchorman, we always had fun. We played. We laughed. And until cancer invaded our lives, we were children with nothing on our minds except whether or not Nana would let us make mud pies so Papa could pretend they were better than any old-fashioned chocolate meringue pie in the world.

A child who was once carefree and vivacious soon fell victim to her illness. My grandparents, ever faithful, made the Ronald McDonald House their new home. And to think I envied her because she could miss school and play on the enormous playground in the children's cancer unit. Of course, I knew little of the severity of the situation. After all, the cancer was just in her leg, right?

She showed us the meaning of courage. She was courageous when her thick brown hair fell from her head, at first in single strands and then in larger clumps. She owned a wig, but its itchy discomfort made it impractical to wear. Baldness didn't bother her. She was proud of her fuzzy, pale head.

364 days after the doctors diagnosed her with leukemia, she lost her final battle. She faced life with vigor, and death with brave defeat.

As a child, I wondered about The Land of Milk and Honey. Liking neither milk nor honey, I had my doubts, but I was reassured in knowing that they would be the perfect refresher for her spirit.

When I reflect on Crystal's life, I find joy in the laughter, but I learn from the sadness. I have learned full understanding is beyond my control. Today, I find it difficult to reflect upon Crystal's illness and her mother without anger, but I realize remembrance should be

about love and joy rather than hate and intolerance. I'll never know why Crystal had cancer or why Jane walked out. But I will no longer allow my memories to be clouded with meaningless speculation. Instead, they will be filled with thoughts of mud pies, Barbie dolls, and Alf.

I think about the lonely bear that sits atop the door in my grandparent's house. And I realize that this bear isn't lonely after all. He holds the key to happiness in the phrase that will remain in my heart: Someone in Texas Loves You.

Lacy Pipkin

UNTITLED

The screaming echoes in my head, never stopping.
The sound, the cry, the desperation
pleading to God--
Was it ever heard?
I try not to blame,
to be angry,
to hold my head down in shame.

The bitter salt keeps coming,
never stopping,
flowing down the cheeks
of those who knew him best.

Together our sorrows make rain
feeding a river of sorrows.
Flowing—
not knowing which way to go.
It hits rocks
but doesn't stop
wishing, hoping, aching.
Let it freeze
so we may be numb,
not have to feel.

We are drowning in overwhelming pain,
pulling us down
like a current tugging at our feet
that just won't let go.
We kick to stay afloat,
our heads just above the water,
gulping breaths only when we can.
Our lungs fill up,
feeling as though they'll burst.

Audell Shelburne

WHITE SUITS, PURPLE SHIRTS, AND LOUD
COLOGNE

Grandpa died, revived by an EMT
Who was good at his job
On a Saturday afternoon
In a church parking lot
Where he'd been pulling
Weeds from the cracks.

But it wasn't Grandpa—the man
Who built dreams with his carpenter's
Hands, his saw and hammer—
on the sterile table with tubes
stuck up the nose.

It wasn't Grandpa inside the bronzed coffin
in a tan suit, earthy-brown tie,
and white shirt, while his white suit
and purple tie hung empty in the
closet next to the dresser with rows
of nearly empty cologne bottles.

The hymns and prayers began, but I had
a game to play. I was starting at third base
that day. I was missing birthday cake
at the neighbors, and my head
swelled from the orange-blossoms
that lure bees to the valley in the spring.