

# THE INK QUILL

LITERARY AND ART MAGAZINE

Bladen Community College

2013



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# THE INK QUILL

## LITERARY AND ARTS MAGAZINE

is accepting submissions  
of poetry, prose, art, and photography  
for the 2014 issue.

Send all submissions to  
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Are you interested in  
writing or art?

Are you looking for a  
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BCC's Creative Writing and Arts Club

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## MY THOUGHTS

*Sharpie Pen, Ballpoint Pen, and Mechanical Pencil*

Ponquoise Faison—BCC Student



## RENEWED

Audrey Lewis—BCC Faculty





A BRIDE THINKING OF HER TRUE LOVE

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff

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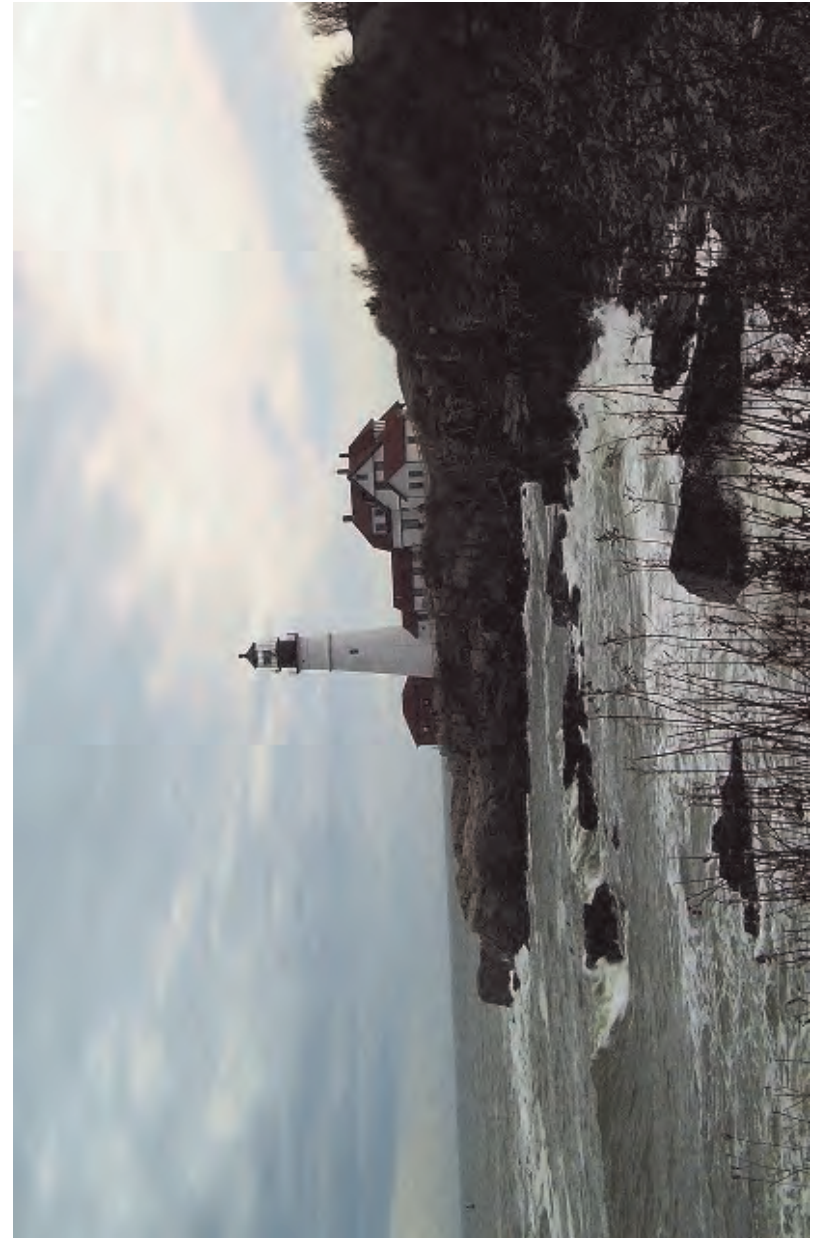
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LIGHT  
HOUSE

Stephanie  
Carroll  
—BCC  
Student



## SNOW

Olivia Sholar—Age 10, Family Member of BCC Student

The snow outside is calling  
As I look out the window  
But it just keeps falling  
Landing with a white glow

The world outside has turned  
To icy cold  
But I am warmed again  
By the fire of gold

As the temperature drops  
The fire still gleams  
As we all lie down  
With peaceful dreams



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## OFF WE GO

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty



## ONE IN EVERY CROWD

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty

## NEW DAY

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

This is a brand new day, starting now  
I will let go of life's struggles that weigh me down

Nothing can rob me of the beauty that's to be found  
I can find love, laughter, and life all around

I can only dream when I close my eyes to sleep  
I bring the pure flow, peace so deep

The river of life, my soul at ease  
It's only me I have to please

The rocks of life won't pull me down  
Nothing can rob me of the beauty that's to be found

I bring the pure flow; there's life up above  
He allows storms of life to live and love

This is a brand new day in a brand new light  
Happiness is rising up on the left and the right

And this is my prayer without ceasing,  
The bad energy I'm releasing  
And as I look above, my burden is easing







### SWEET NECTAR

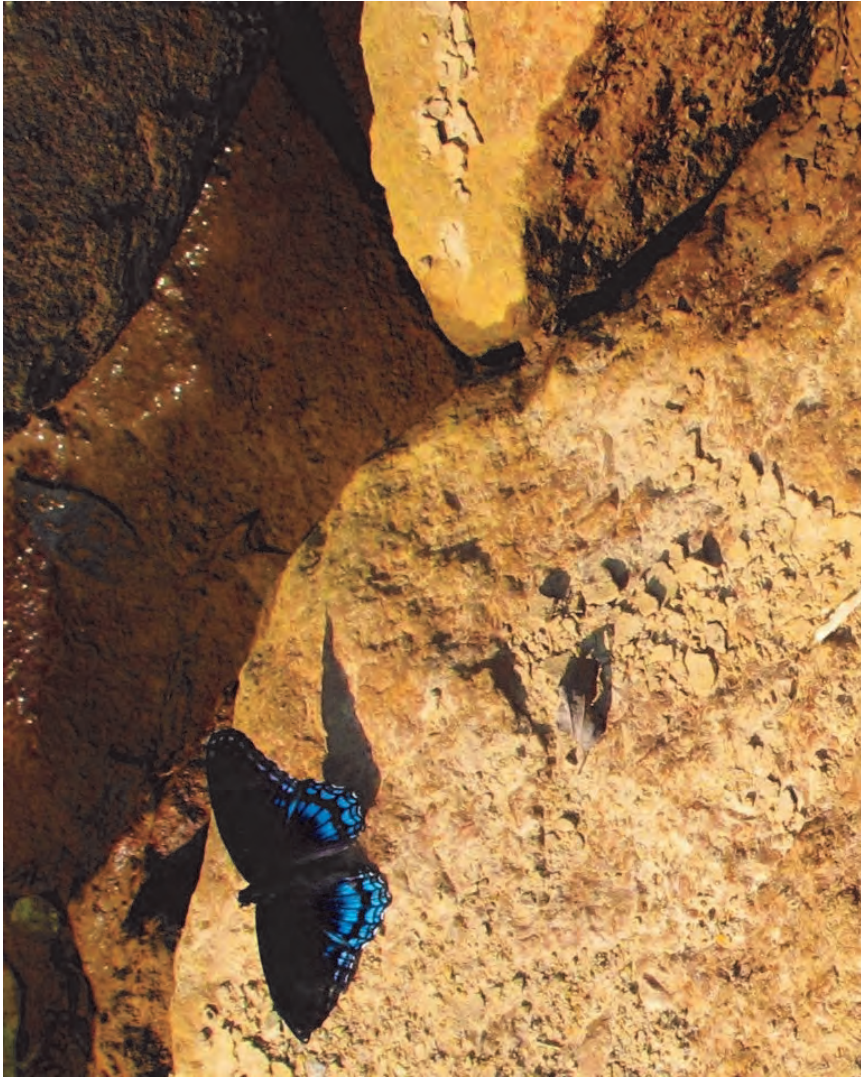
Karen Cecil—BCC Administration



### COMPANIONS

Katelyn Galyean—BCC Student





**QUIET TIME**

Cassy Britt  
—BCC Student



**DOORWAY**

*Purdie Methodist Church, Tarheel, NC*

Joshua James—BCC Faculty Family Member



## PACKING

Rebecca James—BCC Faculty

I help them pack.

We pack and part and pack in part.

Bone china teacup of dried clematis petals:  
we pack in striped hatbox,  
we wrap in faux fur wrap,  
we stuff in pine sideboard.

Bills. Bills. Bills.

We will not take the bathroom mirrors as some do.  
We'll take the curtains, leave the light fixtures.  
Pack, part.

There is little evidence of the one who left,  
the one we are leaving.  
His sheet music yellowed, flew out of windows.

This daybed, this potpourri pillow.  
More boxes, more bags.  
This Christmas shopping through an old life for a new year.

I pack the single mother,  
mine and his, ballerina beautiful,  
to set her on a street shelf of other singles,  
other children, in their boxes, their rows,  
parted, packed. Cream-colored  
appliances and second-job applications.

I bubble wrap. I paper. I tape.  
Yes, you're coming.  
No, you have to stay.

PROSE

Prose  
prose  
PROSE



## LOVE IS AN OMELET

Stephanie Carroll—BCC Student

This morning, my husband made the best omelet! It was different than any omelet I have ever tasted. Since he is out of work at the moment due to a broken hand, he asked me what I wanted him to cook me for breakfast. He loves to cook, and I love his cooking! I told my husband I wanted a garden omelet like the ones I order at International House of Pancakes.

My husband said, "I can do that, plus we have plenty of vegetables in the refrigerator. I will surprise you with a delicious omelet; just be patient and do not come in the kitchen while I am cooking."

I thanked him and got started on my homework while he was cooking my surprise.

Since we live in a small mobile home, I could see him getting the mushrooms, onion, green pepper, tomato, cheddar and Colby Jack cheese, and some garlic. I had never had garlic with eggs. I turned my head and focused on my studies. The wonderful aroma of breakfast filled the room. I noticed my husband was making grits as well. I love grits with butter, a little salt, milk, and cheddar cheese.

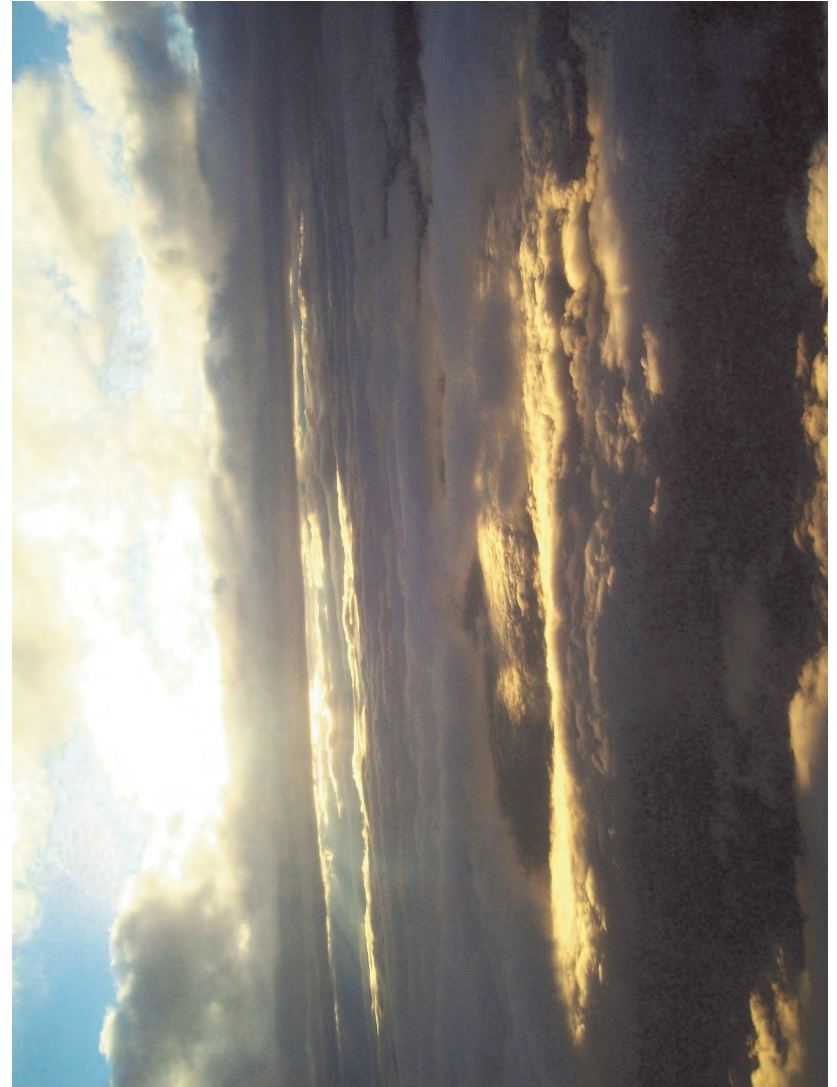
I am so excited that my husband loves to cook because sometimes I do not feel like cooking, and I know many wives that complain all the time because their husbands never cook. I feel so blessed and don't even have to do the dishes!

After my husband finished cooking this succulent masterpiece, he brought it over to the couch where I was sitting.

## SUNSET

*opposite*

Stephanie Carroll—BCC Student



CLOUDS

Stephanie

Carroll

—BCC

Student



## THROUGH THE FIRE

Ginger King—BCC Staff

I've been through the fire  
That molded, finished me  
You can't touch that kind of flame  
Without coming out unchanged

Thank you, my sweet  
For that lovely fiery heat

At the time I could not see  
What felt like breaking  
Rescued me



“Oh honey! This looks amazing!” I said with a huge smile on my face. I took my fork and sliced into this magnificent, huge garden omelet.

The cheese was slowly pouring out of the omelet. When I took a bite, I tasted a hint of salt and garlic.

“Yum.” I thought, “I should add garlic to my eggs more often; this garlic adds a nice twist of flavor to the omelet.”

I could eat mushrooms with anything, so this was my favorite part of my breakfast. The onion and pepper were still a bit crunchy, just the way I like them. The eggs were so fluffy and flavorful. I hope my husband will cook more omelets for me. The grits were also tasty and creamy. I love mixing bite-sized pieces of my omelet along with the grits.

“I want some milk please,” I said, and my husband poured some for me. I felt like such queen this morning.





**FIRE  
FLOWER**  
David  
Humphrey  
—BCC Faculty

The next morning  
Mother Sun arose  
Little Star remained still  
As the time goes

Finally, Little Star cried  
And told her story  
What she wanted  
To have a moment  
Of glory

She was filled with surprise  
As of what Mother Sun  
slowly, solemnly begun

“A spark is in you  
That is not very far  
But a light starts  
With one little star.”





## ONE LITTLE STAR

Olivia Sholar—Age 10, Family Member of BCC Student

One little star  
Emerged from the sun  
Happy as ever  
Her life had begun

The sun settled her down  
And her father, The Moon  
Said that Mother Sun  
Would be leaving soon

As the sun disappeared  
Father Moon was right  
He shone out  
All through the night

Little star watched  
Him, amazed  
She wondered how his light  
Could not be hazed

She wanted to be good  
As great as him  
But when she sparked  
Her light was dim

## THE VILLAGE, THE DRAGON, AND THE BOOK

Morgan Pait—BCC Student

Once upon a time in a faraway village, a giant, flying, fiery dragon held complete rule over the land. No one dared to contradict the will of the flying serpent. All of the Chinese villagers shook with fear whenever the dragon passed by. Each person knew that he or she might be the next one called to the wicked reptile's castle in the distant mountains. One day a little boy and his father, a peddler, arrived in the small village, which was under the domain of the dragon. The father and his son pulled their little rickshaw through the village.

As they trotted along, they called out the names of their wares. "Chopsticks! Bowls! Sugarcane!" The little boy shouted in a singsong voice. "Very cheap! Come and buy!"

But no one came. The two were surprised. Villagers always would come running out when they heard of all the trinkets, utensils, and rare spices that the peddler and his son sold. But this town was quiet. There were no sounds of children laughing, men working, or women cooking. Not even the dogs barked.

"This is an odd town, Father," said the little boy. "Why does no one come?"

"I am not sure, my son," answered the father. "Perhaps they have all left the village."

"I do not think so, Father," the son said. "I just saw someone scurry inside their house."

"Where?"

“In that little one across the street,” the boy replied as he pointed to the house.

“Let us see if we can find out what is wrong,” the father decided.

Their little rickshaw squeaked and bounced up and down as they walked up to a villager’s home.

“Hello! Do not be afraid!” cried the father as he and the boy stood outside. “We only want to know what has happened. Why is the village silent? Why is no one working? Why is no one playing or cooking? Where has everyone gone?”

“You should not be here!” A shaky voice called out. “He may hear you and come!”

“Who will hear us?” asked the boy.

“The dragon! The great, fiery dragon! He will hear you and come to the village. You should leave quickly before he finds you!”

“Why would he hurt us?” asked the peddler. “We have done nothing to offend him.”

“Perhaps, but that does not mean he will not catch you anyway!” the voice cried again.

“What does this dragon look like? What does he do?” pondered the boy.

A little, old man finally glanced out of the cottage door. “He is very big! His scales are sickly green and deathly black. Sometimes he will call one of us to his castle, and we dare not disobey him! He might burn up our homes or destroy our rice fields! Many of the villagers have gone to the dragon’s



## A FAIRY IN MY DREAMS

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty



## AWAKE

Rebecca James—BCC Faculty

I hover over sleep—a silent snow crust I can't reach,  
an ice dome on which the angel  
flailing of my limbs would make no gown, no wings.

Melatonin and sticky red syrups  
cannot pull me down, cannot release  
the helium in my head.

I see the slow glitter below me.  
One wink,  
another.

I see the twinkle of my husband's icicle eyelashes.

I drift in air that is warm and won't stop speaking.



## BRIDGE OVER ROCKY CREEK

David  
Humphrey  
—BCC Faculty

lair, but no one has ever returned. We know that they are dead, for the dragon is very wicked.”

“Has no ever tried to escape?” asked the father.

The little, old man shook in his shoes. “Many have tried to escape, but no has ever succeeded. If the dragon sees a villager trying to escape, he eats the man, woman, or child alive! He does not want anyone to leave the village; he reigns as a tyrant over us.”

“Why has no one tried to kill this cruel dragon?” the boy wondered.

“A few of the men in the village have tried, but there is no one who can stand up to the reptile’s fangs, claws, or fiery breath.”

“Then they have never used the Book,” the little boy decided.

The little, old man was confused. “A book? A book could never conquer this evil serpent.”

The boy shook his head. “A regular book could never defeat the dragon, but the Book could. It is very powerful. No dragon can stand up against it.”

“I have never heard of such a thing,” the old man said in astonishment. “Where could one find this Book?”

“We have one,” said the boy quietly.

“Please, please! Would you give us this Book?” the old man pleaded.

The little boy looked very serious. “Yes, we can give it to you, but there is one condition.”

“What is that?” asked the little, old man.

“Each villager must promise to obey it. Only those who promise to obey what is in the Book will be safe from the

## LULLABY

Stancey Roshell Brayboy—BCC Student

The ceiling fan twirls around and around,  
creating just enough breezes to cool my face.

Tiny bubbles dance on the wall,  
in the soft glow from the light in the fish tank.

The wind chimes play their song,  
like one stuck in my head from long ago.

Your heartbeat like soft drums plays in my ear  
while my head rests on your chest.

Rain drops sprinkle lightly on the tin roof,  
like maracas in the band.

Your warm arms around me let me know you are near,  
wrapped like a butterfly in a cocoon.

The song drifts further away now,  
and the light still more soft.

Finally I have arrived,  
dreamland.







## FRESH RAIN

Audrey Lewis—BCC Faculty

dragon's power."

"I will promise!" said the old man. "And I will tell the other villagers."

The old man quickly ran from house to house in the small village. "Come! Come and meet the strangers who have come with a Book that can defeat the cruel dragon!"

One by one, the villagers came to where the peddler and his son stood.

"Is this true?" they asked. "Do you really have a Book that can conquer the wicked serpent?"

The little boy and his father nodded. "We do."

"Please, give it to us!" cried the villagers.

"We will give it to you," answered the peddler. "But you must know that only those who promise to obey the Book's words will be saved from the dragon."

Many of the villagers promised, but a few were skeptical. The doubters said, "How can a book defeat the fiery dragon? Nothing can defeat him. We have tried everything."

"It will work," assured the boy and his father. The little boy lifted a soft, black book out of the rickshaw. The old man whom the boy and his father had first met accepted the Book. Suddenly, the sky grew cloudy and dark.

"He is coming!" the villagers cried with fear.

"Do not worry!" said the boy. "The Book will protect you."

All of the villagers gathered around the Book. Everyone but the boy and his father watched the skies in fear.

"I can see him coming!" shouted one of the villagers as he pointed off into the distance. Everyone could now see the form of something dark and shadowy flying in the sky.

"Trust in the Book!" commanded the peddler.

"We trust in the Book!" the villagers shouted.

“Shout again!” the boy cried.

“We trust in the Book! It protects us!” the villagers cried.

The air was pierced with a harrowing scream!

“We have never heard it cry out before!” said the villagers in awe.

“The Book must be working!” the old man laughed.

Angrily, the dragon flew round and round the village, but he could not get near the villagers.

“The Book protects us!” the villagers shouted with joy.

The dragon screamed again at the villagers’ mention of the Book.

“The Book defeats the dragon!” the village children shouted with glee.

In horror, the dragon flew away as if he had been wounded.

All of the townspeople cheered as the dragon returned to his castle. “Hurray! Hurray for the Book! Hurray for the Book that conquers the dragon!”

All of the villagers thanked the peddler and his son for coming to their village and giving them the Book. They begged them to stay with them for a few more days.

The father and his son just smiled. “We have other villages that need our wares,” explained the small boy. “There are other villages just like yours that need the Book. We must bring it to them as well.”

The townspeople shed tears of joy and sadness as they watched the peddler and his son leave.

“Do not worry!” said the father. “We shall meet again one day. Read and obey the Book.”

Slowly, the travelers continued on their way. The rickshaw gently bounced and swayed to the music as the boy and his father sang of the Book.



*Karen Cecil*

GLITTERING  
DEW

Karen Cecil—BCC  
Administration



## TO SLEEP AND DREAM

Ginger King—BCC Staff

I went to bed and asked myself why  
To sleep and dream an unspoken response

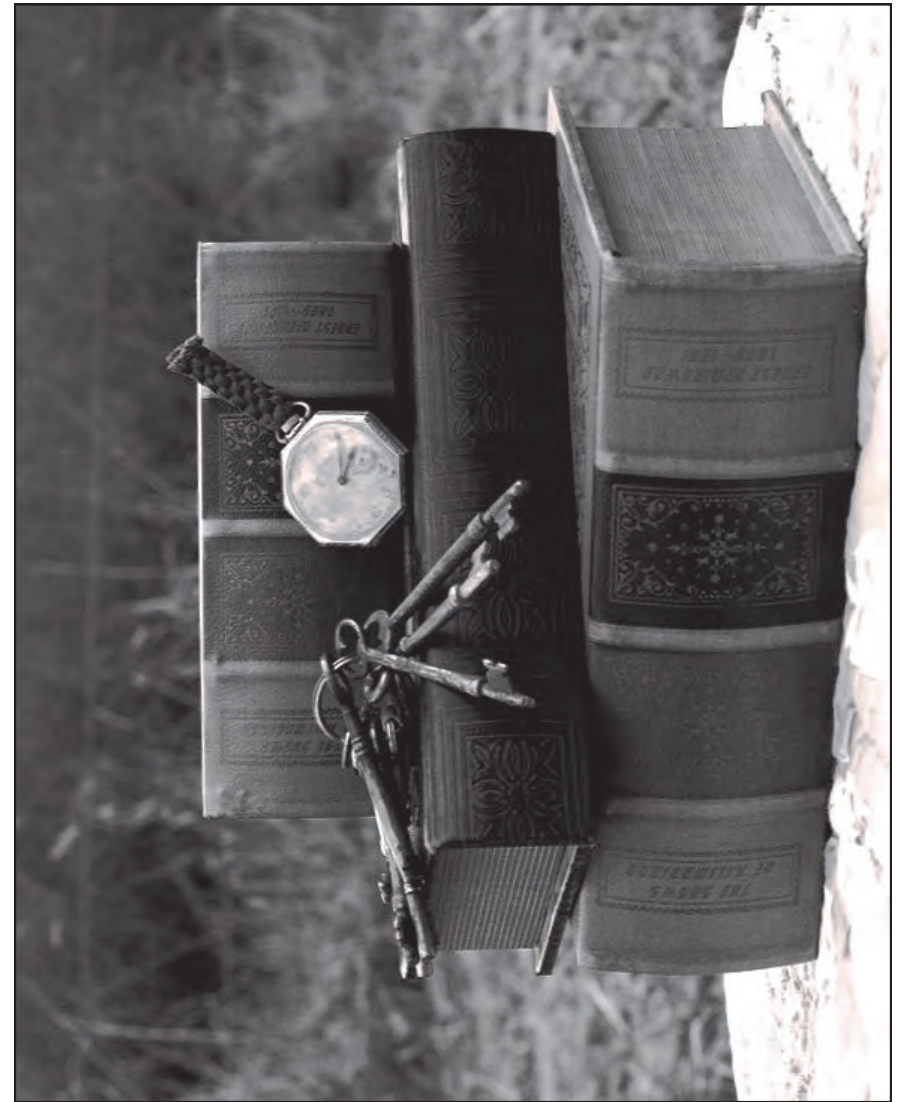
Listening to my own breath, a futile attempt  
To quiet the day penetrating  
Repeating again and again

When will I drift to that sweet land of temporary rest? Rest  
from the list pressing upon waking!

Somewhere in the trying, it found me but I don't  
know when it came.

Shhhh not to waken  
Mmmm to Sleep and Dream

Sleep catches even the watching  
Off guard.  
Dreaming makes one glad for it



KEYS TO  
THE  
FUTURE  
Diane Vitale  
—BCC Staff

## CHERISH EVERY MOMENT

Katie Galyean—BCC Student

It is a tradition in my family to read the Christmas story from the Bible on Christmas Eve. We all cherish this time together and always look forward to it. One particular year, when I was around the age of eleven, my grandfather came to spend Christmas with us as my grandmother had just recently passed away. Papaw, as my siblings and I affectionately called him, used to be a preacher and, as far as I know, has used the same Bible for most of his life. We decided that this Christmas, Papaw would read the story to us. As we all sat there and listened to my grandfather speak, we all realized just how special moments like this were and how important love really was.

It was late Christmas Eve, and my brothers, my sister, and I were all gathered around, gazing at the overly-decorated and brightly-lit tree and dreaming of all the wondrous gifts that would appear beneath it in just a few hours. Anticipation had us all rocking back and forth on our feet. My parents and grandfather entered the room, and I noticed my grandfather had his old Bible tucked under his arm. I smiled because I knew this meant that the time for reading the Christmas story had come! Sitting down with grunt, Papaw looked at us children and told us he would be reading this year. Excitement bubbled through the grandchildren, and we all bounced up to snuggle against Papaw as he opened his Bible to Luke. Sitting on my grandfather's left side, I could see into his Bible. As his deep voice proceeded to delve into the story, I studied the way his Bible looked. It was definitely older and had those little tabs with the names of the books of the Bible



*Karen Cecil*

SPRING  
LIGHT

Karen Cecil  
—BCC  
Administration



## THE BEACH

Olivia Sholar—Age 10, Family Member of BCC Student

The beach

The wind in my face

The sand in my eyes

The ocean so blue

For me, it cries

The people that laugh

The kids that cry

Oh, how I don't want

To say "goodbye"

The people I meet

The fish I see

We're all together

My family and me

I collect the shells

Some pink, some white

Hoping I can save

Them tonight

Now we leave

Family and friends

Hoping to

Come back again

on them where each book started, so he could find it easily. There were highlighter marks that had bled through the pages he had marked long ago, and my grandfather's cursive scrawl documented his thoughts and beliefs throughout the long book. The edges of the Bible's cover were torn in many places, and the thin ribbon that was tucked between some of the pages was faded and frayed. The binding had also grown feeble, barely holding together despite the careful way Papaw was turning the pages.

That is when I noticed Papaw's hands. They were brown and callused, the hands of a man who had worked his whole life. I looked up into his face and saw the laugh lines from many years of happiness, but then I glimpsed the sorrow still streaking through his eyes over the recent loss of my grandmother. I looked at my parents, and they sat close together, with my father's arms around my mother and her head on his shoulder. My baby brother was nestled in her arms, his thumb in his mouth and sleep starting to take over his eyelids. My other brother and sister were on the other side of my grandfather, their own eyes rapt with attention to the story.

That is when I realized just how special these moments were and how important it was to love one another. From my recent experience with death, I was really starting to realize just how fragile life can be. I knew my grandfather was not always going to be here to tell of Mary and Joseph searching for a place to sleep. Cherishing these moments when we were all together was suddenly extremely crucial to my young mind, and I scooted just a little closer to Papaw and wrapped my small hands around his strong arm. He snuck a loving glance at me and winked, making the lines behind his thick

glasses more prominent for a split second. As he finished reading the story, he pronounced he would lead us in a prayer. While all heads were bowed and my grandfather prayed in a reverent tone, I silently thanked God for all the blessings he had given me and asked him to help me always love my family and cherish every moment we had together.



EARLY MORNING RAINBOW OVER THE GULF OF MEXICO

Maurice Mitchell—BCC Staff

## LEAVES

Ginger King—BCC Staff

Leaves fall from the trees  
Refugees  
Seeking a new destiny

Wind hurried  
To new locations  
Still forever  
Tied, bound

To find *new* ground  
Nurture of rain and sun  
Different, but *not* a  
Destiny

Their contribution  
Complete  
They simply let go





**PINECONE**

Katelyn Galyean—BCC Student

**AN UNUSUAL TOURIST**

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

I've always dreamed of the outer world, wondering what life is beyond my own. I only have one more, and my dreams will come true. Don't get me wrong; I love everything about my world, but everyone wonders what else is out there.

I will be eighteen years old in twelve more hours, and this is something I have waited for my whole life. Others have the same opportunity at their eighteen birthday, but no one acts on it; I will. I will be able to explore beyond the aquatic world I have always known. So it's time for me to cozy up in my clam bed and get a good night of sleep, for tomorrow will soon be here. I must rise early to pack a small satchel of garments my grandmother made for me to wear while roving amongst humans.

I am on an emotional rollercoaster right now. I'm excited, anxious, nervous, and scared all at the same time. My mother is crying because she is afraid, afraid of what's to come. You see, all mermaids are beautiful: long, thick, flowing locks; perfect porcelain skin; piercing iridescent eyes; an hourglass figure...but the most beautiful of all is what's inside a mermaid's heart.

We have choices. The wicked sea serpent controls the consequences of those choices. We are allowed to visit the human world on our eighteenth birthday; if at any time we choose to leave the sea life, we elect to give up our possession most worthy of envy: our hearts, the core of who we are. So as I make a journey from the depths of the oceans, I have to remind myself of this pact.

I am on my way; it seems like forever. My mother, father,

sister, and grandmother accompany me. As we are on our journey to the world above us, I am taking in the majestic beauty of the ocean, the brilliant colors of the coral reef along the ocean floor, and the variety of aquatic creatures that we meet during our travels. Slowly, the dark abyss is becoming transparent. The ray of light is coming through like a light show; our eyes try to adjust. As we near the top, I can see it, yet I suddenly feel alone. My family is no longer by my side. I look back, and they are waving. I am now on my own. The water is so blue and clear that I can see everything, even the big, bright white circle above. It's getting bigger and brighter...the sun.

I take my first breath, feel the air for the first time. It's different yet magnificent as my body and organs acclimate. It's weird to have my head above water while the rest of me is still below. This is just so overwhelming. I begin to cry, not because I'm sad. I'm happy. It's a happy cry.

I can see the shore on the horizon. I take a moment to look back, and all I see is where the sky meets the sea. There is no separation; it is an infinity of blue. It's breathtaking. I continue to swim as fast as I can, fast as tiny silver fish. The water is more and more shallow. I feel my tail dragging along the sea floor. This is it; I just wade in the shallows. Then, a huge wave comes and sweeps me onto shore. The water recedes; I glance down at what was once my fish tail, and I see legs, feet, and toes. I am curious. I begin to wiggle my toes, then twist my feet, then bend my legs. I have transformed.

The shore is deserted. No one is around; once again, I am alone. I try to stand. I stumble at first. I try again and then a third time. I'm vertical at this point but still unsure. I dig my

bring forth from plastic seals  
one of your clean clones  
tear the once-treasured tag  
and deliver another you  
to the little calling king



### GNARLED

*Singletary United Methodist Church, Dublin, NC*

Joshua James—BCC Faculty Family Member



## TRANSITION

Rebecca James—BCC Faculty

I speak for you, vowel-rich murmurs,  
and when the command comes, I kiss  
your plush caramel and cream casing  
stitched sand mound wrinkles  
face blackened with saliva and lint  
tooth-scraped glaucoma eyes.

We sometimes see your dear original:  
stout prince of the apartment complex  
leashed in the grass of glass and cigarette stumps  
trembling to wrestle and roll.  
And when that delight whimpers back up the steps,  
a tiny voice calls for you, tiny copy.

Dimpled hands press you to rib-rippled chest  
under aqua blanket at oatmeal time  
under dappled aquarium of turtle nightlight  
under hover of white-coat woman  
who hides stinging points with sticky red dogs.

One night of sickness, I sink spray you  
clear of curdled milk and carrots  
squeeze suds through your belly beads  
bundle you in green silk pillowcase for the whirling

toes in the white sand that the sun has warmed. It's an amazing feeling. I put one foot in front of the other and then repeat. I continue to do this several times, and I realize I am walking. I never thought this day would come.

I am naked! I walk to a nearby dune to hide just in case someone approaches the beach. I remove my satchel from my shoulders. My garments are wet, of course, but I still get dressed as they won't take long to dry; it's a scorcher out here. As I sit here waiting to dry, I'm wishing that my family were with me, but that's part of the pact. I must travel to the outer world alone. I miss them already.

I have so much to do. I have very little time. I have to return to the ocean by sunset. I put on some thin, strapped sort of shoes and begin. I spend the next ten hours exploring as much as I can.

The human world is full of so many things. I researched a lot about human life before I left home. I only read about this, and now, it's coming to fruition. I see structures called hotels, restaurants, bars, outlet malls, and fast food places. I see water parks, museums, movie theaters, golf courses, amusement parks, so much activity! Most people travel in something called an automobile, but I've seen a few on bicycles or on foot as I am.

For the most part, everyone I have come in contact with seems preoccupied, not eager to help and answer any questions I have, unfriendly, and rude. I have to be cautious of the way I ask a question or make a comment; anything could give me away. Families are arguing but trying to smile, putting a happy front over the anger. I have noticed that everyone seems to be in a hurry to get somewhere and seems a little

stressed, especially at how much things cost. I am beginning to miss home even more.

I have had an extremely busy and tiring but educating day. All the things I read before taking my adventure were extremely helpful. I didn't come here completely blind. It seems to be a life with lots of fun activities, but it's a fast-paced life.

It's getting late. I must head back. I reach the beach, and I see the orange-reddish sun beginning to set. As I'm standing there, I'm reflecting on my day. I was once anxious to visit the outside, and I appreciate having had the opportunity. I learned a lot, a lot that helped me come to my decision. I value my family, our simplicity, and the morals my parents instilled in me. I would never give up who I am to live this way. The human world is too complex.

I quickly undress, not caring if anyone is around. I happily run to the water's edge, jump in, and make my way back to my world, the world full of people and things I admire, full of love, peace, and serenity.



## GOTTA GO FISHIN'

Ginger King—BCC Staff

I gotta go fishin'  
Seems everyone  
Wants one more thing  
But not *today*  
I gotta go fishin'

Every time I turn around  
I see that cane pole  
Bobbers and box  
Callin' out to me

"Let's take up  
One more load, haus  
Just one more  
Won't hurt your condition"

"That's true boss  
On most days true  
But not today cause  
I *gotta* go fishin'"

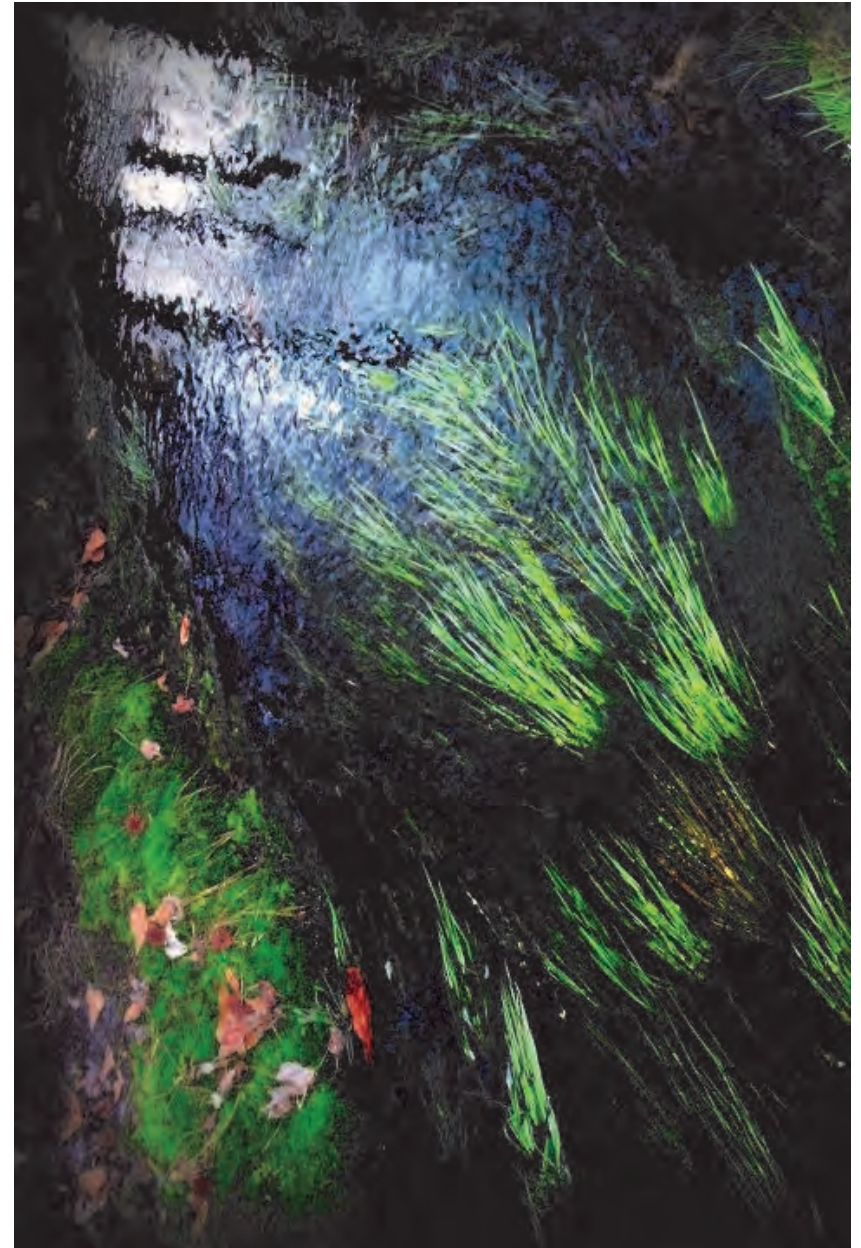




## SEASONS OF MYSELF

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty

Among the many tides and climes  
 Stand fast the memories of all those times  
 When flowing streams and raging seas  
 Gave life to dreams and towering trees.  
 The trees were but hopes held high  
 Reaching upward to the sky.  
 Marked by green or sparkling snow,  
 In freezing rain or warm sun's glow,  
 The flaming leaves, then naked trees,  
 And mellow months of swift spring breeze...  
 The Seasons of Myself were these.  
 The dreams still live, the hopes survive,  
 The streams still flow to meet the seas,  
 And in these, my seasons, I am alive.  
 By each season that I know  
 I gain new insight and with it grow.



FLOWING  
ALONG

Cassidy Britt  
—BCC  
Student



## EASTER'S REASON

Audrey Lewis—BCC Faculty



## DILIGENCE

Katelyn  
Galyean  
—BCC  
Student





## IN FLIGHT

David Humphrey  
—BCC  
Faculty

## ABIGAIL ADAMS: A WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Sara Neeley—BCC Faculty

Abigail Adams, the wife of Founding Father and second President John Adams, was a woman of formidable intelligence, great charm, saucy wit, intrepid boldness, and exceptional foresight. In an era when women deferred to their husbands, when they failed to receive the education commonplace to their male counterparts, and when society forbade women to own property or engage in business affairs, Adams daily encroached on these male-dominated domains. She was a complex woman, at the same time fully a woman of her own time (1744-1818) and of a time one hundred years in the future when the state of Massachusetts would allow women to own property and when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution that her husband helped draft would enfranchise women. In his biography, *Abigail Adams*, historian Woody Holton reveals many facets of this fascinating woman: her interest in and opinions of women's rights, slavery, education, religion, the events of the day, and business and finance. What is truly remarkable is that she was able to speak and act as freely as she was because of the love and respect of her husband. In fact, it is through more than 1,100 remaining letters between John and Abigail Adams that this vibrant woman emerges.

Perhaps Abigail is best remembered for her "Remember the Ladies" letter to John, who was at the meeting of the Continental Congress in 1776. "I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors" (Holton 99). After all, she reminded him, "all Men would be tyrants if they could" (Holton 100). Holton

points out that Abigail attempts to be humorous as she continues, “If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation” (100). Written in 1776, this statement would be prophetic 150 years later. It is also noteworthy that Abigail truly admired her husband and exempted him from being among those who advocated the subjugation of women. She wrote, “Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex” (Holton 101). Abigail continued to speak in favor of women’s rights all of her life. Holton tells us that six years later, in 1782, Abigail wrote John, seeking reform laws that would punish men who “use their wives with cruelty and indignity” (173) even though Abigail knew that she herself would never benefit from this reform, for her husband did not mistreat her. In spite of the serious vein in which Abigail approached the subject of women’s rights, she maintained a keen sense of humor. On more than one occasion, in letters to John, Abigail facetiously referred to men as “Lords of the Creation” (212). Abigail realized that the men of her time, including her husband, were more likely to heed her warnings and advice if she infused them with her infectious sense of humor from time to time.

Both Abigail and John opposed slavery. Two years before the Revolutionary War, Abigail told John, “It allways appeard a most iniquitous Scheme to me—fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have” (Holton 71). Moreover, she believed that men who thought that they were superior to women were more likely to support slavery. Holton relates, “Adams persuaded herself that the southern slaveholders

## MY FISHING BUDDY

Olivia Sholar—Age 10, Family Member of BCC Student

There’s a small creek  
Where the river used to run  
Flowin’ all day  
Fueled by the sun

Me and Daddy  
Would go out  
Grab our poles and hope for a trout

We tried all day  
And slept at night

Only to fish again  
In early morning light

And what he used  
To say  
Back in those days  
Made my heart go wild

“Let’s go out and get muddy  
I won’t be sad as long as I’ve got  
My fishing buddy.”





## I LOVE YOU, MOM

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

You have helped wipe away my tears  
And seen me through my biggest fears

You held my hands when the waters got rough  
You've been by my side when the times were tough

You always give love without reason  
Your love is unconditional through every season

You sacrifice even when you feel bad  
To make sure I'm okay, happy not sad

And these things you've always done  
I know I'm the lucky one

You've taught me everything I know and more  
You're the friend I most adore

You held me up when I wanted to hide  
Because of you, I now walk with pride

You have taught me to be the best I can be  
And because of this, you mean the world to me  
I love you, Mom



## FALL DELIGHT

David Humphrey

—BCC Faculty





## FRESH SOIL

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty

Seeing your smiling face in a dream

Let me know that all is well

Now that peace has shown her face,

At night when my eyes close

There is comfort in knowing that you will always be

My Kayla Rose



## SINGING MY DAY AWAY

Diane Vitale—BCC Staff

## KAYLA ROSE

Kimberly Johnson—BCC Student

With all of my strength  
I wanted to reach out for you

With every waking breath  
I called out your name, *Kayla*

With all of my heart  
I wish you could have stayed  
To bless us with your beauty, sweet aroma, and  
*Just because* days

When darkness covered the immaculate sky  
The tears swelled in the corners of my eyes.

When the sun would shine after the pouring rain  
I thought it would help ease the pain,

Grief has come,  
Hope is here,  
I have been longing for peace to simply appear.

I know that the peace that comes from above  
Is a sign of everlasting love

who dominated the Republican party ('a packe of Negro drivers,' she called them) had been irretrievably corrupted by their sexual access to the women they claimed to own" (290). A second cause that Adams linked to her opposition to slavery was her advocacy of education for all, slaves as well as free men and women. "Merely because his Face is Black," she asked, "Is he to be denied instruction [?] How is he to be qualified to procure a livelihood? Is this the Christian Principle of doing to others, as we would have others to do to us?" (Holton 305). Once again, we see Abigail Adams expressing sentiments that remain pertinent in contemporary society.

Throughout Abigail's life, her single biggest regret was her lack of education. Girls rarely received any formal education; thus they did not study the ancient languages, mathematics, great works of literature, the heavens, philosophy, and science. On the other hand, young women were taught the more traditional female skills of music, art, and needlework. In spite of this lack of formal education, Abigail was an avid reader and, as such, was self-taught. In fact, she and other women friends spent much time reading and discussing books. As she watched her children, she was saddened by the educational opportunities that were given to her sons but denied her daughters. On one occasion, Abigail's sister, Mary Cranch, wrote to Abigail about her own daughter Lucy: "Her Soul is not tuned to Harmony. . .but to Science. Had she been a Boy she would have been a Mathamatisation" (Holton 233). Abigail and her sister were in complete agreement about Lucy.

A parson's daughter, Abigail was religious, but, according



to Holton, she was not a “friend of biblical literalists” (291). As she traveled in her own country and abroad, she had very definitive tastes in ministers, liking those who were expressive in their speaking as well as those who made her think. However, she believed that religious tolerance and the freedom to question had been “like all other good things, perverted, and, under that shelter, deism, and even atheism, have found refuge” (291).

Abigail’s most traditional characteristic was her absolute allegiance to and support of her husband. Even though his involvement in the affair of this new country took him away from her for months and years at a time, she knew that he was doing what his country needed him to do. Holton quips, “Whenever John took a stand on some political issue, Abigail invariably adopted a more extreme version of the same viewpoint” (94). Through their steady flow of letters back and forth, she encouraged him and kept him posted on events at home. For example, when John was at the Continental Congress, Abigail wrote that she could not support a reconciliation between England, to whom she referred as “no longer parent State, but tyrant State” (Holton 95), and the Colonies. “Let us separate” (Holton 96), she encouraged. When the Revolutionary War actually started in the Northeast, John wrote her, telling her to take the children and flee, if necessary. However, she and her oldest son, John Quincy Adams, actually went to the top of the highest hill in town, from which she could view the shooting, and later wrote all the details to John.

Perhaps the single area in which Abigail departed from other women of her time was in financial matters. Both John and Abigail were very frugal Yankees. However, unlike John,

## THE SISTER I NEVER HAD

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

I have a best friend  
Who is perfect for me  
She listens to all my problems  
No matter how silly they may be

She listens to me patiently  
She never judges what I do or say  
She helps me with any problem  
Big or small, she never turns away

She likes to text on the phone  
But for me, she likes to call  
‘Cause we can talk and laugh for hours  
About, you guessed it, nothing at all

I can tell her all my dreams  
All my thoughts that were to be  
She listens and never runs and tells  
That is why she means so much to me

She is there for me in times happy and sad  
She is the sister I never had

## DREAM WISH

David Humphrey—BCC Faculty

Somewhere there is a land

Where the waters are cool, the skies are clear,  
And the wind brushing the trees and caressing the sand  
Is among the natural sounds you hear.

A land perfect for quiet resting,  
Isolated from the noisy-peopled throng.

A land where the birds may be found nesting,  
Singing their song.

A land where life is full and happy,  
Where clouds drift lazily across the skies.

A land where butterflies flutter, so carefree,  
As to suggest that they realize

Theirs is a land that's now quite rare,  
To be enjoyed and explored to the utmost.

I only wish that I could be there,  
And enjoy what the butterflies boast.



Abigail inherently knew how to make money. Even though she was prohibited by law from buying and selling property, she did on numerous occasions. Moreover, she covertly saved money in her own name, despite the fact that legally all her money belonged to her husband. Even in the late 1700s, Abigail understood the concept of a diverse portfolio. She bought property, bought and sold bonds for substantial profit, and sold merchandise during the War when England had blockaded the Colonies, and Americans were desperate for goods such as linen, pins, and tea. Abigail managed to procure these goods through John as well as through her own contacts. She had an innate sense of when to buy and when to sell and made her husband a wealthy man. John actually made good money from the many political offices he held during his time, but Holton believes that Abigail made a larger contribution to the family finances than John did. Holton emphasizes, “deep down he knew that the reason he was able to take a casual approach to his family’s financial situation was that Abigail never did” (277). Before her death in 1818, Abigail drew up a will in which she distributed both property and bank stock to her female relatives remaining behind. Of course, legally, these things were not hers to distribute. However, both her husband and her sons supported her will. Although she bequeathed nothing to her male children and grandchildren, they realized that her exclusion was not due to ill will or animosity. Holton explains, “She knew that custom as well as law put women in a much more precarious position than men, and she had lived long enough to see this vulnerability increase in an important way” (409).

One cannot overestimate the influence and impact that Abigail Adams had upon women’s struggle for equality, an

issue that once again surfaced during the 2012 Presidential election. Although we refer frequently to the Founding Fathers, Abigail was equally a Founding Mother. Oddly enough, the brilliant men who were her contemporaries intuitively recognized her strengths and respected her. David McCullough, in his definitive biography *John Adams*, acknowledges, “His marriage to Abigail Smith was the most important decision of John Adams’s life, as would become apparent with time. She was in all respects his equal and the part she was to play would be greater than he could possibly have imagined, for all his love for her and what appreciation he already had of her beneficial, steadying influence” (57).

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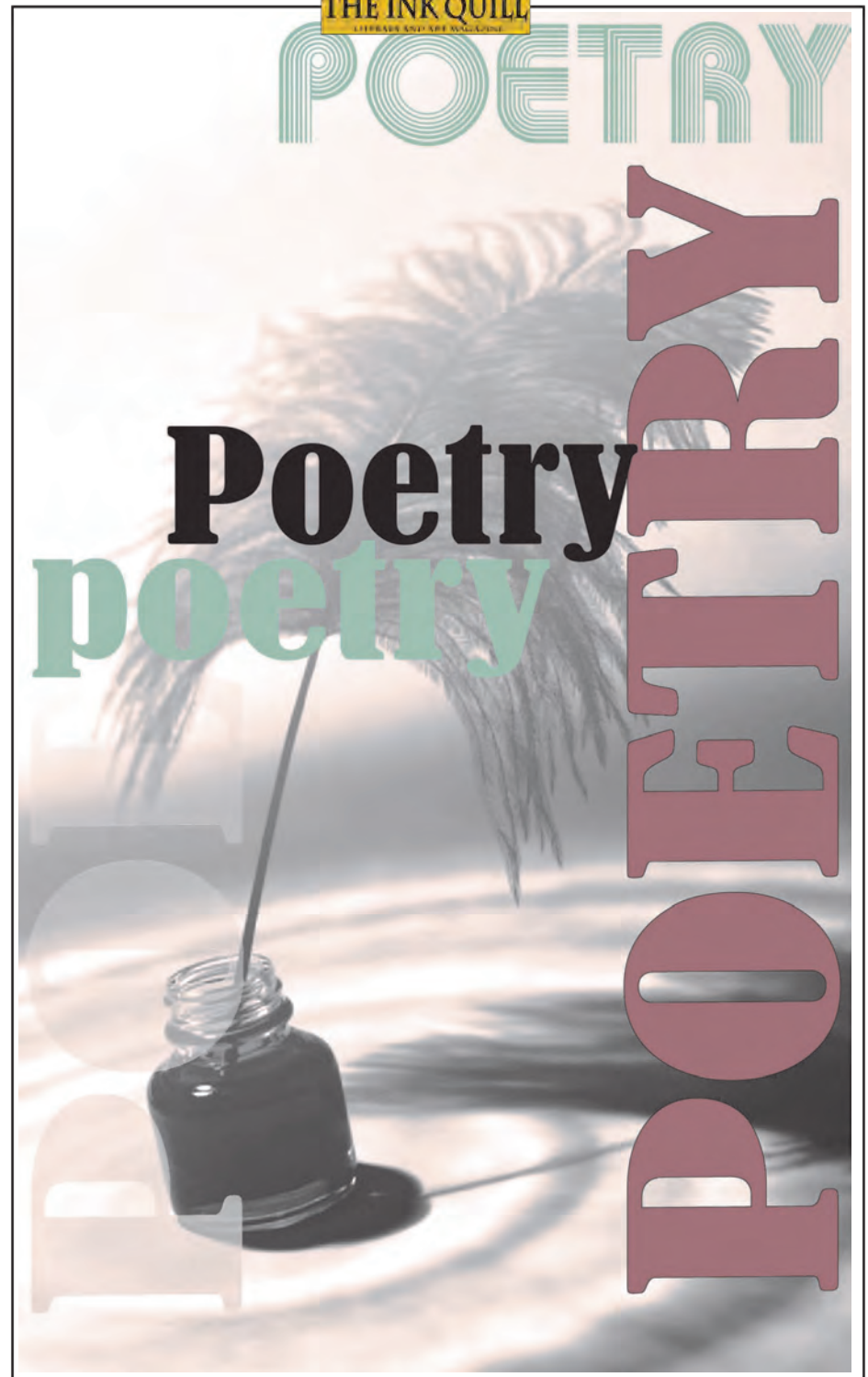
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## SUNRISE

*Bladen Community*

*College*

Joshua James  
—BCC Faculty  
Family Member



## SOLITUDE

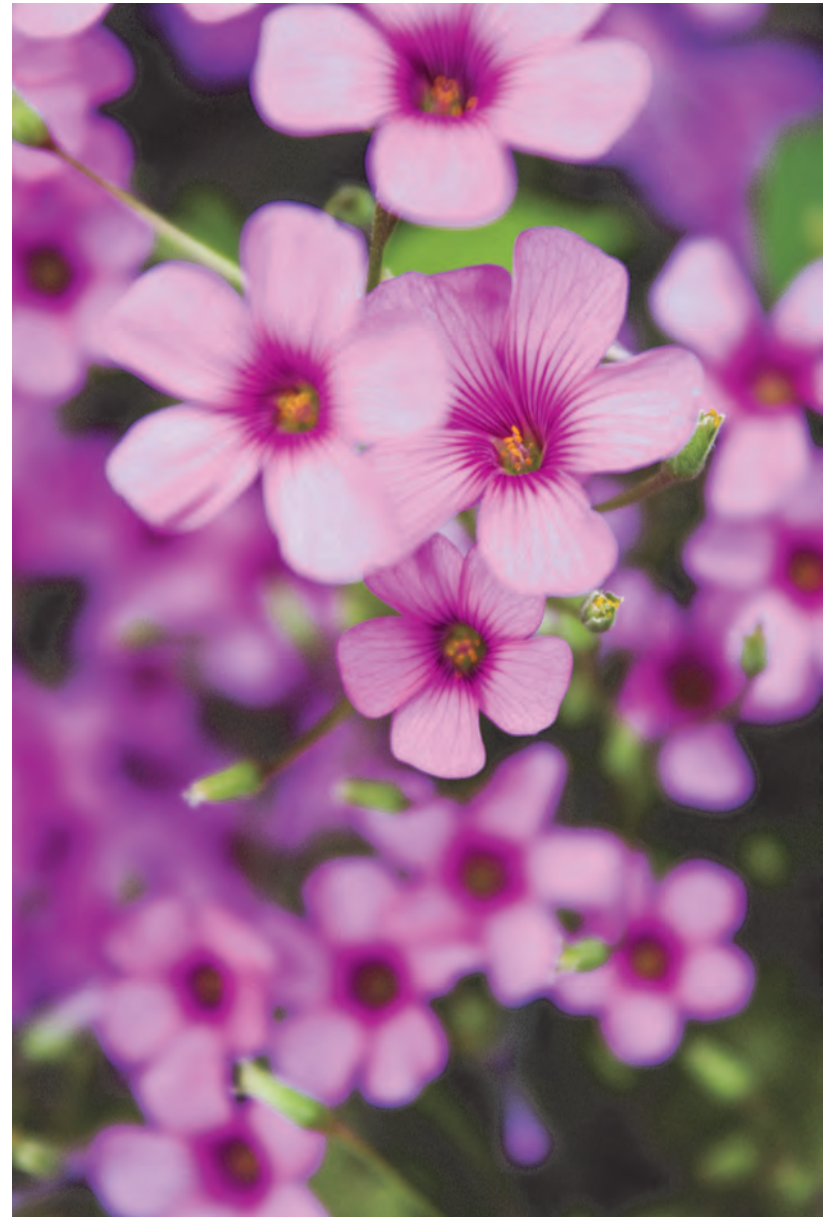
Audrey Lewis—BCC Faculty





## STANDOFF

Cassy Britt  
—BCC Student



## DELICATE

Katelyn Galyean—BCC Student





## GUARDIAN

*Allen Cemetery, Dublin, NC*

Joshua James—Family Member of BCC Faculty

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

I was having a peaceful Sunday morning alone. The house was quiet; everyone was at church. I was relaxing, and on occasion, I would hear a vibration of some sort but had no clue what it was or where it was coming from. After the third time hearing it, I became curious as to what it was; I went to hunt.

After chasing the source for several minutes, I came to the dresser in our bedroom. As I got closer, the vibration became more apparent. I opened the top drawer on the left where my husband kept his socks, and there it was: his cell phone.

He had left it behind, whether on purpose or by accident, when he and our daughter left for church. I was curious as to why someone had tried calling him several times for the past half hour. I guess he'd meant for me to find out. I picked up the phone. I looked at the history of missed calls, and the name Mike Davis was showing.

The phone started vibrating again, Mike Davis calling. I immediately thought it may have been an emergency, and it was a client of my husbands; my husband was a dog breeder.

I said hello, and there was silence on the other end; I said hello again and nothing. I thought it was really weird. I looked at the voicemail history, and it showed four voicemails. My curiosity was getting the best of me, so I decided to listen to the messages; I knew his password, and I didn't think he would mind.

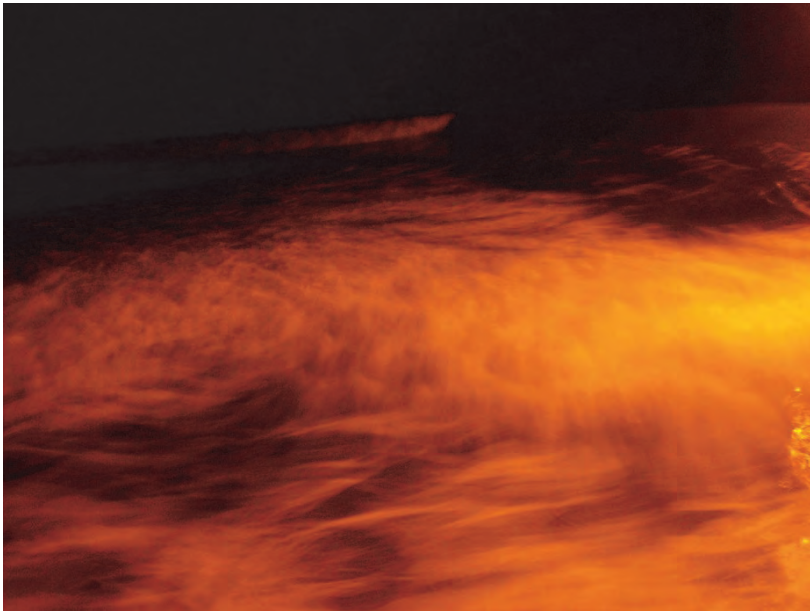
When I heard her voice on the other end say "I love you," my heart fell to my feet. All of a sudden, I couldn't breathe; I felt a panic attack coming.

I listened to the second message, I know you love your wife and daughter, but I love you baby.”

The third message, “I know you can’t leave her now, but maybe someday we can be together.”

The last message, “Where are you and why aren’t you answering my calls?” I was physically sick to my stomach.

My entire life, I had told myself that if I ever got married and had a family of my own, I would make our marriage work, no matter what. I took my vows before God, and divorce is frowned upon in our family and church. Four months later, I packed my and my daughters bags and filed for divorce; the deceit and lies were more than I could bear.



**HURRICANE SANDY, OCEAN ISLE BEACH, NC**

Stephanie Carroll—BCC Student

## A RARE MOMENT

Tosha Dawn Walters—BCC Student

I close my eyes, just for a moment. I am far, far away. I am un-caged, unbound, released, completely free. I am alone to do as I wish. I have no one to answer to, no one breathing down my neck, no frustration, no anger, no hatred, no disrespect. Never. Peace. Just Peace.

As I explore alone in this vast world, I remind myself about the simple pleasures. The crisp, cool air feels refreshing and rejuvenating. The warmth of the glowing sun wraps me like my favorite blanket. The clouds, suspended in mid-air, resemble heaps of whipped cream. I take in all the majestic colors—greens, browns, oranges, and yellows—and the various flat and mountainous landscapes of this place, this Earth. The magical shades of blue are so iridescent. I can see the aquatic life within.

As I soar, weightless as a feather, I feel happy. I see all things in a different light. I feel new, revived. I have a feeling of tranquility. I remember to live for the moment.

Then, as I begin my descent to the perch on my resting place, I hear, “Hey, Momma, we’re hungry. Whatcha cooking us for supper?”

My eyes open. Chaos ensues.







## ESCAPE

Cassy Britt—BCC Student

## CULTURE SHOCK OR...?

Joyce Bahhouth—BCC Administration

I come from Lebanon, a small beautiful country in the Middle East, but where there have always been unrest, wars, and lack of security. My husband and I decided that we did not want our son to experience war the way we had. As a result, we came here and, of course, we had to adjust to a different way of living, a different culture, and certainly different social norms. We were aware of the difficulties we might have to face. On one hand, we wanted to respect and adapt to the culture we had chosen to become part of while on the other hand, we wanted to maintain our heritage, and probably our identity.

Teaching at Bladen Community College was an easy step. I had the teaching experience, knew the course content, and was familiar with the demographics of the classroom environment. I had to adapt to how the system worked at large and asked many questions, but this was still acceptable for anyone who would start working at a new institution. My biggest challenge was when students absented themselves and dropped out of courses.

For over twenty years, I had never recorded students' absences. I used to go into class, count the students, who were almost always there, and start my class. Students were absent so rarely that by the end of the semester, I could recite to each student when he or she was absent. The student would be shocked, but I could do it.

I had a few drop outs back then, mainly in the '80s and early '90s. However, those students did not drop out by

choice. They were killed by a sniper, a bomb, or shelling on residential areas. We would come to class the following day, look at the empty chair, talk about that student, wipe off our tears, and start our lesson!

You might wonder whether it was safe going to our university to teach or study. It wasn't. I was once asked to give a course at a university very close to the red zone which marked a major battlefield in the city of Beirut. The windows of the classroom I taught in were blocked with sand bags to protect the students from snipers. The walls were marked with shrapnel. The roads leading to that university were not secure either. However, all the students came every day regardless of how severe the shelling was the night before. They wanted to seek a degree.

There were many times when we would be in class when the shelling started. Students would be horrified, and so would the instructors. Nevertheless, we kept the classes in session because it was much safer for the students to stay at the university rather than drive back home. Regardless of how horrified they felt, all students would show up in class on the following day.

We were often under siege, which meant that we didn't have gas to drive our cars. Many would line up at gas stations for hours to get four gallons of gas. We would quite often pay for four gallons, but only get three or three and a half gallons. We did not dare keep our tanks filled even if we could because at night, someone would empty our tanks. Yes, we would only put enough gas in our tanks to take us where we wanted to go, which was work or school, yet our students were always there.

**ALIEN SPIDER**

Katelyn Galyean—BCC Student

squeezes his eyes tightly shut, and assures Buzz, “He doesn’t see us.” The room is deadly quiet. Very slowly, Hunter cracks one eye open. Peering under the bed directly at him is the four-eyed monster, his giant white teeth displayed in an evil grin. The monster speaks, “I see you’ve been lighting smoke bombs and throwing cracker balls again! Your mom is not going to be pleased! You’re going to have to clean this mess up in the morning.”

“Ah, geez, Dad, do I have to?”

“Sure do! But for now, get out of your battle gear, back into your pajamas, and into the bed. NOW!”

“BUT. . .”

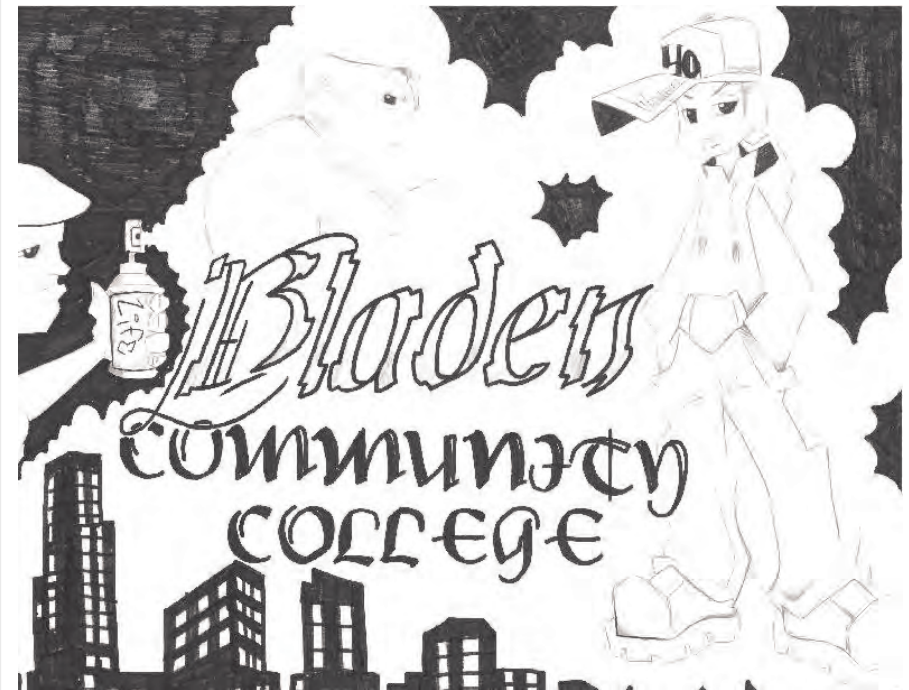
“NO BUTS! INTO BED for REAL. You can bring Buzz with you; looks like you two have had quite a night!”

“Kay, Dad. I’m going to bed now. RE-E-E-E-ALY! Night, Dad.”

“Night, Son.”



The anecdotes I can include are endless, yet they all reflect the determination to seek a degree. We all valued education, and our parents pushed us to seek that education even if it meant endangering our lives!



## OPPORTUNITY

*Sharpie Pen and Mechanical Pencil*

Ponquiose Faison—BCC Student



**SOUTHERN  
STYLE**

Diane Vitale  
—BCC Staff

MIA. Oh, no! Recon strategy number one—epic fail. Time for strategy number two—the hand-held periscope. Cautiously, Hunter slides the mirror of his periscope between the slit in the blankets protecting the bunker. Slowly, the tip of Hunter’s button nose parts the blanket, and his wide blue eyes peer out. As he turns his mirror around the room, from the ceiling to the floor, he spies Buzz Lightyear in pieces, still glowing, under the bed.

“GASP!” Hunter sucks in his breath. Desperate times call for desperate measures! This perilous situation calls for custom armor and his red Star Wars light saber. After all, he needs all the protection he can get! Off come the bunny slippers, replaced by a Timberland boot, unlaced, on the right foot and a yellow rain boot on the left. On his body are his footie Backyardigan pajamas covered by shorts, his WWE belt, shoulder pads, and a blanket tied around his neck like a cape. His Panthers helmet safeguards his head. Super Hunter coils for action!

“Hold on, Buzz,” Hunter cheers as he leads the charge out of his fort, cape billowing behind him, light saber cutting through the air, and his boot lace flapping! Unexpectedly, Super Hunter trips on his boot lace, sprawling headlong under the bed. SPLAT! “It’s okay, Buddy. Super Hunter has arrived!” Hunter consoles Buzz. “The monster will never find us now!”

Suddenly, the door to the bedroom flies open (WHAM!), and the monster questions menacingly, “HUNTER, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU KNOW IT IS PAST YOUR BED-TIME!”

Under the bed, Hunter curls himself into a tiny ball,

## THE BEDROOM BATTLE

Ms. Neeley's ENG 080 WA01 Class:  
Shawn Adams, Amber Adcox, Dakota Barfield,  
Gloria Bartley, Maria Castro, Megan Chavis,  
Meria Harrell, and Wesley Lennon

Hunter knows the monster will return again tonight, just as he does every night at bedtime. Sitting on the edge of his twin bed with his legs dangling, Hunter dreads this time. Even Shrek, smiling beneath him, cannot protect him. Each night, precisely at 10:30, Hunter's room vibrates, his bed shakes, and green fog fills his room, the very place where he should feel protected and safe. Shadows creep from the corners and crawl across the room as they whisper his name, "Hunter, he's here!"

Hunter's rocket clock tells him it is 10:29. Suddenly, fear fills his body, his heart races, sweat pours down his forehead, and the hot green vapor enshrouds his bunny slippers. Pops, zaps, and cracks echo off the walls. Hunter hears the hissing sound as the thick, sulfurous smell drifts up around his nose. His eyes burn and water. "Ah-h-h-h!" Hunter screams. "It's 10:30!" He springs from his bed, snatches his Buzz Lightyear flashlight, and sprints across the floor to his make-shift bunker. Diving through the blankets, Hunter is temporarily secure. Here, amid his formidable arsenal of toys, Hunter can plan his strategy, for he has all the armor, weapons, protective clothing and gear, reconnaissance devices, and back-up he needs.

Singling out his wind-up Buzz action figure, Hunter winds him tightly, and aims him out of the fort with his arm swinging in a karate chop. Suddenly, all goes quiet, and Buzz is



DEFINITION

Katelyn  
Galyean  
—BCC Student



## LIFE IN A WHIRLWIND

Norris Benson—BCC Student

“Daddy! I need help!”

“What, Son?”

“I NEED HELP!”

“WHAT IS IT, TREY?”

“I need a towel so I can get out of the bathtub!”

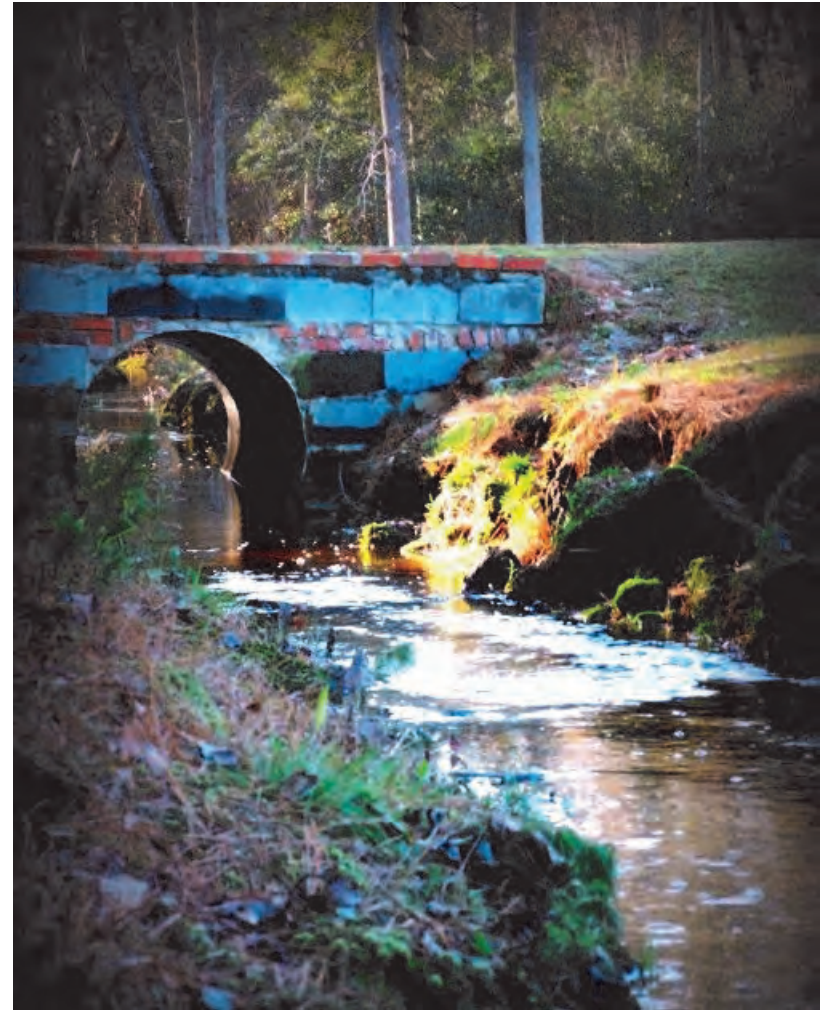
Just great! Here I am trying to perfect my spaghetti sauce while looking for my missing cell phone, and I have to stop to go get a towel for my five-year-old. Why didn’t he get it for himself? Because he has a daddy to do it for him! I resignedly take him a clean towel and finish my sauce. Perfecto! Now for my missing phone, so I can tell my dad how well the sauce turned out.

“Yasmine, honey, have you seen my phone?” I ask.

“Ummmmmm.....I’m busy, Daddy,” she replies.

I go to look, and of course, she’s in her room playing a game on the phone I’ve looked for the past hour. I remember a time long ago when I was responsible only for me. Boy, wasn’t life without kids great?!

When a person has children, life as that person knows it ceases to exist. I love spending time at the nearest waterpark, running around, climbing the highest waterslides and swinging on ropes. Or, at least ,I think I still do! Now I’m stuck watching my two children run wildly about, each in a different direction. I look around and locate Yasmine, but Trey is nowhere in sight. I frantically run among the lazy river and



## SERENITY

Cassy Britt— BCC Student

Top down, exposed, we stopped as they made their way around the car. Penelope loved it. It was really cool. I wanted to get out and touch one, but of course, I didn't dare.

The second time through, it was me in the convertible, Penelope in my lap, lapping up the crisp air, a smile on her face. It struck me as funny that I had been unimpressed with the park the first time. It was not dull at all. It was green and alive. The sun split through the air, shaking prisms into the trees, the gentle slopes, and high places, the streams. I didn't want to leave. I wanted the money to buy a travel trailer, park it right by a babbling brook, and venture out on the trails that wound through the millions of acres of that park, with little Penelope, my companion.

The third time I drove through Yellowstone, the Cooper was back at the bank, and I was driving back from picking up a '95 Geo Prism—faded red, white in other places, but a good car, great deal, and all mine, no payments. Penelope was with me. Even though I was in this humble car, no top to put down, I could see more from the front slant of the windows than from the front of the Mini. I didn't want to stop driving, didn't want to leave this world of beauty for the reality that waited for me at the end of this route.

The most important gift I got from Yellowstone was the assurance that the girl in me was still there. I had not lost her. Cynicism and bitterness had reared their ugly heads and pushed her way down. But she was there, and she would heal me. Battered but not broken, I would make it. Someday, I'll go back and park my travel trailer near a stream.

pools looking for my son, imagining finding him drowning while we're on a family outing. Once I find and scold him for running off like that, I relax a little and think of my buddies out on our planned whitewater rafting trip, the one I was forced to skip out of at the last minute because of two crying children wanting to be with their daddy.

Single life is great! There are so many options nearly every day of the week for single people and groups of friends. Many play sports or music of some sort. Some join car and truck clubs and spend countless hours and dollars fixing up their special cars. Almost all of these people spend much time at functions such as New Year's and Superbowl parties. Many of them also spend weekends out with friends at bars and clubs, doing many different things to have a good time. Other people travel to different places around the country and world seeking the beauty in nature or just seeing how other cultures live. Most of these people are enjoying life as they know it, and many are looking to find their own places in the world. I distinctly remember many of these attractions from my younger years, from the souped-up sports cars to hanging out with my friends almost every night, having fun. That happy and carefree life has been gone for years now, replaced with stress and aggravation. Now I spend weekends refereeing "GET OUTTA MY ROOM!" matches and arguing over whose turn it is to pick where we are going to eat dinner.

"Daddy?" a soft voice whispers, snapping me back into reality.

"Yeah, Buddy?" I ask.

He climbs up into the chair beside me and wraps his little arms around my neck. "You're the bestest Daddy ever," he



says. “I love you, Daddy.”

My frustrations melt away as I look down at my son. “I love you, too, Son,” I reply. Children can be the most irritating and aggravating creatures I personally have ever dealt with. But they also can be the one thing that keeps you going on in life at times. Because of my children, I am more willing to give up hanging out and having “fun” to better provide for them and to be able to spend more time with them. I love spending money as much as anyone. And there isn’t enough time in my life to be able to see all of this great big, wonderful world we live in.

But with these two little creatures that God has blessed me with, my life is all that it needs to be. Sure, times get tough. And sometimes I struggle to make ends meet. I may never own that big crew-cab Duramax diesel truck I want or be able to spend summers in Europe, but when I look at my children, I realize there is nothing in this world I want more than to raise them the right way.



## YELLOWSTONE

KC Melvin—BCC Student

I was handed a road trip through difficult circumstances, right when the country was about to go into a recession we are just now beginning to recover from. My life had taken the turn I had consciously hoped for, and unconsciously made happen, a turn that shifted physical and emotional experience away from me and to me, a turn that locked away the girl inside me, far from me, so that I thought I had lost joy, wonder, innocence, forever.

I went through Yellowstone three times en route to my destination, all within months of each other, all going to and from North Dakota and Nevada. The first time I saw Yellowstone, I was driving a four-month-old red convertible Mini Cooper, top down, my dog Penelope (10-pound, multicolored Pomeranian: the best dog on the planet), unable to leave my lap without trembling, a friend sitting in the passenger seat, excited, looking everywhere at once. I really wasn’t all that excited about seeing the park. I wanted to be in Yosemite, but that was in California. I didn’t care about spouting glaciers or petrified trees. I wanted high mountains, waterfalls, swinging bridges.

When we were riding through the park, it looked dull, not vivid, like on TV. I was dying to see a bear, though. We thought there might be a bear in the vicinity when we saw a line of cars parked by the road, people out, looking through their cameras. Sure enough, there was a small bear running through the meadow, probably shocked at all the attention, running for its life. We saw a wolf and elk. We saw bison. On the way out of the park, we were surrounded by them.

And it did change my life. It opened wide a new existence through music and musicals. But *Phantom* has kept my heart for most of my life. Not so long ago, I dealt with many difficult events that seemed to eat away at my sense of wonder, my potential, and my *self*. But then, I suddenly started listening to, looking at photos from, pondering, researching, and talking about *Phantom* and its sequel *Love Never Dies* again, as I hadn't done actively for years. And I realized that I was getting better. An essential part of myself, a soaring shade of my soul, which my parents and grandparents made possible through some strange intuitive understanding (no, they didn't understand, but they *knew*) and mercy, had returned to me.



## BALLARE CON LA LUCE

Diane Vitale  
—BCC Staff



ALLEY  
Allen Cemetery,  
Dublin, NC  
Joshua James  
—BCC Faculty  
Family Member



## THE ENVELOPE

Rebecca James—BCC Faculty

I was eight. I remember being on plane next to my dad on our way to his parents' house for Christmas. He was telling me that he'd bought tickets to a musical for Mom as a Christmas gift. I asked about the story. He said he thought it was something about a crazy guy who lives in the attic at the Opera House. It sounded fantastic.

I couldn't stop thinking about it, and Dad didn't know enough to satisfy my curiosity. Luckily, my grandparents, who had already introduced the thrilling world of musicals to me through videos from *Carousel* to *Gigi*, had seen the show and had the soundtrack. They even had a souvenir program with gorgeous photos, which they later gave to me.

Grandpa let me use his Discman, pretty new and fancy at the time. I remember spending most of that trip in a wing back chair in the quiet formal living room, listening to the two CDs over and over and studying the booklet with the libretto. I wasn't conscious of exactly why this mattered so much; in fact, it wasn't until a year or two ago that I started to understand. But I knew that this was vital, likely one of the most important and impactful discoveries of my life. By the time we went home, I knew every note and every word.

Grandpa ensured that I had always had a Walkman, usually a freebie with Radio Shack or Circuit City purchases. He soon took me to actually buy one, asking the salesperson for a sturdier model. I remember Grandpa's saying, "Oh, no, she doesn't abuse it. She just plays it until it breaks." I don't remember exactly how I ended up with the soundtrack—just

highlights on tape. Maybe Nanna and Grandpa had a tape for the car and gave it to me. In any case, my life could continue.

I remember the night Mom and Dad went to the play. I was sick with jealous sadness but trying so hard to be happy for them, for the life-altering experience they were about to have. I think one or both of them had said something about it being too scary for me to see anyway, and I knew that tickets cost more than I could fathom. Somehow, though, I knew that they would not appreciate the wonder the way I would. As my mother put me to bed that night, I said, "Please—tomorrow, tell me everything, everything."

The details she remembered weren't sufficient to fulfill my hopes, but in my parents' compassion, they had bought me a souvenir program with a white cover. Oh. I lost it at some point later—a heartbreak I feel even now.

We were at the mall, probably Hickory Hollow in Nashville. I think I remember a rush of after-Christmas sales. Dad disappeared for a while. I was melancholy.

I remember the sudden cold and dark as we entered the parking deck to find our car and go home. Dad held something out: a slim envelope with advertisements on it. I was confused. I opened the envelope and saw block letters on purple and white. Eventually, the letters came together, and I understood.

Two tickets. My daddy was taking *me* to see *Phantom of the Opera*. I don't know if I could even speak, but I remember the sensation of my ribs cracking open and my heart trying to shoot up to the top of the deck. Wonder of wonders, it was something I never expected.