

Essay--1st Place

The Last Time I Saw Her

by *Angela Uwadiogwu*

It seemed like a dream. I don't exactly remember where or when I heard of it at first, so it felt like I knew forever. Mama had a broken hip, and she got it when she tried to cross the ditch from the filling station to her beer parlor and fell. Everyone at home got used to the fact, so when we found out that the hospital which admitted her agreed to transfer her to Lagos, we took it lightly. Mummy dressed in a loose *boubou* on Sunday evening and tied her scarf. She made plans to be in the east by midnight to oversee the transfer. She didn't wear make-up.

"I say let me go instead." Daddy hated her leaving for anywhere too far.

Mummy shook her head. We had just finished warming up the melon soup and *eba*. Mummy kept to herself lately. Her face was darker, the color of rotten mango. She looked thinner.

Daddy still cajoled. The florescent bulb in the kitchen grew lighter as the day outside dimmed. I cleared the counter with a rag and gathered the used plates for the sink. Mummy spoke back to Daddy. I don't remember much of what they said. I just headed for the small gate and closed the opening to the kitchen, shoved in the latch and padlocked it. I went to the sink to wash the plates. I thought of nothing serious, just how to get my homework done for school and get my younger ones ready for bed. I hadn't seen Mama yet, so I didn't understand why Mummy acted restless and quiet. She avoided nagging us into cleaning our room for days.

The soup tasted alright, and each ball of *eba* slipped into my mouth in one piece. No bumps or stickiness. Everyone gulped and sucked their dinners with greed. Mummy frowned all through the evening. When she made to leave, Daddy had stopped cajoling, but he fell silent. Gaby begged to follow Mummy but Daddy told me to take her upstairs and bathe her. I went, and by the time I returned down Mummy left.

Mummy came back after two days, and she didn't look any better. She seemed to disappear under her clothes, and she averted her attention from food. Mama was in LUTH (the Lagos University Teaching Hospital) now, and I asked daddy why she slept there instead of the hospitals he "trusted." Like Saint Nicholas hospital in Victoria Island. I regretted that. Daddy couldn't spend that much now, since times hit us hard and milked us almost dry of money. I stopped asking about LUTH, and took his angry answer of "cutting clothes to size" to heart.

Mama's stay at LUTH gave us (the kids) new excuses to ask to accompany our parents to the main city in Lagos for work or otherwise, in the name of seeing our grandmother. Lagos Island, Ikeja, Surulere and Yaba were the raucous and creamiest parts of the state, where we would most likely get a more sophisticated bite to eat, or a clothes' boutique to raid. Now time has blurred the past, and I can't tell if I wanted to go to Lagos to actually see Mama or simply just have fun.

First Tochukwu and Gaby went over to see her, and when they returned at night and we asked them how she looked, they said little. I went to see her about a week later.

I wore jeans trousers because we didn't have a car to use that day, and we had to use commercial transportation. Daddy dropped us at the bus-stop before driving away to his office. We boarded a rickety bus to Mile 2, five persons per four-seat bench, squeezed ourselves between sweaty passengers. The bus bounced and pulled itself forward, lumbering with our weight. The afternoon sun moistened the air in the bus, and worsened it into cooking heat when we reached the dreaded traffic-jam. It took ages before we left, plodding slowly amidst the echoes of food peddlers, mad thugs and playful school-age children. The bus jolted with every road bump and rattled and vroomed until we reached our bus stop, and as we painfully jostled our way out people rushed in. I dusted imaginary lint off my trousers and took firmer hold of my purse, looking around quietly. Mile 2 carried with it a noisy and dangerous breeze. One had to be careful, as the saying went in my head, "This is Lagos." Mummy stood by my side. She held a small bag filled with clean bedding and linen and *lappas*, and a cooler of fresh beans and fried plantain. She wore jeans too. She looked distant, and when her eyes met mine she smiled with playful disdain.

"You look at people too much." She smirked. I smiled back but didn't say anything in reply.

"What are we going to do when we're done with visiting Mama?" I asked after a while.

She shrugged. "Maybe go to my shop, get a few things for dinner."

I nodded. The next bus dashed towards us and we moved back before struggling to get in with the others. Major bus stops posed competition every time. Too many people for fewer buses were never compatible. We managed to get in and made our next trip to Akoka, Yaba, where LUTH was located.

The University of Lagos surrounds Akoka like a band. Salons, Nightclubs, food joints, young girls dressed in outrageous boots and guys riding the latest sport's cars. And there was LUTH, the teaching hospital.

After we reached Akoka Bus Stop, we alighted from the bus and crossed the two-express road to the other side, entering the huge entrance into the maze called LUTH.

We crossed small ditches and passed the roads. I saw several hospital wings. Huge, light green houses tens of stories high with a lot of broken window panes and frayed clothes draping them. Motorcycle taxis chugged by, cars rode here and there. Students marched along, some in lines, behind doctors, some straggling off for a laugh. We reached a small, dirty walkway flanked with columns, and entered it.

It was a noisy, greenish room. Intensive care, they called it. A lot of bed-ridden women with bandages, and a lot of visitors.

We finally reached Mama's bed. She was asleep. Her mouth was slightly open, and spit lines formed around it as she snored. Sores covered her chest and arms. Yellow scabs with flies prancing about. She wore a singlet, and the wrapper which was supposed to cover her legs was exposed one of them all the way to her hip, which was bandaged. I think I heard a baby cry somewhere. Mummy tapped Mama.

“Mama, I have come.” She sat down on the bedside chair, smiling. I had to stand. The room was really crowded. I didn’t care then. I was still staring. Mama opened her eyes and stared sleepily at Mummy.

Mama’s cheeks sunk, forming two small bowls. She looked at me, and she smiled. Her teeth were yellow, sticky with aged food. “Angela, how are you?”

“Fine.”

I wanted to look away because I thought I would cry. I think I held it in. I don’t remember if I cried or not. Mummy took out the cooler of beans from her bag and brought out a spoon. She began to feed her. One of the women in bed talked to us about how Mama was a tyrant and bossed the nurses around. We were laughing. Mama wasn’t saying anything. She opened her mouth and chewed wetly. Mummy asked if her Pampers were finished. I wanted to ask: Pampers? What for? Then I knew. She needed them to “go to the toilet.” Mama said she still had a few left.

Mummy brought out the clean linens and gathered the old ones. I caught a whiff of feces as she put the old linens in the bag. We had to leave then. The meeting was so brief. I spent the whole day wondering if Mummy wanted to cry each time she saw her. When I arrived home everyone asked how Mama was doing. I said she was alright. My heart leaped every time I told that lie. We ate *Jollof* beans for dinner, the same type fed to mama.

The beans were yellowish brown, with palm oil leaking at the edges of their roundness on my plate. We were in the sitting room, watching TV. The beans were burning hot when they touched my tongue.

“Why are you crying, Angela?” Marian, my sister, asked. Everyone’s attention focused on me.

“My stomach hurts.” I felt my face. It was wet with tears and sweat. I asked Mummy if I could get some Paracetamol from her cabinet.

“Go ahead, but don’t scatter my things. Sleep. You look tired,” She replied. I think she knew why I was crying. I went upstairs to get the drugs.

I closed the door behind me when I entered Mummy’s huge, air-conditioned room. I stared at the small crucifix hung on the wall, overlooking her bed, its Christ staring at the small bulb shining over him like a revealing light. Mummy’s bed was crinkled. Emeka, my younger brother, probably had a hand in that.

I looked harder at the Crucifix, the surreal film of Mama, thin and scabbed, playing in my head. I cried, and I was afraid.

“In Jesus name, Mama will be well. The devil is a liar.” I shook the image of Mama off my head, wiped the tears off my face and stood reassured. I went to Mummy’s cabinet to get the drugs.

Essay--2nd Place

My Brother, My Hero

by *Heidi Kirsch*

If someone had asked me the question “What do you think of your older brother?” two years ago, I would have said, “I love him, but I don’t particularly like him.” Two years ago, Shawn, an average college freshman, attended Mayville State University. In November, 2003, his sergeant called him, saying their company was on alert for deployment to Iraq. Three months later, my family and I said goodbye and left Shawn in Fort Carson, Colorado, a few days before he left for “the big sandbox.” Shawn returned from Iraq last February, after a one-year tour of duty with the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion of the North Dakota Army National Guard. Some people who knew him quite well before he left say he is a new man, and, in some ways, I can see that; however, some things never change.

When he returned from Iraq, I saw some alterations in Shawn’s lifestyle and habits, but some days, I couldn’t help but smile when aspects of his old being came shining through his tough, new, sun-baked exterior. When I said goodbye to him in February 2004, he was a risk taker, a kid of average intelligence who wasn’t overly ambitious, and a guy with little job experience; however, when he returned, he was a man who seemed kinder and gentler, exhibited a new brand of wisdom, and held the experience of an occupation unlike any other—and I like this version of Shawn a lot better than the previous.

In his high school years, Shawn spent a great deal of time arguing with my parents. Due to his job as a truck driver, my dad was usually only home on weekends, so all the negative discussions Shawn and my mom had during the week were revisited when Dad returned. I can recall one particular instance where Shawn displayed his argumentative, rebellious side. The night before his high school graduation, Shawn returned home very late. He had been in Dickinson with his friend, Matt. Shawn would have gone alone, but his license had been taken away when he was caught driving 113 miles per hour in a zone marked 65, a previous topic of the above mentioned “discussions.” Matt’s parents, who happen to be the school superintendent and his wife, called my parents, worrying about their son.

When Shawn and Matt returned home around midnight, my dad threw a fit. I had been sleeping pretty well up until that point, but when Dad started yelling, I woke up. He told Shawn, in a horribly loud voice, that he needed to apologize to Matt’s parents before he walked across the stage at graduation in the afternoon. This incident upset me quite a bit, probably because my brother was going to leave home soon, and I hated thinking about the possibility of him never coming back because of the unstable relationship he shared with Mom and Dad. If I had only known what was around the corner, such a small matter wouldn’t have upset me.

When he returned after spending a year in Iraq, Shawn acted much better than he did before he left; he stopped arguing so much and kept his thoughts to himself. I believe the twelve months away from home made him realize how fortunate he is to have a family,

especially one that cares about him. He still argues with Mom and Dad, but much less frequently. Shawn cares more about my brothers and me as well. He lets us borrow some of his things and maintains composure when a situation turns out opposite of what he had hoped for. I know the possibility of Shawn getting upset still exists, but it takes a bit more prodding to evoke a yelling and screaming match these days.

Shawn's risk-taking side may have played a role in how he behaved in high school as well. He never applied himself as much as he could. He possessed the capability to earn As and Bs in his classes, but he chose not to put forth the effort to attain those grades, and instead, got Cs and Ds. I suppose it never bothered Shawn too much, but it hurt me to see him not achieve what I knew he could. I looked up to him, and his academic performance made me doubt whether or not I should *want* to be like him.

When he returned, however, Shawn held a new brand of wisdom, a kind of intelligence shared only by those who had been with him in the Middle East. Many news reporters, try as they may, lack the knowledge of what is really happening. We only see what they want us to see, but the soldiers know the inside story. Shawn, when given a start on the subject, speaks of the few close calls he had while on patrol, the high numbers of specific groups of Iraqi people we think are minorities, the fun the soldiers had, and the good being done despite being in a bad situation. Our soldiers are the only Americans able to truly describe what the war in Iraq is like. I consider myself lucky to know a person so close to me who voluntarily shares his experiences and knowledge of the war of this generation.

Given his level of education before leaving, Shawn, like many other teenagers in my hometown, had little choice when it came to jobs. No one *needs* anyone to work for them, but some people willingly offer jobs to people they trust. Reggie, the youth leader at my church, gave Shawn a job on his farm. Shawn spent the summers of 2002 and 2003 working in the fields and around the farmyard. I think he enjoyed the work, and he couldn't complain about the amount of money he earned. Being a farmhand was a good job for Shawn, but he needed more experience; little did he know he was in for the job experience of a lifetime.

In Iraq, Shawn's platoon held the responsibility of finding improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on and along the roads, collecting them, and setting them off in a safer location. While some soldiers searched for IEDs, others watched for the enemy, ready to fire in a moment's notice. During his first month in Iraq, Shawn e-mailed us his account of what had happened on one day's mission. He had been looking for roadside bombs from the front of his humvee when a missile shot across the hood of the vehicle. Had the vehicle been going any faster, it would have gone through the front driver's side window, in all likelihood causing multiple fatalities. My brother also felt the excitement and power of being a gunner while he was in Iraq. On his birthday, he was chosen to be the shooter when they went on patrol. When we heard this story, we asked Shawn if he killed anyone. He told us that they never went back to check, but he knew that his group avoided being hit because the Iraqis are "lousy shots." Shawn, in addition to his "fun," felt the pain of losing a fellow soldier when one man

from his platoon died after being wounded. Being a soldier allowed him to catch a glimpse of real life—the life behind the scenes of the war.

Shawn has changed in many ways, but the most obvious change is that he has become a veteran. He is also, in my mind, a hero. He may have done nothing special to make him better than any other soldier, but the fact that he willingly served our country makes him a hero in my eyes.

By recognizing the ways Shawn has changed, I can better understand why he behaves the way he does, and by doing so, help him. If I realize he is in a “mood,” I know to avoid him and let him figure things out on his own. If he starts talking about something of which I

have no knowledge, I know not to question his intelligence. Finally, if he talks about his experience as a soldier, I know to listen, so I may learn all I can about what he went through.

If asked now what I think about Shawn, I would say, “I love him, but I’m still working on *liking* him.” Comedian Mark Lowry sums it up well when he says, “There are some people you love who you just don’t like. You know who they are. You’ll cry at their funeral, but you won’t go on vacation with them.” I feel the same way about Shawn right now, but as time goes on, I am certain I will begin to like him more for who he is—my brother, my hero.



Sinking Addiction
by Virginia Ritzke

For thy hunger

by *Craig Rood*

“What is wrong with the world?”

That question seems relentless-- when you turn on the television, radio, or just open your eyes, you're destined to hear or see some form of depravity around you. Suppose one cares and wants to enact change in oneself and the world-- where do you begin? Of all the things that you see wrong with the world, what is the most evil thing that you can imagine? Do you suppose that there is a “root” or a fundamental cause of destruction in the world? I do. Let me begin with a brief story.

In July of last year, for the first time in my life, I attended an Air Show. Due to a stiff neck, an empty water bottle, and 4 hours of being drained by the sun, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon I wanted to go home. Despite my complaints, my acquaintance insisted that I hold out a little bit longer to see the “main event” of the Air Show—the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels. I had heard the name, but I wasn't sure what they did.

After their formal introductions and procedures, 5 mini-crews helped each of the pilots enter their Blue and Yellow F-18--- I was shaking from dehydration and anticipation. Synchronized aircrafts soaring through the sky-- turning and flipping with the wings of each aircraft seemingly attached to one another. I could see them turn in the distance, then, as my head rose up, the planes' giant wings swallowed the sky...

As they were circling around the fairgrounds, I lowered my head to ease the strain in my neck. I glanced beside me and saw a young woman reading a book with her hand resting on a purse.

The purse grabbed my attention because there was a patch, with the imprinted words “Pray for Peace,” sewn on the side.

I've heard such lines before in several different forms, such as one must have faith, hope, luck—all of which are realms beyond human will. I've always considered those lines foolish, but in that moment, my bewilderment turned to disgust and I felt overpowered by an urge to slap that woman's face. There I was, enthralled by the spectacle of witnessing the United States Navy's elite commanding their precision aircraft. It was a beautiful demonstration of individuals understanding the world and giving it shape. This sight was a hymn to the centuries of technological advancement-- from the discovery of the laws of gravitation and the principles of aerodynamics, to the creation of the internal combustion engine, to the jet engine-- not to mention the thousands of small steps in between... all the thought and effort that went into making that scene magnificent. I was paralyzed by the contrast of this spectacle to the message that if one wants to achieve, peace, one must pray. I imagined the sight of jet engineers huddled in a circle, praying, hoping that the engine would just “work,” somehow. Aircraft requires thought and action, so does peace or any other noble cause you commit yourself to.

In that moment, I grasped that the implicit message in the words “Pray for Peace” is the most hideous of mankind's flaws. Perhaps you thought that starvation, slavery, or war was the most evil thing in the world? They are hideous, I agree, but you still uphold the sovereignty of your mind and thus the capability to solve these problems. Note that the idea of praying for peace, which

proposes that peace cannot come from human action, but one must pray for it, leaves individuals helpless. If you deny the potency of your mind and proclaim that one must pray, wish, or hope for peace, freedom, and full stomachs, you declare yourself impotent and thus unfit to cope with the problems in human existence.

Faith is the most evil thing because if you choose that as your method of dealing with the world, you render yourself helpless. If there is anything you aspire to accomplish in your life, wishing abnegates the faculty of thought. Thought is the first step, but it also requires expression. Whatever your aim is in life, don't pray, wish, or hope-- think, think some more, then, while you're still thinking, act. Never declare your mind helpless. If you abandon your mind, it will be of no use to you.

Don't gaze up in the sky and shake with hopeful apprehension that someone may be up there listening. Whenever you see problems in the world, use your mind and look to this word for the solution. Some of you may insist that you were created by a God, or some sort of all powerful entity which orchestrates human existence. If so, don't you imagine that God armed you with a mind in order to *deal* with reality, not just as an awful trick to acknowledge your own helplessness?

I think so.

Do you?

Cattle and Baseball Do Not Mix

by *Adrian Hook*

"Adrian, it's for you. I think it's Justin," my mom said while I sat at the dinner table. It was a typical August night while I was in high school. I got up to take the phone and it, indeed, was Justin. We could always tell the difference between the Campbell boys. Justin had a deeper voice than the older Ryan.

"Want to come over?" Justin asked.

"Yea, I'll be over in a while," I replied.

That was that. I didn't even ask my parents. I knew they would be cool with it. After all, this was almost a daily occurrence. I went back to the dinner table to finish off the rest of what was on my plate. Even though he knew what was up, my dad always asked, "Who was that?"

"It was Justin he wants to hang out."

"Have you fed the dogs today?"

"Yes. I took care of them when I finished mowing the lawn."

"Alright, well clean the table off and you can go."

I hurriedly cleaned off the table, rinsed the dishes, and even put them in the dishwasher. Usually I was not so arduous, but it had been a long day of mowing our yard and my grandmother's. I rushed to get my Huffy ten-speed bike, the highlight of my twelfth birthday, and sped down the road to their house as if I were that young again.

From the tip of my driveway to the mailbox to the north that read "The Robert Campbell's" stretched a quarter mile of coarse gravel road. Abused by the constant traffic of county gravel

trucks, the road had been beaten into a miniature mountain range. The numerous bumps vibrated cars, trucks, and farm equipment until it felt as if you were driving over a washboard. The undulation and frequency of the bumps reminded me of how the Appalachian Mountains appeared when I flew over them. Some bumps towered above most of them, and I would ramp over those in an attempt to soar above the rest. Upon landing I would again attempt to ascend across more of these bumps, but tonight was not a usual night, I anxiously wanted to get to Campbell's house.

On the east side of the road, a large field, usually of wheat, stretched across the North Dakota prairie. Beyond this particular field a gravel pit sunk into the ground where the Campbell boys and I had spent many hours riding four wheelers and hauling gravel to our houses to make basketball courts. Trees too young to climb inadvertently put a limit to the pasture blanketing across the land west of our road. The contour of this pasture was very wavy and mapped by large boulders. Having no livestock grazing the grassland surrounded by unkempt fences, the tall grass blew in the Dakota winds.

The vast ditches on the immediate left and right of the roads had been mowed recently. Our neighbor to the south raised cattle and used the hay to feed his herd. The stench of manure reached this far north. I had finally reached the mailbox in my sprint of excitement. The gravel continued until its dead end, the Campbell farm house. Evergreens gave Campbell's vast yard a limit. We would travel the lands beyond both belts of trees, but not tonight. To the west of the trees a large pasture and pond fed the neighbor's cattle. In packs, more of our friends and us would hunt

thirteen-line ground squirrels and feed them to their cats. A large rock pile and garbage pile crowned off this pasture. The row of evergreens to the east blocked farm equipment from view and golf balls. Between the rows of trees, we would use our irons and hit golf balls back and forth aiming at a small decorative fence and largest elm tree. Never once did we break anything. At the southern tip of the eastern border, a box elder wilted with unusually low branches that the boys and I had scaled to new heights. At the northern tip of the row of evergreens on the east side, a two stall garage sheltered the nicer, newer vehicles.

Opposite of the garage a vast sign surrounded by beautiful flowers represented a commemoration of the Campbell farm centennial. Seeing the sign that read "Campbell Farm Centennial: 1903 – 2003," reminded me of its celebration. Family and friends united to commemorate the longevity of the farm that will still last for years to come. The parents enjoyed cocktails and beer, while the kids frolicked around in the yard preceding the finely prepared food. Not only did the sign bring back memories of the past celebrations and sleepovers, but it also put the future in prospective. Ryan and my senior year had come, and the frequent visits would be coming to an end. The boys had cross country beginning soon, and I participated in basketball thereafter. Sports and clubs aside, my family started to move our belongings into our new house in town; therefore, this could end up being a crappy night. As soon as I passed the sign, their cocker spaniel Sandy started yelping at me, only to soon recognize that it was only me. I got to their sidewalk, hopped off of my bike and threw it to the ground. The

kickstand, at this point, was non-existent.

I went to the door and met the two boys anxiously awaiting me. We went to the pump house and gazed at the various sports equipment stored in there. The baseball bat, gloves, and balls appealed to us the most. Our favorite team, the Minnesota Twins, was in first place of their division with a large lead. Things looked optimistic for them, a possible World Series even. We decided to play catch and have a home run derby. I always portrayed Jacque Jones because he played my position, right field. We went a few rounds blasting the weathered leather baseballs over their landmark barn. We finally ran out of baseballs and it happened to be my turn to go get them. I scaled the fences to get behind the barn and I ran because I had a hot bat. At full speed, my left foot stepped in something very *nasty* and my right foot followed suit but actually slipping out from under me this time. I went airborne, which felt like an eternity, and fell on my back. The neighbor's cattle had recently been in this portion of the pen I remembered, and I was right. Fresh manure became the new color of my once white t-shirt. It looked as if I was no longer wearing my red Adidas shorts, but now wearing brown ink blot pants.

I forgot about the baseballs, and I forgot about my at bats, I wanted to go home. I re-scaled the fences to get back to the main lawn, only to see the two boys waiting for me. As soon as they noticed the fresh coat of "paint" that I had bathed in, they both fell to the ground laughing. I told them I had to go home; I had to get out of these clothes. I rode that same Huffy 10-speed mountain bike back home. My dog Millie did not look at me the same. Her curious nose

soon shied away from me due to the stench. I took all of my clothes off except my boxers, hosed myself off, and walked in the house. My mom, very surprised to see me unclothed, began to laugh when she realized my situation. I did not go back to Campbell's that night. After a long, hot shower and a fresh set of clothes, I realized how crappy of a night it had been.

"Star Wars" Midnight Showing

by Alex Kelly

May 16, 2005 "Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith" hit theaters nationwide. The long awaited final chapter to the "Star Wars" saga. People all over America have been camping outside of theaters for months to see this movie. The hype for the movie was getting "Star Wars" fans excited ever since they saw the first movie preview.

Finally the time had come for the fans to see the movie they all hoped would make up for Episode I and II. After "The Phantom Mances" and "Attack of the Clones" there was much to make up for.

It was early in the morning on May 14, tickets for the midnight showing of Episode III came out. I wanted to see the midnight showing but due to the fact I had to work at the time, the ticket booth I knew there was no way I could get tickets. Plus people had already been camping out in the theater parking lot waiting for tickets.

I like to refer to myself as a closet case geek, I like sci-fi and fantasy movies, I read comic books and know many different superheroes, and have

also played “World of War Craft” or WOW as we like to refer to it as and watch Japans anime.

But very few people know about my vast nerd knowledge, I like to keep it secret I don’t go to comic book convents dressed as a Vulcan I don’t show up at comic book stores on Wednesdays when new comics come out and would never play card games like “Magic the Gathering.” Mostly because unlike the people that do things of that nature I want to have a normal social life that doesn’t involve conversations on why “Batman” is better than “Superman.”

Ever though I like to keep it a secret, I’m a big “Star Wars” fan. It has always been my favorite movie. It is the classic story of good verses evil that takes place a long time ago in a galaxy far far away.

It has always been a movie I would never turn down a chance to see. That is why I wanted to see the opening of the final show. To be part of an ending of an era and maybe for once in my life among fellow “Star Wars” fans to let my true nerd run lose.

On my way to work I drove by the theater to see what the crowd looked like and imagined would it would be like to be in the Theater at midnight to see the giant “Star Wars” logo appear for the last new movie of the epic that has touched some many life’s; but having to face the harsh realization that it would never happen. When low and behold, I saw a brief glimmer of hope. An old friend of mine from high school was there in the parking lot in what appeared to be a giant light saber rumble.

Lee had camped out the night before to get tickets for the show. I drove in and asked him if he would get

one for me and he said he would be more than happy to. After giving him the money for the show I drove off to work happier than a nerd in a comic book store.

At work there was a smile on my face and a spring in my step. In a little more than 24 hours, I will be taking place not only in a big part of “Star Wars” history, but sci-fi history as well and being a history major. That is one thing I should never turn down.

The morning of the 15th I ran into “Media Play” to buy a light saber for that night. Since I was already going to the midnight showing of Episode III, I better try to look like I belong there.

At the check out, the lady that rang me up gave me a weird look. Probably because I was a 20 year old buying a kids toy; but after assuring her that I was seeing the midnight showing of Episode III her weird look turned into a look of envy, or sympathy. It was hard to tell the look of expression she was giving me.

Once work was done, I could leave for the theater. I couldn’t wait to see what the waiting crowd for the movie looked like. I knew people had been camping for at least a week and of course people would be dressed up as there favorite characters, but I never expected to see what I saw that night at the theater.

A line going all the way around the theater going out deep into the parking lot. There were still tents up from the night before. Many people were dressed in costumes, most of which were home made. Plus light sabers galore.

As I drove in, I passed another giant light saber rumble. I think it was green sabers verses blue sabers. Looking through the mass amount of

Jedi, Stormtroopers, evil empires, and princesses, I tried to locate Lee in the line but didn't have to look for long. Lee was right at the front up near the door. It was starting to turn out to be one of the luckiest two days of my life.

Lee of course dressed up in a homemade Jedi costume. For this, I thoroughly made fun of him but tried to keep my voice down. The last thing I wanted was to get beaten up by someone that actually thinks the Force is real.

Many of the people out there were, well unique would be the best word to describe them. One person that stuck out was a guy named Moby. I don't know if that was his real name or if that was what he liked to be called. He had a giant Mohawk that was dyed blue.

Moby had been camped out for over a week to be the first in line. When I had shown, up the local news crew was interviewing him, while the line was cheering him on. I found out later that he works as a pizza delivery man, but for that one night he was a god.

Outside of the theater was an amazing sight, all those people came out to which the final chapter of a movie that touched so many life's in many different ways. All ages were the people that were kids when the first one came out, people my age that watched the original trilogy on VHS and people that had to beg their moms to let them stay up past there bed time to go see it.

Whether they preferred the Rebels or the Empire, the Jedi or the dark side of the force, each fan had their own opinions of the movies. Each had their own favorite movie in the saga, and favorite characters and no two opinions were the same.

At 11 o'clock the doors opened up and we were let in. Suddenly, a huge

excitement came over the crowd. People were rushing to their spot and forming a straight line.

Once Lee and I got our tickets ripped, we ran to the Theater right behind Princess Leia and Queen Amidala. In that run, I found out that my light saber could be used to hit Lee in the rear to make him run faster.

The theater was skeptical all by itself. At the end of my row was Luke Skywalker and sitting in front of me was Princess Leia and Queen Amidala. In the row behind me had none other than Darth Vader. I was in the middle of a family reunion.

There were four theaters showing Episode III so many people wandered from theater to theater the hour before the next movie started. Management put an end to that quick. They didn't want people sneaking into a different theater.

In the theater people were having light saber fights for amusement, for them and for the rest of the crowd. I joined in against some guy that was trying to be the next great Jedi. Not to brag or anything, but I beat him; I beat him good. Shortly after that the managers made us stop. Apparently they were worried we were going wreck the screen.

Soon the final minutes before the show were upon us. People began to take their seats. On the screen a sign came up saying please turn of all cell phones. That was when I herd a loud voice from the back yell, "I'll hurt anyone whose cell phone goes off." When I turned around to see who it was I saw I giant man that looked like he could play a Nazi extra in HBO's "OZ." After hearing that I made sure mine was off. The last thing I wanted was to be

stabbed in the back by a shank made out of a bed spring.

Finally it started, a giant applause came over the crowd and then silence and all eyes were on the screen. People laughed, when the Jedi temple was stormed, people cried, and people watched in amazement at the light saber fight between Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker. When the ending credits came up people gave it a standing ovation.

Outside the theater people were talking about how they were going to frame their ticket or compared the movie to other ones in the series. But most people believed Episode III made up for Episodes I and II. Many people were sad that it was the last new “Star Wars” movie but they were happy with the movie that it ended on.

On the way home I couldn’t believe I actually took part in something like that. It turned out to be one of the few nights of my life I will never forget. Even though my status as a “Star Wars” geek went way up for taking part of it, I would gladly do it again.

Hats in the Life of an Educator

by Mary Varner Zimmerman

As educators, we have gained the knowledge of the policies, procedures and responsibilities; we must adhere to, as classroom teachers. Some of the skills we must possess include: the use of organizational, preparation and time management skills. We have come to understand the importance of writing agendas, ordering supplies for classroom projects or labs, while utilizing marketing techniques, to recruit students

and provide informational sources for parents, communities and colleagues, on Technology Education programs. We know and understand our position in the “chain of command” and will strive to do my best, to remember professionalism as an educator and colleague. As a future educators, we feel confident, knowing we will fulfill our responsibilities and utilize all of the “Skills for Success,” planning and procedures, yet, I feel compelled to add the characteristics of a successful educator and “hats” or roles, educators play everyday, in educational institutions around the world.

Understanding the roles, we play or “Hats” we wear as an educator, while utilizing all of the special personality characteristics, are qualities I feel, will make us successful teachers. Therefore; I have adopted this philosophy: “It is not what the students, parents or communities can do for educators but what educators can do for students, parents and communities!”

You may ask, “What do you mean by, “hats,” or roles played by educators everyday?” Let me explain. Imagine if you will, educators on the first day of school, awakening to a beautiful morning and beginning a routine, which will be consistent, for the next 185 days. The routine is simple, after drinking coffee, eating breakfast and contemplating the day ahead; they step into the closet, to find what to wear. After choosing their clothes and shoes, they see an invisible rack, full of magical hats, all with different “roles” or “personalities,” decorated with admirable characteristics. Having no size or color, the hats seem to match everything and fit perfectly. Although the hats are very heavy; educators are proud to wear them everyday.

Then, you may ask, “What kind of roles or personalities and characteristics do the “hats” play in the life of an educator?” To understand the “hats” or roles and personalities; we must understand what “hats” we wear and the purpose for each one.

The first hat plays the role of an educator having characteristics of knowledge, humbleness, outstanding morals, enthusiasm and inspiration; while teaching and encouraging students, by helping them set high standards, achieve their educational goals and reach their dreams.

The second hat plays the role of a colleague with the characteristics of inspiration and professionalism; while being a team player, helping other colleagues set and attain educational goals and congratulating them on their successful achievements.

The third hat plays the role of a volunteer with the characteristics of giving time, and sharing knowledge with students, parents and communities; while setting and achieving educational or community goals and higher living standards.

The fourth hat plays the role of a mentor having characteristics of role models and attaining positive attitudes; while spending quality time with parents, students and colleagues on school and community projects or competitions.

The fifth hat plays the role of a friend with characteristics of understanding and compassion; while giving students, colleagues and parents a shoulder to cry on or an ear to listen, to all of the successes they achieve in their lives and by sharing past experiences and the knowledge of life.

The sixth hat plays the role of a psychologist, listening to students,

parents and colleagues, when they are having problems with “life” in general and showing them possible solutions to those problems; while helping them understand the lesson being taught from those life experiences and find the cause or root of the problem that led to that outcome, so it will never happen again.

The seventh and final hat plays the role of a parent with characteristics of a disciplinarian and supporter, educating the students on right and wrong behaviors; while showing forgiveness, caring and compassion, in giving just punishments or rewards, for actions and goals achieved.

These are the “Hats” I want to wear and the characteristics I want to show, every day as an educator; I will never leave home without them. If there is ever a time I feel the “Hats” are too heavy to carry, I will look to my family, friends and colleagues for encouragement and support. I challenge all educators to never leave home without their “Hats”. Striving to assume these roles, attaining the “Skill for Success” and continuing education are the building blocks of a successful educational facility and are the qualities I feel will make me a successful teacher.

In conclusion, these “Hats” separate the complexities of education and are the issues, at the “Heart” of education. These “Hats” are the life source which keeps educators and educational facilities alive as they progress and become successful in the Information Age of the 21st Century.

A Touch of Hypocrisy

by *LeeAnn Even*

In December of 2004, a very dear friend had cash stolen from her purse at the nursing home where she worked. She ranted about someone purposely taking something of hers, especially so close to Christmas. In July of 2005, a five-month investigation by the Sheriff's Department and the State Auditor's Office resulted in charges of embezzlement filed against this same friend. The investigation revealed cash received by her, as the city auditor, for utility bills never made it into the appropriate accounts. One could assume the money stolen from her purse was the money stolen from city coffers.

The Encarta Dictionary defines hypocrite as "*somebody feigning high principles.*" How does a person live comfortably in his or her skin while making choices that run counter to his or her professed claims? Could someone truly be so removed from his or her own life to not see the forest for the trees?

Articles from psychology journals frequently make comparisons between pathological liars and hypocrisy. "Pathological" and "lies" have the following definitions from the Encarta Dictionary: "*extreme, uncontrolled or unreasonable*" and: "*to give a false impression intentionally.*" Similarities between the definitions can be made, but are all hypocrites' pathological liars? Could the hypocrisy be in the eyes of the beholder?

Since February of 2005 this friend has been seeing a counselor. She has fully embraced the notion that she is a pathological liar, an obsessive-compulsive shopper, unable to control herself. Yet those she victimized were not the only potential candidates. She

worked part-time as a Post Master Replacement, exposed to money she alone was responsible to sort out. She also worked part-time in a nursing home with the legitimacy of being in a resident's drawers and closets alone. Her ability to control her impulses in these situations is telling. She claims and has not been shown to have stolen from these other places of employment.

When politics are involved, many will take apart the opposing view's positions and spotlight the inconsistencies. Bill Clinton was embraced by feminists who saw him as a champion to further their cause. Feminists brought about change in the workplace. They made it no longer acceptable for corporate executives to expect and receive sexual favors from employees lower down the corporate ladder. Feminists would immediately believe and support anyone's claim that the boss was using his position to leverage unwanted "favors." Along came Paula Jones, and the feminists were unusually quiet.

Hypocritical; it depends on the interpretation of the claim. She may have been part of the right wing trying to destroy a credible politician's career. She also may have been legitimately victimized by a man who had believed fully in his power and prowess to think he was above being prosecuted. Either interpretation does not let the feminists off the hook of their full embrace of all prior claims of sexual harassment in the past and their silent tongues and back pedaling in the face of a powerful voice's possible destruction.

Many on the right delighted in discussing campaign finance issues when Al Gore was shown to have received illegal contributions from an Asian country looking for some political

pull during the 1996 election season. Now, however, Trent Lott has been indicted by a grand jury for campaign funding issues, and he and the Republican Party are upset over the fact the prosecuting attorney is a Democrat, and practicing “obvious partisan politics.” What gives? How could discovery of campaign fund irregularities ten years ago by one party not be partisan then, but now it is?

With these examples, hypocrites do not have to be pathological liars. They just need to have the possibility of power being pulled out from under them for a widely discussed issue to now take on the ability for interpretation in a different light.

Concern for the environment has brought about much chest thumping from many celebrities with legitimate passion over the topic. However, when faced with installing wind powered generators off the coast of Martha’s Vineyard, celebrities such as Carly Simon and Walter Cronkite let their voices be heard on the subject of devaluing their properties and destroying the beauty of the tourist destination.

In Sowell’s article from Human Events, he discussed the “push to green vulnerable land in the Hamptons” (par 1). The need to ensure vulnerable land was protected brought about artificially inflated property value. The call from some to develop affordable apartment living on lands not considered vulnerable brought about howls of protest. Those protesting were concerned about devaluing their property and the unsightliness of large buildings obstructing the view of the area. People had been displaced with no regard to their need for affordable housing and location close to work in the rush to protect the environment. He made a

compelling argument about the environmental hypocrites willing to preserve the environment as long as it did not affect them.

Once again, hypocrites are not necessarily pathological liars. They have legitimate concerns and are even willing to see there could be valuable solutions. But these solutions cannot disrupt their personal values. The “Not in My Backyard” policy is in full effect.

Even in religion hypocrites exist. The Catholic church spent years covering up for pedophile priests while on the world stage denouncing human rights abuses. Ministers counsel parishioners, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the situations and beginning affairs. While in the pulpit on Sunday they launch sermons urging parishioners to respect others. Suicide bombers have walked into crowded plazas and in the name of Allah blown up innocents as infidels. How did these ordinary people come to the ability to judge others as infidels? Did these people truly believe they could see, as God does, another’s soul?

A case could be made of human beings making mistakes. The hypocrisy of these examples is evidence that people see in others appalling behavior and speak out against it, yet live it themselves.

Hypocrites come in small doses as well. Not all hypocritical acts are so glaringly obvious. Linville writes a memorable passage of the greeter in his church shaking hands with all of the parishioners and their hands mysteriously winding up in his (the greeter’s) sweaty armpit (Christianity Today, sec 4). This man’s fetish could be fully satisfied by placing himself in a position where he reached out in a recognized, accepted display and

achieve his purpose, with most parishioners none the wiser. What is the hypocrisy in this act? The appearance of serving the church in a benevolent manner while taking advantage of a prime opportunity to further his disgusting need.

Hypocrites, however they have arrived at their station, either in grandiose gestures for all to see or with barely discernible ways do share Encarta's definition. "*Feigning high principles*" is not necessarily "*extreme, intentional, false impressions*" though an argument could be made liars do need to "*feign high principles.*" In the end, hypocrites attempt to achieve self-fulfillment with no consideration given to contrary appearances that could fail to legitimize their standing to the outside world.

Works Cited

- Dionne, Jr. E.J. "'Rule of Law' That's So '90's." The Washington Post 18 Oct. 2005, pg A25
- Encarta Dictionary. "Hypocrite. Pathological. Liar." 2005. 28 Nov. 2005. <<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/dictionaryhome.aspx>>
- Linville, Mark. "In Praise of the Church Lady." Christianity Today. 15 Nov. 2005. 28 Nov. 2005. <<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/011/28.64html>>
- Richmond, Raymond Lloyd, PhD. "A Guide to Psychology and Its Practice" 1997-2005 28 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.guidetopsychology.com/honesty.htm>>
- Sowell, Thomas. "The Hamptons, Havens for Environmental Hypocrites." Human Events. 26 May 2000 pg 4



Untitled
by *Christina Judd*