



# Hot Papers 2008:

The Best  
Academic Writing  
at Wayne State College



# Hot Papers 2008: The Best Academic Writing at Wayne State College

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Life in the Sandhills  
By Tom Jilg

The Sandhills are a diamond in the rough. Although they cover an area about as large as the state of West Virginia, the Nebraska Sandhills are hardly known even by the people in Nebraska. Born of the dust of the Rocky Mountains, the geography here is an incredible vision. For instance, even though most of the Great Plains has been turned by the plow, eighty-five percent of the Sandhills is still intact natural habitat. They have the world's largest aquifer, a plentiful source of clean water. They also are the home to many rivers, one of which, the Niobrara, provides one of the greatest canoeing experiences in the country. To understand the Sandhills, you must understand the people here and how they relate to the land. So like a meandering Sandhills stream that cuts and ducks through hills and valleys, let me meander through my reflection of life in the Nebraska Sandhills.

To me the Sandhills are home. They're where people take life one day at a time instead of stoplight to stoplight. In the cities you have to be moving all the time; you don't get much of a chance to slow down. If you're moving all the time in the Sandhills, you really miss out on one of the most beautiful places on the face of the earth. You can't experience the Sandhills in a few minutes of driving through.

People here are more comfortable with who they are, I would say. They aren't quick talkers or loud talkers, as far as that goes, but they are deep thinkers. They listen while someone talks, and they give the best response they can. You can't live there for a few years just to say that you've lived there. You don't live in the Sandhills; the place lives in you.

Not everyone can live here. It takes a special breed. Even if you're born and raised here, it doesn't necessarily mean that you are a part of the Sandhills. I can say this from first hand

experience; I have two older brothers who, after high school, left the Sandhills for the big city. Even though I've been out of the Sandhills for the last five years, I still know that the place is right there for me, awaiting my return. Just like my mom when I come home from school and she hugs me so tight, I feel the hug of the Sandhills.

Some think of home as a house on a quaint street in a small town or a big city. Nothing wrong with that. Ask me what I think of as home, and I'll tell you: my home is where the grassland meets the sand. My home is where hard work still stands for something. My home is equal to prairies and meadows; my home is where I praise the rain and the sun. My home is where I can drive for miles and miles and go through only two towns of about a hundred people. My home is above the flat lands and yet below the hills. Do you want to know where my home is? My home is in the heart of the country and in the heart of every good ole' country boy. My home is on the Great Plains; my home is in the Sandhills.

When I think of the Sandhills of Nebraska, I don't have to go far back into my memory to recall what it's like to live here. I know what it's like to stand on top of a hill and be able to see for miles. I know what it's like to gaze at bright blue skies, to listen to the song of sandhills and the blowing of wind, to feel the sun upon my skin. I get goosebumps every time I think of home.

I'm one of the luckiest people in the world. I know what hard work is, and I know what it's like to reap the fruits of my labor. Where I live, the sun shines and clouds bring rain; cattle smell like work to me. I know solitude. Most people think that quiet is when they stop flapping their traps for five seconds. Silence is one of the truest forms of heaven, I think, that people take for granted without ever experiencing. Living in the Sandhills does make people speak softer; people here know that when they speak, they often drown out the other wondrous sounds going on around them. The Sandhills make us more aware of the life around us and help us to respect it more.

My dad was away from our family's ranch working road construction for two years after he graduated from Western

Nebraska Technical School. When he moved back to the ranch in 1978, he told me that he would go months at a time without having to go to town, a thirty mile drive. He would go there, pick up some groceries, come home and be just fine. My father still rises with the sun and doesn't quit working until the after the sunset.

I look into his eyes and see all the stories he can tell. I love when my girlfriend comes home, and he tells her the stories that he told me when I was a kid. I still get teary-eyed just thinking about when I was seven years old, in the dead of winter, and Dad had to pull a calf. It was way too cold to keep the calf outside, so he brought it into the house, put it in front of the stove, and stayed awake with it all night just to make sure that the calf would live. A person who doesn't live here doesn't know what that's like. I've heard rumors some people think that ranchers just care about the money when that's the farthest care from a rancher's mind; he genuinely cares about the well-being of his cattle.

When I was younger, I remember being mad at my dad for missing some of my sporting events because he had to take care of the cattle or for waking me up at six in the morning to work the day after a game. It was one of these times that my dad woke me up to work cattle that I realized that this is more than just caring about the cattle. My dad was teaching me why he loved this lifestyle. It was a Saturday morning, I was a junior in high school, I had just played a football game the night before in which I tore the muscle on my forearm, and I didn't get home until one in the morning. My dad came into my room and woke me up and asked if I could help brand calves. I couldn't get out of bed. So he helped me get dressed, and we walked out to the corral. My uncle Dennis, my dad's oldest brother and the other one who runs Jilg Ranch Inc., was already waiting for us to get started. We worked all morning and until after five o'clock. The three of us branded over 180 of our calves that day. And when it was done, we all just stood around, looked at the sun going down on Pony Lake, which is in my back yard, the biggest lake in Rock County. While it was a hard day, everything was perfect;

we talked about Friday night's game and the upcoming Huskers game. It wasn't until I looked into my dad's eyes behind his glasses that reflected the scene from the lake, that I saw the love of a man who loves his way of life and where he lives. Dad is fifty-three years old. He's told me that he's never worked a day in his life because work was something that he didn't necessarily want to do but had to. He loves what he does. There aren't many places in this world that can give a man that feeling. I believe that feeling is unique to the Sandhills of the Great Plains.

A common misconception about the Sandhills is that we're all backward people. I was taught not to judge a book by its cover. People work every day from sunup till after sundown, and when they look you in the eye and shake your hand, you know it's the truth. Everybody knows each other; nobody locks their doors. My parents didn't even have locks on the door until they got their new modular house and locks came on the doors. I never locked my car when I went to school. When I go into the gas station, I leave the windows down with the keys in it.

One of the hardest and biggest things that I've noticed: the farther out of the Sandhills you go, the unhappier, or more hurried, people seem to be. When I drive down the highway going home on a weekend, I wave to everyone I meet. If I'm lucky, I might get one person to wave back during the first two hours of the three hour trip. During that last hour, the closer I get to home, more people wave, more people smile; I see more tractors on the road, and more people working in a pasture alongside the road instead of in the fields. More people are willing to stop if I have a problem alongside the road. I've been pulled over on the side of the road changing a tire, and within thirty minutes, three cars will stop to see if I need help. Then we'll get to talking and find out that they know someone that's from where I'm from, and we'll talk for longer than it would have taken to change the tire. I don't know how many wrong numbers I've dialed and still sat there and talked to that person instead of having the phone slammed on me.

What I love about where I'm from, is that...these people are a dying breed. I consider myself to be one of a dying breed.

We had only two TV channels growing up, PBS, and sometimes CBS. But the only time we watched TV was on Saturday mornings for cartoons and the news. For entertainment, we got blankets and sat out on the front porch to watch lightning bugs flying around or the lightning from the storm that was rolling in. Sunset was the prettiest time. No matter where I go, I know that I will never see a prettier sunset than those red ones that reflect off the lake--it's almost as if you can see a little bit of heaven.

When people think of the Sandhills, they usually have two distinct images in their heads: boring land they can fly over on their way to more interesting places, or the romantic mystique, where, if they're lucky, they get to see rolling plains or maybe an Indian. Neither of these two descriptions could be farther from the truth.

The Sandhills, first, are never boring. What could be boring about working with your hands and feeling that you've accomplished something at day's end? Work isn't just nine to five in the Sandhills; work is a way of life that is always changing. In my twenty-two years of life on the Sandhills, I can't think of one thing I did that was repetitive. Some days, especially in the summer when you're sitting on your hot tractor mowing down the hay for the cattle in winter, may seem repetitive at first glance. Once you actually do it, however, you realize that every turn that you make, every single roll of your tractor's tires, every single time your sickle moves between the guards on the mower bar, is different. I can say that every day. I can wake up in the morning and not have a single clue about what's going to happen to me at work that day. I could be out feeding the cows in the corral, and the nicest cow might just not like me that day, and kick me, when the day before I was scratching her back, and she was eating from my hand. I could look outside and see the sun so I don't grab a coat, and then twenty minutes later, it's snowing, so cold the devil would catch a chill.

Nighttime in the Sandhills is also exciting; anything can happen. You hear the coyotes howling, the cattle bawling, and the bullfrogs' deep croaking. Out in the trees, you hear things moving, but you don't know what they are. Could it be a coyote

looking for some dinner, or could it be the family dog sneaking up on you to play a little trick? You don't know for sure, but it makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. And then, silence. So silent that the only noise you hear is your own breathing, and you realize that you've been holding your breath for the last five minutes--or it seems like that. You let out a big sigh, and then wait, for what you're not sure, but something's going to happen. Then BOOM!! Out of nowhere, clouds cover up the dim-lit stars, more and more thunder rolls, and you scurry back to your house just in time. The rain hits, and it hits hard, coming down at what seems like miles a minute. It rains for fifteen minutes, and then, just like that, it's over. The stars come back out, only this time brighter than they were before, sort of comforting you to come back out and explore some more night life in the Sandhills. Walk to the top of a tall hill, on a supposedly flat piece of land, and from here, you can see just like in the day, for miles. The shadows of night tell you where every nook and cranny is, not like in the day time when the sun can be deceiving.

When I was child, probably somewhere around the age of eight or nine, I used to be scared of the dark. My brothers didn't help--they purposely tried to scare me before bedtime. In the late winter, February or March, when it's calving season, my dad would be out with the cattle more than he was at home. My mom used to work nights at the hospital; I had no one to run to when my brothers scared me, so I would go find Dad. To do this I had to go outside into the darkness, where my brothers warned me not to go. I would walk outside and then walk around in a pasture full of cattle that could easily trample me if they wanted to. I would have to look for the slightest hint of my dad's headlights because he would be out in the pickup, checking cattle. Then, once I found him, he would pick me up, and we would continue to check the cattle. On the other hand, if I didn't see his headlights in the pasture, I would look over towards the barn. If the light was on, that meant that Dad was there pulling a calf. I would run as fast as I could over to the barn; I just knew that he needed my help. I would push open the sliding door, which was always falling off the track. Once inside, it was darker, and

I didn't know exactly what was inside or what pens were closed. I would look for the light over by the sink and calf-pulling equipment, which consists of chains, an old bale hook, and a calf puller. I would see my father washing his hands and the chains, getting ready to pull the calf. Most of the time I startled him, but then he would ask for my help handing him the chains or the hook or the puller. After he got the calf out of the cow, he had to lift it up and drop it to make sure that it was breathing, and then he cleaned out its nostrils to make sure it could get air. We sat there watching, waiting for the calf to lift its head or blink an eye. We let the mother go over to her calf, and she sniffed it for a bit, sniffed us, too, to make sure we were not trying to trick her or hurt her and her newborn. Then she licked it and started cleaning it.

At that moment, we knew--and we know now--that everything we ranchers work for has a purpose; everything at that moment is right. This one moment is perfection at its best. I still have goosebumps thinking about it. I wonder if that's what a doctor feels when he delivers a human child. My dad then would light his pipe, wash up and take me back to the house, telling me that if I didn't get right back to bed, my butt would be blue before morning. I knew, though, that he was glad I was there to experience that with him. I knew that every time he put me back to bed, it would be only a matter of hours before Dad would be up again, to check on the newborn calf, and all the others, too.

Nighttime brings a new day, a new beginning every morning, and with the sun shining into my window, I realize that if there were a heaven on earth, this place would be it. God has blessed this place in so many ways a person can't ever count. He has provided life. The Sandhills are a place not dominated by people, but you don't have to have people to have life; everything is alive in the Sandhills: grasses, trees, streams and swamps. If you live there long enough, you come to realize that we are no higher than the lowest creatures, than the smallest grains of sand. Native Americans referred to the earth as Mother, and in the Sandhills that is very true. You can survive a lifetime here and never go hungry or thirsty. However, life is

full of cycles; realize that you must give back. The people of the Sandhills realize this, so they don't tear up the soil. They might overgraze an area, but then they give it time to replenish. The cattle also help to fertilize; that way we don't have to introduce chemicals into the environment. We take care of the cattle by vaccinating and by pulling calves if needed; in turn, the cattle provide us with beef, leather for clothing or shelter, and with money. Yes, money. Would it be possible to live on the Sandhills for a lifetime without money, and just live off the land? Yes, I would say so, and we're doing the best we can.

The stars in the Sandhills have a story all their own. They can tell many stories. The summer stars shine brightly every night, allowing those in the hayfields to get the work done by moonlight. You can get lost in the stars. My brothers and I used to sit on a haystack and just look at the stars for hours. My oldest brother had a telescope, and we would search for planets and watch falling stars, shooting stars, comets, solar eclipses, everything. Most people, even in small towns, cannot get a good, clear view of the beauty of the stars.

I love the fact that where I live, we actually have four seasons. Each brings its own kind of work. While there is always work to do on a ranch in the Sandhills, summertime is the worst time. People think that ranchers can take time off if it's too hot or that after they get done working in the hayfield, ranchers just go home, kick back, and relax. Actually, you could work all day on a ranch and never finish all the work that has to be done. Springtime is also a time of little sleep and a lot of work. This is when calving starts; this is the time of little sleep because you spend most of your time with the cattle making sure that you do not lose a single calf. Most ranchers in the Sandhills think of the springtime as a time for new beginnings; they see their cattle through the hard times of the winter's snow and are just waiting for that last snowstorm to hit before they are really out of the clear.

The hills in the springtime are at their finest. They look like the reverse of a mountain: all white except the top. The reason they look this way is because the hills aren't as tall as

mountains so they're not getting the cold weather all the time; the snow just warms up and then slides down. At a distance, to someone who has never seen mountains, they could look like mountains. You could easily make the mistake. Springtime in the Sandhills is everything giving rebirth. This is the end and beginning of life, all in the matter of a few months. Spring weather scares most people mainly because it can change so rapidly. It can go from rain to snow, from eighty degrees and no wind to twenty below with gusts of wind up to seventy-five miles an hour. This makes people stay home if possible; the ranchers need to be with the cattle and are moving them to sheltered areas and checking up on them almost hourly.

Fall is the most magnificent time in the Sandhills. The trees' leaves change colors from green to the brightest of oranges, reds, and yellows. The trees are not the only thing changing; so is the temperature. Coming from the hot summer into the cool fall really makes it easier. The ranchers here can afford to take some time away from the cattle, not much but more than in the spring. When the leaves fall off the trees, there is no place on earth I would prefer to be than in my own backyard, lying on the ground looking up at the leafless trees and the blue sky and watching the white, cottony clouds roll by, slowly with no care in the world. I think that this is why I love this time of year so much. No matter where I am, all I have to do is lie down in the freshly fallen leaves, look up, and remember that this is the greatest gift of all.

Winter in the Sandhills keeps you on your toes. Because of the rapid changing of the weather, you can wind up in a sticky situation quickly if you're not paying attention. Dad has told me there have been winter snow storms in which he's almost gotten lost when feeding cattle out in the pasture, and he's lived out here his whole life. The blowing snow whitens every direction. The only way he made it home a couple of times was to follow a fence line; then he could figure out where he was.

Winter in the Sandhills can also be a beautiful time; they are really a winter wonderland where people build snowmen and snow angels. The ice on the trees and foot-high snow can produce one of the most appealing sunsets in the entire world.

The white of the snow can really bring out the reds of the cardinals or the blues of the blue jays. I never really noticed how colorful these birds were until a good snow, and one landed in a tree behind our house, truly an amazing sight. I don't know to explain the joy of being pulled ten feet behind a pickup doing twenty-five miles an hour on an old car hood sled over an icy, snowy pasture. As the snow and grass particles fly into your face, you are hanging onto the rope for dear life. You're being flung in wide, sweeping turns, first to the left, and then quick back to the right over an iced-over pond, right into the middle, you on the sled on the pond. The ice starts to crack under your weight and the weight of the sled. You can hear it cracking from deep inside; you close your eyes and pretend you didn't hear anything. Once you open your eyes again, you can actually see the ice cracking around you. Now your fear is starting to show. The driver of the pickup is just sitting behind the wheel, waiting for you to scream for dear life. As the last ice chunk breaks, the pickup speeds away, pulling you right along with it. The jolt of pure joy within--just knowing that you were going to fall through the ice and possibly die--comes from escaping death, I suppose.

As the seasons pass from year to year, I often go to the place of rest of my ancestors. As I stand over my grandfather's headstone, I can hear the wind moaning for me, telling me this is the way things are, this is the way things will always be. My grandfather worked this land from the day he could work until he could work no more, just like his father, his father before him, and just like my father does. I know I won't stop that tradition. Our ranch has been in my family for over 122 years. We in the Sandhills praise the ground for we are fortunate enough to work it and to walk on it. Could there be a better place to be laid to rest than back into this land?

It All Comes Back  
By Andrew Pajeda

“In war there are no unwounded soldiers,” says writer José Narosky. I could try to explain this, but unless you experience war, you will not understand. The book *Love My Rifle More than You* took me back to a time I have been trying to forget. Numerous times throughout the book, the author, Sgt. Kayla Williams, tries to make you understand the toll war can take on a soldier: the physical problems you encounter, the need to stay on alert when you’re about to pass out from exhaustion, stubborn superiors, lazy superiors, and that constant thought in the back of your head that you might have said good-bye to your family for the last time.

“I’m coming back, Mom. I promise.” I said those words at Omaha’s Eppley airfield just days before I was sent overseas. I prayed to God every night and told him I didn’t want to die a liar. He brought me home, but I was not the same person I was when I left. After the homecoming was over, I had to get back to normal. I went through a phase for a while thinking that I did not belong here. I started to feel like Kayla Williams did, like there was unfinished business overseas. I should be back over in Iraq until everybody came home.

It was tough watching the news when I first got home. Tough, seeing my fellow servicemen and women in their desert camouflage uniforms, kicking doors, avoiding improvised explosive devices in the roads, risking their lives for ungrateful people who won’t let petty differences go for the betterment of their country and the future of their children.

The most disappointing thing to me? Seeing how many military personnel we lost on this day. Seeing the death notices in tiny print on the back page of the *Omaha World-Herald*, like these soldiers aren’t important any more. A slap in the face to the families of these men and women who made the ultimate sacri-

A war based on lies and false testimonies to the American people. Some people may think that since I am a soldier I should not criticize the way our country is run. Let me get this point out. The priorities in my life are and will always rank in this order: God, family, country. I believe that this country is the greatest in the world. I also believe that if the country has the right to send me to die, I have the right to express my opinion, no matter what uniform I am wearing.

When I get to the back of the paper and see that a military personnel has died, I think to myself: why wasn't that me? I read the statistics of all the people who have died, and I feel guilty. What makes me so special? Some of these men and women had wives, husbands, and kids who won't ever see their mom or dad again. I had none of these! This shows me that God must have a plan for me. That he expects me to accomplish many things in my life, and I must make the most of it.

During my deployment, my mom sent me a prayer card that I read every time I felt like I wasn't going to make it. This is what it said: "Lord, help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that You and I together can't handle." This gift from my mom was worth more than any number of care packages or letters I got while I was overseas. The Lord made me go through the toughest challenge in my life. This card assured me that with him always with me, that promise to Mama was going to come true.

While typing this piece, I sometimes had to hold back my emotions. The problem with war is, when you think you are done with it since it's been a while since you were there, then when you encounter war again, your head starts to go back. The feelings you felt while over there creep back into your head. The homesickness, the heat, the exhaustion, and the fear--it all comes back to you. The crack of gunfire over the walls, the explosions that rock your bed and wake you up, the search for your weapon as you head to the bunker, it all comes back.

I had to leave the classroom the other day during the video "Alive Day" because I could not take another wounded soldier's story. I kept thinking to myself, "That could easily be

that this whole war might not even have happened angers me even more. Almost 4,000 dead and nearly 30,000 wounded because of false information and a man who won't swallow his pride and admit his mistakes.

I have been asked my opinion before on this subject and have held back my views because of my military status. I feel like I cannot hold back anymore and must express my feelings. This may sound like a rant, and I'm sorry if this is not what I was supposed to write about, but I wrote this because I was not like this before I left for war. I did not want to go, but I was a believer in what we were doing and was going to serve my country proudly just like my father did. I came back feeling that the United States was giving everything it had and was getting nothing in return.

My point in this essay is that war changes you. No matter where you were or what you were doing, if you got put into a situation where bullets were flying and bombs blasting, your mind will not be the same as it was when you left. Your head will go back over there. You may not think about it for a while, but out of nowhere something will trigger it. It may be when you hear a pop from a firework display or a siren while you're sleeping, and you reach for your rifle that is not there. Plato supposedly said, "Only the dead have seen the end of war." This rings true for all us veterans. Sgt. Kayla Williams's book brought me back to the land of sand, sadly not for the last time.

Shrimp, in Nebraska?  
By Lindsey Hofpar

I shuffled through the thick brown mud at the end of that cool September day; the small crustacean scurried out of sight, into the corner of the largest puddle. I chased it down as I carried the large white bucket, filled with some of his many friends. I reached my gloved hand into the water where I saw the skinny orange antennas, quickly grabbed the mischievous creature, and tossed him into the bucket with the rest.

This may sound like the beginning of a story, but it is only a minuscule part of one of my most memorable family experiences: raising prawns.

The summer before my first year of high school, my dad's brother, my uncle Rob, thrust my family into the prawn-raising business. Rob owns Nebraska Lake Management near Lincoln, and he somehow brewed up the crazy idea of raising prawns in outdoor ponds in Nebraska. It turns out that he was talking with some professors from UNL who were going to try the same thing in some indoor facilities. I guess they needed some guinea pigs for this experiment, and my uncle decided to jump right in and volunteer my entire family.

We definitely received some funny reactions from the people we talked to about our little prawn operation. Some of our close friends started to joke around with the idea and call us "the Gumps," just like in the movie Forrest Gump. Others were completely aghast at the idea. They could not fathom how it was actually possible to raise prawns with our unpredictable climate here in Nebraska. When we started this whole process, I thought it was something cool and unique. I really liked the idea of doing something different.

To begin our prawn-raising adventure, there were many things to do. I remember my dad listing off the copious tasks that had to be done. I was confused as to why we needed to

do so many things, but then I understood after they all actually occurred. The first things we did were dig the two large ponds for the prawns to live in. We had to figure out how we would get the prawns and move them into our ponds. We had to get a new well, specifically for filling and maintaining the water levels of the ponds. We had to do some inquiring about taking care of the crustaceans and just about them in general. We had to figure out who would take care of them, and what we would do if something went wrong, like an oxygen crash. The list seemed to go on ceaselessly! I was almost stressed about it, and I didn't even have that much to do with the start-up of the operation.

After we finally completed all the start-up, we actually bought the prawns. My uncle drove down to Texas and brought back the juvenile prawns, only about an inch long, in massive tanks in the back of his pickup truck. According to MSU Cares.com, the juveniles used to be quite hard to get a hold of, but there are a lot more growers out there, so they are more broadly available, (“Aquaculture: Prawns”). We had to load them into our ponds bucket by bucket, and gradually change the temperature of the water as to not completely distress them. This was essential because temperature shock kills them.

I remember the first year we did this. It was about 8:30 in the evening, and the sun was setting. The water was leaking out of the back of Rob's pickup truck, and the dirt turned into slick mud. There was a slight breeze, and my feet got cold from the mud and water. I remember the distinct smell of the outside, but it's too hard to describe. I remember feeling excited and intrigued that now, the non-native prawns were a part of our small acreage.

The prawns are a cool conversation starter. They are just like shrimp, except they are the freshwater version. In fact, the names “shrimp” and “prawn” are sometimes used interchangeably, according to the definition of “prawn” on Wikipedia. Biologists Louis D'Abramo, and Martin Brunson stated in a web article titled “Biology and Life History of Freshwater Prawns” that prawns also have external shells that they molt or shed when they develop. The prawns are a translucent color, with a blue, green, or even a brown tint to

them. The bodies of the prawns grow from about two inches up to about seven from head to tail. The males generally grow colossal, spiky, blue claws that are extremely slim and long. These claws can get anywhere up to six inches long, and some males have claws that are longer than their actual bodies. I have always been disturbed by the long blue claws, principally when we are trying to put them into buckets during harvest time.

Over the course of the summer, these freshwater crustaceans require a lot of maintenance. For instance, we had to test the oxygen levels every day for the first season we had them, just to make sure there was a sufficient amount of oxygen for them. We had aerators down at the base of the ponds persistently running and pumping oxygen into the ponds to avert oxygen crashes. We also had to feed the prawns twice a day, once in the morning, and once in the evening. Regrettably I was usually the only one home in the summer so I had to wake up tremendously early in the morning instead of sleeping in like I enjoy doing. I remember going outside, jumping on the three-wheeler, opening and closing the fence so I wouldn't let the sheep out, driving out to the ponds about a quarter of a mile away, plunging my hand into the putrid Purina Shrimp Chow, and throwing it out to disperse it around the entire pond. This was not a pleasurable job. The ponds are probably about twenty or thirty yards across. This means that the ponds are pretty large. Trying to throw food all the way into the core of the pond, especially when the wind was blowing, was tricky, particularly when I had just woken up. It's also not amusing because when it's rainy and wet, I'd slip and fall almost instantly, so I always had to change into junky clothes before I went out. I sometimes considered just not feeding the prawns because according to a study by Ami and Sarah Horowitz, one-third of the prawns' diet comes from natural food like bugs anyway (185). Another reason I loathed this feeding job was that I detest snakes, but I'd see them down there nearly every day. It seemed that every time I would spot one, I would scream for at least ten minutes and sprint back to the three-wheeler. Even the frogs jumping out of the tall grass into the water petrified me. I jumped more while I was alone feeding the prawns than I did in my basketball games!

In his article entitled, “Dorm Room Blues,” Adam Voiland writes, “One key to survival is to scope out what to expect before you get there” (65). Unfortunately, it is not so easy in our situation. In fact, I asked my dad, David Hofpar, who was one of the first prawn farmers in Nebraska, what his least favorite part of the whole prawn raising experience was and he said, “I didn’t care for rarely seeing the prawns, because you can’t tell if they are alive or dead.” The only way he could actually check on the prawns was when he put on his huge swimming goggles in the middle of a warm, sunny, summer day and dove into the cool, greenish blue water to search for the small crustaceans. I was always glad that he didn’t make me jump in because those ponds were filled with prawns that have pokey things on the top of their heads. I tried to avoid that because I remembered a bad experience being stabbed by one when we harvested the first year.

Although the process was a laborious one, after a few months of the torture of feeding and checking the prawns, we harvested them. This usually occurred in September when the weather started to change from hot to cold. We had to get the prawns out before the water dropped to a cold temperature because they would die if it was too chilly.

On the day of the harvest, the first thing we did was drain the water from the ponds by pumping it out with an electric pump. All the water was transferred into another pond. After the five feet of water diminished down to about one or two feet, my uncle Rob and my dad toddled through with a large seining net. They dragged it across the bottom and swept in as many prawns as they could. Then they brought it up to the edge where my mom, my aunt Charissa, my sisters, and I were waiting with buckets.

In the poem, “Pterodactyls” Neil Harrison writes of a boy who is scared and after being comforted by his brother, his “breath comes easy/ all at once” (14). I feel that this was what happened when we pulled the large, drenched net out of the water, and it was full of prawns. Our excitement came over us all at once, and after it finally wore off, we’d seize the prawns and transfer them into a cool bucket of unsoiled water to clean them

off. Then we transferred them into another dirt-free bucket of water to wash them some more. After that, we moved them into a giant tub of ice water. After about ten minutes in the freezing ice bath, the prawns would die. I remember reaching into the bottom of the ice water and pulling them out to sort, weigh, and package them. My arms turned bright red, and I felt like had frost bite.

My mom and my aunt were the managers of the next part of the operation. They would take the prawns and put them onto the scale in the garage and package one pound's worth of prawns into each individual bag. They categorized the prawns by small, medium, large, and jumbo sizes. In the article titled "Hofpars Find Market in Aquatic Venture," Julie Liska writes that the average weight of the prawns was between twenty-two and twenty-four grams, and the largest prawn harvested in our first year was between thirty-five and forty grams, (32).

After all of the prawns were processed and packaged, we sold them to people we knew or to people who had called and asked for some of the unsurpassed freshwater prawns in Nebraska. The entire prawn-raising operation only takes about three to four months out of the year, and we get to enjoy great tasting prawns the rest of the time!

Unfortunately, though, this exciting prawn harvest only happened three of the five years we have raised prawns. We have had some appalling turnouts, just like real Nebraska farmers. Our problems include insecticides, salamanders, snapping turtles, and oxygen crashes. In fact, in the Lincoln Journal Star, our local newspaper, Toby Manthey quotes my mom when asked about environmental factors threatening the prawns. She said: "Pray. It's like farming" (C1).

Apparently we didn't pray enough for those couple of years. We ran into such bad luck that we couldn't even salvage any prawns from one of our ponds. We wasted time and money trying to keep the depressingly empty pond alive. So after five years of this prawn-growing, my family in Ulysses decided to give up on raising prawns. We have switched over to raising fish, but my Uncle Rob is still keeping hope alive and grows prawns out at his farm in Valparaiso, Nebraska. He has had more

successful survival rates among his ponds.

I have learned tons of interesting facts from my experience with growing prawns. Perhaps Yusef Komunyakaa summed up my experience with prawns best in his essay, “The Blue Machinery of Summer,” when he wrote, “I know all the tricks of the trade, big and small” (91).

I feel that we do many of the same things that real farmers around Nebraska do, and David Hofpar, prawn grower, said it is similar to regular farming, but also “unique and interesting because we are in the middle of beef country raising prawns.” Overall I am extremely glad that my family got roped into such a crazy scheme, but I’m also bummed that this experience has ended. However, now every time I see the movie Forrest Gump, I can smile and think back on all the enjoyable and not so enjoyable times of my five years as a shrimp farmer in Nebraska.

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The Archetype of Sacrifice: Christ-figures in Film  
By Kelsey Koch

As long as there have been motion pictures, Jesus Christ has been portrayed by film-makers. This trend has continued into the present day. However, more recent “attempts to harmonize the Gospels and offer a literal rendition of the life of Jesus have proven mediocre to some and offensive to others” (McEver). A more popular embodiment of Jesus Christ in film is Christ-figures (McEver). Not all film-makers are Christians; the Christ-figure appears in films made by those of many faiths or those who do not subscribe to any organized religion or faith. The reason for this is that the teachings, death, and sacrifice of Christ are *archetypal*, a term used by psychologist Carl Jung to mean inherited patterns of thought present in humanity’s collective unconscious. Symbols and themes of a sacrificial figure, a Christ-figure, or the Messiah, are repeated throughout history. Thus writers, artists, and film-makers, whether or not they ascribe to the Christian faith, continue to find value in these universal themes.

In order to examine two film-makers’ use of the Christ-figure, this figure first must be defined, differentiated from the person of Jesus Christ, and described in its different incarnations. The next step is to explicate how movie characters meet the criteria for a Christ-figure. Explicated here are a female movie character, Sister Helen Prejean from *Dead Man Walking*, and a not entirely sympathetic male character, Randall McMurphy from the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*.

Kozlovic cites the Christ-figure as a particular favorite of Hollywood (Kritikos). Baugh states that the “cinematic Christ-figure...[is] found in films of every genre” (110). Any perceptive moviegoer can see this to be true if he or she knows what to look for. What is a Christ-figure, and how does one differ from the historical person of Jesus? According to Guðmundsdóttir, “There is no common agreement among scholars about what constitutes

a Christ-figure in film” (28). “Most [scholars] would agree that a Christ-figure...stand[s] independently without an explicit reference to Christ in the film” (Guðmundsdóttir 28). This makes a Christ-figure different from a Jesus-figure, a “representation of Jesus himself” (Kritikos). A Christ-figure “resembles Jesus” and is not referred to using his personal name, but his title of Christ, “the ‘Messiah,’ or the ‘Anointed One;”” Christ figures are “those who are seen to reflect his mission,” not necessarily the details of his life (Kritikos). A Christ-figure is not “Jesus...portrayed directly but is represented symbolically or at times allegorically” (Kritikos). Baugh defines a Christ-figure as “a shadow, a faint glimmer or reflection of him [Jesus]” (112).

Various sources outline criteria for seeing Christ-figures in film, but often the sources try to create a complete list of all Christ’s traits. Guðmundsdóttir, however, does not claim to “present either a perfect or exhaustive definition [of a Christ-figure]” but gives “two basic criteria” for identifying Christ-figures: “a character does not have to be exactly like Christ in all the details,” (although a slight hint is not enough), and a “Christ-figure does have to have a credible allusion to the person of Christ or his message” (29). Baugh describes the four levels “or modalities” for Christ in film: (1) A Christ-figure “merely as a sign,” often used in “overly-simplified films of Christian catechesis [religious instruction] or propaganda,” (2) a Christ-figure “as a myth,” such as a superhero, which is significant because it does not deal with “questions of belief or historical truth,” (3) a Christ-figure as a symbol, a form which “concentrates on the primary significance of Christ for the Christian faith, his role as redeemer, adapted to the problems of this world,” and finally (4) a Christ-figure as the “central figure of a narrative...in all of its parts [the narrative] runs parallel to the Christ-story...[an] extended metaphor or allegory” (110).

It has been established that a Christ-figure alludes to Jesus Christ in some way. What ways have been identified as “credible”? Koxlovic defines a Christ-figure as a character that is similar to Christ in “particular actions” such as symbolic crucifixion, walking on water, or wearing a cross; a film involving a Christ-figure will also usually involve the theme

of redemption, with the Christ-figure responsible for that redemption (Kritikos). Unlike a Jesus-figure, a Christ figure need not be divine because he or she is “a fully human being... [and] may be weak, uncertain, even a sinner” (Baugh 112). Certain “motifs” run through films with Christ-figures, including a “commitment to justice” and a “mission...to free people from...[the] yoke [of injustice]” (Baugh 206). Another motif that can identify a Christ-figure is a “dramatic tension” similar to that “between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities” (207). Established authority is often the antagonist in films with Christ-figures. Prayer is also a motif in Christ-figure films, and like Christ himself, the figure may share “moments of intimacy with God”; this is “one of the most significant, if subtle and delicate dimensions of the filmic Christ figure” (208).

Christ-figures not only show parallels to the life of Jesus Christ, but also may experience a “passion and death” like that of Christ (207). Often this involves shedding of blood (209). Christ-figures sometimes undergo suffering like Christ’s passion in “[t]he via crucis, the representation of the suffering Jesus carrying his cross to Calvary,” in a metaphorical way (209). Metaphorical resurrection is another key occurrence (210). As mentioned earlier, the theme of redemption is often achieved through the Christ-figure, a “sacrificial victim” or “scapegoat” (207).

McEver defines a Christ-figure in more concrete terms than the other scholars; in his words a Christ-figure is “the central character...a non-conformist or unlikely redeemer who transforms lives and ultimately undergoes martyrdom.” The life-changing element of a Christ-figure is also commented on by Baugh, who states, “the protagonists in many Christ-figure films attract a group of followers whom they teach and form and save” (206). These “disciples carry forward the mission once the leader is gone” (206).

Now that the various criteria for Christ-figures have been examined, two films and potential Christ-figures may be scrutinized. The first is the Christ-figure of Sister Helen Prejean, in the film *Dead Man Walking*. Does it matter that she is a

female? According to Guðmundsdóttir, no. “Christ-figures can also differ in terms of age, sex, race, as well as class” (29). It is established that Jesus Christ was born a male, but it is also important to note that he was “never enclosed by the world’s categories” or stereotypical behavior for his gender; his life “displays [traditionally assigned] ‘women’s ways’ of love, sacrifice, and forgiveness” (30).

Sister Helen Prejean in the film *Dead Man Walking* is a Christ-figure. The movie is based on a memoir by the real Helen Prejean, though in reality there were two convicts with whom she worked – for the movie, the film-makers combined the two into one figure, Matthew Poncelet. In the film, Sister Helen receives a letter from a convict on death row, asking for help in the week before his execution. Though not every trait and occurrence related to Jesus can be seen in the film and in Prejean, she matches Jesus Christ’s mission of love, forgiveness, and sacrifice in her passion of spirit. To place her on Baugh’s continuum of Christ-figures, a placement in between figure #3 and figure #4 would be appropriate; her life does not parallel that of Christ in every way. Baugh states that “in...persona and in...activities, [Prejean] represent[s] the full dynamic of the Christ figure” (219). I attribute this placement to the spirit of love and forgiveness embodied by Sister Helen.

Prejean is Caucasian, “a Roman Catholic nun who becomes acquainted with a death-row inmate, Matthew Poncelet, waiting to be executed for a rape and brutal murder of two youngsters” (Guðmundsdóttir 35). She gets to know Poncelet “during the week before his execution” (36). He is very different from her – he is twenty, “white, and raised in deep poverty... [He holds attitudes of] hatred and racism” (36). Prejean works with adult African-American individuals, teaching them to read. Her attitudes are polar opposites to those of Poncelet. The film-maker presents Matthew Poncelet in a way that it is difficult for either Sister Helen or viewers to sympathize with him, including flashbacks from the crime.

Prejean tries to fight for an appeal of execution, but it does not work; at this point, “she agrees to become Matthew’s spiritual advisor and prepare him for his death” (36). It is

peculiar to note at first that Poncelet compares himself to Jesus. Prejean refuses to let him do so, and not knowing the real story in connection with the murders for which he was convicted, says, “Jesus changed the world with love, while you watched those two young people be murdered” (36).

Beyond the overt references to Jesus Christ and the Bible present in the film, there are also metaphorical references. Prejean wears a cross, while Poncelet is executed on a cross-shaped table (Baugh 153). Her work with the death-row inmate also mirrors the work of Christ on earth; she is committed to justice and wants what is right to be done in Matthew’s case. Once the appeal is denied, she wants Matthew to realize his sins, recognize the truth, and ask for forgiveness; she spends an extended amount of time with him in order to guide him to this goal. Repentance is a key part of Jesus’ message (Luk 5.32,24.47 Mar 1.15).

A reflection of Christ’s conflict with the Jewish religious authorities is seen in the film when Prejean experiences conflict with the prison authorities and those who do not agree with what she is doing. The way Prejean is going about counseling the man is different from the view of the prison chaplain, who thinks “it is sufficient to give Matthew the sacrament right before his execution” (Guðmundsdóttir 36).

Like Christ, Prejean is a human being who sacrifices out of love to save someone. She “recognizes...[the] limitations” of her love, but this humility helps her to earn Poncelet’s trust (37). She sacrifices her time by spending it at the death-row of a prison, and in spite of struggles, sees her ultimate goal as the redemption of his soul, at which she feels she is successful. Christ may sometimes be characterized as super-human and divine, but in his human nature, the gospels show him to be multifaceted. Prejean, like Christ, is not “a one-dimensional character...in many ways, she is more complex than Poncelet” (Baugh 151).

An important part of Sister Helen’s life as a nun is prayer, and during the film, she is shown praying various times. An event that is a particular ‘shadow’ of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane occurs when Prejean prays in the ladies’ bathroom, “asking him

[God] to give her strength...so that she can help Poncelet” (155). She is anguished after being faced with the process of Poncelet’s execution and wants to be strong for him (155).

Christ-figures may often sacrifice their lives for the good of others. However, Prejean herself does not die, but Matthew, her “disciple,” does. Guðmundsdóttir does not think this fact interferes in any way with classifying her as a Christ-figure. It is shown that “in order to become an *imitatio Christi* [imitation of Christ] one does not have to repeat Christ’s sacrifice of his life” (Guðmundsdóttir 38). As Christ chose death for sins in the Garden, Prejean also has the “freedom to choose to do what she did,” and this is important in identifying her as a Christ-figure.

According to my reading of the movie, Prejean does not match McEver’s formula for an “unlikely” Christ-figure, disciples and all, though she does “transform lives.” Poncelet’s life itself is transformed before it is taken from him through execution. In opposition to his earlier assertion of his innocence, “by the end [of the film] he admits his guilt and asks the families of the victims to forgive him” (Guðmundsdóttir 36). It is Prejean’s love that has changed his heart. Her love for the convict is “radically Christian,” an unconditional love she feels in spite of his offensive racial beliefs and sexual assertiveness (Baugh 152). Christ, likewise, ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other untouchables, loving them in spite of their sins.

The execution scene is particularly touching and Christ-related. Prejean is allowed to walk with Matthew, while before she had been separated by bars or glass; she is allowed to cross the barriers between them to put her hand on Matthew’s shoulder. As they walk to his execution, she whispers reassuringly to him that “Christ is here” (Guðmundsdóttir 38). As he dies from lethal injection, she is there, present so he can see a “face of love” (37). Physical death has occurred, but metaphorical resurrection is also present soon after Poncelet’s death. The father of one of the victims, a broken man named Delacroix, prays with Prejean; the scene is “suffused by a warm sunny light, and framed by the bright green [the color of new life in nature] leaves of a tree” (Baugh 156).

Christ-figures run the gamut from sympathetic female

characters like Sister Helen Prejean to a not entirely sympathetic male character like Randall McMurphy in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. To place him on Baugh's continuum of Christ-figures, I would place McMurphy closer to #4 than Prejean, as there are more direct parallels between his life and the life of Christ. Baugh classifies McMurphy as an "unlikely, even irreverent" Christ-figure (224). In the events that happen to him, he is sympathetic, but Jack's Nicholson's portrayal of McMurphy highlights his arrogant and defiant personality. Sent from prison, where he was serving a sentence for statutory rape, McMurphy is taken to the mental hospital to undergo evaluation; he has "feigned insanity" at a prison farm so he does not have to work (224). The hospital is a metaphor, according to Baugh, for "contemporary society itself" (224). Nurse Ratched symbolizes the establishment. "The institution hinges on routine and proper procedure while its patients, most of whom are voluntary... accept their reduction to an inanimate existence" (McEver). Baugh identifies the hospital as a "metaphor for repression...total control by violence" and claims it "denies the people living in it freedom, hope and a future" (224).

McMurphy "realizes the inmates are not in fact crazy but rather totally intimidated by the authorities" (224). He challenges authority, especially that of Nurse Ratched, and challenges the way things are done (McEver). He questions an orderly, wanting to know what medication he is being given and why. He tries teaching the patients card games and basketball. He even goes so far as to suggest the schedule be changed so that the patients can watch the World Series. In a particularly Christ-like moment, he takes his "disciples" on a fishing trip (McEver).

Christ came claiming he was "the truth, the way, and the life" (Joh 14.6). In the same way, McMurphy tells "the truth" to his fellow patients, calling it "reality therapy," which is meant to help them become independent from the system (Baugh 224). He changes the patients' lives, trying to convince them that they can live on the outside and that they should leave the institution; however, "they resist due to a lack of faith in their own capabilities to function on the outside" (McEver). This lack of faith is found in the disciples of Christ in numerous parts of the

Gospels. In another similar instance to one in the life of Christ, McMurphy asks the psychiatrist what his file says; Jesus asks his disciples who people are saying he is (Baugh 225, Luke 9.18).

The conflict between the establishment and McMurphy is very strong. Ratched and others see him as a threat, and take it upon themselves to do something about him (McEver). McMurphy is plotted against, and the authorities take their plan into effect as they begin to administer shock therapy to McMurphy and to those of the patients who question hospital procedure due to his influence on them (McEver).

A more direct reference to Christ's passion occurs in the life of McMurphy than in Helen Prejean's life. He suffers and dies, enabling others to live changed lives. The first reference to Christ's passion is a Last Supper-type scene. It is Christmas Eve, a significant date in relation to Christ, the night McMurphy plans to leave; he brings some female friends into the ward and has a forbidden party with his "disciples" (McEver). The plan to leave the hospital does not work because the patients fall asleep (McEver). McEver does not mention this, but in the Garden of Gethsemane the disciples fall asleep three times while keeping watch while Jesus is praying (Mat 26.36-46).

Earlier in the film, before he receives shock therapy, McMurphy asks, "Do I get a crown of thorns?" (Baugh 224) What happens that leads to his death is equally as heartbreaking as Jesus Christ's crucifixion and death. After the failed escape, Billy Bibbit stands up to Nurse Ratched and stops stuttering. A comment about what Billy's mother would think if she knew about Billy sleeping with one of the women causes Billy to regress into his former self-loathing state; he stutters, blaming McMurphy for his problems, and commits suicide (McEver). As Bibbit tells Ratched everything that happened, he is a Judas figure (Baugh 225).

Instead of being crucified, McMurphy is given a frontal lobotomy; "it is fatal for all practical purposes" (McEver). He lives a "living death" after it (Baugh 224). The implications of such a procedure are as horrifying as crucifixion. The "Chief," McMurphy's "beloved disciple," smothers McMurphy to death in his arms, a mercy killing; he then breaks a window and helps

other patients to leave, a symbolic “resurrection” for those living in the institution. They are free from the oppression Ratched and the institution held them in for so long; they are free to live new, real lives.

McMurphy meets more of McEver’s definition in the details than does Prejean. He is a non-conformist who changes a “group of followers” in the hospital from helpless and “sick” to empowered and willing to face their problems. McMurphy, like Christ, does not see the result of his actions; he is a martyr for others. His disciples, however, carry forward with McMurphy’s teachings in their lives.

Christ-figures are not Jesus-figures, but hint at the person and work of Jesus Christ. Someone who sacrifices for others, preaching love and forgiveness, whether or not he or she dies, can be a Christ-figure. Sister Helen Prejean and Randall McMurphy are both Christ-figures in meaningful but different ways. I value them both as “reflections” of Christ, as mentioned by Baugh. Prejean has an effect on Poncelet, but does not sacrifice her life for him. She is certainly a Christ-figure in spite of this fact. Prejean’s mission continues after her work with Poncelet is completed; McMurphy, however, has done all he could before he is incapacitated by the authorities. Like Prejean, continuing on in her mission, literary scholars will continue working on their own mission, to find and explicate Christ-figures in popular culture, for as long as film exists.

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Composition

Professor J.V. Brummels

## It Goes Straight to the Hips

By Emily Lauck

One of the major problems of American society today is the obesity epidemic. “About three of every five Americans are overweight; every one of five is obese” (Pollan 102). We constantly come up with excuses for our major weight problem but we do not often work toward a solution. By looking at all the factors in today’s obesity epidemic, Americans can begin to take steps to solve them. Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, writes about a factor of the epidemic that many Americans do not recognize. This is the overproduction of corn. We may realize that corn is being overproduced, but we don’t understand the effects that overproduction is having on us, the American people.

Lack of exercise is often blamed for our obesity. The truth is that people are not exercising less but are taking in more calories. “Since 1977 an American’s average daily intake of calories has jumped by more than ten percent” (102). This ends up being an extra two hundred calories consumed each day. What is to blame for these extra calories? They come from none other than the farm, and mainly corn. Many things can be done with corn. In the early twentieth century, the majority of excess corn was distilled into whiskey. But today “since the human desire for sweetness surpasses even our desire for intoxication, the cleverest thing to do with a bushel of corn is to refine it into thirty-three pounds of high-fructose corn syrup” (103). We might think that because we are now using this corn syrup, we have decreased the use of other sugars. This isn’t the case. Rather, corn syrup is used along with the other sugars we were previously consuming. This is where the extra calories have come from.

In order to offset the extra calorie intake, one of two things must be done. First, if we are going to consume these extra calories, we will need to increase our activity level and exercise

more. Second, Americans should decrease the number of calories consumed each day. This can be done by decreasing the amount of extra corn that is produced and turned into high-fructose corn syrup. Corn syrup was not introduced into the human diet until 1980, so other options can be used instead.

Many of us use the excuse that obesity is prevalent today because healthy food has become more costly than the less healthy choices. This is true. However, it's important to think about why this is. The price of food goes up when there is a small supply. This is the same for the healthier food choices today. So why is there a small supply of healthy foods? Because we have a large excess of other food, namely corn. Corn today, as it has been for many decades, is overproduced. Since there is this large quantity of extra corn, we come up with ways to use it. In the early twentieth century, there weren't many options for using the excess corn. Today there are hundreds of choices. "They can use it to make everything from chicken nuggets and Big Macs to emulsifiers and nutraceuticals" (103). Food producers spend so much time and energy using up the extra corn, there are fewer people able to put their energy toward producing more healthy food affordable to everyone.

The first step towards more affordable healthy foods is decreasing the large excess of corn. The decrease in corn production will allow food producers to pay attention to healthier food choices. When more healthy food is produced, the price will decrease, and that food will be more available to more people.

While there are many excuses for America's obesity epidemic, the overproduction of corn is a factor in each one. America must reduce this huge excess of corn that goes straight to our hips.

The Inner Pull of the Stones  
Katelynn Wolfe

Mysterious places are found all over the world. What makes them so alluring remains unclear. Also perplexing is what defines a location or structure as mysterious or alluring. I find that Stonehenge is the clear definition of these descriptors. Its setting, its shape, and its sheer size all contribute to its allure. But the truly mysterious thing about Stonehenge is not only the unanswered questions about its existence, but rather, the almost spiritual experience of visiting Stonehenge. What makes this place so wonderful to a person as conservative, black-and-white, right-and-wrong as I am? Perhaps the mysteries that lie within the stones themselves.

I'm not exactly sure when my fascination with Stonehenge first began. Perhaps it was a special on the Discovery channel. Perhaps it was an elementary geography or history lesson. These may have afforded me some basic awareness of Stonehenge, but I honestly believe that I was drawn to the topic through conversations with my mother as she described reading the works of Diana Gabaldon's Outlander series.

As my mother retold the tale of the magical stones and how the heroine of the story mystically transported herself back through time to live a life with a Scottish Highlander, I secretly wondered if it was something that could actually happen. Could the stones hold some magical force that transcend time and space? What exactly were the stones and what mysteries do they possess? These were questions that a person who is considered level-headed would not admit to pondering. I knew I had to go see for myself. I knew that at some point in my life, I would personally investigate the stones to put my questions to the test.

At the age of seventeen, one does not easily scheme ways that entice middle-class parents to jet their daughter to England for a European adventure, regardless of the parents' wishes to make her happy. How fortunate then, that I have a wonderful,

successful, and bachelor uncle who informed me at the beginning of my high school senior year that his graduation gift to me would be a ten-day vacation to any location in the world. I only needed to choose the location before Thanksgiving and let my aunts and him make the arrangements. I also was instructed to tell him what attractions I wanted to visit so he would plan the trip accordingly. It would be an understatement to say that I am a very fortunate young lady.

While I briefly contemplated the rugged outback of Australia with its draw of kangaroos or a safari adventure in Africa where I could meet my beloved lions, I could not ignore the powerful calling of Stonehenge. It lured me like a hummingbird to nectar, and I knew that this was the place I was destined to see.

I made my announcement at Thanksgiving; my uncle and aunts quickly began considering travel dates, accommodations, and attractions that we needed to visit. Mentioned were the expected English locations like the Tower of London, the numerous art museums they would doggedly drag me through, and the famous Harrod's Department Store. I boisterously staked my claim on a day trip to Stonehenge and Bath. The trip to Bath was included as a loving gesture to honor my mother's life-long love of all things Jane Austen. When we visited Bath, my mother knew for sure we would likely run into Colin Firth. My poor mother was feeling the pain of not being invited to accompany the aunts and uncle on my trek through England and Scotland and therefore my suggestion to include an activity she would love would likely win me some serious daughter brownie points.

For the next six months, e-mails between the expedition members were as frequent as were the charges to my uncle's Visa account. Being that I was the only non-transatlantic traveler, the passport fiasco of 2007 became my grandmother's personal mission. My mother was thrilled to receive daily phone inquiries from my grandmother checking on the status of my passport. When the caller ID on our home phone indicated a call from Iowa, we would simply answer the phone with the phrase, "no, not today" and promptly hang up. Much to everyone's relief, my passport arrived with several weeks to spare and was placed

in the all-important family files marked IMPORTANT FAMILY FILES.

The morning after my high-school graduation, my two aunts, my uncle, and I boarded a plane to Edinburgh, Scotland. Twelve hours later, I stepped foot onto foreign soil and began my own European adventure. We spent several days in the Scottish highlands exploring the origins of golf, sought a glimpse of the elusive Loch Ness Monster, and visited castles. Arriving in London we visited the normal tourist sites, shopped and purchased all the English versions of the Harry Potter series, and suffered through agonizing hours of art viewing that are moments of my life that I will never get back.

I saved the best for last with our day trip to Bath and Stonehenge which finally arrived. Knowing that tourists must be part of an organized tour to be allowed next to the stones, we participated in a guided tour. Our first stop was Bath. It smelled like dirty socks and seemed to have a higher than average pigeon population. The Jane Austen house was, sadly, devoid of Mr. Firth, who was only to be found adorning bookmarks. I gladly purchased one as a memento for my mother.

It was difficult to enjoy Bath or the lunch that seemed to take forever. I was anxious and excited to get to Stonehenge, and the bus driver was determined to drive below the speed limit simply to annoy me. We finally arrived and much to my dismay, the tour company forced me to go through a visitor's center. I walked through the exhibits as quickly as I could. The thing that I wanted, no, needed from Stonehenge was not the scientific explanations of the stones. What I needed was the magic of Stonehenge, and that would only be felt by being within the circle of mystery.

Slowly I walked up the winding path that pointed the way to the destination that I had been waiting an agonizing six months to see. As I got to the top of the hill I saw the majestic stones just a few feet away and tried to take in as much as possible. There were butterflies in my stomach and a tinge of light-headed giddiness as the structure came into view. I took that first anticipated step with a baited breath, realizing, "I am finally here." I walked, savoring each and every step

as if it would be my last. The air smelled fresh like a spring morning when dew lightly coats the reborn blades of grass. I did not distinguish any sweet smells from the happy yellow blossoms that dotted the landscape and wondered if the magic of Stonehenge had perhaps voided their aroma. From the corner of my eye, I detected the quick, swooping movement of the petite finch-like birds that made their homes in tiny pockets of eroded stone. Their fluttering wings and high-pitched chirp reminded me of the angry American blue jay I have witnessed viciously dive-bombing my dogs, the bird intent on protecting its home from intruders. I wondered how I would feel if busloads of people invaded my home and felt a pang of remorse for the small animals at the invasion of their realm.

As soon as I got close to one of the stones I felt a shiver go up my spine and goosebumps rise across my body as if some unknown force enveloped me. I was not cold and yet my body reacted to my emotional thrill as it does to a frigid blast of winter air. I moved around the stones quite quickly to come right back to the place that I had begun. I selected a stone that I wanted to examine. I found my stone and started to look at it only to come to the conclusion that all of the nooks and crannies looked like an old man's face that has been worn down while enduring hardships we can only half-imagine. Neil Harrison's poem "Weathering" illuminates similar observations, "In the gentle seasons/ in simple celebration/ some begin recording/ the weathers of their lives" (26).

As I moved through the stones I could feel an unexplained sensation. It was like an ancient ancestor was there to help me interpret the stones and give me a guided tour that only I could enjoy. I closed my eyes and just took a deep breath, sad for a moment that my brother, mom, and dad were not there to share the experience with me. It was the first time in ten days that I felt the twinges of homesickness. I looked around and saw everyone experiencing some sort of feeling to the same magnitude as I was. Not a person was talking; everyone was quiet, serene. The essence of Stonehenge captivated our hearts and souls. Nothing needed to be said. Nothing needed to be done. We simply needed to experience.

After walking around the stones, my aunt Karen and I found a sun-soaked patch of grass. We sat with our faces turned to the stones and simply connected. Perhaps intuitively feeling my pangs of missing my mom, Karen gently stroked my hair and rubbed my shoulders much like my mom does at the end of the day or during quiet times of private family moments. The touch of my aunt's long, elegant fingers on my shoulders soothed my homesickness and longing for my family. A slight breeze suddenly brought my thoughts back to the present. The tour guide then appeared and gently guided us back to the bus and away from this magical place, all of us perhaps, a little closer to our loved ones and a little closer to our own souls. The birds did not mourn our departure.

We seek answers to mysteries. Scientists, anthropologists, historians, mystics, and tourists have all studied Stonehenge for centuries. While they cannot contribute explanations about the human emotional experiences associated with Stonehenge, they can tell us about the tangible aspects of it. Leon E. Stover and Bruce Kraig report that over nine hundred megalithic monuments have been found all over the British Isles (117). Stonehenge, the most popular by far Robin Heath reports, is visited by over one million people a year (1). Stonehenge is not only a stone monument, but also a collection of stone circles surrounded by a series of burial mounds. "About Stonehenge" notes that the monument was created in three phases beginning about 3100 BC. The stones themselves are of bluestone, sarsen, and Welsh sandstone. Christopher Chippindale reports that the circles include 2,675 pieces of bluestone and 2,173 of sarsen (288).

Britannia History reports that the bluestone used for the inner circle came from the Prescelly Mountains some 240 miles from their current location. The sarsen stones were found some twenty miles from the site. While it is likely that the monument was constructed by local indigenous people, one of the most entertaining explanations of the construction lies in a favorite English fable. It has been told that the magician Merlin assisted King Uther in removing the stones from a circle in Ireland. Giants had constructed the circle, known as the giant's ring, with stones from Africa. King Uther wanted a monument to

memorialize the location of the three hundred noblemen who were slain by the “treacherous Saxon leader, Hengest.” This fable was written by Goeffry of Monmouth in his twelfth century History of the Kings of Britain.

As to the purpose of Stonehenge, no one can know for sure. It is strongly suggested, however, that celestial occurrences dictated the placement of the stones, with religious and ceremonial activities taking place within the inner circle. Archeological evidence such as bones, tools, and working interments also implies the possibility of large gatherings, celebrations, and rituals at the location. However, lack of pictorial or written accounts of such activities prevents irrefutable evidence of what took place there. Without such evidence, we can only speculate.

The mysteries of Stonehenge remind me of the mysteries of Cahokia Mounds in Illinois. It too has a very large henge, made of wood that is believed to have been used to celebrate astrological events. Also, surrounding the main structure of Cahokia’s Monk’s Mound are several burial pits. Again, with no written word or pictorial evidence, Cahokia remains a mystery.

Medicine Wheel in the hills of Wyoming is another mysterious spot that again aligns a rock-lined wheel with the heavens. This site also provides a soulful experience for those willing to make the mile-long walk to the top of the mountain. It remains a sacred place for Native Americans who believe their forefathers utilized Medicine Wheel for spiritual activities.

Perhaps the lure of such locations as Stonehenge, Cahokia, and Medicine Wheel is not the fact that we don’t have all the answers, but because we don’t have the answers. In some sense, these locations appeal to our spiritual beings, to our unexplained connection to those who were there before. What were they seeking; what were they telling us? Perhaps they too were seeking a broader understanding of their world. After all, isn’t that why we now build cathedrals, churches, and monuments to our dead, our icons of human existence?

These ancient places appeal to the agnostic in me. They give me hope and support my belief that we are all somehow connected through spirit and soul. Modern-day religions for

me lack the mystical appeal of ancient cultures, and my love of Stonehenge reminds me that what is offered to us now may not be as modern as one may think.

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Al Gore: Environmentalist? Political Celebrity? How  
Ethical Is He in His Approach to Global Warming?  
By Apollonia Grandi

How ethical is Al Gore in his approach to mitigate global warming? Al Gore's name is synonymous with present-day environmentalism. He has invested countless years and undocumented amounts of money into changing public opinion and onglobal warming.

Gore believes, without a doubt, that not only does human-caused global warming exist, but that it is also growing more and more dangerous, at a pace that has now become a planetary emergency.

I have done some research on Al Gore to try to find out how ethical his approach to alleviate global warming really is. I have found that he is a hard-working man, doing many great things including proposing a tax based on energy consumption designed to help the environment, supporting the Kyoto Protocol, raising money and awareness through a "Live Earth" concert, and donating money to environmental organizations. He is also making a great effort to spread awareness of the climate change crisis to the world through speeches, films, and books on the subject. Gore has even won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

But there is evidence that Gore himself has been a bit hypocritical. Records show that the Gore's have been using an excessive amount of energy in their home. There is also proof that he has been letting potentially toxic substances into the water, air, and land from a zinc mine near his home from which he receives royalties. Gore was a primary force behind the "Live Earth" concert that featured high-polluting rock stars and released huge quantities of carbon emissions into the environment.

Throughout this paper, I will convince you that Gore is ethical in his approach to mitigate global warming in a public forum. I will also demonstrate the limits of his ethical approach

in his personal lifestyle which may hamper his effectiveness to diminish global warming. I will begin with facts about his life that led him into politics and, eventually, into environmentalism. Also, I will be explaining how Gore has made an effort to improve the environment as well as spread the word on the climate crisis. Along with this I will present evidence explaining how Gore was hypocritical in regard to his environmental stance.

Albert Arnold Gore, Jr. was born on March 31, 1948 in Washington, D.C. His family was very involved in politics. His father spent thirty-two years in Washington D.C. as a Democratic Congressman and Senator from Tennessee. His mother was an important advisor to her husband. Gore's liberal views were influenced by his parents (Turque).

In 1968 Gore met Professor Roger Revelle while attending Harvard University. It was Revelle who introduced Gore to the idea of global warming (Gore, Truth). Gore graduated from Harvard University in 1969 as an average student. While Gore attended Harvard, his father was having a difficult time getting reelected to the Senate because he opposed the Vietnam War. Gore knew that if he opposed the war, it would only cause more trouble for his father. He enlisted in the U.S. Army and served five months in South Vietnam as a journalist (Turque).

In May of 1970, while stationed in Alabama, Gore married Mary Elizabeth Aitcheson, nicknamed "Tipper." Together, they had four children (Turque).

After being honorably discharged from the Army in 1971, Gore attended Vanderbilt University in Nashville. While there, he worked as a newspaper reporter for the Nashville Tennessean and eventually enrolled at Vanderbilt Law School. During this time, the seat his father once held in the House of Representatives became available. Gore soon dropped out of school and entered the race (Turque).

Al Gore had a political name, but no campaign experience. He adopted moderate and conservative positions that were favored by the voters in his district. Later in his career his positions became more liberal, and his opponents accused

him of flip-flopping to gain political advantage. Gore ended up finishing first in a nine-candidate field and was elected to Congress in 1976, after which he served four terms in the House of Representatives. Eventually, he established a reputation as a hard-working public servant, liberal on economic issues and moderate on foreign policy and military affairs, which helped him to win an election for U.S. Senator from Tennessee. He served in the Senate from 1985-1993 and continued to work on arms control and environmental issues (Turque).

In 1987, Gore, encouraged by his family and friends, decided to run for the Democratic nomination for president. He was thirty-nine at the time and became one of the youngest candidates to seek presidential nomination in U.S. history. Gore won only six states in the South and finished third in the primaries. He eventually dropped out of the race and supported other Democratic nominees (Turque).

During this time, Gore focused his attention on environmental issues and emerging telecommunication technologies. In 1989 he visited the South Pole to study the impact of global warming. He also visited the Amazon Basin in South America to investigate the destruction of the rain forest by commercial interests. Soon, he published Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit which detailed the environmental problems facing the planet. The book became a best seller (Turque).

Less than a year later Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton offered Gore the position of his Vice-Presidential running mate. Clinton and Gore won the election in November of 1992 with forty-three percent of the vote and were in office for eight years. As Vice President in the Clinton administration, Gore was given responsibilities in such areas as the environment. He even proposed a new tax based on energy consumption that was designed to help the environment, but it was not passed by the Senate. However, he did successfully lead an opposition to the Republicans' proposal to weaken environmental laws (Turque). Al Gore also organized countless events to spread public awareness about the climate crisis (Truth 8).

But while Clinton and Gore were in the White House,

their environmental record was flawed. For example, the dumping of dioxins into the oceans and the largest sell-off of publicly owned forests in U.S. history took place under their administration (Hari).

In 1997 Gore helped achieve a breakthrough in Kyoto, Japan. Leaders from many nations jointly drafted a treaty to control global warming pollution (Gore, Truth 8). Gore supported a ‘cap-and-trade’ system, which was a plan to put a cap on the production of greenhouse gases to resolve the climate crisis. According to Deborah Barnes’s article “The Money and Connections Behind Al Gore’s Carbon Crusade,” this plan called for “an immediate freeze on U.S. emissions, a ban on new coal-fired power plants, tough new fuel-economy and energy-efficiency standards, renewable energy mandates, carbon taxes, and mandatory targets and timetables for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.” The emissions mostly consist of carbon dioxide which is a byproduct of fossil fuels. These fossil fuels (i.e. oil, coal, and natural gas) supply the U.S with eighty-five percent of its energy (Barnes 20).

Under the cap-and-trade system “government places a ceiling or cap on private sector emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases. Each sector, industry, or business is allocated a fixed quantity of carbon credits that allows it to emit specific quantities of greenhouse gases” (Barnes). Businesses that emit less greenhouse gasses than they are allocated can sell their excess credits, while businesses that use more than they are allocated would have to buy surplus credits or pay a fine (Barnes).

Radical environmentalists do not like this system because they feel that it allows polluters to continue to pollute by purchasing carbon credits. Also, every country’s government has an incentive to cheat on behalf of its domestic producers (Barnes).

When Gore came back to the U.S., he had a hard time getting support from the U.S Senate (Gore, Truth 8). The United States Senate voted 95 to 0 not to ratify this treaty (Barnes).

In 1999 Al Gore announced his candidacy for president with Joesph I. Lieberman as his vice-presidential running mate

against George Bush. After a long process, the decision was made by the Supreme Court concerning the voting ballots in the state of Florida. Gore lost the 2000 presidential election to George Bush (Gore, Truth 9).

After being defeated in the presidential election, Gore dedicated his time and energy into being an environmental advocate (Gibbs). Gore started showing a slideshow on global warming that he had put together while writing Earth in the Balance. He wanted to enlighten people on the realities of global warming. He warned that “humans are the cause of most of the global warming that is taking place and that unless we take quick action the consequences for our planetary home could become irreversible” (Gore, Truth 9).

For six years, Gore traveled around the world informing anyone who would listen in hopes that they would do something to combat global warming. It was after one of these presentations in 2005 that Laurie David, an environmental activist and movie producer, suggested that Gore make a film about global warming. Gore liked the idea of a movie because he believed this was the way to get his information out to the greatest number of people. The film “An Inconvenient Truth” was released in 2006 along with a book by the same title. Both received exemplary reviews (Gore, Truth 9). Gore says in the introduction of his book, “my hope is that those who read the book and see the film will begin to feel, as I have for a long time, that global warming is not just about science and that it is not just a political issue. It is really a moral issue” (Truth 10). The film won an Academy Award for best documentary in 2007, along with numerous other awards (Gibbs).

Gore and his wife Tipper promised to give one hundred percent of the profits that came from the book and the movie to non-profit organizations that will inform people on things they can do to combat global warming (Gore, Truth 10).

In 2006 Gore established his own non-profit organization called the Alliance for Climate Protection, which is devoted to changing public opinion about the urgency of the climate crisis. This group favors more severe environmental policy regulations on the private sector and wants companies to be forced to

buy carbon credits along with lowering their greenhouse gas emissions. It has been reported that Gore has given this alliance \$250,000 and will donate his share of the profits from “An Inconvenient Truth” to the group (Barnes).

In October 2007, a High Court judge in London, Mr. Justice Burton, ruled that Gore’s documentary was for the most part accurate but that some of the facts are exaggerated. He believes that although this film was based on scientific research and opinion, it is not a scientific film. Instead, it is a political film. Burton agreed that this film can be shown to schoolchildren, but requires teachers to provide notes to balance out Gore’s “one sided” views (Smith).

In October, 2007 Gore, along with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize “for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change” (Gibbs). The Nobel committee called Al Gore “probably the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted” (Gibbs). Gore then pledged to donate his portion of the \$1.5 million in prize money to his non-profit organization, the Alliance for Climate Protection.

In Earth in the Balance, he writes:

This crisis will be resolved only if individuals take responsibility for it. We, as individuals, can do this by educating ourselves and others, by doing our part to minimize our use and waste of resources, by becoming more active politically and demanding change. Each one of us can make a difference. Perhaps more important, we each need to assess our own relationship to the natural world and renew a connection to it. (336)

Ironically, the Tennessee Center for Policy Research revealed that Gore himself used an excessive amount of energy. Public records show that his Nashville mansion uses more than twice the energy in one month that a typical American household uses in an entire year. The average monthly electric bill for this house: \$1,359. Records show also that the energy consumption for Gore’s house actually increased after “An Inconvenient Truth” was released (Barnes).

In March of 2007, Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee, asked Gore to take a “Personal Energy Ethics Pledge” during a global warming hearing. The pledge stated:

As a believer:

- \*That human-caused global warming is a moral, ethical, and spiritual issue affecting our survival;
- \*That home energy is a key component of overall energy use;
- \*That reducing my fossil fuel-based home energy usage will lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions; and
- \*That leaders on moral issues should lead by example; I Pledge to consume no more energy for use in my residence than the average American household by March, 21 2008.”

Gore refused (Dempsey). Yet he goes on to write: “The lakes and rivers sustain us; they flow through the veins of the earth and into our own. But we must take care to let them flow back out as pure as they came, not poison and waste them without thought for the future” (**Balance**).

Al Gore has actually been profiting for years off of a zinc mine near his property that has released millions of pounds of potentially toxic substances into the Caney Fork River and in other areas around his farmstead. This river was actually featured in his film and in the opening and end pages of his book, “An Inconvenient Truth.” The Gore’s own the mineral rights to this zinc mine, which, in the 1980s, was the largest zinc-producing mine in the country. To date he has received approximately \$570,000 in royalty payments. The mine was closed in 2003, and Gore has not decided whether or not to renew his lease since new owners of the mine will start work again later this year. It has been said that Gore has written a letter to the mine owners saying “we would like for you to engage with us in a process to ensure that the mine becomes a global example of environmental practices” (Theobald). In the five years before the mine was closed, nineteen million pounds of toxic substances were released into the air, water, and land. Eight years before the mine was closed, owners of the mine released toxic substances

above allowable levels into waterways. Although the river is a source of drinking water for the area, there have been no reported health problems associated with this particular mining operation (Theobald).

On July 7, 2007, Gore was one of the head forces behind concerts put on to raise money and awareness for global warming. “Live Earth,” consisting of nine concerts on seven continents, featured more than one hundred of the world’s top musicians. This concert did bring awareness, but at what cost? Five of the top performers have annual carbon outputs more than two hundred times the average British citizen’s. Madonna, a featured artist, is one of the worst individual rock star polluters in the world, producing a hundred times more waste per year than the average Briton. Other performers, such as John Legend and Sheryl Crow, performed at the event, but at the time were being paid to promote fuel-guzzling vehicles (Daily Mail).

It was predicted beforehand that this event would produce acres of garbage, a gigantic fuel bill, and thousands of tons of carbon emissions. This concert involved 150 performers jetting around the world to appear at different concerts, some on private jets. It was estimated that the concert’s performers traveled a combined 222,623.63 miles to reach the events. This is around nine times the circumference of the world. At least 74,500 tons of carbon emissions were said to be released with the traveling of both artists and spectators along with energy consumed by the television audiences. It was predicted that 1,025 tons of waste would be produced by concertgoers around the world. The producers of “Live Earth” promised that they would recycle the waste generated at these concerts, but in reality were only be able to recycle one third of the waste produced. The leftover waste went directly into landfills (Daily Mail).

However, some stadiums, like Aussie Stadium in Sydney ran on one hundred percent green energy. The concert ticket included a free public transportation voucher and the bathrooms at the stadium were waterless. The human waste was later composted into fertilizer (Daily Mail).

Gore claimed that the concerts were ‘carbon neutral,’ meaning that the waste produced by this event was offset by the

purchase of carbon credits (planting trees, installing solar panels and donating money to third world countries). The amount of carbon credits needed to make up for the waste generated at the event would have to be somewhere around 3,000. Gore wanted to appear at both the American and Britain concerts on the same day, but decided against it when he realized the gas-guzzling trip would upset people (Daily Mail).

I received the film “An inconvenient Truth” last Christmas from my sister. I had known a few things about climate change, but nothing prepared me for what I would see in that movie. Throughout the entire film I was filled with emotion and guilt. How could we have destroyed our planet this way? I showed the movie to every friend willing to take the time to watch.

Al Gore has spent so much time and effort in trying to convince the world that we must do something about global warming, and we must do something now! This crisis means danger for every living thing on this planet. Even with so much evidence, leaders are not listening. Perhaps the evidence is, in fact, too much of an inconvenient truth.

An environmentalist is “a person concerned about environmental quality, especially with the respect to control the pollution” (Merriam-Webster). Is Al Gore an environmentalist? Of course he is. He has done many things to make the people of our world more aware of the current climate crisis. His books, An Inconvenient Truth and Earth in the Balance, along with his documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” have made many people more aware of the climate crisis and encouraged them to do something about it. Is Gore a political celebrity? He absolutely is. He has used his celebrity status to spread the word on global warming. How ethical is Al Gore on his approach to end global warming? Gore is more ethical than most. He’s taking a stand and actually doing something to help the planet. He’s spending a lot of his own time, energy, and money in an effort to raise the awareness level of the threat that is global warming. He does so from a moralistic standpoint that is as strong as the scientific evidence with which he has been presented. He claims to feel a moral responsibility to present the scientific data.

In his private life, Gore has not had a perfect environmental record. Everyone knows that saying one thing and doing another might not be the best course of action. In relation to global warming and the urgency of the need to respond to it, one can overlook a person's shortcomings, even to the point of his being unethical. The "Live Earth" concert may have contributed to pollution, as has Gore himself. But, this reiterates that all of us are part of the vicious cycle of consumption and pollution. We must find ways to break this cycle.

In my opinion, it would be unethical to deny scientific data as a measure of our impact on climate change. Finger pointing and blame are not going to correct the issue. Awareness and education are the first steps in solving any problem. Gore is trying to be the educator on scientific data that climatologists believe show we are in a warming trend, accelerated by pollution coming from our daily lives. But, as a society, we are still in denial. Many people still believe that global warming is a hoax.

Al Gore isn't a perfect person. He is simply trying to deliver the message of the climate crisis around the world. His flaws are not going to make the crisis any more unbelievable.

Gore has spent years being targeted by critics and non-believers, but continues to send the message that human-caused global warming does exist, and we must do something about it now, to secure a better life for future generations.

Admittedly, Al Gore could do a better job of conservation in his personal life. So could the rest of the world. Therein lies the inherent paradox within the ethics of this issue. Let us not be confused by this dilemma. We must stay focused on the issue at hand, not on the person delivering the data. No one is perfect in terms of caring for the planet. We must all work every day to be less selfish and more attuned to the needs of our environment. Mr. Gore may not be telling us what we want to hear, but pointing out every hypocritical thing that he does will not solve the problem of global warming. We need to spend more time looking at our own shortcomings, and taking personal responsibility for shaping the future of our planet.

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Revelation  
By Margaret Wilson

I have been reading *Silent Spring* for a little over one week now, and I have had quite a hard time getting into the book and appreciating its value. Because of this, when we got the assignment to conduct an interview and write about it, I grumbled a bit. I thought this was going to be probably the most boring interview and, moreover, the most boring paper ever. I could not have been more wrong. After doing some thinking, it dawned on me to interview my dad, and I will explain that in my paper. My point is this: my paper is going to go in a direction that I never thought possible, and it will uncover both truth and consequence.

I chose to interview my dad because I was raised on a farm, and he farmed and planted crops for nearly two decades. He does not farm anymore. The fact that he started in the 1970s, however, is a real advantage to me because I will put a different perspective on the issue of chemical usage and the dangers it poses. My dad started farming in 1976, one year before I was born. He is familiar with DDT, although he did not use it himself since it was banned by the time he started farming. He used thymol and also benzene, which is also banned now, but at that time it was available, and you needed a special license to use it. After receiving this information I looked in *Silent Spring* and found out some information regarding benzene that just blew me away. I believe that I possibly have a personal connection to this book and this chemical called “benzene.”

Chapter 14 in *Silent Spring* discusses the use of benzene as an insecticide and the catastrophic effects it had on the human body. Little was known at the time it was introduced, but after much research and post-mortem examinations of people who had died after being exposed to it, it was revealed that benzene was so toxic that some people actually died within days of exposure.

One particular disease that this chemical was known to cause was aplastic anemia. Aplastic anemia is a depression of the bone marrow that occurs rapidly and, unfortunately, without reason. Usually, the only treatment is to undergo a bone marrow transplant. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, people would die from this disease because there was no cure, and very little was known about bone marrow transplantation. The most important point I am making here is that benzene has been found to be directly linked to aplastic anemia, as well as many other blood disorders.

In early June 1990, my dad was still farming and tending to crops, as well as using benzene as an insecticide. I was twelve years old, and that summer I became very sick. I had flu symptoms that developed into something life-threatening. When I started developing dark purple bruises all over my body and feeling tired all the time, my mom took me to the doctor. After a series of many blood tests and exams, I was found to have aplastic anemia. I was taken to a hospital in Omaha, Nebraska, right away and given numerous blood transfusions to keep me alive. I remember my oncologist telling my parents that if they had waited just a few more days to take me in, I might have died. That is how sick I was. The only reason I lived through this disease was because I had a bone marrow transplant. Had I been a child of the 60s or 70s, I might not have lived. In the 90s, however, more was known about how to treat this disease, though little was known about the cause. They called my case of aplastic anemia “idiopathic,” which simply means “unknown.” The doctors speculated that since I lived on a farm and we drank well water, I might have been exposed to chemicals, but they were not sure which ones. I asked my dad where he had kept the benzene, and he said he had kept all of his chemicals in the garage, adjacent to our house. It is likely that I came in contact with those chemicals and consequently, become ill from this contact. I am only speculating. However, I am convinced that this possibility is very likely.

I have always felt that the use of pesticides and other chemicals on crops is dangerous. After reading about the harmful effects of benzene in *Silent Spring*, I feel so much more convinced and compelled to keep my family as organic

as possible. I am grateful that I am alive today and grateful that these chemicals are banned now in the United States. This really was an eye-opening assignment, and I learned more than I ever imagined I would. The facts that my dad used benzene, and that benzene causes aplastic anemia, are not just a coincidence. I really believe that is what caused my illness.

Siegfried Frederick Singer  
By Megan Hogmire

How ethical is scientist Frederick Singer in his approach to global warming? I am going to explore Singer's views on global warming, climate change, climate models, alternative sources of energy, carbon dioxide, the Kyoto Protocol, and the IPCC. Understanding Singer's views on these controversial topics, I believe, will challenge or solidify our personal opinions and may expand our knowledge on these subjects.

Siegfried Frederick Singer entered this world on September 27, 1924, in Vienna, Austria. He is widely known for his work on energy and environmental issues and his career as an American electrical engineer and physicist. But first, let's begin with what he has done with the past eighty-three years of his life. Singer earned a degree in Electrical Engineering from Ohio State University in 1943 and a PhD in Physics from Princeton University in 1948. In the 1940s and 50s, Singer was involved in designing instruments used in satellites to measure cosmic radiation and ozone. Singer has held many esteemed academic positions throughout his life. From 1953 to 1963, he was director of the Center for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Maryland. In the early 1960s, he served as the special advisor to President Eisenhower on space developments and was the first director of the National Weather Satellite Service. In the late 1960s, Singer was the founding dean at the School of Environmental and Planetary Sciences at the University of Miami. He then became the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water Quality and Research at the United States Department of the Interior. In the early 1970s he became the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy in the United States Environmental Protection Agency. From 1971 to 1994, Singer served as the Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, and in the late 1980s held the

position of Chief Scientist at the United States Department of Transportation.

He is a pioneer in the development of rocket and satellite technology and was the principle investigator of an experimental satellite retrieved by the space shuttle in 1990. He was the first scientist to predict that population growth would increase atmospheric methane – an important greenhouse gas. Singer has even been an important contributor to the manned exploration of Mars. But according to *Wikipedia*, Singer is well known as the President and Founder of the Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), which is an independent research group incorporated in 1992 to advance environment and health policies through sound science. SEPP is a nonprofit, educational organization that disputes the widespread scientific views of climate change, ozone depletion, risks of chemical pollution, secondhand smoke, and atomic power (sepp.org). In 1993, Singer served as a Board Member on the International Center for Scientific Ecology, and in 2002 he was an Advisory Board Member on the American Council on Science and Health. Singer has worked closely with organizations such as the Independent Institute, the American Council on Science and Health, Frontiers of Freedom, the Marshall Institute, and the National Center for Policy Analysis. Singer is also Distinguished Research Professor at George Mason University and Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science at the University of Virginia.

Singer has received numerous awards for his research, including a Special Commendation from the White House for his achievements in artificial earth satellites, a United States Department of Commerce Gold Medal Award for the development and management of the United States weather satellite program, and the first Science Medal from the British Interplanetary Society. He has served on state and federal advisory panels, including five years as vice chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmospheres. He frequently testifies before Congress. He is the author or editor of more than a dozen books, including *Is There an Optimum Level of Population?* (McGraw-Hill, 1971) and *Global Climate Change* (Paragon House, 1989). Singer has also published

more than 400 technical papers in scientific, economic, and public policy journals, as well as numerous editorial essays and articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Times*, *Washington Post*, and other publications, such as *The Independent Institute*.

One of the biggest issues surrounding the environmental debate is climate change. When asked in an interview by *Nova Frontline* if he thought that the threat of climate change is so great that we need to “fundamentally change the way we produce and use energy,” Singer answered that climate change is a “natural phenomenon.” He thinks that the climate is continuously changing, and that since humans have adapted to all kinds of climate changes in the past, it is not a serious threat at this time. When asked if humans were a major cause of climate change, Singer answered that certainly humanity affects climate on a local scale; hence, cities are warmer than the suburbs and surrounding countryside. We as human beings generate heat by producing energy and even just by living. However, we will never go back to living without energy. Singer is unsure if human beings can cause climate change on a global scale. For this, we must rely on data, and in his opinion, the data are indefinite at this point. For example, data by the Independent Institute show that the climate warmed between 1900 and 1940, long before humans used large amounts of energy, and the climate cooled between 1940 and 1975. It then warmed again for approximately five years before cooling slightly since 1979. Researchers show that the surface record continues to go up. But take into consideration that the surface heat is measured with thermometers that are mostly located in or near cities, which will affect the readings.

These climate models that show a warming, a cooling, and a sharp warming now assess the temperature on the land surface. But are these models validated by the observations? According to Singer, the models show that the climate right now should be warming at about one degree Fahrenheit per decade in the middle of the troposphere, that is, just above the surface of the earth. But this is not what the observations show. Until the observations and the models agree, it is very difficult to

believe in the predictive power of the current models. In his testimony before the Senate in 2000, Singer concluded that “[r]egional forecasts from climate models are beyond the state of the art and are even less reliable than those for the global average.” In the near future, we hope to have models that will agree with the actual observations. Singer, however, likes to trust in weather satellites for accurate readings. He points out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) never once mentioned weather satellite observations of the last twenty years. This may be because the satellites show no significant global warming.

What is the difference between using temperatures on the land surface and satellites in the sky? Well, these satellite observations are sometimes more accurate because they give a truer measure of the entire globe. According to Singer’s debate with Trenberth in *Natural Science* (pp. 6), the satellite record is made up of contributions from nine different satellites, and it does not measure surface temperatures but instead measures temperatures through a broad layer of the atmosphere. The surface observations that the IPCC uses do not cover the whole globe. They leave out large chunks of the oceans, which is nearly seventy percent of the globe. Singer also believes that using global average temperatures on which to base the IPCC’s calculations simply is not good enough. Information based on geographic variation, or variation with altitude, or temporal variation will produce much more detailed measurements and serve as more legitimate data.

Singer agrees that global warming is, indeed, happening, but not at the extreme and disastrous rates predicted by certain computer models. According to the interview with *Nova Frontline*, Singer says, “I personally believe that there is some slight warming. But I think the warming will be much less than the current models predict. And I think it will be barely detectable. And it certainly will not be consequential. After all, we get climate changes by a hundred degrees Fahrenheit in some places on the earth. So what difference does a one-degree change make over a hundred years?” Singer believes that the current warming trend is not unusual. Climate is always either warming

or cooling, and ice is either melting or accumulating. In the *Wall Street Journal*, Singer claims, “The human contribution to global warming appears to be quite small and natural climate factors are dominant” (pp. 16). In the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Singer stated, “Even if the climate is warming, it does not mean it is due to human activities” (pp. 32).

Another issue is that of the warmer climate causing glaciers to melt and water levels to rise. Singer agrees that if the ocean warms, the water will expand, and the sea level will rise. Mountain glaciers are also melting, contributing water to rivers, and in turn, the rivers will add their water to the oceans’, and this also will produce a rise. But since the earth is now warmer, a larger amount of water will evaporate. This will come down as rain all over the earth; some of it falling down over the Antarctic will turn into ice and accumulate. So we have some sort of a balance between the accumulation of ice, which takes water from the ocean, and the other factors that raise sea level.

Aerosols are another hot topic. According to *Wikipedia*, aerosols refer to airborne liquid droplets or solid particles, also called dust or particulate matter. In other words, “aerosol” refers to a mixture in which solid or liquid or combined solid-liquid particles are suspended in a fluid from an aerosol spray can. Some scientists say that aerosols might counteract some of the enhanced greenhouse effect and do not accumulate in the way that CO<sub>2</sub> does because aerosols have a very short lifetime in the atmosphere. Aerosols typically last only a matter of a week or two before they rain out or fall out, but carbon dioxide has a lifetime measured in decades, sometimes remaining over a hundred years. However, are the aerosol effects hiding the effects of carbon dioxide now? Since aerosols are mostly emitted in the northern hemisphere, where industrial activities thrive, we would expect the northern hemisphere to be warming less quickly than the southern hemisphere. But Singer has evidence that both the surface data and satellite data show that in the last twenty years the northern hemisphere has warmed more quickly than the southern hemisphere, contradicting the idea that aerosols make an important difference. Scientists who staunchly support climate models find this quite embarrassing because they have been

using the aerosol as an excuse to explain why the models do not agree with observations.

Carbon dioxide is another enormous issue. Although there is an association between carbon dioxide changes and temperature changes, scientists are reluctant to identify which is the cause and which is the effect. Al Gore, on the other hand, has not been so careful. In his “Live Earth” program that correlates with his book, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Gore includes the results of the Antarctic ice core (called the Vostok core), which show changes in temperature and in carbon dioxide (pp. 66). Thus, according to Gore, these carbon dioxide changes caused a temperature increase in the past. In early 1999, there was a paper in *Science* in which scientists reported that they can measure which came first, the temperature change or the carbon dioxide change. The temperature change actually came first, followed by the carbon dioxide change many years later. This means that something other than carbon dioxide changed the temperature. But then as the climate warmed, more carbon dioxide was released from the ocean into the atmosphere.

Singer claims, “I have no doubt that an increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere should lead to some increase in global temperatures” (*Nova Frontline*). The question is – how much of an increase? Carbon dioxide levels have already increased by fifty percent in the past hundred or so years, since the beginning of the industrial era. But how can we be sure that this increase in temperature is from additional carbon dioxide? The climate changes naturally; it warms, then it cools. Singer questions, “How can you distinguish a warming produced by an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> from a warming produced by other causes – say, the sun? These are important issues that need to be settled” (*Nova Frontline*). But say carbon dioxide does increase four or five times. We have geologic evidence that carbon dioxide levels were twenty times as large during the fossil record as in the last six hundred million years, and have been decreasing steadily. The earth has experienced much higher levels of carbon dioxide than we have today, without any obvious ill effects, and life has adapted quite well.

With all this worry about a warmer climate, let’s consider

what problems a colder climate would pose. What if carbon dioxide levels sank too low, even half of what they are today? This almost occurred in the Ice Age, and life was in real trouble. Plants rely on carbon dioxide for food; without it, plants would disappear, and so would animals and human beings. During the Little Ice Age from 1400 to 1800 or so, Europe was really cold. Harvests failed, food was scarce, people starved and there was much disease. The climate was warmer around the year 1100; thus, the Vikings were able to settle Greenland and grow crops. Life was good in Europe with plenty of food.

Al Gore's hype about the hot climate contributing to the forest fires in Florida, the droughts in Texas, the unusually hot summer of 2005, and the warm winters of late is *not* evidence of global warming. Although these conditions were all a cause of alarm in the United States, we have not considered the recent weather in other countries around the world. In the past several years, the temperatures in Europe and Russia have been extremely cold, although this news does not ever make it into the American papers because it might discredit the urgency of global warming and climate change. If we experience a bout of cold weather, the headlines do not shout about a coming Ice Age. But between the years of 1940 and 1975 (i.e. – the bitter winter of 1948 and '49), global temperatures were decreasing, and we experienced several bouts of freezing cold weather. All people could talk about was a coming Ice Age. Interestingly enough, many of those same people are now concerned about an impending global warming catastrophe.

Singer is not a strong supporter of the Kyoto Protocol, which is largely concerned with the increasing levels of carbon dioxide. Many scientists believe that there is a point at which the greenhouse gases will be a major factor in influencing climate change, and the ever-increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will mean trouble in the future. But many other scientists, including Singer, as evidenced in his *Nova Frontline* interview, believe that carbon dioxide levels will decrease due to the so-called decarbonization of our economy, which has been going on for some time and is expected to continue. That is, we will use less and less fossil fuel to produce a unit of GNP.

Fossil fuels are also expected to become more expensive as they become depleted, and therefore, in a very natural way, we will turn to nonfossil fuels to produce energy.

Nuclear energy is a good example of an alternate fuel source because it produces absolutely no carbon dioxide. Although nuclear energy has a bad reputation in the United States, it is used to produce seventy-five percent of the electricity in France. Japan is in the process of building twenty more nuclear reactors in the next ten years, which would increase its electricity capacity by fifty percent, all nuclear. According to Singer's book, *Unstoppable Global Warming*, "Solar and wind are still four to ten times as expensive as fossil and nuclear energy sources. Shifting to 'renewables' would also force us to convert hundreds of forest and wildland acres to windmill farms, solar panel arrays, biofuel crops, and the like" (pp. 14).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) plays a pivotal part in the environmental spectrum of research. Singer has much to say about the IPCC, or the idea of "scientific consensus," as he refers to it in the *Imprimis* publication, "Global Warming: Man-Made or Natural?" One misconception in the IPCC is that supposedly 2,500 IPCC scientists agree that global warming is coming. However, if you count the number of names in the IPCC report, it is fewer than 2,000, and most of the panelists have no scientific qualifications. The fact that they all supposedly agree makes one wonder. The scientists obviously agree with the part they each contributed, but they may not agree with the entire summary. In fact, the summary was written by a separate group of scientists that consisted of only about a dozen members of the governing board who voted on the "consensus statement" in the report. A second reason not to rely on this "scientific consensus" concerns the word I just used: "consensus." Science is not about voting on a majority view or a show of hands, but using the scientific method to draw conclusions based on evidence and challenging theories. Look at Einstein or Galileo, for examples. Also, the general conclusion was that there was "a discernible human influence on global climate." That statement is easy to agree with, but it does not mean that the climate models have been validated and that there

is going to be a major global warming during the next century. However, this is implied by the IPCC.

Since no one is absolutely sure about the fate of our planet and how soon the disastrous effects will take place, the obvious solution is to do something about it now. But we are being asked to buy an insurance policy against a risk that is very small, if it exists at all, and pay a very heavy premium. We are being asked to reduce energy use, not just by a few percent, but according to the Kyoto Protocol, by about thirty-five percent within ten years. That means giving up one-third of all energy use, using one-third less electricity, throwing out one-third of all cars perhaps. It would be a huge blow to our economy and its people, especially those who can least afford it. A horrible yet probable scenario is that the poor in the developed countries will suffer to benefit the rich in the poor, developing countries. And for what? All the Kyoto Protocol would do is to slightly reduce the current rate of increase of carbon dioxide. According to the *Nova Frontline* interview, if the Kyoto Protocol was meticulously observed by all of the countries, it would reduce the calculated temperature by only .05 degrees Centigrade by the year 2050, less than fifty years from now.

Singer's previous government and academic positions make him a more reliable source in my eyes than, perhaps, Al Gore, who is deep into politics. Singer's experience and research in the National Weather Satellite Service, the environmental and planetary sciences, water quality and research, and his time spent as an electrical engineer and physicist speak for his vast background in this area. There has been mention of a conflict of interests because rumor has it that Singer was supposedly receiving money from Exxon, Texaco, Arco, Shell, the American Gas Association, and other oil companies. However, on February 12, 2001, Singer wrote a letter to the Washington Post in which he denied receiving any money from the oil companies in the previous 20 years when he had consulted for the oil industry (*Source Watch Encyclopedia*). Rumors of conspiracy and deceit are common, especially in highly political positions. The Kyoto Protocol is in a precarious position because the governments that have signed and agreed to it also support this organization, which

means that it is in the Kyoto Protocol's best interest to find facts that back up these governments' theories on global warming and the environment. I am not justifying this practice of deceit; I am just showing that we cannot escape it.

Reducing emissions and choosing "greener" ways are becoming a greater concern around the world each day, especially here in the United States. Instead of putting even more money towards a cause that already spends four billion dollars per year, the United States federal government should find other outlets than environmental research and climate studies to help mitigate global warming ("*The Kyoto Protocol: A Post-Mortem.*" pp. 72). I would rather strive toward lessening other disastrous, worldwide problems; for example, targeting societal problems like poverty, disease, illiteracy, lack of sanitation, education, and a shortage of clean water. Some people believe that the world is less adaptable because it is so overpopulated. But Singer believes that adaptability has to do with technology, and I agree that we will soon develop an alternative source for energy and that we will naturally adapt to the change over time. Climate change may be a threat at some point, but I believe nature will take its course and technology will fill in where it is needed to continue our life here on Earth. And if not, Singer is looking ahead by supporting the exploration and experimentation of life on Mars!!

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Cornfused  
By Steph Zahourek

Corn is inexpensive, so inexpensive that numerous uses for it have been created. With all these uses come issues of economical, environmental, and personal damage. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan shows that the problems related to corn in America are significant and growing. Corn should be used in its natural form than rather being heavily processed or force-fed to animals.

Cattle have been enlisted to help consume all the cheap corn. However, "this cheap feed...turns out in so many ways to be not cheap at all" (Pollan 82). "It costs...the public...antibiotic resistance or food poisoning by E. coli," obliges the taxpayers to subsidize the farms, and strains the environment (Pollan 83).

"Calories are calories, and corn is the cheapest, most convenient source of calories on the market," according to *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. However, going the cheap route may not be the answer. In the past, the same idea of "calories are calories" also went for protein. Feeding cattle rendered cow parts seemed reasonable until scientists found that it was causing mad cow disease (Pollan 75). Time is already showing that there are issues with feeding cattle corn, which will be discussed later.

The use of inexpensive corn to feed cattle causes numerous strains on the environment. Rangelands are typically healthier with cattle on them because they spread grass seed, plant it, and even fertilize it. Without cattle on the land, it would turn into a desert. Therefore, it is vital that they graze the land rather than live on a feedlot.

Even farmers directly harm the environment through their poor use of fertilizer. Farmers waste most of the fertilizer they purchase because they put "down extra just to play it safe." They believe it is "a form of yield insurance." Since "farmers persist

in measuring success in bushels per acre,” they will pollute the environment carelessly. The extra nitrogen from the fertilizers “acidifies the rain and contributes to global warming.” Some even “seeps down to the water table” (Pollan 46). Fertilizer runoff can be found in the Gulf of Mexico, “adding its poison to an eight-thousand-square-mile zone so starved of oxygen nothing but algae can live in it” (Pollan 83).

The environment will continue to be damaged until farmers stop measuring success in the amount of corn they can produce. The environment, just like us, needs variety to maintain a healthy balance. Cultivation of the same crop ruins the soil, not only starving it of certain elements, but also eroding it. Environmental issues continue to arise as crop rotations become less and less popular with farmers who want to produce more corn.

The United States Department of Agriculture believes that a healthy variety of foods is beneficial (“Steps to a Healthier You”). However, “we North Americans look like corn chips with legs” (Pollan 23). We are mistaken if we believe we have a varied diet. “There are some 45,000 items in the average American supermarket and more than a quarter of them now contain corn” (Pollan 19). That ends up being 11,250 products.

With obesity described as an “epidemic” by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, it is time to look at our food supply to find the cause. “Industrial agriculture has introduced a vast new stock of biomass to the environment.” “Ecology teaches that whenever an excess of organic matter arises anywhere in nature, creatures large and small inevitably step forward to consume it, sometimes creating whole new food chains in the process” (Pollan 62).

“Chemists have learned to break down and then rearrange [carbohydrate molecules in corn] into hundreds of different organic compounds” (Pollan 86). “Whenever whole foods are processed, ...nutrients...are lost” (Pollan 93). In the process, “a complex food is reduced to simple molecules, mostly sugars” (Pollan 87). High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) “is the most valuable food product refined from corn, accounting for 530 million bushels every year” (Pollan 89). HFCS can be found

in an increasing variety of foods, such as breads, cereals, soft drinks, and condiments.

Studies done by the American Society for Clinical Nutrition found that “the increased use of HFCS in the United States mirrors the rapid increase in obesity” (Bray 537) and “the upward trend in the prevalence of type 2 diabetes” (Ford 774). With type 2 diabetes and obesity comes an onslaught of many other serious diseases and health conditions (“Overweight and Obesity”).

Cows are one animal to look at for the creation of new food chains due to a “flood tide of cheap corn,” says Pollen (39).

Corn-fed American steers consume as much of the mounting pile of surplus corn as they can digest, turning it into meat. Enlisting the cow in this undertaking has required particularly heroic efforts, since the cow is by nature not a corn eater. But Nature abhors a surplus, and the corn must be consumed. (Pollan 62)

Cows are natural herbivores, but about sixty percent or “54,000 kernels” (the biggest portion of America’s corn production) “goes to feeding livestock” (Pollan 66). “All that excess biomass has to go somewhere” (Pollan 67).

“Most of the health problems that afflict feedlot cattle can be traced either directly or indirectly to their diet” (Pollan 77). Due to this unnatural diet, various pharmaceuticals must be used for the cattle to help digest the corn and not become sick. “Most of the antibiotics sold in America end up in animal feed, which is leading directly to the evolution of new antibiotic-resistant superbugs” (Pollan 78). These “new strains of resistant bacteria that will someday infect us and withstand the drugs we depend on to treat that infection” are being created because we are force-feeding corn to cattle (Pollan 81).

We are force-feeding them corn because it is cheap. Why is it cheap? Because the government continues to subsidize it. As evidenced by the example above, going the cheaper way is not always the best option. It may seem that less expensive meat is helping society out; however, meat “which used to be a special occasion in most American homes [is] so cheap and abundant that many of us now eat it three times a day” (Pollan 67). This

cheaper meat comes from corn-fed cows and is “less healthy for us since it contains more saturated fat and less omega- 3 fatty acids than the meat of animals fed grass” (Pollan 75). This also contributes to our unhealthy nation.

We have to stop allowing the cheapness of corn to be the driving force behind every decision that is made. Corn should be consumed as is, instead of being heavily processed or force-fed to animals that were never meant to consume it. This only creates numerous health and environmental issues as shown above. We must consider the effects of our actions; we must think about what we are doing. Considering the long-lasting consequences on our own bodies and on the environment, corn is truly not that cheap.

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Peter Norbeck and the Needles Highway: An Early  
Conservationist's Work in Custer State Park

By Jennifer Horan

Peter Norbeck is not only remembered as South Dakota's greatest statesman, but also its greatest conservationist. In an era of progress and continued expansion in the United States, Norbeck saw beyond what was conventional and most convenient, beyond the typical and status quo, beyond time and the human perspective. The state of South Dakota would not be the same today if not for his grand works of selfless devotion to his beloved state. This is perfectly exemplified in his work on the Needles Highway project of 1920-1922. Located in Custer State Park, this avant-garde highway would share with others all the beauty and perfection Norbeck himself found in nature.

Norbeck has been described by his admirers as a "man of common origin but uncommon destiny."<sup>1</sup> He was born to Scandinavian parents in a dug-out cellar in northeastern Clay County, South Dakota. His father, George Norbeck, came to America in 1866 to farm; however, he was a revivalist preacher for the Lutheran Church and spent much of his time preaching. He met and married Karen Larsen, a native Norwegian, in 1869. Born on August 27, 1870, Peter was the eldest of six children. He had a typical childhood for one raised on the Dakota Prairie, though with more responsibility, being the eldest and his father being away many times preaching. In this atmosphere, he began to resent the agrarian lifestyle and crave schooling. Though he was able to attend county school for only three months in the winter, he learned much from his mother and father. Karen read to her children, and George required them to memorize long sections from the Bible. Peter had an appetite for learning and devoured the Norbeck family library, even though his future appeared to be in farming and manual labor.<sup>2</sup>

In a twist of events, the Norbeck family managed to save up \$25 for Peter to attend the University of Dakota in the fall of 1887. He stayed only one term and returned home in the spring to again help with farm work. He followed this pattern again in 1889. His fate turned in 1892 when his father bought a dilapidated well-drilling machine. Across the Midwest at this time, farmers faced water shortages, and many turned to wells as a solution. Peter saw the potential in such an operation, which kindled his early interest. Although he fixed up the old rig, Peter's first attempts were fruitless and frustrating. He returned to school in January 1893, but the demands of farming and the Panic of 1893 tore him for good from his much-loved education soon after.<sup>3</sup>

After meddling with the well drill during the winter of 1894-95, Norbeck began drilling artesian wells, this time with more success. Over the next few years he continued to perfect his designs and continued to drill wells for those in neighboring communities. In 1899, Norbeck sent his designs for a new drill to the American Well Works Company in Aurora, Illinois.<sup>4</sup> The drill cost \$270 and could drill up to 1700 or 1800 feet, surpassing its competitors by 1000 feet.<sup>5</sup> He began a partnership with Oscar Nicholson in 1898, and it flourished, offering cheaper, more efficient wells than anyone else in the area could offer. By 1905, the duo had twenty-five well operations in South Dakota alone. At that time, Norbeck lived in Redfield, South Dakota, and the company's total assets amounted to \$145,888.67, a considerable sum for a farm-raised laborer.<sup>6</sup>

Norbeck began to court Lydia Anderson, a friend of his younger sister, in 1899. They were married on June 7, 1900, by Reverend J.A. Quello of St. John Lutheran Church in Sioux City, Iowa. The couple honeymooned at Niagara Falls by way of Chicago.<sup>7</sup> In 1901, they moved to Redfield, and by 1910 had four children.

In this time of change for Peter Norbeck, conservationism was taking hold in the larger scope of the United States. The conservation movement at the turn of the twentieth century was considered a "scientific movement" by early conservationists.<sup>8</sup> The movement searched for the most economical and efficient

means to manage the natural resources of the United States. The American Forestry Association was one of the earliest organizations formed in 1875. In its early years, lumbermen played an important role within the organization.<sup>9</sup> Also, the government ran the Division of Forestry which was renamed the Forest Service in 1905 and put under the Department of Agriculture, where it remains today.<sup>10</sup>

By far, the greatest asset to the Conservation movement was President Theodore Roosevelt, Peter Norbeck's idol and inspiration. At the beginning of the Roosevelt Administration in 1901, forty-one reserves consisted of 46,419,209 acres of land. By the end of his presidency in 1909, 159 national forests with 150,832,665 acres existed. Much of this land is directly linked to Roosevelt's executive powers; the creation of national monuments and national forests did not require congressional approval.<sup>11</sup>

The conservationists sought the support of the public; however, this was complicated. While upper and middle class individuals enthusiastically offered their support for the protection of the wilderness, those who lived in the wilderness just as enthusiastically opposed the movement.<sup>12</sup> The majority of the support for conservation came from the large corporations. As author Samuel P. Hayes states in his book, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, "Large corporations could more readily afford to undertake conservation practices, ... they alone could provide the efficiency, stability of operations and long-range planning inherent in the conservation idea."<sup>13</sup>

Norbeck set out on his first adventure to explore the little-known territories of the West in 1905. He made the first automobile trip from Ft. Pierre on the Missouri River to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Norbeck and two friends, including business partner Oscar Nicholson, took Norbeck's Cadillac across the unmarked trails of the West.<sup>14</sup> The party took three days to reach the Black Hills, completing eighty-seven miles on their longest day; today this drive would take no more than three hours. To cross rivers, they drove across railroad tracks and on numerous occasions, the party became stuck in rivers and mud holes, and was forced to rely on the locals (cowboys) for help.<sup>15</sup>

This trip had an enormous impact on Norbeck. He became enchanted with the Hills and returned there later with his family in 1916.<sup>16</sup> From 1920 on, the Norbeck family came to the Hills every summer, even building a summer house there in 1927.<sup>17</sup> While in the Black Hills, Norbeck developed an idea to create a game park and preserve in the southern part of the Hills in Custer County. He desired to protect South Dakota's native species, such as the antelope and bison, which were quickly disappearing. Norbeck also made trips in the coming years to other places in the West, even venturing as far as Alaska. All of this traveling in the wild fostered his life-long passion: the beauties of the natural world and the desire to conserve it.<sup>18</sup>

In Redfield, Norbeck's business continued to dominate the field of well-drilling and brought him great wealth; his personal worth in 1908 was far above \$300,000.<sup>19</sup> He also grew more political as time passed. He was a staunch Roosevelt Progressive Republican and defended this positing to his grave. Norbeck was well-known and well-liked wherever he went. Combining his political interest and wide popularity, not surprisingly, he was asked to run for the state senate in 1908 for his home in Spink County. He took naturally to politics, and what he lacked in public speaking skills he made up for in personality, even if Lydia complained affectionately that he was "careless in dress" and "uncouth in his manners."<sup>20</sup> South Dakotans, particularly those in rural areas, overlooked his total worth and simply saw a farm-raised, self-made man and called him "Old Pete."<sup>21</sup> He was elected in 1908 and reelected in 1910 and again in 1912. He was then elected Lieutenant Governor in 1914 and became South Dakota's first native-born governor in 1916. Norbeck was elected to the United States Senate in 1920 and kept this position until his death in 1936.<sup>22</sup>

In political office, Norbeck worked diligently for the state of South Dakota. He remained concerned about the situation in the Black Hills; however, the process to secure the lands for a preserve was complicated and timely. In 1906, negotiations were begun to gather scattered school lands into a large section within the Hills. With Norbeck in the Legislature in 1910, South Dakota relinquished 60,143 acres in the Black Hills area

in exchange for 47,937 acres in Custer County and 12,212 acres in Harding County.<sup>23</sup> After this passed, Norbeck urged Senator John F. Parks to introduce legislation creating a game preserve from the 61,440 acres of the newly acquired lands.<sup>24</sup> The measure passed in 1913 and called for a State Game Preserve in Custer County, with \$8,000.00 allotted for fencing and \$7,000.00 for stocking game.<sup>25</sup>

Norbeck personally supervised the building of a forty-mile long, eight-foot high fence and took the leading role in acquiring game for the Preserve. In 1914, twenty-five elk were brought in from Yellowstone National Park and thirty-six buffalo came from Scotty Phillips' herd near Ft. Pierre. Pronghorn antelope were later introduced in 1916, but there was still much to be done. As The Department of Game and Fish projected, "to accomplish the purpose for which this Preserve was created, will require, in the immediate future, considerable legislation and liberal appropriation."<sup>26</sup> With this in mind during his Governor's address to the 1919 legislature, Norbeck called for the Preserve to be made into a permanent state park and for the appointment of a state park board to oversee and control the park.<sup>27</sup> The legislature passed his suggestion and Custer State Park was created that same year.

Norbeck was dissatisfied that the most scenic parts of the Black Hills, Sylvan Lake, Harney Peak, and the Needles, all to the north of the park, were not included within the park. He sought legislation for the addition of such lands and a bill passed the House of Representatives in 1920 (HR11398) to create a Custer State Park Game Sanctuary; this set aside land with the same intentions for which the original Preserve called.<sup>28</sup> Norbeck was extremely proud of this accomplishment, and in a letter to John Stanley he writes, "This gives South Dakota the largest State Park of any state in the Union, but what is most important, it is one of the scenic wonders of America and second to no region except, possibly, two or three of the large national parks."<sup>29</sup>

Norbeck knew better than anyone at that time how to appreciate the beauty found in the Black Hills, especially the area within his newly acquired lands. These best showed the age of

the Hills themselves. The barren rocks and tall spires that thrust towards the sky like needles have been weathered away by years of erosion and are actually the skeletons of the once much higher hills; only the hard granite core remains today.<sup>30</sup> (See Fig. 1 in Appendix) Perhaps Frank Lloyd Wright best described the land when he said: “The needles is an endless supernatural world more spiritual than Earth, but created out of it.”<sup>31</sup>

Norbeck believed that acquiring these lands was only part of his goal; he wanted to make them accessible for everyone to appreciate, which was not an easy task. The annual report of the Department of Game and Fish stated that “many miles ... on the south, west, and north sides crosses [*sic*] mountain ranges and deep canyons—hence no roads existed or could be built.”<sup>32</sup> This was exactly Norbeck’s intention.

In Norbeck’s search for an engineer to build a road through the area, he was turned down time and time again. Finally, interviewing his fifth engineer, Norbeck found the man he needed for the job, Scovel Johnson. Johnson had worked for the park service in 1908 and later became a state surveyor.<sup>33</sup> Johnson, Norbeck and C.C. Gideon, park superintendent, hiked across the rugged terrain where horses could not go. They plotted a route that took people through the heart of the Needles and the most beautiful places in the Black Hills. As Gideon described to Norbeck’s biographer, “The governor’s trousers were badly torn and his legs were scratched and bleeding. It was not easy to push his 240 pounds over such a difficult route. As he sat on a log breathing heavily, he turned to Johnson and said: ‘Scovel, can you build a road through there,’ to which the engineer replied: ‘If you can furnish me enough dynamite.’”<sup>34</sup>

In Norbeck’s struggle to find an engineer and plot the route through the hills, the significance of such a project can be found. Not until the late 1910s did South Dakota begin receiving federal aid for the construction of roads.<sup>35</sup> To many at the time, building a highway for scenic purposes seemed odd when so many other roads were to be built for practical purposes. Not even fifteen years before, the first automobile trip was made to the Black Hills, without the aid of actual roads. The project was difficult and sometimes seemingly insurmountable; thus, many

engineers at the time would not bother. However, the highway shows Norbeck's foresight in that not even ten years later during the 1920s, prosperity consumed America, and people of all backgrounds were looking for places to take their Sunday drives.

The three men plotted a fourteen-mile highway to appeal to aesthetic purposes. They were united in this purpose and when arguments arose with the "diploma boys,"<sup>36</sup> or other engineers, Norbeck won every time. Norbeck was highly involved in the road's progress over the next two years and was in constant correspondence with Johnson. The elevation varied between 4,750 feet and 6,250 feet at the final point, Sylvan Lake. As Johnson reported to the State Park Board, they had to cross four basins; however, bridges were not economical and a permanent road was to be built in the rocks themselves. He also said he would require "several carloads of explosives,"<sup>37</sup> 150,000 pounds to be exact. The men were paid according to their position. A common laborer made thirty cents per hour; a powderman, who worked with explosives, made forty cents an hour; and a foreman with a small crew made fifty cents an hour.<sup>38</sup>

The heaviest work to be done on the highway, and consequently the most beautiful, was just east of the Sylvan Lake. The work through the center of the granite uplifts was not only the most difficult, but also the most costly. This one and a quarter-mile area includes numerous curves, a maximum grade of nine percent, and also a tunnel section, the most expensive undertaking. The tunnel in this section of the road, the Crevasse Tunnel, is one of two on the entire highway. The other, the Buffalo Tunnel, is located farther south along the route. The Crevasse Tunnel, located under the parting of two rock structures, is 150 feet long by twelve feet high, with a width of nine feet and cost \$12,000 to excavate. Calculating the cost of the other rock work, this one and a quarter mile long section cost an estimated \$60,000.<sup>39</sup> The entire cost of the road upon completion was \$163,935.<sup>40</sup>

Work started slowly as the year 1919 came to a close. The weather was bad and precipitous, making the initial cutting and clearing of the road very difficult. Half the men were laid off.<sup>41</sup> Much of the highway work was performed by "convicts

of the right kind,” as Norbeck described, who were efficient workers.<sup>42</sup> The year 1920 passed with progress but problems, as well. The foremen in charge of different sections along the road did not always meet expectations, and many times supplies fell short of expectations. Johnson wrote to the State Highway Commission demanding better explosives, which typically were WWI surplus material.<sup>43</sup> The crews tried to work around the clock to complete the project in a timely manner, but the lights the state sent were too small for the purpose of drilling, which required the most work and time. Also, crews were forced to wait for a drilling machine to come from the state, and the ones the project used were not the most efficient or productive.<sup>44</sup> Another delay was the harvesting season when men were needed in the fields rather than at the drill.<sup>45</sup>

As 1921 dawned, changes were felt throughout the project. Better foremen worked on the project, and better drills and air compressors were used. In March of that year, the Crevasse tunnel advanced with a slow but steady three and a half feet per day with the air compressor.<sup>46</sup> Sixty men worked in eighteen teams with the two air outfits and an additional steam drill. By October, as many as 165 men worked on the road. In that same month, Scovel Johnson proudly proclaimed to Norbeck that the highway was passable for the first time and congratulated them both on accomplishing “something worthwhile and that few others thought would ever be done.”<sup>47</sup> In a few more months, the so-called “masterpiece of engineering”<sup>48</sup> was passable to the public. When completed, the sign directing people to the artistic creation read “Needless Highway.” When Scovel Johnson saw the error, he effectively used his pocket knife to scrape off the unnecessary *s*, this his last act on the scenic dream he worked so hard to make a reality.<sup>49</sup>

Norbeck continued to foster valuable projects in his federal career. During the summer of 1927, he brought President Calvin Coolidge to his beloved park, and the President stayed for the summer, along with all his staff. He wished to show the President his adored Hills and also his next project, Mount Rushmore, which desperately needed funding. In Washington, Norbeck worked to create Grand Teton National Park, Badlands

National Park, to extend the borders of Yellowstone National Park and to pass the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929. Even with all this accomplishment in Washington, he found time every year to return to the Black Hills and spend the summer in his summer home, Valhalla, built on Needles Highway.

In the early thirties, Norbeck began to suffer from chronic, cancerous mouth sores. He spent time in and out of the hospital in the early parts of the decade, but in 1936 while in his home in Redfield, the cancer overcame him, and he passed away on December 20, 1936. As the state mourned his loss, so did the conservation community. Horace Albright spoke for this community when he stated: “We are not likely to see another leader arise who will have such a broad knowledge of the conservation problems of the country and the courage, power, and the legislative skill in guiding through Congress the laws necessary to provide permanent solutions to these problems.”<sup>50</sup>

Peter Norbeck is notorious for saying, “I would rather be remembered as an artist than as a United States Senator.”<sup>51</sup> His work with the Needles Highway project exemplifies this in his life. He was a statesman, but even more, a man of passions and ideas, a man who strove to make his dreams come true for his great state of South Dakota. Norbeck’s memorial speaks eloquently of his passion for the lands of South Dakota, where he will be remembered forever:

His was the heritage of cold, strong lands: His the pioneer vision which saw far ahead, far beyond. He felt the strong heart throb of his beloved people commanding him to do greatly and be great. In these mountains he found a wilderness for them and labored to preserve its beauty unspoiled for them and for their children’s children. He is still present in every mile of road that he built in the noble pines and towering rocks he loved, and in the hearts of the multitudes who will enjoy them.<sup>52</sup>

## Notes

### (Endnotes)

- 1 Ziemann, Lois, *Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway*. Pamphlet.
- 2 Gilbert Fite, *Peter Norbeck, Prairie Statesman* (Pierre, SD, 2005), 9-12.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 4 Craig Pugsley, "Peter Norbeck the Prairie Statesman," *South Dakota Conservation Digest* (1981): 2.
- 5 Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, 21.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 7 Lydia Norbeck, "Recollections of the Years," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, ed. Suzanne Julin (Pierre, SD, 1989), 21.
- 8 Samuel P. Hayes, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, 1959), 2.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 17,30.
- 10 Dyan Zaslowsky and T.H. Watkins, *These American Lands* (Washington D.C., 1994), 71.
- 11 Hayes, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 47.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 142-143.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 263.
- 14 Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, 25.
- 15 Edward Raventon, *A Piece of Paradise—A Story of Custer State Park* Helena and Billings, MT, 1996), 24.
- 16 Lydia Norbeck, "Recollections of the Years," 40.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 58, 90.
- 18 Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, 25-26.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 20 Lydia Norbeck, "Recollections of the Years," 18.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 22 Pugsley, "Peter Norbeck the Prairie Statesman," 3.
- 23 Linda Sandness, "History of Custer State Park 1855-1941," (computer printout, 2007), 2.
- 24 Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, 75.
- 25 South Dakota Department of Game and Fish, *Fourth Annual Report June 30 1912 to June 30 1913* By H.S. Hedrick, (Pierre, 1913).
- 26 South Dakota Department of Game and Fish, *Fifth Annual Report June 30 1913 to June 30 1914* By George W. Roskie, (Pierre, 1913).
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- Legislative Assembly,” 1919.
- 28 HR Bill 11398, Box 95, Peter Norbeck Manuscript Collection, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD.
- 29 Peter Norbeck to John A. Stanley, March 1921, Peter Norbeck MS Collection.
- 30 Raventon, *A Piece of Paradise*, 16.
- 31 Jessie Y. Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park* (Custer, SD, 1994), 124.
- 32 South Dakota Dept. of Game and Fish, *Fifth Annual Report*, By George W. Roskie.
- 33 Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, 123.
- 34 Fite, *Peter Norbeck*, 76.
- 35 Peter Norbeck, “Message of Governor Peter Norbeck to the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly,” 1917.
- 36 *Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway*. Pamphlet.
- 37 Mrs. Carl H. Sundstrom et al., *Custer County History* (Rapid City, SD, 1977), 151.
- 38 Scovel Johnson to State Highway Commission, November 30 1921, Peter Norbeck MS Collection.
- 39 Above information found in, “Reconnoissance [sic] Estimate of the Cost of a Portion of the Proposed Scenic Highway from Sylvan Lake to Custer”, Peter Norbeck MS Collection.
- 40 Sundstrom, *Pioneers and Custer State Park*, 119.
- 41 Scovel Johnson to Peter Norbeck, November 7 1919, Peter Norbeck MS Collection.
- 42 Peter Norbeck to C.C. Gideon, February 20 1920, *Ibid.*
- 43 Scovel Johnson to State Highway Commission, *Ibid.*
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 Scovel Johnson to Peter Norbeck, September 28 1920, Peter Norbeck MS Collection.
- 46 Scovel Johnson to Peter Norbeck, March 15 1921, *Ibid.*
- 47 Scovel Johnson to Peter Norbeck, October 28 1921, *Ibid.*
- 48 *Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway*. Pamphlet.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 Pugsley, “Peter Norbeck the Prairie Statesman,” 3.
- 52 *Peter Norbeck Memorial*, carving, dedicated September 13, 1952, Iron Mountain, SD.

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Life Eternal  
By Riley Hamilton

Roads, faces, rainbows: these were all seen by Black Elk in his Great Vision, a vision that was a foreshadowing for his people and a beacon of guidance for all people who become part of this world. All we can do with such a vision is to interpret it to the best of our abilities and imaginations. There was symbolism in his Great Vision, but more important than any symbolic object is the message we find in hindsight in Black Elk's life, his stories, and in all of his visions.

Black Elk was placed at the top of the world to look down upon his people, and the paths he saw were no different than any man's. One path was red, showing that the world would be beautiful, that life would be plentiful and happiness abundant. The other road was black. On this road the world revealed its evil. The black road was the road of war, starvation, sadness, and death. All men and all nations are faced with this crossroads. We, as individuals, will walk a road of happiness and beauty. We shall see the splendor of the red road. As we are blessed with the red road, we shall also be cursed with the black road. On it our tears will fall, we will know pain and sorrow; we will be acquainted with sadness. We, as a nation, can be on the red road of beauty and life or the black road of sadness and death. The brothers and sisters of our nation are walking the black road for us now, across the ocean.

In his Great Vision, Black Elk was blessed to see the faces of the future when he entered the sacred teepee of the Six Grandfathers: "As I rode through the door, there were cheering voices from all over the universe, and I saw the Six Grandfathers sitting in a row...and behind them in the cloud were faces thronging without number, of the people yet to be." He saw the faces of the future twice, once in the sacred teepee and another time in a field when they were part of a cloud that floated by. The faces he saw and the cheering he heard came from people Black

Elk had never seen before, nor were they faces he would meet. Black Elk believed his actions were for his nation that existed then, but now, through hindsight, we can see that his vision was intended for more people than he could ever have imagined. The countless faces showed him that his actions would not be only for himself, but for people not yet born, whom he could know nothing about.

Our actions are not so different. Every action we make shapes our future and affects the future of others. Our destinies can be so great that we blaze a trail in life where none has never been laid before. We are leaving footprints for people to follow, even though we will never meet them or even see them in our dream or in the clouds. We can provide chances for the future, ones that have never been given in the past.

In Black Elk's Great Vision, he saw an extraordinary rainbow. It was a flaming rainbow, and below it sat the sacred teepee of the Six Grandfathers, the powers of the universe. It was through this rainbow that Black Elk was truly able to save his people. Flaming Rainbow would become the name for John Neihardt, the man who created the pathway for Black Elk's people to live again. Because Black Elk told his life story with great detail, after so many years remembering every piece of it, we are able to see his people, his life. We can live with his nation through his memory; we can see his people through his story, and his people will live on through his words.

Our lives are not so different. We will grow older and create our own stories, and after we pass away, we can still live in the hearts and memories of our most beloved family and friends. If we are loving and caring, we will be remembered in those hearts we have touched the most. Our story can still be heard after we have left, and our actions can still be seen after we have stopped performing them. If our story is captured as Black Elk's was, then we as a people, a nation, and as individuals may live on. As I have recently lost an uncle, I find some comfort in knowing his story and being able to share it with his family. My uncle lives within the hearts of his wife, his children, and his many grandchildren. He may be never-more, but his memory will carry on forever-more.

As poet John Donne wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself.” We all have vital parts to play in the world. We all rely on each other, as did those in the past, as will those yet to come. It takes all people to spin the world; remembering those who have gone before will help us keep balance in that spin. Black Elk has shown us that all people will see beauty and face danger, and that with the proper beacon we can carry through.

## INTERNATIONAL PAPERS

*During the Fall 2007 semester, Professor Deb Whitt of Wayne State joined with Professor Vivian Wu of Chienkuo Technology University in Taiwan in a collaborative experience to enhance student speaking and writing in inter-cultural settings. American and Taiwanese students shared their perceptions on universal topics. Here are two of these collaborative efforts.*

### **Perception of Authority**

By Jamie Tworek, Pei-Yu Tien,  
Yi-Chun Chen, and Jyh-Jyh Shieh

We would describe authority as the people or ideals we follow, look up to, and trust to make the right decisions. According to Webster's Dictionary, "authority" is "the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle disputes; the right to control, command or determine." It is inclusive to all aspects of life, personal, political, or familial. Authority is apparent to humans from birth to death and is both learned and respected throughout one's life. Though it may be perceived differently among cultures, the first type of authority one encounters in life is that of the family.

The nuclear family usually includes a mother, father, and children. Children's first authority figures are their parents. Children learn authority from a very young age. They must go through trial and error experiences under the authority of their parents in order to learn right from wrong. Authority within families, though, may differ across cultures. According to the Intercultural Communications textbook by James W. Neuliep, in individualistic societies it is typical of family authority to be democratic. An individualistic country such as the United States allows members of the family to have a voice in family decisions and the freedom to feel that their individual opinion is valued. This does not mean that the authority figure will accept their opinion or request. However, when the democratic style is used, the authority figure is often highly respected.

In Taiwan, modern society also may be composed in this manner. Parents may share responsibilities and instruct

their children in the correct direction. Their democratic view encourages parents to be forgiving of the child and is quite opposite of the authoritarian style of most collectivistic cultures. Our textbook states that authoritarian collectivists tend to impose a hierarchical decision-making process. This means that the family member deemed in highest regard makes the decisions. In Taiwan, traditional society relies mainly on this type of both authoritarian and patriarchal systems. This means that the man is seen as a symbol of power, and the woman affiliates. The male figure will sometimes request the suggestions of the female, but the final decision is made by the man. Diplomat Henry Kissinger states that "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac." Pei-Yu Tien believes this view relates to the authoritarian style of the male figure in Taiwan. Traditional males are reassured throughout society that they are the "strongest and wisest." However, even though the man may have power in a collectivist country such as traditional Taiwan, power can also produce negative results, for the man is accountable for how he chooses to utilize this power.

Either way, parental authority in families may often seem unfair to children and filled with a list of impractical rules. Children may become angry with their parents and seem disrespectful. They may even falsely accuse their parents of not loving them because parental regulations are "unfair." Both modern society in the United States and Taiwan agree that parental authority figures must be forgiving as children are learning. The parent is only teaching the important guideline of obedience that the children will need to carry with them as they follow other authority figures in the real world. Upon entering adulthood, our appreciation and respect for authority grows, and we realize the importance of following these figures. As the English cleric and writer Charles Caleb Colton said, "The family is the most basic unit of government. It is the first community to which a person is attached and the first authority where a person learns to live. The family establishes society's most basic values for life."

The Future of the World Depends on Us  
By Yin-Lun Lin, Lin-Ching Sung, Yu-Shan Hsu,  
and Derek Kinnison

The Taiwan students describe life as a challenge to gain as much knowledge as possible, to work hard, and to honor one's commitments. Yin-Lun Lin (Kelly) once wrote the American slogan, "No Pain, No Gain" and Lin-Ching Sung (Betty) included a quip, "My mother told me never to forget to learn." The seriousness with which my Taiwan partners take their academic careers tells me that the future holds many opportunities for my friends. The adage, "Knowledge is Power," does not fall too short of the truth for my Taiwan counterparts. In fact, I admire them for their dedication to excellence, pride of academe, and optimism for a peaceful future by using knowledge as a weapon instead of bullets, bombs, or guns.

My Taiwan friends, especially Yu-Shan Hsu, mention in their emails how peaceful campus life is and describe the beauty all around them. Whether it's the tidy grass and flowers on campus, or the mountains, I can't help but be impressed that they are taking the time to notice the world around them and appreciate what they are given. It's a rare quality to find in people these days, and it speaks volumes about the certain tranquility they are experiencing on campus and how that peaceful experience will influence their decisions in the future. Hopefully, it will pay forward the same opportunities for future generations to experience the same peace at Chieukuo Technology University.

The idea here is that the future is what we make it. By definition the future is a time yet to come. It is unwritten, capricious, yet made tangible by the fact that we wake up every morning to face it. The future is very much dependent on the decisions we make and the actions we perform on individual, societal, and global levels. To some, the future is a time to embrace with optimism. For others, the future represents the "to-hell-in-a-hand-basket" ideology or the perpetuation of what is ugly in our world. Perceptions of the future can create tension as easily as they can create joy. The future can be substantiated by

conscious decisions we make for the improvement and success of our communities locally, nationally, and globally.

Every individual effort adds up to a noticeable whole. My Taiwan friends and I have already taken steps to gain understanding of each other, our cultures, and communities by participating in Intercultural Communication. By going beyond ourselves to reach out and engage new people and cultures, we will have an impact on the world in which we live. We will build a future ever closer to peace.

The Story Behind My Sports: Coping with the Past  
By Russell Wardlow

*Blood and sweat dripping from my dramatically fatigued body, aching from the pain, in the middle of a hexagon-shaped cage, with people outside yelling as if they were watching animals fight--still I have to go on because sometimes it seems that blood, sweat, and aching define my life, and I just can't quit. I zero out the crowd, focus on my opponent, and suddenly, with every ounce of energy left in my body, I attack. Ten seconds or fifteen minutes, win or lose, my frustration and pain are gone. Ironically, I feel free while locked in a cage with another human being to deliver as much punishment to each other as we can. Maybe the feelings of freedom and relief are why I entered the cage in the first place. The euphoria of the ring is impossible to describe; at the end, everything I've gone through is worth it.*

Very few people I've come across could say they've experienced the things I have, even though I'm young. A counselor once told me: "Most people don't encounter as much as you have in their entire lives, but then again, most people that have been in your shoes don't live past the age of twenty." Back then, those words meant nothing to me, but today they mean everything. They keep me going when life throws another obstacle at me.

Growing up in the system as a young foster child, moving from home to home, was possibly the hardest life that anyone who has no control over a situation could ask for. I was deprived of the love from a caring parent, unable to make many friends because of the constant moving and inconsistent home arrangements. Soon, all I came to know was the daily struggle of a difficult life and a feeling of autonomy at a very young age. This eventually led me to life on the streets. When I say "life on the streets," I mean life incorporated with drugs, gangs, and mass

been killed. Not being involved in anything else or having a role model in my life, I began to hang around with the gangs and even to do illegal things for them because at that time they were my only family, and they looked out for me. In a gang I met my best friend, and we did everything together, bad or good.

My best friend and I always played backyard sports, but we never had cable to watch sports. So we had no favorite players, but we'd always talk about being a famous football or baseball player, you know, like most kids do! We were always the first to be picked for neighborhood teams in Omaha; everybody had noticed our talent. Soon those conversations with him ended. We were walking from a store and a car drove by; they thought we were someone else. The next thing I knew, I was grazed across my arm, and my best friend became another one of the people close to me to die. At that point, being so young, I didn't know what to do. I was soon really lonely when he was gone.

Not much later, I was again moved to another foster home. This time I was living in a completely different city called Bellevue, a suburb of Omaha. The home was much better, and the area a lot more beautiful. No graffiti or marked territories, no chaotic nights, and a harder-working, friendly, peaceful stratum. At the time all that seemed like nothing to me because I felt exempt from this society--until I was invited one day to play backyard football. From that day, my life took another route. I was asked to play little league football. I began to play other sports, too: basketball, track, wrestling, boxing, and jujitsu. I have also attempted cage fighting. I wanted to do it all; I found that I was a natural athlete. Athletics kept me busy and was the most fun I'd had in my life.

When playing sports, I experience such a spiritual, emotional, and physical high that I sometimes can't find words to explain it. But I found a poem that expresses my feelings. Poet Neil Harrison, in "In the Beginning," writes: "In that timeless space where the world begins...and you know in that instant for this you were born, the eternal beginning, and two worlds waiting even if it slips...to pierce the illusion of peaceful genesis with the sudden bloom of blood in the shallows." Training is when

I'm at my best, when nothing else matters.

I train differently in one sport than I would in another, which means different highs and lows, even when I'm just working out. I come at every training session with a different mindset or goal needing to be accomplished, but what is similar is the fuel I use to keep going, to keep me from quitting. If life is hard or if I just need to push myself through a workout past my fatigue, I use my past as my fuel, all the pain I've experienced and endured. I take all that anger and put it in a workout to make it through my days. There are times my body and clothes are soaked with sweat, as all the water I take in, I quickly sweat out. The air coming in and out of my lungs is hot and dry, which gives me intense cotton mouth. When my body is tight but my arms are too light to pick anything up again, when my body is telling me it's had enough but my head is full of too much adrenaline, anger, and pride, and I want to push myself to that next level in order to feel accomplishment, I talk to myself. I say, "Come on, Russell, you can do this. Don't quit. You're not a quitter." Often favorite quotes come into my head: "Pain is weakness leaving the body"; "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger"; "Pain is only a state of mind that the strong block out and the weak listen to." When I'm finally done, in intense pain and exhaustion, wanting to drop to my knees as I make my way to the water fountain, a slight grin comes to my face. I feel like a giant. I know I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish, and I made myself stronger mentally and physically. I reap the benefits of that mental glory.

There's a war going on in my head almost every day. When my mental capacity doesn't shut me down but makes me stronger, I'm proud. The greatest power is the mind. Every man and woman suffers from mental and personal battles, but if the battle doesn't beat me, I win and become stronger.

Many athletes are where they are because they've gone through much in their past, and they do what they do to keep them going. They use their past battles as fuel, something positive to keep them close to their goals, instead of the past acting as a great burden that holds them back. The NFL's most recent

rookie of the year, pro-bowl MVP, and most rushing yards in one game record- setter, Adrian Peterson, says he runs angry because football is his calling and his means of coping. Nicknamed “A.D.,” short for all day, he refuses to run out of bounds to avoid a hit. That’s his all-day tough way of honoring those taken from him. The night before Peterson ran at his NFL combine, one of his family members was shot and killed. The next day he ran the fastest forty-yard dash of all the running backs, making him a Top Ten draft pick. This revealed more of his mental toughness than any interview or psychological test could do. People like Adrian Peterson give me the hope and inspiration to keep moving on, knowing that I can reach whatever I choose to pursue in life as long as I put my all into it.

In an essay called “That Which Does Not Kill Me Makes Me Stronger, from *Best American Sports Writing*, Daniel Coyle writes about Jure Robic, the world’s best ultra-endurance athlete. Robic says that “[i]n a race, everything inside me comes out... good, bad, everything. My mind, it begins to do things on its own. I don’t like it, but this is the way I must go to win the race” (107).

In an interview with my aunt Phyllicia Brown, a psychologist, we talked about her recent research on youth involvement with sports. She says:

Statistically youth involvement in sports is generally because they want to improve skills, to have fun, to be with friends and make friends, to succeed at something or to achieve a goal, to have a safe escape from their home lives, and to exercise. Some progress has been made in identifying those factors that lead to a positive, enjoyable experience, and conversely, those that do not. Personal competence, challenge, excitement, and skill development are the major contributors to fun, with such social factors as being part of a team and being with friends being of secondary importance. Simply not allowing a child to participate in any physical activity is a form of depriving a child of social interaction because children make long-term friendships through

playing on sports teams.

In my life before sports, I was deprived of long-term friendships and even of meeting new people. I barely had friends until I started participating in sports. I really hated that; not having people to talk to makes me feel like I'm in prison. It all balanced out, however. I met new friends that I still talk to today, and sports became my getaway from a life I wasn't pleased with. Even though I'd been a natural athlete, I always wanted to be the best, and my competitive spirit made me successful. I was controlled and aware of everything I was doing. That made sports something I loved, rather than something to make me forget my worries. Without my self-control, I would have spent much time on things other than getting better at sports.

Control is really essential. Achieving an optimum level of performance demands an ability to regulate mental arousal levels. I believe that an athlete who recognizes his optimal level for the task--and has the techniques to control or modify arousal to meet this optimum--is clearly enhancing his chance of performing above average limits. Visualization of the task at hand also helped me. I'd often imagine myself succeeding at whatever the task was in order to get my mental status on track. On the football field, each time before I got the ball, I imagined making a touchdown, no matter how far away I was. Crouched down in my stance, zeroing out the crowd noise to listen only to the snap count of the quarterback, for those few seconds I closed my eyes and imagined myself running as hard and as fast as I could to get into the end zone and score for our team. If you believe without a doubt that you can do something, then anything is possible. The greatest strength is mental toughness because at the end of the day, your mindset will make or break you.

Strength in sports or in the weight room has contributed to my strength in life. That strength has gotten me farther than I ever thought I'd be. I'd have the best grades in class because I didn't want anything keeping me away from sports. I'd also keep my behavior issues in check.

Playing sports and cultivating mental toughness get you ready to face life. You will face some of the same hardships in

life that you do in sports; only the scenery is different. If you have a career that demands that you and a team work together on a project, you already have the experience of coping with a team and with leadership. Especially in school, you will be paired with people you might not like, but you'll realize that you are both there to accomplish the same goal, so you will learn to work together. In life you must be accountable, work hard to make a living, and put your mind to what you want to do or be when you grow up. You have to do these same things to succeed in sports.

I have a much better attitude and outlook on life now. If it hadn't been for sports, I'd never have obtained such discipline. I wouldn't be in college today if I hadn't given my all in what I loved. I gave up a lot of free time for sports and training; I even missed out on lots of parties because I wanted to stay focused. In life you must sacrifice. You must give to get is how I see it; you can't get everything. You must take one step at a time. If you try to do too much, you just might start going downhill.

In the past year, I have had two surgeries, and they have kept me away from being as physical as I usually am. I've been clouded with frustration; on top of it all, I haven't been able to work out as usual to get my mind off things. If it weren't for those years of learning to control my anger by channeling it into something constructive rather than detrimental, my grades would have fallen. I'd have been a crabby person. I made it past that stage; I was patient, and I'm back at sports again.

I know sports will not always be the main outlet for me, but they've taught me to work hard and to have discipline. That will help me make it far in life. I wouldn't be who I am or have done what I've done to this day, if it weren't for working hard in sports -- if it weren't for doing what I loved for so long. My past will haunt me no more: I will always be able to cope with it, and because of that, I will be a stronger man.

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