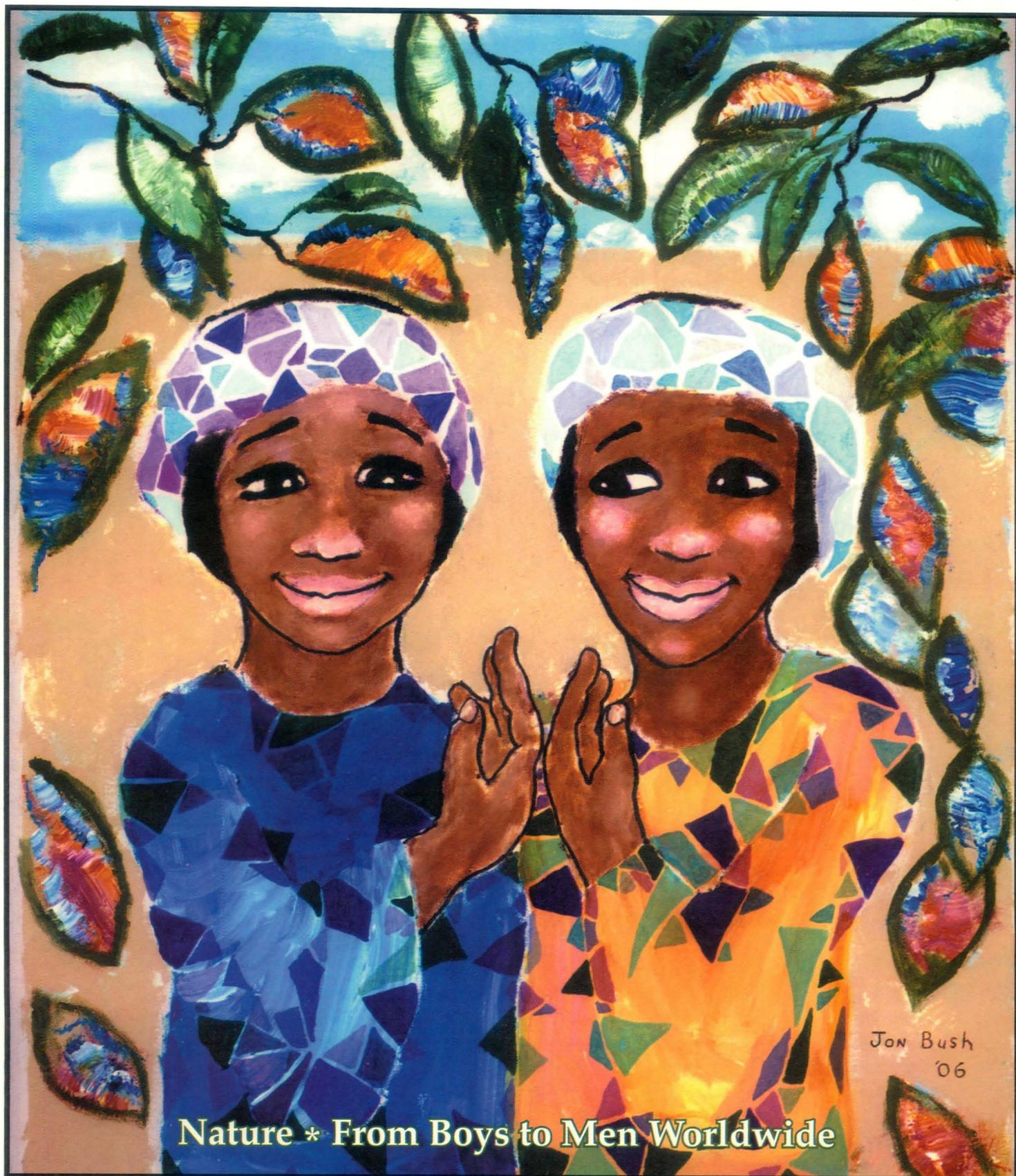


# Skipping Stones

Vol. 19, No. 2

An Award Winning Multicultural Magazine

March-April 2007  
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Nature \* From Boys to Men Worldwide

# Skipping Stones

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## About *Skipping Stones*:

*Skipping Stones* is a non-profit children's magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. *Skipping Stones* expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We seek your suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

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*In the spirit of ecological sensitivity, we choose to print with soy ink on recycled and recyclable Living Tree Paper (90% post consumer recycled content and 10% non-tree fibres).*



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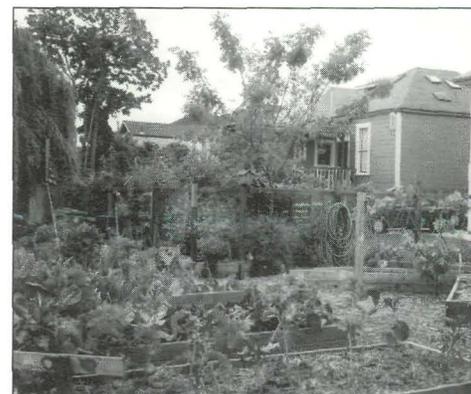


Photo: Michelle Lieberman

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## From the Editor

Did you read about the wild, wet weather in the West this winter? Actually, the South also got its fair share of extreme weather recently, with snow and ice as far south as Texas. And, there were reports of unusual winter warmth on the East Coast, with daytime temperatures 20–25°F warmer than normal for weeks, with flowers blooming in December and January! Severe winter wind storms were also reported in European countries. One “climate expert” erroneously blamed *El Niño* for the storms.

The Sun-driven global weather systems keep the air and water circulating on our planet. We expect storms every now and then, both summer and winter. But Global Warming has the effect of increasing the strength of these storms.

I try to keep my connection to nature (even throughout the winter months) by bicycling to work, walking and hiking, visiting the garden, etc. But, no, I don't belong to the Polar Bear Club!

On one very frosty morning, I went for my walk around daybreak. As I saw a few birds scurrying around and chirping their morning songs, it dawned on me, “How inconsiderate of us to think that the earth was made only for us human beings.” We often forget that nature has space for all species, and we take much more than our fair share of natural resources. As I realized that these tiny birds were managing well in 17°F weather (without the central heat we use in *our* homes), I felt a sense of respect and reverence for Mother Nature.

With our technological advances, we are able to extract resources in huge amounts, from miles-deep underground. And, as we burn oil, coal, natural gas, we add billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other gases that change the delicate balance of natural systems, making them more vulnerable to global changes. Natural systems are so well-balanced that even a minute change (in composition, temperature, etc.) has a huge impact on the rest



## Rethinking ways we do things

of the system. In other words, if the average temperature on the planet increases by 2°F or 5°F, it will have a huge impact on ocean levels, weather patterns, storms, crops, species and global ecosystems.

An effective solution to this impending ecological crisis is complex and needs international cooperation at all levels—personal, corporate and governmental. We, the common citizens living in “rich, industrialized countries” as well as our well-to-do friends in the rest of the world, would need to work jointly.

What can we do? For our part, we need to drastically reduce our energy use—oil, coal, natural gas, wood, petroleum and electricity. In place of cars, let's use public transportation or bicycle/walk whenever possible. During 2006, we saw an increased use of public transport even in our small region of Eugene-Springfield, Oregon.

Heating, air-conditioning and our inefficient industries consume a lot of energy. The efficiency of our cars, appliances, homes, factories, power plants, schools, shopping centers, and public buildings needs to be increased.

Recycling isn't enough; reducing resource use is a must. A typical American family has much more stuff than truly needed. Low-cost, overseas-made goods sold in our shopping malls increase our craving for new things. Old stuff gets tossed out, or it simply gathers dust. If we buy well-made, energy-efficient, repairable products, it will also help save on landfill needs. Buying locally-grown foods is another way to reduce ecological impact.

Did you know that use of renewable energy resources such as solar energy and wind do not contribute to Global Warming? In place of cutting down forests, if we planted millions of acres of trees in every region of the world, we might be able to slow down the build-up of CO<sub>2</sub>. Fortunately, more people are becoming aware of the climate crisis.

We offer you this issue as food for thought!

A.N.T.

# Health Rocks!

**Almost immediately**, a surprisingly wide array of benefits flows our way when we begin eating healthy food. Our skin becomes clearer, sleep improves, our digestion functions well, our ability to concentrate improves, our weight stays stable, we are less inclined to get sick, our mood brightens, and we have more energy. Most importantly, we feel better about ourselves, through and through. Really though, the only way to determine whether these claims for healthier eating hold true for you, is to give it a go.

For all its advantages, however, healthy eating is easier said than done. That's because the vast majority of food made readily available to us as we move through the modern world isn't fundamentally healthy. Most packaged and fast foods haven't been designed to deepen our health. They are deliberately designed to be cheap, quick to prepare and eat and loaded with addictive fats and sugars—to "hook" us so that we (and our wallets) keep coming back for more.

Navigating our way past this jungle of fast, processed foods and the accompanying tidal wave of sophisticated and seductive advertising deliberately targeting younger tastebuds, presents a very great challenge. Eating well requires educating ourselves, resisting temptation, and much willingness and determination to do the right thing.

How then do we make sense of what is healthy and what is to be avoided? A key observation holds true: locally raised food will reliably be the healthiest food you can eat. So, try to eat food raised as close to your home as possible. Where you are able, eat vegetables and fruit that are in season. Where I live, for example, I eat fresh, local strawberries throughout the summer and fresh, local

## Going Local? It's Worth It!

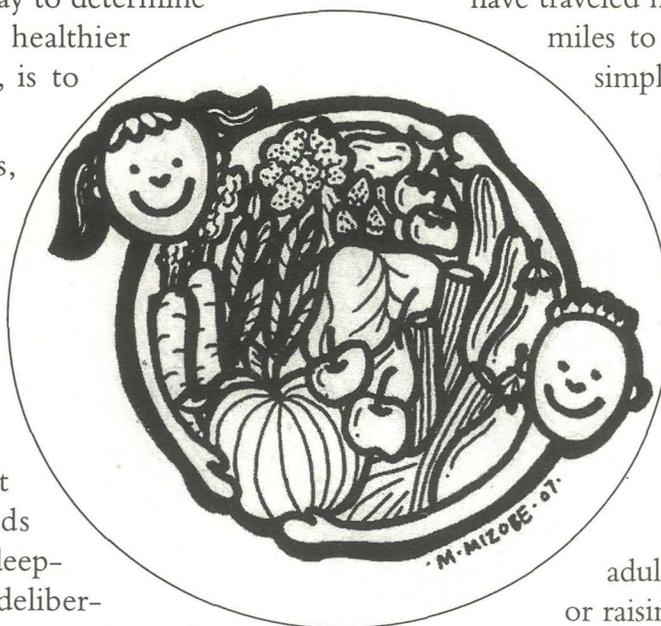
leeks throughout the winter. I extend my seasonal food availability by having a big, winter-hardy veggie garden, and by drying or canning much of my summer harvest of plums, apples, peaches, pears, berries, tomatoes, beans and cucumbers to eat through the rest of the year. As those who eat at my table agree, even "canned" local food tastes and feels better than out-of-season produce that will have traveled hundreds, if not thousands, of miles to your supermarket. There is simply more goodness in it.

Where possible, begin taking greater responsibility for finding out how the food you eat is actually grown. Very often the best way to find local food is to go to your local farmer's market where local farmers sell their produce directly to you.

For most kids and young adults, starting a vegetable garden or raising chickens at home is unrealistic, unless space is available and parents are also committed to the challenge. Fortunately, however, many programs are now emerging to help kids and young adults explore this responsibility within their communities. We are seeing a nationwide explosion in the number of vegetable gardens in schools. In one of my local high schools, the impetus for such a garden was not teachers and parents, but students themselves.

We are also seeing strong growth in farm-to-cafeteria initiatives—efforts to bring fresh, local food into school kitchens. Ask your school what it is doing to bring such food to you and your fellow students. Find out who in your school district is working on this; they will be delighted to hear from an ally and may encourage and support you to play a role in stewarding this burgeoning trend.

—Nick Routledge manages the nursery for the School Garden Project of Lane County in Springfield, Oregon.



# DEAR HANNA

Comments, questions and concerns about sibling relationships come my way frequently. I just experienced such a tender interaction with my older brother this recent Christmas which I am very eager to share. In that interaction, I found out that great joy can result from an act of kindness, and that healing can take place even many decades after an incident.

My older brother became a very busy doctor. Since he always had to tend to many important matters, it was not until we both retired that we took the time to share memories of our childhood.

In one such leisurely conversation, I raised a question to my brother: "Do you remember that when I was seven years old, we moved from an apartment to a house? Our mother told us that the ceiling in both our rooms consisted of brown plywood, about one square yard. Where the squares came together a very narrow strip of wood covered the joints."

"We could each pick the color we wanted for the strips of wood. You chose *green!*"

My brother excitedly jumped into the conversation. "And you quickly grabbed a sheet of paper and a colored pencil, drew a picture of a flower, and said you wanted a flower in the middle of each square. It's amazing, but I can still see the picture of the flower you drew exactly as if it were in front of my eyes right now. I also remember that you said that you wanted the strips in your room *yellow!*"

I added quietly: "Mother said that people who like *yellow* are selfish and jealous. She told me that I should pick *blue.*"

The Christmas following the exchange of this incident, my brother sent me a package. He had made a plywood square with yellow strips at the edges and painted a yellow flower in the middle of the square. A note which was lovingly attached to his present, said "I'm sorry that I got the color I wanted but you got neither the color you wanted, nor the flower in each square. So I am sending them to you now with my love, at Christmas."

Tears came to my eyes as I unpacked the gift. Finally, after all those years had elapsed, my brother, the retired doctor, healed a pain that had lingered in my memory.



Illustration by Shannon Lattin

Send your questions or comments to:  
**Dear Hanna** c/o *Skipping Stones*  
P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403

In Peace,

Hanna

## As Long as We Are Together

## What's On Your Mind?

**Early this morning**, as I lay in bed after spending all night working on the computer, my father phoned me. I was surprised, because it was so early. Nervously he asked, "Your sister tells me that you spent the night in the Internet bar. Is that right?"

I responded sleepily, "Well, yes! But I was not there for fun. I had homework to type and e-mail. It's not busy at night and it's cheaper then."

He replied in a more normal tone, "Well, don't go there at night. If you need it, I'll give you extra money to buy books or whatever, but the Internet bar is dangerous at night. Understand?"

It's hard to avoid going there at night—during the day I have a lot of other things to do—but I promised not to go again at night.

It occurred to me that it had been almost four years since I began to really understand my father.

Soon after I was born, I lived with my grandmother, not my parents. I rarely saw them. At that time, Father was working in the town as a middle school teacher and my mother had gone to help him with housework. I was left with Grandmother when I was just two or three months old. Because I couldn't see them very often, I didn't miss them at all.

The first time I remember meeting Father, when I was six, he came to take me to the town where he worked so that I could attend school. I have a picture in my mind of a tall, overweight man walking down the road, followed by a little girl, thin and humble, their figures gradually vanishing into the morning fog.

I was extremely afraid of my father. Over the years he was like a stranger, showing little kindness to my sister and me. He was always a man beyond our reach.

My sister is four years older than me. When I came to live with them, it seemed she hadn't known I existed. She ordered me around, punched me and locked me in a dark room. However, after she went to college, a wonderful thing happened. Suddenly, I was important to her. She bought candy and chocolate for me,

and we walked around together. Now, we are together, studying in Xining. Although she had spent more time with Father than I, Father shared his coldness equally between us.

Father is not a man who hugs or kisses his children. Rather, he scolds and shouts. In nineteen years, only once did he help me put on my clothes and only once did he help me carry my bag. Both times I held my breath and my heart pounded fast. Normally, our conversation was nothing but his endless scolding or chasing me around with a stick.

The question often came to me, "Is he my stepfather or my real father?" I decided that he must be my stepfather. Otherwise he wouldn't be so hard on me, but that answer didn't make me feel better.

Father would vanish for days and come back reeking of liquor.

After a few days of rest, he was off again, leaving us with nowhere to find him. Mother bore it all without complaint. She was always busy with housework or working at the local printing factory. She cut grass and collected spoiled vegetables from the local market to feed the pig and two sheep Grandmother had given us. At night, she washed basin after basin of our clothes. Her small salary from the factory supported our life. I began to hate my father for his heartlessness and carelessness.

When I was in middle school, I was surprised to find Father staying at home more and more, hardly going out at all. Mother told me Father had been diagnosed with diabetes. I was not as upset as I thought I should be and wondered, "Am I really so emotionless?"

The only way I could help was to not make him angry. "That's easy," I thought, since we rarely spoke to each other anyway. We talked only when necessary, but from that time on, Father began to change. He was at home, and started to care about our schoolwork, our family and the housework, but his temper got worse. He would insult Mother in every conceivable way, and my hatred toward him was unchanging. —>



Art by Shannon Lattin



One day I asked Mother, "Why don't you divorce Father? I'll live with you. It does not matter whether I go to university. Sister can finish college and then live with Father. I don't want you to suffer like this."

Mother said, "My daughter, not only do I suffer, but also your father is suffering. In fact, he is a good man, but this is our fate. My hope is that your sister and you will graduate from a good school and have a better life, no matter how much I suffer during these years."

I was very upset to hear Mother say this. I couldn't bear Father's cruelty to Mother's self-dignity.

Things reached a climax one day when Grandmother told me that Mother and Father were maternal cousins. Father's parents had died when he was very young, leaving his three younger brothers and him alone in this world. Consequently, Grandma took the responsibility to rear them herself. When my mother was nineteen-years-old, Grandmother married her to Father, so that Mother could help care for their family. Certainly, there was no love between them when they married. Even today Mother sometimes comments, "How can you love your cousin since you are relatives and grew up together?"

Now I knew why Mother said, "This is our fate."

I have forgiven Father for the past. I understand him more, and he is now kind to us all. I believe he thinks he hasn't much time left and I know the only things that support his will to live longer are my sister and me. He knows that if he passes away, our family situation will be much worse, and it will be impossible for both of us to finish university. He wants to live longer, take care of his illness and cherish his life, for our sake. He strictly follows the doctor's advice. Every morning he goes jogging and exercises in the local gym, and he follows a strict diet. In four years, he has become thin and old, but he still tries and never gives up. ❖

—Mtsho mo Skyid (Faith), 20, Tibetan, P. R. China.



### Money Can't Buy Everything

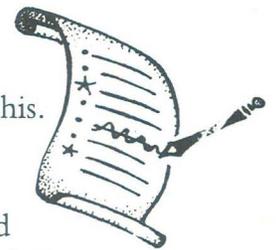
Money can't buy everything.  
It can't buy you a happy face.  
It can't buy your heart  
a secret place.

—Olivia Leiwant, 9, Florida.

As I begin,  
I start to think  
Deeper than ever before.

Maybe I've been right all along.  
Maybe I don't want to do this anymore.

Thinking hard  
Making lists  
I just can't see  
What's to come of this.



For a kid,  
This is pretty hard  
As I narrow down the choices  
Making some starred.

Making lists of pros and cons  
Is harder than it seems.  
I just hope I can make a good decision  
So that my conscience will be free.

What the final outcome will be,  
I just cannot see.  
What I do know, though,  
Is what I want,  
And it is for my conscience to be free.

—Amber Ackovitz, 13, North Carolina.

"I will soon begin my twelfth year of dance. Throughout the past few years, I've had mixed emotions about it. Sometimes it is fun, sometimes it isn't. One night after dance practice, tryouts were coming up, and I needed to decide what to tryout for. I finally started a list of pros and cons of dance, and immediately became even more frustrated! Instead of breaking down in tears, I started to write 'Free.'"

★ What's on YOUR mind? ★  
Let us know at  
[editor@skippingstones.org](mailto:editor@skippingstones.org)!

# Spring into the New Year!

**The sweet fragrance of jasmine** flower permeates the land. The people grow excited. It is time to light bonfires and decorate tables, to sweep the rug, to wear new duds and to eat pistachios. Get out your gold coins and the dust pan because it's time to ring in the new year, Iranian style.

For more than 2,000 years, the people of Iran have observed their new year, referred to in Persian as *Now Ruz* (New Day) on the spring vernal equinox, occurring on March 20<sup>th</sup> or March 21<sup>st</sup>. During ancient times, Iran's King Jamshid designated the first day of spring as the country's new year so people would rejoice at the end of the harsh, dreary winter and welcome the warm, spring sun.

But celebrating the rebirth of nature is just part of the *Now Ruz* festivities. This exuberant holiday season, which lasts thirteen days, is preceded by a blazing ritual referred to as *Chaharshanbeh Suri* (Joyous Wednesday). On the eve of the last Wednesday of the year, Iranians seek help from fire and light to ward off any evil spirits. Once the school bell rings on Tuesday afternoon, kids run home like rhinos, rapidly complete their homework and await sundown to watch their parents ignite bonfires on major streets, narrow alleys and backyards. The young and the old form a line and leap over the small flames. One by one, jumpers ask the fire to transfer its warmth and brightness to their lives during the upcoming year.

After *Chaharshanbeh Suri*, Iranians are so intoxicated with joy that even "spring cleaning" is welcomed. Out come brooms, mops and dust pans as rugs are swept, windows are cleaned and cobwebs are removed. After winter's debris has disappeared from homes, mothers take their children by the

hands and head to the local bazaar to purchase bright-colored dresses, formal shirts and ties to be worn on the exceptional day. Smiles from ear to ear are seen on children's faces after they receive their sparkling new outfits.

But preparations are not yet complete for busy Iranians because they still need to arrange the traditional *haft seen* table. *Haft* is the Persian word for seven and *seen* is the name for the Persian letter that corresponds to the letter S in English. So *haft seen* translates into seven S'es. Several days before *Now Ruz*, this symbolic decoration consisting of seven items beginning with S'es is arranged on the dining table in virtually every



*A beautifully arranged 'haft seen' table.*

Iranian home, acting as the focal point for the family gathering. Each one of the seven items has a unique meaning.

The most visible and significant item is the *sabzi*, or greens, which represents fertility. A couple of weeks before the new year, barley and lentils are soaked on a china plate in order for the vegetables to grow into lush, green sprouts three to four inches high. Another item from the plant kingdom is the *sonbol*, the hyacinth flower. Its pleasant aroma greets visitors as they enter the home. The *sekeh*, a glittering gold coin, symbolizes money for the upcoming year while the *samanu*, a sweet wheat pudding represents joy. *Serkeh*, or vinegar, is to ward off bitterness and *seer*, or garlic, represents good health. The *senjed* is a tiny dried fruit symbolizing peace and protection.

Over the years, several other items such as a mirror, colored eggs, and a live goldfish in a clear bowl have been added, all representing happiness and good fortune. →

# Island Girl

**I am an island girl.** It may not be obvious to look at me, yet the tropics run in my blood. My mother was born and raised on the tiny island of Barbados, in the Caribbean. Her mother, grandmother and four generations before her have called that beautiful rock home. My heritage shapes me in ways that are hard to convey; a smile spreads across my face when I try, nonetheless.

When I close my eyes, I remember my childhood visits: I am a little girl, shuffling across a pale pink beach next to a lazy, aqua surf. Under a gracefully-arched coconut palm, my family laughs and gossips good-naturedly, the lilt of the island's sing-song dialect on their tongues. The roads bustle with people, dark and sun-kissed, always busy, yet no one conveys the work-related stress most people know so well. Each year, I was touched by experiences that revealed the nature of Barbadian culture: hard work, creativity and joyfulness.

True, I am *only* half Barbadian. True, I *do* live in America. The island sheds light on what it means to live with resources at my fingertips. Hard work and perseverance are qualities that my mother and her family know well. Learning to be resourceful, that's the kicker. Don't give up. If you have no car, ride your bike and enjoy the fresh air. It has shown me the true meaning of "count your blessings."



Barbados' influence runs deep, as it has generations before me, guiding the development of my imagination and sense of creativity. The island's atmosphere is rich with history and life—elements that have inspired many of my drawings and paintings.

Above all, I know Barbados has helped me lighten up. Through all the struggles Barbadians endure, they maintain a joyfulness that permeates the island. This zest for life is something I have always known my mother's family to possess. They make sure everyone feels welcome. Nothing compares to a hearty meal of flying fish, macaroni pie, jug-jug and fresh cherry juice, prepared with all the hospitality one could ever hope for. On the street, islanders are quick with a kind word and directions for lost tourists. I try to incorporate this attitude in my life, in the hopes that it may brighten someone's day. The vitality and laughter of Barbadian culture keeps my family and me smiling and young at heart.

I share this special bond of heritage with my mother. This exotic gem, radiating reggae music and sunbeams, stands as a living, breathing influence in my life. Because of it, I feel like I can tackle any rough wave or crack any hard coconut.

—Stephanie Lloyd, 17, Florida.

## Spring into the New Year! *continued*

Finally, just minutes before the new year, jubilant families gather around the *haft seen* table, either watching television or listening to the radio, and begin counting down the minutes for the magical moment. Once *Now Ruz* has arrived, family members embrace and wish each other a great new year. For the next thirteen days, loved ones visit with one another to socialize, reminisce and eat decadent pastries and mouth-watering pistachios. Since Persian culture greatly values age, elders are always visited first.

"I've been celebrating *Now Ruz* for over thirty

years and every year I am overcome with joy and optimism," said Iranian Ladan Zahrai.

Isn't it surprising that for millions of people, the new year celebration involves fires and goldfish? But *Now Ruz* is much more than a series of rituals. It is a time for giving thanks and appreciating nature, a time when hope is brought to the heart of every Iranian.

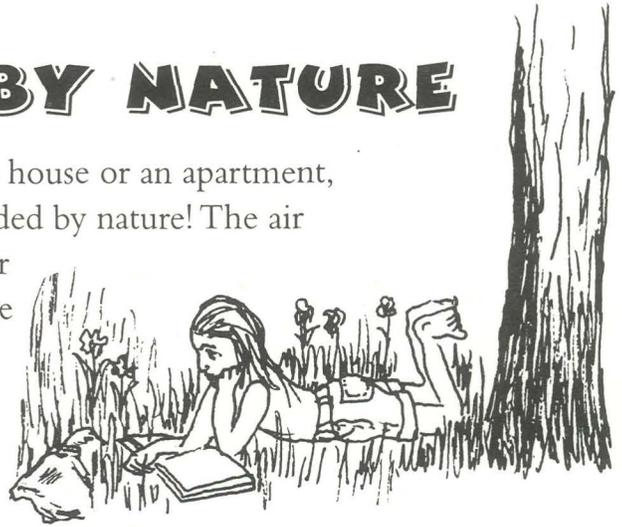
Regardless of how you celebrate your new year, may you always be prosperous, healthy and just plain happy. ❁

—Celia Taghdiri, Iranian American, California.



# SURROUNDED BY NATURE

Whether you live in the city or countryside, in a house or an apartment, in North America or Southern Africa, you are surrounded by nature! The air we breathe, the water we drink, the animals local to our areas and even the very structures in which we live have come from nature. In the next few pages, we invite you to celebrate, meditate and learn about nature!



## Flamingos

**F**lamingos. The bright, pink birds that stand on one leg...sometimes. After you read this, you'll know a lot more about flamingos!

Flamingos have long, skinny necks. In fact, they have nineteen neck vertebrae, which allows maximum movement and flexibility. Their ankles are located halfway up the leg; you can't see their knees because they are located very close to the body, underneath the wings.

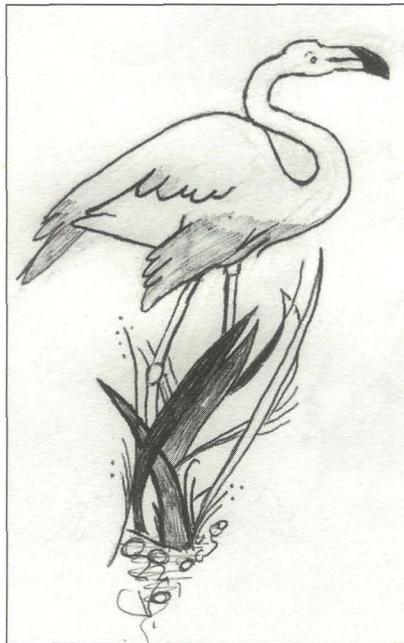
The tallest flamingo is the Greater Flamingo, which is over fifty-inches tall and weighs almost eight pounds. The smallest is the Lesser Flamingo, which is a little over thirty-one-inches tall and weighs a little over five-pounds.

Flamingos get their bright pink color from eating food that is rich in alpha- and beta-carotene pigments, such as fish, mollusks, crustaceans, insects and algae. While searching for food, they flip their bills upside down underwater.

The flamingo's best sense is hearing. It's important to hear if danger is nearby. Their senses of taste and smell, however, are very poor. Even though they can't see well at night, they can see better than humans.

Though people are not sure of a flamingo's average life span, one flamingo has lived for forty-

four years. Flamingos consider larger birds threats; many vultures and storks attack flamingo eggs and chicks. Also, some places in the world eat and sell flamingo eggs as a delicacy.



Flamingos start to breed when they are about six years old. They build nests out of mud, straw, rocks, and feathers. Some nests are over a foot tall because flamingos want to protect their young from high water and heat. Flamingos usually lay one egg, maybe two, but it is rare for both to hatch.

—Kendall Lampinen, Illinois.

*"I love flamingos. I started drawing them with a skirt, shirt, purse, necklace, bracelet, and feathers coming out on top of their heads. I used to like penguins, but then I changed to flamingos. My aunt also loves flamingos."*

### 2007 Youth Awards

We invite your exceptional writing and art on:  
**Culture & Diversity, Family & Society,  
Nature & Environment, Dreams &  
Visions, Youth Activism, Peace & Justice**

Send your entries by June 25, 2007.

Skipping Stones – Youth Awards  
P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403 USA  
editor@SkippingStones.org  
www.SkippingStones.org

## Nature's Life

**Birds soaring** through the air, as the golden ball of beauty arises. They speak in their own language, as they sing their beautiful songs.

The dewy grass blows through the wind, gracefully like a dancing ballerina. Chlorophyll-filled blades...some short, some tall, all different sizes.

The trees sway back and forth as another is cut down; animals' homes are destroyed by forest fires and more.

Animals awake to a short morning drizzle. Rabbits hop away; foxes get food for their young.

Bear cubs run wildly, seeming to grow so fast, waiting for the day when they'll become great, adult grizzlies.

Nature is such a beautiful thing and yet so much is destroyed. But animals still tend to sing, chirp and talk in their own secret ways, as a family of one...awaiting the day nature is free and safe.

—Carla Saadiya Forbes, 11, Massachusetts.

*"I love to sing and act. I'm Jamaican, British and American. What inspired me to write this poem was the Earth and its nature. I enjoy nature very much and hate seeing it destroyed. Everybody should pitch in to keep the Earth clean and healthy."*

Wind blows  
in my face.  
**Nature** is a  
dreaming  
place.

—Antonia  
Ferre, 9, Florida.

*"My parents are from Miami and Nicaragua. I think nature is beautiful. I write about nature to help everyone see how beautiful it is."*



Antonia enjoys nature at school.

## Recycle

I bought milk  
in a plastic container  
that says it's recyclable

But there are no  
recycling bins  
in the cafeteria.

So I just  
threw it  
away.

I spoke proudly  
of making a  
petition  
to get recycling bins  
for these  
new milk cartons.

It was one of  
those things  
I never got around to.

When we emptied  
our lockers  
I could hear  
trees screaming  
in pain  
as the students  
crumbled up  
old papers and  
threw them away.  
I gazed at

the old homework  
in my hand.

I shot mine in too  
like a basketball  
ignoring the mournful  
sighs of the rainforest.

Today  
the last day  
of school  
we empty our stuffed  
binders.

I watch a girl  
go to stand up and  
throw away  
a stack of papers  
two inches thick.

I reach out  
and touch her shoulder  
"Could I maybe  
take those home  
and recycle them  
for you?"  
She smiles  
and gives me  
her papers.

I imagine  
I hear  
the trees outside  
crying with joy.



—Claire Kortyna, 14, Pennsylvania.

### *In the ocean, where fish swim*

Dipping from the top, of your bathroom counter  
Sitting in the filthy gutters, of the street.

This is water.

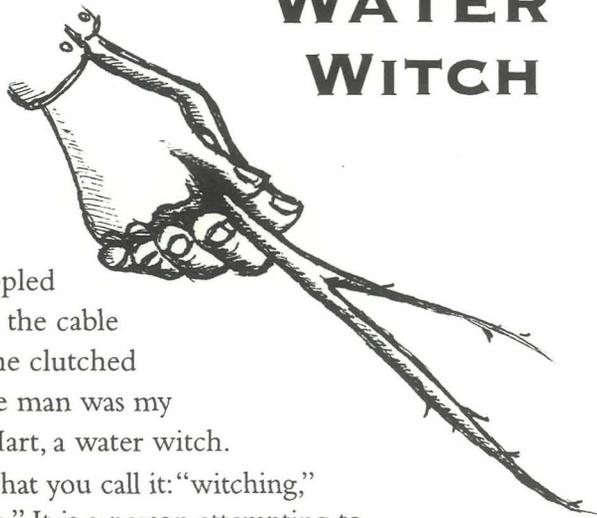
One of the world's most bountiful resources.

But there is so little for drinking.

And so much for wasting.

—Andrea Sadowski, 13, British Columbia, Canada.

# WATER WITCH



**AN ELDERLY** man in matching blue work shirt and pants, scuffed up boots and suspenders crisscrossed a patch of land. In his hands, crippled from years of grasping the cable of a well-drilling rig, he clutched a Y-shaped branch. The man was my grandfather, George Hart, a water witch.

It doesn't matter what you call it: "witching," "dowsing" or "divining." It is a person attempting to forecast the unknown. Fact or fiction, magic or special gift, the arguments for and against the practice have been going on for hundreds of years.

George Hart enjoyed sharing his lifetime of knowledge. You might find him perched on his front step telling stories and puffing out a blue fog from an old pipe. At other times he would be sharing a discussion over a cup of tea in the kitchen.

"I mostly use Cherry," George explained when asked about the tools of his trade. "Choke Cherry is alright, there's lots of it around. Sometimes I use Black Thorn or a piece of straight steel."

Many dowsers agree that willow is too sensitive to fashion the traditional Y-shaped witching gad. Folklore suggests hazel to be the "magical" wood. The final decision on type, size and how freshly the branch should be cut depends on the individual.

Still other dowsers employ a bent metal clothes hanger, barbed wire, steel stakes or a crow bar for the task. Some prefer a gold watch on a chain or a darning needle suspended by a string.

Over the years many explanations for dowsing have been considered. Everything from divine inspiration to mischievous devils have been given credit. George believed, "It has something to do with the static electricity in the body," an opinion shared by many modern dowsers.

Unlike some, George never charged for his services, though he would accept a present in thanks now and then. He believed divining is a gift. If you made money from that gift, it would somehow weaken your talent.

The American Society of Dowsers claims everyone is born with the ability. George firmly believed, "Either

you got it or you don't." Only one of his four children showed any promise, and only as a child.

George was always on the lookout for talent. Many of the customers were eager to give the stick a try. "Lots of people can do it, but they've never tried."

His daughter-in-law, Lila, remembers, "He got me to witch one with him. He cut me a little gad to see if it would work and it did."

For a dowser like Lila, there is no shortage of stories about their craft. "One evening I was witching a well at Black Bear Estates with a much heavier gad than I usually used. When I came to the water, it flew up and hit me in the shoulder."

Lila continues, "The gentleman I was witching for asked me if I was alright. I was, except for having a black and blue mark for about two weeks after."

Not an isolated incident for this dowser, she has also been struck in the cheek with a coat hanger while witching. As for the theory that witching is just the unconscious movements of the dowser, Lila laughs, "I don't injure myself on purpose."

More than one dowser tells of the disadvantage of using a fresh-cut gad. If the water is plentiful and pulling strong, the gad can turn with sufficient force to strip the bark from the stick. Likewise, if the gad is dry, the wrenching stick may leave scratches on the dowser's hands.

How accurate are the dowser's results? George considered witching to be unerring but he said, "You have to have a lot of common sense."

Lila adds, "There's a lot that can draw you off. Metal and other running water will draw you, too."

Occasionally, you will hear stories of a gad suddenly coming to life in a person's hands when it is touched by an experienced dowser.

As for their skeptics, most dowsers are unconcerned. George was known to tell a customer he would drill their well anywhere they wanted but not to blame him if there was no water. Lila responds, "If you don't want to believe in it that's alright, but I know it works." ❀

—Lisa Hart, Ontario, Canada.

## A Special Place

**My special place to go is close to my house.** My sister, mom, dad, and even my puppy know about it, but it is still calm and peaceful.

The thing about it is that it really isn't on our property, and we didn't build it. This wonderful place that we took over really belongs to a boy named Spencer up our lane. We thought that it was ours because it is right across the lane from us. The relief, though, is that he is a teenager now!

My close neighbors, Brittany and Bryanna, share it with us. We even made a sign saying: "BFF (Best Friends Forever) Girls' Club" and then signed our names in bright marker colors. My dad hung it up on an old wooden platform that is part of our club.

It is not easy to explain our fort, but here goes. Our fort is right across the lane from our driveway, hidden well away by beautiful, tall, assorted trees. (Well, at least when the trees have leaves, but even when they don't, it's still hidden.) We have a "bridge" that you can cross with thorny bushes on either side of you to get into the place.

Once you've crossed "the bridge," you will see a stubby, dead tree and a thick, silent forest ahead of you. If you turn left, you'll be stepping on an old, faded attic door. Keep going straight about three steps.



Looking down, you must walk a light blue plank with a few pieces of wood that are about a half-a-foot long each, which are nailed on so that you can step on them to help you balance. It slopes downward like a ramp. It's a very interesting little thing.

Then, there before you, is our cute and tiny fort, old and silly, but just enough for us to come and play, eat a snack, talk, or just relax inside. We have a few green plastic flower pots that we use as stools to sit on. Also, we can sit on a large moldy rock. Of course, it's a girls' club, so we have my sister's bright pink kid chair in it, too.

Surrounding us are three slim trees that two worn out boards are tightly nailed to in a triangle shape. There are two gold coat-hanger hooks like ones you would find in a locker or on a stall door. We have sparkling silver tinsel hung on them and the edges of the fort boards are able to hold it up.

The fort is not too big. It is only about eight-by-six feet all together. A few steps beyond the fort, there is another area where you could play, but the branches on the pine trees are low there. We haven't done anything to that area.

All together, the fort is most definitely a wonderful place to go if you need some time away from people. It would put a smile on your face. ❀

—Kelsie Schanlaber wrote this at age ten. She is now in the seventh grade in New Hampshire.



### The Oak Tree

I feel so blessed,  
I have to confess,

It is the beauty of the oak tree that's the best.  
As the wind blows in my face, I look at this sacred place.

God has blessed each one of us with glee,  
Hoping that we'll see nature's mystery.

Each ghastly approach as we fight in this war saddens me.

As bombs erupt and bullets fly,

Some people might not know if there is one last safe  
place out there.

I do.

I feel like I'm in heaven, sitting out there, praying to God.

I feel like this oak tree will always be there.

—Olivia Leiwant, 9, Florida.

## Eli's Mountain

In the faraway west there is a place called Echo Valley. Long, long ago there was a mountain in the middle of Echo Valley.

The mountain belonged to an old man named Eli. It had once belonged to Eli's father, having been in his family for many generations.

When Eli's father died, he gave the mountain to his son. "Take good care of the mountain, my son," Eli's father said. "Protect the flowers and the trees that grow there. Make sure that the animals that live on the mountain are never harmed."

Eli spent his life on the mountain. He saw the flowers bloom every spring. He saw the trees grow taller and taller. It seemed that they nearly reached the sky. He protected the animals that lived there. When hunters came to hunt the animals, Eli rolled the rocks down the mountain and frightened the hunters away.

Eli loved the mountain. He loved the flowers. He loved the animals. And he loved the trees that had been there when his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather cared for the mountain.

Old Eli had never married, so he had no one to leave the mountain to when he died. This worried the old man. He could only hope that everyone would see the beauty in the mountain that he did. He could only hope that they would love and protect the flowers, animals and trees as he always had.

As the old man got older, the trees also got older. They had stopped growing long ago, but they were still thick and green.

One day, as Eli was resting under a tree, he was startled by loud voices. He started walking down the mountain. At the foot of the mountain were several men. The men were woodcutters. Eli could hear what they were saying.

"We must cut down those big trees soon," said one man. "They will bring a lot of money."

"Yes," said another. "I have never seen such huge trees."

"We will be rich," said a third man.

"No! No!" Eli called out. "You can not cut the trees!"

"Who are you?" asked one of the woodcutters.

"My name is Eli," said the old man. "This is my mountain. You cannot harm anything on my mountain."

The woodcutters laughed and laughed. "Go away, old man," they cried. "We will be here bright and early in the morning to cut the trees."

Eli's heart was heavy as he walked slowly back up the mountain.

Sure enough, bright and early the next morning, the woodcutters returned. They came in big wagons pulled by mules. They had saws and axes.

The woodcutters got out of the wagons and started toward the mountain. But—there was no mountain!

The woodcutters stared in wonder. "What—what has happened?" gasped one man. "Where is the mountain?"

"Old man," called out another woodcutter. "Where are you?"

But there was no answer. He called out again. Still there was no answer.

Poor Eli was gone, and the mountain was, too.

The place called Echo Valley is still there in the faraway west. But the mountain is gone and there is not a trace of where it once stood.

Eli is no longer living. But the old man has hidden his beloved mountain so well that no one will ever find it.

The flowers and the animals and the trees will be safe forever on Eli's mountain. ❀

—Bonnie Taylor, Oregon.



## A Nature Fable

An autumn westward wind blew through the forest and onto the grassland. The time for flowers was past, grass had begun to wither, and leaves slowly became gold. The sky was especially blue, and the wind blew flocks of white clouds across it.

In this autumn world, a doe lived at the bottom of North Mountain with her lovely three fawns. One day, the doe and her three fawns were trotting down a path. Suddenly one of three fawns said, "Mother, here are lots of dry leaves."

She said, "Wait. Don't eat anything yourself. I will smell them to be sure they are edible."

After the doe sniffed some leaves, she said, "OK! They are good, so let's eat, my dears!"

The hungry fawns gobbled up the leaves in a flash and continued walking through the forest.

Another fawn said, "Mother, here are some small red fruits."

The doe sniffed the fruit, and after they had passed her inspection, the fawns ate them. Deeper in the forest, the third fawn said, "Come! There is a lovely small meadow. Let's go play there."

Doe said, "Don't go yet. Let mother first see if the meadow is safe."

The doe stepped into the small meadow, but suddenly she fell into a hunter's trap. The fawns watched helplessly as a hunter with a rifle, standing behind a large tree, took aim. The mother doe ordered her fawns to flee. Then she said to the hunter, "Please don't harm my lovely fawns. You can do anything to me."

The fawns sobbed, "Mother! Mother!" But the sounds were carried away by the autumn wind.

The poor doe was very sad. Her tears wetted her crystal rosary's thread. At that time, the hunter felt a bit guilty and tossed his rifle onto the ground. He sadly remembered his dead mother and his earlier life. ❀

—*Tshe-ring Skyabs (Oscar), 22, Tibetan, P. R. China.*



## Herding Sheep

I wake up when the sun rises. It's almost 8:30 and time for breakfast. My family has fifty sheep, most of which are small. Seventeen are ewes and the others are lambs. As I eat my breakfast, they start up the hill, enjoying the fresh air and moist grass. The sheep in the front of the flock defend against wolves, and sheep in the back protect against dogs.

At mid-day, when they are tired and full, they stay on the hill and sleep, but when the sun begins to set, it's time for me to

take a whip and climb up the hill. I pant from the climb. When I'm in front of them, I pop the whip. When they hear that noise, they know it's time to scamper down the hill and go home. ❀

—*Don-grub Chos Skyid (Avery), 19, Tibetan, P.R. C.*

## Milking Sheep

**We milk sheep in summer.**

First, we round up all of the sheep in one place. Then we prepare water, an empty bucket, a basin to wash our hands in, and two jars of red soil mixed with water, with a stick.

Some sheep are not easy to catch. When my brother catches one sheep, the other sheep get nervous and flee, their teats swinging right and left, heavy with milk. After catching an ewe, he uses his hands to rub away the dust on the sheep's belly and teats. Otherwise, dust will fall into the cup when you milk.

I wash my hands and the teats repeatedly. Finally, when the teats are clean enough, I slowly squeeze them, and the milk squirts out into the cup, making sounds like a bell ringing. When I finish, I mark the ewe's bottom, smearing it with red mud using the stick from the jar. This way, we can identify which sheep have been milked. When the cup is full, I pour the milk into the bucket. ❀

—*Tshe-brtan Sgrol Ma (Samantha), Tibetan, P. R. China.*



# Noteworthy North. East. West. South.

## • Who's Happy, Who's Not?

Young people in developing nations are at least twice as likely to feel happy about their lives as their counterparts in the developed ones, says a global survey by MTV Networks International. Indians are the happiest overall, while the Japanese are the most miserable. The survey covered more than 5,400 young people in 14 countries. Only 43% of the world's 16 to 34-year-olds were happy with their lives. In rich countries, including Britain and the U.S., less than 30% of young people (and in Japan, just 8%) said they were happy.

The reasons for unhappiness across the developed world included a lack of optimism, concerns over jobs and pressure to succeed. In developing countries, most youth expected their lives to be more enjoyable in the future. The happier youth in developing countries were also the most religious, according to the survey.

## • Interfaith Cooperation Needed for Peace

Last October some 33 governments sent delegations to a special U.N. conference on how religious organizations and governments can work together for peace. At the High-Level Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, participants reflected on rising concerns about religious intolerance and the need to promote religious dialogue and tolerance as a remedy. Many of the leaders from developing countries (suffering from the consequences of religious conflict) wanted to learn from each others' experiences and to promote inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. Religious groups and civil society organizations also attended the forum.

## • Meditation in Juvenile Detention Helps

An experimental program which introduced a daily meditation technique at the juvenile detention center in Santa Fe, New Mexico has shown promising results. Detainees participating in the program were reported to be calmer and better-behaved than they were prior to the program. Some were even released early as a result of their improved behavior.

## • Birthdays Without Pressure

To offer solutions to the disturbing trend of parents everywhere feeling pressured into throwing "impressive" birthday parties for their kids, a group of parents have set up a website, BirthdaysWithoutPressure.org, suggesting ways to make birthdays *stress-free!*

## • Active and Proactive in British Columbia

A program called "Action Schools" was initiated in more than 1,100 British Columbia schools by the Education Ministry. The purpose of the program, which includes yoga and other fitness-related activities, was to help teachers keep children active, proactively fighting the problem of obesity in Canadian children. Some 247,830 students have registered in the program.

Since yoga has Hindu roots, alternate exercises will also be provided for students who choose not to do yoga. Education Minister Shirley Bond said, "We're trying to find as many ways as possible to engage our children in healthy and active lifestyles."

Vancouver yoga instructor and former kindergarten teacher Mara Branscombe adds, "Yoga brings clarity to the mind. The benefits are huge in terms of productivity. The practice builds self-esteem and confidence, and controlled breathing techniques promote an optimal state for student learning."

## • Reducing Asia's Transboundary Pollution

Air quality researchers at a regional conference in December 2006 called on Asian nations to formulate a pollution control mechanism to solve an increasing number of cross-border environmental problems. Japan says soot from Chinese power stations is poisoning its lakes. Coal emissions from India and China are polluting the air in Bangladesh, while land-clearing forest fires in Indonesia routinely send a choking haze across Singapore and Malaysia. These factors, experts say, have turned Asia into the world's most polluted region.

Mr. Krzyzanowski, an adviser on air quality and health for the World Health Organization said that transboundary air pollution was a big problem, especially in densely-populated areas in East Asia. Currently, there is no mechanism to regulate transboundary pollution. We need emission ceilings and common efforts to reduce the growing air pollution in Asia. It took over ten years for Europe to work out a regional solution.

• **Canada Will Spend \$25 Million to Protect its largest temperate rainforest—the Great Bear Rainforest, along the Pacific Coast of British Columbia.**

Jan. 30 - Apr. 4: **The Season of Nonviolence**  
Apr. 22: **Earth Day. Celebrate it every day!**

—Compiled from news sources including Hindu Press International, B.W.N.S., and Can West News Service.

# Nature Poetry

## At Last...

How lonely  
Am I  
In this  
Wind howling  
Night  
I shhh-iver  
With  
Loneliness  
From the tip  
Of my waves down  
To my deeps

Suddenly  
A bright golden  
Face  
Appears  
I rise up to greet her  
"Hello!" I cry  
The sun shines back a  
Greeting,  
To my waves  
'Till they gleam  
With joy

The sun warms up  
My cold waves  
As she comes nearer  
I smile at her  
And she at me  
We make one  
Huge glowing smile  
'Till our hearts  
Join Together  
Now  
At the  
Beginning of the  
World!

—Nicole Esella Zumaeta  
Garcia, 11, New York.

## Blade of Grass †

Green, tall as my pinky finger  
Strange, skinny  
Curves in the wind  
A small man in a big world.

—Ben Mentzer, 12, Pennsylvania.

• • • • •

## Emerald Grass

Let the rain of Kailua  
fall on you.  
Let the rain spill  
over my house on Kanaha Street.  
The rain smells like sweet water  
in my favorite glass.  
The rain makes dark bronze  
mud puddles in my backyard.  
The rain bursts on my roof  
and sounds like lightning.  
Paint the rain sapphire  
on the Ko'olau Mountains.  
See the rain promise emerald grass  
at Dinosaur Park.  
Touch the rain now.

—Nikolas Hager, 7, Hawai'i.



Drawing by Nikolas Hager

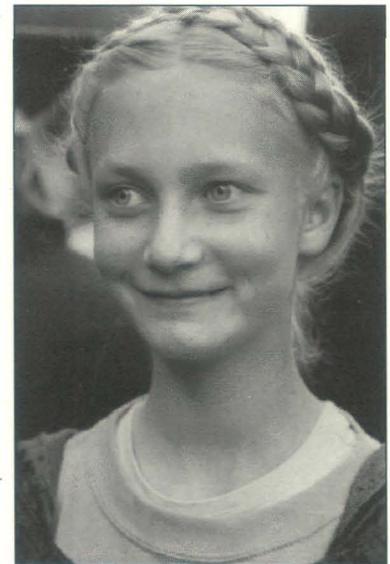
## ✧ The sun burns my back. ✧

But it fears to cross the trees  
And warm the shadows.

## ✧ Any tree is bare ✧

When compared to a Dogwood  
Or a Sakura.

—Kamy Wakin, 13, Pennsylvania.

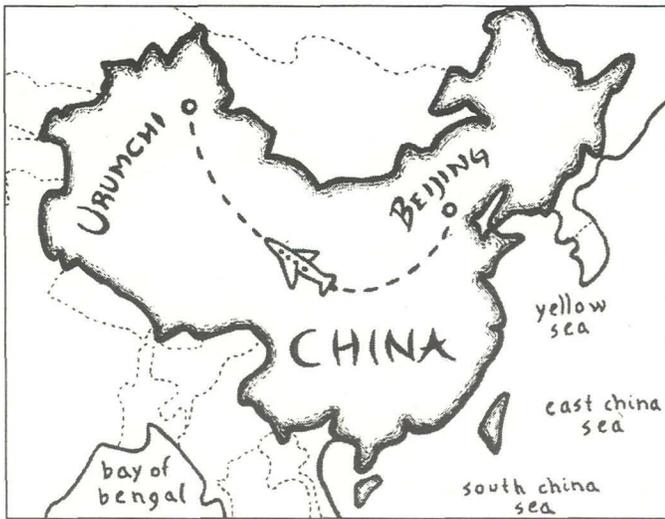


Lauren Wilson

## Tree Bark Has Layers

Tree bark has layers  
Layers of endless joy and sorrow  
That only tell half of what  
This tree has experienced  
The branches reach out  
Eager to help all  
Who pass by  
Eager to support the weight  
Of a thirteen-year-old girl  
Sitting happily in her hammock  
High in the tree  
Writing poems  
Writing about tree bark  
With layers

—Lauren Wilson, 13, Oregon.



## The Return of a Young Man

Wearing an army T-shirt and big black army boots, a young man boarded a flight to Urumchi, the capital city of Xinjiang Province in China. Minutes later, the plane soared in the cerulean sky. As it left Beijing, the young man began a journey in which he would revisit places he'd not seen for fifteen years.

And who is this young man?

You may have already guessed that it's the author, recounting his first return visit to his birthplace in Northwestern China.

After landing, I exited the plane, and the place where I began my life came into view. I had no memories to recall. All I knew about Xinjiang was what my parents had told me and what I learned in geography.

The province is part of the temperate zone, but there is little precipitation. Desert plants survive, but vegetation is scarce. Portions of the Gobi desert extend into the province, and windmills are much in evidence, as the area generates a portion of its electrical energy that way.

The capital city of Xinjiang is Urumchi, the most inland city in the world. It's located in the center of the province, at the Northern foot of the Tian Shan cordillera. There are many ethnic groups there: Uygurs form the majority of the population, but there also Kazakhs, Han Chinese and many national minorities.

### Lake of Heaven

On my second day, I visited the Sky Pool, also known as "Lake of Heaven." It is located about 110 kilometers from Urumchi and was created by glaciers on the adjacent Tian Shan mountains. Unlike other areas of Xinjiang, trees abound, and a stream flows

*"I wanted to catch a glimpse of the monster..."*

down into the lake. There was a wonderful breeze, and as I walked slowly to enjoy it, a little pool came into view. Cliff-like abutments from the adjacent mountains cast shadows on the water.

Though I've never traveled outside China, I've read that the scenes I was enjoying were much like mountainous areas in Switzerland or Canada. One difference is that here in China, the yurts of Kazakh people dot the landscape.

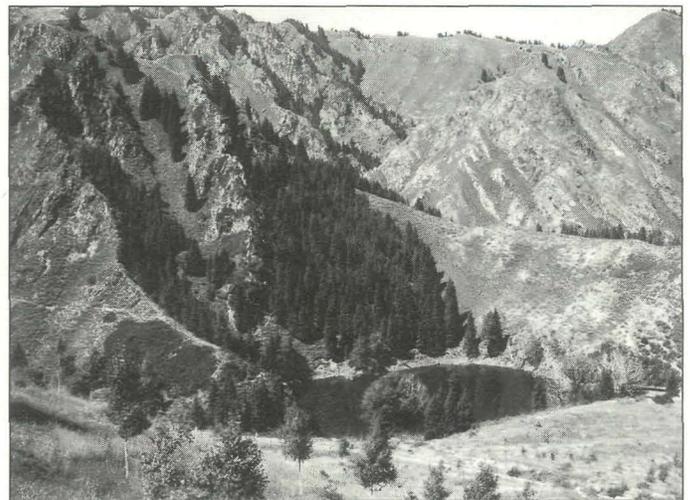
The locals tell of a huge monster that, years ago, appeared from time to time in the pool. No one could explain, but fishing and swimming were forbidden. I wanted to catch a glimpse of the monster while I was there, but didn't have that kind of luck.

I took many photographs, as they describe the area better than I can. We all understand such things better when we see them.

### Windmills and Aqua ducts

The sun had risen on my third day in Northwest China. When I opened my eyes, a quick look around reminded me that I had slept in my great-aunt's home, the same place where I'd lived during my first two years of life.

The telephone was ringing. It was my mother, who said that in an hour she'd come for me and my little brother, who was also along for the visit. We would head for Turpan, a city east of Urumchi. Part of Turpan basin is 159 meters below sea level. That's the lowest place in China, and the second deepest depression in the world. It is also the hottest place in China! My mother thinks of Turpan as her hometown, as she lived there as a child for ten years.





While we were having breakfast, I heard the sound of an ambulance siren and it seemed close by. What was happening? The phone rang again—it was my mother again. She asked us to come downstairs, saying that she was there waiting for us.

As we were grabbing the things we'd need, we looked out the window to see where she was and all we could see was an ambulance. That was confusing, but we ran downstairs together, and then, surprisingly, we saw mother sitting in the ambulance, beckoning us.

I wondered, "Why is she in an ambulance? Is she sick? What was happening?"

Soon, it became clear. We were to get in the ambulance—it was our car for the day! We had a driver, and our destination was still Turpan.

With the siren sounding, we took off. It was interesting that no other vehicles could overtake us. We were the lords of the roads. We came to a toll station and the attendant would just glance at the blue lights on the top of the ambulance and wave us through without charge. I have never before enjoyed such royal treatment!

While I was enjoying that novelty, a large group of windmills came into view. It was our first sight of Daban City, a very windy place, famous for generating wind power.

The Xinjiang government invited a Dutch company to assist them in building the biggest power plant in Asia. Windmills now extend for eighty kilometers east to west and twenty kilometers from north to south. They use energy in the wind which blows through the area year-round.

The windmills fascinated my little brother. When he saw them, he shouted, "Windmills... windmills!"

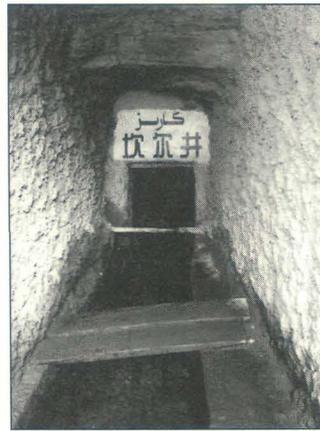
Our driver, Mr. Du, parked the car so we could get photographs of them and all of us.

That's my mother, in the middle, next to me with my little brother in front. Our driver is on the left, and the two women are my mother's friends from the hospital. After this photo was taken, we continued on toward Turpan.

When we arrived, the thermometer inside the ambulance had reached 39°C (102.2° F) at 10 a.m. We all felt the heat. The dry wind seemed the perfect weather for turning us into mummies, and it was only mid-morning.

We visited one of the culverts that had been built by hand over 2,000 years ago with the wisdom of the ancients. They devised a way to transport water underground using gravity. A total of 1,000 wells are involved. Mother told us that my grandfather had been a civil engineer in this project thirty years ago.

In recent years, plans were made to modernize the system, and conduits were constructed and installed. Because of the extreme heat, however, the water evaporated before it had flowed halfway through. So, the project was cancelled and the old culverts that had worked for so many years were re-evaluated.

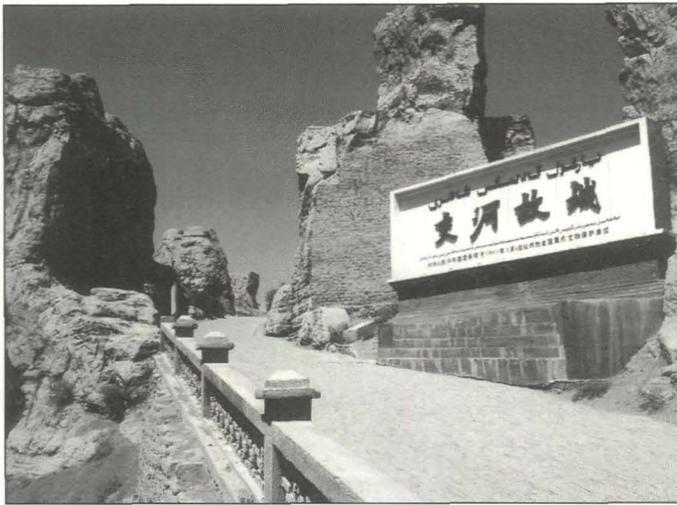


We were able to enter a culvert and saw what is called a hidden aqua duct. It's actually an underground water channel. The sign in Chinese characters above the entrance is translated as "Hidden Culvert." The same message is also written in Arabic, as there are many Muslims in that part of China.

Since the aqua duct has been providing water a long time for people in the area, my brother wanted to drink it. Mom said that he could, as it flows underground and is not polluted. I tried it, too, and it tasted sweet.

### Exploring an Ancient City

After walking out of the coolness of the culvert, we got into the ambulance quickly. Our next destination was the end of an island: a city named Jiaohe, which means the confluence of two rivers.



Established during the Han Dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD), it was once a very important Buddhist center before it was overwhelmed by Genghis Khan and his warriors. As a result, Islam was brought to the area and in the process, the city was destroyed and is now in ruins.

I pressed Mr. Du to get us there as soon as possible, as I have a strong interest in archaeology, and the ruins were a kind of holy land in my heart. I could hardly contain myself when the entrance came into view. The sign read, "An Ancient City."

As soon as the ambulance stopped, I climbed out quickly and entered the ruins. There are five main areas to the ruins: residential, military, industrial/commercial, governmental and religious. When we walked along the main road that cuts through the city ruins, we came to the governmental area. It's the highest point, and I couldn't help but think that the government had chosen that spot as an authoritative symbol of how they controlled the city.

The religious area is the most luxurious. The monastery is large and impressive and the arrangement of art objects has been done with great care. Four statues of Buddha were originally in the tower at the entrance, but three of them were destroyed in a religious war.

While I was deeply touched by all I was seeing, I remembered how hot it was. Reluctantly, I returned to our starting point, as I felt I could become a mummy in the ruins if I stayed. An archeologist of the future would find me there and wonder what I had been doing.

### **The Hottest Place and the Coldest Place**

It was time for lunch when we left the ancient city and Mr. Du suggested we go to "Red Rose," a good

*"...I suddenly felt as if I were just a speck in a vast world."*

restaurant in Turpan. Run by Uygurs, it specializes in Xinjiang food. After having yoghurt filled with nuts, I then ordered a dish of noodles called *la-tiao-zi* (noodles with peppers, tomatoes, and onions).

After lunch, we went to Flaming mountain. It's also called Fire Mountain, as it appears to be on fire when viewed in the mid-day sun. When we arrived, it was 111° F. I got out of the vehicle, and a strong heat wave struck me in the face. I felt that getting back into the car would be like entering heaven, but I had to investigate the underground museum. Fortunately, it was much cooler down there. I wondered how the people of Turpan could live in such hot weather!

On our way back, we visited a grape valley. Strangely, the valley is the coolest place in Turpan. The temperature there is only about twenty degrees Celsius. We sampled many kinds of grapes. I loved the long, green grapes, which were sweet and helped quench the thirst that had built up during our visit to Fire Mountain. A pleasant end to an interesting day.

### **Trip to the North**

Our trip to places around Turpan over, we began a four-hour drive north, to a city that depends on one of the most important resources in the world to make it rich. The city is Karamay, the resource is oil, and it's located in the northwestern part of Xinjiang.

When we arrived at our first destination—a ghost town—the wind blowing in my face helped me to understand how the ghost town was formed. I climbed on a large mound and was shocked to see that similar mounds spread out onto the landscape as far as I could see. They were innumerable, and I suddenly felt as if I were just a speck in a vast world.

Our last destination was northeast of Karamay—the "City of Oil." A Chinese scientist first found oil here. The whole mountain is made of it. Walking around, I saw many little pools with black liquid. I knew it was oil, though it was my first time seeing it in its natural state. Poking a little stick in it, I found that it was viscous as I expected. I wanted to take some, but had no container.

I learned later that the city of Karamay was constructed in 1958 because of the rich supplies of oil and natural gas in the area. "Karamay" means "black oil" in the Uygur language. Now, over 340,000 people live in

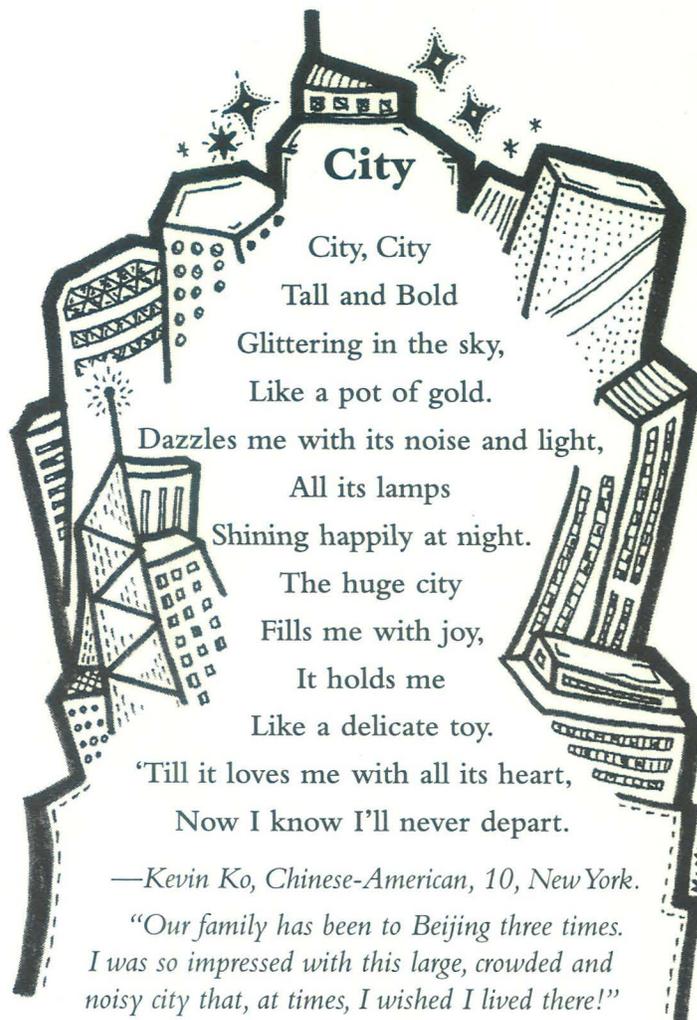


that city and 30,000 of them work in the oil industry. Over 1,000 oil pumps are in operation.

That was the end of our sightseeing trip. After spending a few more days with my great-aunt, we'd have to return to Beijing. It had been a fun trip. I had learned a lot and vowed to return to my birthplace again. ❀

—Yi Zhu, 16, People's Republic of China.

*"I found that upon returning to Beijing, I just couldn't stop writing. I wanted to record all our experiences and have an account I could send to my aunt, to thank her for getting me started in life."*



## I Have a Dream

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a role model to me. He changed my life. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be in a public school since I have a disability. Now I can be in a public school, and for that I thank him. MLK is an inspiration to me because even though he was one man, he was able to change the world. If he were still alive, I would be glad to meet him, and I would definitely go to see him speak. Also, I would have also liked to meet his wife, if she were alive, since I think that it must have taken a lot of courage to be MLK's wife.

MLK spoke to the world about changing the rules of society. I think that was totally awesome; he made a difference that affected me. If I weren't able to go to school, I would be home and wouldn't be able to wrestle and do other school activities. I would not have my friends and would feel bad

about myself. His life struggle was not easy because of his color; my struggle in life has also been hard.

My cerebral palsy affected my balance and prevented me from participating in sports when I first came to Sheldon High School. But when wrestling season started, I was told by a friend that I could try out despite the fact that I had a disability. However, even though I wanted to try wrestling, my parents said I couldn't be on the team. But then my mom saw a documentary about a boy with no legs who was a wrestler. He got a scholarship to Arizona. She decided to let me join wrestling, and my life has been changed. Without being allowed to be here in school, I would never have been able to to wrestle.

Thank you, Dr. King.

—Zack Childers, 16, Oregon.

## BASEBALL, DAD AND ME

"Come on," I say. "The game is about to begin!"

My twin sister crawls over to the TV, then Mom comes with a bowl of peanuts. She says that baseball is an American sport, and in her country, people eat peanuts while they're watching a game. Obachan comes in last.

We didn't go to the stadium because my sister can't walk, and Mom says it's too hard to get her wheelchair up the steps. There's no ramp in into the stands. "Besides," she says, "It's not as hot, and we can see Dad better on TV."

On screen, the teams run into position, and then there's a close-up of Dad. He's the coach of the Tokushima High School team. They've made it all the way to the semi-finals. If they win today and tomorrow, they can participate in the national tournament at Koshien Stadium.

Just before summer vacation, we wrote wishes on strips of paper for *Tanabata*. Dad wrote that he wished for his team to go to Koshien. Everybody who loves baseball dreams of Koshien. In the summer, every TV and radio in Japan is tuned to the games. The players who actually get to go there scoop up dirt from the field and take it home in plastic bags to keep forever. Dad played baseball all through school, but he never got to go. Now, as a coach, he might have a chance.

I wrote that I wanted to play on my dad's team. He laughed, "I'm just a high school coach. Don't you want to play for the Tokyo Giants? Or even the Tokushima Indigo Socks?"

I shook my head. I didn't want to be rich or famous. I just wanted to play ball with my dad.

In the first inning, Dad's team gets two runs. By the seventh inning, they're ahead six to zero. Every time the camera lands on Dad's face, he is

smiling. I'm smiling, too. The other team scores a couple of runs late in the game, but Dad's team wins. His team will play in the final.

On the TV, the players throw their arms around each other and my dad. I hug my sister, my mother, my grandmother. "Let's have a party," I say.

We blow up balloons. I make a sign that says, "Congratulations, Dad!" and tape it to the wall.

We are just getting ready to cook a special dinner when the phone rings. It's Dad. He won't be home until late. He is going to celebrate with his team.

I reach for a red balloon and I pop it. Bang!

Mom looks at me for a moment. "Let's go outside," she says. "I'll pitch a few balls to you."

I don't really feel like it, but I grab my bat, a ball, and the leather glove Dad gave me.

Mom isn't a great pitcher, and I know she doesn't love baseball, not like Dad and I do. She's always saying to Dad, "In America, baseball is a summer sport. Why do you have to practice all year round?"

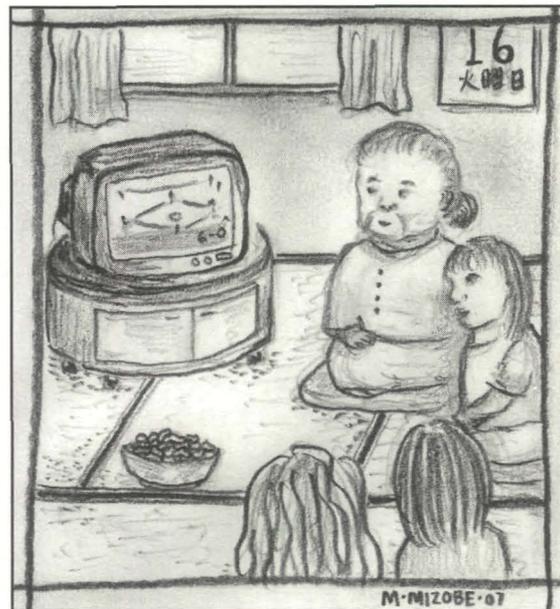
Mosquitoes are buzzing around my head, but I try to keep an eye on the ball, like Dad always says I should. Mom throws a little low. I smack it anyway. It goes onto the roof.

Dad comes home late, after I've already gone to bed. I see him at breakfast the next morning, and then he's off for his next game.

"Can we go to the stadium today?" I ask Mom. "Please, please?"

Mom is silent for a moment. I know she's thinking about my sister, and the wheelchair and the heat. Finally, she nods. "OK, slugger. Let's go."

My sister stays with Obachan. Mom and I pack





a thermos, sandwiches and a parasol, and set off for the stadium.

"It's hot enough to fry eggs out here," Mom says, opening her parasol.

"Hot enough to fry

octopus balls?" I ask her.

She grins. "That, too."

Dad's team scores early on—a home run with a runner on third. I wish I could see his smiling face, but he's below in the dugout, hidden.

The pitcher for Tokushima strikes out three batters in a row. Dad's team scores a couple more runs, but then the other team begins to catch up. In the bottom of the ninth, the game is tied.

At the top of the tenth, Dad's team is at bat. The first batter sends a pop-up fly to center field. One out. The second batter hits a clean line between second and third. He makes it to first base. The third guy swings and misses, swings and misses and lets a couple of low pitches fly by. Then, he whacks the ball straight to the second baseman. Double play.

I look at Mom. Her lips are pinched together. She grips the handle of her parasol tightly.

"Win, Dad," I say. I hold my breath. The first pitch is hurled. Strike. But on the next one, the ball pings against aluminum and then it's sailing against blue sky, lost in the sun, and over the fence.

I hear cheering, but there's a lump in my throat. I look up at Mom and see that there are tears in her eyes.

That night, Dad comes home in time for dinner, but he doesn't eat much. He doesn't smile and he hardly even looks at us. I want to talk about the game, about how it felt to sit in the stadium and hear all those people cheering for his team,

but after we finish eating, he leaves the room.

"Wanna read a book?" Mom asks. "Play a game?"

"No, thanks," I say. I go into my room and imagine myself catching that last ball and hitting a home run.

The next morning, when I get up, Dad's sitting at the table, frowning, reading newspapers. Every one has a story about yesterday's game.

"Hey, Dad," I say. "Will you throw me some balls?"

He looks up at me as if he's never seen me before. Then, slowly, he puts the papers down and that faraway look turns into something else. "Okay," he says, "Show me what you've got."

We go out into the backyard and I take my stance. There are bees buzzing and birds twittering, but all I see is Dad and the ball. I keep my eyes on it as it comes toward me, a perfect pitch. I swing as hard as I can. I feel the ball kiss the bat and watch as it flies over Dad's head, onto the roof.

Dad's frown dissolves into a big smile. He whoops and punches the air. "Home run!" he shouts.

I pretend to run the bases and then run straight into his arms. ❀

—Suzanne Kamata, author and parent, Japan.



## MOOD CHANGE

Sometimes I'm glowing red—

Insane and hyper,

Potent and full of energy.

Other days I'm baby blue—

Placid and peaceful,

Relaxed and gentle.

Either tone, I'm still me.

—Mark Badulescu, 13, Illinois.

*"I can go from one mood to another, instantly. Everyone has some type of mood each day, and no matter what, it can change instantly."*

## A TIBETAN BOY'S LOVE

### EVENING TOOK AWAY THE SUN'S

last ray, leaving only darkness in the endless sky. There was a party inside but the music was too loud, so I went outside to sit where I could enjoy the evening. Another boy from my class came out and sat beside me. While talking about ourselves, I became quite interested in his story. So I wrote it all down and here is what he said...

I was born in a quiet village surrounded by high mountains. My family was large, and we were very poor. There was not even enough money for the children to go to school. When our situation improved, I was the lucky one who was sent to school.

At school, I met a girl named Lhamo, a neighbor's daughter. We became classmates, going to school together every day, our bags filled with heavy books.

One day on our way to the school, we noticed some red radishes with small, green leaves growing on the other side of a high wall. They looked so fresh and tasty that they made us hungry. Lhamo said, "You are a strong boy who could easily climb that wall. Why don't you go get some of them?"

"Alright, I will, if you want me to," I said.

I quickly climbed atop the wall and jumped into the yard. I pulled out a very big one and put it in my pocket. Then, as I took another, I heard a dog bark. Turning around quickly, I saw two fierce dogs coming toward me. I dropped the radish and leaped up on the wall. When I was on the top of the wall, I realized how stupid I had been. I climbed down the slope where Lhamo was waiting.

When I divided the radish, I made a mistake. I broke the radish into two parts, and I handed the small part to Lhamo. "I want the big part," she complained.

"Who climbed the wall? Who got chased by the dogs? Don't be so ungrateful," I said gruffly.

"But I gave you the idea," she said.

"Yes, but what did you do except wait for the

result?" I shouted at her, slapping her face in anger.

She cried out, holding her hands to her face. I began to fear she would tell my father, who was very fond of her. What can you do when an innocent girl cries in front of you? I didn't know how to make her stop crying. "I'm sorry. I was very stupid and selfish," I said.

But that was ineffective, and she still cried. "Please stop crying. If you stop, I will give you the big part or maybe all of it," I said.

So I ended up with nothing to eat. I looked at her as she chewed the radish while my empty stomach growled.

During those years, she moved my heart many times. She was the first girl not related to me who ever cried for me—it meant something special.

One warm winter day, I didn't feel like going to school. But she was waiting for me, so I lied to her. "You go on to the class and I'll come as soon as I get the book I forgot at home."

I left in a great hurry to meet up with some other mischievous guys. We had some money in our pockets, altogether one yuan. We wanted to buy fruit, but the seller refused, forcing us to forego that idea.

Then, I suggested to my naughty friends that we buy cigarettes. They were also curious about smoking, so we bought a pack of cigarettes. We took several out of the box and began to smoke them. When it was over, we merrily went home.

Arriving at home, I was astonished to see Lhamo waiting for me at my front door. I wanted to run away but didn't have the courage. Just as I entered the house, something hit my face very hard. When my father hit me with a plastic rope, I felt anger and pain, but I knew it would be useless to cry. I endured the pain without tears. As Lhamo watched, she began to cry loudly as though she was the one who was being hit. When I saw her crying, I felt terrible and cried as well. Father stopped beating me and left us alone.



- M. MIZOBE - 67 -

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The next day on the way to school, I scolded her about the event. Then I realized I was wrong to blame her for caring about me. After many years, that memory still grieves my heart.

After third grade, she quit school. I didn't see her very often. We drifted apart.

As I walked on the road, heading to my family's field one day, I noticed her from the road. She was dressed in a Tibetan traditional robe. Her lustrous eyes were bright, her reddish face shining in the sun's rays. Never before had I realized that she was so beautiful.

I felt love grow in my heart, but I knew it would be ridiculous to tell her. My family was too poor. I felt unqualified to even talk to her. It would not be proper for me to approach such a beautiful lady. I didn't want her to notice me, so I hid behind the tree. I became very sad that I was poor and lived in such an old, worn-down house.

But some things are not what you think. She would often take the initiative to talk to me, even though she knew I would refuse her kindness. I wanted to go back to the past, to the way it was in school. I wanted to talk with her normally, without fear or embarrassment, but my family's position always stood in the way.

By the time we were sixteen, she had become a magnificent girl in our community, more beautiful than ever. One day when the grass was green and bright colored flowers were in bloom, I lay down on the grass, looking at the limitless sky and dreaming of my love for Lhamo. After a while I heard someone furtively approach and felt two gentle hands placed over my eyes. I instantly recognized her scent. I heard a sweet voice breaking the silence of vast grassland, "Who do you think this is?"

"Lhamo," I said, pretending to be annoyed.

"Yes, how clever you are. Today I want ask you something," she said.

"What do you want to know about a poor boy from such a poor family? Please, let me go. I still have some jobs left to finish," I said roughly, but she knew I had nothing to do.

"Please, don't say that. Tell me what you're feeling."

"I don't think there is anything useful you can learn from me," I said.

"It may not be useful to me, but it's important to me."

"What do you think is important between us?" I said, getting more upset.

"Don't you think love is important?"

I was astonished. I felt like a man who had just turned into stone.

Does she mean me or does she just want some advice from me about another boy, I wondered? For the sake of my dignity and self-esteem, I decided to keep on pretending.

At last she said, "To tell you the truth, there are several boys who have written letters to me, expressing their love."

"What has that got to do with me?"

"Don't you feel a bit jealous?"

"Why should I feel jealous? I don't think that is necessary," I said, pretending to be stupid.

For a few moments she couldn't find her voice. There was deep silence, except for the birds' twittering and the river's melody.

"I love you, but you disappoint me. I really don't know why I love such an inconsiderate boy," she said coldly, and then she stood up and started to walk away.

"I feel as much love for you as you do for me, maybe even more. My stupid reactions were a disguise. I was afraid you would find out my feelings," I said as loudly as I could.

Our sounds seem to disturb the sky, for suddenly the sky became dark in the north. "Besides, I am a poor boy and my family's reputation is not good in the village. If you were to follow me you would wear patched clothes and eat poor food. Others would give you a brilliant future," I said filled with sorrow.

"I don't care," she said promptly.

"But your family cares. They would turn a cold shoulder to me and would despise me, so I thought we'd better forget each other," I said.

I stood up, in my sorrow, and left her alone on the grass as dark clouds began to gather in the sky. After that, we did not see each other often. An uncomfortable relationship existed between us.

One day a new student, Zhaxi, came to my class.

His family was quite wealthy. Gradually we become friends. We would go to class together, play together and share our secrets together. However, I never said anything about Lhamo and neither did he.

There is a very big festival in our community just for young people. All the boys and girls gather at the ruined shrine one day each year. I cannot dance or sing, so I had never gone before, but this time my best friend persuaded me to go.

When we got there, I saw Lhamo. I wanted to leave, but it was too late, so I stayed to watch impatiently. I figured out that they sing love songs as a game. The rule is, girls are in one group, boys are in another. A girl who is chosen by her group then sings a classic Tibetan love song to a boy she selects. Then the boy must respond with another love song.

It happened so suddenly that when I found my mind, I was already in the front of the shrine, listening to Lhamo's melodious voice with its natural rhythm. I immediately felt very nervous. Since I cannot sing,

I wasn't able to respond when I should have. All the other boys and girls were waiting patiently until, finally, laughter filled the shrine. I didn't know what to do, except become helplessly angry.

After it was over and all the people left, I knew someone was still there. When Lhamo passed me, I stopped her and unleashed my anger.

"Why did you embarrass me in front of all those people? You say I am an inconsiderate boy, but I think that word fits you," I said loudly.

"Because my mind can't stop thinking about you, my brain can't work without a picture of you in it. Are you satisfied with this reason?" she said as loudly as she could, even though she knew someone might overhear us.

That was the second time she had told of her love for me, and once again she began to cry. I gently took her hand, pressed it to my lips and kissed it dearly. ❀

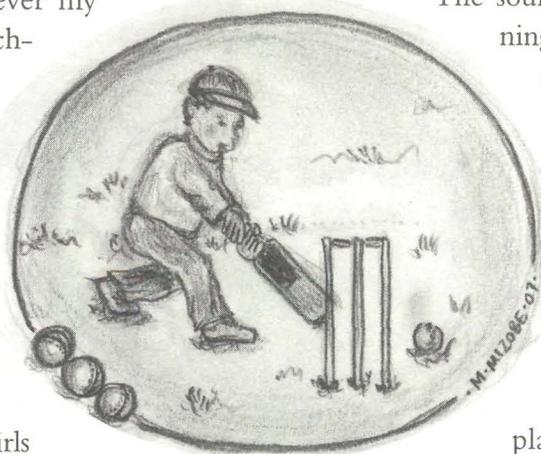
—Thub Bstan Zla Ba "Ethan," 18, Tibetan, People's Republic of China.

## The Game I Love to Hate

**Cricket.** You might not be too familiar with it. I, however, have spent endless nights playing it. When I was young, I disliked it. Just the name caused fury in my mind. I got annoyed whenever my family wanted to watch the matches, the same matches that I now crave to watch.

I started playing cricket when I was seven, with the kids in my neighborhood. We played wherever we could, front lawn, backyard, on the street, in school, in our garage, on the roof, even! Small games to long, five-hour ones. Girls against boys, always. Never together. The fights over who won, the pushing, the shoving and the teasing—all this I remember so well.

I remember the smell of the dried grass in the summer. The smell of fresh rain on mud and roads. The smell of the green grass in spring. The feel of the round



red ball and the handle of the bat. The feel of the sun kissing my face and the moon watching my every pace. The bruised, bare knees and the scratched elbows. I can feel it all. The sound of our mothers calling us in.

The sound of the bat hitting the ball, running feet and falling with a thud when someone slipped. The bright colors of summer, the hazy fog and the places we played—I see them all. Everyone yelling to catch the ball—I remember it all.

Cricket. In Pakistan it became my favorite sport. Now whenever I see it, I remember the endless nights in which I played cricket. Cricket, the game I hate to love. ❀

—Muqaddisa Javad, 15, Washington.

"I was born in Pakistan and moved to the U.S.A. five years ago. Everyday I am learning something new from this western culture and relishing the memories of my own culture. Cricket is a very popular sport in Pakistan."

## Becoming A Man: A True Growing-up Tale from Cameroon



There are lots of stories saying that in Africa, it is better to be born a boy than a girl. Is this true? Is it false? I don't really know. But I often recommend some caution to those who tend to draw conclusions too quickly.

One morning, I was proctoring a national exam when one of my best girl students arrived a good ten

minutes late. She was admitted at the last minute, but when the exam ended, I questioned her in a reproachful tone. Where was her head to arrive late to such a serious occasion?

"C'est l'enfant, Monsieur," répondit-elle de sa douce voix.

*"It's because of the baby, Sir," she replied in her soft voice.*

"L'enfant? Comment ça l'enfant?"

*"The baby? What do you mean—the baby?"*

"Je devais porter l'enfant parce-que ma mère fendait le bois, Monsieur."

*"I had to take care of the baby, because my mom was splitting the firewood, Sir."*

"Mais morbleu, il n'y a personne chez-vous autre que ta mère et toi pour tenir l'enfant?"

*"But my goodness, is there nobody else at your place other than your mother and you to take care of the baby?"*

"Si, Monsieur, il y a mon père, mes frères, et mes cousins."

*"Of course, Sir, my father is there, my brothers and my boy cousins are there also."*

"Et alors?"

*"And so?"*

"Ils mangeaient, Monsieur."

*"They were eating, Sir."*

"Mangeaient? Mais c'est quoi cette histoire?"

*"Eating? What kind of tale are you telling me?"*

"C'est comme ça chez-nous Monsieur. Quand les hommes mangent, on ne les dérange pas."

*"It's like that at our place, Sir. When the men eat, we don't disturb them."*

Elle remarqua combien j'étais interloqué et poursuivit sa litanie. "Ah! Les hommes sont tellement bien, si seulement je pouvais naître garçon..."

*She noticed how much I was taken aback and continued with a list of complaints: "Oh! Men are so lucky. If only I could have been born a boy..."*

"Ah! bon! Si tu avais pu naître garçon? Si tu pouvais savoir combien il est parfois difficile d'être garçon, ma petite. Si tu pouvais savoir. Ecoute un peu mon histoire, tu me diras après..."

*"Ah! Well! If you were born a boy? If you could only know how difficult it can be sometimes to be a boy, my dear. If you only knew. Just listen to a little of my story. Tell me what you think after."*

I was fourteen, and I was the first boy in a family of nine children. Apart from going to fish with my father from time to time, I was leading the worry-free and exciting life of most boys of my age. Then my father fell ill suddenly and died a bit later. My elder sisters efficiently supported my mother in the house-keeping tasks.

The funeral ceremonies were properly organized with the help of our uncles despite the endless wailings throughout the period before burial. The people who were visiting us were amazed by the meticulous organization, and they were inundating me with tons of congratulations. Yet, I had only offered the strength of my small arms for some basic tasks. What did I understand about all these efforts, all this protocol? The grown-up men in charge, the real men, were stretching their minds and working their fingers to the bone to tackle all of this. Yet, they were always letting me know their conclusions, as if I had the power to change anything.

Ah! I was quivering. I needed to learn to become a man, a real man, a grown-up. But let's come back to my father for a moment. Before his death, when the members of our clan had a gathering on important matters, he had the main role. He was not the leader, but his title gave him the role of the disciplinarian, the bursar, chief of protocol and the negotiator. He was the one to organize almost everything, and he could solve almost any dispute. He was also the one to set up the —>

*“The bird which flies away leaves a feather. The man who goes away leaves a print...”*

amount of dowries for our daughters who were going to marry and, most terrible of all the tasks, he was the one to communicate the amount of the tribute that a widow had to give to her late husband's family, in compensation for all the care he provided for her.

But back then, I had no concern about all of that because I was dreaming of adventure, girls, of showing-off. Of course, here and there I was hearing dissatisfied murmurings regarding the way my father had settled some disputes or about the homages that the chief used to pay to my father when everything was well. But why should these old-fashioned issues bother me, subjects which did not obviously concern the people of my age? My father was there, a solid strapping man of around fifty years, sharp, energetic and discerning.

But now, the ancestors had suddenly called him back to them, and I was the natural successor. I had to replace him. From the frail and cowardly teenager that I was then, I had to become robust and courageous. From natural gentleness and daydreams, I had to become alert, bold, harsh. And my stammering? I had to be eloquent and enthralling. I was unable to even to make decisions for myself, but now I had to make decisions for women and widows.

“You will start with your mom,” said the Chief, bringing me back from my thoughts.

“I know, Chief, I know,” I learnedly replied with a hint of conceit in my voice, fascinated by all these advantages which are the exclusive privileges of our clan's men.

At the wake ceremony before the burial day, all the dignitaries of our clan were there, taking their seats in a sort of circle around our courtyard. It was a struggle for me to put my insecurities aside and take a seat among all these old men decked out with their loincloths and out-of-style jackets.

Drum rolls were still tearing through the air when the Chief got up and took me by the hand. He said, “Let the brook become a river, let the hill become a mountain, let the sparrow take the scale of an eagle and the lion cub be covered with the mane of a lion.”

As he was speaking, the hand he was using to hold me squeezed my wrist hard enough to break it, while his other hand waved a giant ceremonial fly-swatter about quite dramatically.

As the tradition requires, I had a loincloth around my waist, bare feet and chest, and around my neck hung a large collar necklace which symbolized the burden of my father. If one could see me, I looked more like a half-featherless rooster than an imposing and charismatic man who was supposed to impress these old fossils forming the council of the wise ones.

Finally when the Chief finished the speech, he gave me his large fly-swatter and demanded that the attendees give their attention to me.

My heart was beating wildly, but I breathed from my innards and I thrust forward with my trembling and uncertain voice: “The bird which flies away leaves a feather. The man who goes away leaves a print, and the offshoot must one day replace the banana tree. Our voices will resound across the world because the blood of the fathers runs in the veins of the sons as a guarantee of our clan's durability and faithfulness to our traditions.”

Everyone responded with unanimous nods of approval, “Ah! He speaks like his father... This is his father himself, the spitting-image,” they murmured in response.

I felt reassured for a time and I prepared myself to continue with a more calm tone when I heard: “Speak loudly. Your father used to speak loudly!”

So, I opened my throat while endeavoring at the same time to maintain the enormous ceremonial fly-swatter in the air, which was beginning to weigh a ton. However, their affirmations diminished little by little so I turned to the Chief, as though asking for his support. “Stand up straight!” he thundered in his steely voice.

The moment was serious, the seconds seemed to me eternities. Hey! Mr. Ancestors, don't you know any means to help me disappear from up here?

I mumbled some words again and decided to stop there. Was this then the end of the test? Nope! In taking my father's role in the clan, I still had to announce officially and publicly to my mother the value of the tribute that she had to pay and when she would be authorized to show herself in public places. So, they brought her forward. Her hair was in battle and she had an unspecified dress thrown on her shoulders like a coat.

—>

“Woman,” I started, “After all these years near your husband, our son, enjoying the fruit of his labor, we—the parents and brothers of the defunct who entrusted him with the force and the protection of the clan—settle the amount of your compensation as follows: You will present to me within nine days, three goats of good race, nine cocks, three bags of corn, five oil cans, ten bundles of wood and 200,000 francs cash. Even the smallest failure to meet this requirement will bring you the wrath and the curse of the clan.”

It was surreal. Whereas usually, I could never hold the gaze of my dominating mom without running the risk of collecting a nice smack, today she was the one to cast her eyes down in front of me, a fourteen-year-old boy who could hardly give himself a bath. Here I was, on the side of the strongest, but do you think I was feeling strong? Never!

I was the son of my mother, sharing her sorrow and quite aware that she could not satisfy this request. And when I saw her burst into sobs when I went down the string of requirements, I could not repress the desire to not be a man. My last words were intersected by large tear drops rolling down my cheeks.

“Les hommes ne pleurent pas!!!” hurla le chef.

*“Men don’t cry!!!” the chief howled.*

But I was not hearing him anymore. I was a small, sniveling man among real men—a funny boy who wanted to act like a man but ended up resembling a woman. Was I too sensitive to be a man? Was the weight of the traditions too heavy for me? Everyone will certainly have his or her own, personal opinion. But I still wonder why can’t we change these traditions. Perhaps if we were to change the traditions so that they reflect our conscience, we would end up changing the whole world for the better.

At the end of my story, I asked my pupil if she still wanted to become a boy. “I don’t know any more, Sir,” she answered.

And you, then, how would you answer? ❀

—Samuel Etouké Elimby, teacher, Cameroon.

## Is He Different?

“What is wrong with him?” they ask, as they stare him down. “Is he different? He seems different,” they simply state.

There is never compassion, never understanding... always unkindness, fear, and even sometimes spite. To answer, “He is different,” seems superficial.

What is ‘different’? Different is defined by what is normal. What is ‘normal’?

He has the mind of a young person, but the body of an adult. The carefree nature of a child spills forth from his soul with a heart bigger than words can express. He has compassion toward all human beings, despite their indifference and callousness toward him. They ask, “Is he different?”

He is not obsessed by worldly possessions. There is no jealousy for what his neighbor owns—the sports car, the brand new house, the white picket fence and the pool. He has it all with his one bedroom apartment and steady job, and he needs nothing more. They ask, “Is he different?”

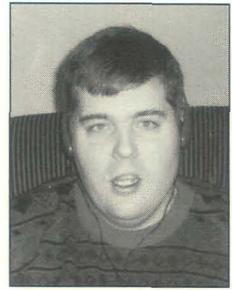
His love remains with family, friends and spending time together with these people. He would never lie, hurt, or deceive anyone. He cannot easily express his love, but his heart is bigger than anyone could imagine. They ask, “Is he different?”

He works hard, he gives to his community, and he loves life. The American Dream is his, despite his low income and lack of driver’s license and car. He does not expect society to owe him anything. They ask, “Is he different?”

I contemplate my response and finally answer, “Yes, he is different. Autism gives my brother a refreshing perspective on life. He is carefree, charismatic, and fun-loving. He does not envy the rich or resent the poor. He does not judge based on appearances or harbor anger toward anyone. He is interested in the life, love and happiness of every person he meets. He will stop a stranger to ask their name because he cares. He is unique. He is amazing. He is a profound teacher of the joy of a simple, honest life

Don’t we wish we could be different? ❀

—Heidi Heimlich, Missouri.



**Everything Bird** by Cherie Winner (*Northword*). Why are vultures so ugly? What is an owl pellet? Are birds smart? With plentiful photographs, this book seeks to satisfy a young person's curiosity about birds. After piquing an interest in bird biology and behavior, resources are listed so readers can further develop their bird savvy. Ages 8–14. ISBN: 978-1-55971-962-9.

**The Day the Dragon Danced** by Kay Haugaard. Illustr. by Carolyn R. Barritt (*Shen's Books*). An African-American girl brings her grandmother to a Chinese New Year's Parade, where people from diverse cultures work together to give life and rhythm to the main float—a dragon. Ages 5–8. ISBN-10: 1-885008-30-9.

**The Buffalo and the Indians: A Shared Destiny** by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent (*Clarion*). This book shows the relationship between the Plains Indian tribes and the once abundant buffaloes. Combining history, Indian stories and science, the author shows that while the buffaloes and the tribes suffered due to the settling of the West, they are establishing a new strength and presence on the plains. Ages 9–13. ISBN: 0-618-48570-8.

**New Clothes for New Year's Day** by Hyun-Joo Bae (*Kane/Miller*). The beautiful illustrations of a young Korean girl dressing for the lunar New Year's festivities do most of the storytelling in this colorful book. Readers learn that many aspects of the dress carry special symbolic significance and express a resolve to better oneself in the upcoming year. A great book! Ages 4–7. ISBN: 978-1-933605-29-6.

**The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering** by Sharon Mehdi (*Viking*). At a time when the news is grim and we feel powerless, this inspiring story tells of two women who want to change the world by standing for what they think is right. In the beginning, no one takes them seriously, but soon they are joined by countless others to transform the world. The story allows us to rediscover that great things are possible when we work together. All ages. ISBN: 0-670-03460-6.

**Wild Animals of North America: A Poster Book** by Karl Meyer (*Storey*). A book of dramatic, pull-out photographs of animals in the wild: a white snowshoe hare on a snowy field displays its large hind foot, two bald eagles dance in the air with mountains as the backdrop, a cougar's muscles strain as it leaps from a sandstone plateau. On heavy paper with facts about

**Martha Ann's Quilt for Queen Victoria** by Kyra E. Hicks. Illustr. by Lee Edward Födi (*Brown Books*). A beautifully rendered account of the life of Martha Ann Ricks, a former slave, who spent the greater part of her life in freedom making a quilt for the Queen of England. Her story is set within a larger one—that of the sixteen-thousand manumitted slaves and free Blacks who chose or were encouraged to return to Africa (Liberia) long before the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 chapter in America's history that has so often been downplayed.

This book is a welcome addition to the children's literature on slavery and its legacy. Lee Edward Födi's expressive illustrations bring the story's characters to life. It would make me proud to see **Martha Ann's Quilt for Queen Victoria** used as a Social Studies resource in elem. grades. Ages 5–9. ISBN: 978-1-933285-59-7.

—Henrietta Blyden, educator, New York.

the animal on the back, the photographs could be used as animal identification flashcards or hung on a wall. Ages 8–13. ISBN-10: 1-58017-643-7.

**Mercy on the Teenage Chimps** by Gary Soto (*Harcourt*). One boy decides to take up residence in a tree after being humiliated in front of a girl. His best friend must right the situation to get him back on the ground. This novel addresses the experience of becoming a teenage boy, with all the new feelings and frustrations attached to that change. It also celebrates the role that friends can play at this time in life, supporting each other. Ages 12–15. ISBN: 0-15-206022-7.

**Go to Sleep, Gecko! A Balinese Folktale** by Margaret Read MacDonald. Illustr. by Geraldo Valério (*August House*). In this cumulative tale, Gecko learns that his well-being is connected to the elephant, fire-flies, buffalo, rain... the whole village. And, we learn that we are all interconnected; our well-being depends on that of the entire world. Ages 4–7. ISBN-10: 0-87483-780-4.

**The Lizard Gang** by Kirra Somerville. Illustr. Grace Fielding (*Magabala Books*). Written by a nine-year-old *Martu* from Western Australia, this prize-winning picture book deftly celebrates cooperation over competition. Ages 5–8. ISBN: 1-875641-89-0.

## CULTURAL COLLAGE

### Sasha's Folk-singing Competition



*My name is Sasha. I'm twelve. I live in the town of Bologoe, where I go to music school. I draw, play the piano, sing songs and learn English there. I like to study music and to sing songs very much. I sing a lot at concerts.*

*And, not so long ago, I took part in the folklore song competition in Tver city. I sang three songs there. My mum and my folksong teacher supported me and helped me very much at the concert, as I was a little worried.*



*I had a beautiful costume: a white blouse with lace and a red dress. My folksong teacher, Irina Sergeevna, taught me a lot and that is why I sang very well and won a certificate. I was very glad that my work was appreciated at its true value. Now, I am a girl who is happy, cheerful, and confident of success.*

*This is my song!*

*—Sasha Juravleva, 12, Tver Province, Russia.*

### Зеленая рощица

Зеленая рощица, чтож ты не цветёшь?  
Молодой соловьюшек, ох чтож ты не поёшь?

Молодой соловьюшек, чтож ты не поёшь?  
Запел бы Я песенку, ох да вот голоса нет.

Запел бы Я песенку, да вот голоса нет,  
склевал бы Я зёрнышко, ох да мне волюшки нет.

Склевал бы Я зёрнышко, да мне волюшки нет,  
голубка гуркует ох да, что голубя нет.

Голубка гуркует да, что голубя нет,  
молодка горюет ох да, что молодца нет.

### Green Grove

Why do you not bloom, green grove?  
Oh, why do you not sing, young nightingale?

Why do you not sing, young nightingale?  
I would sing a song, oh, yet I don't have a voice.

I would sing a song, yet see, I don't have a voice,  
I would peck at a grain, oh, but I do not feel like it.

I would peck at a grain, yet I do not feel like it,  
A female pigeon cooes sadly, oh, that the male is not there.

A female pigeon cooes sadly, that the male is not there,  
A young woman is in grief, oh, that the man is not there.

*Translation by Elnur Ahmadov.*



### AMANDA PAIGE'S ART

I sat down one day at my desk and began to sketch in pencil; I didn't know exactly what I wanted to achieve on paper. I went by a feeling. Most of my art is kept in a sketch diary—instead of having a written diary, mine consists of drawings.

In *OM*, (see left) I show peace, joy, light, ultimate belief and the world being at One. However, like much other artwork, it could mean something completely different to another person. My medium (after I sketched in pencil) was paint, outlined with metallic markers.

*—Amanda Paige, homeschooler, 15, Florida.*

Sometimes we may not take seriously what our sons are learning and doing, telling ourselves that “boys will be boys.” Other times, we may take what they do too seriously and tell them to “grow up and act like men.” Raising sons today, with our concerns about the violence to which they are vulnerable and the controlling and abusive male roles they may grow up to inhabit, is a challenging occupation. How do we guide them from boyhood to manhood with their strength, creativity, caring and lives intact, remembering that they are boys, but inevitably boys will be men?

Many of us operate out of a tug-of-war theory of parenting with our sons tied to the middle of the rope. We see ourselves as pulling against the media, peer pressure and the temptations of modern society for our son’s attention and allegiance. This approach can lead us to feel constantly embattled, trying to save our sons from the evil influences out there.

We need to realign ourselves so that we are on their side, instead of trying to get them to be on our side. Our sons are not unthinking and gullible people tempted by horrible (but tantalizing) fates. Our boys have feelings, thoughts, ambitions, dreams, and the capacity to make their own decisions. We need to strengthen their ability to make good choices about their lives. We need to trust that they will pick their own best directions, activities, friends and future given the options they see. We can help them expand those options.

Of course they will make mistakes. Few of those mistakes will be fatal and most of them will be necessary for them to grow and learn how to be mature adults. Our challenge is to help them make their own choices and mistakes beyond simply carrying out the traditional male role training in violence and control.

How are boys trained? From a very early age, a boy is told to “act like a man.” Be tough, be aggressive, don’t back down, don’t make mistakes, be in control, take charge, have lots of sex, have money, be responsible and don’t show any feelings. I have come to call this the “Act Like a Man Box” because it feels like living in a box. One reason we know it’s a box is because every time a boy tries to step out, he’s pushed back in with names like wimp, sissy, mama’s boy, girl, fag, nerd, punk and others even more graphic. Behind the names are the fights. Most men were in a fight sometime in their youth to prove they were in this box.

## BOYS WILL BE MEN:

There are lots of cultural variations on this theme, but the similarity of male expectations across cultures in the United States is striking. Boys themselves have different strategies for trying to survive in the box, or sneaking out of it at times, but the scars from living within it are long lasting and painful.

As parents, even though we may fervently want them to get out of the box, there are probably subtle and not so subtle ways we reinforce the importance of being in the box. Have you ever not held, hugged or kissed your son because you were afraid it might make him too soft? Have you discouraged him from crying or been uncomfortable in the presence of his feelings?

We may think of our son as too soft or a wimp for not standing up for himself more aggressively. We may become fearful for his safety and offer lukewarm support if he shows interest in activities that are not traditionally male or are not as aggressive.

We may encourage him to participate in athletic or other competitive programs because we think it’s good for him, without questioning the values he learns from these activities. There are probably ways that all of us sometimes give up and say “boys will be boys,” failing to challenge the messages and training boys receive from TV, movies, books, sports and their peers.

Perhaps most importantly, few of us talk to our sons about the gender role training they receive. We don’t help them notice the consequences for themselves, women, and other men. We don’t challenge them to think critically and develop communication and problem solving skills to get out of the box.

### Resource!

**From Boys To Men:** *Spiritual Rites of Passage in an Indulgent Age* by Bret Stephenson (*Park Street*). In Western cultures, adolescence is often a long and turbulent time for boys and for the adults who care about them. This book proposes that adolescent boys may benefit from rites of passage inspired by more traditional cultures, investing the transition from childhood to adulthood with more structure and challenge, leading to a sense of pride. A thought-provoking book for parents and educators of adolescent boys. ISBN-10: 1-59477-140-5.

## Guiding our Sons from Boyhood to Manhood

### What Do Boys Need From Us?

What do boys need from us to become the healthy, creative, intelligent, compassionate, interdependent members of the community that we know they can be?

#### *Practice expressing feelings*

Boys cannot be in touch with themselves or close to others if they cannot express their feelings. To help them we can regularly ask them how they feel. When we read stories and watch videos with them, we can ask them how the characters feel, and how they would feel if they were in that situation. We can also help them find ways to express their feelings besides words, such as through art, music, writing and dance.

#### *A chance to nurture*

Besides lots of healthy nurturing, boys need the opportunity to become nurturers. We should assume that boys naturally can and want to nurture others. We can give them plants, animals, dolls, stuffed animals, and younger children to care for, commensurate with age and abilities. We can help them practice the skills and learn the joy, satisfaction and responsibility in nurturing.

#### *Someone to talk with about the hard subjects*

Don't wait to talk with them. Many of us postpone talking with our boys until they are adolescents because we are uncomfortable talking about sexuality, drugs, violence or other difficult issues. The best time to begin is in elementary school, at an age-appropriate level. At that age, they are still listening to us, and they are not yet ready to experiment with different behaviors. We can use books, videos, TV programs and news items to talk about sex, violence, drugs and other difficult issues.

Talking about sex or drugs does not encourage young people to experiment. In fact, it lessens their need to. If we wait until they are teenagers they may already have so much confusion, fear, or misinformation that they will not listen to us.

#### *A chance to participate and make a difference*

We know that boys have a tremendous sense of fairness, concern for others, and that they want to make a difference. Community service projects are a wonderful way to take them into the community to participate. We can take them to a program for feeding the hungry or an environmental cleanup project. This gives them a sense that they are part of a community and to learn that in a community, people care for each other. They

get to see through their actions that they can make a difference in other people's lives.

When I ask people at a workshop to name some of the wonderful qualities of boys, they throw out words like energetic, challenging, curious, intelligent, caring, rebellious, creative, artistic, expressive, dramatic, pushing the limits, wild, passionate, loving, clever, ambitious, hardworking experimental, fun-loving, sexual, vital.

Today, when boys and young men are portrayed as violent, drugged out, underachieving sexual predators and the cause of many social problems, it is easy to forget the wonderful qualities of boys and young men. However, if we stay grounded in our love, caring and high expectations for our sons, we can help them stay safe, develop strong and caring relationships, and achieve their most creative and visionary dreams.

—Paul Kivel is an educator, activist, writer, and parent. His book, *Boys Will Be Men: Raising Our Sons for Courage, Caring, and Community*, and many other resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).

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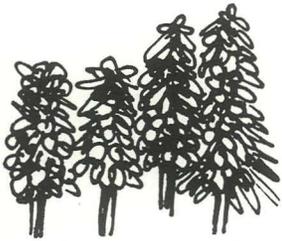
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**Winner, the National Association for Multicultural Education, EdPress, Writer, Parent's Choice and EEA Awards.**





## Understanding Native Forests' Ecology

How can we, as educators, enlighten children to the intricacies and beauty of native forests? Walking with them through a cathedral forest system would be ideal, yet many schools lack the funding for such field trips. So the Native Forest Council ([www.forestcouncil.org](http://www.forestcouncil.org)), a national public lands protection organization, came up with "Native Forests Are Not Tree Farms," an exquisite Powerpoint presentation that walks kids through the development of a forest.

Using 183 photographs from the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests, along with private and state forest lands, the visuals provide educators with a plethora of ecological and biological information about a functional forest ecosystem. There are no calls for advocacy or contentious debate on forest harvest. However, students and teachers recognize that tree plantations are simply monocultures, and when forests are cut there are significant trade-offs.

The Powerpoint takes students on a visual journey of breath-taking images. Sequenced to help students comprehend the natural patterns of a forest, mini-sections explain the vital "cogs" of a native forest. Students will learn how red alders colonize a disturbed area, followed by Douglas firs forming a massive canopy. Along the way, those "shade-loving" cedars, yews and hemlocks gracefully form an understory as nature weaves its way to make this forest an "ancient forest." Students are exposed to the niche of snags (standing dead trees) and their inhabitants, such as the Fisher, Marten, Spotted Owl and Pileated Woodpecker, along with other denizens of the deep forest. As snags fall, they become "nurse logs"—huge, organic depositories of mycelium, humus and other nutrients. Most importantly, they are a framework by which all growth will take root! Forest ecologists often state, "a forest grows on itself," and new appreciation is given to this downed tree.

One of the highlights of the slide show is the often overlooked topic of soils: the layers or horizons, the rich organic components, soil's innate ability to store water and its ancient history under the more appreciated hemlock and fir giants. Here is where you can get creative (or simply email me for ideas)! In my classroom, I bring in forest soil samples from a native forest, a recently cut and replanted tree plantation and a 12-15 year old replant. There is no "bad soil," yet, indeed the students notice big differences in the samples. Students measure the layers, examine the fungi content and find countless treasures from cyanide millipedes to snail-eating beetles. Students clearly notice the difference in tree farm soils. As the future decision makers, they need to understand the trade-offs of converting forests to plantations.

There is a sequence about the logging practices that have generated so much debate. Shot on logging sites, the children watch trees fall, slash (leftover debris) burn, logs

being carried out, and a native forest replaced by a monoculture of conifers. The problems associated with such short rotation forestry, such as disease and wind damage, are rarely discussed in our nation's schools. Aerial photos of large clear cuts open dialogue on the biodiversity dilemma of fragmentation—habitat sliced into puzzle pieces that significantly alter the ecosystem, reduce water purification and lead up to the invasion of exotic plants like the pesky Scotch Broom.

Students are spellbound by the "critter shots" ranging from salmon swimming in the pristine and oxygen rich riparian waters of a cedar shaded river, to the grand Roosevelt elk and the motherly care of a tree vole grooming her baby. "Indicator species," or those species that signal a healthy and vibrant ecosystem, are represented by amphibians, with photos of tree frogs and salamanders.

Punctuated throughout the production are question sections: for example, a sequence of slides examines the basic structure of a forest, from the ground up to the canopy. Shots from both a tree farm and a native forest allow students to compare and contrast the two.

Lastly, a set of slides examines the "Biscuit" fire, a large fire that actually benefited the forest and offers secrets into the role of fire and nature's healing growth after this natural change. Here, you can lead a discussion on whether logging should occur after fires, the role of fire, and how fire suppression actually endangers a forest more than fire itself.

I also do a tree identification lab with this, providing every student in my Earth Science class with the sprigs of 16 different conifers and 5 different broad leaves to be charted and preserved, to be used numerous times in class. This brings the class to life.

Mix in the soil lab and do some simple water tests and your unit becomes an integrated tangle of interwoven concepts. Critical thinking being our paramount goal, we can ask the students: "Should forests be converted to tree farms?" Should public lands be left alone for the inherent ecological services they provide? Should specific, private lands be designated as areas for growing fiber? Should alternative sources of paper, like kenaf, replace pulp trees?

How long should this "unit" last, you may ask? The presentation offers you the latitude to design your own lessons and choose their goals. The Native Forest Council believes that schools are currently flooded with materials from the timber industry. While it may be reasonable for children to be exposed to those viewpoints, do they give the whole story? I believe they do not. The Native Forest Council presentation focuses on the missing ecological viewpoint.

—John F. Borowski ([jenjill@peak.org](mailto:jenjill@peak.org)) has taught high school science for the past 26 years. For a copy of the Powerpoint, contact the Native Forest Council: [Info@forestcouncil.org](mailto:Info@forestcouncil.org).

## Editor's Mailbag!

### Dealing with Gossip

I believe in peacemaking. Everyone has to deal with gossip at some point, in schools, in offices, in neighborhoods and in our daily lives. The Buddha and don Miguel Ruiz are spiritual teachers who think that gossip is like a poison that spreads from one person to another and is harmful to communities. These stories are myths or lies about others that can lead to conflicts. Myths create images in our heads.

Everyday I try not to gossip about myself or others because it is harmful. It divides people. On some days, I'll ignore it. Sometimes I'll walk away or change the topic when I hear gossip. The Buddha calls this practicing 'right speech.'

What I try not to do is to take it in and have the myth become a part of my spirit. On a good day, I may feel compassion for the person, send him good wishes and leave. I may wonder why the person is gossiping but would try not to judge him or her. I might ask myself (or the person) what need s/he has that is not being met. Marshall Rosenberg calls this compassionate or nonviolent communication.

I know that no one is perfect. Louise Hay has said that criticism breaks down the inner spirit and praise builds it up. I try to be a person of integrity each day. In the end, that's all that really matters, if I know I've done my best.

Gossip causes disharmony. It is important that conflicts are resolved quickly, if possible. We need to be responsible for our actions and apologize, if necessary. We need strong, positive and productive communities in which to grow and enjoy life. And we need to be supportive and caring toward our friends, relatives and others. As the Dalai Lama once said, "Kindness is my religion."

Wishing you peace.

—Patricia Wong Hall, Asian American educator, Oregon.

### Praise from a New Subscriber

"More power to you and your fabulous team for this oasis in the desert. A good, wholesome, multicultural magazine to nurture our children's souls."

—Prema Ramachandran, parent, Singapore.

• **PEN PALS!** Saturday Enrichment Class of 35 students (grades 6 – 8, ages 11 – 14) wants pen pals. Contact them c/o Ms. Elizabeth Whitesell, teacher, Stephens Middle School, 1830 West Columbia St., Long Beach, CA 90810 USA; or, send an e-mail to: ewhitesell@lbusd.k12.ca.us.

Art: Amanda Paige, 15, Florida.



### On Dreams

The ones who said you couldn't—what did you want from them?

Did you ever think that maybe people are directed to you to say certain negatives to see how strong you are and how bad you truly desire something? Yet, you still remember how your heart cried without its tears shown compassion. Or when the sun shined through for only a glimpse, and you had a small window into the world you love. Yet, then the shades were pulled closed on you.

"That's not for you," they say. But you know better inside.

Then the magnificent happens, the day comes when the door swings open wide, greeting you as you swiftly walk into your believable dreams.

Today I am looking back, just for a moment, and I forgive those who told me I wouldn't meet success or happiness, for they didn't know what not to say.

This was staged in every generation. I thank my mom for being aware and never having to follow as they did. For all the others, I forgive you, and I hope you find your way one day.

—Amanda Paige, 15, Florida. "Live Your Happy Story!"

*What actions can we take to reduce our impact on the natural world? How can we make society more equitable? Send your thoughts to editor@SkippingStones.org. Please be concise and clear!*



**A Day at the Beach** Photos taken in Florida by Kirsten Phelps.

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