

# RIDGELINE REVIEW

ENMU-Ruidoso's Literary & Fine Arts Magazine



No. 2 Spring 2022

## About Ridgeline Review

*Ridgeline Review* is ENMU-Ruidoso's literary and fine arts publication, featuring work from students, faculty, staff, and community members. We define "community" to mean anyone who lives in or near the Ruidoso area, or who has been impacted by this area at some point in their lives.

Here at *Ridgeline Review*, we recognize the power of the creative arts, and we value their ability to connect our campus with the surrounding community and the larger world. *Ridgeline Review* is powered by student interns with guidance from college staff. As you experience the writing and artwork in these pages, we hope you feel as proud and inspired as we do!

*Ridgeline Review* serves as a creative space for this community, and the views and opinions expressed within don't necessarily reflect those of ENMU-Ruidoso.

## Submissions

Feel free to submit your writing and artwork year-round!

### *Guidelines*

- Fiction & Nonfiction (up to 10 pp.)
- Poetry (up to 5 poems)
- Art & Photography (300 dpi, saved as JPEG)
- Please submit written work as Word document
- Please include 25-50 word biography when submitting

Send all submissions or questions to: [jeff.frawley@enmu.edu](mailto:jeff.frawley@enmu.edu)

## Website

Check us out @ [ruidoso.enmu.edu](http://ruidoso.enmu.edu) under "Recent Publications."

Spring 2022

# Ridgeline Review

Number 2, Spring 2022

Editor: Jeff Frawley  
Managing Student Editors: Luciana Schiavone &  
Caitlin Daugherty

Eastern New Mexico University-Ruidoso's  
Literary and Fine Arts Journal

*Helping ENMU-Ruidoso Students & the Ruidoso  
community reach new creative peaks!*

Special thanks to the Spencer Theater and Coda Omness.

*Front cover photo by Jack McCaw. Rear cover photo by  
Amanda Daugherty.*

## From the Editors

This issue of ENMU-Ruidoso's *Ridgeline Review* is the culmination of the best creative minds within the community of Ruidoso and throughout the region. The poems, essays, short stories, artwork, and photography on display in this magazine are stunning and inspirational. Each piece has a creative person behind them, portraying their love for their community and their passion for the arts through their works.

I had the pleasure of working with and helping these individuals by allowing their art to be seen by an audience. *Ridgeline Review's* mission has always been to celebrate the creativity of the residents of New Mexico and to give them the chance to be celebrated by other like-minded individuals through a collection of literary art. Art and literature are more important now than ever, as it gives many going through a rough time hope and inspiration to succeed and flourish despite the hardships being faced.

I hope that you enjoy issue #2 of *Ridgeline Review* and maybe become inspired to create and enter your work next year.

Caitlin Daugherty  
Managing Editor

This issue is dedicated to Professors Jack McCaw and Dinah Hamilton. Thank you for your years of teaching, inspiration, and service at ENMU-Ruidoso.

Jeff Frawley  
Editor

**Table of Contents**

Jolee Magoosh	“Invisible Woman” (poem)	5
Chloe Reynolds	“Body Image” (artwork)	6
Orlando Cervantes	“Two Firefighting Short Essays” (essay)	7
Alan Higgins	“Bomb Cloud” (photo)	8
Tiffany Phillips	“Life and Death” (painting)	9
Jocelynn Benavidez	“To the One I Loved Before” (poem)	9
Mackey Muller	“I’ve Lived” (poem)	10
Luciana Schiavone	“Light” (poem)	11
Luciana Schiavone	“Monster in My Head” (poem)	12
Jack McCaw	“Grand Canyon God Beams” (photo)	13
Carla Darlene Hall	“Guess What I Am?” (poem)	13
Diana Watson	“Liyu Lake” (essay)	14
Jayden Wolf	“Eyes of Grief” (poem)	17
Jack McCaw	“Carlsbad Caverns King Palace” (photo)	18
Jack McCaw	“Star-Scape Time-Lapse” (photo)	19
Red Ryan	“God Might Be Laughing” (essay)	20
Cheyenne Dowdell	“Surreal Sunset” (artwork)	28
Hannah Kamphuis	“What’s My Meaning?” (poem)	29

**Table of Contents**

<b>ARTS 1520: DIGITAL MEDIA I SHOWCASE</b>	<b>30</b>
Cheyenne Dowdell	“Portrait” (artwork) 30
Dana Haynes	“Green on White” (artwork) 31
Dana Haynes	“Diamond” (artwork) 31
Lynell Magoosh	“Beyond the Front” (poem) 32
Alex Eakins	“Gone Are the Days” (poem) 32
Kayla Hein	“The Fire” (essay) 33
Caitlin Daugherty	“Celestial Body” (poem) 34
Caitlin Daugherty	“Guts” (poem) 35
Anthony Escalanti	“No Signs of Life” (story) 36
Sierra Otero	“Three Poems” (poems) 40
Heather Mayer	“The Two Matts” (essay) 42
Robert Trowbridge	“Two Action Figures in Wood” (sculpture) 50
Jayli Lueras	“To Pentagon or Not to Pentagon” (essay) 51
Christina Ponce	“My Pen, My Friend” (essay) 54
Caitlin Daugherty	“Lamb on the Hill” (artwork) 56
Mary Lemmond	“Building a Good Day” (essay) 57
Contributor Biographies	59

## Invisible Woman

Jolee Magoosh

*Author's note: This poem deserves a little back story. I want to honor the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls all across the country. There have been unfortunate events that have unfolded for many generations, and have been ignored for centuries. My contribution to these women is to aggressively express the fight that Indigenous women face everyday.*

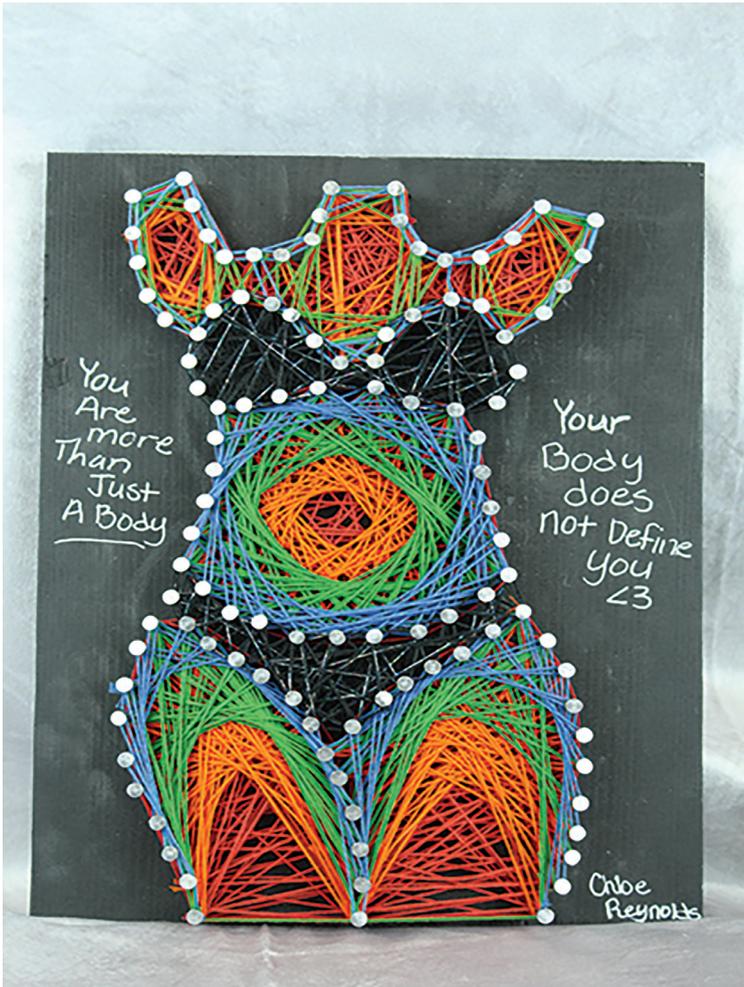
She flourishes in her jewelry, turquoise wrapped in silver.  
The sparkle of her identity  
lies within her hair, her smile, her native tongue.  
She speaks proudly to her mother.  
She is immaculate like a soaring eagle through  
a broken field.

She is scared.  
She sees a beauty being destroyed.  
She sees the women burning in flames,  
suffocating in the fires.  
She screams but no one looks at her.  
They walk past her.  
*Help!*

She screams louder.  
The sirens go right by her.  
She cries.  
The sirens fade.  
Silence...

They're burning, she is burning.  
She suffocates in silence.  
Nothing but a single thought,  
that fades in the smoke.  
In the sky.  
Into darkness.

Crowds of people look at the ashes,  
wondering what they've could've done.  
Wondering how they can help.  
When all they needed to do was listen.  
Listen to the girl screaming.



**Body Image**  
Chloe Reynolds

This piece of artwork shows the importance of everyone's body. The colors represent the way everybody generates heat. All of us generate heat, making us very similar. In this way, we should not be treated differently because deep down we are all exactly the same; we are all human. Society makes looking like a model such a big deal. This art shows that you don't need to look like that. You are perfect just the way you are because you are human. Your body does not define you and you are most definitely more than just a body.

I created this piece because all my life I have been insecure about my body. As a teenage girl, it may feel hard to feel like you fit into today's society. It can be so easy to compare yourself to what society considers "perfect." I wanted to create this art to encourage young girls like me that your body is perfect just the way it is.

## Two Firefighting Short Essays

Orlando Cervantes

### The Anderson Creek Complex

The year was 1982 and I was nineteen-and-a-half years old. It was my first year fighting fire. There were twenty of us and most had experience fighting fire. We had a crew boss whose name was Junior. He was a veteran fire fighter. We rode a bus from Mescalero to Albuquerque and from there we took a plane to Redding, California. It was also my first flight. I remember it was so awesome, the feeling of power as the jet took off from the ground. It felt like we were going straight up. I sat there looking out the window, watching the wing flexing as we went through the air. My stomach was in a stew. The flight was about three hours long. As the plane touched down there was a jerk forward. We unloaded the plane and I saw hundreds of yellow shirts next to the building. As we came down the ramp, I could see there were two more planes behind us just about to land. All were fire fighters getting off. There had to be at least a thousand of us.

We all started loading the buses; there was a whole fleet of them. It took five hours to get to the fire. The name of the fire was Anderson Creek Complex. The next morning the skies were dark from the smoke and it was hard to breathe. The smoke had settled in the valley overnight from the fire, which was an hour away. So we loaded on the buses again and headed out to the fire. As we got closer to the fire, I could see trees torching. The flames must have been hundreds of feet high. The smoke thickened in the air. I was both excited to be there and amazed by the destruction. My heart swelled from the damage. There was nothing left behind but ash. We began to dig line. It was so hot I pulled my scarf up over my face; the heat burned my skin through my eyes until they teared. There was no getting away from it, the fire just kept getting hotter. Then the fire began to roar like a thousand locomotives. I felt scared when I looked around and I saw that I was alone. The rest of my crew had pulled back and I didn't hear them when they gave the command. I was alone and trapped. My flesh was burning and I was terrified. I fell to my knees and began to crawl back down the line. The trees began to explode around me and I panicked. I couldn't see from all the smoke burning my eyes. The heat was so intense that the air burned my lungs. I tried not to breathe. My heart raced. I began thinking, *I am going to burn alive. Oh my God.* Then I saw the road. I could feel my skin blistering all down one side of my face. I crawled even faster. Finally, I was safe. Thank God, I survived.

## Two Firefighting Short Essays

Orlando Cervantes

### Yellowstone

Since I started fighting fires, I have been on hundreds all over the United States. One in particular has left a lasting impression: Yellowstone National Park, 1988. It was one of the saddest moments in my life. There were hundreds of animals burned alive: bear, deer, elk, and foxes. My heart was broken from all the life that was lost there. We were told not to touch any of them. It was hard because some of them were still breathing. They were suffering and we had to stand by and watch them die. The forest ranger said that we couldn't interfere. It was beyond sad watching them gasp for air and there was nothing we could do for them but watch. We looked at each other and put our heads down. No one said a word, we just kept digging line, trying not to look up and think about it. We started to dig fast to drown out the sound of the animals trying to breathe. Nature is unforgiving; it takes life, all the same. Big, small, young, and old. They were burned so badly that their hair was singed to their skin. It was an ugly look. I will never forget it; even after all these years I can still see them suffering on the ground, at the edge of the fire line. I have always had a deep love for animals. It was hard for me to watch. We dug line all night long and into the next day. Through the night we could hear the baby animals crying out for their mothers. I am a tough guy, but it brought tears to my eyes. It was the toughest fire I have ever done.



### Bomb Cloud

Alan Higgins



## **Life andf Death**

Tiffany Phillips

## **To the One I Loved Before**

Jocelynn Benavidez

To the one I loved before,  
For there had been a time, your love mattered.  
Now, there is dark where one could have mattered.  
You twisted the key, to open my heart.  
Now you twist up lies, and leave me to depart.  
I cannot say where I shall go  
For I do not know where I shall go.  
Until the next time, my heart is lost.  
Where did it go? I do not know...

**I've Lived**

Mackey Muller

I've come to love my skin. It has proof that I've lived.

Every stretchmark

casts a glow like a crack of white lightning upon olive-skinned hills.  
Illuminating vanity in my soul and emerald eyes.

Like silver roots stretching across my thighs that have helped my  
body to bloom, and to nurture my growing son.

Every scar

had a healing process that taught me lessons only the healing could.

Marked with an intense sorrow and hopelessness of being no one's  
own. Not a daughter, not a sister, not a friend, and not a lover.

My slender scarred wrists prove that bright red blood no longer  
dries atop rusty razors and drips to a hideous laminate bathroom  
floor, while my mother sobs hopeful whims on the other side of a  
locked door. I diverted from such things and became whole again.

Every split

on the palms of my hands and the shins of my legs dug and scraped  
violently in my skin. Gravel roads and shards of glass have nothing  
on me.

I've stayed wild and free.

Every soft pigment my skin fades into

light pink flushing through joyful cheeks warm to his touch.  
Powder blue veins embracing mine, golden eyes like a seven o' clock  
sunset in Texas.

Show me that my heart pumps blood through me and sends  
butterflies to fill my nervous belly.

## Light

Luciana Schiavonne

My defense mechanism is to take my company away.

When I feel hurt I will simply dissolve.

You will not have the joy that I brought to your life.

With me, it leaves and you are left bereft of my beauty, of my soul. Everything that I am

That I have given to you, you have proven yourself unworthy of my attention.

The dawn breaks across the sky as I dance across your eye.

The one, the only biologically engineered specimen with my eyes that can dazzle you suddenly. As if a light comes on in a dark room, you realize loving me is easy. Loving me is fun until loving me is work.

The kind of work that makes your head throb and your heart sob. There have been nights where I wonder about your strength, as I'm sure you wonder about my wandering eye.

The way I seem to dance through the sky, refusing to touch my feet to the ground. I know my head is stuck in the clouds, I am addicted to daydreaming. I know you want me to be straight, I know you want me to be sane, you look at me with disdain. I am not straight, I am crooked and curved, bent and broken. My curves are proof that I can heal, and I am not sane.

That is the price you pay your inner child. She spots the beauty in the wild, she keeps me silly and bright. That little girl still clings to my soul. God bless you if you ever frighten her. She has a way with words that can carve the heart from your chest and leave a hollow hole. She means well, even though her head can swell. She is protector of my faith in mankind. She is protector of my wonder. You see I am messy.

I am too much for an ordinary anybody, and I am much more than I can put into words. But I am not yours. I am everything you cannot experience living life without. I am light.

Goodnight.

## Monster In My Head

Luciana Schiavonne

Your mothers, fathers, and grandfathers told you  
There is no monster under your bed  
That it was all in your head.  
When you grew up they told you that words can't hurt you.  
Those words that amputated  
a part of you  
Then you grew  
Grew into trust issues  
And they tell you  
you need someone to talk to.  
But who?  
Monsters can be manipulators  
Monsters don't look like dripping fangs and smell like rotting meat  
they can smell sweet.  
A monster can smell like old spice, feel like something nice.  
A monster can have a dazzling smile.  
Monsters are often found in denial, down the path of ruthless, violent, and  
vicious impulses.  
The path to denial is open to anyone who believes that monsters don't exist.  
So then believe  
  
what your mothers, fathers, and grandfathers told you.  
  
There is no monster under your bed. It is all in your head.



## **Grand Canyon God Beams**

Jack McCaw

*This photo was taken on a cloudy day in Grand Canyon National Park, where the sun peaked through clouds for only a few minutes, creating this dramatic event.*

## **Guess What I Am**

Carla Dalene Hall

Soft, shimmering grains of gold  
layering endlessly through days of old.  
Gazing down I wonder,  
where oh where  
ever will they be?  
Forever sifting,  
sliding, escaping  
under the toes of me.

## Liyu Lake

Diana Watson

The day after the Lunar Year holiday in Asia is similar to the day after Christmas in the States. In the States, we nestle in our warm homes, drive and take in the electricity-filled streets, and want to recover from all the gift anticipation, binge-eating, and late nights watching Christmas shows. Taiwanese Lunar Year celebrants do many of the same, but the day after their holiday the first thing they want to do is go out – again.

I live across the street from Liyu Lake, a small tourist attraction for families who want to abandon their concrete jungle communities for fresh nature. I could hear laughter, cries, and pitter-pattering of footsteps when I walked onto the lake's walking path. The usual desolate park instead was crowded with couples taking selfies and families trying to capture a beginning-of-year memento to put on Facebook. Normally, I listen to a podcast while I strolling. But today was special. The government gave us a gift. With the holiday also came a break from the constantly overcast skies that factories produce every day. I lifted my head to the sun and gazed at the chartreuse trees on the mountains, with blue skies behind. I looked with envy as I saw a paraglider cruising along, ecstatic to hit the lottery. No inconsistent gusts but steady, soothing breezes. I closed my eyes and pretended it was me floating through the clean-laundry-smelling mountain air.

Liyu Lake has trees, trees and more trees. But I noticed a difference today. What happened in the past week? Now the floss-silk tree had three times as many alabaster balls on the ground. Both children and adults were shocked that big spheres of “silk” could fall from a tree. They looked like pieces of clouds fell from the sky and landed at our feet. As I continued to walk, a purple parade of colors flooded my eyes. The *Ardisia Squamulosa* had thousands more wine-colored berries on it than usual, and the Rosy Trumpet tree had fuchsia- and cotton-candy-colored pom-poms cheering “rah, rah, rah” with the comforting winds to celebrate the beginning of the New Year.

I left the amethyst forest and met the models on the runway. The *Lanterna Camara* stood like royalty with its skinny, long-legged branches that exploded into hundreds of dense, impervious leaves. On the other hand, the *Bauhinia Blakeana* leaves were larger, almost heart-shaped. Both trees provided ample shade for the three or four tourists resting during their walk underneath.

And there were the trees that were the immigrants, the trees that looked like

they had no business being there but tried with all their might to be honorable citizens of this new country. The poor Mexican Frangipani looked dead, and the Japanese Autumn Maple seemed out of place. The Japanese during their fifty-year occupation missed their beautiful autumns, so they tried planting some maples with the hope that they could get a piece of home here in Taiwan. With great surprise to all onlookers, this loner survived.

But not all the trees wanted to celebrate. Some decided that they didn't want to join the party. In the five days since the last time I was at the Lake, the Formosan Sweet Gum lost all of her tiny, mustard yellow leaves. The poor bushes reminded me of the middle child no one ever pays enough attention to. Since everyone comes to participate in lake activities or look at the trees, no one cares about the bushes. From a distance, the bushes make the sides of the mountain look like emerald crystals that lead up to various hiking trails. These trails appear captivating, mysterious, but no one dares to explore. The *Lantana Camara*, the *Kusukusu Eupatorium*, the Golden Spotted Leaf, the Day lily and Hibiscus appeared as co-hosts and tried to give it their all with torn, sage-colored leaves hanging off the stems. The vibrant flowers I witnessed years before were all gone. This made me sad because I know how these bushes look in their glory. They often stole the spotlight from the trees when I first moved here.

Liyu Lake has many signs that say, "No Fishing." Despite that, I still see a few people carrying rods and believing that they will get a great catch that day. During the week, I often observe young Vietnamese factory workers trying to fish. They pull out their 100-meter fishing rods to catch fish in water that is putrid and heavily polluted. That doesn't seem to stop them though. Once I caught a glimpse of one man turning the handle hard and fast to pull the rod out of the water. I held my breath with anticipation. He pulled the guide out of the water with a skinny two-inch gray fish on the end of the hook. I wish he could have seen that I was watching him the whole time. So disappointing. All that for a tiny, polluted two-inch fish? My man needs to find a new pastime.

I passed the wannabe fishermen about seventy-five percent of the way around the lake and walked into an alley of Chinese lanterns. The outside open alley had a traditional red-brick ceiling and pillars. It was dark and cool, almost demanding that you stop and look up. When I did, I gazed at rows of amber and Chinese-red lanterns on the ceiling. They were battered, discolored, and many were missing with only the hooks left as evidence, but I didn't care. Every Chinese New Year when I see lanterns, I think of how far I've come by

speaking Chinese, understanding the culture, proud that I made a home in a place that I thought as a child was another planet.

Liyu Lake, on this day, didn't have the typical smells or sounds either. After I left the open alley, I came upon a pavilion. There I listened to a sixty-something-year-old grandpa play traditional Taiwanese music on the saxophone. I'm not a fan of traditional Taiwanese music, but slow nostalgic music fit the mood of the day. Once he finished playing the song, without missing a beat, he stepped off the stage, picked up a Xiao, and began to play the next song. Only three people sat in chairs and listened to him. Should I do the same?

Then I realized at this time of year entertainers know their music is needed for ambiance, no attention to them is necessary, so I decided to keep on walking. As I walked, most of the stores were empty, reminders of when Mainland Chinese came to visit in droves during the pre-election, pre-COVID days and spent gobs of dough on anything and everything. A few food stalls were open. One sold red bean cakes, another stinky tofu. The stinky tofu store I didn't see, but I knew was there. Once you smell that rancid odor, you will never forget it for the rest of your life. In the sixteen years I've been here, I've eaten it twice and I still can't stomach the stuff. At the main entrance, the parking lot looked like rows of Hostess Cakes in plastic containers lined up one next to the other. On the other side of the main entrance, a dozen young moms, dads, and grandparents stood waiting to board the Classic Train. Each car of this toy-like vehicle was one color of the rainbow. It drove lazy tourists around the Lake. "Not necessary," I thought, since most of the people who were walking around were senior citizens. Anyone could do the walk, fast or slow, in less than an hour.

Other excited holiday-goers lined up to board the Little Dragons, peddle boats to cruise along the lake. And these Little Dragons were complete with coverings because heaven forbid if someone gets darker from the dominant, strong, evil sun. I stared at the couples moving their feet in slow circles, chuckling about their lives.

On my way home, I took shade under a delicate, thin-leaved bamboo and gazed at Liyu Lake one last time. I watched the sun as it reached the three o'clock point in the sky. Ripples from the lake looked like the universe had spread Dolce Luna crystals all over it. That made me think, "Does Lunar New Year, like Christmas, appear more beautiful, more special because of the excitement of the holiday?" Perhaps, I have become Taiwanese.

## Eyes of Grief

Jayden Wolf

Eyes filled to the brim with grief,  
it feels as if acid has been dumped on my head with intentions of death,  
scouring for every crevice to get in to cause me the most pain imaginable,  
burning my skin, making it blister.  
the burn of sadness lights my eyes on fire,  
like a flambe station,  
charring any piece of food that touches it.  
Behind that anger is a much deeper emotion.  
Such a deep emotion that I feel tangled in it,  
as if I am a victim of a kidnapping,  
tied up to a chair to witness horrible acts done to the people I love that I  
cannot prevent.

Wiggling, pulling, and screaming but having no success.  
Stuck in the loss of two, furry, four-legged friends and two geckos of the past.  
Stuck under the stress of my sister's kidney doctors as she faces Polycystic  
Kidney Disease along with a possible hysterectomy.  
Stuck in the world of being healthy as a horse, not having to take but one  
medication for sadness that is easily fixed,  
while my mothers and sister are facing battles that I do not have to face.  
Kidney doctors that my step-mother and step-sister have to visit,  
knee surgery that my step-mother has to endure,  
strokes that my biological mother had to experience,  
epilepsy that both my step-mother and step-sister have to be medicated for,  
and being permanently disabled, which my biological mother must live with.  
My eyes are filled with grief,  
grief, sadness, and anger for many things.  
For my family and their battles.



**Carlsbad Caverns Kings Palace**

Jack McCaw

*This photograph was taken during a tour 110 stories underground.*



### **Star-Scape Time-Lapse**

Jack McCaw

*This photograph was taken in the Bonito River drainage during an overnight backpacking trip. The exposure lasted more than 5 hours.*

After fifteen years of service at ENMU-Ruidoso, Professor Jack McCaw will be retiring at the end of the Spring 2022 semester. Over the years, Jack has taught many science and natural resources courses, including biology, chemistry, physics, forestry, and anatomy and physiology. In addition to helping make ENMU-Ruidoso what it is today, he has inspired countless students with his dedication to their success, his love for science, and his generous heart. Recently, he has put in much time to help students begin their path towards careers in nursing. While he will be greatly missed around the halls and labs of our campus, it is exciting to know Jack will be able to dedicate time in his retirement to his many hobbies, which include travel, hiking, and nature and wildlife photography. We hope his various photos throughout this magazine (including the front cover) showcase Jack's amazing talent--and how much fun he's going to have exploring the great outdoors!

## God Might Be Laughing

Red Ryan

I must have lived in the cold so long that I became obsessed with burning. That first breath of fresh air, distinctively *soft* air, air that did not hurt my skin. It must have been in early May. I can vividly recall the relief that overcame me as the scarce sunlight hit my face one morning. It was hardly warm – but it was not freezing and that meant everything. Spearfish had only ever been cruel to me but even the slightest promise of summertime left me desperate and begging Spearfish for something kind. The snow was melting and the air was soft and the Policky family had waxy, leathery skin again from all the time they spent on their stupid boat at Pactola Lake.

There was nothing to do in that valley tucked between the Black Hills but sit day after day in my mother's turquoise rocking chair on the front porch, staring out into the forest that was so beautiful that, as a result, we hadn't seen real phone service or wifi in three whole years. I had often been told that the Hills were supposed to look black from a distance. They didn't. Yet still, I enjoyed the consistency of watching them from the porch each evening.

I hadn't lived there for long, three or four years by that point. My high school graduation had taken place in the Hills and I had just barely begun to identify with them by eighteen. I had even fallen in love with the forty-minute drives to and from school in the frozen winters that often nearly killed me because I just wouldn't slow down. Yet, the difference between seventeen and nineteen was gut-wrenching and the Black Hills looked different to me that summer.

It was around that time that I had developed the most ridiculous method of creating cold brew. Though I can promise it wasn't genuine cold brew. Just bad coffee that happened to be cold. Still, it felt right – sitting in the summer air, choking on words I didn't have yet, drinking cold coffee I truly believed was decent. This was in May, in between cold fronts and sleet-filled rain that wore me weary as I pleaded for summertime.

June came and I had arrived at a hospital in the Arizona Sonoran Desert, covered in blistering sunburns and a promise that I only laid out in the one-hundred-and-ten-degree weather for as long as I did because I knew how deeply I would tan. I had a choice as to where I would be treated. I could have gone to Denver, five hours from where my parents lived, in a hospital where I hear they strap patients to stiff beds and the walls are gray and the people are bitter like they tend to be in Colorado.

I was insistent that I go someplace with sunshine. I said that I wanted to return to the Southwest. One-thousand, two-hundred and twenty-one miles between myself and my family but it would be worth every inch of searing blue sky.

Nearly none of my clothes fit the dress code and so I had thrifted a handful of men's clothing items from a place in Utah: a large Hawaiian shirt, oversized button-ups, corduroy riding pants, and white linen attire that everyone warned me wasn't suited for the desert dust storms.

The string of my robe had been confiscated – the one I used to curl my hair each night – so I had learned to twist my hair just right in order to create the curls that I just didn't have time to burn into my long hair when we inevitably would be woken at five a.m. One of the patients had taken up knitting and I remember thinking that I could use the scarf she was creating to curl my hair if she would allow it. That is, until her scarf was confiscated and she was scolded for making it too long.

“What? You really think I would *knit* my own noose?” she demanded.

That must have been the funniest thing I'd seen in weeks. I could hardly have cared that my only hope for properly curled hair was long gone.

I kept quiet in group therapy and I gave shallow answers in personal therapy. Illness was unexplainable to me by that point. I had first been diagnosed with anorexia nervosa when I was ten years old and didn't even know what it meant. I'd been in and out of treatment my whole life and the only thing I knew for certain was that I would get better again, but I would also get bad again, and that I was tired. They say chronic anorexia is the most difficult to treat of any eating disorder. I would have agreed with that, as it was so ingrained into every part of my identity and my brain during the most formative years of my life.

It wasn't vanity. That was the only thing I knew for certain. Because when I was fifteen and my hair fell out in clumps between my fingers, I felt this distinctively sickening feeling of *happiness*. I was happy to see my hair fall out. I never wanted to be beautiful, I wanted to be sick. And this disease was designed to kill me, I knew it.

But recognizing that did nothing to help me. If there existed words of inspiration that could cure people with anorexia, I'd have been cured years prior

and I would have remained in the Black Hills that summer. So, I chose not to think about the fact that I was sick; I chose to distract myself throughout treatment instead.

I'd been slow to finish my Fannie Flagg book but had reached the end nearly two months into treatment. Overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness and regret, I closed it slowly. I've heard that people tend to gasp when caskets are closed. This was nothing in true comparison, but there was this sense of deep dread that accompanied closing that book and knowing that I could never read it again for the first time. I'd spent ten years intending to read it and, suddenly, it was over.

"Are you alright?" Jodie asked me, catching me by surprise.

Although I had been in the hospital for months, I had only just gained the kind of health to qualify for the larger home at the facility. It was like finding the right hair extensions and being recruited to a better sorority with a larger mansion – only the reality was that my doctor had simply determined that my feet were no longer blue like they were in June and I was eating my sandwiches whole. Not mutilated in such a way that a nurse might humiliate me at the dinner table for eating an egg patty on its own rather than sandwiched between two English muffins. I never liked British food. No, this was the home with more freedom, healthier patients, the promise of newcomers who weighed more than eighty pounds.

"I finished my book. I just wish I had brought more to read," I murmured, tossing the book onto the empty cushion next to me.

"I have extras. I brought a ton," she said and I looked up sharply at her with hopeful eyes. "I only have Westerns though."

Jodie didn't like anyone. She was the one who would act so cold to people they would confront her grudgingly in group therapy. And her favorite response: "I think you're just reflecting how you feel about yourself onto me." *Golden.*

"That's my favorite kind," I told her eagerly. Hadn't she seen me after each mealtime? Every time this girl, Alice, and I undoubtedly couldn't finish our meals, we would have to stay seated at the kitchen table to take a liquid supplement. We'd made a game of it. I taught Alice the scene from *Hidalgo*, where the main cowboy is out at the saloon taking shots and a man who lost

to him in a race declares that the cowboy's mustang should have been used for fertilizer.

Whoever got to be Viggo Mortenson first would declare, "You can say what you want 'bout me. But don't you go talkin' 'bout my horse that way," pretend to flip a coin in the air, down the god-awful supplement like a shot of whiskey, and then fake-punch the other in the face.

Then, we'd always switch roles so the other could take their supplement and we could finally join everyone else outside of the kitchen. Only a glass wall stood between the kitchen and the living room so the whole house got the Western performance of a lifetime night after night.

*Hidalgo* used to be my favorite movie. It began by telling the viewer that it was based entirely on a true story. But Frank Hopkins was a liar who fabricated a Lakota identity (he was entirely white), never knew Wild Bill (let alone performed with him), and never won races on an unbroken mustang. I was crushed when I learned this. Still, Viggo Mortenson, who portrayed Hopkins, really did sleep in the horse stables at night in between filming; and he would cook up roadkill if he ever struck it on the highway, so I suppose cowboys do really exist in a sense.

We went to Jodie's locker and she handed me a book. I can't remember the book she gave me. The first few pages were all right and it briefly distracted me. Yet, for those first few days in the better house (the second house), all I remember was Jodie. I recall glancing up at her during lunch one day and thinking that she resembled someone I knew. Then, nearly cracking the first smile I'd ever had at mealtime when I realized I was thinking of Willem Dafoe as a young and naive detective. *Mississippi Burning*. She had the same part to her hair, same length, the same glasses, nose. I never liked to cry during movies but I had cried during that one.

She used to stare at me each day, brown eyes from across the room until, one day, she just stopped. If she was assigned to sit next to me during any meal, she would pick up her plate and name tag and move as far away as possible. If I was inside, she was out on the porch, staring into the blue desert horizon. If it was over one-hundred and ten degrees outside or within an hour of a meal or thirty minutes of a snack, the porch was banned and she could be found seated at the far corner of the room, on the floor, and as far away as she could get from me with a book shielding her face.

## Ridgeline Review

“What does God think of you?” we were asked in group therapy and everyone around the room took turns providing mundane answers.

God wishes that I was kinder to myself. God didn't intend for me to do this to myself. God wants better for me. I am hurting God's creation when I hurt myself.

“I don't have an answer for that,” I said and no one pushed me because they knew I really didn't.

God wants me to nourish my body. God has better plans for me than I have for myself.

“I think that God is laughing his ass off right now,” Jodie said sharply and the room fell silent. She was tired of these questions.

She was tired of therapists bringing up God in such a Godless world. But there was nothing she could do to make them understand what God had done to her – what he had only done to *her*, and maybe to Gwenn, who would rush out of the room each time someone tried to get her to talk about God. How many times did Gwenn have to remind everyone of what had happened to her as a child during confessions? Why did they continue to believe that this idea of God, which had hurt her so horribly, was going to be the thing that saved her? I was tired of having to rush from the room just to catch up with her and make sure she was all right.

“I think he thinks this all is fucking funny. He thought it would be funny to make me want to kill myself and then make it *not work*. I want to love God like my parents want me to. But he made me with irony and is laughing at me right now. That's all.”

“And why do you think God –” the therapist began, but Jodie sharply cut her off.

“I said that's *all*. I don't want to talk about God anymore. If I did, I'd call my parents and talk to *them*.”

I had opened up just one time like that, but it wasn't in front of Jodie. It was in the first house, which they called Ocotillo, where I was asked what made me the most afraid.

I'd said: "I'm scared because I know I'll be alone forever. My friends all get into relationships and then they'll leave me alone because I never want to be married. But I can feel a void and I don't want to be lonely my whole life. That makes me feel trapped."

Lindsey, this thirty-two-year old patient who often liked to call me a *bulimic*, interrupted me and said, "I'm sorry, but how old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"Exactly. *Stop it*. You have so much time ahead of you. There's no need to talk like that."

And I didn't bring it up again. I spent that summer writing about other people instead. I wrote over three-hundred pages by hand just to keep myself busy. It was this story I knew I could never do anything with. This was because, at times, it felt a little too much like I had re-written *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* with different names and a different plot, but practically the same characters. Maybe Ruth never actually married that man at all and maybe she never died halfway through the book. Maybe Idgie sat on the front porch day after day, choking on her own silence, wishing that Ruth would come back home and she would by the end of it.

"They were friends, though. They were friends. I know it, I've seen the movie," people always said because they'd never read the book.

People liked the movie but if they knew that the love story between those two women was actually romantic, it would ruin it for them.

"Friends are important," they say. "Seeing just *friendship* on-screen is important and I'm tired of women in movies always having to fall in love."

I've seen friendship between women play out in stories a million times. I'd never seen two women fall romantically in love. But people want the friendship. They like Idgie when she just doesn't like men, but she doesn't like women either, and she still dresses in men's trousers and suspenders which is quirky and different. Never mind the fact that Ruth's baby takes Idgie's last name and the way Ruth and Idgie look at each other – ignoring that 1990s director pleading with them to keep it platonic. This wasn't enough for me, though. The story and everything about it had been ruined by the movie which had turned them into friends and I needed to fix it for myself.

## Ridgeline Review

But I just couldn't fix this book no matter how hard I tried. The way Fannie Flagg had been so nonchalant about Ruth falling in love with Idgie in Alabama during the 1930s was unmatched and no matter how badly I wanted to write it differently, my version of Ruth always died and this version of Idgie was always alone by the end.

I tried to sit near Jodie one more time, out on the porch. Not next to her. I was on a different couch maybe ten feet from where she sat. Still, just as soon as I sat down, she stood and rushed to the other end of the porch, where she laid down furiously. And at mealtime, when her name had been placed next to mine, she picked up her plate and name tag, moved to the other end of the table, and aggressively avoided eye contact as though she found it difficult to look away. What a change in pace from the first time she laid eyes on me.

Things got better when she left. She moved up to the third house, where you go when you're nearly ready to be released. I could breathe again knowing that she wasn't there, no longer having to make sure that I sat as far away as possible from her. Especially when far away never seemed to be quite enough.

I never moved on to the third house – I never was good enough for that. Practically everyone had cycled through treatment and I had stayed stagnant in that second house until I had reached a point where I was begging to go back home. I didn't care if I was never good enough or if I relapsed or if I never saw another summer. I wanted a Diet Coke. I wanted to have control over my life again.

Toward the end of summer, my very last week, everyone at the hospital knew that there was a spare bed in my room. One of my roommates had gone home against medical advice. And Jodie walked back through the door of that second house, her arm wrapped up in long white bandages, a nurse carrying a laundry basket full of her things.

"Isn't that girl from the next house?" the girl on the couch next to me muttered into my ear. "She must have done something. Do you know her?"

"Sure," I muttered back, studying the blank recovery journal in my hands as a movie played on the TV.

Jodie sat behind a couch across the room from us and cried for what must have been half an hour. There was no sort of privacy in treatment, so this was the closest she could get. We were trying to watch a movie – a Western

that I had picked out and had been excited to watch – but no one could help listening to her cries.

She had cut herself. I don't know how. We had no access to glass or knives or anything like that. So, I don't know how she did it, but she did, and it sent her back to the second house into the empty bed in my room.

Finally, she emerged from behind the couch, exhausted and dehydrated. I could have sworn she'd broken some sort of a record – I don't think anyone has ever cried for that long.

The girl next to me was whispering in my ear, “Invite her over. You're the only one she knows.”

“I'm not going to do that,” I mumbled, trying to keep my focus on the movie.

“Jodie, come sit with us on the couch,” the girl said to her, knowing there was no point in urging me any further.

*She won't, I thought irritably. If I'm sitting anywhere on the couch, she won't go near it.*

The couch was almost empty. Most of the girls were on the floor playing games with each other. Despite this, Jodie sat down on the open cushion directly to my left. I tried hard not to blink. Listening to her sob behind the couch had been painful and consuming. I despised the way it made my heart sink and bleed into my chest. Still, without looking at her, I closed the notebook in my lap, rose from my seat, and sat on the floor across the room. I would finish the movie but I would not sit near her.

I ignored the tears that began rolling silently down her cheeks and, that night, I slept out in the hall next to the nurse's station so that I wouldn't have to be near her before a car came to pick me up for my flight back to the Black Hills.

For years following, I truly thought that any woman who could possibly love me would hate herself if she did. That was what Jodie had shown me when she could have simply left me alone. Because I was a woman and she was a woman and she hated herself for what she was and she hated me for how she felt about me. I regretted leaving her alone on that couch for a while after, often wondering how I could have been so cruel.

## Ridgeline Review

The only regret I've had since was not standing up to leave her side sooner ...and with more resentment, the way she had done to me when I was still innocent. I regret that standing up was the only thing I did to hurt her when she had so purposefully made me think any girl who could ever love me would make me feel the way she did. I was sick, too, but she would never know why and she didn't care. She just wanted to make sure someone else felt the same self-hating shame she did, without ever realizing that we were already the same. And I know she did it on purpose just to make God laugh a little harder.



**Surreal Sunset**

Cheyenne Dowdell

## What's My Meaning?

Hannah Kamphuis

My life cycles between homework, regular work and video games  
Turning and beeping my way through a maze of dots, ghosts and fruits  
I don't have a set list of quests to complete so I can get to my goal  
No NPC's to tell me exactly what I need to do to move forward.  
I can't even find a super cool sword  
Even though it's too dangerous to go alone  
But I am trying to find a place in the world that's for me  
Aimlessly walking my way through the world  
Finding what I'm meant to do  
I know I like history, I know I like to teach  
The question that remains is how to get to my goal  
And know what that is  
I watch movies and anime, pretending I know my calling like they do  
I dye my hair greens blues and purples so I can be the protagonist in my own  
story  
I'm no magical girl or wizard,  
I don't have a powerful quirk to make me a hero  
All I can do is live my own story and make my own slice of life in a 3D world  
But my world of pretend usually get torn out from under me  
A tirade of beeping alarms reminding me to go make money and pay my bills  
Reminding me of how much I took being a kid for granted  
But the fact is I know but I don't  
I came to be who I am from the teachers that taught me,  
So well that I wanted to be like them, and teach the next generation  
What it means to hope  
What it means to dream, and what it means to live  
It's taken me 21 years to find my meaning,  
And that meaning is to teach.  
To teach history  
To teach how to write and convey your feelings  
To teach what it means to be kind  
To be compassionate  
I want to teach them how to be human.

## Showcase from ARTS 1520: Digital Media I

This spring, students in Digital Media I gained considerable practice with graphic design skills. ENMU-Ruidoso's new graphic design and art appreciation instructor, Dolores Chacon, brought her years of teaching and graphic design experience to our campus and classrooms. The college is excited and grateful to have her inspiring students!

On these pages, find a few sample student creations.

Interested in developing your own graphic design skills? Call or come check us out to learn more!



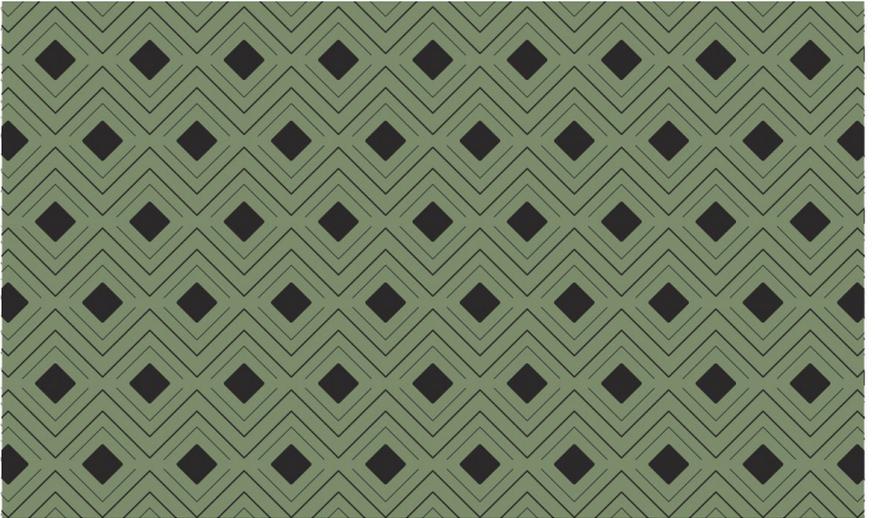
**Portrait**

Cheyenne Dowdell



**Green on White**

Dana Haynes



**Diamond**

Dana Haynes

## **Beyond the Front**

Lynell Magoosh

I love my crooked feet  
Moving in different directions  
Like night and day  
I love my flawed face  
Where little pebbles flow  
Through a rough valley  
I love my eyes, looking through  
A small glass window, searching  
For a glimpse of hope in a cruel world  
Listening with my ears, the sounds  
Of trees arguing as the wind blows  
I love my skin for  
It glows as the sun shines bright  
I love the birthmark on my stomach  
Shaped like splattered paint  
I love my body that carries the rapunzel-like hair  
Representing my heritage and holding the traditions  
Of my people because I was born  
To love every part of who I am

## **Gone Are the Days**

Alex Eakins

After the mega base, the glistening water fell down the center.  
After the gray and black dragon in the deep black abyss,  
After the years spent on this one world,  
I can only reminisce.

Gravity, monsters, magma, and your own creations are coming close  
To take anything and everything you own,  
No matter how hard you try,  
Gone is the throne.

1,472 in-game years spent in this cubic and simplistic world,  
43 large structures without use constructed,  
Yet all that's left of it,  
A file corrupted.

## The Fire

Kayla Hein

Everyone has a place. A place that is comforting and familiar. My place is by the fire. The landscape is nothing but dots of ponderosa pines and salt cedars. There is no other humanity to be found other than my close friends. Fire crackles and hisses in the wind. The warmth can make even the coldest of nights seem warm. A gentle breeze stirs the embers making them turn to a bright red.

The only sounds are those of my friends murmuring softly to each other. Then suddenly the hush is interrupted by the sound of sudden drunken laughter. No one knows exactly what is so funny, but everyone joins in. It is calm and peaceful.

Out in the distance, thunder rumbles its deep throated moan. We know that trouble is coming. The peace will not last for much longer. The gentle breeze becomes a harsh scream. It ruffles the long-overgrown grass with a ghostly gasp. The fire crackles and hisses in protest. Then, the first drop.

It does not rain much around the fire, but tonight there is a thundering sound. The sound of a waterfall. It is coming straight for us. The hail and the rain pelt the landscape. What was dry instantly turns to mud and mush. The landscape changes in a second. Desert rain is nothing to be messed with. They can make even the most macho man run for cover.

The pines drip water as if they were crying. Rocks turn shiny and slick. The tall unmown grass hugs the ground as if in fright. The once-hissing fire is now no more than a puddle. Logs that a moment earlier burned bright now looked like fish fighting for their lives.

The soot that had sustained them now drowned them. It was as if the water had taken the very life out of all of the scenery.

Every drop of rain had changed the landscape. Everything seemed so very unfamiliar to us all now. Calm settled in after the frightful event. A lone deer appeared in the distance. It was surrounded by the soaking wet ponderosa pines. It was exceedingly difficult to see at first. It was as if another ponderosa pine had sprouted out of thin air and grown before our eyes. Everything was suddenly a wonder. We looked up and the tall thunderheads parted to reveal a beautiful sunset. It was a dazzling display of reds and pinks. It was as if the

sun were shouting its defiance to the rain. Renewal was upon us.

The once-weeping grass again stood up as if to proclaim that it had never been scared at all. The crickets started chirping their merry tune. Dotted in the distance, the ponderosa pines and salt cedars started to dance in the now-gentle breeze. It was as if they were joyful and had never shed a tear.

Many people have never had a desert waterfall fall on their heads. The sudden onslaught of rain that leaves everything different. The landscape is immediately altered, but it is not forever changed. The pines may weep momentarily, but they will always dance again. The fire will be re-lit and we will enjoy the hushed conversations and drunken laughter that is shared between close friends. The landscape is what makes so many things so interesting, strange, and enjoyable no matter what kind of weather mother nature throws our way.

## **Celestial Body**

Caitlin Daugherty

A golden smile paired with  
Flaxen locks. choppily and greasily  
Stuck to the sides of a sickly pale  
Moon. The craters and pockmarks  
All remnants of a once smooth and untouched  
Planetoid. Peach fuzz and freckles and dimples  
And scars. Every mark and every bump a  
Story to be told. Like a map pinpointing every  
Experience and every struggle. Like a ruby  
Polished and shined from storms of grit and  
Detritus these marks are reminders of  
Bad times, so-so times, the best of times.  
From chubby cherub to skeletal skinny from  
Skeletal skinny to chubby cherub this  
Ever-changing battle wages on to this day.  
A pale living corpse that evolves with each  
Breath and despite being dead continues to  
Live.

## Guts

Caitlin Daugherty

There are long and wiggly squiggly guts. There are short and stubby little guts filled with worms and dirt and mud. The oozing and the swelling and the leaking and the squishing. The carious bones that once protected are nothing more than dull splinters carousing with the superfluous amount of ravenous roly-polies, rapacious roaches, cruddy carrion beetles, begrimed botflies, famished flesh beetles, and malignant maggots.

The putrefaction sweet and the rot sweeter there can be no doubt that this is a most saccharine occasion. The intimate mingling of flesh and muck. The malodorous festival of life and death on display. The depths of decay and the heights of spoil. These guts spill and pile and lay wherever they choose. Their eternal slumber, their retirement from duty, all celebrated as they vacation with the silly little insects and the funny fungi that came together for this most momentous party.

Perhaps in life, these intelligent intestines were once a part of a hardworking demure deity. Their day-to-day activities are done to the absolute. Never once failing, until this day. The end of a most effective career. The beginning of a restful, relaxing, tranquil, never-ending slumber. As we speak these still oozing and miraculously steaming guts are wiggling and wobbling and squeaking and sobbing as they are being herky jerked from side to side from little friends (fiends) on the inside. The rotten yellow melted eyes like runny egg yolks are peering down below at the funny fellows at play. The festering fingers twitch and point at a ditzzy dung beetle carrying off a chunk of meat. The ears once used to hear sweet music are now filled to the brim with merry maggots and buzzing botflies.

Perhaps life after death is not so sweet after all?

## No Signs of Life

Anthony Escalanti

Lee Daniels was on his way home from a long day of hunting. He was disappointed because he'd been out all day and hadn't shot one round. He began to wonder if all this global warming had anything to do with the deer population dwindling. He was eating the rest of his snacks that he'd packed for the ride which only consisted of peanut butter sandwiches and trail mix. He was also looking at houses along the roadside; he never imagined houses being built in these areas in his lifetime. New developments were popping up everywhere. These houses were nice compared to his neighborhood. They had brand-new-everything about them. He was cruising on a two-lane highway headed south. He came up to a stop light and to his right sat a gas station. He needed gas so that he could go out again the next day.

While he was in the gas station he grabbed a big cup of coffee, even though it'd been sitting there all day and probably tasted like battery acid. He still grabbed a cup anyway. He just wanted some caffeine. He didn't want any sodas or energy drinks, none of that stuff. He wanted caffeine and fast. He could make some coffee at home, but his wife would complain about the smell of coffee inside the house late in the afternoon. "It gives me headaches!" he could hear her say. This would make him feel guilty for making the damn coffee so late. His dad used to do it all the time: even right before he went to sleep he'd drink coffee.

Lee got his coffee and gas and drove home. He wasn't surprised that the coffee was cold when he took a sip.

He pulled into the driveway and saw that his wife's car was there. He didn't suspect anything. He walked in with his rifle so that he could put it away. He didn't want to leave it in his truck. He felt safe with it inside the house. He walked in and saw that the TV was on. It was on some kind of soap opera. Lee couldn't stand the sound of soaps playing in the background. It made him think about being forced to go to church on Sundays as a kid, or, worse, being forced into going to a baby shower. It was the mood it gave off that made him cringe.

He came back into the living room and turned off the TV. He listened out for any kind of movements or sounds.

Then he called out for his wife: "Kim!"

There was no sound. He sat down on the couch and turned the TV back, putting the channel on some old eighties action movie. He sat there. “Where is my wife?” he thought.

Soon he wondered more and more. So, he got up to get a drink of water. He watched twenty more minutes of the movie and then turned it off. He listened again for any movements in the house. He began to lurk around the house, hoping she was playing a trick on him. But there was no movement or any signs of his wife. This began to anger him.

“Kim!” Still nothing.

He thought maybe she went out with her family somewhere. He wanted to know. This was too strange; she’d left her car and the TV was still on. So, he reached in his shirt pocket to retrieve his phone and called Kim’s phone. No answer. Then he called her family members, her mom and her sisters, and asked if anybody knew where Kim was. He called her dad’s phone; Dillion was living in the next town over.

“Hey, Dillion, have you heard from your daughter?”

“No, we don’t really talk as much anymore, her mother put all these negative feelings in her head about me.”

“I know, but she’s not here and nobody knows where she is,” Lee said.

“I’ll be over in a few hours,” Dillion said, then hung up.

Lee walked back to the couch. He kicked something on the ground. It was his wife’s phone. “What was it doing here,” he thought. “She never leaves her phone.”

This scared him: he was powerless. He sat there listening to the quiet house for what seemed like hours. But only forty minutes had passed since returning from his hunting trip. He began to panic, but what could he do? He went upstairs to their bedroom and tried to take a nap.

“When I wake up she’ll be here,” he thought.

He took off his shoes and laid in bed with the rest of his clothes on. He fell asleep. He began to dream about his wife.

## Ridgeline Review

They were in the kitchen; she was making lunch. They were both standing by the cooking stove. He was looking at her hands as she stirred something inside a pot. Then she began to talk, but he couldn't hear what she was saying. He leaned closer and said, "What?" She gently said something. But no sounds came out of her mouth. She was looking down at the pot. This made him feel discomfort inside his heart. He knew something was wrong.

"What, honey?" he said as he leaned even closer to her.

Then in an instant she turned into an older version of herself. She had white hair and was partially a skeleton; the cartilage on her nose was worn off and there was a big black hole and she had rotting flesh dripping down around her mouth. He could see her molars peeking out at him.

"Where are you!" she yelled.

He jumped out of bed. It was dark now and he looked at his watch. It was about eight-thirty. "Kim!" he called out, hoping she would answer. He winced. "K-I-M!" he yelled even louder.

But no sound. He ran downstairs and then he yelled again and again. A feeling of uncertainty clouded over him. He sat down on the couch again. He started to sob a little. A weird, unsettling feeling crept in. This is how he felt as a kid when his mom would go to jail for a few days or would shack up at some guy's house for a week and Lee was forced to stay with his grandparents.

He put on his shoes and went driving around town, but he didn't know where to start. So he came back home, hoping that she would eventually return. He called the police while he waited. They told him that she was an adult and that he would have to wait twenty-four hours before he could make a report. He wasn't eating or drinking, which made him more dizzy. He sat down on the couch again and stared at the TV screen. He tried to watch the news, but he came to his senses and realized he hadn't checked the backyard.

"What if she fell?" he thought.

He walked around to the backyard but found nothing. He returned inside the house. He looked at the clock on the wall. It said ten-fifteen. He turned the TV off. Then he looked at the house. It was so happy. Like there was nothing wrong. He could almost hear the people in the pictures laughing and have a wonderful time in some other time, somewhere. But in his world he

was thrown off. He sat there thinking about how he could have stayed home instead of going hunting. He was in between jobs. He was waiting to be hired for the local forestry. He'd worked as a male nurse recently, but lost interest and wanted to do something different. His wife wasn't working; her last job was working for a local restaurant in town. That was about a year ago, but they had saved up some money to hold them in the meantime. They didn't have kids but that didn't mean they didn't like kids. They hoped to have some of their own someday.

Lee thought he could hear a buzzing noise. He didn't really pay attention because he thought it was probably a vehicle with a loud engine coming down the road. He paused and listened.

The noise grew louder. It sounded like a swarm of bees. Now it was inside the house.

“What the hell!” he thought.

Within seconds there was a bright flash of light coming from outside the house. He could see the widows light up. It looked like somebody shined car lights directly onto the windows. But there was something different. He could also see other colors, too. He thought he saw reds and greens, as well as orange. The house began to shake. He stood up but couldn't move. He was paralyzed. He tried to move but it was with no success. He wasn't in charge of his body anymore. Then the loud buzzing noise grew louder. He closed his eyes. Within seconds, Lee disappeared.

Kim's dad had been knocking for a while. So he walked in. He thought it was the only applaudable thing to do. He was worried for his daughter and his son-in-law's wellbeing. He walked around inside the house but found no one. He called Lee's phone. He heard it ringing on the floor in the living room. He noticed that the TV was on too. He walked over to the TV and turned it off. He didn't know where to go or what to do now. He walked into the kitchen and drank a big cup of water. All this worrying made him thirsty. As he was drinking his water he looked around and felt that something wrong. That something had happened to them. He put the cup of water down and then he called the police.

### Three Poems

Sierra Otero

#### Green

Green is the color of nature,  
The miraculous shades of life  
That flow through as a vein  
Or yet a feeling.

Her jade-green eyes stare  
Piercing through skin and mind  
Inspiring a new green to grow.  
It is a fierce emerald  
Though not precious.

It is repulsing,  
It spreads eating  
Away at the yellows, blues, and reds,  
Devouring the mind  
Wishing for destruction  
Overtaking the innocence and happiness  
With the deepest of greens,  
Envy.

#### Pizza Grease

The cheesy fingers of the pepperoni pizza grazed the buttons on the telephone leaving splotches of grease behind. It placed the phone on the edge of its slightly burnt crust, listening for the voice on the line. The voice answered and took the pepperoni pizza's order. Can I get a skinny human with short hair, please? asked the pizza. Will that be male or female sir? replied the voice. Male, said the pizza.

Across the room, the cheese pizza entered with a perfectly cooked crust and an assortment of cheeses melted together on top of a nice layer of pizza sauce. The cheese pizza called out to the pepperoni: Don't forget to order me a human. Okay, dear, the pepperoni pizza answered, what would you like?

I want it to be fat.

The pepperoni pizza's eyes glared at the cheese's for a moment. No, the fat will turn you more gooey, said the pepperoni pizza, and you are already gooey

enough as it is. I want it to have long hair, said the cheese pizza.

Are you insane? Long hair will make your crust powdery, and it is already crumbling. All right, then, replied the cheese pizza, I want it to be female.

Absolutely not, if you consume a female the hormones will have you feeling all emotional, more even than right now.

The cheese pizza's crust sagged and oils dripped onto the wooden floor. A moment passed as its mind raced. Suddenly, it perked up and the oil drip halted. Fine, then I guess I will starve. The cheese pizza walked away and was followed by the eyes of the pepperoni pizza. When it was out of view, without hesitation, the pepperoni pizza said, That'll be all, into the phone.

### **Payback**

Grey mist lightly smothered  
Newly lit sky, small water beads  
Fell. I sat alone legs exposed  
To the bitter concrete. I saw a worm,  
Piercing through the surface of the  
Moistened soil. A dreadful idea  
Shot into my head. My hand  
Reached for the restless creature,  
And held it, as sticky mud  
Gripped tight to my hand. Inside, lights  
Were warming and my not-so-innocent  
Brother sat alone at the table.  
I analyzed him. When he turned I slipped  
The organism into the pool of his cereal.  
I watched avidly, my heart desperately  
Pounded, my brother's ears nearly grew  
Suspicious, sensing the vibrations.  
The spoon lifted, with the gift awaiting.  
Crunch.  
I snickered, but he replied  
With an angry regurgitation of his entire breakfast.

## The Two Matts

Heather Mayer

“Matt, stop,” I yell as tears stream down my face.

“Why should I?” he sneers in that voice that only a twelve-year-old bully can perfect.

He has my blue, pink, and yellow striped nineties-era sweater by the shoulder and I cry once again as my long braid swings around and catches in my glasses, tugging my head back at a sharp angle.

“Because you are scaring him,” I say with all the bravery of an eleven-year-old female who wants to protect her friend from harm.

I hang onto Matty’s hand, refusing to let go for anything.

Even at the age of eleven, I can remember thinking *This will be the first time I ever get in trouble*. My mother was the high school choir director, and she was always telling me I had to make a good example for the other students. All I could think was that Mom and Dad were going to be so mad at me. What would I do now?

I do have a very strong memory of Matthew, though. He was the boy whose hand I was holding. The other Matt. My Matt. My Matty to be exact. To be honest they were both my Matts, but that would be a story for another time. This was the story of when my life took a drastic turn in a new direction. When life said, *You need to start making decisions for yourself and not have decisions being made for you*. When my childhood took a turn in a direction I never knew it would ever go.

So much of my life is just blurry pages in a photo album. I look back at those memories and wonder if they even happened. But on this day I can remember it like it is happening right now and that I have Matty’s hand in mine at this moment. I feel like I am breathing the event to life in my mind. It is so real I can see it repeatedly like ghosts re-enacting their death.

I remember seeing my friend Matthew yelling out in pain and looking up at me with fear in his eyes. The tears in his eyes as he looks at me in horror. There’s something on Matt’s face, but what? Not Matty, but our bully, Matt. So much had happened in the short time since class had started. I squeeze

Matty's hand again to make us both feel better.

Here I am trying to protect the most innocent and pure person I have ever known. A person I still know after thirty-six years of friendship. Matty, the boy I met in kindergarten, the same day I met the other Matt, our bully. Small world, isn't it?

My Matty was special and not just because he got to have me as a friend. He had autism. Some of the kids would bully him. Many were afraid of him. Others just left him alone. I got the privilege of being his friend. Over the years our friendship would come and go in strength depending on if we had classes together. I don't mean we would stop being friends or anything. We just were not as close some years as others. Matty lived at the other end of town and since I lived out on my grandfather's farm it was hard to see each other very often unless we had classes together.

All through elementary school we would have play dates and birthday parties together. We went on trips sometimes, always keeping our friendship alive. My mother was good friends with his mom so that also helped. I feel like I want to say something more about Matty, but even to this day I feel this need to protect him. He was just Matty. That one perfect friend in the sea of all the others. That one friend you may or may not have had growing up who never changed. They are still the same as they were twenty or even thirty years ago. He has always been this person that can do no wrong in my life and it always made him special to me.

Even though I saw him as my perfect friend, so many others could not stand him, and one of those people was this other Matt. Matt could not stand, from the time we were little, that my Matty was so perfect. You see, this other Matt loved to lie. I am not being mean here when I say this fact. We all knew it. He loved to tell people his lies. He spread lies like other people spread germs. That sounds strange to say about a child, but it was his superpower.

If you wanted someone to lie to your parents, he was the guy for the job. If you wanted someone to cheat on a test for you, he would do it. From the time we were all little, Matt excelled at anything and everything bad. These two Matts were the exact opposites of each other. You could not have found two boys further apart from the other. If you wanted someone who thought himself a villain, Matt could have been cast as your main character. At least in the mind of a twelve-year-old boy.

## Ridgeline Review

So here you have two very different boys coming together in one classroom. And on that day in April (yes, I can even remember the month) something bad was about to happen.

Now on the one hand you have Matt who could tell lies as fast as water flowed from a faucet and loved being bad. Then you had Matty. My Matty who could never tell a lie or understand if someone else was lying to him. If you asked him a question he would either answer it or say he did not know the answer. No matter what. He also always believed you no matter what you told him. You could not tell him a fib because he was always going to believe it. You had to think about your words when you said things to him. It was just the way his mind worked.

By the time we went on to middle school Matty and I were good friends. I knew his quirks. Matty and I had always been friends. Our mothers had been friends forever. We had gone on vacations together and class trips together. I had always been there for him, and he was always there for me.

On the other hand, Matt, as we moved to middle school, had gotten meaner. His mother was also a friend of my mother's and Matt had been to many of our birthdays, but he just never wanted to join in. I think back on it and wonder why. He had started making fun of Matty more and more as we got older. Anytime Matty had trouble with his autism in school Matt was right there to make fun of him. As we got older he even got his friends to join in on the taunts.

Now here we were in third period home economics class with Miss Harp and events were moving us towards an epic end. She was teaching home economics, which was always a fun distraction for most of us. We did not have to do much except silly crafts for an hour every day. That day was cross-stitch. (Such a valuable skill for the future, but I digress.) We had the desks moved into groups of four, but for some reason that day our group was made up of just me, Matty, and Matt. We had bookmarks to design, and I had my graph paper trying to meticulously draw what I was going to make on my bookmark.

I looked up and my Matty, sitting next to me, was looking at all the colors of floss laying in a pile on a tray in the center of the desks, trying to pick out his colors. That day Matt was late to class and came barging in just as loud as ever, making Matty anxious and stressed. I should have known from that moment on it was going to be a bad day.

I noticed Matty was already agitated, so I put my hand on his and said, “Why don’t you use the graph paper first and decide on your colors later, Matty?”

Matty looked up at me and smiled. Probably one of the last ones he would have for a while. He pulled over his rectangular graph paper and started drawing what he wanted to make that day. He picked out a mixture of gray, orange, green, white, and black. Anyone who knows Matty would know he wanted to make a Philadelphia Flyer’s jersey. He loved the Flyers more than anything and was always drawing their mascot or jersey symbol. I smiled and went back to messing with the cross-stitch floss that was laying in the middle of the table.

Outside of our little world, Matt was getting scolded by our teacher Miss Harp. As we were sitting there happily, Matt received detention and was not happy. He marched over to our desk area and plopped down so loudly that the entire class became quiet. Matty and I looked up.

In that moment I asked, “Matt, where were you?”

Matt said, “Hey, you don’t want to know so don’t ask stupid questions.”

Now I was already annoyed, but I thought fine, I will let it go.

“Listen, Matt” I asked, “I just wondered where you were because we already started on the next project, and you missed the introductions. I will end up being the one that has to explain everything to you and I don’t want to have to explain things over and over again.”

Matt looked up at me and said, “Listen, Heather, I am not stupid like your friend here. I can figure things out like how to cross-stitch without your help. Now leave me alone.”

I slid over the cross-stitch supplies and responded, “There is no reason to be mean to us just because you got detention for being late. Maybe just be on time to class next time, okay?”

At this moment Matty joins the conversation and says to Matt, “Look at my picture, Matt. FLYERS!!”

Matty jumps up and shows Matt his graph paper, on which he has drawn a very basic picture of the Flyers symbol. Matt grabs the graph paper from Mat-

ty's hand and looks at it for a moment. Then, in a matter of seconds, he tears the paper in two and throws it in the trash.

Matty jumps up to get his lost picture and I begin to yell at Matt.

“Why did you do that? God, Matt, you are so mean to everyone,” I yell.

“He got on my nerves,” says Matt.

I go over to Matty and tell him that we will tape his picture back together and it will be fine. Matty was so sad, but he can see that his picture was not lost. We go back to our desk, and I get some tape. After a few minutes Matty is back to work at picking out his floss for his bookmark and I am glaring at Matt while we sit across from each other at the table. Matty is oblivious to my annoyance with the other human at our table and I am fine with that.

I am making a bookmark for my mom, so I have mapped out a picture on my graph paper that has my mom's cat, Bootsie, my mom's favorite flowers, and the sky at the top. I plan to write “For my mom” across the top. I always love the home economics classes so I am trying to forget about my annoying seatmate and go back to my project. Miss Harp has given us two weeks to complete the project, but only a couple of class periods to work on it before we must take it home to finish it.

I had not been paying attention to what was going on around me because I wanted to color in my picture. We were supposed to make a color grid that included the floss colors we chose. I was working hard on that part of my floss when I suddenly realized that Matty was making weird whimpering noises. I looked up and saw that he was very red in the face. His eyes looked glassy, and he almost looked like he was crying.

I drop my papers and turn towards him. “Matty, what's wrong?” I yell very loudly. I only realize later how loud I was in that moment.

“Tell Matt to stop, Heather,” says Matty in a weak, shaky voice.

I look around trying to figure out what had happened. I look over and see that Matt has come around to the side of Matty's desk and is sort of hovering over Matty.

“What are you doing to him, Matt? Back off.” I shout in a forceful mom voice.

For an eleven-year-old I have a voice just like my teacher-mom, which tends to scare other kids.

By now some of my friends have rushed over and are crouching down around Matty and asking about what has happened. I ask where the teacher is, and I learn that she has gone into the connecting classroom to check on the other class. I call for another friend to ask her to go get the teacher.

“Matt, you are in so much trouble,” I say. I know it sounds silly. I don’t even know what he has done, but I am mad.

“Back off, Matt, give him some air. Why are you even over here?” says Mark, another friend in the class. He has come over and tried to take over and Mark is not happy. Another male in Matt’s territory. Now they are both facing off and it does not look good.

“You always want to get involved, don’t you?” says Matt. “Step back.”

“Why is Matty so upset?” I ask again.

I still am confused and think there is something up between the two Matts. By now Miss Harp has come back into the room and she tells everyone to go back to their seats. She comes over to our desk and asks us to explain what happened. Matt says nothing and I say that Matt did something to Matty.

Matt says, “Prove it!”

“Well, I wasn’t here and Matty says it is nothing, so Heather, just let it go for now and try to get along.”

I am so upset, but I try to settle down because Matty has agreed to get along with Matt for now. I sit down and go back to my cross-stitch. I cannot concentrate no matter how hard I try. I keep looking out of the corner of my eye wondering what will happen next.

As I watch I see something glint in Matt’s hand. What was that? I try to see it closer, but I don’t want him to know that I am watching. I see that Matty flinches in his seat, but why. What are they doing? Why are these two Matts going at it? What has happened that I missed? What is going on?

There is something happening between the two of them. Matt has Matty

## Ridgeline Review

under his control and Matty won't tell us what is going on. I keep working on my picture and pick up the pink, purple, blue, and green floss. I do this because it allows me to reach across the desks and look Matt right in the eyes. I try to look him up and down to see what he has been doing with his body. I feel like I have become a detective.

As I continue to work I realize something. The box of cross-stitch needles has gone missing. Our table had all the supplies today, with everyone coming over to get their supplies. There had been a box of needles. I find this weird and wonder where it went.

I see the glint in Matt's hand. I try to look closer. I see needles all over his right hand. What in the world? What has he done! He has gone crazy! I look at Matty again and he sways back and forth. Tears stream down his face. I put my hand on his trying to make sure he stays okay. I need to take control of the situation now.

"Matt, can you help hold my project for me?" I ask him.

Matt looks over at me startled. It is the first time I have talked to him since Miss Harp left us to work in groups.

"No, do it yourself," he tells me rudely.

"But I need you to hold it flat while I put on the back," I say.

He just groans and gets up. He walks around the table and comes closer to our side of the table. Matty gets more agitated, and I realize that whatever Matt has done to his hand has Matty upset. We have an answer. Now I need to figure out what to do.

I ask Matt, "Let me see your hand."

He whips his hand up and starts waving it around. He makes a real show of it. He is proud of his handywork on his right hand. I fearlessly grab it, but he pulls back. But I have seen enough. All over his hand he has placed needles just under the surface skin, making it look like the needles are stuck in his hand. It looks like there are at least twenty needles now stuck in his hand, basically sewn into his skin. As I continue to look at his hand, Matty mewls in pain behind me.

"Why, Matt, why did you hurt yourself?" he says. "Take them out, please, you

are hurting yourself!”

Matty was feeling pain from what he had seen. He cannot stand to see things like this. His innocent mind could not comprehend what he was seeing. He was feeling the pain he thought Matt was feeling.

“Matt, take them out!” I shout. I am so upset I cannot stand it. “You have Matty so upset, he is crying, why would you do that?” I howl in anger. I just don’t know what to do. I am angrier than I have ever been before. All my friends have always seen me as the peacemaker. I never get mad. I am always happy. I never get upset, but today I am mad. Very mad. Why would you do something like this to your body and continue to upset someone near you? My young mind just cannot understand.

I cannot handle what has happened and my mind has started to boil over. I am stuck in a world that will not fix things for me. I feel alone, wanting to protect those that need protecting. Miss Harp has left the room again and we need her now more than ever. I am at the center of this madness and don’t know what to do. My friends are all shouting. Matt refuses to stop. Matty is crying even more. I look around for a way out. I keep thinking in my mind, What would my mother want me to do?

And then it comes to me. I am strong. I am more than this boy who wants to be mean to my friend. I can control this situation. I will handle this situation.

I look up at Matt, and say to him, “Matt, are you not going to take those needles out of your hand and sit down?”

Matt yells in my face, “No, they feel nice in my hand and look cool!”

I shout back at Matt, “FINE,” then punch him in the nose.

Matt falls backwards into the class’s pile of pillows, stuffed animals, projects, and fabric that we use for our weekly assignments. I immediately jump on top of him while he is down on the floor and start pulling the needles out of his hand. I have a single-minded determination to get the needles out of his hand. That is all I can think about in that moment. I don’t want Matty to have to see the needles in Matt’s hand anymore. Mark, at the same time, holds a paper towel to Matt’s nose to stop the blood that now pours out.

After several minutes, during which we all scramble around the room work-

## Ridgeline Review

ing to clean up, we hear noises from the other classroom. Finally, Miss Harp returns. Let's just say she is not happy with what she finds. She shouts, "What in the world has happened here?" I think I am in trouble now.



### **Two Action Figures in Wood**

Robert Trowbridge

## To Pentagram or Not to Pentagram? That is the Question.

Jayli Lueras

For centuries, humans have noticed the “pentagram” inverted or upright, and immediately thought it to be a sign of evil, devil worship, and witchcraft. But do you know the difference between a “pentagram” and a “pentacle”? What is the true meaning behind the symbols? Is a pentagram and a pentacle even the same? To sum to all up, neither stands for the things we have come to believe. In this essay, I will explain not only its correct meanings, but also its place in my spiritual culture.



Looking at the image above. I am sure the mind immediately goes to “pentagram.” The well-known image symbolizing witchcraft and/or Satan worship, depending on the area of the United States you are in. But this is not actually a pentagram. This symbol is referred to as a “pentacle.” Shocking, right? But this misperception is just the tip of the iceberg.

In Wiccan culture, this symbol has nothing to do with Satan. To quote Sandra Bullock’s character in the 1998 movie *Practical Magic*, “There is no devil in the craft.” And no truer words have ever been stated either in fiction or in everyday life. There is no “devil” in the craft. And on the other side of that coin, there is no “god” either. Broken down, the star within the circle represents the five elements of nature. The four of which I am sure everyone is familiar with are water, fire, earth, and air. The topmost point represents spirit. The circle, representing the universe, connects them all. For Wiccans and pagans alike, the symbol is a sign of faith. Much like the crucifix for Catholics.

When I first began my spiritual journey into the Neopagan Wiccan practices, I knew of the pentacle as the pentagram. I did not know about the history. I just knew it was a pagan symbol. But I did not see it as evil by any means. To me, it was a beginning of a new chapter of my life. A connection with the world around me that I did not know was there. It was through this single artifact that I found a place where I felt like I belonged.

It was my aunt who posted a video on Facebook explaining the difference between a pentagram and a pentacle. I, naturally, shared it immediately to my own page. Christian family members were commenting on how they never

## Ridgeline Review

knew the meaning. They did not know that it was not tied to Satanism at all. And that it did have a place in Christianity for a time before it was marked as evil. I sat back and smiled as people I knew and loved dearly began thanking both my aunt and I for sharing the message of the Pentacle. It was one of the first things I posted on social media that expressed my spirituality. Not only that, but it was also being accepted by family members who were Christian. Of course, not everyone saw it in this positive light. And I did get several phone calls in the weeks that followed. Did I answer each one? Of course not. I picked and chose those battles as cautiously as I could. But I was able to educate more than a few people on the pentacle. And that was good enough for me. Just as it was intended, the pentacle became a symbol of hope for me. A symbol of faith. Faith in myself, faith in elements around me, and faith in something much bigger.

The direction of the pentacle does not matter either, in Wiccan culture. It is traditionally used either way. If the pentacle is pointing up, it is to symbolize Spirit ascending above matter. And, of course, inverted it represents Spirit descending below matter. Think of it as a physical representation of the phrase “As Above, So Below.” Spirit is all around. Whereas Christianity has heaven above and hell below, the Wiccan culture does not. Spirit is everywhere and there is no greater or lower plane.

As I move throughout this journey, I still have much to learn. Though it may not be a spiritual awakening for you as it was for me, I do hope this information does shine some light.

A standard pentagram is simply a five-pointed star. No circle around this one. It has little to no association with the Wiccan practice, or paganism for that matter. A pentagram could be used to represent the stars, the elements, or a sign of protection. So, what is the connection?



It is not hard to look at these three symbols and see both similarities and differences. The standard five-pointed star of the pentagram can be seen in all three. Invert the star, grab a pencil, and sketch out the face of a goat, and

there is the Sigil of Baphomet. A sigil that, honestly, I had no idea about at the beginning of my journey. I will not say that it ever struck me as “evil.” Just one of those images that I wanted to steer clear from in my studies. Not to say there is anything wrong with the Sigil, it’s just not my preferred cup of tea. One is bound to trip down a rabbit hole while researching on the worldwide web. Within a few fatal clicks, the image had a name. A meaning. Life. One that I grew to acknowledge, identify, and give purpose to. Even if it held no purpose within my life.

I do have a small ring on my left pointer finger. A thin silver band with a pentacle in the middle. It is a small reminder of who I am and how far I’ve come. How far my ancestors have come. And how far we all still have to go. It is a wholesome and meaningful design that has more background and history.

These sigils are still grossly misidentified across the United States, Europe, and even some parts of Asia. Something so innocent and precious has been turned into something to be feared. And who can truly be blamed, when you have people like Richard Ramirez running around with the pentacle on his palm and carving it into more than most of his victims? Not to mention bands like Motley Crue, Slayer, Megadeth, Cradle of Filth, and many more, who produce albums like “Shout at the Devil,” “Show No Mercy,” “Haunting the Chapel,” “Hell Awaits,” and “The Principle of Evil Made Flesh.” Whether for the shock factor or the fact that the musicians never walked into a library to learn the meaning, the pentacle and the Sigil of Baphomet have been used to either attract followers or strike fear in others.

Still to this day, there are people who see the Pentacle and show some form of disgust in one way or another, be that an outburst or a simple look. I attend Sunday Mass with my children and husband. At the end of each service, the Father will stand at the door and shake hands with the adults. Naturally, it is my turn and as I reach out my hand, I think nothing of the small, dainty pentacle I wear, not something for the priest of a Catholic church to see. No words are said but they needn’t be. The look alone made the thoughts clear. Thankfully, there was no whispering of the congregation. No threats or verbal assaults. What could have quickly turned into my worst fear was silently acknowledged and the day went on as planned.

It is a symbol of hope, love, and life. One that I will proudly wear and carry for the rest of my days. An artifact of not just my spirituality, but of my culture. One that is near and dear to my heart.

Blessed be.

## My Pen, My Friend

Christina Ponce

The absolute best friend I have ever had in my entire life is my pen. I never have to hide my insecurities, keep my secrets, or lie because I am ashamed of something. I was not always this strong. I was not always this confident. I have come a long way. This pen has always been there when I needed it.

I began writing a long time ago, even before all my struggles became my reality. I was in 6th grade creative writing when I realized that I wanted to be a writer. One of my favorite stories I've ever written was about superheroes. We had to pick a partner in class and create a story about what superpower we'd want and how we would use it. I just happened to be invisible, and my partner had x-ray vision, so together we saved the world! I knew that I could not write for a living, and I was not the best at it, but I knew that when I wrote I could write whatever I wanted, however I wanted. I loved nonfiction, I loved fantasy, I loved being creative and coming up with silly stories.

Then, I got older...I noticed all the wrong things happening right in front of me. I started to see the similarities between myself and others. At that point I knew I wanted to write about my life and my obstacles that I had overcome so I would be able to help others that related to me in that way. I wrote about what I wanted in life, how I wanted my life to be, and just like that, my problems were solved! I was able to take myself away from any place I did not want to be.

Let us fast forward, 2011. I lost my mom when I was fourteen, the absolute worst thing that ever happened to me. I was so lost; I was so afraid. I was alone. My mom was my everything, I did not know what I was going to do without her. I began to write in a journal as if it was my mom. I would ask questions I did not know the answer to. I never received an answer back from the book, but I always put the answer in the book after I figured it out on my own. I never stopped finding the answers I did not know. I knew that I never could. Without my mom, I knew I would be on my own and I knew that from that day forward I had to be able to get through everything. Even though I was going to be alone in the years to come, I was somehow ready for it. I tried to communicate with other people — adults, classmates, family — and I could not get over the feeling of being judged or the thoughts of being shut down.

I met one special person along the way in 2013, Ms. Tamez, my favorite cre-

ative writing teacher. I felt so comfortable with her; she made me love writing even more. I was a great student in that class with the best grades. I never felt more at home. She encouraged me so much that I was even confident enough to enter my poetry into a poetry slam! One of my favorite poems I ever wrote was about my mom, of course, and it seems that I am always inspired by that amazing woman. Here it is, just one of the many:

### **I Remember**

I remember how happy you were

I remember how happy you looked

I remember what made you happy

And I also know that you weren't always happy

I remember how sad you were

I remember how sad you looked

I remember what made you sad

Even though I was bad, you were always there for me, best mother anyone  
could have

You were the greatest in the world; no one could replace you or even come  
close

Oh! Your beautiful soul I miss most

What you were able to give me in our short time together, was everything I  
needed to make it without you

I will always remember your love and how the last time I spoke to you, you  
said, "I love you," and I said, "I love you, too."

My favorite memories are the ones with you laughter, love, hugs, kiss; all out  
of the blue

Now you're gone but you will never be forgotten.

Mom, I love you.

Then, after the school year was over, Ms. Tamez moved across the country, just like that, and I was alone again. As a writer I knew that I never needed a person to talk to because I always had my pen. I am thankful for my struggles as well as my successes because I am who I am today from them.

Now, onto 2015, nearly five years after losing my mom, I did not change much when it came to communication. I still did not like to talk to people. At that point in my life I was eighteen years old, so I knew that something was going to have to change to maintain my job and finish school. I wrote, and wrote, and wrote some more until I was able to get by in my daily life.

## Ridgeline Review

Writing made me comfortable; even just a small amount of writing a day kept the “mental health” doctors away. Writing is my savior and therapist. I really enjoy it, aside from needing it to cope in my daily life. I absolutely love to do it. Writing is a form of language between reader and writer.

Do you ever read something and feel so connected to it? Or something sad, and you tear up? Or something funny, and you laugh? I feel like writing with a pen is more fun than having to type up a paper. I must have a pen! A pen makes me feel calm and collected throughout my day. If I need to vent about something that is bothering me, it is best if I write because I let out everything on that piece of paper with that ink, then immediately I feel relieved. I am sure we all have something we use to comfort ourselves; mine just so happens to be a pen.

As an adult, I still write. I just happen to be stronger and better when communicating. In this very life that I have chosen for myself, I am who I want to be. I have had this silly pen with me for as long as I can remember, throughout the wins and the losses. I will never give up writing, I will not quit on my dream of having my work published. One day you will read about me — one day you will read what my pen wrote. My pen is my friend, and the best thing about it is that this connection will never end.



**Lamb on the Hill**

Caitlin Daugherty

## Building a Good Day

Dr. Mary S. Lemmond

Creative Aging, ENMU-Ruidoso

Building a GOOD DAY. What a concept! Sometimes days seem to JUST HAPPEN: the electricity goes out, the internet doesn't internet, the dog gets sick, it rains when there was 0% chance forecast – you know the drill. But not EVERY DAY is like that. In *Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing As We Age*, Dr. Mary Pipher suggests we can take days (or parts of days) and make them our own. Building a good day is more than taking control. To me it's about *making good choices about our emotions, thinking and behavior*.

Does that strike you as “doable”? In *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Dr. Stephen Covey explained internal and external *locus of control*. Internal control is what Pipher clarified with her chapter on “building a good day.” External control includes all the little things that come at us which are not of our making or liking (toilets, internet, dog, rain, etc.). Covey indicates that when we *grow* our internal locus of control the external irritants maybe will not SHRINK but will be less stressful and problematic. We will not be at their mercy. Sounds good, doesn't it?

The question then becomes: How do we build a good day? Pipher offers some suggestions:

**Start with your first morning thoughts.** Are you grumpy or more on the positive side? If grumpy, do a mental reset and think about the positive things you look forward to, and what you are grateful for – maybe that first cup of coffee???

Next, **concentrate on what's important.** We can get so overwhelmed with “must do's” that we don't have time to enjoy. My friend Dr. Swasti Vohar of the University of New Mexico says we must learn to “savor.” I LOVE that. That first cup of coffee or tea: gulp, or sip and enjoy? The latter will start building a good day.

Third, **learn to pace yourself.** This was the hardest for me. I've been so used to Go, GO, GOOO, but as Pipher says, sometimes our ambitions and ideas outpace our stamina. Is it possible to take a few minutes during the day to relax perhaps with a good book or magazine? How about a walk or some stretching to ease stress?

Fourth - nothing new here – **balance activities and stress**. The more I read about stress and its physical implications on our health, the more I realize how I was literally making myself sick trying to “do it all.” The best thing I’ve found for stress relief is *deep breathing*. So simple. It can be done anywhere, even in the grocery store line as you grow old waiting! Meditation is also a stress reliever. Consider “walking meditations.” Use one of the many guided practice apps available to help get started.

Next, take a cue from some of the 12-step programs and **don’t let yourself get too hungry, tired, lonely, or angry**. Your food intake will be critical in how you feel, as will deep sleep.

Deep meaningful relationships are imperative as we build the good day (good life). Anger is a real feeling, but let it go and don’t let it cause you to give up the better part of your day (life).

Sixth – a FUN ONE, finally – **do something unique or different**, or PLAN for that activity. Last year I took a train trip to Wisconsin. I can’t tell you how fun it was planning. What can you do to make something unique happen? A new recipe? A new restaurant? A new hiking trail? A phone chat with an old friend? Look for it. Pipher calls this a “subject change” where we get out of our rut and find something FUN and different.

Is this starting to sound good? I hope so.

Now, some work. **Manage your expectations**. Pipher goes into detail about this topic, but for me it boils down to **gratitude**. Write a gratitude journal to help keep life in perspective. Write “What makes me Happy?” Sometimes it is big, huge things like LIFE, and sometimes it’s silly things like Sensodyne Toothpaste. It DOESN’T MATTER what you are grateful for – what matters is that you reflect and enjoy the big things and those little quirky things that only matter to you.

Finally, **close the day with reflection or prayer** to realize how good your day (or most of it) really was. Some people journal, others mentally reflect, or a combination of both. We don’t know how much time we have left in our lives. Expressing gratitude for each day is a way to close your good day and prepare for the next great one.

## Contributor Biographies

### JOCELYNN BENAVIDEZ

Jocelynn Benavidez is an early college high school student who lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico. She was born and raised in a small town. She graduates with the class of 2025. She is currently working on getting her high school diploma and degree in business and management. She also aspires to minor in journalism, hence why she spends 90% of her time writing stories and poems. Jocelynn has always found writing exhilarating and calming. She uses it as a method to express herself and her emotions. Jocelynn hopes to put more of her work out there before she's eighteen.

### ORLANDO CERVANTES

Orlando Cervantes is a retired wildland firefighter from Mescalero, NM. He fought fire for twenty-seven years, working for US Forestry, State Forestry, and BIA. He is working on his degree in fire science at ENMU-Ruidoso.

### AMANDA DAUGHERTY

Amanda Daugherty is a stay-at-home mom who picked up photography as a hobby. Photography helps keep movements of time still forever. Amanda started taking her kids' school photos because she wanted to give more care and consideration to her daughters' photos. It blossomed into taking photos of everything. Black and white photos are her forte, yet she enjoys color photography as well. The photo she submitted, "The Glow of Summer," was a photo she took while her family was camping. The glow of the fire and the New Mexico sky just touched her. She wanted to remember that night, her kids laughing with their dad singing "Row Your Boat."

### CAITLIN DAUGHERTY

Caitlin Daugherty is an 18-year-old writer and artist from Capitan, New Mexico. She writes poetry and stories and paints weird art. She is interested in a variety of hobbies: sculpting, writing, drawing, painting, photography, reading, and watching cartoons. She spends every day trying to make the world a little weirder.

### CHEYENNE DOWDELL

Cheyenne Dowdell is one of our Navigators at ENMU-Ruidoso. If you've ever needed something on campus, you've likely met her. Cheyenne is an ENMU-Ruidoso alumna, and is currently attending ENMU in Portales online. Her hobbies include: playing video games, trying to create 'art', and chasing that dopamine through social media.

## Ridgeline Review

### **GENE DOWNER**

Gene Downer is eighty-two years old. He is a native of Stump Creek, a coal mining patch in western Pennsylvania. Before moving to New Mexico he lived in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he published a regional magazine, ran a book store, and operated a float trip on the Snake River in Grand Teton National Park. His magazine *Teton* received a national journalism award from the American Medical Association in 1973 for publishing an investigative report on the Wyoming school for mentally disabled citizens. He also originated the Jackson Hole Figure 8 Competition. He currently resides in Alamogordo where he is an active tree planter and hiker. He received two Master's Degrees from Harvard University focusing on addiction while in his fifties and worked as an alcohol and drug counselor for many years.

### **ALEXANDER EAKINS**

Alexander loves to be weird and creative, whether in his writing or his many hobbies. He enjoys playing video games such as Minecraft and Halo, creating products from leather, and writing short stories with characters and worlds as wild and wacky as his imagination. He likes to have a sense of humor at all times, especially in his writing.

### **ANTHONY ESCALANTI**

Anthony Escalanti was born and raised in Mescalero, NM. He has been going to ENMU-Ruidoso for a few years. He enjoys working in the food industry, where he meets different interesting characters every day. He started his continued education on a simple goal, to just go back to school. Now, he enjoys it and he loves the positive feedback that he is receiving. He hopes to accomplish his goals and hopes to keep going.

### **CARLA DARLENE HALL**

With her Bachelor's degree in Biology and Associate's degree in Chemistry, this lady had high hopes of traveling the world, researching diseases, and developing efficient cures. She was eager to get going, yet life took her down a different path. The move from a good-sized city in New Jersey to a small town in New Mexico changed everything. She attempted to gain entrance into small laboratories locally, but had no luck. Then she tried other avenues of employment. Her jobs included caregiver, pizza delivery driver, personal assistant, grocery stocker, and tutor, plus short-term work in both Las Cruces, NM and Centennial, CO. She discovered one of her success stories and loves in tutoring, and another in driving. Her goals include healthy living habits, enjoying life, helping others, finding ways to grow, and celebrating each day of life.

### **DANA HAYNES**

Dana Haynes is an ENMU-Ruidoso student who created artwork in this issue during

**KAYLA HEIN**

Kayla Hein attended ENMU-Ruidoso during the Fall 2021 semester, during which she wrote “The Fire” for ENGL 2310: Intro to Creative Writing.

**ALAN HIGGINS**

Alan from Lithium Dreams Photography started out his photography journey forty years ago, photographing landscapes in Central New York. He finally settled in Alamogordo, NM, where his passion for capturing landscapes and sunsets returned. Two years in a row he has won awards for his landscapes at the Otero County Fair. He captures images for the Flickinger Performing Art Center. Alan believes that with every photo there is a reason it is captured at that moment. Alan runs four genres of photography business in Alamogordo.

**HANNAH KAMPHUIS**

Hannah Kamphuis is a senior at Eastern New Mexico University. She is a History major with a minor in English, and hopes to work in museums after graduation. She likes to write in her free time, and enjoys watching movies and playing with her dogs.

**MARY LEMMOND**

Dr. Lemmond, an educator for many years, taught students from preschool through graduate school in Tulsa, OK. She moved to Ruidoso in March 2019. She attended her first Creative Aging Program meeting at ENMU-Ruidoso the day after she moved to town, and has been captivated ever since. Now in their fourth semester, the Creative Aging: Issues and Ideas classes support older adults to age with grace, involvement, and health.

**JAYLI LUERAS**

Jayli Lueras has been writing since she was in the third grade. It has become a passion for her. As of now, she has one full novel posted online, and is currently in the process of writing the next installment. Jayli loves spending time with her children, husband, and loved ones whenever she can.

**HEATHER MAYER**

Heather Mayer currently lives in the barren oil country of west Texas. Her main purpose in life for many years has been the caring of her ailing mother, Mona. While her mom was resting, Heather found time for writing short stories, poems, and painting some truly terrible watercolor paintings.

## Ridgeline Review

### **JOLEE MAGOOSH**

Jolee Magoosh wrote “Invisible Woman” in ENGL 2310: Intro to Creative Writing during the Fall 2021 semester. A recent graduate of Ruidoso High School, she will be attending University of New Mexico next fall.

### **LYNELL MAGOOSH**

Lynell Magoosh is Mescalero Apache and Isleta Pueblo. She wrote her poem in this issue because she wanted to show how powerful self-love truly is. Writing has always been something she has loved doing, especially poetry. She loves being with her family and her two cats. She also enjoys playing both volleyball and basketball.

### **JACK McCAW**

Jack McCaw is a Professor at ENMU-Ruidoso, where he has taught many science courses over the past fifteen years. Professor McCaw began his photographic interests early in life, taking family and vacation snapshots before progressing into 35mm photography by junior high. His interests in nature and photography grew, and eventually he attended New Mexico State University, where he received a B.S. in Wildlife Science and a M.S. in Wildlife Biology. McCaw worked his way through college using photography as his main financial means, working at three camera shops along the way, and also as a darkroom technician for several studio photographers. Professor McCaw is at the end of his twenty-five-year teaching career and tenure at ENMU-Ruidoso. After retirement, he plans to travel, photograph, and delve into filmmaking.

### **MACKEY MULLER**

Mackey Muller is twenty-four years old and has been attending Eastern New Mexico University for the past three years and will be graduating in May of 2022 with her Associate’s in Business Administration. She enjoys home projects such as interior renovation or decorating and outdoor activities with her family. Mackey was born and raised in Ruidoso and now has two children of her own being raised here as well. Her goals are graduating, finding a first family home, and creating her own business.

### **SIERRA OTERO**

Sierra Marie Otero is a dual credit student at ENMU and Ruidoso High. She hopes to receive her Associate’s degree and transfer to the University of Arizona and later go to medical school. She enjoys sports and using creative outlets to express herself.

### **TIFFANY PHILLIPS**

Tiffany Phillips is a stay-at-home mother of two from Holloman AFB who enjoys art, reading, writing, and camping with her family. Tiffany grew up in the San Patricio

valley and moved to Las Cruces to study at NMSU, where she met her husband Levi. She finished her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology with an emphasis in Applied Behavior Analysis at Purdue University Global and hopes to one day be a therapist. Her love of nature and fantasy are what inspire her to create in her spare time.

### **CHRISTINA PONCE**

Christina Ponce is from the Mescalero Apache Tribe; she is a mother and student who also works full-time. She is twenty-five years old. In her free time, she likes to express herself through writing! She mostly writes about her life; however, she also enjoys drafting short stories and the occasional poem. She is currently a medical assistant in the community and a student at ENMU-Ruidoso pursuing a degree in nursing. She has two boys with whom she loves to spend time and her favorite thing to do is go on "mini vacays" with them. She plans to accomplish her goals while continuing to write with the inspiration of her little family and faith.

### **CHLOE REYNOLDS**

Fifteen years ago on May, 23rd, 2006, Chloe Reynolds was born in San Luis Obispo County, California. Chloe has always enjoyed the comfort that listening to music brings her. Chloe moved to Capitan, NM with her family only a year-and-a-half ago for a fresh start. The idea of body image has always been important to Chloe because she feels that what society thinks is "perfect" is not perfect. She values the idea of diversity in people and their natural beauty instead of a set standard of imposed beauty.

### **RED RYAN**

Red Ryan is an Eastern New Mexico University student who lives in the Southwest with her wife and dog. She currently works out of Arizona.

### **LUCIANA SCHIAVONE**

Luciana is a creative, innovative individual with a passion for changing the world for the better. She is an advocate for environmental restoration and conservation, and she aspires to live in an off-grid earth ship home. Luciana is inspired by her mothers, and by Nikola Tesla, Aristotle, and Albert Einstein. She was adopted in Tyler Texas at a month old and brought to Ruidoso, New Mexico. Luciana had an open adoption, so everything that happened in her life was documented by her adopted mother and sent to her biological mother. At twenty years old, she was introduced to her grandmother and an entire street in Tyler, Texas that had closely followed her life. These strangers knew her favorite colors when she was three, and they knew when and why it changed to black when she turned eleven years old. Although at first it was odd, Luciana took this experience and learned that the true meaning of being human is

communication, creative expression, and love.

### **ROBERT TROWBRIDGE**

Robert's father gave him a pocketknife for his eighth birthday, telling him that if he wanted toys, he should learn to make them, just as he had as a boy. It didn't take long for Robert to begin a lifelong career of bringing wooden figures to life. Early figures were both literally and figuratively "stick figures," but once he discovered that he also had a talent for drawing, his carvings became much more life-like. Robert is retired from the Army, and has been an actor, playwright, assistant director, and property manager for the theatre at NMSU-Alamogordo. He also enjoys cartooning.

### **DIANA WATSON**

Diana Watson is an English and Mandarin speaking champion. Her most famous speech, "Am I Strange?" made her a YouTube sensation. She has authored two books: *The Speaking Seed: Secrets to Successful Foreign Language Public Speaking*, published in both English and Mandarin in Taiwan, and *Called to Lead: Success Strategies for Women*, which was the number one leadership book in the UK on Amazon. Diana helps semiconductor companies with operations in Taiwan improve intercultural communication. She enjoys long chats with her mom, reading, creative writing, studying Mandarin Chinese, exercising, and walks around Liyu Lake. She considers Taiwan home.

### **JAYDEN WOLF**

Jayden loves to participate in anything that allows her to express herself; however, she does have a hard time expressing how she feels and that is why she loves to write. She finds writing to be peaceful and a way for her to get out her emotions when talking about them seems too difficult. She loves writing about whatever comes across her mind and just letting the pencil write about what it chooses. She enjoys sharing her work with whoever wants to read it and loves using her work to relate to others and to make others feel something.



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A bonfire is burning brightly in a field at night. The fire is the central focus, with a large, intense yellow and orange flame. The surrounding area is dark, with the silhouettes of trees and a dark blue sky in the background. The fire is surrounded by a layer of dry grass and twigs.

Jocelynn Benavidez  
Orlando Cervantes  
Amanda Daugherty  
Caitlin Daugherty  
Cheyenne Dowdell  
Gene Downer  
Alexander Eakins  
Anthony Escalanti  
Carla Darlene Hall  
Dana Haynes  
Kayla Hein  
Alan Higgins  
Hannah Kamphius  
Mary Lemmond  
Jayli Lueras  
Jolee Magoosh  
Lynell Magoosh  
Heather Mayer  
Jack McCaw  
Mackey Muller  
Sierra Otero  
Tiffany Phillips  
Christina Ponce  
Chloe Reynolds  
Red Ryan  
Luciana Schiavone  
Robert Trowbridge  
Diana Watson  
Jayden Wolf