

David Edwards

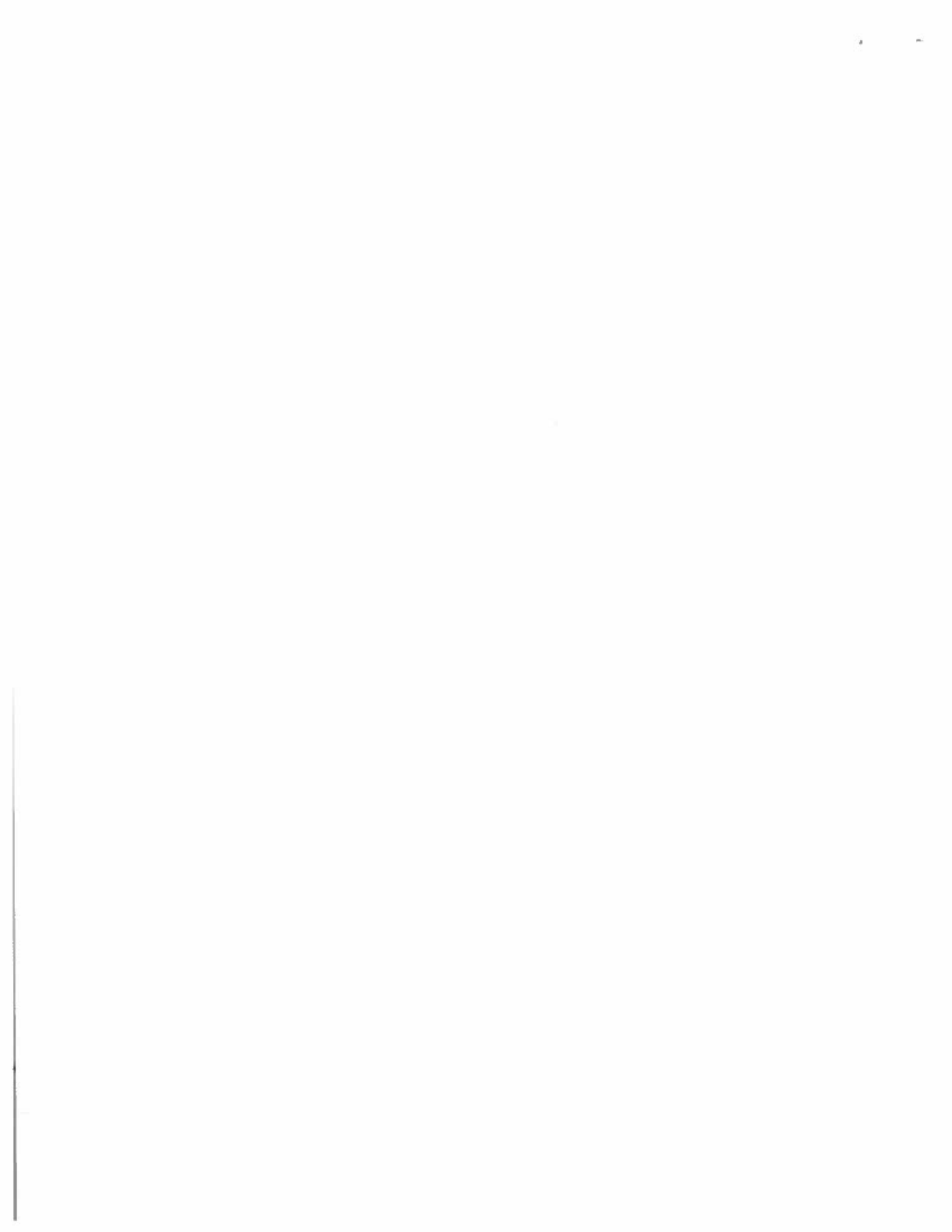
Janet Stevens

Pre-Draft A1

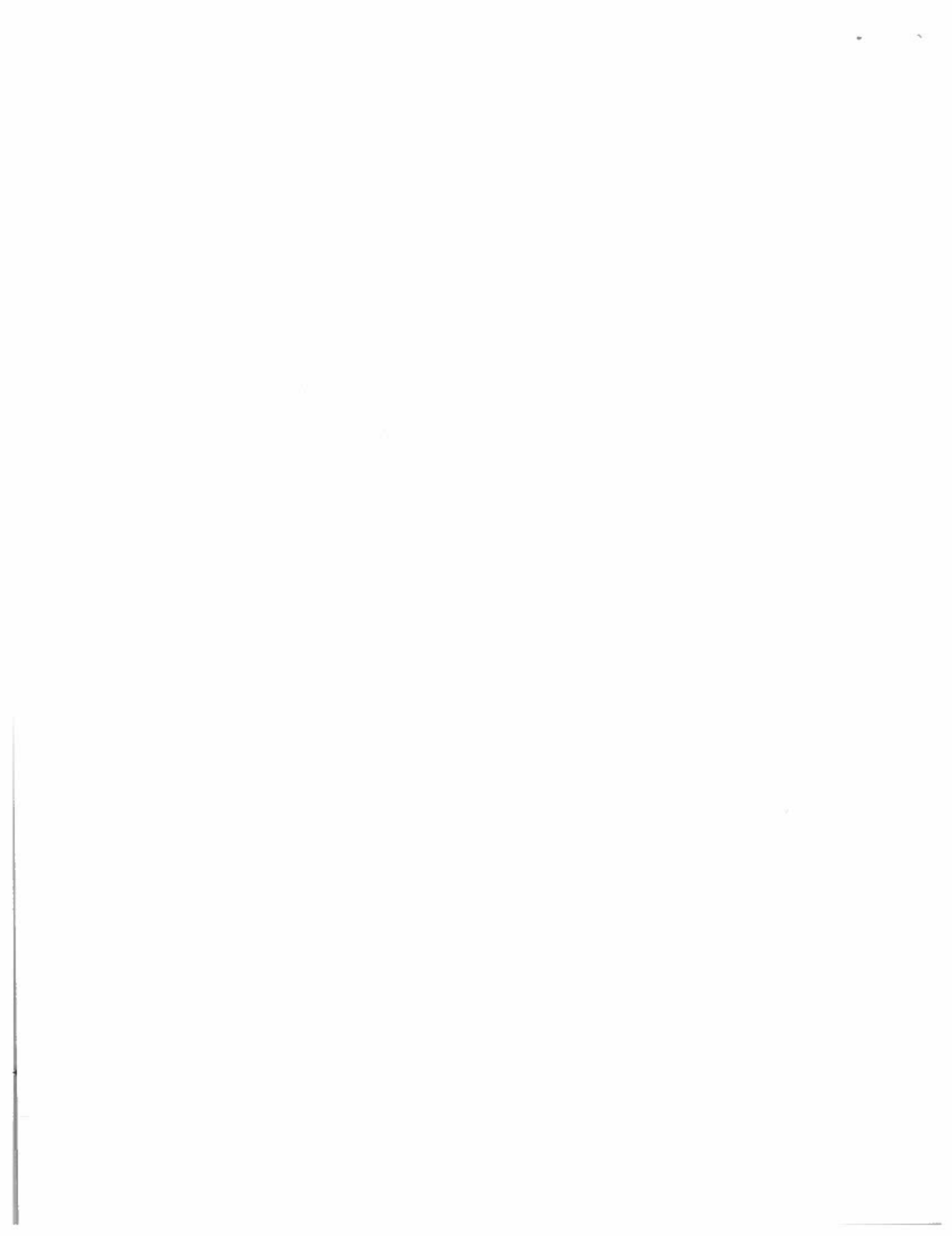
I've had many impactful experiences that have influenced my life and changed the way that I live my life. There is one that sticks out over all the rest though, this one moment in my life is the most precious in my mind. All throughout high school I was both a football player and a volunteer youth football coach, this game was the most important thing in my life and it still is. It was the night before my high school team goes away to a camp to practice against the best teams in the state. I was coaching my youth team, around 7 pm the rose colored sky was telling us that practice was nearing an end, as I say goodbye to my players I remember that my great grandfather was in the hospital. This wasn't just my great grandfather, to me he was someone that I actually respected and looked up to other than my immediate family. This man taught me so much about being who I am today, how to behave, how to stay organized, how to be the best that I could possibly be. He was very influential in my life since me and him spent so much time together. Anyways I ended up driving up to the hospital just to stop by and talk to the man that I respected and admired. When I walked down the seemingly endless hallways of the hospital, uneasy I followed them to the ICU where his room was. As I opened the last set of doors before his room I ran into my parents who were just exiting his room, they asked if I wanted them to stay and I said "No, I think I'll be okay go home I'll be home in a few". I opened the door to his room I looked at him lying there looking as cheerful as ever watching *Dancing with the Stars*, when he saw me come in I saw his eyes light up with joy. We start talking about everything under the sun including school, sports, how everything at home is going, the usual stuff we talked about when we were alone talking. Whenever a nurse came in he always praised me,



showboating to the nurse how great his grandson was and how handsome I was. He was boasted about how great I was and how great I was going to be, that made me ecstatic every time I heard him say such things since he was someone that I respected and held as a peer. The next thing that we knew it had been 2 hours and we had just been trying to get as much time as the nurses would let us have since the visiting hours were about to over. The nurse had let us have 10 minutes to finish my visit, he looked sad, I had then asked him "Why do you look so sad is everything okay?" his response was the usual "I'm fine, don't worry" but this time he added that he wanted to tell me of his time in the war since he knew that I wanted to study history. He started to tell me about when he was in Vietnam and how he was part of a battalion known as "Sea-bees" what these soldiers did was build bridges so that they could get over rivers and other obstacles then blow them up so the enemy couldn't follow them. He told me that he had seen many things he wished he could unsee and that he lost many friends during the war. He got quiet and hush he motioned to come closer and I did till my ear was right in front of him mouth and he said "I love you, I'm glad that you're my grandson" which my response to him was "I love you too gramps". This made me so happy I could barely hold it in the nurse came in and told me that our 10 minutes was up and we said our goodbyes and he told me finally the catch phrase he had come up with randomly which was "Hey, make sure you don't pick up any wooden nickels" Which to this day I don't truly understand where it came from, but I went with it and it was our little saying that we had and only us. I had a strange feeling when I left the hospital and when I went home that night, I had also questioned why he wanted to tell me that story I told my parents about what he talked to me about and they were both baffled. My dad and aunt tried talking to him about his military experience and he didn't want to talk to them about it. This both scared me and made me feel special, but really what made him want to tell me that story? I went off the



next day busting my butt at the camp by the time I got home I was physically exhausted and ready to crash. But when I opened the door to my house both my parents were in the kitchen looking down, neither of them could fully look me in the eye. They proceeded to tell me that my great grandfather had died that morning before I left for camp both of them knew since the hospital had called my house before I had even woken up to tell us he passed. To be honest I am so glad that my parents held this information from me till after my camp because if they told me before I don't think that I could have gone through with the camp. This man was a huge part of my life and because of him I push myself to do the best in everything that I do whatever I put my mind to I put 110%. To this day whenever I get down on myself or fail at something I look at the wooden nickel and picture of him in my wallet and I get inspired to try harder next time. All my hard work is for him and to show him that I will do my best no matter what I'm doing, I want to live up to his expectations.



Brian Gutierrez

Professor Stevens

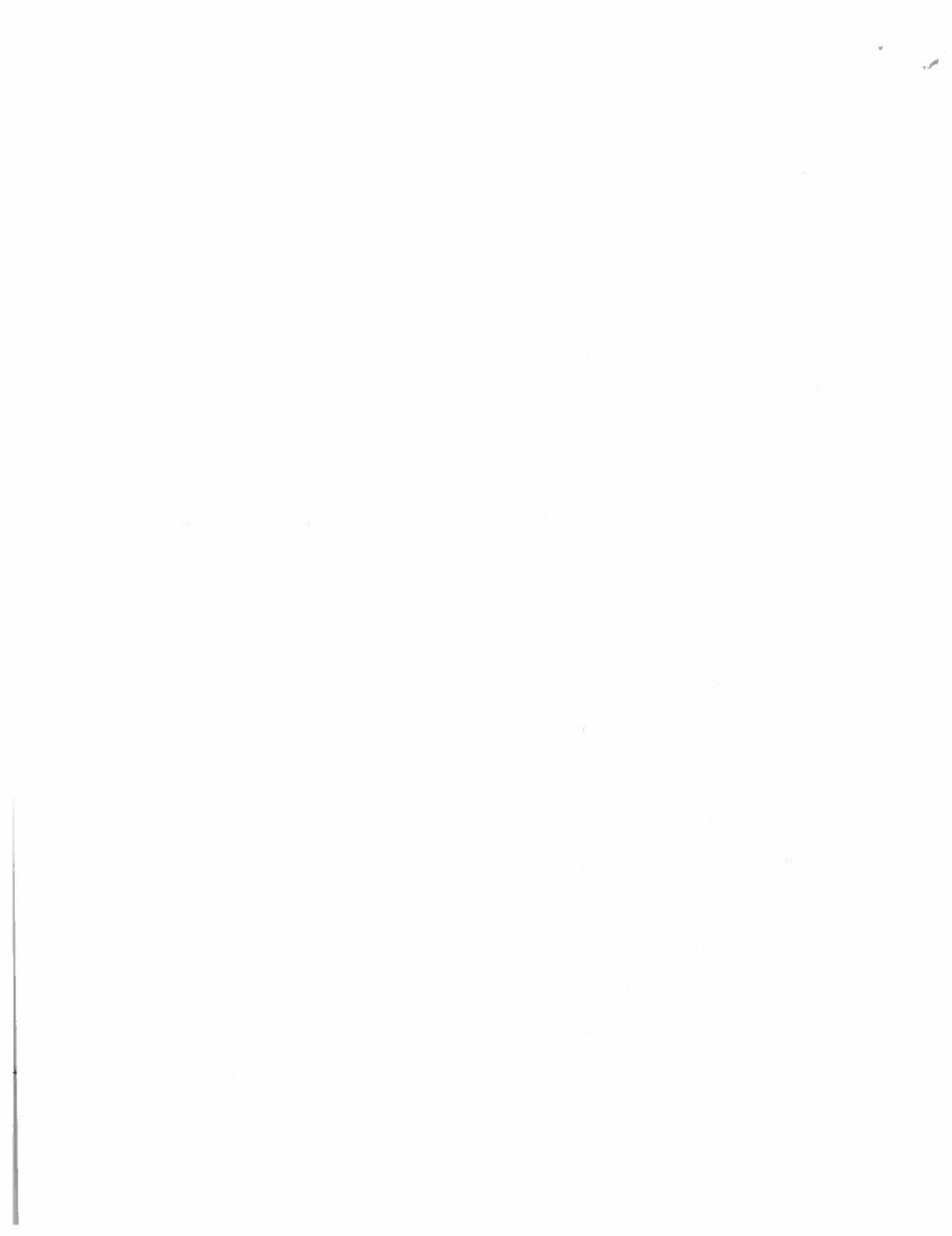
English 102-16

1-27-16

Who I am today.

Where do I start with understanding the person I have become in present day? There are so many experiences and factors that have shaped me to have a persistent nature, no matter how bleak the situation appears, my dedication and perseverance has prevailed any trials that I have ever come across. As a child, waiting for the clock to turn eight, hardwood floor below me as I watch the rest of kids showing why they are the best candidates for the basketball team. All the lights and attention make me question why I would bring myself with zero confidence on to the court where skill and persistence were qualities everyone had to have in being considered at all. Right before I turned around and thought it was not the best choice to continue my efforts, I reminded myself why I started, why I ever picked up a basketball. The sound of a made basket that caused the adrenaline to rush throughout the body, I knew I was there for a reason and I went on the hardwood floors, gave it my all and left it all on the court. Whether it was enough or not, I would not leave the court with the sense of never knowing.

As the spark of the never giving up illuminated in my young self, it would return at a very crucial time, a defining moment in my life. As teenager, I sought out my purpose, what I am here for, why I am here for, what is my purpose. All my question would be soon neglected and forgotten as the main focus shifted to living in the moment and living life day by day. A hazing memory of my junior year in high school, as reality became a nightmare. I chose to never take high school seriously as a young naïve adolescent, I chose to avoid any consequences for my lack of interest in post high school planning. I was heading down a road where a future would



seize to exist, I was being looked down at, with shamed eyes of my parents and adult figures that wanted the best for me. Only to be on brink of no future, is where my drive and persistence that became my beacon light for hope and prosperity for myself. Changing my attitude to prove to myself and my family overall, I wanted a future, I wanted them to be proud of who I become. From a freshman who did not ever think the times would end like an endless loop and evading consequences, that would later catch up to me when I really did want to do something with my future. I changed to be a top student from moving up the ranks in levels of my classes, from being a student that had never been in honors classes to being placed in college level courses as senior to boost my academics to later being in this seat I am today in the University of Massachusetts Boston.

This life shaping experience is one that I carry around myself proudly as one of the darkest and bleak times of my life, turned out to be where I learned the most of myself and who I wanted to be. My persistence and dedication to never give up on my dreams of making something out myself, I come to learn that we cannot choose where we come from, we can only go from there. Without these experiences, I would have never found my persistence to never give up and to never give in no matter how hard it is, for that I am grateful because one never knows how great it feels to be on top unless you have been at the bottom.

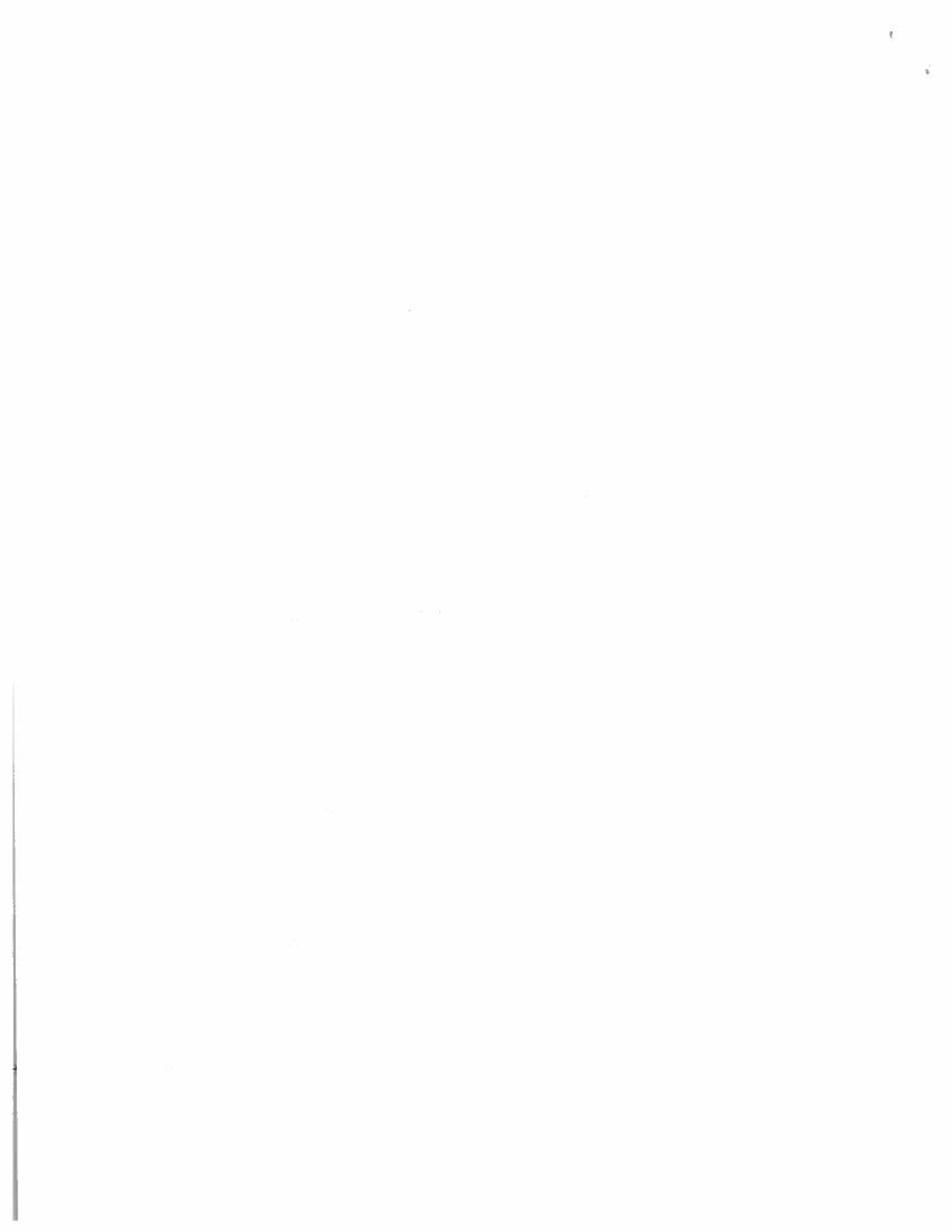


Kelli McCarthy
Prof. Stevens
English 102
27 January 2016

Pre-draft A

Who am I? If you ask any of my friends chances are the first thing they will do is sing 24601 in your face. I am a theatre kid and all of my friends are too. Our high school experience was our own version of *High School Musical*, we would sing in the locker room, the hallways, classroom, car rides, we lived in the theatre, and the only rivalries were BC High boys or Xaverian boys. If someone needed to find me and I was not in the theatre then they would have to walk to the other end of the building to our Campus Ministry. I spent the rest of my free time there helping prepare for school liturgies and retreats. How did I get to be a Campus Ministry Coordinator and a member of my schools Thespian ^{Troupe}~~Troop~~? I blame my oldest brother a little to be honest.

When I was a kid I wanted to be just like my older brother, however he was a wicked smart kid where I was just average. He was a straight A student I was more of a B/C student. When he was in the first grade he read the first four Harry Potter books, I read them going into Third grade. At my elementary school once you were in the third grade you had the opportunity to be a part of the drama department, my brother wanted to do it, so he did, and two years later I followed. I always enjoyed theatre and had a great time doing it. I know I am not the next Sutton Foster or Julie Andrews but I love the theatre and every aspect of it. I love the music, the costumes, the sets, the stories, and the ability to transport an audience to a different time and place for a couple of hours. Entering high school I decided to do my school's musical, *Beauty and the Beast*, and that was how I found myself in my school Thespian ^{Troupe}~~Troop~~ with my best friends. I



became a theatre kid and found all my friends because I wanted to be like them when I was little.

Becoming a Campus Ministry Coordinator has to do with my brother a little, but mostly my elementary school. In the fourth grade students were offered to be trained as altar servers, my brother did it so I did too. In eighth grade we needed forty hours of community service to graduate, and I went over and beyond that, I was even invited to a community service project with Governor Patrick and other kids from the Commonwealth. I loved the community service and being a part of the mass. Once in high school I became an altar server and a lecturer and once I was confirmed I was also a Eucharistic minister. There were many different aspects of community service but I stuck with the ones where we played with little kids and the elderly. Having spent three years basically living in the Campus Ministry Center I decided to apply to be a Campus Ministry Coordinator and because I was so well known in the office and an active participant I was selected to help with the pray services and liturgies.

How did these two activities shape who I am today? Theatre helped me to break out of my shell. I was and am still a quite kid in school but because of theatre and my friends from it, I do not stay that way. It may take a little but when I warm up to new people and become friendly you would never know I was a quiet, sometimes it's getting me to stop talking that's the problem. Campus Ministry helped realize I love helping people. I believe that has something to do with the fact I am a Criminal Justice major. I want to be able to help people and I can do exactly that with this major. I found myself through helping people in Campus Ministry and pretending to be someone I am not in Theatre. Who am I? I'm a theatre kid from a private all-girls Catholic school and proud of it, I would not be who I am if I went to public school, that I am sure of.

Jomaira Moreno

Professor Janet Stevens

English 102

29 January 2015

Pre-Draft A1

Interact club was my life. It all began in 10th grade when I was in my U.S History class. My teacher, Ms. Ascher, was talking about an extra credit opportunity that had to do with an after school club that she was the advisor for. She did not tell us what the club was about she just told us to go. My best friend wanted to go but he did not want to go alone so I tagged along expecting to waste an hour of my life on something that was not going to interest me. I was really wrong. At Interact club that first day they were talking about their goals, Service above self, and many volunteer opportunities that were coming up. I became so involved that I quickly went from just a regular member, to secretary junior year and then vice-president my senior year. I spent all my free time doing community service and making sure that everything was ready for our weekly meetings.

Helping others and being so involved in this club helped me during a difficult time of my life where I had to be apart from my mother for a year while she was stuck in Honduras trying to get her residency and bring one of my older brothers back with her. It was very difficult because we had no idea when she was going to be back or if the government was going to leave her there. When she left everything went downhill including my grades. My vp status in Interact Club was being threatened because I did not have the grades necessary to participate in after school activities. Interact Club was all I had at the time and I could not let that slip out of my fingers.

The people at the ALS center that I was volunteering at were so happy to see me everyday and their happiness motivated me to keep going. It was not just them and the club that helped me.

Ms. Ascher also has a lot to do with who I am today. She helped me a lot and was the only teacher that listened and truly cared about seeing me progress and do great things with my life.

My love for helping others and for doing community service led me to where I am now. It led me to my major and to the decision to be a Social Worker. I want to help other kids find their passion and I want them to have someone that is always going to be there rooting for them. I want to be a Ms. Ascher, I want to be as happy as the people in the ALS center that although we're going through a difficult time still managed to be happy and encouraging. I want to help the people that I work with be great. I love to help people, it's just who I am.

Lauren Moses

Moses 1

Professor Stevens

English 102

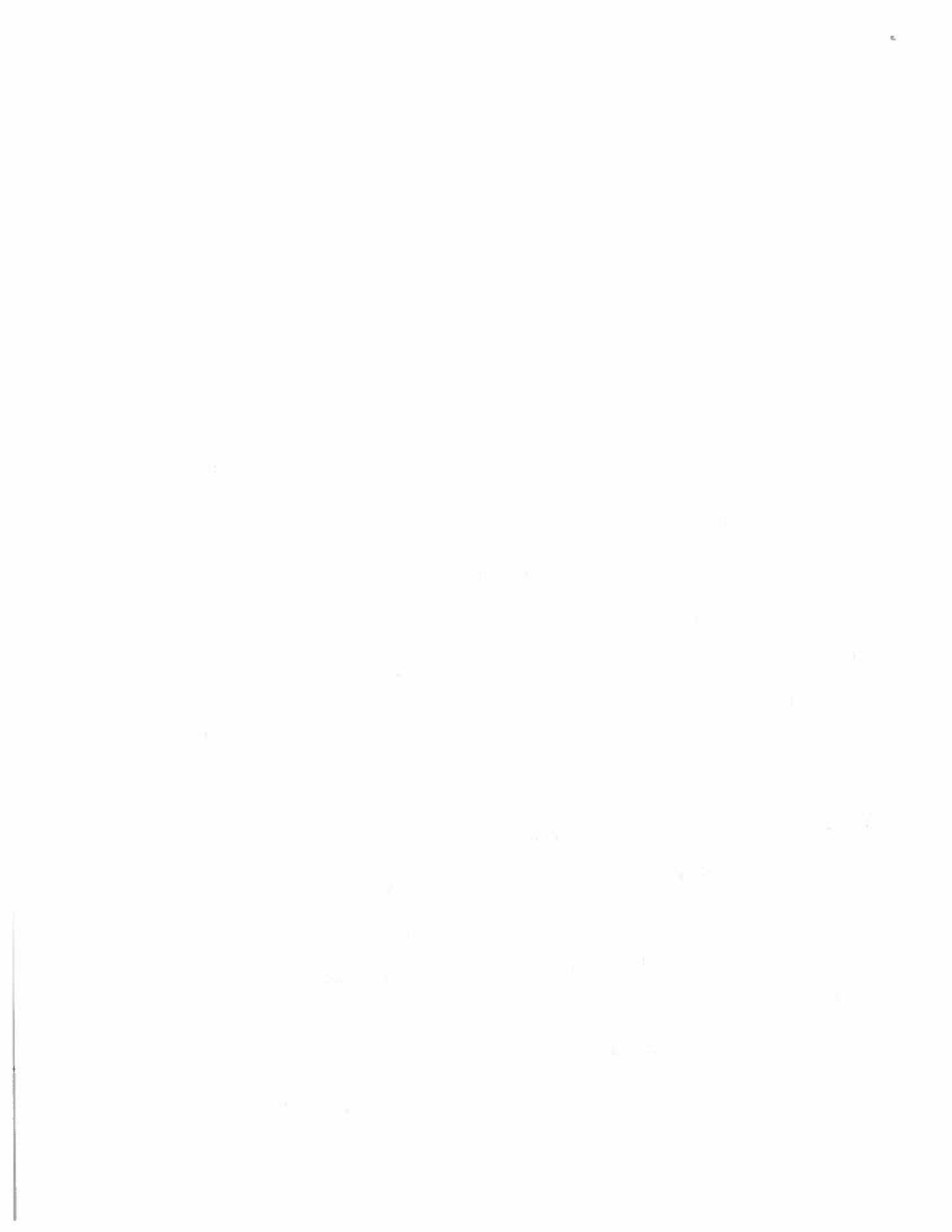
Unit 1 Pre-draft A

28 January, 2016

Perseverance

It is December 11th and I was just at the funeral parlor. My Great Uncle died the 9th. Right now it is dark out and I am down the street from the funeral parlor. I am leaning against a wall taking deep, not very affective, breathes in and out. My lungs are failing to take in the oxygen it needs so that I am able to function properly. I am having an asthma attack... I am going to die. Let me explain to you how I got into this situation.

At the funeral parlor, two people were having diabetic shocks. My cousin and I ran to the store to get some orange juice (for the diabetics) and cream (for the mourning people who wanted their coffee). It was the start of December so winter was upon us. I was running out of the building and down the street with panic coursing through my body. My body started to slow down and I started to feel the tightening in my chest from the physical activity and from the embrace that the cold had on my lungs. I brushed it aside. My cousin then decided that we should split up to make the trips to the stores faster. She went to go get the orange juice and I went to go get the cream. I went to the store and my symptoms of asthma started to worsen. When I purchased the cream and headed out back to the funeral parlor I knew something was wrong with my body. I frantically searched for my inhaler, but no luck. I must have left it at in my purse at the funeral. So I proceed to look for my phone. That too was left at the funeral parlor. On my way back, my air ways have gotten significantly tighter and my body was



shutting down. I decided to stop and try to catch my breath. That is how, where I go to where I am right now.

I'm leaning against this wall debating on what action I should take next. I see a delivery man next to me, delivering dinner to the house whose wall I am borrowing. I am out of it, the street lights look completely different; they seem brighter. Movements around me seem to be slowing down but I cannot focus. I see the delivery man looking at me suspiciously, he sees that I am in distress. Should I ask to use his phone? I debate this question with myself for quite some time. I decide not to. One reason is because I can't seem to focus on asking him the question and two, all of my relatives that could help me are at the funeral and I do not know any of their numbers on the top of my head. The man leaves. Many people walk by with concerned faces but do not ask me if I need help. I am thinking 'man, laying down or sitting down and just resting would be great right now', but I know I can't do that. I have to get back to the funeral parlor. I am not sure how long I have been standing here but I must descend back to the building. I took five steps and already I felt fatigued. I must keep going. I miraculously crossed a busy street and I don't remember crossing it. I rest again on the side of the sidewalk, with my hands on my knees bending over trying to regain oxygen and energy. I must keep going. I cross another street. I stop. I must keep going. This goes on multiple times, for how long? I can't recall. I end up on the same street as the parlor. I see flashing red lights on trucks for the people with the diabetic shocks. I debate on asking them for help, I don't need to make the situation at the funeral parlor more chaotic than it already is. I take a seat on the steps of the building. I want to sit here and just rest a little, I still can't breathe but for some reason it seems right to just stop. No, I must keep going. I get up and look at the lights flashing. I climb my way up the steps cautiously.

As I open the door to the parlor, my cousin comes running out. "I was just coming to look for you! You have been gone a long time! Are you okay", my cousin says all together in an alarmed tone. I slowly walk to the chair that is to my right and say to her a whole four words, "Get mom... need inhaler". She ran to my mom and my mom ran to me with my inhaler. Finally. I put the inhaler to my mouth, push the medicine, and deeply inhale. My air ways start to open up and again I can feel the refreshing oxygen flow through my lungs. I just had to keep going.

Composition 102

1/29/16

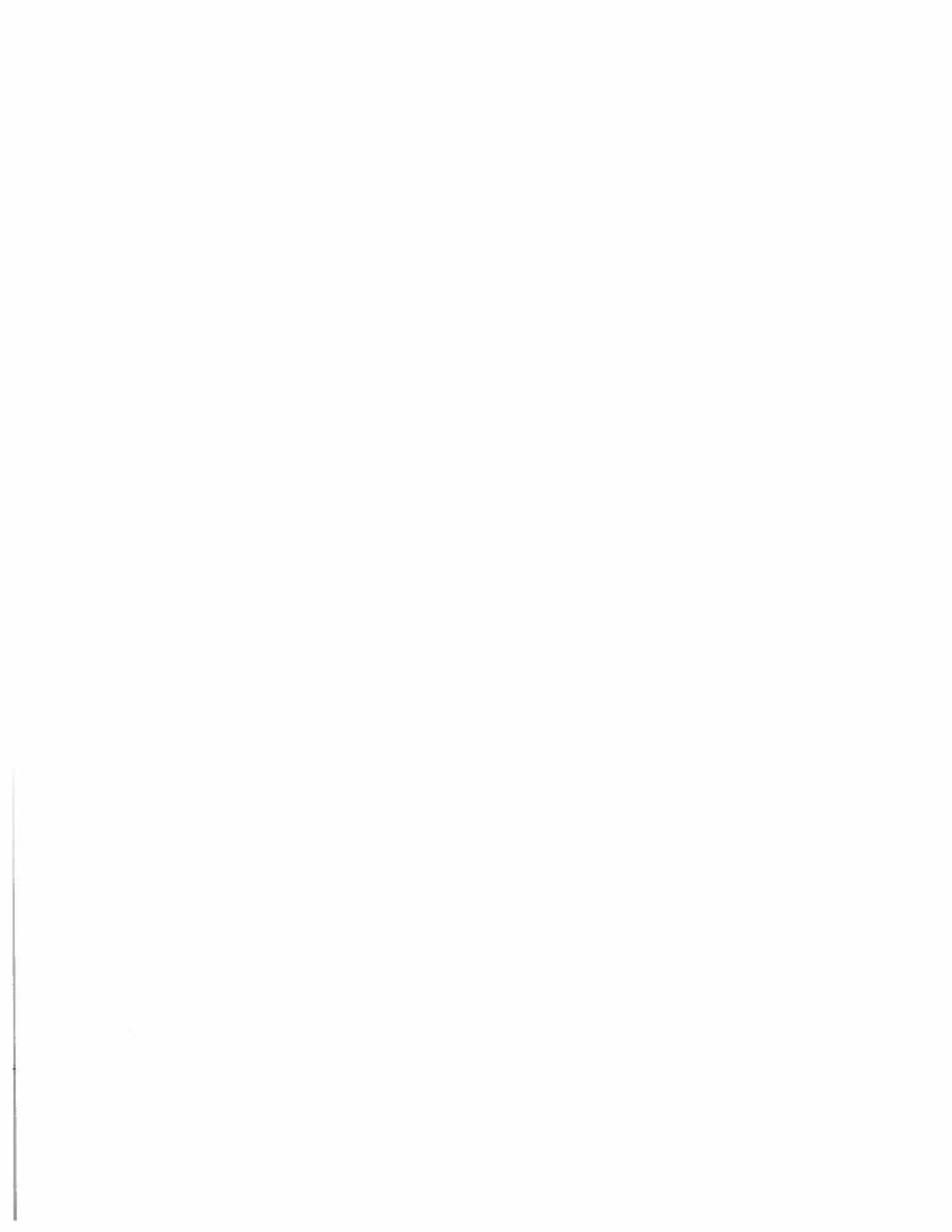
Mon, Weds, Fri 10am

Paul Jeffers

I remember feeling guilt, shame, and above all: nausea. I suppose the dead silent plane ride didn't help me cope with my symptoms because I knew at the end of this quick trip from Vermont to Martha's Vineyard there was a cloud of disappointment and anger waiting for my friend and I, and I knew we would deserve every bit of punishment we got.

Flashback two days and I am on the ferry boat with my best friend on route to Woods Hole MA. The boat ride was slightly rocky and the sky was very dim for noon time, and there was a slight damp breeze in the air that stuck to my face when I walked outside. We could barely wait to get off that ferry and get into his father's car to drive all the way up to Vermont. This was a special occasion for us because my friend's dad was paying Snoop Dogg to perform at one of his nightclubs, and he invited us to the performance. Being in our freshman year of high school we jumped at the opportunity to meet one of our favorite artists. Little did we know how the rest of this trip would go.

We arrived in Vermont and the place was busier than usual for a skiing town in April. People were arriving a day before the performance to get hotel reservations. I remembered thinking how lucky we were to be able to have a complete free trip to watch Snoop Dogg live. We stayed up all night thinking about how cool the show was gonna be, and how cool it would be to "party" with Snoop Dogg. Up to this point in my life I had never touched a bottle of



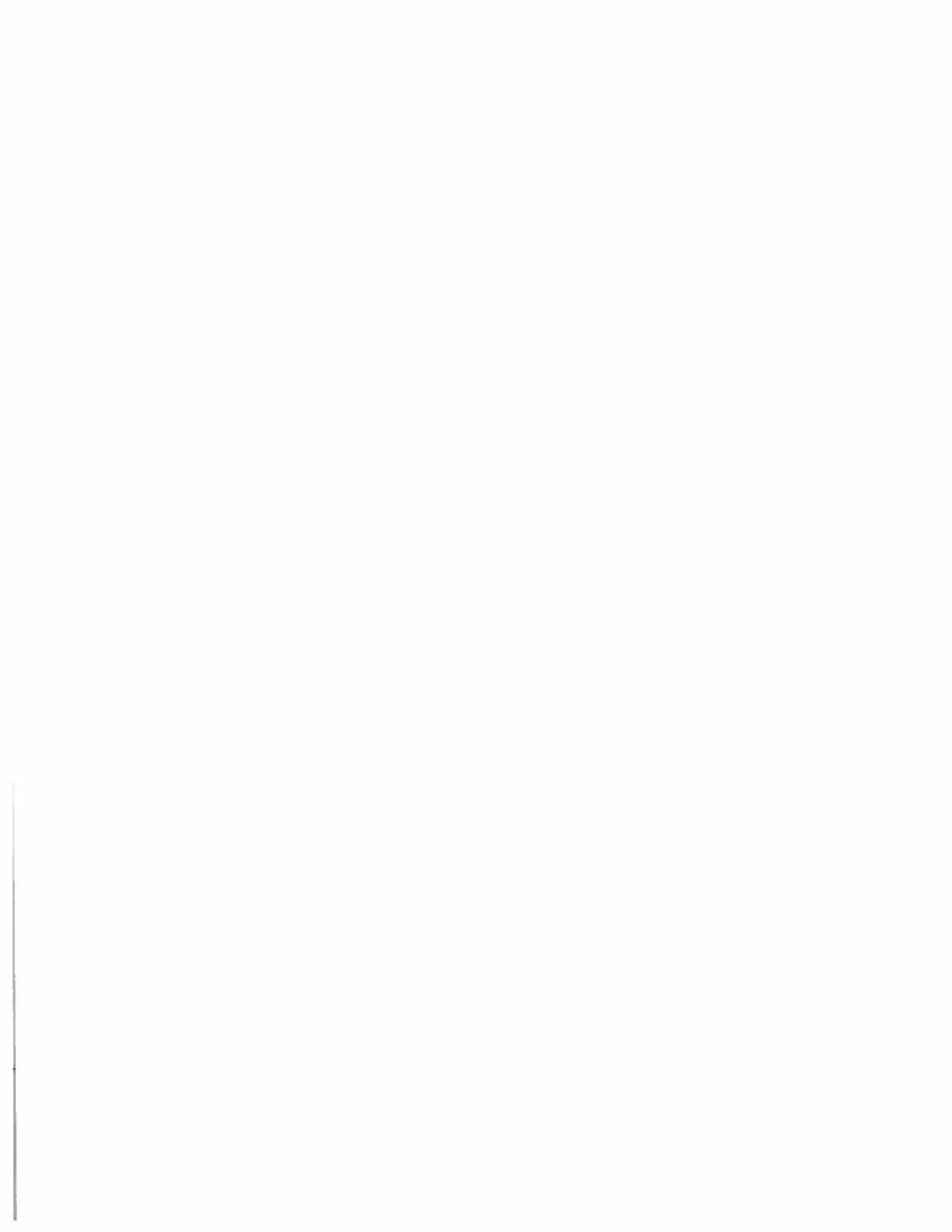
Paul Jeffers

alcohol and never even been around weed in my life, so in the back of my mind I was always thinking what do I do if I have the chance to drink or smoke. Then again, What would any other freshman in high school do?

Finally the night of the show arrives and my friend and I are waiting at the back door of the club to be let in by security. They give us our passes and ask where we want to stand for the show, and we tell them right next to the stage. We walk in and the entire club is dark, smoke and the smell of weed floats through the air. It was damn near impossible to not get a contact high from being in there. The show starts and it's everything we imagined. Snoop Dogg was electrifying, and he played every hit song we wanted to hear, and it was one of the best times of my life.

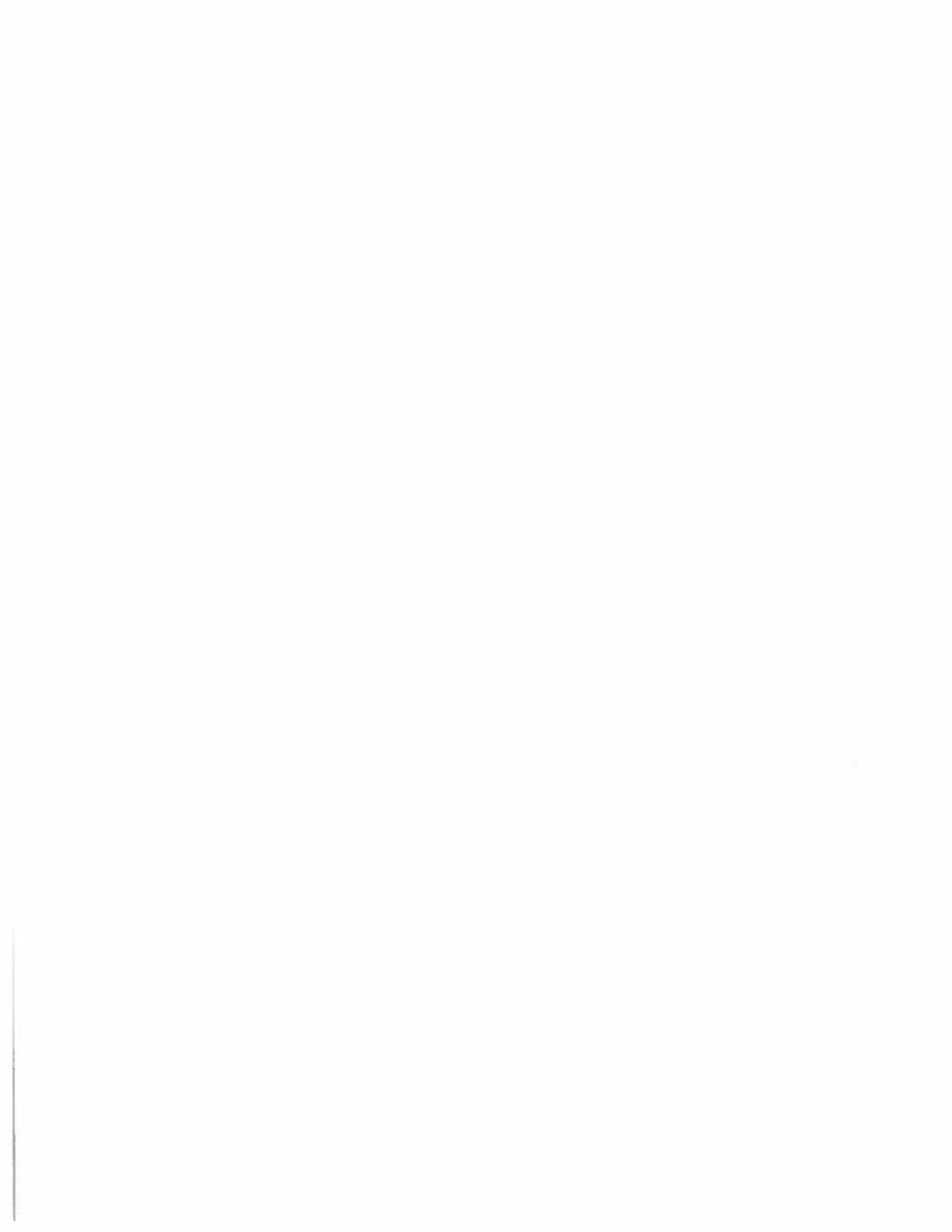
As the show ended we got to the front of the line to meet the one and only Snoop Dogg and get our picture taken with him. Security waits outside the room and we walk in where he is sitting there smoking blunts like cigarettes. He offers us each a hit after we get our picture taken with him while security isn't looking and we were on our way. We were so pumped! Snoop Dogg let us hit a blunt with him! ^A After we got back to the house everything went downhill from there. We for some reason thought it was a good idea to start drinking alcohol for the first time. I remember taking my first sip and thinking how much it would take to actually get me drunk. Problem was I didn't stop till I was passed out.

The next day I woke up and my friend's dad explained what he found when he got home, which was: a broken toilet, puke everywhere, a broken door, and bottles of liquor out on the counters. I knew we screwed up BIG time. Not only was this stupid, but also extremely disrespectful especially since I was a guest. Calling my parents to tell them what happened was



another very uncomfortable moment from this trip. They explained how I had never acted out like this and that I would be dealt with accordingly. My friend's dad immediately put us on a plane back to Martha's Vineyard and he didn't say a word on the trip to the airport.

That 45 minute plane ride felt like an eternity. Both my friend and I kept playing over and over what went wrong in our heads. What we come to realize is the true damage our foolish mistakes cost us. Losing the trust of our parents and family members was already hard enough, but to disappoint them was even worse. I personally felt accountable after this experience and took the bulk of the blame because I was the guest and damaged things that were not mine or my family's. It's safe to say from this point on, But before I could redeem myself, I had to wait for the plane to land on this bright sunny day. Then I could start my long road for redemption.



Origin Story/Anecdote

Arthur Pellenq

English 102, Prof: Stevens

01/27/16

^{day}
First of School (in America)

→ It was a windy but hot early morning day of September, I remember my parents dropping me in front of what was going to be my middle school for the next three years, I was 12 years old. While I waived back at my parents who were leaving, I was getting anxious, I did not speak a word of english and I had no idea where to go. As I was heading to cafeteria where all the students were asked to go to. All of sudden an old lady approached me and pointed at the direction of another boy with curly hair. He introduced himself as Nick, from what I could understand ~~understood~~ ^H he and I had the same schedule and I was suppose to follow him for the rest of the day. I sat next to him with his friends at one of the tables, I wasn't and I am probably still not a very outgoing person but back then I was reserved and shy. So ^H I tried to avoid eye contact and stared at my backpack, not knowing what to do. We finally arrived at our first class, it was a room filled with desks organized in rows facing a big rectangular screen hanged on wall, with on its edges, four markers of different colors. A tall and bald but energetic man walked into the classroom, turned on the rectangular screen and proceeded to introduce himself -Mr.Shea-. Other than the fact that it was my first time seeing such an piece of technology so to speak I was more used to blackboards and chawks instead of smartboards. My new teacher; Mrs. Shea, was and still is (as he will later be a teacher at the highschool I went to) a very funny and outgoing person, the complete opposite of me at this point who could barely communicate with anybody. Then

came lunch time, as I was walking down the main hallway which was large and had tiles of three different colors; blue, white and black, with a water fountain on its right side, something that was quite a novelty for me, I didn't even know how to use at first. In the cafeteria after paying for my lunch and moving over to Nick's table with his friends, I was eating in silence, then probably out of kindness and of desperation, trying to communicate with somebody who so far hasn't spoken much nor have shown or expressed interests in anything; I wasn't the most interesting person to talk to, and neither was I trying to. While I was eating Nick looked at me pointed his finger in the direction of the food on my tray and then rub his hand on his belly and said yummy. I looked at him with a very disappointed look on my face and then switched table, my thoughts were that although I don't speak the language I am not mentally retarded either. Finally the bell rang and signified the end of my first school day in America, it really impacted me as I was by myself and while trying to figure what was going on I had to overcome my timidity, and the people I met that day helped to accomplish this even though my first reaction wasn't the best. Later down the road I even became good friends with Nick.

Katie Mitrano

Professor Stevens

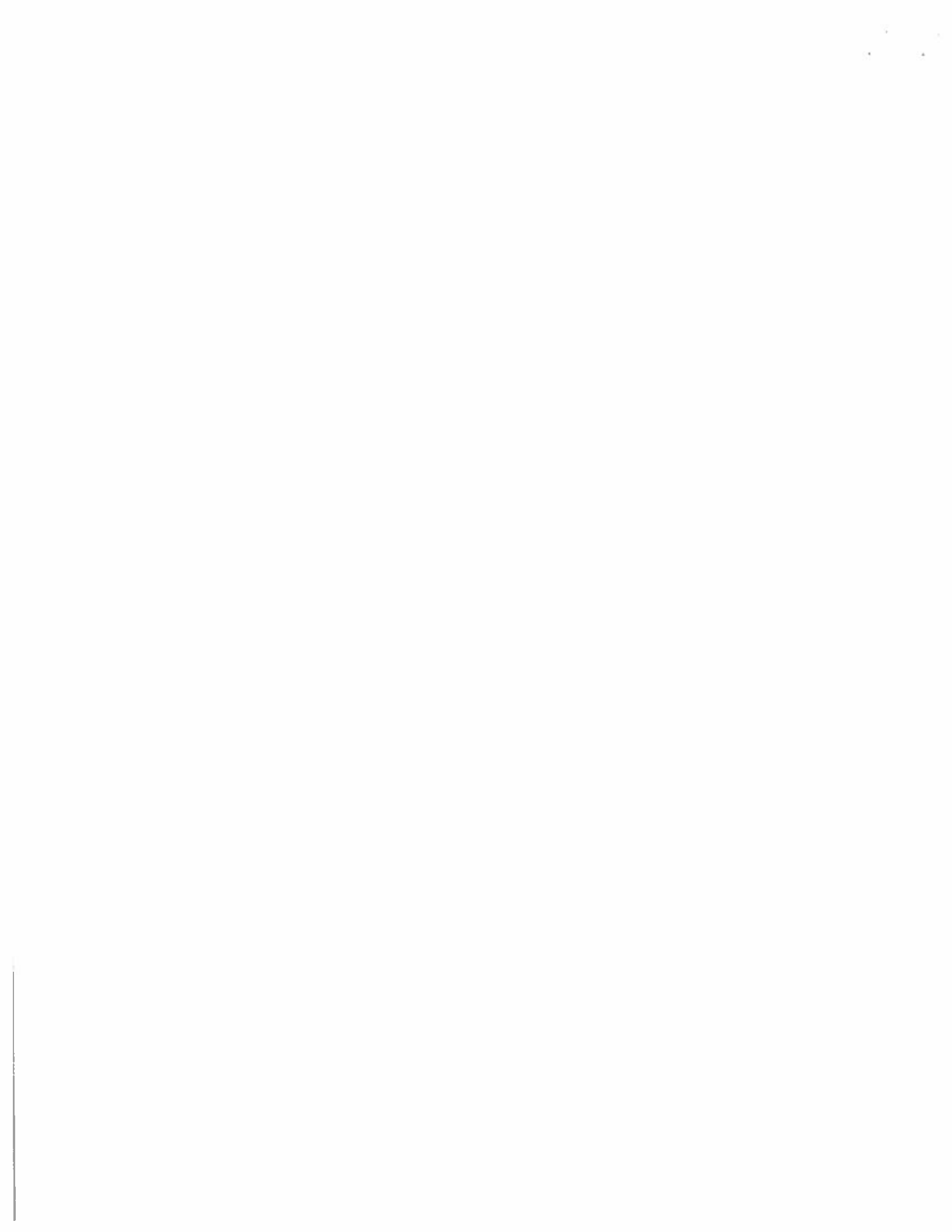
English 102

29 January 2016

Origin Story

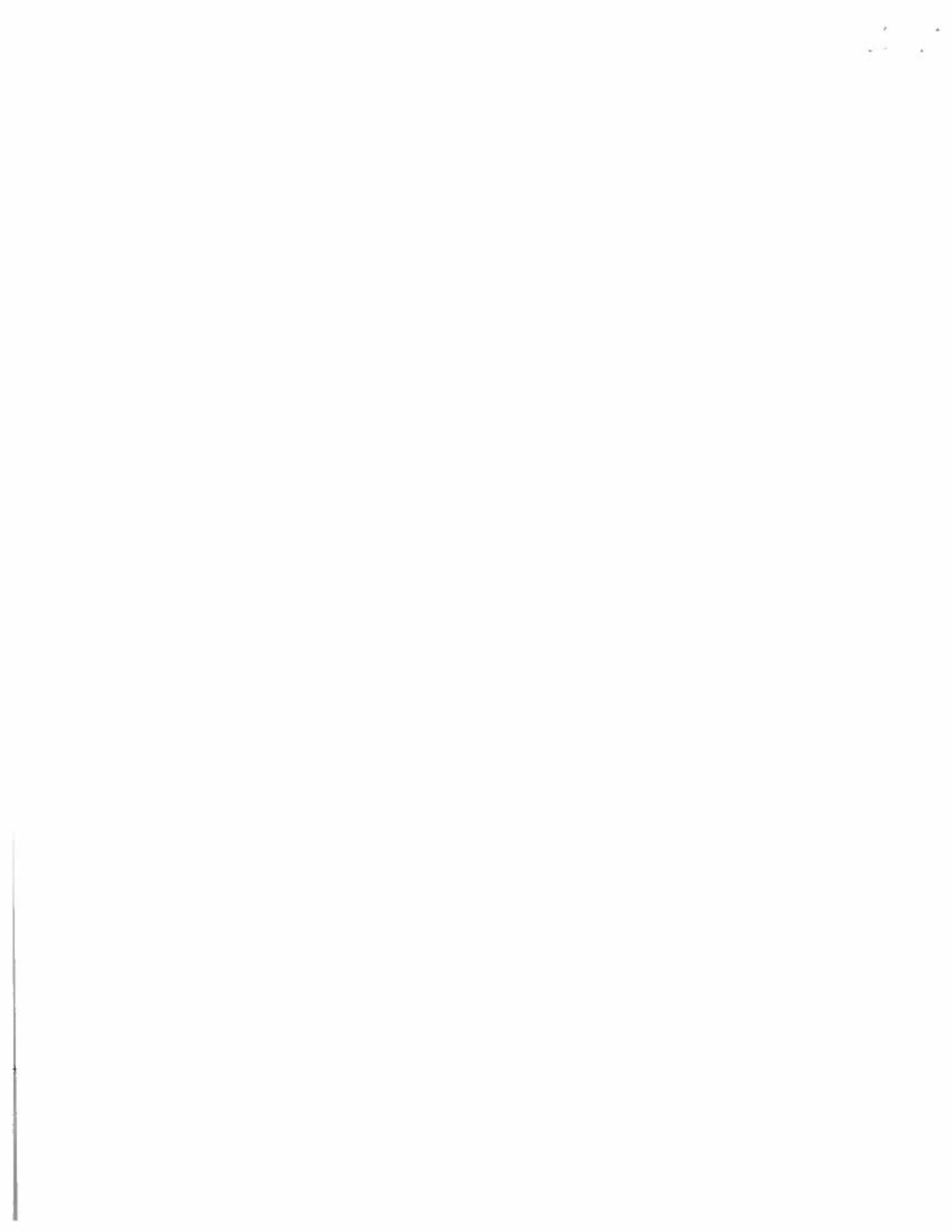
As a child, I was always told that if you wanted something, you have to go for it. No one was going to give it to you and do not expect to get everything you want. My parents always told me to be determined and whatever you set your mind to you could get there. Neither of my parents went to college, but my dad worked every day of his life and now owns his own excavation and landscaping company. He never gave up, he knew what he wanted and he got there. That truly inspires me, his determination inspires me to be just as determined as he was. Once I have my eye on the prize, its hard to get me off of it. I work constantly until I get it.

For example, in high school I was extremely involved in our theater arts department, that my uncle runs. He is the artistic director, and everything that happens goes by him. I signed up to do makeup for a show, just to keep me busy. I ended up falling in love with it. Since that first show, I knew I wanted to be the head makeup designer. My mentor knew she wanted me to take her place when she left so she went to my uncle and said “let her be me, let her be in charge”. He laughed at her and said “no, she can’t, it just won’t work”. After this, I wanted to prove him wrong. I worked on every show, I spent more time, before and after rehearsals to make sure I had the design down. I never gave up. My junior year rolled around and the girl that was supposed to be in charge was removed 3 weeks before a show went up. My uncle looked at me and said “here’s your chance, get it done.” and I did. My junior and senior year I was the head designer. I was determined to get there, I wanted this, even though all odds were against me. You would



think having your uncle being the artistic director it would help you, but it made it harder. He set a higher bar for me than anyone else, he wanted me to work more than he asked anyone to. I knew that, I did not understand it until I graduated, he wanted me to see my determination and the success that came with it and apply that to everything else I do. I now fully understand what success feels like, and it's the best feeling in the world. This learning experience made me fully realize that whatever you set your mind to you can get there.

Another trait that really describes myself is caring. I am a very caring person. I have always been the person to make sure everyone around me is okay before myself. I always worried about other people and I always wanted to make everyone happy. I hate seeing people in pain mainly because it makes me feel pain. Overtime, I have obtained the nickname mom. It started my junior year because I always made sure my friends were good and had everything they needed. If we were at school late for rehearsal, I made sure their homework was done or they had food. I was the person they went to if they wanted a break. When I went to college I thought that nickname would die, it didn't. All of my friends call me mom, I make dinner every night. I clean my apartment constantly, and make sure my roommates have their homework done. Anytime I have friends over I make sure they're fed and that they're okay. It came to the point where my roommate gave me a 'World's best Mom' coffee cup for Christmas. I care for people I don't want anyone to be hurting because no one deserves that. I was always told to be nice to people, and to help someone if they need help. I defiantly get this from my mom, she is the first person to lend a hand to anyone. She always made sure her family and friends were okay before she was. She's the reason I do the same thing. I will always be the person to lend a hand to anyone if they need. It's who I am.



Sarai Suarez

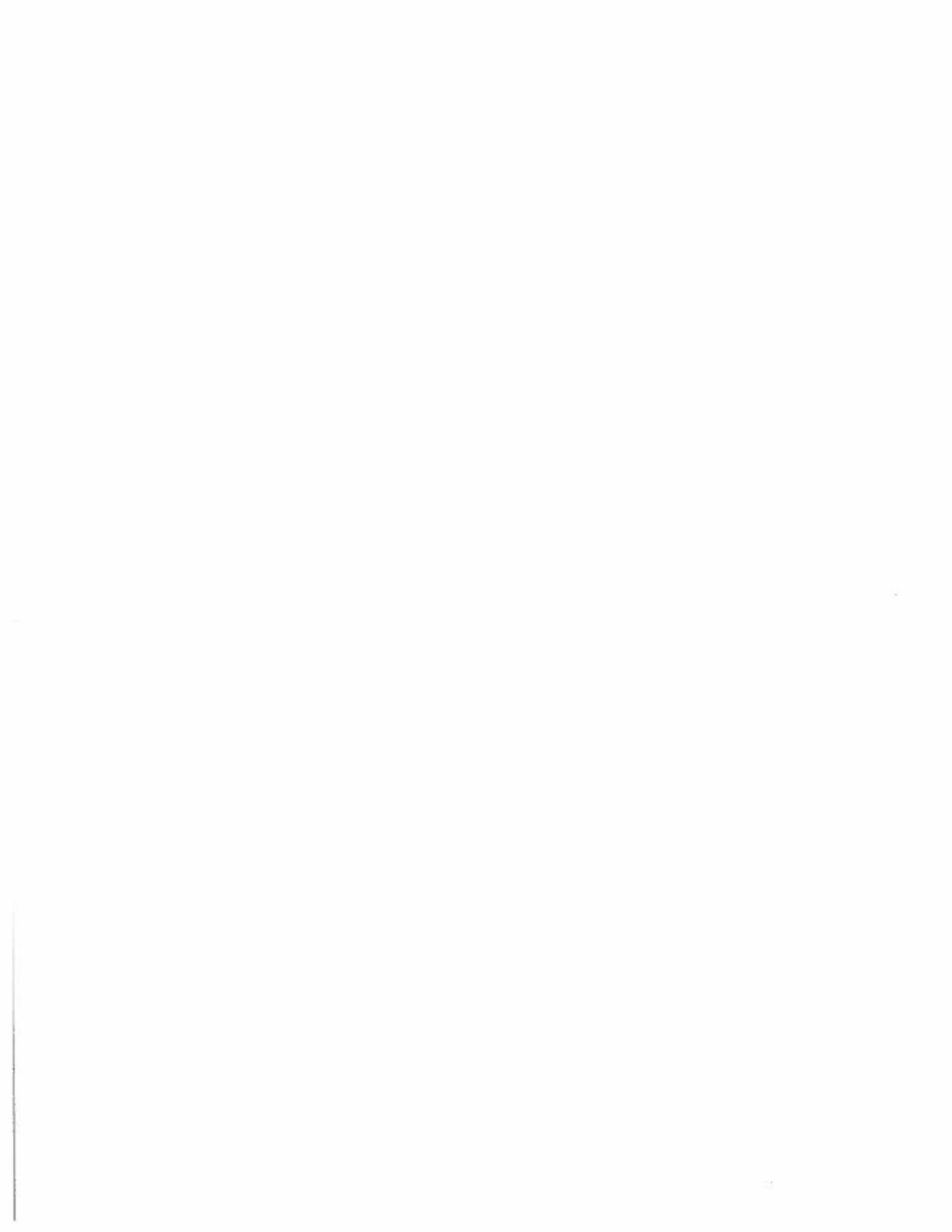
English 102

January 28, 2016

I Owe It To Them To Be Better

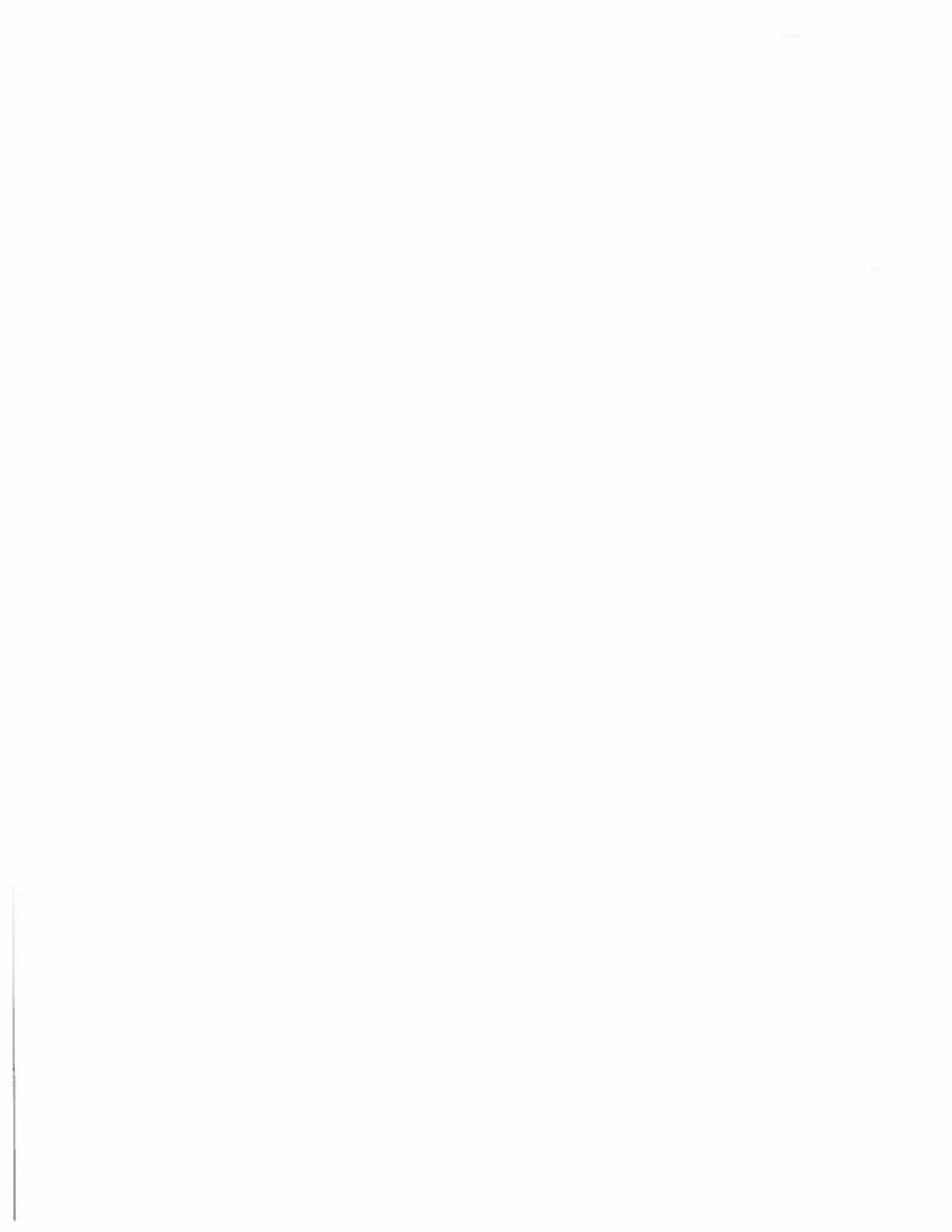
When you live in a small little neighborhood like Chelsea, you realize that no one really has much. Sure, the latest clothes and shoes, but everyone lives in overcrowded, overpriced and pretty crummy looking apartments because that's all there really is there. You grow up in that little city where you know almost everyone and don't really look to go somewhere else. It's comfortable, even if it sucks. You learn to tolerate the ever changing, ever mediocre school system that the city has, pushing through your schooling focusing on the grade rather than actually learning anything. You know almost everyone and always say "good morning" to the crazy old lady who camps out in front of the Salvation Army thrift store. You learn to conform with what you have, and just go day by day through your routine, learning what is in your reach and what is not.

Some kids in Chelsea don't even bother applying to college. They just don't. Some students really can't because of lack of legal documentation, but those who do have legal documentation often just drop out and work at fast food chains or local restaurants. I've always assumed that they were just lazy and wanted the easy way out. I never once considered that it may be because they knew themselves and their capacity and chose not to continue perusing higher education. College just isn't for everyone, no matter how much people try to argue otherwise. Some people are better and manual labor- construction, plumbing, painting, carpeting, etc., than sitting in a classroom for hours at a



time and writing what they hear a professor say. Living in this small town taught me to be realistic and not to aim so high so I don't get disappointed, to always set my goals within my reach. I never expected much from anyone or anything or even myself because I never really had much to expect. I grew up in a small Hispanic town and got used to going about my routine, assuming it was all I was going to get out of life. That changed when I applied to college, as I saw that I CAN do better than the daily routine, however I maintained that realistic mindset all throughout. I'd rather be right than disappointed.

When I started school here in UMass Boston, I did anything and everything to maintain the friendship and bond that I have with the people who have been with me and supported me through even my toughest times. I quickly learned that sometimes you're only friends with people because you see them five times a week, not really because they care about you. But those who do really care for you and continue to support you and motivate you through the process of pursuing your education are those that you feel almost indebted to. You feel as though you owe them this degree, you owe them your best effort, you owe them your loyalty and friendship because they have given you theirs. A small group of friends and I, the day of my graduation, promised each other that we would not give up. We would either work or go to school or do anything, but we promised not only ourselves, but each other that we would do our best to be better and better over time. Although this promise was made by a bunch of emotional, sobbing teenagers saying their final goodbyes over some pizza and soda before we all went our separate ways for college, it is one that I will have in my mind for the rest of my life.



Tristan Suarez

English 102

1/28/15

The Ballad of Crackhead Mary

This is an old story and one that I need delve into the recesses of my memory to retrieve. Each time I retrace its misty chronology it changes and becomes more vague with each telling of it that I give. So let it be known here that this is the written cannon of what happened during that dark mid-autumn in my sixth year of life. All of what you will read here is an account of a true event. Nothing has been fabricated nor exaggerated in any form or fashion. The eldritch ghosts that still lurk within the collective memory of Germantown need no elaboration to bring their horror to bear upon the world. As I said it was in the autumn of my sixth year that this all transpired. I and my siblings enjoyed the cool winds and dancing leaves that ceaselessly tantalize silently the denizens of New England. Pumpkins and scarecrows adorned the fence our mother had had recently built in our yard; a physical manifestation of the ward she guarded her children with unseen. While that fence, like me, is now old and weathered, each year it still finds itself dressed in the fashion of the season when they come round again. One day I and my twin brother were out in the yard feasting our eyes on the ambiance that surrounded our home. While carelessly sending Obi Wan Kenobi to an untimely demise in the depths of a T-Rex's gullet, we detected the sound of the quiet shuffling of feet and the labored breathing of some starved animal. We looked around and saw nothing, then look again but this time behind us. Our eyes met the lawn of the house to the left of ours and there stood too small boys several years younger than we. I and my brother gazed at these unblinking interlopers with shock for in the entirety of their being

there not once “at least as far we could see” had they blinked nor smiled or cried. These two were gaunt and clad only in tee shirts and diapers, like Rugrats dropped into the universe of Mad Max. We entreated the two to join us in our yard and play with what must have been a hoard of toys to these poor young ones. At once the two nodded in unison and walked together across the expanse of their matted, dog feces ridden lawn. When they reached the edge of their dark dominion there was all at once a cry that seemed to echo across the gulfs of space. A shriek with all the malevolence, desperation, and lugubrious howling that a wounded wolf might possess as its life is ended by a hunter’s snare. At the behest of this hideous call, the two boys scampered back into their misbegotten dwelling to face whatever monster dwelt there. At dinner that night we told our mother the horror we had witnessed that day. And our mother is and was a very patient woman, she was wary of to her must have seemed to be nonsense. The next several days were met without incident, and neither hair nor hide of the two little boys could be seen. However, we did see an older kid come out of that house of ruination. He had a buzz cut and a padded denim jacket. His mannerism denounced an aura of displeasure with the human race but children are blind to such cues. We waved at him with joviality and he made a funny gesture with his hand that we had no means of being offended by. However he certainly must have been offended by ours because the next day we woke to our mother’s shrieks. Apparently, early that morning he had left a steak knife in the big scare crow we had in the corner of our yard. As I said my mother is a patient woman but when pressed she becomes a lioness. Her shrieks weren’t those of a bereaved maiden, but of a shovel wielding warrior chasing a bald teenager up our street. In fury she came back to our home red like a tomato and proclaimed valiantly that she would have words with the irresponsible brat who had raised these kids. She went back and we waved as what was sure to be our mother’s last moments passed before us. She went straight up to that place which we dared not go bravely. Like some forgotten slayer of dragons riding to glory. She banged on that door so loudly that it was audible in our own home. With one turn of knob she was in and here my visual knowledge of events fades. What

follows is an account given by our mother of what the recesses of what would colloquially be called “the Pit” looked like. Mountains of trash were heaped into monstrous shapes. Along the walls, great Picasso works of impressionist artistry were made with dried feces and avarice. An old man was sprawled in nothing but his underwear stood at the top of the stairs with vacant eyes that seemed to reflect the hazy miasma of gloom that permeated the home. My mother would have been agape in horror if it were not for the overwhelming gag reflex that would soon take her over. She tried to flee from the living nightmare which spanned before her but her path to the door was blocked. Stood there, in the clear light of day, was that which produced those wraith-like screeches that haunt my dreams to this day. She was gaunt, gangly, and thin like an Ethiopian. Her hair was matted and her teeth were few and far between. Her face however denoted a youthfulness lost and screaming in a sea of wrinkles. She horrifying, yet also piteous. This wretched thing that now stared vacantly at my mother. She had apparently been smoking something behind the house because the pipe was still in her yellowed hand. My mother ran, ran with all the fear that propels a creature escape insurmountable circumstances. The warrior woman who had gone to war now returned in crushing defeat. “I’m calling D.S.S” was her only response as to what had happened. Days passed after the incident over in the House on Haunted Hill. Every shadow, every vacant corner of our home became a portal in our minds to the horror that our mother had witnessed. Then, on a gloomy Tuesday, police cars arrived on our little street. They had a van with them and two agents with D.S.S ready to help the little ones in the home. After they all said a prayer and bid their wives and husbands goodbye over their cell phones, the small army of social workers and officers marched forth into the den of evil that had become the fixture of our imaginations. Five minutes passed. Then ten minutes. Twenty minutes without the eruption of those dreadful cries we had heard left us watching wide eyed out the window like voyeurs into a horror novelist’s dreams. Then all at once, one cop, two cops, three, four officers rushed out the building with the three kids that resided there. The two little one’s screamed and cried, desperate to the return to that place so many

had come to rescue them from. Then we heard that which I and brother had been so long anticipating. The woman of the home leapt forth like a panther and raced to the van her children were now being kept in. The officers restrained her as she fell slowly to the concrete. I watched as her tears poured forth like mournful rivers. She rocked back and forth cradling the teddy bear of her child, sobbing in great heaving breaths "Oh God what have I done?! Oh God what have I done?!". This was no wraith. No ghostly figure for me to share with my friends over a campfire. This was a woman. A human being chained to an illness that would not only her children but undoubtedly her life. In the aftermath, when she and her family had been removed my mother went out to talk to the officers who were still there. They laughed for apparently that woman had had a long track record with them. "Oh that's just ol' Crackhead Mary" they chided "she's been on watch for a long while for child endangerment. Was only a matter of time". I asked my Mom recently if those officers told her how old Mary was. My Mom looked at me like I had opened some old wound and replied "Oh yes they did. I remember it clear as day. That woman was twenty seven". I relate this story to you here that you might take away the same kind of humanity I felt in hearing those words. The idea that beneath a mask of avarice there was a young face tortured and abandoned to her own devices. We're all human beings, regardless of creed and regardless of circumstance. Mary represents a million fold population of people who are left unloved due to a culture that promotes this idea that drug addicts bring their own pain unto themselves. While this may in some cases be true, regardless of how misfortune befalls someone, the pain is the same as what you might feel in circumstances you perceive as unjust. This whole affair reaffirmed the lessons my Mother endowed me with as a child. That all deserve love and all deserve pity.

Joshua Martin

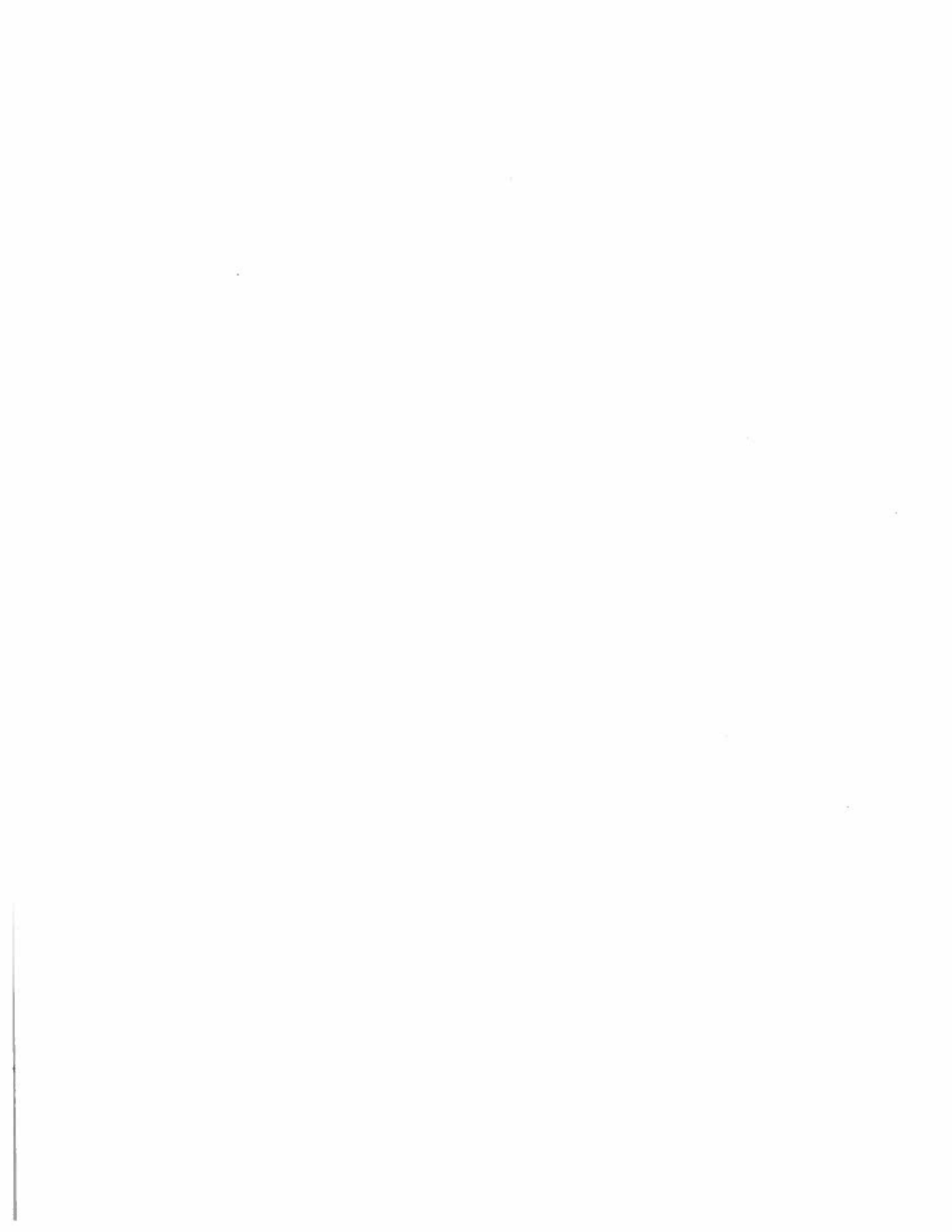
January 27, 2016

English 102

My Origin Story

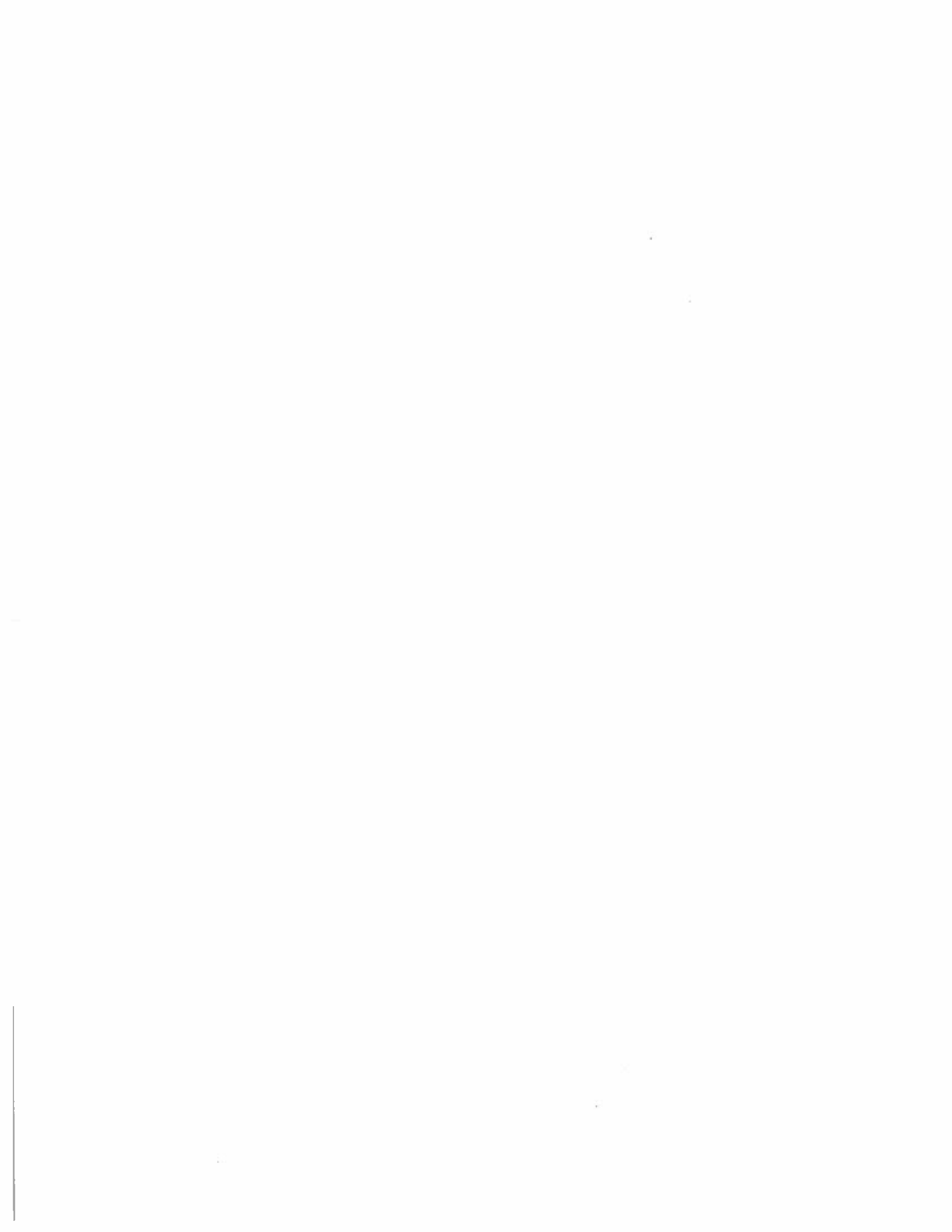
When most people look at me, they do not see the funny and hard-working individual that is underneath my skin. I've always been the one out of my friends and siblings to work hard and make it on my own. Also, I have the funniest personality out of all my friends and I can always make them laugh. The origins of these traits come from how I was raised in my house and how they were instilled upon me from my dad. These dominant traits characterize who I am and they are very important to me.

Everyday, my dad gets up at 4 am and goes off to work at around 6:30 am. He goes off and works a full day and works his but off there. He told me a few years ago that he wanted me to have a job and to be self sufficient. He has never in my life ever given me an allowance and he rarely gave me money to go shopping, buy food, etc. He always expected me to provide my own funds for anything I wanted to buy and so that resulted in me going to work at a young age. Ever since this, I have had a job regularly and over the past summer, I was working three jobs to earn money. The dedication to put in this much amount of hard work was a great amount and this trait was instilled upon me by my dad. By having this trait, I have always been a hard working person on anything I do. But the hard work didn't just stop at the end of the summer, when most college kids quit their jobs. I kept mine and I still have it while also going to college, which most college kids don't do because of the rigors of college. I know that with my hard work ethic, it is easier to do handle a challenge like this.



One of my favorites I have about myself is being funny. Ever since I was a kid, my dad would always be my family's jokester and he would make everything funny. I was jealous at him for having clever jokes and being very witty at the perfect moment. He always had the right joke or pun to say at any moment and he would always make me laugh. As I grew up, I wanted to be the funniest one in my family. I wanted to be the one who had the clever jokes at the right moment and would make everybody laugh. As time went on, I did get to be very funny around my friends and family and I was one of the funniest people in my family. My friends from high school and my family will always say that I am a funny guy and I can produce a chuckle from anyone. Being funny has helped me in all sorts of situations like in awkward times and having this trait really helps me express myself than other formal ways.

The traits and their origins from my life have produced great moments for me and they have given me great experiences. These traits give me great qualities to succeed in life and to be successful. They help me in living an enjoyable life.



The day I found out I would be going to Wyoming with my camp, I was not only full of excitement also fear. Before I knew it, my mom was driving me to the station where I packed my suitcase and other belongings into a giant yellow bus, give her a kiss, and said, "See you soon."

I was on my way to the state of Wyoming to start my adventure of taking an eight day trek in the backcountry. We spent the first day planning out routes and learning how to set up tents, carry our eighty pound backpacks, and how to use the bathroom since there were no toilets. I was not only scared of what it would be like in the middle of nowhere, but I was also thrilled to be able to experience something new with the people I trusted most: my family away from home.

The next morning, we sat down to eat our breakfast before splitting apart for the eight day journey. That day, I was the leader. My job was to make sure we got to different destinations on time. It was fun when we first started hiking, except for the fact that it was close to 100 degrees. I had to make sure everyone stayed calm while handling everyone's different emotions. By the time we arrived to the campsite, we were tired and sweaty. I wanted to take a shower but I couldn't. We cooked dinner on a portable stove, washed the pots and pans, hung up the bear bag and set up our tent for the night.

By the third day some of the girls wanted to quit and go home, but I kept pushing them by saying that we started as group and we would finish as a group no matter what. I was excited each day for the new things to come. I would try to sleep at every break we took, and drink as much water as possible. But on the fourth day, I broke down while crossing a river. I had to wear my water shoes and cross the river holding my partners hand. I was fine until my partner started to slow down and my feet got really cold. After I crossed, I broke down and cried. I just wanted my mom and I told my counselor that I wanted to go home. All the girls in my group asked what

Ashli Smith

was wrong, because I was the one who never cried. They picked me up and kept pushing me until we got to the next campsite.

Before we knew it, the last day in the back country arrived. The day involved a five mile walk to the spot where the vans would pick us up. It didn't seem that much, but it was a walk alone through a canyon with the sun beating down and an 80-pound backpack on your back. I was the first one to start the walk back alone. As I walked, I thought about how proud I was of myself to not only complete this journey but to finish it with the people I trust. I thought of how I would never forget this journey, and that it would be a story that I could share with other people at home. I thought of how this journey made me a better person with leadership skills. I thought of how this journey had opened my eyes to being comfortable with experiencing new things.

I learned that whether I'm far away or close to home, there is always a lesson to take home and a story to tell. I learned that when I work with people I trust and believe in, that anything can be accomplished. I learned that I have a lot more potential and am a lot stronger than I had previously thought.

