

# Blue Colt Vibe

Journal of Thought

*Spring 2019*

The Place I  
Call Home

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The Effects  
of Social  
Media

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Keys to a  
Healthy  
Relationship

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MCC Alum  
Rocks Out



Front Cover Art Courtesy of Meztli R. Herzog

# About Us



**Claudia Ugbana**

Claudia is a 20-year-old journalism major. She aspires to be an author and editor for an esteemed magazine.

She enjoys reading novels, writing and interacting with people of all ages and races.

Some of her favorite novels are by powerful women, such as Danielle Steel, Nora Roberts, J.K. Rowling and Margaret Atwood.



**Matt Thornton**

Matt is a sports writer and copy editor for Quo Vadis from Piscataway. This his second year on the staff. He is passionate about basketball, and has followed the sport for the majority of his life.

He wants to pursue a career as a sports writer and broadcaster for a major newspaper and sports network. He enjoys playing “NBA 2k,” eating good food and playing basketball. Most importantly, you can’t guard him one-on-one.



**Bridget Quimby**

Bridget is a second-year journalism major at MCC that wants to be a magazine editor when she grows up. She is a writer, traveler, snowboarder, special effects artist, painter and photographer that lives life to the fullest. She enjoys pizza, sushi and coffee – but not at the same time. Bridget is fluent in American sign language and hopes to learn more languages in the future. She aspires to travel the world and live happily.



**Matthew Serraty**

Matthew was born on Feb. 24 in New York, but was raised in North Brunswick for most of his life. He is Dominican-American, and still has family in the Dominican Republic

Matthew is a 19-year old journalism major at MCC, and is currently in his second year. He is a section editor, copy editor and writer for the newspaper. He is also the president of Smash Club.



**Samantha Cheng**

Samantha is a computer science major at MCC who graduated from Edison high school in 2016. She likes art, music and making new friends. She is a photographer, sports editor, layout artist and managing editor for Quo Vadis. She takes most of her photos with a Nikon D3400, and some photos with her iPad and phone. She would like to someday learn how to edit photos and videos. Her favorite quote is said by Oogway from the movie Kung Fu Panda: “Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called the present.”



**Chris Place**

Chris is a journalism major at MCC. He enjoys watching sports, listening to hip-hop and watching television. His favorite sports teams are the New York Giants and New York Knicks. His favorite rappers are Eminem and Kendrick Lamar. His favorite television shows are “Friends” and “The Office.” He wants to become a sports writer and be on a sports talk show.



**John Degregorio**

John is a second-year journalism major. In his spare time he enjoys reading, writing, “Dungeons & Dragons,” pizza and petting dogs. He hopes to work for a newspaper after graduating.

“Sam! You’re not even in this class!”

-Fall 2018 JOU 202 Class

*The magazine is published by Middlesex County College and produced by the Fall 2018 JOU 202 class.*

*The adviser is Melissa Edwards.*

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# The Place I Call Home



Photo Courtesy of Enem Odeh

*Woman selling peppers in a market*

## **By Claudia Ugbana**

When people ask me where I'm from, my first response used to be New Brunswick because I've lived there for a few years. While New Brunswick is a town where I've somehow managed to live in three houses and an apartment, I wouldn't call it my home. Home to me means more than a place I lay my head at night. The place I call home is Lagos, Nigeria.

Nigeria is a country located in west Africa, with an actively growing population of 188,462,640 people and counting, making it the seventh most populous country in the world. It is the 32nd largest country in the world at 356,669 square miles. The capital city is Abuja, but the largest city of them all is Lagos, where I spent 16 years of my life loving and hating everything about my country.

Lagos city is known to be one of the fastest-growing cities in all of Africa. Lagos, popularly known as "Eko," "Naiji" or "Lasgidi," is not by any means a clean, quiet or comfortable place to live; but like some

of the world's greatest and most interesting cities, it is a place that houses historical nightlife events, as well as a range of people who come from varying ethnicities and cultures throughout Nigeria. Lagos is emerging into one of the best commercial cities in Africa with a growing production in railroad systems and a large amount of transportation systems, ranging from land, sea and air.

With over 30 local markets around the city, visitors are offered a variety of vendors and locations where they can shop for clothing or food and explore the cultural aspects of the city. Over the years, there have also been many developments, such as the two famous malls, the Palms Shopping Mall and Ikeja City Mall, which offer movie theaters, bowling alleys, a ShopRite and many stores that cater to both children and adults.

One of the many interesting things about Lagos is the way in which the people have the ability to turn their misfortunes into happiness and joy that reflects onto

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# Cruise to Alaska Part 1: Seattle, WA

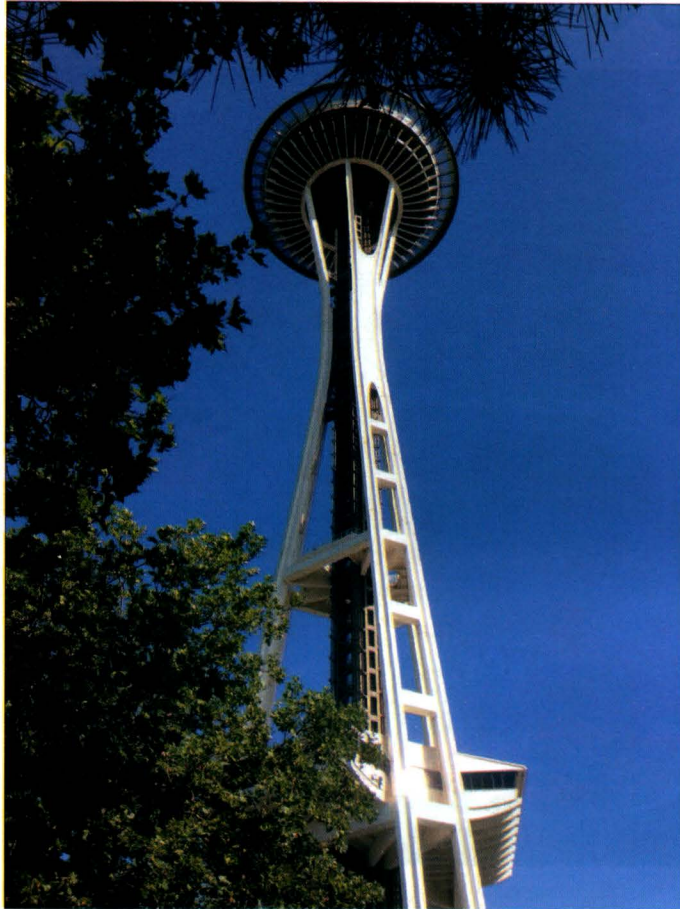


Photo Courtesy of Samantha Cheng

*View of the Space Needle from below*

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others. Hawkers roam the streets selling bags of purified water known as “pure water” to earn a living, as well as setting up kiosks by the side of a busy street to sell roasted corn and spicy meats known as “suya” for the people who have put in long hours at their jobs. On weekend nights, local girls and boys gather by popular streets to perform traditional dancers, sing renditions of songs by famous musicians and showcase poetry.

Although there are a variety of things that make Nigeria so great, the country still struggles with economic issues, which differentiates it from other top-leading nations. There is a famous saying, “A beautiful thing is never perfect.”

The world has always perceived Nigeria as a third world, underdeveloped country that is yet to catch up with other nation’s technological advancements, but the people of Nigeria strive to conquer the adversities thrown at them to do better and uplift their country.

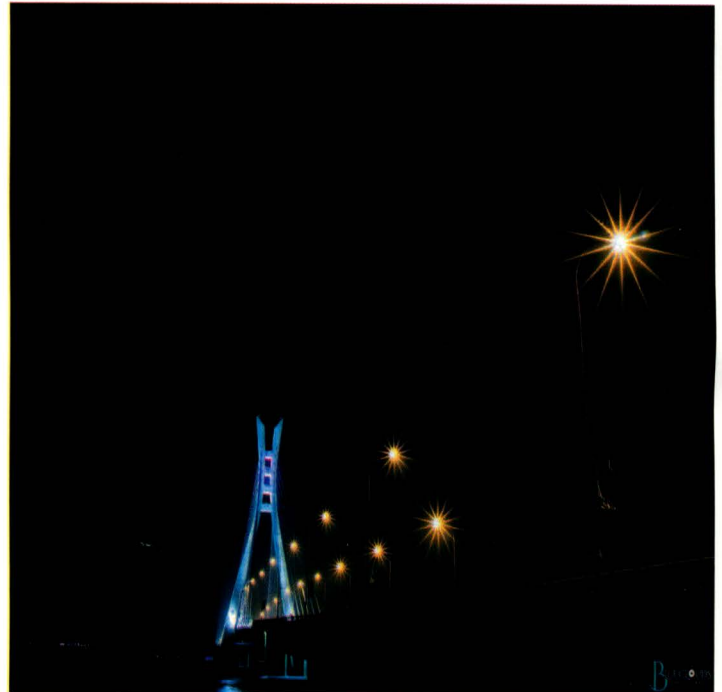


Photo Courtesy of Enem Odeh *Ikoyi Bridge - Lagos*

# Small Town Spirit

By **Bridget Quimby**

My hometown is quaint. You can get to the ends of Sayreville within a 10-minute drive. Sayreville, or as locals call it “The Ville”, is right smack in the middle of the biggest highways in all of New Jersey: the Garden State Parkway, U.S. Route 1, Route 9, Route 18, Route 34, Route 35, Route 36, Interstate 440 and Interstate 287. I think you get the picture. In between all of those buzzing highways is a small and surprisingly quiet suburban community filled with multi-generation family-owned businesses, churches and winding side streets. As you take the very smooth, relaxing ride towards my hometown you will see a tiny blue sign with gold lettering that says “Succeed in Sayreville.”

Sayreville is a very neighbor-oriented town filled with friendly people who have lived there for decades. Everyone comes together for Friday night football games over at the Sayreville War Memorial High School. During the Fourth of July, all 45,000 residents, or “Sayrevillians”, head over to Kennedy Park for a spectacular fireworks display and the Saint Stan’s carnival in the very beginning of summer.

Sure there are a few franchises in Sayreville such as the Starbucks and Dairy Queen on Route 9, but Say-

reville is a town built on its own industrial success, literally. The Borough of Sayreville is built on top of extensive amounts of clay deposits. The Sayre and Fisher Brick Company was one of the largest brick-making companies in the world that made over 6.2 billion bricks once it reached its 100-year mark of business. Before Sayreville got its name, it used to be called Wood’s Landing. After the Sayre and Fisher Brick Company success, the town was

renamed in the 1860’s. Even today, most of our museums, churches and some of the oldest houses are made of beautiful red brick.

Sayreville has a wide variety of food options, all owned by local families just trying to bring a little taste of their home to the table. Nunzios Kitchen has the biggest, most ridiculously creative pizza slices you could ever imagine: things like chicken, waffles and syrup stacked over baked dough or jalapeno macaroni and cheese slices. You can expect to see handlebar mustaches and sleeves of tattoos welcome you into this cool, hip place that will immediately



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

make you feel like part of the family.

Then there's LaLa's BBQ on Jernee Mill Road that has amazing empanadas and serves authentic Argentinian food right off of their charcoal grill. The whole show is run by this sweet little Argentinian lady who will make you feel as if you're in your grandmother's kitchen. She will always check up on you and no matter how old you are she will always call you sweetheart after every sentence.

For a quick bite, the dads of "The Ville" usually drive over to Bear's Hotdog stand for a traditional homemade chili-covered hotdog and a little high school football chat with the owner. The family who runs this famous hotdog stand has been in business on the same street corner for nearly half a century. If you ask anyone where to get a hotdog in Sayreville they will point you over to this legendary stand.

Last, but certainly not least, the staple in everyone's childhood in Sayreville, Big Wally's Sub Shop. Big Wally's supports just about every Sayreville sport, most notably the famous Sayreville Bombers High School football team. This shop has sandwiches named after coaches, teachers and is mostly run by the football



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

players themselves. The sandwiches are massive and are loaded with an abundance of meat, cheese and anything else you ask for. Stingy is not in Big Wally's vocabulary.

The nightlife in Sayreville is never dull with the ample pubs and bars scattered around town. The most well-known venue of all would be the Starland Ballroom, home to crazy concerts with even crazier fans. This spacious concert hall has welcomed many famous performances by

Van Halen, Bruce Springsteen and of course Sayreville's hometown hero Jon Bon Jovi. The venue opened in 2003 and was one of the 10 largest concert nightclubs in the world. I don't think there is one person that lives in Sayreville that can say they have never been to the Starland Ballroom, it is truly a must to go here.

Sayreville is not the biggest or most extravagant town, but its bonds and history are what makes this town so legendary. Regardless of where you are from or where you will go, you will always find home in Sayreville.



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby



# Memories in Monroe

By John DeGregorio

Growing up in New York City affords an opportunity to have a taste of seemingly all of the world's cultures right at one's fingertips. Even from a young age, I was aware of this. Though I knew there was an entire world outside of the five boroughs, I always felt as though there was no reason to see much of it because everything anyone could ever need or want was right there in my own backyard.

Around the time I turned 14, my family moved to Monroe Township, NJ. This felt like the end of everything I had ever known and held dear. My friends all pitied me. Imagine having to move out of the cultural, financial, food and fashion capital of the world to the back-woods boondocks wasteland of New Jersey. Over the course of several melancholy years, I was able to finally adjust. Once I got my bearings, I was able to see that life outside of the big city was worth living.

One of the strangest things to get used to upon leaving New York was that everything in Jersey seemed so far apart. Walking to the grocery store or to a friend's house for the afternoon wasn't really a thing. Getting around required a car, and it was in a car that my new

friends and I created our fondest memories of our home town.

At over 42 square miles, Monroe is objectively enormous.

The guys and I would hop in someone's car, blast the radio and just spend our afternoons and evenings cruising around town. During the summertime, local farms growing small trees and flowering plants would come into full bloom and make for impressive sights. Others grew fields of deer corn that seemed to stretch on forever.

One of

Monroe's premier attractions is Thompson Park, the largest developed park in Middlesex County, home to Lake Manalapan, a 30-acre lake whose surface is often peppered with the bobbers of local fisherman and canoes. We spent countless summer afternoons hiking the park's trails, playing basketball and touring the small zoo housed within the park. Though it now operates under a new name and new ownership, in my day, a hotspot for local youth was the nearby Dibrizzi's Pizza and Ice Cream, conveniently located just across the

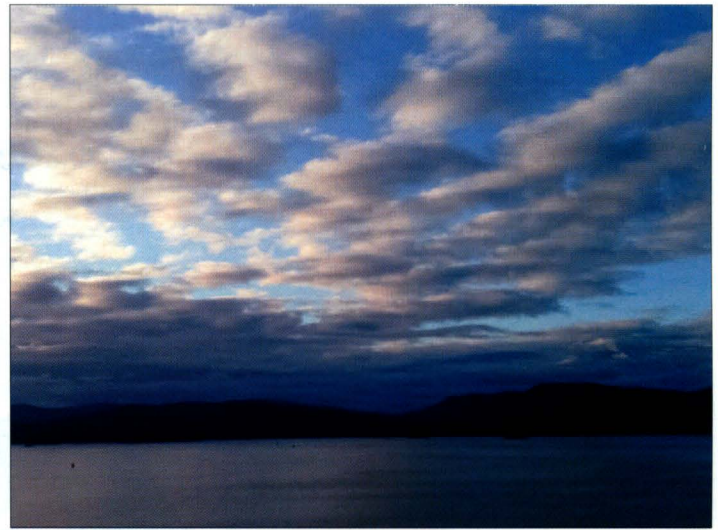
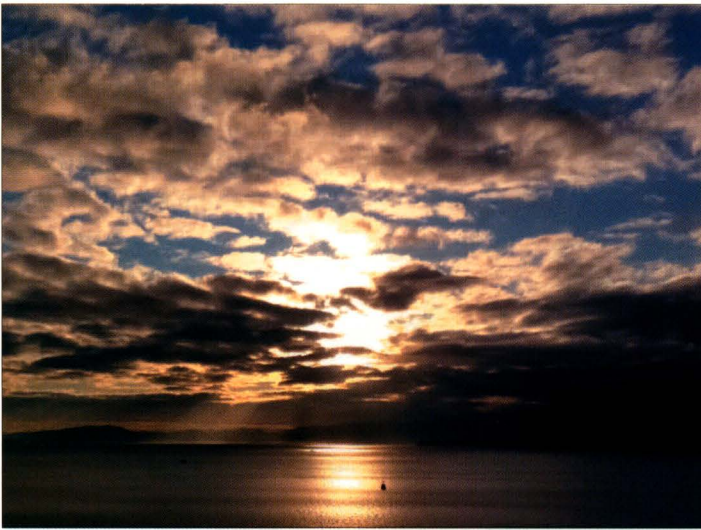
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Illustration Courtesy of Samantha Cheng

# Cruise to Alaska Part 2: Out at Sea

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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street from the park's main entrance. My friends and I, along with countless other neighborhood kids over the span of the pizzeria's lifetime, spent hours loitering in their parking lot, drinking soda and eating slices of central Jersey pizza (almost, but not quite, as good as New York).

When darkness fell, Thompson Park was out for us. As mentioned earlier, Monroe is a sprawling town, and one of that size is going to have plenty of hidden back-roads and features. Our go-to spot under the cover

of darkness was James Monroe park, a much smaller park nestled in a much more rural locale on the town's southeast side. On the swings of the deserted playground, my friends and I would spend time laughing, talking about girls, complaining about teachers and just having good, clean fun, as our nightly curfews drew closer and closer.

Adolescence in Monroe was much different than the city, but my friends and I made the best of it, making memories and having plenty of fun along the way.

# Where I'm From: North Brunswick



By **Matthew Serraty**

Photo Courtesy of Matthew Serraty

North Brunswick is the little brother of all the Brunswicks. New Brunswick has the nightlife to explore and the Rutgers campus. East Brunswick has multiple parks, and of course South Brunswick has one of the better high school football programs in the state. North Brunswick is not given the notoriety or the respect it deserves.

North Brunswick is a small town, but it's still filled with personality. The people are the biggest reason because they all come from different cultures and walks of life. They all come here to settle and enjoy a quiet life. The parents all know each other because their children play the same sports. For this reason, the town seems to get smaller and smaller the longer you're here.

The youth gives North Brunswick a different edge as well. You'll spot them all over the town wearing the trendiest clothing and constantly using the phrase "What's the wave?" The teens are constantly looking for new adventures.

Even the lingo they use is different:

"Can you scoop, bro?" "You got the whip?" And the

best one, "You're gassing."

The go-to spots to eat are as quiet and pleasant as the town itself. Nino's Pizza & Subs is the signature pizza spot in North Brunswick. They feature an endless amount of pizzas and various types of subs to eat. Owners and the employees are as friendly as they come. They just want you to indulge and enjoy your time; but when at Nino's, never buy any of the drinks. That's what the Krauszer's Food Store next to it is for.

When searching for a quick bite, you do not have to look far when in North Brunswick. Everything including McDonald's, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Five Guys and Smashburger is right here. Even when making the decision about grocery shopping, you have a plethora of choices. There are always the super stores like BJ's and Costco for a huge grocery day. They have the more affordable Wal-Mart, where it feels as if they have every product known to mankind. There is also the more practical ShopRite or Trader Joe's for the organic people.

*Continued on page 12*

# Cruise to Alaska Part 3: Ketchikan, AK

Photo Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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The Regal Cinema is here for when you want to watch the newest superhero movie. It's usually really slow during the weekdays, making that the best time to go. However, if you want to do something a bit more engaging, there's the Bowlero. You get to have a wonderful time bowling, and even spend some time in the arcade. The best part about the Bowlero is how affordable it is.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays the local Buffalo Wild Wings is packed. They have their specials on wings that send people into a frenzy. Tuesdays it is half off the traditional wings and Thursdays are 70 cent boneless wings.

North Brunswick does care about the fitness and

well-being of the people in the community. This is shown through all the gyms located here. The LA Fitness is only an option because they're the only gym with a pool and basketball court in North Brunswick. The Planet Fitness is a gym for beginners, but it is cheap and has the perk of being open all day and night. Crunch is a great gym, but not too much space to operate. The UFC gym is highest quality of all, but the price drives people away.

The irony of this town is that I always hear from the people who live here, "There isn't enough to do."

As you can tell, this is not true. There are so many things to do and explore in North Brunswick that people don't appreciate. While it is little brother for now, it is going to grow and blossom.

# Living In Highland Park



By Chris Place

Photo Courtesy of Chris Place

Highland Park is a small town, to say the least. The area of Highland Park comes in at less than two square miles. Don't let the size fool you, there's plenty of stuff to do around here. We don't have as many things to do as towns like Edison or New Brunswick, but we have certain things that make our town very unique.

Highland Park is one of the more diverse towns in Middlesex County. Irving Primary School, Bartle Elementary School and Highland Park Middle School are all evident of that. When groups of friends sit together at lunch or walk together in the hallways, more than likely, all of them will come from different backgrounds. It's one of the things that make this town so unique, and it's why the people in this town love it so much.

Another great thing about Highland Park is that there are plenty of places to eat. The most common place to eat in town is Highland Pizza. They have everything, including pizza, burgers and salads. It is a great place to get food from when you don't feel like cooking, or if you want a good lunch. It's packed on days when students get out of school early, or if there is a big football game that day.

White Rose Burgers is another great spot to eat.

They have great burgers and fries. Along with that, they have great breakfast sandwiches. The people that work there are very friendly and really make you enjoy going there, even if it's just for a few minutes.

Dunkin' Donuts is one of the main spots in our town. We have two Dunkin' Donuts, one on each side of town, so you're always going to be near one. Everyone needs to make a Dunkin' Donuts stop every once in a while.

Donaldson Park is one of the main spots to visit in Highland Park. It is such a big park, with so many things to do. There are a couple of playgrounds, dog parks, baseball fields and basketball courts throughout the entire park. There is also a huge path that goes around the entire park, where you can go for a walk or go for a run. Donaldson Park also has great hills, so when it snows, everyone comes out to go sledding. On the Fourth of July, they have a fireworks show that everyone in town comes out to see. It truly is a tremendous experience.

Highland Park will never be the biggest town, or the most glamorous, but it is definitely one of the more unique towns in Middlesex County. I am glad to call it home.

# A Life In Piscataway

By Matthew Thornton

Piscataway, New Jersey, a place known for its diversity and beautiful housing, is somewhat under-appreciated. On any given day, you'll find children and teenagers playing basketball outside at one of the 13 parks located in the city. These parks were beautifully-made and are taken care of properly.

Piscataway is full of athletes who are consistently trying to improve their game and go to the next level in their athletic career. On a nice, sunny day, you can find over 50 teenagers playing pickup games from 2 p.m. until it the street lights come on.

Everyone loves playing basketball, but Piscataway is known for its high school varsity football team. People from all over New Jersey travel to Piscataway just to watch our varsity games. In 2016, they won the state championship. Every year, we are one of the best teams in the state and seem to always have the most electrifying quarterback and running back in the state.

The most popular spot for the youth to meet up, engage in activities and conversation is Stelton Road. There is a Quick Check that everyone, and I mean ev-

eryone, goes to. Right across the street from Quick Check is a library that is in the middle of all three middle schools in the city. This allows the teens to meet up, even if their friends attend another school.

On the same street, we have a fantastic pizza shop called Fratelli's, where they serve some of the best pizza and other Italian food in the city. There is also a Chinese spot called China Moon, which is a city favorite. Lastly there are two sub shops all on the same street. As you can see, if you're looking for good food and conversation, you definitely need to go to Stelton Road.

On Grandview Avenue, you'll see some of the most eye-catching houses in all of New Jersey. These houses are huge and beautiful. One of the best qualities about Piscataway is how peaceful it is. You can hear the birds chirp early in the morning. The city has a sweet calmness to it that you can get lost in if you allow yourself to. Crimes rarely ever occur in Piscataway. It's full of decent men and women. Piscataway may not be the flashiest city in the world, but the food, athletic competition, beautiful areas and peacefulness makes up for it.

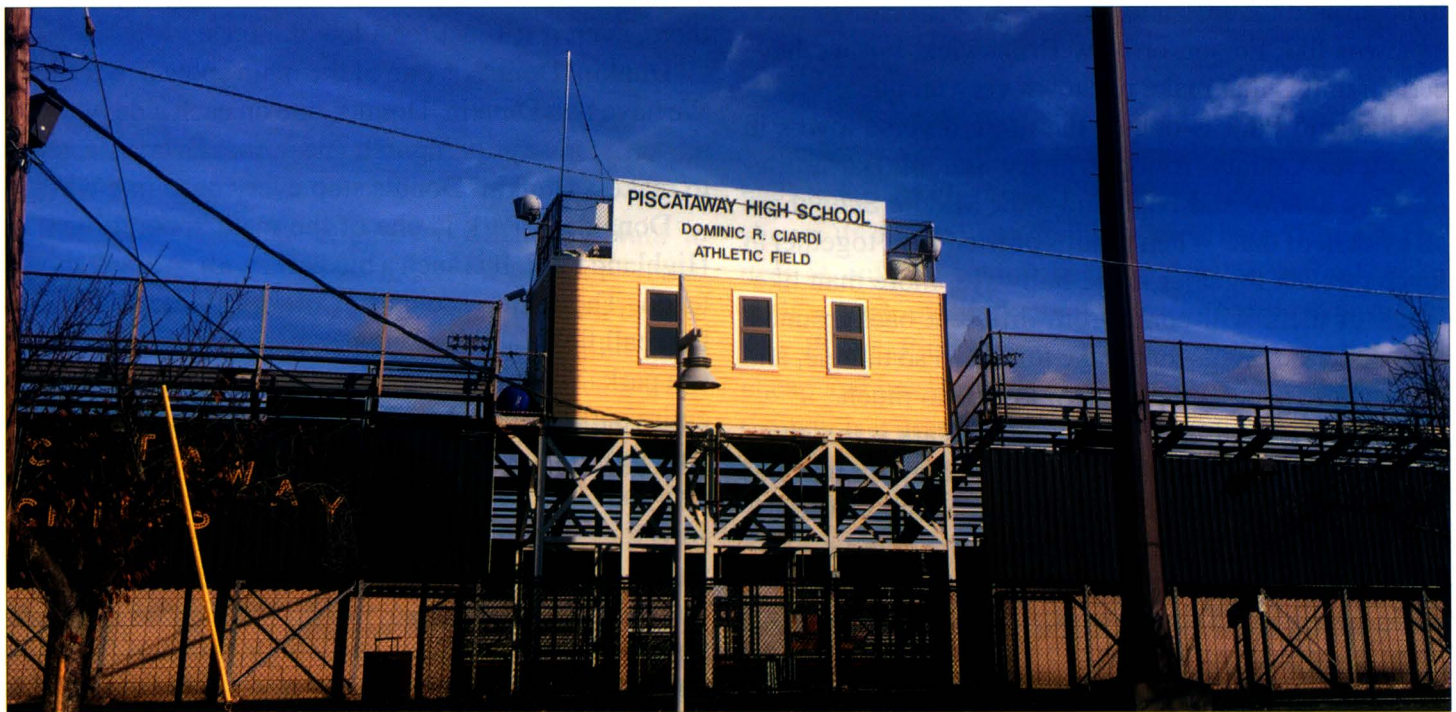


Photo Courtesy of Matthew Thornton

# Carteret: The Town That Sleeps

By Christian Grullon

Oh Carteret, the town that always sleeps. It's obviously not exciting like New York or Los Angeles, but it's a safe community for people to live in. Families who

look for safe communities wouldn't have a hard time raising themselves there. There are so many attractive places to eat like McDonalds, Burger King, China Garden, Family Garden and more. Although there has been incidents of crime here and there, Carteret isn't infested with constant violence.

One of the great things about Carteret is that it's very diverse, there's no dominance with one or two ethnic groups. Yes, there is a lot of Indians, but there's just as many Blacks, Hispanics, Whites and even Asians. If you're looking for some fried chicken, I suggest you try Jezif's Chicken and Pizza. As soon as you walk in the restaurant, there is a whole display of the golden-brown chicken waiting for you. Also, to add taste to the mouth, there's pizza, hamburgers, fries, salads, chicken and gyro platters, you name it. Obviously, you can either eat at home or eat at the restaurant. Do you like going to New York? Well Carteret has the perfect way for you to get there. You can either drive, take a cab or even take a bus. Carteret has a ramp that leads to the New Jersey Turnpike to take you to New York. Of course, the best way to get there would be by vehicle, because Carteret

and New York are an hour away from each other. If you really think about it, that's not really far.

A lot of people would say Carteret is a boring town because it's not a place full of entertainment, but the

town has had festivals and carnivals in the past. Plus, there is a few parks in the town called Carteret Park, Shortcross Park and Chrome Park. There is also a baseball field next to Carteret Park. Everyday, the basketball courts have a wave of people playing basketball, football, baseball,

soccer and other daily activities. There is a variety of adults, kids and teens at the parks. Very rarely do you see any elders at basketball courts, but they usually sit on a bench or look at a monument of a water fountain at the center of the park. The park is the perfect place for you relax and simply enjoy the beautiful sight of the park itself. There is a fountain at the park where people would fish and watch the water blissfully flow around the fountain. Birds are always on vacation at the fountain, as you can see them relaxing and sipping the water.

Oh, let's not forget what makes Carteret so special, our hometown team the Carteret Ramblers! Every Friday night during football season, so many people attend the football field full of blue and white, pride and

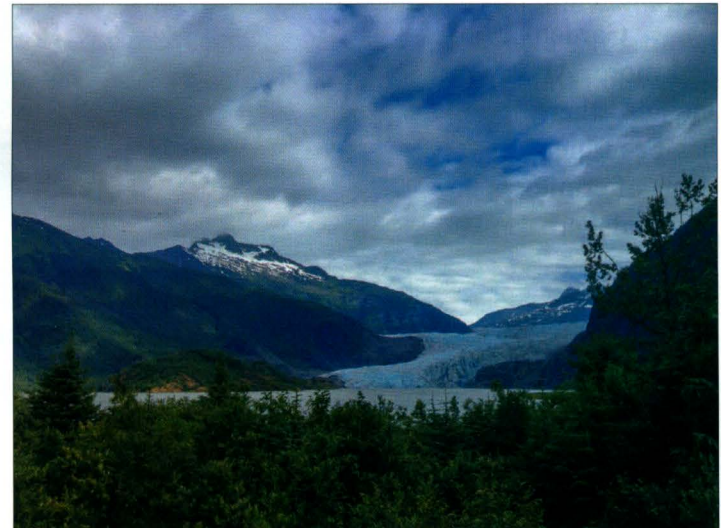
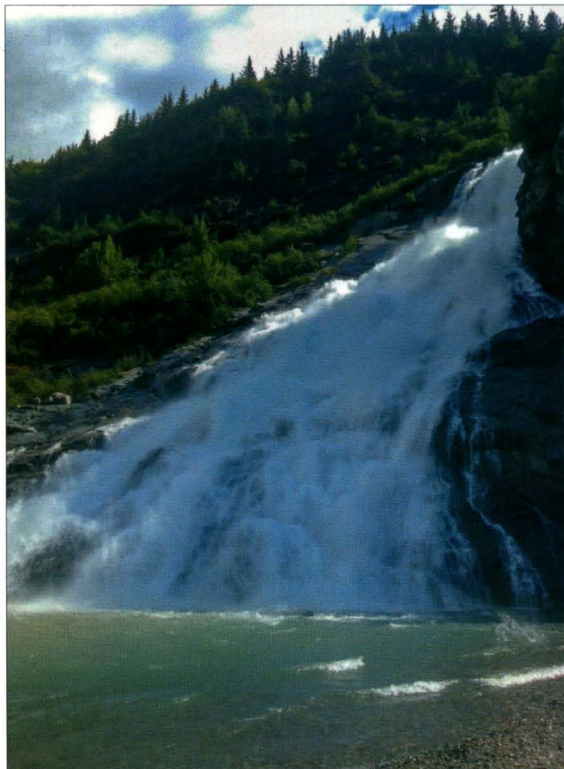
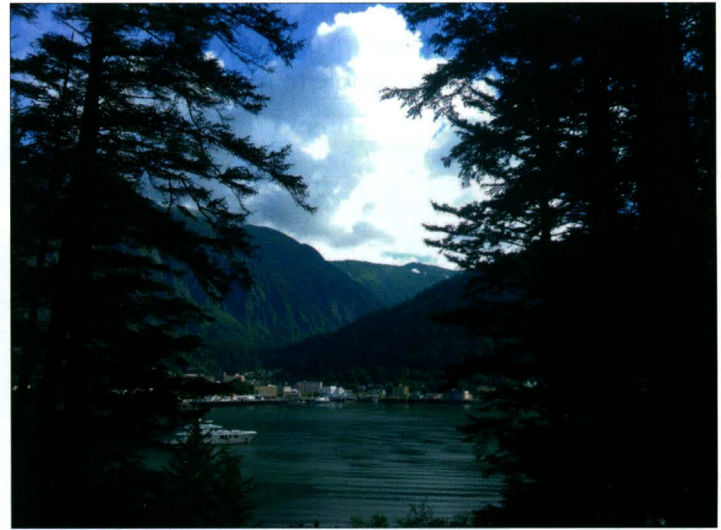


Photo Courtesy of Christian Grullon

*Continued on page 16*

# Cruise to Alaska Part 4: Juneau, AK

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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*Con't from page 15*

passion. The whole town surrounds itself with bleeding blue. There's nothing like spending Friday nights cheering and screaming for Carteret Ramblers football. The band's playing, fans get loud and crazy, and the promising high school players are displaying their physical talent on the field for all of Carteret to see.

In almost every neighborhood, there's beautiful trees

with green leaves just staring at you with the beautiful display of the sun beaming from the sky. When you drive or walk down Jackson Avenue, there are trees left and right. As said before, Carteret may not be Hollywood-like, but it's sure a safe and quiet town for people to live in. I don't think anyone would want to live somewhere where they would feel unsafe and scared for their life. Thankfully, Carteret isn't like that.



# Travel

# Atlantic City Still Excites



By John DeGregorio

When the subject of things to do in New Jersey is brought up, Atlantic City is at the top of the list. Some may argue that Atlantic City has fallen from the height of its glory since the 1920's, perhaps even more so in the past decade with the closing of several iconic boardwalk casinos and hotels. Despite all that, locals and tourists from all over the Tri-State area and beyond still make pilgrimages to the southern Jersey resort town, and with good reason.

When my grandmother was still alive, long after giving up driving, she and her friends would hop on a coach bus in Brooklyn and make the two-hour trip to hit the

slots and drink Long Island iced teas for the day.

"It makes us feel like kids all over again. It's just fun," she would tell me. This is what Atlantic City is all about: fun.

Though not quite as dramatic or extravagant as Las Vegas, Atlantic City offers a taste of the high-roller lifestyle right in our own backyard. When describing the city of Las Vegas, the comedian Sebastian Maniscalco once said, "The place reeks of money," which I believe he meant both figuratively and literally. Atlantic City offers the same opulent decorum and atmosphere, with each casino adorned with long rows of marble pillars, towering ceilings housing chandeliers the size of cars,

Photo Courtesy of John DeGregorio

seemingly endless halls packed with boutiques, restaurants and bars, but most importantly, sprawling casino floors crowded with table games, slot machines and patrons looking to have a good time.

But Atlantic City isn't just about getting dressed up and gambling, there is so much more than that to do. Many of the hotels, but most notably the Borgata Casino,

Hotel and Spa, host shows featuring world-class musicians, pop stars and performers. Night clubs like The Pool at Harrah's are legendary among the local youth for attracting well-known DJ's and celebrities. The city is home to world-class restaurants like Carmine's Italian in the Tropicana, famous for its enormous family-style portions. Both inside and outside of the casinos, vacationers can find shopping and outlet stores for

just about every brand under the sun. On summer days, families can enjoy traditional boardwalk food and beach activities.

It's probably impossible to find an adult in the state of New Jersey that isn't familiar with all there is to do in Atlantic City. Next time a naysayer tells you that Atlantic City is washed up or not what it used to be, show them this list and remind them that there has never been a better time to visit the fun-capitol of New Jersey.

# The Beauty of Rutgers Gardens



By **Bridget Quimby**

Hidden behind luscious forests and acres of land resides a mystical oasis of exotic flora, spherical hedges and a winding stream that moves through the trees; a place where time stops and leaves roar.

Rutgers Gardens is an extensive property owned by Rutgers University that is open to the public and it just so happens to be one of my favorite places in New Jersey. There is a variety of things to do here, but most importantly, getting lost in the inescapable peace of mind. The garden is located in the heart of New Brunswick which is known for traffic jams and honking horns, however, the trees seem to protect you from any outside noise.

Ethereal butterflies meander through the garden with friends of all kinds like birds, squirrels, rabbits and ladybugs that greet you as you walk through the place they call home.

Rutgers Gardens is a place where families make giggling, uninterrupted memories, lovers go on picnics, students read, couples wed and roamers roam. Nature walks with little bridges that cross you to the next steps of your hike will force you to be present with the everlasting trickle of streams heard in the distance. Overgrown rods of bamboo will make you eager to find a low hanging branch hovering over the rocky river that

Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

lies around the corner; a perfect place to read. Natural archways of white flowers will help you feel like you are entering the gates to a new version of yourself. You can fish, kayak or take the time to learn about and appreciate the well-maintained garden area. Thousands of species grow in this botanical garden every year.

Few people take the time to glance over to the welcome sign of Rutgers Gardens on their daily commute and I think that is the beauty of this place. Only the people who wander their eyes during their daily commute and step out of their routine are the ones who explore this garden; people of similar values towards the quality of life. It is so easy to spend hours here and get lost in the moment to the point you never want to leave. There is something so refreshing that Rutgers Gardens has to deliver with the persistent presence of life.

Sitting beneath a tree in this magical place is like being one with nature. You sitting with your fingers in the grass will seem like the only things that matter in the world. Whether you are a child or a senior, Rutgers Gardens is a place where anyone can come for any reason they have. To simply have fun outside or feel at peace, this is a place where people can free themselves and have a sense of individuality on this orbiting planet of ceaseless space.

# Travel to New Brunswick

By Claudia Ugbana

New Brunswick City is famously known as “The Hub City,” home to one of the most prestigious universities in New Jersey. Although Rutgers University is the one deciding factor to consider when visiting this enigmatic city, there are many more interesting reasons why people should visit New Brunswick.

New Brunswick was built with centuries of historical secrets, routed within the grounds, where many fraternity houses and college campuses now lay. The current version of New Jersey’s constitution was drafted in 1947 in the Rutgers College Avenue gym, which makes New Brunswick a historical landmark.

This famous city has also been labeled a “healthcare city.” The Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical company was founded in New Brunswick by Robert Wood Johnson. The city houses two of the most reputable hospitals in New Jersey: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and St. Peter’s Healthcare System.

Because New Brunswick houses one of the more popular universities in New Jersey, the hub city contains a variety of restaurants to cater to the young, vibrant college students that roam its streets. They range from mouth-watering Italian cuisine to the all-American grub popular on game days.

Clydz is a well-known restaurant and bar discreetly

tucked behind a short flight of steps on the corner of Paterson Street. It features a small private dining area and a bar menu known for its martinis. Besides Clydz, visitors might

find Old Man Rafferty’s long lines intimidating, but the food there is always worth the half hour wait. Old Man Rafferty offers a variety of soups, salads, chicken entrees and seafood options their customers always enjoy. This restaurant offers a buzzing atmosphere,



Photo Courtesy of Claudia Ugbana

known for their friendly staff, and a view of an outdoor garden area to go along with your uniquely-flavored American cuisine.

The nightlife scene is the most raved-about feature of New Brunswick. Specifically, Olde Queens Tavern, a historic bar on Easton Avenue. This bar was most famous in the early 1900’s for having tailgate parties on game days at Rutgers University. In the recent years, Olde Queens has become the go-to bar, where famous DJs host notorious parties every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday night.

New Brunswick is a city comparable to other exciting cities around the world, such as New York, Miami and even Las Vegas. This city has an exciting nightlife, numerous restaurants offering a variety of dishes from all over the world, and young thrilling, people who are always willing to have a good time.

# Columns

# Nothing is Worse Than Cilantro

By John DeGregorio

I've never been a picky eater. I eat everything – and I mean everything. From a young age, my parents taught me how delightful and exciting it could be to try new things, especially when it came to food. As kids, when my brother and I went out to eat with the family, we ate like adults. No cheese was too smelly, no calamari tentacle was too wiggly and no steak was too rare. We weren't the chicken fingers type.

I work in a restaurant. Almost daily, I see kids old enough to own cell phones, but not mature enough to even look at food outside of buttered penne. I find it almost offensive. I've broken up with girls for being picky eaters. Food is important to me. Trying new food and sharing it with the people I care about is important to me. There is one food, though – and only one food – that I absolutely despise. The smell of it alone can ruin an entire meal for me: Cilantro.

I grew up in an Italian-American household. My mother, a Sicilian immigrant, did all of the cooking growing up. Fortunately, as far as I know, cilantro isn't used in traditional Italian cooking. My mother carried many of the old-world traditions over to the U.S. when

it came to preparing meals. To this day, things like pig's feet, fried sardines, sautéed dandelion root, beef tripe and a slew of other things that your average American might turn their nose up at, are among my favorite meals. I eat all of my pizza with anchovies on it. My dad's best friend used to own a poultry market in Brooklyn, and when he would come home with a bucket of chicken

hearts and livers from Uncle Richie's store to sauté in onions, we were excited about it. I've eaten brains, eyes, gizzards, necks, skin, tongues, ears, tails and some of the funkiest-looking sea creatures you can imagine, and I do it with pleasure. My friends marvel at my ability to not get grossed out at food like that. "John will eat anything," they say. That

would be true, if I weren't completely repulsed by cilantro.

The silliest part about my hatred for cilantro is that it isn't even really food. It's just an herb, a spice. Often it's used as a garnish, but its presence alone ruins the aroma and flavor of anything it touches. Mediocre chain restaurants like Cheesecake Factory and P.F. Chang's put

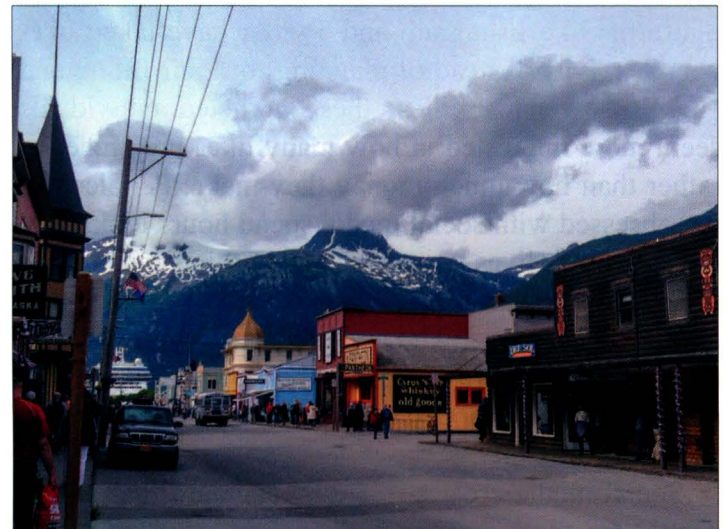
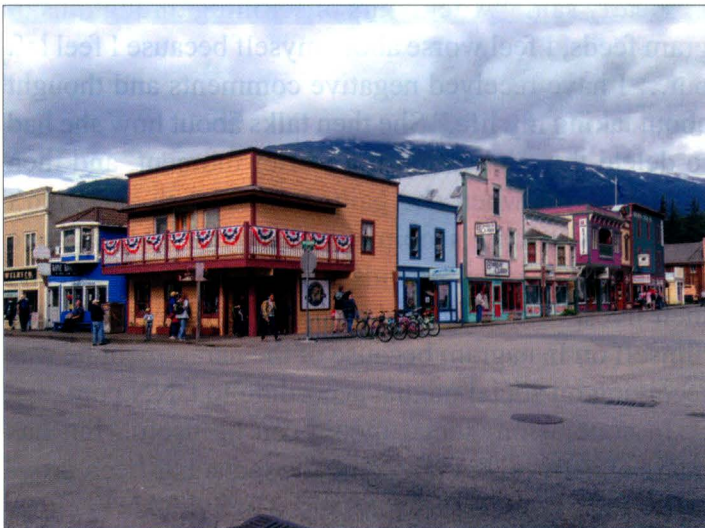
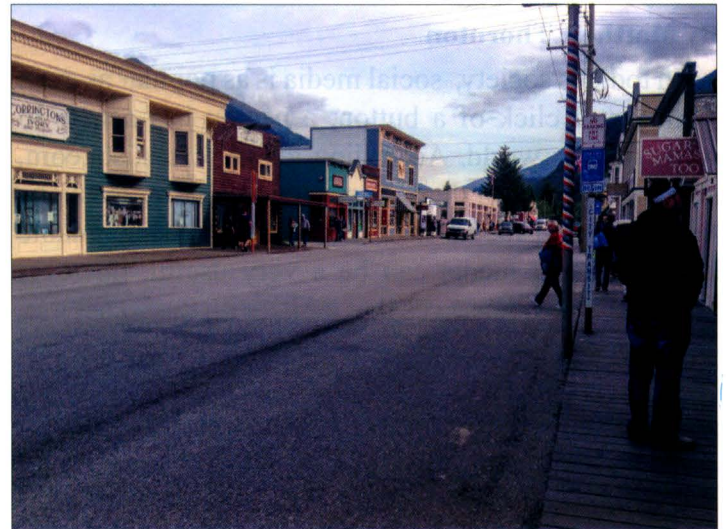


Photo Courtesy of John DeGregorio

Continued on page 23

# Cruise to Alaska Part 5: The Town of Skagway, AK

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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it on seemingly everything as a last-minute garnish, because they think it's trendy or sophisticated.

I love Mexican food. Who doesn't? But unfortunately, Mexicans love their cilantro. A lot of traditional Mexican cooking has cilantro embedded in its roots. Naturally, I love tacos. I don't mean Taco Bell tacos; I mean true, blue authentic Mexican-style tacos: Two small, grilled flour tortillas, meat, onions and cilantro. It's easy enough for me to call up the local family-run taco joint by my house and order a few cow tongue ("lengua") tacos, and emphasize the importance of their not being cilantro on them. Without the cilantro, the

tacos are divine. If they happen to mess up and put even a little of it on my tacos, they might as well go into the garbage, as far as I'm concerned.

Some of my other favorite types of food to eat can also often be tainted by the vile weed: Indian, Thai, Cuban and Vietnamese food, just to name a few. One of my best friends claims that he loves the taste of cilantro, often taunting me with the fact that he would "eat a cilantro sandwich." Just the thought of that makes me sick to my stomach. If tomorrow I turned on the news and learned that a previously-unknown species of locust has emerged that only eats cilantro, and is set to eat through the planet's cilantro harvest, causing the herb to go extinct, it might be one of the happiest days of my life.

# The Effects of Social Media

By Matthew Thornton

In today's society, social media is as popular as ever. With just a click of a button, a person has access to a whole new world. According to [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com), about 81 percent of the U.S. population had at least one form of social media in 2017. This is understandable because social media can be a very useful, however there are many negatives that come with it. Social media distracts, has been proven to cause depression, has caused individuals to either harm themselves and, in some cases, has led individuals to take their own life.

Social media is one of the greatest distractions ever to exist. For some people, it's their first thing that's on their mind when waking up in the morning. Social platforms like Instagram and Twitter have taken over people's lives. Instead of planning for their future and handling responsibilities, these addicted individuals seem more interested in how many likes they receive, rather than how much money they make. People who are obsessed with social media spend hours looking at other people's lives, as opposed to working and making their life more prosperous. People spend hours looking at celebrities' pages, who are already successful, while at the same time are hindering their own success. It is as if they are so wrapped up in this fake world that they forget about reality.

Social media creates a certain standard that young people try to live up to. When their goal isn't met, these individuals tend to fall into depression. This is when false illusions come into play. A false illusion is when people tend to create problems in their head that are not actually significant. This is most common with females. In an article called "How Social Media is a Toxic Mirror," journalist Rachel Simmons discusses how people (mostly women) fall into depression trying to look like other women they see on social media. She also discusses how seeing these other, better looking females cause them to create false illusions about themselves. Such illusions might include, "I'm too fat, I'm too skinny," etc.

Simmons said, "All of this provides an illusion of control. If I spend more time and really work at it, I

can improve at being beautiful." When these people see other people receive thousands of likes and they receive 10, they start to doubt themselves, and figure that something must be ugly or wrong with them, when in fact there is nothing wrong with them."

Lastly, social media has caused people to commit suicide. Bullying, negative comments and jealousy are all part of social media, and for some people, this is just enough for them to end their own life. An article by an anonymous author for the New York Post, called "Rise in Suicide" connected social media and suicide. The author spoke with a 20-year-old woman named Caitlin Hearty.

Hearty said, "After hours of scrolling through Instagram feeds, I feel worse about myself because I feel left out... I have received negative comments and thought about taking my life." She then talks about how she had to delete the application for a brief moment, and then re-installed it when she gained confidence and didn't care about people's opinions. Bullying and negative comments have caused kids all over the country to end their lives. One individual who was 19 years old, killed himself on Instagram because of the harassment he was receiving on social media, according to CNN.com

In conclusion, social media can be useful, but has many negatives. Social media distracts, has been proven to cause depression, has caused individuals to either harm themselves and in some cases has led individuals

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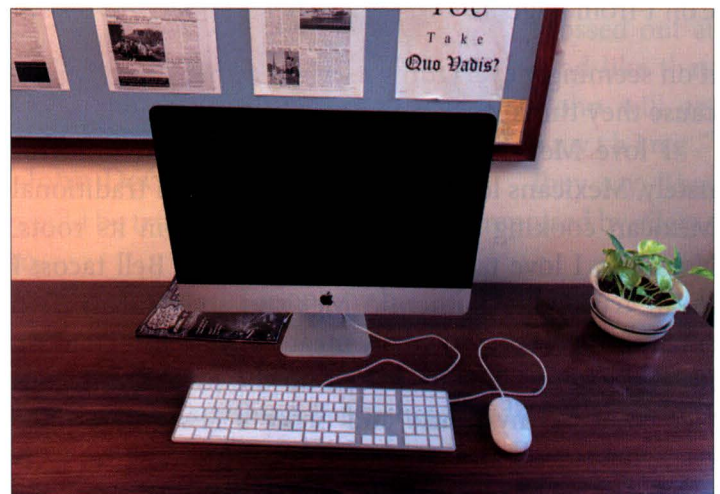
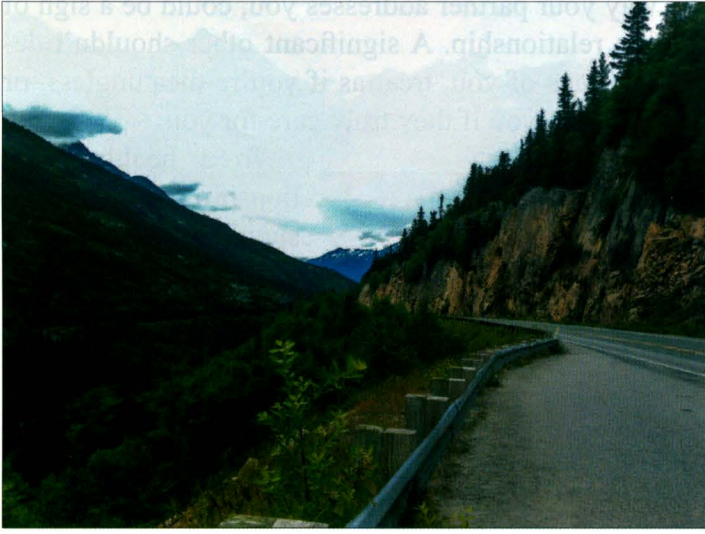


Photo Courtesy of Matthew Thornton



# Cruise to Alaska Part 6: Nature Around Skagway, AK

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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to take their own life. Social media has taken up many peoples' time that they could be using to better themselves. Instead, people are living in a fake world. This product has created false images and illusions for peo-

ple that they are not good enough, and that something is wrong with them. It also has caused individuals to kill themselves because of lack of likes, negative comments and bullying. Maybe social media isn't as great as everyone thinks it is.

# Keys to a Healthy Relationship

By Marissa Bowden

In a world that already has so many problems, people also have to deal with abusive relationships. More than half the time, people don't realize the signs and continue the relationship anyway or refuse to acknowledge that their lover is doing more harm than good. People tend to overlook many signs because they "love" them or think they're doing it because they care for them. They also tend to think that relationships are only considered abusive when physical violence is involved. Any level of harmful phrases can be considered as emotional abuse. How do you make sure that you're not in a toxic relationship? Here are some warnings signs of an abusive relationship.

If your significant other tends to isolate you from your friends and sometimes your family, you should be concerned. If every once in awhile they ask to only spend time with you, then that is normal. If they're constantly getting jealous with you spending time with some friends, then that's an entire different issue. Sometimes that person will find a way for you not to be around your friends anymore and they'll do anything it takes to get you away from anyone that's not them.

Every average couple tends to call each other names or belittles their partner. However, when constant harmful harassment occurs, the person is meaning to say those things. They'll say things like, "I'm only telling you these things because I love you," or "I only said those things because I was angry." Phrases like these are traps to women/men believing that this kind of harassment is normal in a healthy relationship. Even

the way your partner addresses you, could be a sign of a toxic relationship. A significant other shouldn't demand things of you, treat as if you're meaningless, or talk down to you if they truly care for you.



Photo Courtesy of Claire Lacy

In a healthy relationship, one person shouldn't be carrying all the blame for what goes wrong and should have their emotions matter. If your partner is clearly doing things wrong and somehow turns that into being your fault all the time, then something is wrong. If you feel strongly about a subject and your partner won't even consider how you feel, they don't care about you. Your partner will find reasons to

back up why their feelings and morals are more important than yours. The important thing to recognize is that relationships work with compromise between the two individuals, not with one person dictating it.

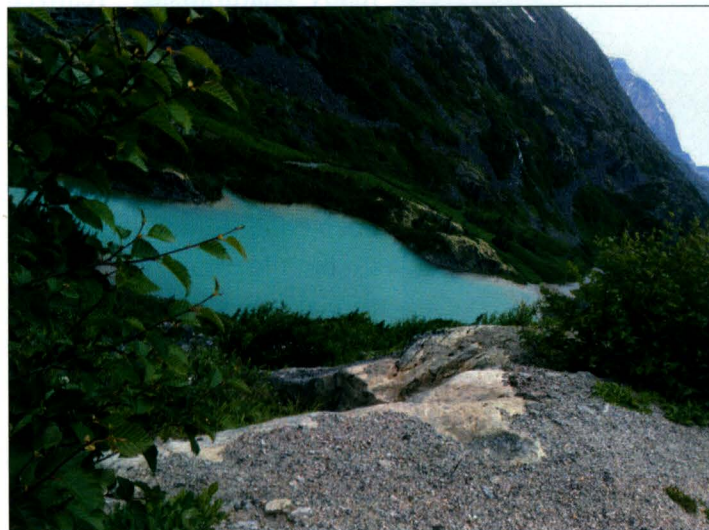
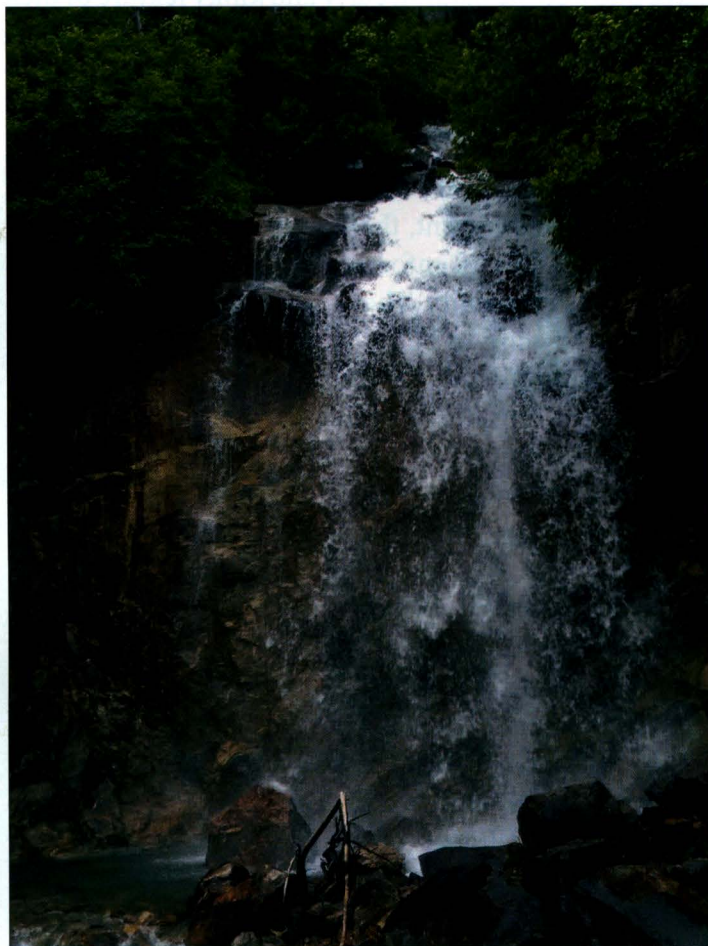
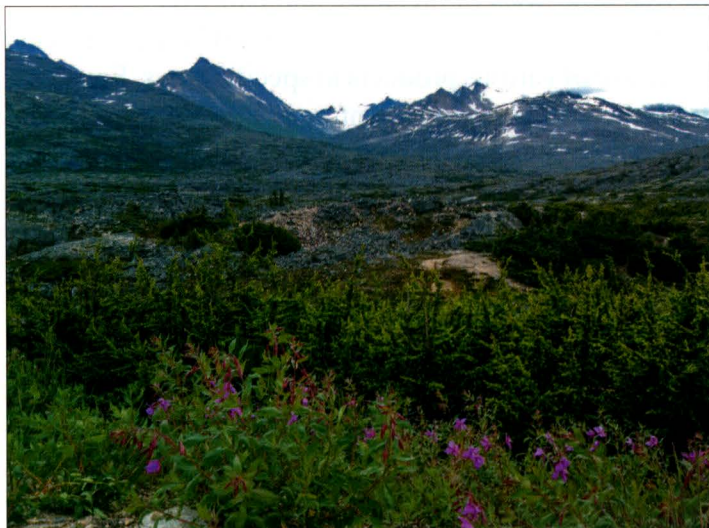
As a person you have the right to do what you want, when you want. If your partner is trying to control every little thing that you do, then that person is not for you. They will try to tell you; what you can wear, who you can talk to, who you can hangout with, or what you're allowed to be into. This person is not your mother or father, so they have no right in telling you anything. Sure, they can ask if you can stop talking to a certain person because it's damaging your relationship. If they start demanding that you can't talk to this person without recognition on how you feel, you must leave right away.

The most obvious sign of an abusive relationship, is physical harm. It will only start off as simple pushing or punching. Over time, it will only get worse and

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# Cruise to Alaska Part 7: Nature Around Skagway, AK Con't

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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*Con't from page 26*

worse. If this person during an argument hits because they were angry, they will do it again. A person that resorts to letting out their anger in violence, will continue to do it. The person will say, "I didn't mean to hit you, I was in the heat of the moment, I won't do it again," this phrase seems meaningful at the time, when in reality doesn't mean anything that you think it does.

Above are only a few of the signs of an abusive relationship, but are the most obvious ones. Getting out of this kind of relationship can be a hard and scary thing. The most important things to remember is that you're not alone, there is always someone that you can talk to and get help from, it is never your fault, and that there is always a way out. Even if the person threatens to physically harm themselves if you leave, you can still leave.

# The Natural Hair Community is Strict

By Claudia Ugbana

The natural hair community can best be described as a group of black girls with varying hair textures, who have allowed the natural, curly and kinky texture of their hair to grow. The movement has become fast-growing over just a few years, with many girls using social media as a platform to embolden the movement. However, as with any movement, there are do's and don'ts enforced within the community. These rules are proving to be crippling and ineffective for the young girls out there who join this movement.

About ten months ago I decided to do the “big chop” and join the natural hair movement. Although I felt prepared for the journey, I hadn't expected the natural hair community to be so authoritative. There are numerous rules and regulations which naturals insist on following. A handful of these rules seem restrictive, and may very well hinder the growth of any girl out there who wishes to embark on the journey to long and healthy hair.

One major rule within the natural hair community is the process of always having your hair styled. When I typed “how to take care of my natural hair” into the search engine on YouTube, I found that many hair gurus emphasized constant hair manipulation. There are many subsections to this rule: make sure you twist your hair in this manner, make sure you put your hair into this style every night or make sure you do your hair in a specific manner each morning. This rule of constantly having your natural hair done calls for a large amount

of free time, tons of breakage and hair loss.

Another vital rule within the natural hair community is the use of various products in specific ways. For a long time there was a movement against the use of shampoo. Many YouTube gurus explained that shampoo was stripping women of their natural oils. Instead, they insisted on using a product called a “co-wash,” which was basically a conditioner which seemed to cleanse your hair. What seemed extremely confusing about this was the idea that using a conditioner to wash would stop the product buildup and aid to clean our natural hair. This movement came to an abrupt halt when many naturalistas realized that co-washing your hair every other week wasn't doing anything for growth or your natural oils.

There is a rule of weekly deep conditioning that seems to be the most largely enforced rule within the natural hair community. Deep conditioning is a vital process of your hair routine. It penetrates hair cuticles and helps to soften hair texture, and serves as a hair treatment. However, a weekly routine is unnecessary. Deep conditioning can be done every two to three weeks and still ensures your natural hair will be healthy.

Ultimately, rules placed onto the natural hair community are methods which have been tested by women we call “pros” to ensure hair growth. However, they will not work for every girl out there. We all have varying hair types. It is important that you do your research on what your hair texture is, and what methods and products will work specifically on your natural hair.

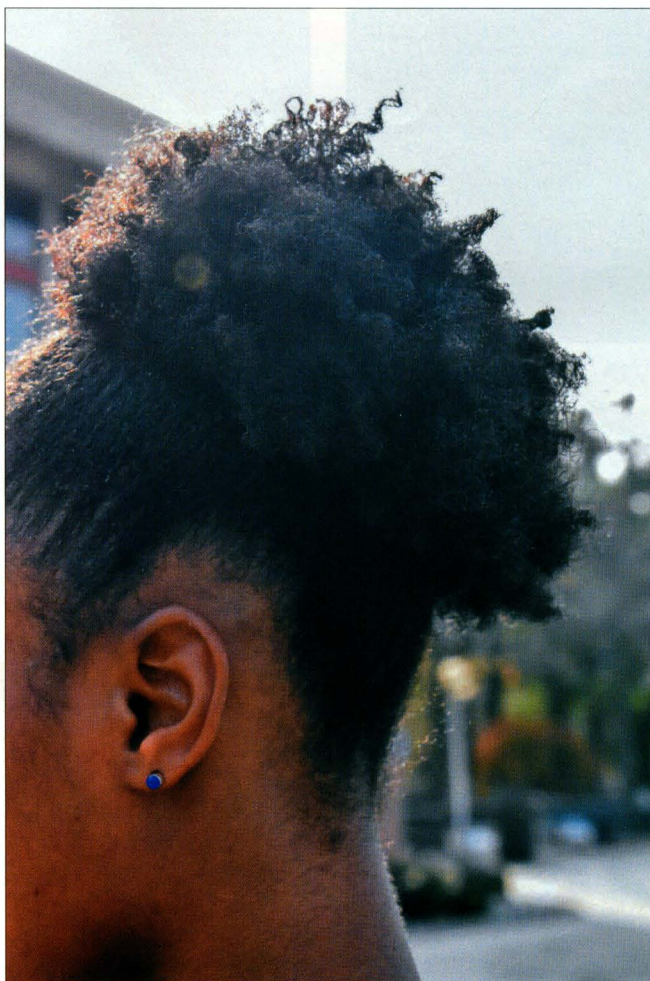


Photo Courtesy of Samantha Cheng

# Slice of Life

# Van Life in Iceland



By **Bridget Quimby**

After a six-hour flight over the North Atlantic Ocean, my friends and I finally landed in Reykjavik, Iceland. With only our backpacks, we were completely ecstatic to experience this mystical island of fire and ice.

It was mid-August, and I wore a winter hat, hiking boots and a windproof jacket; the temperature was around 50 degrees Fahrenheit. I took a deep breath of the crisp Icelandic air before we embarked on our four-day journey in a miniature two-door, stick-shift camper van.

The van was small, but it had all we needed – a bed, refrigerator, single-burner stove and wheels. Our first stop was a discount grocery store called Bonus to load up on just enough food that we will need for the dura-

Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

tion of our adventure. We bought meats and cheeses for sandwiches, peanut butter and jelly, cucumbers, crackers, cereal and, of course, instant ramen noodle soup.

After we loaded up the mini refrigerator, we hopped into the van and set directions to one of the most iconic waterfalls in all of Iceland: Skogafoss. The van was only meant for two people, but we are all tiny girls, so we managed. One person always had to be lying down in the back while the driver and passenger navigated.

The drive from the grocery store to the site of Skogafoss took about 40 minutes and there was absolutely no one on the road— complete solitude. Pulling into the gravel parking area was mesmerizing. I will never forget this moment. The waterfall cascaded with grace and

power as the mist rose from the natural plunge pool. We parked the car, geared up with camera equipment and walked toward the roaring curtain of water.

It was like the three of us and the waterfall were the only things on earth that mattered. We were surrounded by green mountains and white horses as the bright pink sun eclipsed a cloud, which gave the illusion that the mountain was on fire.

Along the right side of the plummeting water was an intimidating set of steep metal stairs that seemed to go on forever. We decided to take on the challenge and climb the brutal staircase that left us gasping for air by the time we reached the top. However, the view was even more breathtaking. The water went back for as long as I could see and rushed in raging white rapids to

the cusp of free-fall. I felt like I was on top of the world.

We took in the harmonizing music that nature had to offer and headed back to the van to make dinner. After descending down the stairs, we made fresh sandwiches and instant ramen from the trunk of our temporary home. We sat side-by-side through the back doors with our feet dangling while we felt the mist of cold water vapor numb our cheeks and the forgiving warmth of ramen noodle soup. We sat in silence, staring at the fall. I think we all knew that this was the meaning of peace.



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

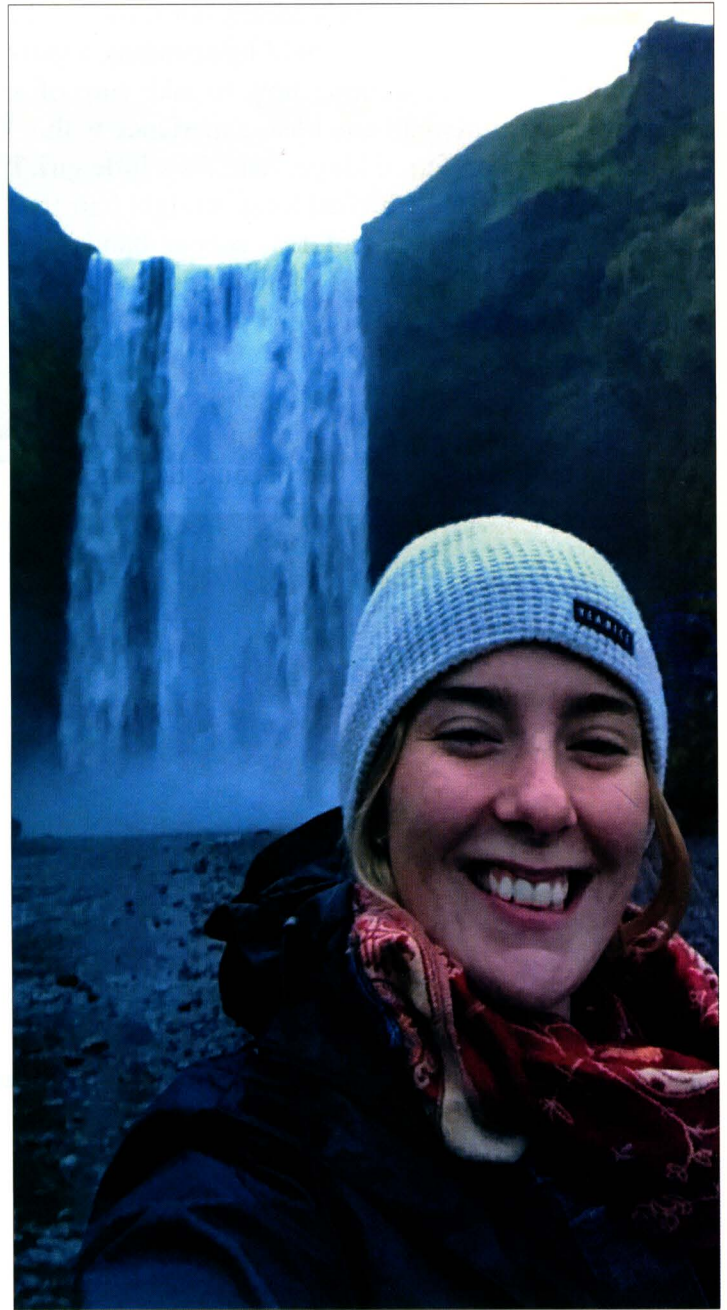


Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

# My Journey to Natural Hair Growth

By Claudia Ugbana

At age 19, I considered myself too old to “big chop.” The term simply refers to cutting off all of my permed or relaxed hair and starting fresh. This is a transition from using chemicals to straighten my hair out monthly, to allowing the natural curly texture of my hair to grow freely. I considered myself too old because the tasks of embracing these curls meant not only would I be living with short hair, I would be spending a generous amount of time learning how to take care of a different hair texture than one I had experience with.

I have always preferred longer hair. As a little girl, I was known as the one who had long, straight hair that was always decorated in colorful rubber bands and hair beads. As I grew into an adult, I frequently wore weaves and extensions that were always 20 inches long; no more, no less.

The damage to my hair seemed to be an unavoidable experience. As I weaved my way through my teens, my hair began to weaken, break and become damaged.



Photo Courtesy of Claudia Ugbana

My first memory of the new year began with all my permed hair scattered across my bedroom floor. I stared at myself in my full-length mirror hung against my bedroom door and cringed. I had short puffs of hair on my head. To say I was immensely uncomfortable with my own self would be an understatement. I looked at myself and saw all the things I didn’t want. I did not voluntarily decide to cut off all my hair. Life had just given me the decision and said, “Here, make lemonade.” I was dealt an unfortunate hand, and I was expected to make the most of it.

Time seemed to be the most forgiving factor in my battle with my hair. For the first few months, I refused to deal with it. I had many hairstyles in between that time that boasted my love for long hair. In a four month span, I had faux locks, box braids with curly ends, weaves and cornrows using long hair extensions. During that time, I watched my hair grow and secretly admired the progress. My hair and I were in an unhealthy relationship in which she begged me to nourish and care for her, and I habitually ignored her and covered her with extensions I deemed better and more reliable. I believed the greatest pleasures that came from having fake hair were the ways in which it could be manipulated. I could purchase any hair texture in any length I wanted and it would be just what I needed it to be. It wouldn’t frizz up on me unexpectedly and the curls would not fade away after just a few days of performing a wash-and-go. It didn’t take me long to realize I refused to love my hair because it wouldn’t be just one thing. It was many things, and that was the beauty I later came to appreciate.

During the summer, I began to take care of my hair. This included purchasing various hair products, time spent watching videos on YouTube and frequently questioning Google, “How do I care for my 4c natural hair?”

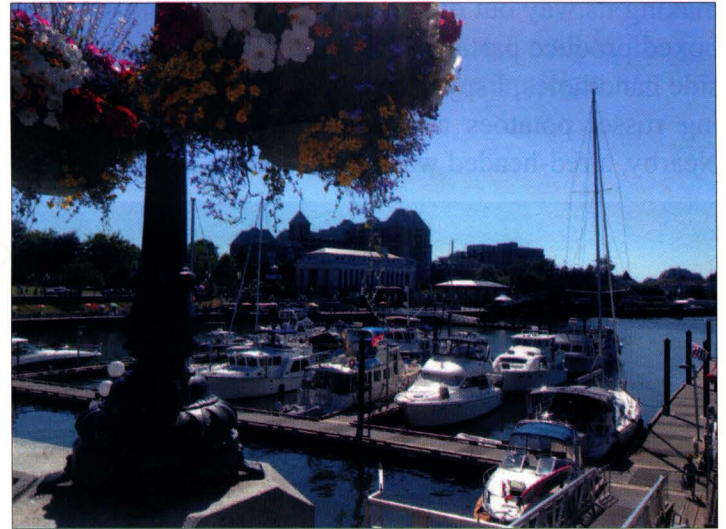
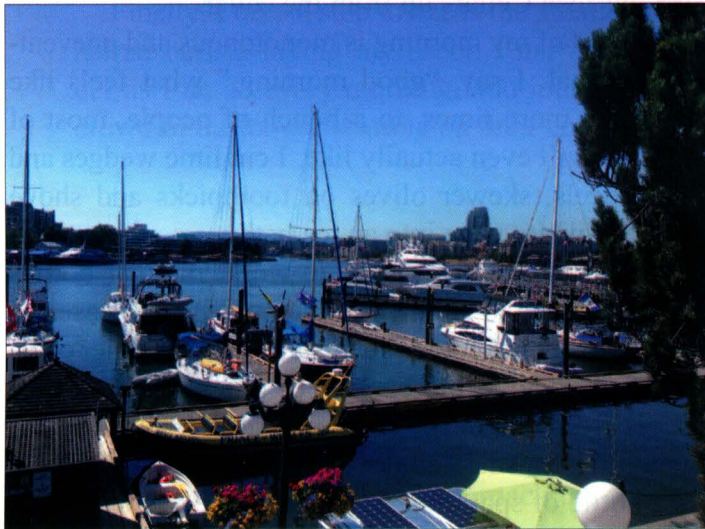
By the fall, I began to see drastic changes in my hair texture, and I stopped and watched her boast. For once, I loved the way in which my hair spiraled in curls that were not loose or gentle. My hair was not delicate or forgiving to a comb. It was tough, kinky and thick. As

*Continued on page 33*



# Cruise to Alaska Part 8: Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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I learned to tame the texture and work with what I had, the more hair growth and hair health I experienced from the process. It seemed that my natural hair texture was better than any weave or hair extension I could buy. My own hair was something to be proud of, something I loved and seemingly something other people loved too.

There are bad hair days and good hair days. There are short moments when I admire my natural hair and there are intensely long moments where I imagine shaving it all off would be an easier battle. Nothing in life comes easy, and that could be said for all walks of life. This slice of my life has been the most interesting and rewarding victory.

# A Morning at the Bar

By John DeGregorio

I get out of my car and make my way through the misty parking lot. As I go, I button my shirt and flick my cigarette onto the blacktop before reaching the glass double front doors.

The restaurant is still dark, but quite a few of my co-workers are already here; already buzzing around this way and that, like little worker bees in their hive. Some of them are hauling racks of glasses, still hot from the dishwasher, to the soda fountain. Others are unpacking brightly-colored cakes and pastries from their boxes, fresh off the bakery truck, to be displayed in the enormous glass case in the center of the atrium. A vacuum that sounds like it's on its last leg whines noisily in a far-off dining room.

The kitchen is already brightly lit. Click-click-click-WHOOSH – a stovetop burner ignites. The stoves' hood fans whirl into life. They are loud, but not loud enough to cover the sound of the Mexican rap music making its way out of a nearby radio. A soggy stack of boxed produce partially blocks my way. Through their side hand holes, I spy vibrant red tomatoes, dirty-looking russet potatoes and bags of leafy-green lettuce. Nearby, a red-headed waitress is cutting lemon wedges

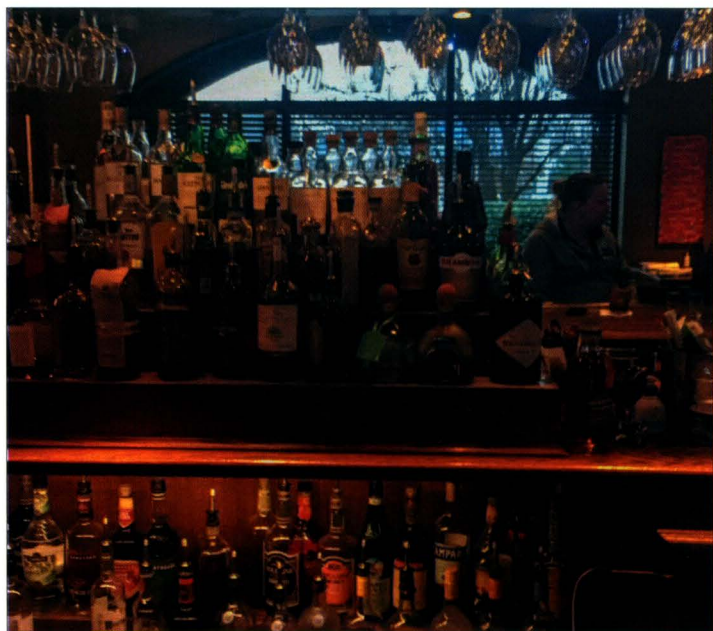


Photo Courtesy of John DeGregorio

on a stainless-steel countertop. She looks up from her cutting board and smiles at me. I smile back and make my way downstairs.

The basement is mostly deserted. It's cooler down here than the rest of the restaurant, and quiet, though not for long. I unlock the Master Lock securing the huge white door to the walk-in cooler, where we keep the beer, and make my way inside. The door partially closes behind me. Before I get a chance to do much of anything, it swings back open. A male server pops his head in, looks around and asks, "Whatcha doin'?" I wish him a good morning and return to my business. What is it about the beer walk-in that makes people so curious? It isn't that exciting. It's cold, dirty and hard to walk around in – mostly just kegs and bottles of cheap white wine. Maybe people are just naturally fascinated by doors that are always kept locked. I grab a case of Josh Cellars chardonnay and begin making my way upstairs, silently laughing to myself at the fact that I'm carrying Josh Cellars up from the cellar.

The rest of my morning is monotonous and uneventful, as usual. I say, "good morning," what feels like a hundred more times, to a bunch of people, most of whom I don't even actually like. I cut lime wedges and lemon peels, skewer olives on toothpicks and shove bottles of white wine into an ice bath.

I spend most of my time at work, moving bottles from one place to another. Sometimes it's the cases of wine from the big cooler downstairs into a smaller cooler upstairs behind the bar. Other times, it's six-packs of beer from one of the smaller coolers behind the bar into a different small cooler behind the bar. Sometimes, it's a bottle of sparkling water from one of those same small coolers onto the service bar, to be brought to a guest. Other times, it's bottles of pinot noir and malbec from one of the wine racks in the atrium to a cabinet behind the bar. Sometimes, it's a shot of Jose Cuervo on the shelf into a glass. What it all boils down to is just moving bottles around. As this thought makes its way through my mind, the rest of the front-of-the-house lights come on. We are officially open for business. The real bottle moving is about to begin.

# Morning Page 1

**By Claudia Ugbana**

There is a line of customers wrapped around the small Starbucks on George Street, New Brunswick. The small coffee shop features dark wood interiors, with three large windows spread out against the back wall of the store, allowing for perfect visualization of the long line.

Pouting, but determined to have my Iced Caramel Macchiato with extra pumps of caramel, I step into the line along with two other customers. The line was growing just by the second.

I glance down at my phone screen as I take a step forward in line. This is an automatic gesture that I, along with the three other customers ahead of me do, as we make what seems like a long journey ahead of us. My phone informs me it is 10:49 p.m., just eleven minutes before the train arrives.

I make a tapping noise with my left foot as I grow increasingly anxious with each passing second ahead of me.

Finally, I take a step towards the small brown-haired barista taking my order. I narrate my order as I do so every morning, and join the small crowd of customers waiting on their coffee's.

The small group of baristas are working quickly and efficiently to make numerous coffee orders; there is a crash, a spill and many unclaimed coffees at the pickup station.

I glance down at my phone again, 10:54 p.m.

"I have an Iced caramel macchiato for Claudia?" the brown haired barista is loud and clear.

"Yes!" I reply collecting my coffee.

I grab my coffee and make a run for the train station just two blocks away. As I throw each foot in front of the other, I steady my coffee with both hands to ensure it doesn't spill over the lid.

I hear the train horn from the tracks above me, as I make my way through the station and up the single flight of stairs inside.

The train doors slide open as I burst through the double doors onto the train platform.

I am one of the last people to board the train as the doors slide shut just behind me.

"Tickets!" the coordinator yells as he walks into the train car.

I am panting and breathless when I realize, I never got a chance to purchase my train ticket.

# Morning Page 2

**By Bridget Quimby**

After trekking for two hours through a moon-like, flat and deserted field, I am embodied with a sense of accomplishment as I approach the site of a 1973 US Navy Aircraft wreckage.

Hearing nothing other than the volcanic rock crunching beneath my boots, I am at peace. There is not a thought in my mind except for the state of awe that I am in. The plane has its accents of jagged holes and rust but other than that it is entirely untouched. As I enter the cabin of the plane, I close my eyes and envision the crash— mayday calls and terrified

soldiers as they descend to what would have been their death if everyone hadn't survived. I tighten my boots and climb to the top of the plane, I know it is dangerous, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Climbing through the gaping holes, I make it to the top of the plane, the metal pops under my foot like the metal cap of a Snapple bottle, but I continue slowly to the nose of the plane. I look out into the distance to the ice-capped mountains and perfectly leveled black terrain, I have never been more present than right here and right now.

# My 2018 Vacation



By Chris Place

Photo Courtesy of Chris Place

“Please welcome the Place family,” is the first thing I hear as my family and I finally enter the cruise ship. All that keeps going through my head is, “Thank god vacation is finally here!” As we enter the ship, we head straight to the elevator so we can get to our rooms as soon as possible. When we get to the elevator, there are mobs of families waiting to go up. I almost feel like we should just carry our luggage up the stairs, because it’s going to be a while before we get an open elevator.

Finally, we make it to our room. It literally feels like you can’t move in here. There’s a bed right when you enter the room, and then right next to the bed is the pull-out sofa. Past the sofa is the balcony, so there’s a little bit of space out there. I know we won’t be in the room

very much, though, so I’m definitely not complaining.

A couple of hours later, we go to the top of the ship to watch it sail away as we get ready to have the best week of our lives.

The next day, I wake up and go look outside right away. We’re in the middle of the ocean and it’s pouring outside. I’m just wondering what in the world are we going to do today with it raining all day. We head upstairs to go straight to breakfast. It is a buffet, and there is so much food to choose from. When I look down, I see hash browns, waffles, pancakes and so much more. Even though it’s pouring out, this breakfast made the day start off good.

After going to a couple of shows on the ship, we

head outside to check if it is still raining. Of course the rain has only gotten worse. It's completely pouring outside and we feel like the whole first day is going to go to waste.

The next morning when I wake up, it's completely sunny with no clouds in sight. I already know

we are going to have a great day. Right after breakfast, we head straight to the pool area. It is scorching hot outside, so I head straight to the pool to cool down. After I get out of the pool, I order a pina colada. Then, I sit back on my chair and watch the movies playing on the big

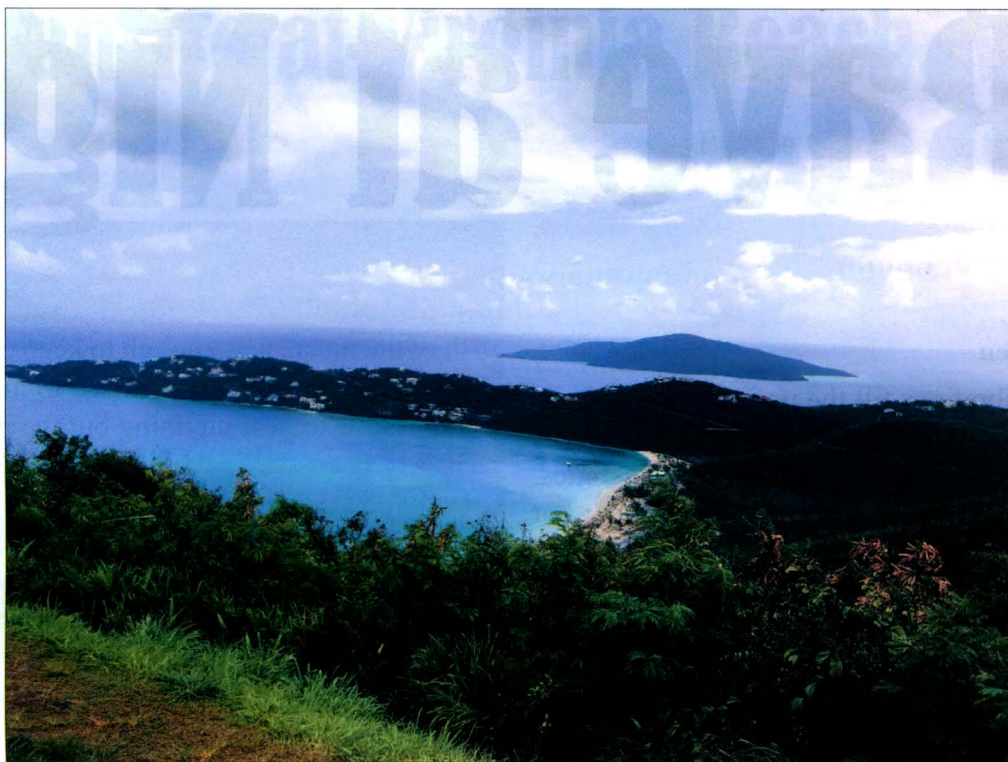


Photo Courtesy of Chris Place

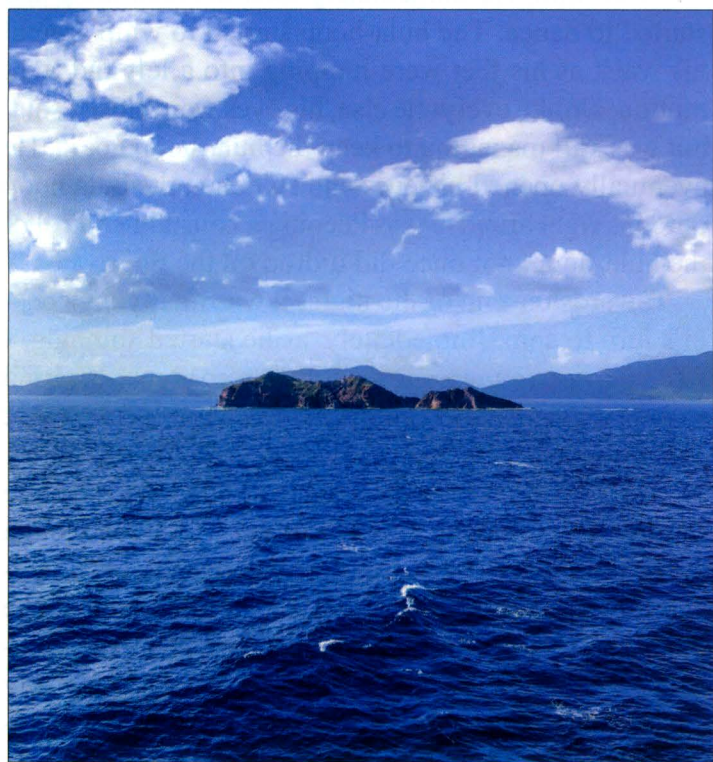


Photo Courtesy of Chris Place

screen above the pool. This truly feels like vacation.

It's finally time to get off the ship. The ship has pulled into St. Thomas. We make our way down the stairs. Of course, there is a long line to get off the ship like it's Black Friday. Right when we get off the ship, we get on a bus that's going to take us

to the beach we're going to spend the day. On the ride there, I look around and everyone is taking pictures. The view is so amazing as we drive up these hills. You can see the buildings, water and even our cruise ship from where we are.

The driver parks at a really high point of the island and everyone gets out to take pictures. We finally get to the beach and I am just ready to get into the water. This beach is more of a secluded beach, which means it will not be crowded at all. I already know this is going to be another great day and I never want to leave.

After another great day at sea, we arrive at our last destination: Disney's private island, Castaway Cay. This is my third time here, but I'm just as excited as the first time I came here. My mom makes us stop to take couple of pictures in front of signs we've taken pictures with before. This just delays us from getting to the beach sooner. We set up on the beach near the slides, because it's the most fun area of the whole island.

The time is now 4:30 p.m. The ship is scheduled to leave at five. We always stay late to soak up every last second of the cruise. We hear the lifeguards say, "The beach is now closed," as we make our way back to the ship. Once we get into the shuttle, I look back at the island one more time because I know we won't be back for a long time.

# A Rave at Night

By Marissa Bowden

Fast, sudden vibrations fill the unfit air as hundreds of people gather at the dancefloor. Smoke continues to scatter the air as everyone lights up their cigarettes. The garage-like room was smaller than it looked; but managed to fit a couple sets of chairs, one stand to buy drinks, the disc jockey booth and dancefloor, and there were even two small, dark bathrooms to go in at your leisure. Certainly, not enough room for the tons of people that kept on coming in.

A woman then busted through the door, immediately striking everyone's attention. She was wearing an extremely snug red tube top, gigantic multi-color disco pants, fishnet gloves, pigtails and dark makeup, which all seemed to match her ridiculous huge ruby red high heels. The man that followed her was just as appealing. He was wearing a black oversized t-shirt that had at least a million holes in it, along with fishnet stockings, black combat boots, and a glow in the dark hula hoop. The two raced inside practically knocking a poor girl over and jumped straight to the dance floor where everyone seemed to be at this time. When I finally step foot on the dance floor, I understood why everyone was enjoying the jungle music. My feet were beginning to vibrate along with the music and in no time the beats were flowing through my entire body. Even though the music was nothing but random beats, the dancing was surprisingly easy. All a person had to do was move with the beat of the music. Every song was fast-paced and had different individual sounds.

A woman with dark blue hair was the center of attention on the dance floor. She had black polka dot leggings that went with her rainbow colored crop top and pink boots. Her movements were different than everyone's average dance moves. Not only was she quickly moving her feet, she was managing to move her head back and forth, as her hands were thrown up in the air. She continued this movement for an hour straight. The

rush of the music was enough to keep everyone moving non-stop. Sudden pressure raised to my ears and made it impossible to hear anything but the intense, pumping beat. My heart was pounding and sweat was dripping directly down my face. Flashing colorful light patterns were gleaming across the screen and reflected back into the tiny packed room. The disc jockey was constantly at work; he was racing to each button with only one hand, along with a drink in the order, and had his head banging back and forth along with the music. Only a fraction of the people decided to stay in the near back of the room, where there was less action going on.

As the night went on, more and more people were showing up. Each disc jockey that went on was better than the last and continued on for hours. The guy with the glowing hula- hoop came onto the floor. As he approached, the people made an appropriate amount of room for him. He immediately took his hula-hoop and started to dance. The hula-hoop started to whip around his waist as his feet were jumping into a left and right motion. Unlike everyone else, his eyes were closed shut, but was still managing to keep the hula-hoop going. He eventually opened his eyes and switched the hula hoop onto his right arm. He was keeping a constant control of the hula-hoop, not once did it drop on the floor.

Towards the end of the night, it was finally my cousin's turn to spin. Immediately, as he started spinning, I felt an overcoming of joy coming across me. I started to dance more than I did at the beginning of the night and caused everyone on the dance floor to look at me. Any other time I would've minded, but at this instance I didn't, I was having the time of my life. Even though every other disc jockey that went on was playing average music, my cousin's music was all that better. The other disc jockeys didn't have their own style, their music was a simple low demeaning beat and lyrics. My cousin on the other hand, had his own unique style. In-

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# Sunrise at Virginia Beach, VA

Photos Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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stead of having one simple beat, he had several mixing beats that flowed throughout the song. His beats were also original, unlike the other disc jockeys who partially copied each other styles.

As soon as my cousin was finished spinning, I decided it time to finally go home. I walked quickly out the door and was dreading the long ten minute walk that I had at four in the morning back to my car.

# Hockey Game to Remember



By Kayla Lombardo

We arrive at the Wells Fargo Center early so we have time before the game starts. Finding a parking spot took up most of our time due to the massive sea of cars we're faced with. We do laps around each packed lot, row after row until we finally find an empty spot, miles from the main entrance. We start our hike to the stadium, surrounded with hordes of young adults, all dressed in bright orange Flyers jerseys to represent their team. I walk past many pickup trucks, their beds full of tailgaters drinking cheap beer and listening to rock music blaring through large speakers.

We make it to the stadium entrance, and become just a pair out of the hundreds of others pushing and shoving to get through the double doors. I'm clenching my ticket as tight as I can in my hand so I don't drop it and lose it forever under the crowd. The security is strict, making everyone put their belongings in a plastic crate and walk through a metal detector.

"Beep... beep..." I hear as me and my boyfriend walk through the detector and are clear to go.

Photo Courtesy of Kayla Lombardo

The line went quicker than expected and we're finally free to go search for food. There are so many options to choose from, none of which are healthy or look like they'll be tasty. I see the typical items on the menus, curly fries, burgers, pretzels, or beer.

"I'm so hyped! Let's grab drinks first," says a young man in his twenties from across the room.

I buy curly fries and a soda and am satisfied. The energy from all of the people surrounding us is overwhelming, especially with the noise volume and all of the pushing and shoving. As we make our way into the main part of the stadium I get more excited with every step. There are so many different entrances to find your seats it's like a giant maze, luckily there are men in uniforms that work there to help guide you. We see our seats and make our way up to the top; my legs start to ache from the steepness. My thoughts are muffled by the overbearingly loud rock music. The number of seats in the stadium is incredible; everyone's knees touch each other because of how many seats are squished into

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# Green Tree Python

Photo Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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*Con't from page 40*  
each row.

Tonight, the Philadelphia Flyers will be versing the New York Islanders. This is my second hockey game I ever went to and I'm enjoying it even though it hasn't started yet. I look across the rink into the crowd and see everyone in their jerseys, chatting with their friends and chugging beers. The ice is perfectly smooth, untouched so far, with not one imperfection. The whistle blows and the first period finally starts, right on time. The bulky players race to each other and sticks start crackling against the ice as they fight for the puck. They glide down the ice so gracefully, weaving in and out of one another with such speed.

During the first ten minutes, each team scores one point. The puck flies into the net, the dramatic buzzer sounds, and the crowd stands up going wild. I can feel the vibrations in the floor from the music and buzzers going off, I'm yelling along with everyone else in the crowd. The second period begins, and the New York Islanders score two more points, making it 3-1. At this point, the ice has hundreds of scuff marks from the players' sharp skates. People in our row excuse themselves as they walk passed us to get a refill on drinks; I lift my legs out of the way for the tenth time tonight.

During intermission, we go to throw out our garbage

and stretch our legs. I'm chatting happily about how interesting the game is and who I think is going to win. Going by the concession stands is relieving because I can feel the warmth from all the grills, taking away the chill in my bones from being by the rink.

"Let's go Flyers, let's go!" is being chanted as everyone fills the stadium and takes their seats again.

The third period is about to begin, I notice the Zamboni finishing up cleaning the ice, making it perfectly smooth again. I'm sad this is the last period, but I'm hoping the Flyers make a comeback. The New York Islanders score another point, half the crowd jumps up screaming while the Flyers fans boo loudly. Quickly after, they score another point, making it 5-1. The Flyers glide to the other side of the rink with ease, and shoot the puck with great aggression, making it in and making the score 2-5. The cotton candy guy walks past me a few times taunting me with the sugary snack, I order one because I can't resist. My hopes for the Flyers winning are lessened at this point, but it was still a great game. The third period soon ends, resulting in the Flyers losing. Once again, we are being pushed by intoxicated fans as everyone tries to leave the stadium at once. We make it down the escalators to the main doors and exit, excited that hockey season has started and looking forward to the many games to come.

# Cigarettes After Sex

By Gillian Hatcher

There's a constant buzz in the room, voices are melding together into one low hum, many different conversations coming together into one giant sound. I'm behind what seems to be a family, the mother, their two kids and the one kid's significant other. The mother must be on her second beer, her breath tells me that much, and because we are all so packed into such a small space I can almost pinpoint the brand of beer she was drinking. It was a light beer, the color of the remnants in her cup that she's moving around as she talks with who I can only imagine is her older child, clarifies that much. Their adult child is drinking white wine.

The tickets said the show started at 9 p.m., however as it was getting closer to 10 p.m. someone behind me says, "Is this Cigarettes After Sex or Cigarettes After 10 o'clock?"

The lights slowly go down and it takes everyone a second to realize it, between the conversations and the alcohol they're distracted. I stand in the near center of it all with my small glass of water because I'm younger and it felt weird to not have at least something in my hand. When everyone realizes the lights have gone down there's only the sound of the almost cheery music that is playing through the speakers while a clip of snow falling in front of an apartment building is play-

ing on loop on the stage.

Soon, the band appears, out from the dark patches of black on the side of the stage. The crowd cheers and it seems very out of place with the soft music in the background and the almost innocent imagery behind the band on the wall.



Photo Courtesy of Gillian Hatcher

They start in. The beat of the drum is a constant, always the same slow, low tempo, beating in a time that seems to be going at half the speed that the rest of the room is going.

Without warning, the image behind the band changes and goes to a close-up of a young girl crying. Her hair is short and black, the blunt bangs cut across the pale expanse of her forehead, and a tear rolls almost painfully slow down her cheek.

The lead singer has a voice that doesn't seem like it should be higher pitched, but when he gets to the chorus it goes to the deeper tone one would expect from a guy with a full dark beard. It's a constant play on the higher and lower notes, the lower ones seem to be reserved more for the chorus of each song, giving them an almost haunting quality.

As the songs change so does the back drop, from the falling snow, to the crying girl, to a small burning fire, each song gets its own image. If you look closely, you can see the small pieces of the image reflected on the faces of the band members, white and black contours

shifting over their facial features.

The crowd barely moves other than the small sway that everyone has seemed to have adopted. It's uneven, no one is on the same timing, but everyone is doing it.

In front of me, near the stage, there's a small puff of smoke that begins to float over the crowd and before I know it there's the distinct smell of marijuana wafting in the air around me. It adds to the almost calming atmosphere of the moment, the lack of serious security allows for the person to keep taking hit after hit and soon it mixes fully with the light smoke coming off the stage, making the room just a tiny bit hazier.

Time seems to go by infinitely slower than normal, the music having a constant slow pace, never getting fast enough to make anyone truly move around. It's a stationary moment; it's almost contemplative. There's

nothing to do besides stare at the images on the backdrop and let the music completely wash over you.

The murmur comes back over the crowd, but this time it's everyone in sync, singing quietly along to the music. A group of people promising that nothing's gonna hurt you baby, and that as long as you're with me you'll be just fine.

It should be eerie, but it isn't.

When it ends it seems to come naturally, with the lights finally fading slowly to black and the guitar quietly playing out.

The lights come on and it's as if I was just thrown into a cold bath. I follow the flow of people out to the street, take in the muggy night, and walk down the steps into the subway.



Photo Courtesy of Gillian Hatcher

# Participatory

# Heroin Takes Toll on Family

By Bridget Quimby

Camarie Miller was 18 years old the morning she awoke to urgent doorbell ringing. She found the Sayreville Police at her front steps. It was 11 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 27, 2017.

The police insisted on speaking with Camarie's parents and refused to disclose any information while Camarie was home alone.

"I had no idea what was going on," she said.

The police located Camarie's mother, Susan Miller, who works at a local upper-elementary school, and informed Susan that her 23-year-old daughter Shannon had died of a heroin overdose earlier that morning.

"When they pulled me aside and told me that I had lost Shannon, my scream echoed through the hallways," said Susan.

Susan was driven home by the officers and saw Camarie waiting outside of their house to find out what was happening.

"I remember my mom's face looking distraught as she was hysterically crying and screaming," said Camarie.

Camarie was sat down on the couch as her mother struggled to find the words to tell her that her older sister passed away just a few hours ago.

"I instantly went into fetal position and started bawling my eyes out," said Camarie.

Shannon Miller had a history of using heroin as she started using the drug at 16 years old. Her drug use started when she was diagnosed with Chiari Malformation: a brain condition which causes brain tissue to extend onto the spinal canal resulting in severe, vision-blurring, noise-sensitive migraines.

"None of the medicine prescribed to her helped with the excruciating migraines she experienced," Susan said. "That was when she resorted to self-medicating. Through peer pressure, one thing led to another, and she began using."

The Miller family was aware of Shannon's substance abuse and admitted Shannon into rehab several times, spending over \$100,000 in treatment. Shannon is remembered by her family and friends as a very happy, loving young lady that always gave back to her com-

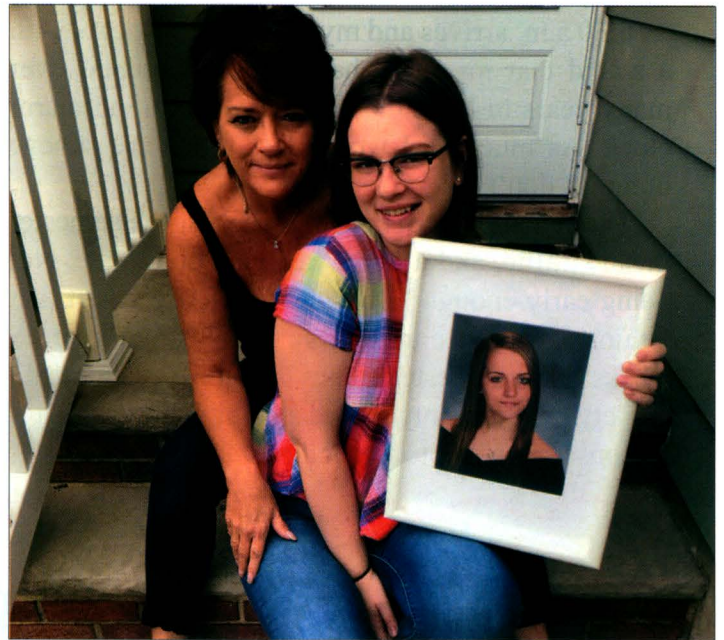


Photo Courtesy of Bridget Quimby

munity.

"Around Christmas, Shannon would buy necessities and clothes for girls with the money in her pockets," Camarie said.

The Miller house is filled with pictures of Shannon along with ceramic angel statues inscribed with heavenly quotes for those who have passed. Camarie and I went through a box of Shannon's old soccer trophies, Disney trinkets and written letters between Camarie and her sister.

"She always loved Disney," Camarie said.

Camarie brought me to her backyard to show me the family's massive garden filled with vibrant flowers, engraved stones and Donald Duck windmills that they built in memory of their beloved Shannon.

The family continues Shannon's patronizing legacy with an organization they put together called Shannon Clause. Every year since Shannon's death, they bring Christmas stockings filled with hair bands, toothbrushes, hats, gloves and other essential items to the Crawford House, a halfway house for women that struggle with addiction.

Susan Miller started a support group called CSM Support Group, to support families who have lost a

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## Morning Page 3

**By John DeGregorio**

6:30 a.m. arrives and my phone hits my ears with a sound that my mind has been conditioned over many years to hate: the necessary evil of an alarm clock. As much as I would like to hit the snooze button, I don't.

The second day of the first week of the semester means traffic, and a lot of it. I hate being late. Not being early enough to be able to choose a seat that I think I will be comfortable with for the next 15 weeks of the semester makes me anxious. This mild anxiety heightens my senses a bit as I drag my barely-conscious body to the bathroom to get ready.

The radio drives me insane; \$200 per year for Satellite Radio, 300 channels and not a single thing to listen to. I remind myself that I only feel this way about the radio right now because I am not a morning person. I flip to Howard Stern, but Robin's soothing voice is putting me back to sleep. I flip back to the Lithium station in the hopes that Kurt Cobain can keep me awake instead.

Traffic in Jamesburg, traffic on Route 1 in New Brunswick, and of course traffic on Woodbridge Avenue. I inch my way to campus one never-ending traffic light at a time. After what feels like an eternity, I have finally arrived.

## Morning Page 4

**By Matthew Serraty**

It's time. My body is exhausted and I have the scent of wings and fryer food. I am sick of wearing this uniform and the only thoughts I have in my mind are ones of my bed and sleeping.

Managers say we are good to go, no time is wasted, I clock out and I'm headed for the door. I head for my car and it isn't hard to find.

The ride home is quick but does not lack aesthetic. Luminous street lights reflect off the puddles. The sound of the engine slowly becomes white noise to my ears, and it feels like I am truly the only person in the world at this time. After the short drive I arrive at my destination: sweet home.

Before entering my home, I sit in my car in solitude and enjoy the feeling of complete peace and privacy. This is the only time I am allowed to seep into my inner thoughts without any interruption.

The occasional car passes by and I have music playing in the background, not loud enough to disturb my thoughts but not low enough for me not to hear it. After realizing how much time has passed by, I head inside my house and quietly tip-toe inside, trying not wake anyone up. I head to my room and submerge into my bed still in my uniform. I know I should change, but my exhaustion takes over and I enter my deep slumber.

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loved one to addiction.

Camarie Miller shares her story with students at her former high school to raise awareness of drug addiction and how it can happen to anyone, at any moment.

Speaking with Camarie and her family about the loss of Shannon opened my eyes to the grueling hardships families have to live through day-by-day, knowing they will never hear their loved one's voice again.

It makes me think back to all of the pointless fights I've had with my older sisters and wish I had just hugged them instead. You never know when the last goodbye is.

The Miller family will always have my respect. I extol their strength, bravery and kind-hearted spirits that have impacted the lives of thousands of people.

-In Loving Memory of Shannon Miller-

# Life as a Recruit in Boot Camp

By Chris Place

On Feb. 5, 2018, Ishmael Zubairu was shipped off to Parris Island, South Carolina, where he was going to go through three months of boot camp.

“When I first got there, it was scary. It was me and a bunch of people I’ve never met before in my life. You’re sitting in a bus with your head down, and you couldn’t look up,” said Ishmael.

From the second the bus arrives at the base, they are being tested.

“The bus stops for about ten minutes. You hear the door open, and someone says, ‘Everyone get out of the bus now,’” he said.

“Everyone’s heart is racing to get to the yellow footprints. Once you get there, they read you the oath. They’re telling you everything that’s about to happen. They tell you once you enter the hatches, there’s no going back.”

Once the recruits enter the hatches, it all becomes a reality to them. “Once the hatches close, all you hear is a boom, like it’s a prison cell. You already regret it,” he said.

That is just the beginning, though. The next morning, they are all forced to cut their own hair. Boot camp has an effect on some of the recruits right away.

“Later that morning, they cut all of our hair off. You see kids crying, especially because a lot of kids who had really long hair got their haircut,” he said.

Not only does boot camp require a lot of physical training, your whole lifestyle changes for those three months.

“We wake up at 4 a.m. every morning. From there, we go to eat chow for about 200 seconds, if that. If the drill instructor is mad, we get about a minute at the most,” he said.

“By 4:04 a.m., we were already on the sandpit and it was cold as hell.”

One of the most important things about becoming a Marine is having discipline. You must do exactly what your drill instructors tell you to do. That’s something that Ishmael knew coming in, but he messed up here and there, and instantly regretted it.

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Photo Courtesy of Ishmael Zubairu

## Morning Page 5

By Claudia Ugbana

My morning routine entails a short series of the same events. I am usually awoken by my alarm clock, which I snooze about two or three times. Usually, I tell myself it is important I get up on the second ring.

I stumble downstairs into my kitchen and roam through my fridge with the intention of making a big breakfast. I am one of those people who finds that breakfast really is the most important meal of the day, because I usually skip lunch or dinner. Rarely do I ever make both.

Breakfast could mean a variety of different things for me, and I do not like to repeat the same meal twice in a row. I will usually make scrambled eggs and go with all the fillings I enjoy; onions, peppers and cheese, and a side of fruit or a yoghurt along with that. I am also a huge fan of cereal, and I find the older I get, the more types and flavors of cereal I want to try. However, I find my kitchen is always stocked with honey nut cheerios, or lucky charms in its original flavor. These two are my all

time favourite.

After breakfast, I hop right into the shower and scrub efficiently. I do not gravitate towards scented body washes with extravagant packaging, I like anything simple and unscented, soaps that will get the job done. I then go over to the sink and brush efficiently, usually I will floss first, brush and then rinse twice with mouthwash. I find that the health of my teeth is an essential part of nailing down my morning routine.

I usually wash my face last, after I have showered and brushed because I get to re-wash my hands through warm water before I dive into my face products.

The rest of my morning routine is easy and effortless. I put on lotion, deodorant and get dressed. Then I am out the door in a rush because I have usually taken up extra time listening to music or getting distracted by my phone.

My morning routine is important to me, a ritual that enforces important steps in ensuring I am clean, content and ready for my day.

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“I called my drill instructor D.I. instead of drill instructor. I got [extra physical training] on the quarter deck for hours. They had me doing planks until I started bleeding through my elbows,” he said.

In boot camp, all of the recruits are completely disconnected from the outside world. That means no internet, laptops, phones or anything of the sort. The only way you can communicate with friends and family is through letters.

“You’re always so busy, you don’t really think about your phone or any of that stuff. The only time you think about that stuff is when you get time to write letters, and you hear about everything that’s going on,” he said.

One of the hardest things the recruits have to go through is isolation from their family for months. Ish-

mael felt the effect right from the jump, when he received his first letter from his mom.

“The first letter I got was from my mom. I shipped out on Feb. 5, and my mom’s birthday was on the Feb. 11. The next day, my sister sent me a picture in a letter of her and my mom on her birthday. Man, I didn’t cry, but I started tearing up when I saw the picture,” he said.

After the three months of boot camp is over, the first people recruits get to see are their families the day before you leave.

“The day before, we get to have family day. When we saw each other, we all started crying right away. It was one of the best days ever.”

I am very proud of Ishmael for becoming a Marine. Hearing about his experience makes me appreciate what he and all other Marines do for our country.



# MCC Alum Rocks Out

By John DeGregorio

Being a rock star is a dream for many kids. Since the early days of the birth of rock and roll, people young and old all over the world have fantasized about picking up a guitar and getting on stage in front of a cheering crowd, just like Elvis Presley or Joan Jett. They dream about getting behind the microphone to sing in front of a sold out crowd at Madison Square Garden, like the Rolling Stones or Metallica. Even just meeting these people would be a pleasure like none else to some. Though Mike Quindlen, a North Brunswick resident and Middlesex graduate, and his band Blind Hate Experiment, never became a true sensation, Mike and his friends did get a taste of the rock star lifestyle for a short while, and got to meet some of the artists they admired along the way.

“We all went to high school together and had been playing together for a while before we officially became a band. That was around 2000, I was 19 years old,” said Quindlen, scratching his head and squinting, as he willed the details to come back to him. “I played bass and guitar. We had another guitar player, my friend Tom. Our friend Eric was the vocalist, and we met this guy Sean through another friend. He played drums.”

Quindlen began playing guitar in middle school, quickly developing a taste for both listening to and playing loud metal music.

“I always liked rock music; the louder the better. When I was a kid, I was really into all those metal bands you used to hear a lot about: Metallica, Pantera, Tool and Korn, stuff like that. Still am into those guys,” he said, pointing to his torso. Mike was wearing a Black Sabbath t-shirt. He is a rock and roll fan through and through. “In 1997, my dad got me a blue ESP Horizon

for Christmas. It’s still my favorite,” he said, patting the nearby case proudly.

Mike was eager to talk about the band, though, not just his own story.



Photo Courtesy of Adam Leota

“In 2001, we were playing small stuff with the lineup we had. Parties in our friends’ backyards, basement shows, local bars, stuff like that. One day, we met this guy from around town who said he could get our demo to a guy at Roadrunner Records. We think, ‘This is it, this is the big break.’ We do a showcase for the Roadrunner guys at this place in Woodbridge that was called Packee’s Pub at the time,” he told me, beginning to stare off a bit. I could tell Mike was really getting lost in memory of what he once thought was his ticket to the big-time.

“The Roadrunner guys ended up passing on us because they didn’t think our live music was as good as the recorded stuff,” Mike said, rolling his eyes.

This setback did not deter the members of Blind Hate Experiment. The band continued to play shows and kept their eyes on the prize.

“Later that year, we met this guy Dean at a show we played in Old Bridge. He tells us he wants to manage us, and can get us a small recording deal with a local label called Seventh Level Records,” Quindlen said.

“We rushed to that studio, man. We banged out a three-track demo that sounded pretty good,” Mike said, proudly. “And now we’re starting to line up shows like left and right. Not just stuff in Jersey, either. We were in New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and we even went down to Memphis a few times. Everyone that was into that kind of music in the area knew who we were. We were kind of like local celebrities. It was a lot of

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# Bearded Dragon Eating a Raspberry

Photo Courtesy of Samantha Cheng



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having fun, partying, girls...” Mike trailed off, grinning. “The best part is we were getting paid to do it.”

Around this time, the band released their first full-length album, “Portrait of My Own Emotions.”

You can’t be a rockstar without radio play, and Blind Hate Experiment was starting to see that too.

“One day, some of our songs start showing up on 89.5 SOU, the Seton Hall radio station. Imagine hearing yourself on the radio.” Mike was getting visibly excited at this point, pacing around the room and making animated gestures with his arms. “We started playing bigger gigs, too. We played the Surf N Skate festival, which eventually went on to become the Bamboozled Festival.”

According to Mike, he and his friends peaked in 2003 when they opened for the band Disturbed at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York City.

“We loved those guys. I still love those guys. Dis-

turbed was really big at the time, and Hammerstein is a big deal too,” he boasted.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end. Like so many other bands before them, Blind Hate Experiment parted ways due to creative differences. Unlike so many others before them, though, this didn’t drive a wedge into their friendships.

“The rest of us weren’t seeing eye to eye with Tom. I still love the guy, and he is talented as all hell. He’s still out touring with a couple of other projects of his. He played with one of the guys from Marilyn Manson’s band and a ton of other really cool dudes.”

Mike’s dreams of professional musicianship are long gone, though he still loves music and plays guitar in his spare time.

“I never did get to be a full-fledged rock star, but I got a lot closer than most other people can say and it was the time of my life,” Quindlen said.

# Noel Jones: Being an Artist

By Matthew Serraty

Noel Jones is currently a student at Middlesex County College. Jones attended North Brunswick Township High School and graduated in 2016. This sounds pretty typical. But, while being a high school student, Jones made a name for himself using his music. Jones released music under the stage name NoL.

Jones detailed how he first fell in love with hip-hop, and how big of an influence his father was. “My dad is one of my biggest influences. He’s the one that got me into music.”

Jones’ father was also a hip-hop artist. Jones appeared in some of his father’s music videos.

Noel describes himself as a “student of the game,” garnering many influences over the years. “Nas, Jay-Z, Kendrick Lamar and J.Cole; and Kanye is a big one,” he said.

While his father was the reason he initially fell in love with music, he was not the one to help Noel work on his craft.

“My friend Diego showed me Fruity Loops my freshman year, and that’s how I started making beats,” said Jones. Fruity Loops is a program that allows people to create instrumentals.

Diego did not just help Gallagher start to get into music, he was also there to aid him in his journey.

“We talked about making music sophomore year. He taught me how to make beats at his house. He taught me the basics, the patterns and showed me how to rap.”

From there, Jones took off. He released music on SoundCloud, a music streaming service that allows artists to put up music for everyone to listen to. With gaining a following his junior year of high school, he decided to drop his first full-length project. The title he gave it was “Grape Vine.”

He talks about what the recording process was like.

“I went to the studio on my birthday and just recorded the entire album in one session,” he said. Once he released it, he discussed how it was received,

“It felt really good. People who I didn’t even know [were] saying they liked my album. I can’t lie, I was one-hundred percent feeling myself. Even with that, I still had a humble approach, as always.”



Photo Courtesy of Noel Jones

While Noel had experienced some of the highs making music brought, he’s also seen some of the lows. The biggest struggle, which many face, is the money.

“I make money doing this, but I don’t make good money. I usually just make enough money to cover my studio time. That’s the main reason that I don’t take it as serious anymore.”

The struggling artist appears again, just in today’s version. While the financial part is one of the negatives, Noel explains that there’s more.

“I’ve dealt with a lot of fabricated and goofy people because of music.”

Even with the struggles of a rising artist, Noel does not have any intentions of quitting.

“Music will always be a part of my life, I never wanted to quit,” Noel said.

He also teases at new music to be released.

“I have around thirty songs I haven’t released.”

Today, the way we look at and consume music is different. The internet has made it so that anyone can release their music to the public and become a rapper. Society looks at it and labels it “SoundCloud rap,” and anyone who partakes is a “SoundCloud rapper.” They are still humans with real issues, and just want to chase their dreams like we all do.

# From High School to the Workforce



By Scott Pietschker

Photo Courtesy of Scott Pietschker

My father, Scott Pietschker Sr., was born in 1968 in Piscataway Township, New Jersey to two middle class parents. His father was a bootmaker for the Tingley Rubber Company and his mother was an office secretary for a tool business. He grew up in the lower middle class range and saw the struggles of his parents.

“When you see what other people have and it’s so far out of reach, you realize that you are truly lower middle class, if not poor,” ultimately, his family lost their home to foreclosure.

“We always had the hope that something was going to change so that we could buy the house back.”

My father, now 48 years old, explains, “College was never in the thought process, it was always about an hourly wage with benefits.” Higher education was never in his mind, due to his family’s financial instability.

“I was never a good student, but I was always mechanically inclined, and I had a great work ethic.”

In his last year in high school, he joined a work-study program, which allowed him to go to school half

the day and then get set to work. My father’s main goal was to be a machinist, so he worked for a printing press repair company, where he had no time in the shop.

“The company had me shipping tools and parts. This was a wakeup call to how some of these businesses would use the high school kids. They never taught me anything about the trade itself.”

From there, my father graduated high school and got a full time position at the Samuel Bingham Company, where he made and machined printing press rollers.

“I was a full blown machinist. I had a great work ethic, so they appreciated me.” When one of my father’s coworkers left, he gave him a tip that there was an opening in a different company, Okonite Cables, where he would be paid a whole two dollars more per hour, and be a part of a union.

My father got the interview.

“I was nervous walking into the huge factory. I was going to be a machine operator. I was a nervous wreck. I walked into the office where I was going to take the

interview, and sitting right in front of me was my old Cub Scout leader, Mr. Boswell. At that point, the nervousness completely left my thoughts.”

“He told me that I was the best Cub Scout in the group. I would always listen to him, and he straight up told me that I had the job. I did not even say one word to him.”

My father made radar deflecting cables for submarines. The machine that he was running was humongous. It was electronically advanced, compared to the other machines in the factory. He quickly moved to the coveted day-shift position.

“I was the only one who knew how to run the machine at the time. They needed me to stay.” My father was making a whopping \$10.64/hour in 1988 with full benefits. Due to inflation, this would be like making twenty two dollars an hour today.

My father was then approached by his girlfriend’s father, who is now my grandfather, about working for Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G).

“I remember saying to him, ‘Why would I leave a job paying \$10.64/hour to work in a small storeroom for \$8/hour?’” He then told my father there are so many more opportunities at PSE&G compared to Okonite Cables.

The day my father changed his mind was the day his manager told him that he wanted the machine running faster and he wanted more production.

“I told him, ‘We’re going to have a problem with quality control if we’re going to speed up.’”

He did not care and proceeded to reach past my father’s hands and turn the dials to full load. This poorly made decision caused the machine to overload and spin out of control. My father had no choice but to hit the emergency button, which causes the whole plant to shut down and all the workers to run over to help. The manager then ran into his office. My father was then met with one of the meanest union representatives to ever run the planet. He was asked if he was okay, and my father proceeded telling him everything that happened. The union rep told him that he would take it from there.

He then decided to take my grandfather’s words and every Friday would ask how he was doing on the list for new hires at PSE&G.

“Every single Friday for nine months I would go in and check.” One day, he was told that he could start in four days. He put in his two-week notice and quit.

“It was hard for me to do, but I thanked every manager except the one that made the dumb decision.”

My father started his career in PSE&G in 1989 in the storeroom, which he stayed at for nearly a year, until he became a high voltage lineman.

“I became a first-grade lineman, equipment operator and an upgraded to line chief before finally becoming a troubleshooter.”

He is coming up on his thirtieth year at PSE&G, and is eligible for retirement in seven years when he is 55.

While also working at PSE&G, my father, along with his business partner, started F.O. Property Management, Inc, a general contracting company which bought properties and renovated them for sale and rental. These renovations include total interior demolition to bring to new condition, plumbing, electric, sheetrock and finish.

The company also tried their hand at new construction, where they demolished a home, and built new from the ground up. Over the years, their main source of work included numerous kitchens and baths and many larger renovations.

“I work hard because it is all I know,” he told me, “I want a better life for my family than what I had growing up.”

When asked if he would do anything differently my father told me, “I would not change a thing. The bad experiences built to where I am today.”

His favorite saying is, “Every day is a good day,” which he has tattooed on his arm.

When asked for the advice for normal, college students, he said, “You can train your brain to do anything, I’m an example, because I can build a house from the ground up and repair anything on an electrical grid. Two occupations that I would never even think of doing during high school. Never give up.”

One of his biggest inspirations is Milton Hershey, who started his chocolate company at 40 years old after ten failures.

“If you fail ten times, you shouldn’t look at them as failures, but instead learning experiences.”

“I would never discourage anyone from going to college, but if the opportunity isn’t there, you have to make the best of it, and that is exactly what I did.”

My father is one of the smartest people I know and is a huge inspiration to my siblings and me.

# The Biggest Struggle

By Marissa Bowden

Michael was only 13 years old when 9/11 occurred, his eyes were glued to the television seeing thousands of people jumping from the 100 story building. He was even able to see the smoke coming from his bedroom window. It bothered him that he couldn't do anything about the situation, but already as a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) his brother was able to help.

Following his brother's footsteps, at the age of 16, Michael started EMT school. He began to experience vivid nightmares of being deployed out to war, but dying wasn't his fear; failing was. Those nightmares didn't stop him from pursuing his goal. When he was 17, he forged his parents' signatures to enlist as a combat medic for the Army. Michael finished all of his basic training in 2006, and was deployed to Iraq in the year of 2008 as a New Jersey Army National Guard.

Within two weeks of being in the Army, signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were already beginning to occur. The first sign was Michael isolating himself from others, then shortly it got to a point where he couldn't even eat in front of or around anyone. Those experiencing PTSD are usually never aware of it, and Michael wasn't. Eating everything he saw in sight still wasn't enough, he was losing an excessive amount of weight.

Recounting these memories had tears rolling down Michael's face, "I began to seriously contemplate suicide."

The last month of his deployment was the hardest. Dealing with PTSD and thoughts of suicide started to take a toll on Michael physically. He noticed a dull ache in his kidneys and from that moment, he knew something was wrong. He was transported to a hospital in Germany where he was informed that his kidneys were failing. After 72 hours of running tests, he was told that the pain was being caused by stress. After hearing that news, Michael said he knew that there were issues elsewhere and decided to get them checked out. Within minutes, he was diagnosed with severe PTSD. Hearing those words devastated him. With regret in his voice, he said, "I had failed; the one thing I truly feared."

Around this time, there was only one week left of his deployment. Immediately after it was over and he returned home, Michael sought out professional help for his mental illness. It took him a long time to find someone he was able to trust and be comfortable around. For six long months, he spent almost every moment thinking back to Iraq. He would see reminders constantly each and every day. He told a brief story of his worst reminder.

"I was walking down a street one day, saw a crack in a sidewalk that reminded me of a crack I saw in a sidewalk in Iraq. This little crack sparked a memory that led to an hour's worth of tears and hyperventilation. It was unbearable."

While still seeing professional help, Michael went to the bar every day for six months to drink the pain away. On top of drinking, he started to lose all the friends that he had. When they would ask about the war, he would tell stories that involved people dying without a shred of emotion. The friends that he had, began to fear him.

It was around this time that Michael had completed his undergraduate degree and moved to Philadelphia, where he would take on graduate school. During his time in Philadelphia, he made new friends, but not true friends since they didn't know what he had been through and he wasn't going to share that information with them. The only thing that gave him comfort were opiates, which led to an addiction to Oxycodone. He still managed to get his Master's degree in Public Health, and worked for a while, but destroyed his life with the opiates.

Within two years, he was in debt of \$200,000 due to his drug use. Drug rehab didn't help the two times he went, but he decided to give it another try in Fall of 2016, after wanting to commit suicide again. Going to rehab for the third time helped Michael get over his addiction.

He then later moved to Denver, Colorado, and began his new life there. He started out by getting a job that had nothing to do with his degree, but was finally happy. In June of 2016, he finally got a job in screening patients across the country for tissue and organ transplants. His life was finally going in a positive direction and shaping up to be the person that he is today.

# Special Shoutout to the Fall 2017 JOU 202 Class



Photo Courtesy of Humberto Marmolejo

