

Middle School Division Poetry

All Alone

My life is a mess
I understand that now
My family is gone, I have no friends
In this world, I am truly alone

The memories flood my mind
Almost as if a dam of knowledge has broken
My sister's happy smiles
My brother wrapping me in a hug as if to shield me

He couldn't
I now realize
In real life, there are no happy endings
Only sadness and worry and torture

The Darkness covers me like a blanket of guilt and sorrow
They're all dead
Because of me
No family, no friends

I hear the Darkness laughing at me, taunting me
"You're all alone, there's no one left"
My tears begin to fall
The Darkness laughs louder

I close my eyes to escape the endless black surrounding me
My eyes will never open again
I am met with one thought, only one thought
"I am all alone."

*Alexia LaGrone
First Place
7th Grade, LJ Alleman Middle School*

The Perfect Day

Her eyes are kaleidoscopes,
Glinting with gold and green.
My little sister slides her tiny hand into mine,
And we are off.
Through fields of flowers
Tilting their broad, open faces
Toward the morning sun.
Salty ocean breezes blow back our hair,
Bringing everlasting serenity to this fine day.
Golden rays shine in sparkling streams
Through blossoming tree branches.
Everything, this whole place,
Is prim and proper,
But loose and flowing alike.
A chain reaction
Brought us here,
One wonderful thing leading to the next.
The sun came up
Just after the sorrowful moon
And painted the sky with vibrant colors
Of golds and oranges.
This caused all of the flora
To look up in awe,
Staring at the sky.
Then, the plants are inspired
To grow their fruit
By jealousy,
Wanting to match the sun's colors.
So, they bloom their
Flowers,
Big and bright,
Which transform into large fruit.
My sister and I find the best tree to sit under
And sink our teeth
Into juicy mangoes.
Wide smiles spread across our faces,
Confirming what the blue jay cries out.
This is the perfect day.

*Kaylie Bonin
Second Place
6th grade, Jefferson Island Road*

By the Blade

Grinding as the sun goes down
Happiness seems to frown
The blade goes up the blood goes down
Wincing with pain
Emitting no sound
The tear welling up
But my one concern is not giving up now
The choices I have made are all on the line
Strength in numbers the will not to die
I turn the blade blood dripping off
My heart skips a beat
Down on my back
Swept off my feet
Not by love but by the blade
Is this what I have to show?
Everything in vain?
Back on my feet for all I have to show
Rain beats down
Hair in my face
The growl in my voice
Thus begins the chase!

Carter Porche

Third Place

6th grade, David Thibodeaux STEM Magnet Academy

Middle School Division Fiction

Goal-den Girl

He heard her before he saw her. She was coming onto the field with her ball and drink in hand. She seemed to be able to find every bump and hole in the field, practically tripping every third step. She was muttering curses under her breath. He shook his head. If she was on his team, no amount of effort from him or the rest of the team could save them. He was considered the best forward in the state, yet he didn't believe he could help her.

She dropped her drink on the bleachers and dropped her ball so she could kick it to him. He stopped it as she jogged over to him. The rest of the team had yet to arrive.

"So," she said, "you're the team captain. What position do you play?"

He was confused, to say the least. Wasn't he supposed to ask her that? "I am. I play forward. My name is James. What's yours?" he asked, holding his hand out.

She shook his hand, noting to herself how they were the perfect size for a goalie, yet his long legs would be a good trait for both goalies and forwards. "Rosemarie. Goalie, just in case you were wondering."

He paled. They had no other goalie. "Really? That's... good. We need one."

She smiled. "Could you help me warm up before practice? I figured if I can practice with a good forward, I'll be ready for the games."

He returned the smile. "Sure." She sprinted to the goal and got into position. Compared to the nine foot tall goal, her five foot two stature

seemed especially short. James shook his head with a smirk and lined up for the kick. He kicked the ball with as much force as he could, sending it flying directly towards the goal. He fully expected Rosemarie to step out of the way, but, she put her hands up and snatched the ball from the air, drop-kicking it to him. He was barely able to stop the ball from rolling out of the field because he was so shocked.

She smirked. "Hit me with your best shot." He narrowed his eyes and bounced the ball on his foot. He kicked the ball again and sent it sailing towards the top right corner of the goal. To his irritation, she ran and jumped as high as she could, brushing the ball with her fingertips. This sent it into the pole and back out of the goal. He felt a growl rise up in his throat as he heard applause behind him. The rest of the team was watching them, smiling.

"Wow! New girl just stopped two of James' kicks!" someone shouted. Everyone rushed to congratulate her.

After, as everyone went off to warm up, Rosemarie came up to him. "Just so you know, it took me nine years to learn to do that."

He smiled crookedly. "Can you do that in a game?"

"I don't know. Can you?"

Cassi McQuilling
First Place
8th grade, Berwick Junior High

The Christmas of Crimson Lights

I clenched on tighter to my black, thin-layered jacket, attempting to reach the feeling of warmth. The navy blue scarf that hung around my neck now covers a portion of my face.

“At least it’s warmer than this flimsy jacket,” I thought out loud.

After adjusting the blue scarf to a comfortable position, I continued my aimless wandering around the desolate neighborhood. The few crimson Christmas lights that were wrapped around the houses illuminated the streets, letting the lightly ice-frosted scenery become visible. Each step I took echoed throughout the crisp, winter air. The mist created by my breath blurs my sight a tad bit.

A walk in the night gives off such a placid feeling, something that I wanted. Tonight was the night of 2009’s Christmas Eve, wasn’t it? Families visiting, parties, presenting gifts; it’s just a boisterous, disorderly mess. My relatives with their children shouting and fussing, nonsense spewing from their mouths irritates me to no end. Leaving the house for a nightly stroll was the most plausible option. It’s surprisingly simple to just slip out unnoticed. For now, I’ll just continue wandering the neighborhood. No place to aim for, just strolling about.

I tightened my loosened scarf. The weather was frighteningly freezing outside, but I can deal with it. Ignoring the thought of the temperature outside, I crossed the corner of a street, entering the other half of the neighborhood. I was always quite fond of this half, considering the fact that it’s one of the most illuminated areas. Under the moonless sky, the Christmas decorations were beautiful and lively with lines of Christmas lights, and an ample amount of little props were placed in front of stilled houses. The houses and lights were lightly ice-frosted, appearing as though it’s a wistful wonderland. It’s such a stunning sight at night and

only one person is here to witness it. I started to get lost in a daze while gazing at this scenery.

Mew.

Surprised, I broke out of my daze and looked around, attempting to locate the source of the noise. As I searched for the origin of the noise around the street and houses, another abrupt sound came from behind a brick mailbox, just a few feet away from me. Curious, I stepped closer to the mailbox. The closer I got, a figure started to form. After only a small distance was between me and this figure, I started to realize what was the source of the strange sound. A kitten. A kitten with glossy white fur with spots of black scattered on it. How cute it appeared to be was my first thought in mind, though I mentally slapped myself after realizing that it's a young kitten in the freezing night of winter. The little kitten was shivering, hardly even able to stand its ground. Slowly, I reached my hand out, attempting to hold it. The kitten hardly hesitated, allowing me to handle it.

The first thought that came to my mind was to warm it up by wrapping it in my navy blue scarf. I removed my scarf and proceeded to wrap it up, ignoring the bitter cold air that hit my neck. It soon made itself comfortable, resting in its little warm wrap. A smile spilled from my lips from viewing this cute animal. I lifted up my hand and petted the white-and-black kitten, who mewed in response. A small cloud of mist from my breath formed as I let out a low chuckle. As the crimson Christmas lights lit up my pathway, I continued on my nightly stroll with a little friend in hand. For some reason, the night felt much warmer...

Kristie Nguyen
Second Place
8th grade, Judice Middle School
My Life as a Penny

When I first came out of the mint in Denver in 1999, I was handed to a very rich lady. She gave me to her son, who looked to be about eleven years old. They got into their car and we drove for about four hours before we stopped. I was able to peek out over the boy's pocket and saw a sign that said USS Alabama. The little boy ran around the ship for at least an hour. "Ow, Ow, Ow, Ow!" I said as I hit the other coins in his pocket. He finally stopped running and put his sweaty hand into his pocket. "Gross!" I yelled, but he didn't hear me.

He picked up two quarters along with me and put us into a little slot. I was shot out onto a moving platform. I looked around and there was the boy and he was cranking a lever. Every time he stopped cranking it, it would stop moving. I turned my head again and saw this big black wheel. I was suddenly going through it and I screamed for help. When I came out the other side, I was flatter than a sheet of paper. I looked up and there was a big stamper coming down on me. "Ouch!" that hurt worse than a permanent tattoo. The next thing I knew I was being shot back out. The boy picked me up and looked me over. There was a battleship printed on one side of me, and the words USS Alabama printed on the other side of me.

The boy took out a black booklet and put me into it. When he closed it I could hear other penny voices. I turned around and there were two other squished pennies. The first one had Alcatraz printed on it. It leaned over to me and said, "It's like you're a prisoner in here." Another penny sat next to me with a skull and cross bones printed on it. The Alcatraz penny leaned in even closer and whispered, "He doesn't talk much." And so that day I began life as a commemorative coin.

Zachary Fitzgerald

Third Place

6th grade, Berchmans Academy – Schools of the Sacred Heart

Middle School Division Nonfiction

The Reckless Raisin Situation

When my family adopted Kip, a Norfolk Terrier puppy, we thought that we were looking into the eyes of a dog that would not cause any commotion around the house, except perhaps a little fetch and tricks. And, during the first month or two, he behaved just that way. We were certainly surprised with the first displeasing experience cause by the innocent creature.

It all started with one delectable chocolate covered raisin treat, which I was devouring while sitting at the computer. I suddenly had to use the restroom, so I left my delicacy behind on the table, forgetting to push in my chair. When I returned, I was bewildered by a disturbing sight. What I witnessed was Kip, at the computer, standing with his hind legs on the cushion of the chair and his front legs propped up on the table. The puppy had replaced my role of enjoying the delightful dessert.

I then relocated from behind the terrier to his side, to see him leaning over a once full plate of chocolate and raisins, two very toxic substances for dogs. I could almost smell the animal's breath, a mixture of coco, raisins, and something very stinky and unpleasant which I believe is called "doggie breath." My tiny, clever friend had found a way to lick up all of my tasty snack.

When he peeked around and spotted me standing there, staring at him in shock, he bounced off of the chair and dashed away, obviously frightened that he had been caught in a sneaky act. Listening to the pitter-patter of Kip's paws racing down the hall, I was panicked and unsure of what to do next. I could only scrounge up one reasonable

solution. I sprinted to the kitchen, calling, “Mom! Dad! Kip ate the chocolate covered raisins!”

I believe that my puppy had a very stressful time being rushed to the animal hospital, where he had his stomach pumped many times, was given various types of medications, and received other assorted treatments. The concerned veterinarian told us that Kip’s kidneys were in danger of failing. Later that night, Kip was sent home, a little sore and limp from the stomach pumping. I leaned over and stroked his smooth coat and felt his hot nose, concerned about his health.

The next day, our beloved family pet was whisked away to the animal hospital once again for a follow-up appointment. Fortunately, the doctor found that our now not so innocent little puppy was returning to his old self and was on the way to a full recovery. To this day, he still loves to jump through the hoola-hoop, as well as play ball and hide-and-go-seek. However, we still face many challenges with Kip’s mischievous side besides *The Reckless Raisin Situation*, but that’s another story.

Brynne Tynes
First Place
7th grade, Paul Breaux Middle School

Nonfiction Memoir: San Francisco

It was about eight years ago that my family and I went to San Francisco, California. I was five years old and had short blond hair, which is unlike the hair I have now which is long and brown. My hair was always styled half up and half down. This is because my hair was too short to do anything else. We went to San Francisco because my dad's sister Felicia lived and worked there for Chevron.

My nanny Felicia always had her hair in a ponytail and was about shoulder length. She is very sincere to our family because we were the closest family she had. Traveling to San Francisco was my very first time on a plane. The plane was larger than most so it could hold more passengers. "Mom, how long will it take to get there?" I asked in the airport waiting for the plane number to be called.

"About five and a half hours, " my mother confirmed.

"Ugh, that's so long to be sitting," I said.

I sat with my dad, and he took lots of pictures of my brother and I while we were able to move about the cabin. When the plane finally landed, my family's legs were all jet-legged. My nanny Felicia was waiting for us at the airport with a surprise. She rented us a limo for the day! I couldn't believe it; I was actually going to ride in a limo. I had only seen limos on TV and when celebrities used them on the red carpet. That day we had gone to my nanny's apartment to unpack and settle in our new home for the next week. Once that was finished, we rode around in the limo all day sightseeing. We went to the Children's Museum, took a bus tour around the city, and Muir Woods to fulfill the hours of the day.

The next day, we went to Alcatraz which was a used prison but was shut down on March 1, 1963. We took a walking tour around the prison. They showed us where the prisoners ate, the regular cells, and the solitary confinement cells. My dad took a picture of my brother Brennan and I behind a cell to make it look like we were in prison. Everyone thought it was hilarious. That same day, we went to the Ghirardelli ice-cream shop and took a tour of the city on an antique fire truck. While on the antique fire truck we went over the Golden Gate Bridge while singing, "Big red shiny Mac (clap) fire engine, big red shiny Mac (clap) fire engine, big red shiny Mac (clap) fire engine, we're off to the rescue now (beep beep). I couldn't stop singing the song for days.

The next day, we walked all the way down Lombard Street, which is also known as "the crooked street" as my family calls it. This street was really long and it took us at least five minutes to walk down the entire street. Luckily there were no cars passing down the street at the time. Once we were at the bottom of the street, my nanny took a family picture of us at the stop sign with the street in the background. The other two days we went to the beach, but it was really cold so we didn't swim, we just walked along the beach. Those two days in a row made my legs hurt extremely sore. On the way home, the plane was awfully quiet and everyone was sleeping so my dad told me to speak softly so that I wouldn't wake them up. When we got off the plane, my family and I were so relieved to be home again. "Home sweet home," I said when we arrived at the airport. My family started to smile as we started walking out the building.

*Victoria Frederick
Second Place
8th grade, Paul Breaux Middle School*

The Best Vacation Ever

In the summer of 2011 on the week of July fourth, my family and I drove to Tennessee for our family vacation, for a little over fifteen excruciating hours. You would not be able to believe how excited I was to get out of the car after being stuck in the car that long with three younger siblings. They literally drove me up the wall and out the sunroof. All of the bickering, and whining, and complaining, it was utterly ridiculous, but it was all worth it. I would personally have to say that Tennessee is one of the most gorgeous places I have ever seen or been to. The mountains in Tennessee were just covered in beautiful, luscious, green trees. Even the skies were extremely pretty; they were clear, blue, and perfect. The air was crisp and cool, unlike Louisiana's, humid and blistering hot. I was so glad that the cabin we rented had a perfect view of the Smoky Mountains. I was wake up real early at sunrise, just to specifically sit on the balcony and watch the sun rise over the mountains. One thing that came close to the beauty of the mountains was the amazing firework show that went on during the night of July fourth. Bam! Pop! Blow! I have never seen fireworks so big and colorful in my life. They were such a magnificent contrast against the black night sky. The cabin was also really cool; it had so many fun and different aspects. One of my favorite things, besides the balcony, was the pool table that was in the game room upstairs. I was also hanging out in the hot tub almost every evening, watching the sun set behind the mountain tops. I have never seen sights so beautiful as the ones those summer evenings, and summer mornings. One of the final and most fun things we did on the vacation, was visiting the creeks in the Smoky Mountains. The creeks were filled with small, and extremely smooth stones, but was also filled with humongous ones. On those rocks, you can climb on top of them and take in the world's natural beauty.

*Grace Evanco
Third Place
8th grade, Paul Breaux Middle School*

High School Division Poetry

Voices

i

Descartes once said that "I think therefore I am"
But whenever the clanging of the morning bells
Dull and diminish the thoughts in my mind
Whenever I can't even hear myself over
The crashing sirens of oncoming boats
Outside voices right in my ear
Polluting fog blinds my path
As I leave my words behind
Am I still the person I thought to be
Am I?

ii

Too many thoughts and not enough paper
Words reverberate harder, harder against my skull
An escape, a dignified retreat
To a place where I can breathe
And what if I cut down every forest
This Earth has ever born
And leave it barren
Scavenging to save the spared
Write down so many thoughts, so many dreams
A scribe's eternal duty by all means
Would that justify the salvation of my sanity
Or am I being dragged to the bottom
By more than just gravity

Vincent Cheramie

First Place

12th grade, Lafayette High School

My Sun and My Moon

We have the same hands
Creating atmospheres
Aura pollinating rings lingering on long loving fingers
Each a pair of tender hearted lips whispering wise words

She gave me pit of the plum passion
An exhilarating hymn she hums
Good as gold she said
You're good as pure gold

She planted seeds all over my skin
Flowers bloom on our cheek bones Her roots nourishing love to me
She makes me smile Sculpting sweet bliss

*Beautiful aromas flow through the window that connects our heart,
soul, spirit, and mind*

My Kind of day is when I wake up and walk in this peaceful awareness

Oh I wander
I spy a periwinkle bruise
She placed my hand over her heart
With olive silk skin so thin
My fingertips gave flight to the tiny butterfly inside her defiant ribcage

It cam tiptoeing
A leaf floating from a tree
Unnoticeable until you wake up and it's winter
Will it be the last winter?

We have the same feet
She planted me
She led me to my journey

She showered my path

Gram

She was sent from God

I told her please don't go back

*Lindsey Taylor
Second Place
12th grade, Acadiana High School*

A Hundred Words

A sequestered sigh of exhaustion in the glacial winter
solely because of the musician
that performs in my subconscious;
an altercation in my nerves, a restlessness.

Teardrops of ancient distress
figure skate down crystal cheeks and
multiply every other second.

It must be nice in Heaven,
to have a golden glittering blanket
that is warm and comfortable
to sit upon and smile.

I don't have the eloquent answers, therefore
I am conquered by fulgent frustration.

I love you like a fragrant candle in the center
of a dark room on wooden floors.

And that, you shall never return to me.

*Caroline Torpy
Third Place
10th grade, Lafayette High School*

High School Division Fiction

The Chase

A young girl straddled a fat tree branch. She ran her twig-thin fingers through a knot of Spanish moss. Humid Louisiana sunlight pounded against her while black strands of sweaty hair stuck to her cheeks. She scrunched her face when she realized that her cream dress had turned brown from dirt and grit during her afternoon exploring. She imagines her mother's calloused face becoming hot and red until tomato juice came oozing out of her ears in anger. She laughed and forgot about the unimportant dress.

She swung her scuffed knees around the branch and shimmied closer to the fragile end. This gnarled tree was hundreds of years old, a silent veteran to Indian battles and civil wars. Many bodies had hung limp and cold from its powerful branches. They had no problem holding up the tiny girl and the wildlife she was searching for.

She flinched when a flash of bright green ran across her hand. A lizard stopped to flash the red fan he kept under his neck to threaten the girl.

"Come'ere," she whispered. She sent her little sun-darkened hand toward the lizard. When her finger came too close he darted away, spiraled up a twig, and blinked at her. She pouted back. The lizard twitched his verdant tail, taunting her. The girl huffed and situated herself.

She carefully put one hand in front of the other for balance and moved slowly along the branch. The leaves rustled with every move. She stretched her hand to the twig the lizard was grasping. He continued

watching her, tilting his head with every inch she scooted closer. She still couldn't reach. The branch grew thinner and thinner. She almost had him. Shaking, she reached her hand a little further . . .

Crack.

She tumbled through the leaves and branches. Green and brown flashed all around her. With clumsy hands she tried to grab anything. She couldn't breathe.

Whamp.

The girl hit the ground. Her eyes were clenched shut and tears left clean paths on her face. Her hair had become a sculpture of tangles accented with twigs and leaves. She opened her eyes to see everything covered in a speckled pattern the sun left on everything through the leaves.

A little green lizard was sitting on her chest.

*Brittany Dugas
First Place
12th grade, Carencro High School*

A New Life

The forest stirred as a small breeze passed through the branches. Orem stopped, worried that the wind may give his scent to the people he was trailing, he wasn't sure if they could smell him in their human forms, this was the first time he dealt with werewolves. Had you told him the supernatural existed two days ago, he would have laughed and called you a fool. Today, he was in the middle of the woods trying to get his wife back from those monsters. His thoughts started to drift as he recalled the beasts smashing through the door of his house and tossing him aside like a ragdoll. They had prowled toward Leslie as they turned into humans then motioned her toward the door they had demolished. His wife hadn't even bothered to resist, she just walked away with the creatures.

Orem sighed as the wind died out completely; the beasts either could not smell or had chosen to dismiss him. He watched them walk into a cave and slowly crept to the entrance. He could see Leslie sitting at a table with a man in army clothing, his back to the cave entrance. Orem did not see anything holding Leslie in place. Why was Leslie just sitting there not trying to escape, was she that scared of the man? He crouched as low as he could to the ground and crawled, not really sure what he would do once the man was in reach. He was almost to the table when the man spoke. "Nice of you to join us Orem, take a seat by Leslie if you don't mind."

Orem froze as he realized that the man held the cards. He stood up and walked over to his wife, who was oddly calm. He sat in the empty chair that the man had blocked from view. The man smirked lightly and looked at Leslie. "I see why you choose this one, he actually followed you here." Orem looked at his wife, the confusion now showing on his face.

Leslie placed her hand on Orem's shoulder and said in almost a whisper, "Orem, this is my brother Jonathan."

Brother? Orem looked at Leslie then Jonathan, utterly lost. "He . . . he's a werewolf!" Orem exclaimed. Jonathan spoke up, "So is she, you see, despite popular belief, werewolves do not change at the full moon, we change when we wish." Orem looked at his wife and fell out of the chair as he watched her eyes flash gold.

Leslie shouted at her brother, "You promised that I could tell him on my own terms!" Jonathan was unfazed and merely shrugged, "I also gave you a deadline, which is long gone, and frankly it is past time for him to become one of us." Leslie turned to Orem and bit him quickly but unwillingly. Orem's entire being seemed to pulse. Jonathan looked at the wound and back to the couple and spoke as Orem lost consciousness, "Your new life shall soon begin . . ."

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*Todd Nichols, Jr.
Second Place
St. Martinville Senior High School*

Addiction

As Poe pressed the cheap, dirty glass to his mouth, the cold, fizzing liquid surged down his throat. It was a burning sensation throughout his body that he had waited long to receive. It ran through his every vein making him tremble with delight. He greatly enjoyed the power and confidence it gave him. But he must savor it for the moment because this liquid came at a price, and he was quite poor. He was struggling through life. He was all alone and had no real job. He decided to recede to this heavenly liquid that always gave him joy. He called it his friend.

He visited his friend whenever he could and they spent long cheerful moments together. However, it was over, all too soon for his friend always seemed to vanish, only to reappear in another glass. The man followed this routine normally for most of his life, even sometimes indulging a little and visiting his friend twice in a day.

Soon the man began noticing that when his friend was absent, he became very violent and distraught. Yet, he waved it off as nothing, however, it soon reoccurred repeatedly. He found himself doing everything he could to spend another moment with his dearly missed friend. He was losing great opportunities for success and was most definitely ruining his life. How had this happened? Of course, he knew that his friend had no part in hurting him. Or, had his friend taught him a valuable lesson not to become too sure of your friends alliance?

*Cameron Sponge
Third Place
9th grade, Delcambre High School*

High School Division Nonfiction

Seeing the Horizon

As I continued my drive home, the same familiar road was laid out in front of me. The roads were clear, save for the few school buses dropping children off. My brain had given into the numbness of driving long ago and my body started going through the familiar routine. I had let my eyes drift from the road for a moment as I approached an overpass. Turning my head, I felt as if I was being lifted from the bottom of an ocean. I looked out to see an endless sea of green sugarcane and beyond that, a house. In the distance, I saw the mills that I had driven past a thousand times. Beyond that, I saw the horizon, that magical place between Earth and Sky. My mind began to soar as I thought of all the places just past it. As I ventured even further along the overpass I realized the tree line moved against the horizon. It dawned on me how much the horizon could change with mountains, plains, and skylines: with houses, trees, and people. An eagle passed across the great line and my eyes followed it towards the sky. I felt envious of the great bird who could see above the field of vision of most, and dares to travel pass it. He is truly a creature of the horizon; he connects the earth and sky. I felt a sadness in my throat as I finally came off the over pass. My moments where I was lost in another world were gone. There on the over pass was where I found the horizon and a love for chasing it.

*Adelai Lynch
First Place
10th grade, Delcambre High School*

Over the Levee

I catch myself thinking about my grandpa. Those days when we would visit my grandparents are days I never want to forget.

My grandparents live along the Atchafalaya River. Although, you can't see the river from their house because of the huge levee separating the two. That levee used to be our playground. Today it's just a memory. Some days my grandpa would take us up that levee and down it to get to the river. We would walk up and down the river for hours listening to my grandpa tell stories about working on the river growing up. He had to stop when my grandma got impatient with us and made my grandpa drag us home.

During the evening, my grandparents would take us to town to get ice cream. The levee circles around between their house and town so on the way you would have to drive over the huge hill. We came up with a name for this hill, Tickle Hill. Now remember, we were only kids. Have you ever rode a roller coaster that seemed to go as high as the clouds and on your way down your stomach would get this strange feeling as if you were being tickled? That's what it was like going over that big hill. We would never hesitate to pick up our feet and wave our hands in the air. It was the closest thing I had to a roller coaster as a kid.

If you ever visit my grandparent's house, you better expect some pecans. It never mattered if it was pecan season or not because my grandma stored them in the freezer. Their house is surrounded by pecan trees. We would spend hours picking up and throwing pecans in our own individual, little buckets. It got less fun as we got older, because then it felt like work. I would do anything to have one more day with grandpa picking up pecans or going up that levee. I know I'll get the chance once I die. I'm hoping that heaven is a big levee full of pecan trees.

*Hannah Gonzales
Second Place
11th grade, Iota High School*

Performing Again

I am standing on the sidelines in "Parade Rest," my left hand placed over my right, which is rested on the bell of my saxophone. I feel the sun's warmth radiating onto me. My uniform absorbs the heat of the sun. I feel a small drop of sweat trail down my temple and past my brow. The anticipation of the moment causes the few seconds I spend with a clean slate for a mind, clear of all thoughts, to feel like an hour. I hear the drum major call the band to attention. We respond by taking up our instruments in our hands yelling, "Pride!" The crowd is hushed momentarily as the deep cry rings out through the stands. This silence is followed by loud applause everyone that made it to a priority to come here today and watch the Pride of Panther-land performs. Courtney, our drum major, commands us to march forward. The procession continues until we reach the back-hash of the football field.

Here we halt, awaiting Courtney to climb her podium, salute to the judges, and count us off for the opening song for our show, "Salute!" I hear the count off and listen to the drum introduction. With the first beat of the song, everyone begins to march. Only two things can make this show run smoothly now: muscle memorization and focus. With muscle memorization in my favor, I can focus on playing my music and making sure that I am in the correct place for every step and every halt. Before I know it, the opening song to the show, "American Salute," is over. Each member is anticipating the count off to the second song.

The band begins to play "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy." The saxophone players dance as they perform their solos. We all move about the field, really giving the audience a feel of the type of jazz theme the song exhibits. Once this fun piece has been played, the most emotional part of the show begins.

The woodwind section begins to play the slow melody of "Amber Waves." The percussionists, who do not have a musical part in this song, carry 20-foot tall banners onto the field. One by one they unroll them, presenting large pictures of the Golden Gate Bridge, olive leaves, the Statue of Liberty, and many more. With the drum major's direction, the band crescendos and decrescendos. The rounded, full sound we all create is breath-taking to not only me, but to the audience. I see people waving small American flags in the air, making me feel more emotionally connected to the patriotic performance than I ever have before. Once again, the drum major ends the song, salutes to the judges, and the applause sounds. This applause and appreciation is personally my favorite part of the marching band. As this is the first marching festival of the season, all I can think is, "Goodness, it feels so great to perform again."

*Tara Baker
Third Place
10th grade, Delcambre High School*