

PEPPERMINT ROOSTER REVIEW



Peppermint Rooster Review

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Editorial Staff

Emily Corby
Francis Corby
Steve Higgins
Ashley Luster

Editor

Lainee Frizzo

Layout and Design

Louise Jett

Cover Art

“Different Perspectives”
by Kathryn Smith

Dear Reader,

This is the tenth issue of Peppermint Rooster Review, an annual publication that publishes fiction, poetry, and essays by Lewis and Clark Community College students and former students. We hope you enjoy this book. We would like to thank Jill Lane, who wanted to showcase outstanding written work from our students and who secured the financing for this project. In addition, we would like to thank Lori Artis for assisting our staff in the production of this magazine.

For the ninth year, we held a campus-wide contest for a student to design the cover. A panel of judges decided on the winning cover art, titled “A Different Perspective” submitted by Kathryn Smith.

When we were looking for a name for this magazine, we considered many different suggestions. The name “Peppermint Rooster” was suggested by a former Lewis and Clark student, and the idea resonated with us because of the odd juxtaposition between the two words. (Also, it sounded more interesting that “Lewis and Clark Literary Magazine.”) This book, as you’ll see, contains some interesting juxtapositions, too. We hope you enjoy reading this and that you will stay tuned for next year’s book as well. If you are a LCCC student, please feel free to submit your work to litmaglc@lc.edu. We will be reading submissions year-round and we look forward to reading your work.

Sincerely,

The Staff of Peppermint Rooster Review

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Caroline Bridges

The Scary April Storm

About eight years ago, I was nine years old sitting on my basement couch with my parents on a stormy April night. My older sister, Audrey, and my younger sister, Bella, were both sleeping upstairs in their rooms. The basement was dark except for the occasional flash that would shine through the windows from the lightning strikes happening outside from the storm. I looked at the windows and could see the water streaming down them like a waterfall. My mom was sitting on the couch twirling her dark brown hair cuddled up next to my tall dad while I sat on the floor and played with our two shih tzu puppies as we watched the movie in our pajamas. As the movie went on, the thunder outside became louder and scarier. Each time the thunder rang outside I could see the TV shake and my heart jump. We could hear the wind blowing against the trees in the backyard and pushing against the house, but the town's tornado siren had not gone off yet, so we carried on watching our movie.

As the storm grew, I could sense my parent's nerves rising as they sat there cuddled up on the couch. I remember my stomach sinking every time the thunder shook my house.

I asked my dad, "Are you scared of the storm?" because he always seems so calm in every situation.

He quickly replied, "As long as all of us are safe and together in our home then I am not scared of the storm."

My mom chimed into the conversation and said, "Storms are normal. They might seem scary while they are happening, but they come and go all the time."

After hearing my parents calming words of reassurance I felt better. Every time the thunder would roar or lightning would flash through the basement windows I would just keep thinking to myself, *Storms are normal and it will pass*. And suddenly, I heard the loudest sound I have ever heard in my entire life. It had sounded like a bomb had gone off right outside our house. Right away the TV shut off and the whole house went pitch black and silent.

My dad sprung up from the couch immediately and said, "Take the dogs and go upstairs to the garage now!" I could tell something was not right. I ran upstairs to get my sisters to go to

the garage with our puppies. My older sister was still awake as I came to get her. She was wearing black leggings and a white sweatshirt with her long dark hair tied up in a ponytail.

After getting her, we both went to grab our little sister who was only one year old at the time. We picked her up out of her crib and her eyes were puffy and her blonde hair was crazy. It was easy to tell that she had been fast asleep. As I gathered my two sisters and our dogs, I could see how scared they were in their eyes. We stood there holding some blankets and the dogs waiting for direction from our parents on what we should do next.

I went to the top of the stairs to the basement to get my mom and as I approached the basement looked a bit foggy and had a small stench of smoke.

I yelled down to her, “Mom is everything okay?” My stomach turned and I could feel myself tearing up.

My mom finally came upstairs and said, “We need to get out of the house now.” After she said that immediate panic had set in.

My dad was still in the house trying to figure out what had happened while the rest of us went out to the garage to produce what our next move was. My mom ran out in the rain and put our dogs in the neighbor’s garage—they were out of town at the time—and closed it to keep them safe. My mom was drenched from running in the rain and it looked like she had just taken a shower.

My mom said to us, “Run to one of the neighbor’s houses in the cul-de-sac and knock on their door for help.”

My older sister asked, “What if they don’t answer? What are we going to do?” I could see the panic in her eyes.

My mom then hugged me and my two sisters and said, “I am sure one of them will answer and everything will be okay.”

My older sister and I looked at each other in complete fear as we stood in the garage staring outside at the pouring rain and listening to the roaring wind. We looked at each other for reassurance that we are going to be okay and then held our breaths and ran out into the storm holding hands. My little sister began crying in fear as we approached our neighbor’s house. She was far too young to understand what was going on, but she definitely picked up on our emotions. We all began banging on their door hoping and praying that they would answer to help us.

My neighbor finally answered the door while still wearing her pajamas with her brunette hair in a bun and was in shock to

see us girls standing there soaking wet and scared. She and her husband rushed us inside and got us towels to dry off. She asked, "What happened? Is everything okay?" We then explained to her everything we know about what happened, which was not much. As we made our way more into their house, we heard sirens approaching outside. We looked through the windows of their front door to see that a fire truck and the police had arrived at my house right next door. At that moment I began to freak out thinking that our house was on fire. I felt helpless sitting there in my neighbor's house not knowing what was going on but all I could do was sit there and wait.

It had only been 45 minutes, but it had felt like hours when the firefighters left, and my parents finally arrived to pick us up to take us home. We were all so anxious to know what happened and why the fire truck had shown up. My dad and mom walked into my neighbor's house looking exhausted with their dark hair wet from the rain. My dad said to everyone, "Everything is okay. It was just a power outage it looks like and we are safe to return home now." I told him that I did not want to go home because I was still in a state of fear. My parents told me that I could sleep with them the rest of the night if it made me feel better, and I finally agreed.

On the way home we picked up the dogs from our other neighbor's garage. The dogs seemed just as scared as I was. They sat there snuggled up next to each other as the garage door slowly opened. When the dogs saw us, they got up and started jumping around and wagging their fluffy tails. I was happy to see them safe and to finally head home.

As we entered the house, I was still very shaken up, but a sense of relief came over me knowing that our home and family is safe. When we made it into the kitchen, we all embraced each other in a big group hug. My dad said to us, "I am happy that we are all safe and I am always here to protect you. I love guys and goodnight." I remember feeling very lucky that it was not anything serious and that it could have been a lot worse. After we all got settled back in, I crawled into bed with my parents and cuddled up right in between them. They each put one arm around me and wrapped me up in a fuzzy white blanket. It made me feel so safe to be with my parents and made it a lot easier to fall asleep knowing that they were both okay.

The next morning, I woke up to find that it was still cloudy

and dreadful looking outside. I walked outside with my dad to let the dogs out to find that there were pieces of tree bark everywhere. It was on the driveway, in the pool, on the top and bottom decks, and even on the roof of the house. We begin to get curious and start walking around to find where all this tree bark had come from. As we get closer to the back yard I look over and see that one of the huge trees in our backyard had been struck by lightning. I yelled, "Dad! Look at the tree right over there!" My dad looked at the stricken tree in absolute awe. The whole tree was charcoal black and was still hot to the touch.

While we stood beneath the tree, my dad noticed that there was a lengthy line of grass that seemed to be ripped out of the ground. He bent down to see what it was and realized that it was our outdoor electric dog fence installed underneath the ground. It had also been struck by the lightning. Right when he noticed he ran inside because he remembered that the wires from the dog fence led to the inside of our house. I followed him to our basement where all the wires met in the storage room to see that the box that was connected to the dog fence wires had exploded off the wall and the whole wall was charcoal black.

I went back upstairs to tell my mom and sisters about what had actually happened last night. They were all shocked but relieved to finally know what happened. My mom went outside to see the tree and exclaimed, "This is crazy! It was so close to our house and we didn't even know." She then told all of us that we should all go outside and start cleaning up all the tree bark that was covering our house.

After cleaning up the tree bark, we decided to have our neighbors who had helped us last night over to show them what happened to the tree and the wires and also to just hangout. When our neighbors arrived, we showed them the tree and all the burnt pieces of bark everywhere. They seemed surprised as we told them the whole story. It was a scary feeling for everyone to know how close the lightning strike was to our houses. Nevertheless, they were extremely glad to know that everything was okay.

This experience is something I will never forget. It is great to know that there were people there to help in a truly scary moment. Life can change in the blink of an eye so enjoy every moment you possibly can. It is one of those times in my life that made me appreciate what I have and not take anything I have for granted.

K. Rae Howland

Seasoned

At first it was the gourmet menu. Glorious live-edge tables and silk skirts. Beef carpaccio and glazed duck in cranberry sauce reduction. Mint gelato and dark chocolate tortes with orange peel. Every detail painted artful and precise- not a drip out of place. Sunny morning brunch on the patio with fresh fruit mimosas and piano in the background. Spring breeze and the whispers of lips on glass- of stainless sliding over ceramic. Hands and rags swiftly dunking into warm water- machines too harsh- checking for chips.

And then it was the cabinet. Smooth, dark mahogany with crisp newspaper between to keep off the dust- while the others shined. Clinking champagne- you can hear it from the dining room. Waiting for the next dish- waiting- sleeping off hard kitchen work- remembering the faces gleaming down in expectation- and never disappointing.

Then suddenly a new face. A new place. A place to shine again. It's hot tamales in corn wraps. Bright salsa and crisp chips. Enchiladas in mounds of cheese and loaded tacos kissed with tomato, arugula, and queso sauce. Dry hands lifting up from the machine that heats and sprays and washes. And they don't mind a few chips here and there- it's character they think. It's love.

To a paper box. No newspaper this time- a tiny army soldier riding along from the owner's son. Jostling down the road in an enclosed space. Singing to each other. Wondering what's next. Opening to a sigh of joy. A new place. A new face- very young. A new beginning.





Stacks of white on open shelves. The latest trend. A recycling bin in the corner- no plastic in sight. A monstera's leaves stretching its hands wide. And it's hearty espresso poured with vanilla bean. Hot cocoa with chilis and green matcha. Blueberry muffins, banana bread, and flaky strawberry Danish. Beams of light and restful voices and steaming milk.

It's closing down. It's mystery. A crack here and a scrape there. It's late nights with the lights off. It's separating. The mother with her toddler gripping her leg- wide-eyed and wondering. Dinosaur chicken nuggets and once-frozen broccoli florets. It's little fingers tapping and digging into squishy beans.

It's the single retiree with his face covered in stubble. And he doesn't mind the chips either- he's got a few of his own. Quick meals in the mess hall and holding out a hand for the latest slop. Knowing that the chili is just as good no matter the dish. And there's that recipe Jane would like and maybe she'd join him some night and admire the little buttercups on the edge.

It's the man and his wife who just bought their first home. And they just must. And it's a shame it's not a full set. But it's just like my grandmother's- remember? Turkey sandwiches and homemade spaghetti and tikka masala made with the bulk rice. Eating by candlelight and starting a life.

And it's hand-me-downs to many children. And it's broken pieces on the floor. And a beautiful life with beautiful breaks.

Alexandria Jenkins

First Day of Sophomore Year

The first day of school is always difficult no matter how old you are. The anxiety of either a new building, new teachers, or seeing old classmates never gets easier. On top of the anxiety, there is stress, such as having all your supplies in order, finding where your locker is, and making sure you're going to the right class. It's even worse when you are given dreadful news at sixteen years old on your first day of school.

It was the first day of Sophomore year, which also meant only three more years of dreading the time of graduation. A thousand thoughts went racing through my head; what should *I wear*?

What will my classes be like? Is there anyone of my classmates that hasn't changed since I last saw them? All of these questions were going back and forth all morning long in my head. I felt an overwhelming presence of nervousness wash over me like a tidal wave crashing into the beach.

The thought finally struck me like a lightning bolt that I am almost halfway done with my high school career. I didn't know what I was going to do. I knew my anxiety was going through the roof so I decided to take a deep breath, look up at the sky, and say thank you God for being there for me. I got in my car, alone, because this would be the first day of being able to drive myself to school. This made me feel more empowered and confident in myself for the first day. I found the perfect parking spot for the next three years of school. As I walked through those double doors I felt a gush of wind hit my face and just smiled that here is to a new year. As I walked to my locker I smelled the overpowering perfume from the freshman hall and I knew that I was no longer on the bottom of the totem pole, which strengthened my confidence that it would be a better school year than last year.

Suddenly, the bell rang 8:05 to head to class I was most worried about, English, which happened to have my favorite teachers. All of a sudden the bell rings again for my next class which happens to be my personal favorite Ag animal science. After talking about class rules and going over the syllabus all morning in each class I felt the hunger building up in my empty stomach.

Then the clock struck 11:19 and the halls flooded with hunger driven students running to the cafeteria, Mcdonalds, or to their

cars. Dreading the long line for food in the cafeteria I finally got my tray and joined my lovely friends. After about ten minutes of eating, the principal, Mr. Drew, who is tall, stern and looks like he is on the move, walks in looking across the cafeteria with a stern gaze. The room soon became calmer as students looked wondering what was going through his mind. As I went back to talking amongst us Mr. Drew soon walked up to our table.

Mr. Drew said to me “Allie please come with me to the office. There are things that must be discussed.”

I was very confused about this situation. I got up, pushed in my chair, and left with a puzzled mind. Gathering my thoughts, I walked down this long hall wondering what was waiting for me on the other side. The clear stain glass I looked through, as I walked into the office. I saw my mom waiting for me in the conference room. As I sat down to talk to her about why she is here I noticed that she has been crying. I asked what is wrong, she bust right into tears rolling down the side of her face. As she began to speak the words that came out would forever change my life.

Hearing the break in my mother’s voice when she said, “Allie, honey, I am so sorry.

My face started getting really red. I asked, “Mom, what is it? You’re scaring me. Is it Dad, Maddie, Melinda? What is going on?”

Mom looked very sad and said, “Honey, your Uncle Bill just passed away. Aunt Vicky just called us and since you were very close with him I wanted you to know as soon as possible. Honey are you okay?”

As I sat there staring into my mother’s face. I did not want to comprehend what she said because if I did it would become so real to me that I lost my uncle. I could feel my face getting hot and my anxiety rolling over my body in a matter of seconds. I snapped out of it and could finally talk.

Mom said scaredly, “Allie?”

With a puzzled look on my face I said, “Yes I’m okay, I’m just trying to process this for a second. I am going to talk to Mr. Drew to see if I can go home from the rest of the day since we are not doing much but going over the class rules and stuff like that.”

You could hear the relief in my mom’s voice when she said, “Okay, that is fine I will meet you at home then?”

In a sad tone, I said, “Yes, I will meet you at home.”

I gathered my phone, keys, and my thoughts and went to the front desk to see if Mr. Drew is available to speak. I found him in his office and I sat down and told him what was going on and asked if I could leave for the rest of the day. He told me that I could take the rest of the day off, so I went to my locker, gathered my book bag, keys, and walked out the door. I went home and just put my stuff in my room, hoping in the shower while the tears ran down my face.

Losing someone close to you is never easy, and it will never get easier. Especially when you get told on the first day of school. My uncle was one of the sweetest, kindest, and goofiest people, who always had a story to tell when it came to Christmas and Thanksgiving. Every Christmas, my uncle Bill would put one hundred dollars in a white envelope to hand out to us, his great nieces. Even though we were only his great nieces, he loved and always took care of us like we were his own kids. A quote that helped me through this difficult time was, “When we lose someone we love we must learn not to live without them, but to live with the love they left behind.” Those words have been so meaningful to me in trying to process his death. In memory of my uncle, I got a tattoo of a bird house he built for me on my shoulder blade with cardinals on it, which was his favorite team. It reminds me that my uncle will always be with me no matter what I do, where I go, and that I am always safe.

Kayla Kibbons

Untitled

One Sunday like any other, my fiancé Cody and I had laid down for our afternoon nap. It was a mid-summer afternoon around 3 O'clock. Cody's charming hazel eyes began to get heavy as he covers his slender body with a blanket. The air conditioner placed in the window near the bed had the room a little too cold. Dressed in short black shorts and a blue spaghetti strap tank top, I cuddled up with my two pit bulls to keep warm. Aryan, white with brindle spots laid next to me and lets me wrap my arms around her. Grace my black and white puppy gets a little jealous and lays almost on top of us. Cody had fallen asleep first. As we all enjoyed our afternoon nap none of us could have ever imagined what would come next.

As I woke, I pulled my short unbrushed brown hair into a bun and made my way across my living room floor to my kitchen. I watched Grace and Aryan's tails wag as they followed Cody out of the bedroom. I asked the dogs if they would like to go out, as their ears perked, and they became anxious I knew they did.

"Can you take the dogs out?" I asked Cody.

He reluctantly agreed and responded by saying, "Yes, but will you make me some food?"

Cody takes Aryan out and then Grace as I pull food from the refrigerator and head over to the microwave. When Grace returned inside she started to whine. I dismissed the whining at first thinking she just wanted food. Until I noticed a spot of pee on the floor.

"That's strange. Babe. Grace peed on the floor will you take her out again? She's whining." I asked. So he does. He arrives back inside moments later with a look of concern.

"Babe something is wrong with Grace. She just shit on herself and she can barley stand up. Do you think she got into something? Call the Vet. What did you clean the house with earlier?" he asked without pausing for a breath.

I grabbed my phone and dialed our usual veterinarian office. It was Sunday and they were closed. As I listen to the recording, I grabbed a marker and scribbled down a number. "If you have an emergency dial 6183461843." I hung up the phone and dialed the number I was just given.

"Collinsville Animal Emergency Center," said the woman answering the phone.

“Hi. There is something wrong with my dog, Grace. She’s a pit bull puppy only 6 months old. She just started pooping and peeing on herself and she can’t stand up,” I said trying not to panic.

The woman ordered me to bring her in immediately. While I was on the phone, Cody decided to wash Grace off in the bathtub thinking some chemicals may have soaked into her skin through her fur.

“Cody come on let’s go, get her in the car,” I said urgently.

I petted Aryan goodbye and told her to be a good girl while we were gone. The three of us head out of the apartment down the stairs to my car. I had Grace wrapped in a towel because her black and white fur was soaking wet.

Our trip to the Animal Hospital had just begun. Cody speeds through traffic, barely stopping at stop lights as Grace clings to life wrapped in my arms. It’s been no longer than 15 minutes since her symptoms had started and rapidly progressed. She could barely keep her head up; her tongue had slipped out of her mouth and she seemed to want to slip out of consciousness. The only thing keeping her awake was her slightly responding to our cries and pleas.

“Come-on Grace Baby. Stay awake honey, Grace! Gracie, hold on baby. We are almost there,” Cody and I both repeated continuously as we drove 90 mph with our hazards on down highway 255.

The truth was we still didn’t know what was wrong with her or if she would make it. We considered every possible thing we could think of on the way to the Animal Hospital. Did she get cleaning chemicals on her skin or possibly in her mouth? My E- cigarette had been leaking. Did she get my vape juice in her mouth and have nicotine poisoning? Our apartment was above a bar did she pick something up in the parking lot? Drugs possibly? Anti-freeze? Did she ingest a moth ball?

We arrived at Collinsville Animal Hospital after what seemed like the longest ride of my life. In reality, it only took 20 minutes to get there. Grace had not improved but was not any worse. She was still barely conscience and had relieved a small amount of bowels on herself and me as well. As we pulled in the parking lot, I called the Animal Emergency Center to let them know we had arrived. We ran up to the entrance and rang the door bell. A lady with curly blonde hair, wearing pawprint scrubs came to the door

almost immediately and took Grace's almost lifeless body out of my arms and into the Animal Hospital.

"Thank god we made it," I said to Cody. "I'm so scared, I love her so much."

Cody replied, "I love her too, babe. We got her here. We've done everything we can do for her. All we can do now is pray."

"I know." I tried to suppress my tears and stay strong.

We had been made to wait out in the parking lot and were not allowed inside. After a few minutes the same curly haired lady came outside with a clipboard in her hands to ask a few questions. She began by asking, "What is the pet's name?"

I replied, "Grace."

"How old is she?"

"She is six months old. We have had her since she was five weeks," I told her.

"When did her symptoms start and what happened?" she wanted to know next.

"Her symptoms started about 40 minutes ago. We noticed something was wrong and we brought her straight here." I told her every scenario I could possibly think of that might have happened. She informed Cody and me they would run a tox screen to see if anything was in her system.

"The vet will call you in a few minutes," she said before she returned into the office and left us waiting out in the parking lot once again.

The phone began to ring. It was the veterinarian.

I answered and said, "Hello."

"Hello, Kayla? This is Veterinarian Smith. Grace is in critical condition. She appears to be in shock, her body temperature is lower than normal, and her gums are white. We have her on an IV and are getting some fluids back in her. Even though she has not been vomiting we will be giving her some medicine to counteract any sickness or nausea. You will have to leave her here over night and she may have to stay with us up to three days. We have put together an estimate for you. You will have to pay the minimum today before we continue with her treatment."

"Okay, how much is it?" I asked.

"It will be \$1030 dollars but up to \$3000. The \$1030 is due today" she said to me.

She heard Cody in the background say, "We only have 800 dollars".

“Let me see if I can adjust the estimate and get it down a little for you.” After a few moments, she said, “Okay I got it down to \$780 dollars.”

Even though it was the last of our money, we paid the price. We just wanted our baby better. The vet told us to go home for the night and to call back at 9pm for an update. We got in the car and began to drive home. Cody drove the speed limit as I sat in the passenger seat overwhelmed with emotions. The car was mostly silent as we drove home without our puppy.

We arrived home and I began to search the parking lot in the area Cody walked the dogs earlier that day. I looked down and to my surprise I see a capsule that looked like it had been wet. It was partially dissolved. Did Grace get this in her mouth and spit it back out? It was Heroin! That’s when I realized my puppy just overdosed on drugs someone threw out the window. I was shocked and angry. I took my finding to the dumpster and disposed of it. I walked upstairs and let Cody know what I had found.

“Call the Vet and let them know,” he said. He was in disbelief. So was I. I reached and picked up my pink iPhone and dialed the same number I dialed earlier that day.

The receptionist answered, “Hello.”

“Hi, I brought Grace in today. When I got home, I found a capsule I believe it is heroin. I live above a bar, and it was in the parking lot. I think she might have come in contact with it,” I said almost certain.

“No, it’s not that. She wouldn’t be awake if it was an overdose,” said the receptionist.

“Okay, I just wanted to let you know,” I said and ended the phone call.

A few more hours passed as we waited to call and check on Grace’s condition. Nine p.m. arrived and I placed the call to the animal hospital.

“Hi, my name is Kayla. I brought my dog Grace in earlier today. She was in critical condition. I was supposed to call and get an update from you tonight.”

“Yes Grace. She has responded to her treatment very well. She is awake now and doing a lot better. She has her appetite. She is up moving around. She is still a little weak. We are going to keep her over night for observations. You will be able to pick her up at six in the morning.”

“Thank god! Oh my god. Thank you so much,” I said as tears of joy flood my brown eyes. Cody smiled and wrapped his arms around me and gave me the biggest hug ever. Grace made it through the night, and we picked her up the next morning.

It has been six months since the day Grace got sick. We never got an official answer on what made Grace so sick that day. They did not do a tox screen at the Animal Hospital. When they revised the estimate, it was taken out. I racked my brain over and over to think of anything that might have caused her sickness to happen. Despite what the receptionist said, only one thing makes sense. No matter what the cause, the important thing is she is alive and with us today. Grace is growing up to be a beautiful young girl. She is full of life and energy. I love Grace’s personality and spirit. I am truly grateful to have my puppy in my life. After having a traumatic experience like that I always take a step back and reevaluate myself and my life. A lot of the times we become so used to the daily swing of things we forget to appreciate and cherish those closest to us.

Alexis Martinez

Two Little Letters

Two little letters, sometimes that's the small difference that children need to see another child as someone different than them. At an elementary school in St. Louis, Missouri I witnessed firsthand how two little letters can separate people. The two letters in our cases were E and Z: Courtney Martin and Alexis Martinez. Courtney Martin was petite, blonde, and pretty much the opposite of me. I was tall, had dark hair, and big bushy eyebrows.

My teacher, Mrs. Phelps, taught our 3rd grade class. She had long, bleached hair. She always wore heels to school and looked very put together. I was happy to have gotten her class whenever I saw it on the roster that year. She had been talking about our new electronic chalk board we were going to receive for our classroom for weeks, but today was the day we were going to do our first activity with it. The activity she planned was just one to introduce us to our new technology; she was going to search each of our full names on google and just show us the photos that came up on google images. I'm not really sure what that has to do with a 3rd grade curriculum; but at the time it seemed fun.

We all sat in our seating chart she had assigned us earlier in the year. She went name by name and showed what came up on google images. Most were just characters in movies with similar names, just random stuff. When she got to my name she typed in "Alexis Nada Martinez" which is my full birth name, Nada coming from a late relative. It came up with all types of images showing Hispanic people, their tradition, and just all-around way different than the other students. I was the only student with a name that came from a Hispanic descent.

Courtney Martin immediately busted out laughing: "You're a beaner?"

Jokes at my expense started flying, "Are you even legal?" "No wonder you look like Dora." I was petrified because up until this moment these kids had never even noticed me. I was so shy, so timid. All I was able to muster up was the stupidest thing I've said to date, "I don't even like beans."

Even the teacher started laughing at this point. "You don't have to like beans to be a wetback," said Tanner Blake. Tanner Blake was a boy that I had had a crush on since the day I started

kindergarten at the school. His name was a running joke in my family because of how much I would talk about him. He had bright blonde hair, blue eyes, and was so dreamy to me at the time. I immediately busted into tears. This moment was probably such a character builder. The boy I had imagined marrying in my free time in class was even joining in. The teacher finally realized that this was upsetting and tried to quiet the class down. Everyone was staring at me, as if I was the one that had done something.

“Do you want to go to the bathroom, Alexis?” the teacher asked after seeing my tears. I just ran to the bathroom and called my mom. I told her what had happened, and she came up to the school with a blazing anger.

I sat in the principal’s office waiting on her, feeling regret at even calling her. I knew it was not going to make the situation any better. My mom approached the principal asking, “Well are there going to be consequences for these students?”

The principal explained to her that they try to not punish kids at their first offense with something like this. Instead, they sat us all down and try to resolve the conflict. My mom wasn’t very happy with that outcome, but she could tell I didn’t want it to be any bigger deal than it already had become.

Courtney and her mom Cindy were brought in by the school counselor. After them came Tanner and his mom, Karla. They resembled my teacher, with their bleached hair and low-cut shirts. Their moms knew each other; they were both the ones who usually ran the holiday parties for the school, both super nice ladies. They also knew the principal personally from volunteering. My mom on the other hand did not know them or the principal personally, as she worked all the time and didn’t have time to come volunteer at the school.

“Well, I think sometimes kids will just be kids and they have to learn from these things,” said Cindy. The principal nodded and so did Karla. Of course, that’s how they felt. Racism wasn’t a subject they even seemed comfortable discussing.

Everyone in the room agreed, besides my mom. “I still want an actual apology and I’m not sure how they’re learning with no consequences,” she said, not looking as impressed as the rest of the adults in the room. I tugged at the arm of her shirt and gave her a look to please stop embarrassing me. That’s how I saw it at the time anyway. We left the office with no apology and with that

it was resolved.

That day I went home and asked my mom to change my name to something “normal.” This was the beginning of a long saga of me trying to fit a westernized beauty standard that I just wasn’t made for. I asked to dye my hair blonde, even though my mom’s answer was always no. This teasing did have a long-term effect on me that I didn’t notice until I started to get older. I hope that my children never have to try to fit in somewhere where they don’t belong.

The treatment of me as a joke or as some kind of different species than them lingered for years after that day. I was nicknamed “Pueblo.” Apparently, Courtney had gone on a vacation with her family to a city in Colorado name that where everyone ‘looked like me’. At the time I even sometimes laughed with them, in hopes maybe the teasing could lead to friendship. On TV I saw shows like “That 70’s Show” where a character “FEZ” being foreign or Hispanic looking was often the bud of the joke, so I thought this was no different. This was so different. I was a growing girl that was getting her mind warped into thinking my heritage was a joke, funny, or even something to be ashamed of.

Now I can see that it wasn’t necessarily the children’s fault, as much as it is their family and how they were raised up. I learned that being Hispanic is nothing to be ashamed of, and that the things I was teased for are beautiful. Hispanic culture is beautiful; I am beautiful. It took a long time to get to a point where I wasn’t angry at the children who treated me this way; I just hope they don’t bring their children up that way. I think everyone is capable of change and I hope they all have become educated on diversity and different cultures. I hope that maybe this generation can teach their kids better than past generations.

Yamamoto Yasuhiro

First Basketball Game

I started playing basketball in 7th grade. I fell in love with the game from the moment my dad and I played together. My first game at Civic Memorial High School in Bethalto, Illinois will never be forgotten. On game night, the gym filled up with people from all around Bethalto. I knew I was going to be nervous for my first high school game. Sadly, my emotions took control throughout the whole match. Lucky enough I took control of my feelings, with the help of my friend Noah and this became one of the most important games to me.

My friend Noah was an enormous person even in childhood. He weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, was seven feet tall, a well-trained athletic individual, with a buzz cut like a military member. We had been playing basketball against each other every day since sixth grade at the local park, right down the road from Civic Memorial, called Kutter Park. Our goal was to both play with one another on the same team and win.

On game day it snowed continuously, and by the time school was out, it was above one foot high. Noah and I were scared our game would get cancelled due to the snow. Fortunately for us, our school had stated that the game would not be affected. By the time we got back, the parking lot was already packed with cars. It seemed similar to a fully booked NBA game. Cars went from one end of the parking lot to the other and even went far down the road on both sides.

When we entered the gym we could sense the excitement in the air. As we made our way down to the locker room downstairs, the smell of popcorn and hot dogs, the little elementary kids running around playing tag, and the noise from the crowd pumped up our adrenaline. As we walked down the stairs past the elevator that was next to our locker room, Noah asked me if I was nervous. *Well obviously I have never been this nervous before*, I thought to myself.

“Of course not. Are you?” I said, as my legs started to shake.

“You know I’m not nervous,” Noah replied.

After we put on our game gear our coach announced the starting five for the game. Never would I ever have imagined him calling out my name along with Noah.

“This couldn’t be a better opportunity for us to prove ourselves,” I told Noah.

He couldn’t hide the smirk on his face as he replied, “Yes let’s do this!”

Moments later, it was time to head out onto the court. We ran out in two separate lines, one running straight ahead to the student section, which was located in front of the locker room. The other would do the same but instead of running straight, this line runs to the left. The two lines would meet at the half, following up with high fives. Our team would start by doing lay-ups, with the right side performing the lay-up while the left would rebound the ball and pass it back to the right line. After five minutes of doing lay-ups, it was finally game time.

As I was waiting for the commentator to announce my name through the speaker I thought to myself, *I got this, pretend like this is just another scrimmage. Shoot the ball when I’m open.* Finally, the commentator announced my name, “Coming in at number 12 Freshman Yamamoto Yasuhiro.” I was thrilled to hear my name being called knowing that all those long nights of practice in my backyard had finally paid off. As the game started, with our team winning the jump ball, I quickly ran to the corner of the court.

“Noah here!” I shouted.

The ball quickly came to me and I realized there was not a defender in front of me and it was a perfect opportunity to shoot a three to start the game. I pulled the trigger rapidly, jumping as high as I could. When the ball was in the air making its way to the rim I felt it would surely go in the hoop. Sadly, the ball did not even hit the rim--it was an airball. I felt like a knife had just fallen on my foot as I went back on defense. Everything went downhill from there

“You good, Yama? do not let that airball get to you ok?” Noah yelled.

“Okay,” I muttered.

But then I was subbed out. I thought I might not get to play again. On the bench I could not take my eyes off the clock. I just hoped I would get another chance to prove to everyone what I was capable of, I told myself. Finally after Noah had gotten his fifth foul of the game he was forced to come out. It was the fourth quarter with 20 seconds left to go, so my coach put me back into the game. By now we were down by two points with no more

timeouts left. Our coach had planned a play for me to shoot a three pointer. As we proceeded with the play, I ended up with the ball at the same corner where I had missed in the beginning. My mind was blank at this point. I bent my knees as I went up, I raised the ball slightly above my forehead, and at the climax of my jump I flicked my wrist. The shot felt amazing— it was a swish. I had just won the game for us with the three-pointer.

This was the best moment of my life. Noah and I had just played our first game together. There would be many more games played with Noah but none as great as this one. Noah moved on to playing football at Illinois State University, and I am continuing my education at Lewis and Clark Community College. When I do play basketball I still think about that game and how Noah and I brought about victory for Civic Memorial High School.

Contributors

CAROLINE BRIDGES is a student at L&C.

KAYLA HOWLAND graduated from L&C in 2015 and is currently the Content Creator and Staff Writer for Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau. She enjoys reading and writing science fiction, fantasy, dystopian, and supernatural stories and was inspired by the short, punchy sentence structure often used by author Philip K. Dick for her poem “Seasoned.” In her spare time, Kayla consumes a broad variety of media and also pursues 2D and 3D art, graphic design, and photography.

ALEXANDRIA JENKINS, who goes by Allie, is 22 years old and has just moved to Kane, Illinois, from Carlinville. She has been going to Lewis and Clark for two and a half years and will be earning her Associates Degree in medical assisting. She stated, “My future goal is to be a registered nurse working with either geriatric or pediatric on top of working with wound care program. I have three dogs and honestly want more! I currently work as a CNA I love my job. My residents make me feel at home and at peace. They have brightened my day when I’m having an off day.”

KAYLA KIBBONS is in her first year of an Associates Degree program studying Web Design and Development at L&C. She stated, “I had English 131 last semester and that was when I decided to submit one of my essays to the Peppermint Rooster with the hope that I would earn extra credit in class. To my surprise it was picked to be a part of this Spring Issue. I am glad to have the chance to share my story and hope it brings awareness to the fact that the usage of illegal drugs has effects on more than just the user. It affects innocent puppies, children, friends, family and the community every day. One way to help this change is to bring awareness.”

ALEXIS MARTINEZ is a student at L&C.

KATHRYN SMITH is a creative student at Lewis and Clark Community College. She likes to focus on her studies as a future graphic and web designer. Kathryn plans on putting herself out there with her creativity and talents to show the world what she is capable of.

YAMAMOTO YASUHIRO is a student at L&C.

**LEWIS AND CLARK
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A stylized icon of a classical building with four columns is positioned inside the zero of the number 50. The icon is composed of a grid of small squares, with the columns represented by vertical bars.