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Editor: Tricia Bowen

Fine Print Editorial Group:
Sarah Deasey, Julie Palmer, Debbie
Soccio, Lynne Matheson, Jane
Westworth, Sally Hutchison

Subscription, advertising and editorial
inquiries:

VALBEC
PO Box 861
Springvale South, 3172
Telephone: (03) 9546 6892
Email: info@valbec.org.au

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Adult Education in
the Community

Editorial

Welcome to the student writing edition of *Fine Print* for 2009.

Following the success of our student writing edition last year, the editorial committee decided to continue with the tradition. This year our theme was *MEMORY*. We asked students to describe special memories of people, places or events, in fact any memory that had left a marked and lasting impression.

Once again we received a large number of submissions, which the editorial committee thoroughly enjoyed reading. Space limitations meant that we simply couldn't publish them all but we have printed a wide selection of writing, which best fitted the guidelines and demonstrated a range of learning contexts and student backgrounds.

While we had not advertised for contributions from interstate, much of the writing we received from outside Victoria was so impressive that it was hard not to include some writing from around Australia. The published pieces certainly reflect the diversity of students across the country and their wealth of life experience.

Once again we also welcomed contributions from teachers. We were eager for them to offer their insights as to how they teach writing and to describe the means by which they inspire and motivate their students.

We have assembled the selected writing into four distinct sections. The first section entitled, *Remember When*,

contains a range of stories that describe a particular event or time, special moments or milestones in each writer's life. The second section, *I'll Never Forget*, focuses on stories of the people, the places or the things that have created lasting impressions. Here we find tales of much-loved parents, treasured possessions and the family home. Our third group of stories, *Down Memory Lane*, presents a collection of life stories, writing that describes the many moments and memories, gathered over a lifetime. The final section, *Every Picture Tells a Story*, showcases an inspiring body of work created by a small group of young students, who used photography in order to recall vivid memories of other times and others places.

Many thanks to all the students who willingly shared their memories, and in so doing, brought this edition of *Fine Print* to life. Thanks also go to the many teachers who work tirelessly teaching, encouraging and inspiring their students to tell their stories. As the poet Muriel Rukeyser once commented, '*the world is made of stories, not of atoms.*' This edition is testimony to this sentiment. It contains a wealth of inspiring stories, from the tender recall of the birth of a child, to the terrifying memory of escaping war, to the cherished recollections of school friends and school days.

We hope you enjoy them all.

Tricia Bowen

The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) aims to lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues of importance to practitioners and facilitating positive change. This is achieved through networking, professional support, the sharing of information and the promotion of best practice.

Remember When

A collection of stories describing those special times, the pivotal moments which shape our lives forever. Students share memories of achievements and struggles, laughter and tears, while teachers shed light on their classroom practice.



The Happiest Moment of my Life

By Amy Wu

I am delighted to recall the moment when I gave birth to my daughter. That is the summer of 1992. With a loud and clear cry, my daughter was born.

“Congratulations! You’ve got a really beautiful girl,” the doctor said.

When I took my baby from the nurse, I felt nervous and excited. I even didn’t know how to hold her in my arms. She was so small because her weight was just 2.75kg. I gazed at her without blinking. I was pleasantly surprised to find that she looked completely identical to her Dad. She actually gave me a flicker of a smile when I kissed her cheek. My joyful feeling really was beyond description at that moment. What a cute baby!

Now, my daughter is 16 years old. I will never forget this moment in my life.

Amy Wu is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

Making Popcorn

By Olga

When I was a young girl, aged about eight years old, my mother was teaching me how to cook.

One cold winter’s night my father asked me to make popcorn. I pulled out a big pot from the cabin and put it on the stove. Then, I added a little bit of oil and waited for one minute till it was hot. I put one glass of corn into the pot and waited to see what would happen. My father told me to shake the pot, if I didn’t want to burn the corn.

After a short time my corn started popping. I heard them but I didn’t see them. My father advised me that while I was cooking I should leave the lid on the side. I listened to him. I put the lid on the side and my corn became popcorn and they popped everywhere. I didn’t move my pot but I had popcorn on the stove, behind the stove, on the floor,

and my family laughed so loud that I didn’t know what to do. My pot was empty, popcorn everywhere, just not in the pot. I cried. My father told me it was just a joke and not to take things so seriously. He made another pot of popcorn and I laughed. I was happy because my father protected me.

Even today when I make popcorn for my children, I laugh every time and pass the memory on to my children. They said it must have been funny. Maybe it was but I didn’t laugh at the time. Today I do.

Olga is a student at Macarthur Community College in NSW.

Yabbying

By Vu Quoc

The cold water flowed between our feet. We made our way to the middle of the river, tying the bait to the string and the string to the stick, feeling the water parting and the mud squishing under us, but we couldn’t see through the water. We had to be careful with each step we took.

My friend threw the bait on one side and I threw it on the other, so we could cover a huge area. The girls splashed water at me and I tried to splash them back while waiting patiently for the yabbies to bite. One of my friends called out that they had taken the bait, so we all started to pull the yabbies out of the dam. They were clinging to the pieces of meat tied to the strings.

My friend got nipped by a yabby when she tried to pull it out and we all laughed at her. One of the boys even fell into the water laughing. Later on we all got bitten at least once or twice, but between us we managed to capture a lot more than we expected.

We brought the yabbies back to our place to wash them, and built a fire with dry wood to cook them. They tasted pretty muddy, but we were so hungry from all the hard work and cold water that we thought they were delicious.

Vu Quoc is an ALBE student at NMIT in Preston.

Traveling Around Australia

By Kathleen Toohey

I had just turned twenty. It took me a while to make up my mind, but my boyfriend John and I decided to travel around Australia together. So in July we began our journey. The morning was cold. Bryan, my six-month-old baby, was in the car seat between us.

We kept on driving until we got to Mildura to find warmer weather. After staying the night we then drove on to Adelaide. We stayed a couple of days on the way to Perth before crossing the Nullabor Plain.

We saw lots of dead kangaroos on the ground. However, we kept on going. It was a long way between townships. We stocked up to make sure that we had enough food and water to get us there.

Then on hearing a deafening clunk when hitting a rock we got out of the car to see oil seeping out from the oil sump. We could not fix this problem in the middle of nowhere.

It was then we found miracles do happen. A passerby stopped to help us. He was from the same town that John had come from in Victoria.

It was a relief to get to Perth to see John's friends. We relaxed and went to see the big army ship where he worked and enjoyed the tourist highlights. That was the start of my trip around Australia. I will never forget the feeling of being as free as a bird and the romance of watching the stars at night.

Kathleen Toohey is a student at The Avenue Neighbourhood House in Blackburn South.

A Teacher's Thoughts on Teaching Writing

By Jenny Chalmers

Writing does not just happen—we need to want to say something, independently from our soul, before we can commit to sharing our news with everyone.

I tutor a small group of adult women at a Neighbourhood House, who bring to class many and varied experiences. Because their needs are similar we all work together in a friendly and supportive way to improve our literacy skills.

Mostly, they have all experienced disappointment in their learning journeys and need to feel that they are totally supported in their quest for success. Importantly, there is a need for a basic

foundation that they can build upon, rely on, and experiment with, to find a platform from which they can ultimately fly.

As spelling is a frequent frustration for the majority of my students, we spend time developing phonic and memory skills, and establishing an awareness of syllables. I encourage the use of dictionaries, spellers and individual index books so students feel confident at being able to access the correct spelling at all times. It was many years ago in the 1970's, when I became a disciple of Elsie Smelt whose book, *How to Speak, Spell and Read*, outlines "the orderly relationship between sound and letters in words". For me, this has proved to be an exceptionally wonderful teaching theory.

Writing is encouraged through short regular writing exercises based on personal and familiar topics. To support and motivate the students in their writing activities, short well-written stories or extracts are read and explored for their inspirational qualities. Looking for descriptive words and creative ways of expressing views gives us a way of developing a "scaffold" to build up our writing techniques.

We all learn together, support and encourage each other and although we only meet once a week, the enthusiasm is carried with the students from lesson to lesson. For many it is the first time reflections, frustrations and anxieties have been unlocked and I see the positive outcomes and contentment that comes with the ability to confidently express these events themselves.

I would have to be one of the luckiest tutors to be able to work with such a trusting, conscientious and optimistic group of learners, who have all acknowledged and faced their fears to gain the confidence to eagerly pursue the fascinating world of literature.

Jenny Chalmers is a literacy tutor at The Avenue Neighbourhood House in Blackburn South.

School Days—A Memoir—The Jam

By Rosina Rossi-Mel

My friend Lucia and I lived near each other. At that time girls had to leave school at about ten years old and learn a trade. We learnt sewing and dressmaking. In the mornings at around eight-thirty we used to meet outside and go to the convent school run by the nuns.

When we arrived there the first thing we did was go to the little church inside the convent and pray. We did this at least four times a day without a miss. Then we all started to work, learning how to embroider, sew and cut patterns.

The problem was that Lucia was a very active and mischievous girl. At lunchtime she would say to me, “Rosina, let’s go upstairs and pinch some jam.”

I remember the nuns used to store their preserved jam under the stairs on the second storey. We would creep upstairs, giggling and talking in very low voices. Then we would open a jar of jam and using our fingers, eat as much as we could. It was so sweet and delicious.

One particular day we did the usual thing but this time we saw Sister Maria walk past. She didn’t look at all like Sister, who was always very dignified and immaculate in her appearance. She was without any clothes, with sparse hair, and looked a big wobbly, elderly lady.

That day, the beautiful sixty year old Sister Maria looked so ugly that we immediately thought she was a ghost! We ran so fast down the stairs and never returned to eat jam any more.

Rosina Rossi-Mel is an ALBE student at NMIT in Preston.

Let’s Visit Her

By Zarife Yalcin

When I went into Grade Four, our teacher left. She was transferred to another school.

All my friends and I loved her. She loved kids and she was knowledgeable about her job. She was a very intelligent person. We were very sad about her transfer.

A new teacher arrived. She didn’t like kids and I think she didn’t like her job. We were afraid of her. If a student didn’t know something, she became very angry and beat us.

One day, my friend and I decided to visit our old teacher at her new school. Her new school was far from our school. My friend said she knew which school it was. In my country, school had two shifts, one in the morning and a second one in the afternoon. We had a morning class so when our lesson was finished, my friend and I set off. We didn’t have any money for a bus or a taxi. We just walked.

When we arrived our old teacher was in the classroom. Miss Esmā Seref was concerned. She asked if our families knew about our visit. We said “No”. She called our school and they informed our families. Our families were worried about us. When we hadn’t arrived home they asked at our school. They began to panic.

After that our teacher sent us home by taxi. We were very scared but happy that we had seen our lovely teacher. I will never forget that adventure.

Zarife Yalcin is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

The Struggle

By Muna Arnaoot

It is exciting to have a baby. The difficulty is how you will deal with this baby especially when you are alone and there is no one who can help you. I had my first child after one year of marriage. I was very happy but, at the same time, I was very anxious. I was alone in a new life and a new country, and my husband was very busy with his work. So, I had to give the baby most of my time.

Unfortunately, he had colic when he was born. In this situation, the baby cries most of the time and doesn’t stop until he gets tired and falls asleep. I could not give him any medication for he was very little and I was very worried about him. All I did was give him a warm bath to help him relax and sleep. I would finish my housework and have a bath before he woke up and started his crying.

I was depressed for I was lonely and didn’t have any help. In addition, I had no experience in how to take care of my new baby and myself. I got sick and had a high fever because I hadn’t had enough rest since the delivery. It was the worst time in my life and when I remember it, I get upset. But I learnt a good lesson from this experience. I learnt to be strong and organised to face the difficulties of life, independently and confidently.

Muna Arnaoot is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

A Day I Will Never Forget

By Zeynep Buday

In 1987, my son was four years old. We lived in Coburg. My father-in-law’s house was across the street. One day my mother-in-law said that she was giving a huge dinner party at her house. If too many people came, the women would stay at my house.

When I came from work, I cleaned the house and waited for all the guests to arrive. At that time, some kids and my son Kerim were waiting on the side of the road. A lady didn’t look when she was trying to reverse her car. She crushed my son’s leg.

At that time, I was outside too. Kerim held his leg and walked towards me. He said his leg hurt. I called my father-in-law by shouting and crying. I was afraid. We took him to hospital straight away. My husband, who was on afternoon shift, was notified and reached the hospital quickly.

Kerim had an operation straight away. The doctor said that Kerim's leg might be amputated if it was really damaged. Kerim was in theatre for eight hours. My husband disappeared with his father. He went to the park because he was so upset that the doctor might cut off our son's leg.

When he came out of the operation all had gone well. We thanked God that everything was alright. He had three operations to fix his leg. He stayed in hospital for a month. We were happy that nothing worse happened to him.

Zeynep Buday is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

What a Crash

By Zehra Akgunes

It was a hot summer's day so we decided to go to my uncle's house in Dandenong. My parents went inside and my sister Bedia and I went to the backyard to play basketball with my cousins. We got sick of playing basketball so we decided to use the bikes.

My cousin Sefa got his bike and I got my other cousin's bike, which was wrecked. My sister and my younger cousin went off to take pictures of the beautiful houses nearby. Sefa and I went up the hill to have a race on the bikes.

My cousin counted to three and we raced down the hill. My cousin's bike was pretty good and my bike was very bad. He flew down the hill. I was pedalling so fast that my bike lost control. I was meant to press the back brake but instead I pressed the front brake. The back of my bike went up. I flew off my bike and landed in front of the house. I hit my head and knee on the concrete. It was very painful. I thought I was going to die!

My sister was far away. She came closer and realized that I had fallen off the bike. My cousin, who had won the race, saw me and felt sorry for me. They picked me up from the floor and took me home. This was the worst accident I've ever had!

Zehra Akgunes is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

My First Job

By Puangpet O'Meara

Since I was young, I always wanted to be a teacher, teaching the under privileged children in the remote areas of Thailand. I chose to study in the Faculty of Education but when I finished my degree I couldn't keep my dream. I had to look for a job so I could earn more money to support my family.

Twenty years ago, a chance to get an office job was one out of ten. I had been looking for a job for more than a month but there was no phone call. One day my friend asked me if I was interested in applying for a job as a junior secretary in the company where she worked. The next day I put my application in and had an interview. I was told I had a job and must start the next day. I was so happy that finally I had my first job.

When I arrived home, I received a phone call from one of the biggest shipping companies offering me a job with a very attractive salary. This meant I would have a very good future. Because I had just accepted the job as a junior secretary and I was so worried about my friend's feelings, I refused the offer. I remembered that the person who rang me said I was the first person who refused the company's offer!

Later that day, I told my friend the story. She said that I should accept the offer of the shipping company rather than worry about her feelings. But it was too late.

Seven months as a junior secretary, things went well until my colleagues and I asked for a pay rise. But instead of a pay rise we were all fired. I had to start looking for a job again. That was my first job experience twenty years ago.

Puangpet O'Meara is a student at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, Castlemaine campus.

Is Family Important in Your Life?

By Pooja

After reading and hearing about the recent incidents of the bushfire, earthquake and other disasters, I realized my family is more important in my life than other things.

I still remember the earthquake, which happened in my home country India, in 2001. At that time my sister and I were having our breakfast and my mom was doing housework. My father was also at his work.

It happened only for a few minutes, like five-six minutes, but was very scary. We just did not understand what was happening and why all the things were shaking. But immediately my mom pulled our hands and asked us to run out of our home. We just left everything in our home and called my father to check whether he was alright or not. Luckily, everything was good.

The next day, we read about that earthquake. We watched the news and saw the photos. We were really scared because we did not know how terrible the situation had been. It was so severe that many people lost their lives, houses, money, their family, and many people were missing too. The main area of the earthquake was KUTCH. That city was totally destroyed and thousands of people died.

That time I realized how valuable my family is to me as they have always stayed with me in any situation. There is no use of material things like money and luxury; they may be destroyed at any time. But if we have our family we can start a new life.

Sometimes it happens that we do not often value our family. We understand its value only after going through a dangerous time. I also realized my parents' importance after coming to Australia. I respect them more and just love them even more. They say, "Absence makes the heart fonder." It is very true in my experience indeed.

Pooja is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

Teacher's Reflection

By Amy Lai-Chow

"I don't know how to write."

"I don't have anything to write."

"I have never written an essay or a story in English before."

It is frustrating when a teacher is confronted with such attitudes from students in a writing class. However, this kind of mentality is usually found among students only at the beginning of the writing program. Once students are being instilled with the passion to write, there is a breakthrough in their confidence and interest in writing.

I think the foundation stone for students to find the passion for writing is the rapport between the teacher and the students, and, more importantly, among students in the class. When there is trust and genuine friendship in the classroom, students begin to open up. They then acquire the courage to write

and share the passion they have felt. Gradually, their inner world unfolds.

"Write it out first. Never mind any grammar mistakes."

This is usually how I encourage my students to take their first step in writing. I understand that being adult learners, and coming from some learning contexts in which mistakes are prohibited, our students need a "rebirth"—a re-orientation of perspectives and learning strategies. I help them understand that errors are signs of learning and thinking; that mistakes are "mothers of success".

To facilitate peer support in writing, I create opportunities for the student-writers to share and read aloud their essays and stories in class. There are many memorable moments in these sharing/reading aloud sessions. Often there is laughter; sometimes there are even tears. The ESL classroom must be filled with passion.

The climax of my writing program comes when I help students to edit and publish their essays and stories into in-house printed class magazines towards the end of every course. It's a busy time; it's also a harvest time. When the class magazines are published, students are amazed that they can be writers. Both teacher-editor and student-writers feel proud of the hard work they have put into the publication. At the farewell party, each student-writer is presented with a magazine as a souvenir. A magazine is presented to the Teachers' Resources. Then, the next class of students will be reading and appreciating the wonderful essays and stories published. Thus, both students and teachers forget about the pain of making and correcting grammar mistakes. All they remember is the joy of reading and writing.

Amy Lai-Chow is a CSWEIIIA teacher in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

A Big Surprise

By Zhong Hua

Recently, when I saw my friends, classmates and English teachers they said, "Congratulations!" and I was so happy with that. Why? Let me tell you what happened.

On 17 October, it was an important day for me. I had an art exhibition with other artists in a local primary school hall. I was excited to attend the opening night because this was my first art exhibition since I've arrived in Australia. I had been preparing for this exhibition for a long time. I did lots of oil paintings, sketches, some landscapes, still

life and figures and put different frames on some of them. I even bought a suit for the opening night.

When I wore the suit, my daughter laughed at me and said, "Is this my dad?" and I replied, "I'll meet lots of artists tonight so I need to dress up nicely." Then I was worried my English wasn't good enough, so I begged my PhD wife to go with me and give me some help. So my daughter, my wife and I went together to the opening night.

To my surprise, there were hundreds of art works in the exhibition. They were presented by seventy-five artists in Melbourne. I was very proud that one of my works was selected to be one of the top five, which had been put on the advertising board and tickets.

A little while after we arrived at the opening night, my daughter suddenly saw a red sticker on the corner of one of my paintings and asked why mine had a red dot on it and why others didn't. Then we realized that one of my paintings had already been sold. We were very surprised and extremely happy.

This exhibition wasn't about the money that I earned; it was an extra boost to my confidence for the future in other bigger exhibitions. It is also about the experience of meeting all the other artists that share the same passion as mine.

Zhong Hua is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

My Troublemaker Boy

By Kyunghee (Kelly) Park

"Kevin, can you answer the phone please?" I called my elder son from the kitchen. He was playing with his brother in the living room. "Mom, Dad wants you on the phone", he shouted. I looked at the wall clock. It was half past five. I came to the phone. "Honey, I'm going to come back home early. Do you want to eat out for dinner? Which restaurant do you want to go to?" he asked. "That's lovely, mm," I answered. I was really happy because my husband used to come back home very late.

Suddenly, I saw that Kevin was opening his mouth to pretend to eat the magnetic bead; it accidentally slipped out of his fingers. It happened in a flash. I was shocked. I couldn't believe my eyes. I was at a loss for what to do. My husband asked, "Honey, are you still on the phone?" After a couple of seconds, I came to my senses. "Kim, Kevin swallowed the magnetic bead. I have to hang up and check him. I'll call back later."

"Kevin, are you okay?" I asked. He started to burst into tears. "Please give me water," he begged. I wondered whether a glass of water was good for him or not. I didn't know what I should do.

I rushed to an emergency room in the hospital with my kids. We took an X-ray two times. My husband came to us, panting. While looking at the X-ray pictures, the doctor said, "The magnetic bead has already gone down. We just have to wait until Kevin has a bowel movement. If the magnetic bead doesn't come out in two or three days, we must have an operation, because the magnetic beads are very poisonous. Go home and wait."

At last, we found the magnetic bead in Kevin's faeces three days later. Searching for the magnetic bead in his faeces was a difficult job, but I was pleased to do it. My husband and I were really relieved.

After the incident, I was determined to pay attention to my children every moment. Unfortunately, the same thing happened again only two months later. Kevin swallowed a plastic toy eyeball in his art class. We didn't go to an emergency room this time. We only waited until he went to the toilet. And then I found it.

Kyunghee (Kelly) Park is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

My Childhood Memories

By Shulan Wang

That year, my father had been in the prison camp for fifteen years in Inner Mongolia. When the government allowed my mum to stay with my father there, which was half way through his sentence, I was born. When our family came back to my hometown from the prison camp, I was six years old and starting primary school.

I remember the first day I went to school. Everyone tried to talk to me and liked to sit with me. Then, the teacher decided to draw lots about who would sit with me - it was a girl who was taller and bigger than me. After school, I went home and told my mum about the girl who sat beside me. She didn't say a word.

At the beginning of the school term, this girl and I felt so excited that we couldn't stop talking, even during the lessons. After school, we played games and did homework together. Until one day, my mum told me that the girl's father, who was a leader of our village, had sent my father to the prison. Since I knew that, I tried not to talk and play

with this girl, but she didn't understand what happened and why I liked to pick on her. We always fought over very small things, such as a rubber or a pencil.

One day, my friend had an accident and her foot got injured. When I saw her wobbling around, I thought that was a chance to win because I had never won in any fighting with her before.

I remember that was a beautiful sunny day, towards the final exam time of Grade One. That day, I wore a pair of clogs to school. After class, I tried to get close to her and I sneakily stepped hard on her foot. I then quickly ran away as fast as I could. I heard the terrifying scream left behind me.

A few days later, she didn't attend the final exam, and in the end she had to repeat Grade One. No one knew that was not a real accident, except me.

Time flies. Every time when I recollect my childhood, the terrifying scream would echo in my mind and never fade away. I wish I had never done that to my little friend because she hadn't done anything wrong to me.

Shulan Wang is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

A Family Memory

By Hau Tran

A few years ago we had a reunion with my aunts who we hadn't seen for a long time. One lived in America and one lived in West Germany. They are old and wanted to see my mum one more time because she is very old too. So we decided to buy tickets for them to come to Australia.

When they arrived at the airport we couldn't recognise them because they looked very different to when they had lived in Vietnam. My mum cried so much and was happy.

When we went home, we had dinner. We sat around talking about everything and remembered some events from the past in Vietnam. We didn't sleep that night. Finally, we went to sleep in the morning because we were all tired.

My aunts stayed with my family for five weeks. In five weeks, we took them everywhere, to places such as Apollo Bay and Queensland. They were very interested and loved Australia very much.

They wanted to live in Australia but they didn't know how to do that. They promised when they went back to their

countries, they would save a lot of money and come to Australia again in a few years to visit my family.

When we took them to the airport to return to their countries, we cried again. We kissed and hugged them for a long time and then they invited my family to visit them. We answered 'Yes.'

We miss them so much and hope we'll have another reunion soon.

Hau Tran is a student at the Keysborough Learning Centre.

A Special Holiday

By Djuka Jankovic

I decided to go for a holiday last year. So I started to save money because it is very expensive to buy a ticket. I went to the country of my birth and it was for me a very special time.

I visited all my family, my son and his family, my mother, my brother and his family, my sister and her family and many relatives and friends. While I was visiting my mother, it was her 82nd birthday. We were happy because we were altogether after many years. It was a very special day for my mother, my brother, my sister and I. I will never forget this day—I was in the home where I was born and grew up.

Also on this holiday I had another special time. I saw my granddaughter—she was three years old. She is beautiful and I just loved seeing her.

So this holiday was very happy and nice. Now I have a special memory of this time. I wish I could go again and hopefully I will next year.

Djuka Jankovic is a student at the Keysborough Learning Centre.

My Worst Nightmare

By Asude Gocuk

In my third year of life in Australia, my eldest daughter was eight months old and I was four months pregnant with my second daughter. One day, my family and I had a car accident in Bell Street, Coburg. Our car rolled twice and stopped on the opposite side of the road, upside down. My husband's head was bleeding but I didn't care about us. I was only thinking about my daughter in the back.

All the car windows were broken. I still can't remember how I got out of the car. I couldn't see my daughter. I looked around like crazy and I saw my daughter on the other side of the road. I ran to her and I held her. I knew I wasn't allowed to move her. She was quietly crying but I thought she was dying. An ambulance took us to the hospital.

We didn't have anything physically wrong, however, after we left the hospital, I realised I was scared of cars. It felt like all the cars were going to kill me. For a very long time, I went to a physiotherapist and a psychologist. After two years I went to a professor who came from London. Using hypnotherapy, he found that I was scared of losing my daughter and felt guilty for not checking her seat belt.

Now, I have three beautiful daughters and I am happy they are healthy.

Asude Gocuk is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

My Little Angel

By Saadet Anaz

It was a cold night in July when I found out I was pregnant with my first child. I was so happy that I was pregnant. I jumped up and down with my husband. At 18 weeks, I found out that my little angel has a heart problem and the doctors gave her a 40 percent chance of survival.

My husband and I decided to continue with the pregnancy. Her lower left chamber was too small and the blood didn't circulate around her body. At seven or eight months, I visited the hospital for an ultrasound and every time I was hearing her heart beeping. I had never experienced a feeling like that before in my life. For the last six weeks of my pregnancy, I visited the hospital every second week until I gave birth to "My little angel."

The doctors took her to the Royal Children's Hospital straight away. I didn't even have a chance to hold her. The next day I went to the hospital to see her. She was on a machine lying down. Her arms were open wide and there were lots of needles in her body.

On the day of the operation, we went to the hospital and waited for the doctor to give us some good news. The doctor came with bad news. My husband and I held our "Little Angel" for the first and last time.

Saadet Anaz is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

Across the Tanami Desert

By Donathon Williams

In Australia there is a desert called the Tanami Desert. In the desert lived an old man and a small boy. They were looking for bush tucker but they could not find any food at all.

They came to a waterhole for a drink of water. The boy found a kangaroo sleeping under a tree. The kangaroo was too sleepy to hop away so the old man killed the kangaroo for dinner. The boy was so happy to have kangaroo to eat. They made a fire to cook the kangaroo.

Afterwards, they went back into the desert to sleep by a sand hill near a small tree by an old lake. They slept by the fire. But that night, a wild dingo came to sniff around the kangaroo meat. The old man waved a burning stick at the wild dingo to chase him away.

The next morning, the boy and the old man ate some kangaroo meat before moving on. They walked across the desert. They were very far from home. Then the boy saw a hill. From far away it looked blue. He was so happy to get back home and his mum was very happy to see her little son. They came with the kangaroo meat. The old man was very tired and he wanted to sleep. The boy played with his friend and his wild dingo puppy.

Donathon Williams is a student at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

I Was a Lost Child

By Amy Whyburn

I once was a lost child with no friends, no life and a hermit living in my bedroom 24-7. In my bedroom, I felt like screaming, I wanted to talk to someone but there was no one there. I had no one. One day I decided enough was enough, because I was going crazy counting the patterns of my wallpaper on the wall over and over again.

My grandmother saw how lonely and depressed I was. So she got me to go along to a meeting with a group of people my age who were experiencing the same things as me.

After a while I attended a few meetings and I found myself, the person in me. I realized I had people and I was never alone at any point.

A person from the group meetings had started a course at the Albury Campus of TAFE. This was a course for kids

who had left school early and wanted another chance in their life so she dragged me along.

So after a few classes in the course with others, I felt really good and fitted in very well. I was comfortable with talking and socialising.

I am not sitting in my room anymore and I don't count the patterns on my wallpaper. I am actually going out and enjoying life with others and living a teenager's life, the way I should be. I spend more time with family and I have lots of friends now. I am a totally different person and I would never go back to my old life. So thank you Nan for helping me and changing my life.

Amy Whyburn is a student at the Riverina Institute of TAFE in Albury.

A Day In The Life Of A Soldier

By Jake

13/10/1969

Day 37

Tom Johnson

Another day in Vietnam, carrying 25 kilos on my back while walking through the dark and enveloping bush, being careful not to make a sound in case the enemy is lurking. I'm too terrified to blink. A second here is like a year at home. I'm missing my wife Linda a lot. Not being able to hold her in my arms. She has our baby boy in two weeks. I wish I could be there for her.

Enemy booby traps claimed two of our men today. This is getting too much. The sound of the firing guns, bombs dropping and helicopters circling our main camp for hours in search of any danger is becoming unbearable. We have located one of our enemy's main bases. Tomorrow we go into battle. Many of our men will die. Senior Sergeant says we need to prepare ourselves, but how can you prepare yourself to watch hundreds of men die?

15/10/1969

Day 39

Yesterday.

Yesterday.

I can't breathe. It's as though I'm paralysed, scared so deeply within. The blood, the screaming, the incredible stench of death surrounds me. Senior Sergeant said to prepare. I don't

think anyone could. My close friends Kenny, Bill and Todd all died today along with 50 other men. One soldier was taken by the enemy. We fear he may be kept for information. I'm exhausted, I want to sleep but I can't. Every time I close my eyes I re-live the vivid images, smells and sounds. I go home in two months, if I can make it that long.

1/12/1969

Linda Johnson

Today is the one-month anniversary of Tom's death. He was on his way home when the enemy made an attack on his helicopter. Thankfully he died instantly and didn't suffer like many of his men. He was going to meet our baby boy. He would have been home in time for the birth. To think my son will never see, touch, feel or hear his own father's voice haunts me to my inner core. I lay awake and cry most nights and I struggle to get out of bed most mornings. Tom was the love of my life, the centre of my universe. How can I live without him?

Jake is a CGEA student at Chisholm Institute Cranbourne.

Memories of a Weekend

By Wei

It had been continuously raining for the last few days. Then, the day was warm and sunny. My family wanted to go out for a picnic and do some fishing.

Everyone thought about where to go. We had to find an interesting place that we hadn't gone to before. I found a place, North Head in Sydney Harbour Park. It's north of Sydney in the Manly Area.

I drove the car and followed the street directory to the Sydney Harbour National Park. We could see lots of scenery when we got to the top of the cliffs. Looking down from there, we could see very far out to sea. The sky was very clear and you could see as far as some ships on the Pacific Ocean. There were some small boats below with some divers. They would see other scenery under the ocean. We walked around the National Park path. You could hear a lot of bird and animal calls. There were also lots of plants and bushes there, some big and some small. We were very happy with the sound of the ocean on one side and bird sounds on the other side.

Then we went fishing. This is a very famous fishing point; it's on Little Manly Point. When we were walking to our destination, we were very impressed by the environment.

It's a very serene and beautiful area. There is a relaxed and small wharf and you can see many pleasure boats moored on the bay.

There were many fishermen sitting in chairs by the bank. My son was very excited and was impatient to start fishing. "Let me fish. Let me fish," he was yelling. I said, "Don't hurry. Let me assemble your fishing rod." I attached a fishhook and some fish bait. It was high tide, which was perfect for fishing. My son was very impatient while waiting for a bite. Half an hour later my son suddenly felt the fishing rod shake. He was excited and shouted, "A fish is biting my fishhook." He had caught a small fish. But the fish was too small but my son was reluctant to throw it back to sea. When it was my turn something strange happened, I did not catch any fish. I only saw other people catch many fish.

Even though we returned home with nothing, we were very happy. We had a very nice weekend.

Wei is a student at Macarthur Community College in NSW.



I'll Never Forget

Here is a selection of stories describing the people, places and things that add colour and depth to each writer's view of the world. Students share heartfelt memories of the many characters, locations and treasured objects that have had a significant and lasting influence on their lives.



My Father's Hands

By Brenda Eastwood

My father's hands were ugly. His short, thick fingers were heavily stained with nicotine and the nails were bitten down to the quick.

Despite the surname 'Hand', my father lacked any handy skills at all, and attempts at home repairs inevitably led to an eruption of temper and, yet another terrible row with my mother.

He never smacked me. His discipline consisted entirely of saying, "That wasn't the right thing to do, was it?" I see now, he was a good man, but one who had been ground down by a meaningless hand-to-mouth existence and unhappy years of marriage to a woman with whom he was incompatible.

I do not remember overt affection from Dad, although I have no doubt he loved me. Sadly, I was always too afraid when my parents were together to enjoy the company of either and my relationship with them was stunted.

Dad had many years of ill-health before dying of a massive stroke when he was 53 years old and I a teenager. In my mind's eye, I still see his hands thrumming rhythmically on the old wooden table. I see them rolling his tobacco into the thinnest of cigarettes and pulling Christmas crackers with me. I remember how he guided me, the child, from buses and trains and steadied me when paddling in the sea. Strong hands. Kind hands.

It's 46 years since he died. I wish I could see my father's hands again. I would think them beautiful.

Brenda Eastwood is a student in Pathways to Writing at TAFE at the Stawell Campus.

My Best Friend

By Maria Deng

When I was in Sudan I did everything with my friend. My friend was a good person to me because we played

together when we were young. I was a ten year old and my friend was thirteen years old and we liked each other.

When I was sixteen I came to Australia. I felt sad because I missed my friend. I left my clothes to her and I said goodbye. I was crying a lot and she was crying too.

We both now talk on the phone. I call her every month in Sudan. Sometimes I send money to her. I hope she will be better soon and get a good man in her life. The God gave me a good person.

Maria Deng is a student at the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, Castlemaine campus.

Memory

By Jessica Duncombe

Intelligent, my mentor and my beautiful little lady that is always close to my heart. Everyday your memory lives with me and your presence is constantly felt. You have all of my

Respect and I am honoured to have had a chance to get to know, in my opinion, the most remarkable woman in God's creative collection. I have faith in

Equilibrium, because you're the only thing in my life that gave me balance. With this I have managed on my own, to keep this thought in my mind and live by it. I will

Never in my life forget you, too often I ask you to come and sit with me again just so I can hear your laugh and feel that indescribable comfort.

Everyday that goes by I am proud of who I am because parts of you come out in me and I cherish that. R.I.P. my guardian angel. I love you.

Jessica Duncombe is a CGEA VCAL student at Southern Grampians Adult Education.

Love And Independence

My Children

I listened to you way past dark.

You gave me love and independence.

I have ears to hear your exploding symphony of youth

Others may leave you,

I will stay

I will listen

When you make mistakes, stumble and fall.

I will wait to mend your wings and will continue somehow,

to the next day, the next meal.

And when all your friends shall run for cover, for protection for shelter from you.

I will stay on the battlefield, exposed to the fire from all sides.

I will risk my life for you,

For when I had you, you gave me love and independence

I will be there always, way past dark.

Dad June 2009

The writer is a student at a Correctional Centre in Brisbane.

Pages from the diary of a teacher

By *Vishweswar Chilumkurti*

A few weeks ago, while attending a seminar, the guest speaker opened his speech by saying that there are three occupations in this world for which one needs a higher calling initially: doctor, teacher and priest. Now I have been a doctor for nine years, but I really cherish the seventeen years that I have spent as a teacher.

I have worked as a relief teacher in many schools in India and as a university tutor and a vocational trainer in Australia. My work has taken me to a youth detention centre, a remand centre, a women's prison and a university. I really enjoy the experiences that I have in diverse settings and I believe that is the most important requisite for being a successful teacher. You must love your job so much that working with learners, day in and day out, should never ever wear you out. An experienced teacher also knows that patience is the biggest virtue. If you can, with minimal resources, make a person look forward to your next class, not only have you made a good start, you are bound to succeed in your occupation. Empathy, perseverance, wit, kindness and energy are some of the other traits that are a recipe for success.

I believe that a teacher is somebody who can think for a student and then make them think for themselves. Completing assignments and getting degrees and certificates is not the only successful outcome in education. At the end of the day, if you could kindle in your students, that little spark of enthusiasm, which makes people achieve things, you could consider your job done. Leave the KPIs to the managers!

Structured learning, time management, incremental learning and ability mapping are some of the techniques that one could use to make the educational sessions enjoyable and achievable. Adult education is a different ball game altogether especially for special groups such as incarcerated students who are struggling to come to grips with their situation. A teacher should put aside his or her own frailties, fears and frustrations in order to tackle the requirements of the students. Additionally, another important aspect of furthering the knowledge continuum and the learning curve is about having the humility to say—I don't know. One stands to gain more respect by accepting that it is impossible to know everything and also accepting that imparting knowledge to our students makes us richer by that experience.

I have taught a diverse range of subjects but I feel that the common thing is that we are helping students find their voice. If students find that voice, it is easier for them to convert their dreams to reality. Of course, if a lot of students are sleeping in your class it is time to change your occupation.

Actually I should listen to this voice that tells me that I should try my hand at being a priest for a few years.

Vishweswar Chilumkurti is a tutor and vocational trainer for Griffith University, at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and the Women's Correctional Centre.

A Sad Memory

By *Kafia Yousif*

The saddest occasion in my life was when I lost my husband in 1991. Since then I haven't been the same person. Everything has changed.

I met my husband when I was 26 years old and he was 31. We were neighbours. I saw him a couple of times before we got married. He loved me. I loved him.

We had two kids. He loved our kids very much and he would always tell them funny stories in his holidays. We were married for five years before my life took an unexpected turn.

After my husband graduated from college, he immediately joined the army. When youth over 18 or adults graduated

from school in Iraq, the government required compulsory military service with no limit. That service may last for two or twenty years depending on the circumstances in the country.

His job was in South Iraq and we lived in the North of Iraq. We were 800 kilometres apart. He had been in the army for eight years when the war commenced between Iraq and Iran. He was killed on the 15th March 1991. I was devastated because he was only 37 years old.

I feel sorry for my two girls because they can't remember him. They were very young when their Dad died. They always ask me about him because they want to know how he was as a person and what he looked like.

There is nothing left but a picture and a wonderful memory of him that we shall cherish forever.

Kafia Yousif is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

My Grandmother

By Frank Yi

People often saw an old and kind nanny sitting cross-legged with a young boy on a big granite stone by the riverbank at the entrance of a small village. The boy nestled beside his granny, and the old woman was looking calmly at a distant place. The small village is one of the many villages in the country north of China.

This kind old woman was my grandmother, and the young boy was me. I had lived with my grandma for around one year while I was seven and she was over eighty. My grandmother loved me very much as she loved her youngest son, who was my father.

This was several decades ago, the period of my childhood memories impressed on my mind, although life was very hard in the country at that time.

While I was four, I lost my father who had got cancer—my poor father. He used to be taken pride of by his family, especially my grandma. My father was the first person to go out to study and he was working away from a remote, poor and small village in the largest city in China—Shanghai. He was the youngest of the three brothers. What a pity that we lost our father so early.

After my father had died, my grandmother discussed with my mother about my three elder brothers and me. Grandma thought children should go to their father's birthplace to experience firsthand the country's hard life. My mother was

feeling unhappy, she was worried we were too young and couldn't adapt to country life. But mother agreed finally. I was the last one to go to my old hometown and lived with my grandmother, which is over 1000 km from Shanghai.

We used to talk about this part of our lives as our brothers grew up and got together in my mother's home. Although my grandmother hadn't got any schooling, she is still a great woman in our heart. We appreciate from our experience that grandma had made this big decision for our good. Because of this experience, my brothers and I can overcome many difficult and hard things in our lives. I feel proud of my grandmother.

Frank Yi is a CSWEIIIA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

My Three Mums

By Michelle Wang

When I was born, I couldn't obtain enough nutrition from home. After five months, I was given to my nanny for better food and living in a small village. I didn't go home until I was three.

One day, I had a tough cough. I got pneumonia and I needed injections for one month. Because my aunt—my mother's sister, knew how to do injections for me, my parents sent me to live with her.

My aunt cherished me as if I was her own kid. Later, although the symptoms of my cough had gone, I was unwilling to return to my parents. I was fascinated by the love my aunt gave me as a daughter. As a result, I stayed with her warm family until the age of fourteen. During that period, I changed to address my mother and father as "Aunt" and "Uncle".

Even though my parents compensated me with more love when I went back to them, I couldn't love my mother like every kid did. As time went by, I psychologically knew and recognized my parents loved me and I loved them too. But, strange to say, I couldn't call out those two words—"Mum and Dad." I just kept the old custom of calling them "Aunt" and "Uncle".

We maintained this state until one day when I was twenty years old.

"Mum," it was my first word when I called my mother from the university that day, which was the first phone call I rang home when I started my independent life in Beijing.

“You mischievous girl!” Mum laughed on the phone. No tears, she sounded so normal. We went on chatting on the phone as if I had been calling her “Mum” before. I never planned to do anything spectacular for both my mother and me. It just happened like a gentle breeze. It was God’s perfect timing to acknowledge my birth mother as “Mum”.

Now my Mum is sixty-five years old and very healthy. She cares to know all about my life in Australia. Unfortunately, my nanny and my aunt were both tortured by cancer. My nanny passed away when I was nineteen years old. As for my lovely “Mum”, my poor aunt, she passed away last October due to stomach cancer. I have never changed calling her “Mum” and even now, I can’t help crying whenever I think of her.

Michelle Wang is a CSWEIHA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

Growing up in hardship and difficulties

By Hue Ba

I would like to share with you my story of growing up in hardship and difficulties.

When I was young, my job was every hard. I delivered sugar everywhere in north Italy from 1980 to 1987. Although my family and I have left our home country Vietnam for more than twenty years, I can’t forget this experience.

Our house was built in 1827. It was about 182 years old. The house sat under the Alps mountain of Boscha Town, of Turin area, a city in north Italy. We were refugees there at that time.

It was an old house, so it had mud stonewalls that were very thick—about 40cm. The house was always cold throughout the year. We had three bedrooms, a dining room, a kitchen, with a shower room and the toilet outside the house.

When the cold season came, people who came to visit us had a big problem. The house was getting colder every year. We spent a lot of gasoline for the heater and we often put on a jacket or jumper at home.

We could only shower once a week because all the hot water system used gas and hot water was very expensive. So people had to save hot water.

However, inside the house, we had beautiful decorations.

Although our old house was cold most of the time during the nine months when we stayed in Italy as refugees, we missed it a lot. We still dream of seeing it again because of our fond memories of living in it together as a family. I will never forget this old house.

Hue Ba is a CSWEIHA student in the Foundation Studies Department at Swinburne University of Technology TAFE.

The Kitchen

By Margerita

In my family there were three sisters. When we were children my mother taught us to do the housework. My sister Lisa always had to wash the clothes and curtains. My sister Viola had to vacuum the house. I had to cook, organise the kitchen and sometimes wash the windows. In the beginning I hated peeling the potatoes.

When I grew older I had to spend so much time at school that I didn’t have time to work in the kitchen. After university I got married so I was very busy with little children and my job. My mother-in-law did our cooking for us. I cooked on Sunday sometimes, usually something special with a dessert. I loved cooking and I missed being a housewife.

For me, the kitchen is a very important place in the house for the family together. It’s not just about the cooking or the food, it’s more about the opportunity for the family to be together and enjoy each other’s company. Now I have time to cook and organise my kitchen. I laugh with my husband and say, “I am the chef here!” I am so happy when my family and friends say, “Your cooking is wonderful!” But I am relieved when the meal is over.

I have many recipes and I like to share the recipes and food. I want to learn many more different recipes and especially Australian cooking. During my life our family has moved to many countries and we have had many different kitchens. One day I would like to have my dream kitchen.

Margerita is a student at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

The Ebb and Flow of Memory—A Teacher’s Reflection

By Jenny Coutts

After reading Carmel Bird’s *Writing the Story of Your Life: the Ultimate Guide*, I was inspired to teach the memoir genre to a small group of CGEA adult writers.

To begin the unit we organised a visit to our local historical museum, which is walking distance from our place of learning. As we looked at the old things, memories started to ebb and flow. One of the younger students, an avid photographer, took photos to help us remember on our return to our writing place.

In her guide, Carmel Bird had suggested a number of topics that she used to encourage writing. I copied these topics, each a noun, onto small, coloured cards. There were four colours. The topics were many and varied but included The Spider, The Watch, The Brother, The Journey, The Window, The Cat and The Grandmother.

During each session the students were required to select four cards, one of each colour and to start writing. If they were stuck, they could write a list of words or phrases that came to mind when they thought about the topic. I modelled how to do this during the first session by writing a list of adjectives to describe a noun "The Clock". We also had a photo of an old clock that had been photographed at the museum, to assist our imaginations.

From this list I modelled how a memoir can grow. I was pleasantly surprised with how the group embraced this writing style and requested more cards to take home to write about during the week. The completed writing was 'published' in a spiral bound book, accompanied with a selection of the museum photographs, which the writers took home to share.

Jenny Coutts is a teacher at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

The Park

By Jadie

I was about three years old and I loved the park that was near my pre-school. It had a slide, swings, a little flying fox and a thing that spun around. When I was little I would call it the dizzy spinner. The grass was always green and mown.

My favorite thing at the park was the swing. Mum always pushed me and I would say, "Go higher" like little kids do. There was a big tree near the swings that mum sat under when I was playing. We would always bring some lunch and sit under that tree. Afterwards I would have one more swing and then we'd set off for home.

Jadie is a student at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

The Butterfly

By Takao

While I lived with my wife on Raymond Island, we had a small vegetable garden at the back of the house. I sowed cabbage seeds there in winter. Spring passed by and then early summer came round. The cabbages began to form heads; white butterflies came to lay eggs on the cabbage leaves. I covered the cabbages with a net, but it was too late, for when we picked them for cooking, we were disgusted to see green, fat caterpillars coming out from under the leaves. I even thought of genocide with some poisonous insecticide but instead I resorted to a net and often caught three at a swat of the net.

Since we moved to town, where there is no extra space in the garden for vegetables, I have no reason to get mad at butterflies. I open an encyclopaedia, not to learn about butterflies scientifically, but rather for the sake of reading the English description. Closing the volume, I indulge in imagination wondering about butterflies. After being larvae hatched out from eggs, they become pupae and now they are as imagos flying gracefully in their splendid garments against the blue sky, in contrast to their former ugly forms. I wonder if they dream as chrysalises of how beautiful they will be when they are free to fly.

Takao is a student at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

The Toy

By Diane

One of my oldest toys I remember is a pink poodle. I would go everywhere with it, even to school at one stage. I liked it so much; I even gave it a name. The poodle's name was Fluffy. Fluffy had white skin, with pink fur on the feet, head and tail. Also it had a small black nose and eyes. It was very cute.

When I was about ten years old, I got my very first pet. It was a Border Collie puppy. We named it Butchy because we received it free from the local butcher's shop. The first couple of days Butchy was fine and happy. But then, one day he got really sad, so I gave him my pink poodle. Butchy loved it just as much as me.

After a few weeks Butchy loved the poodle so much that he ripped off Fluffy's tail. I was very upset because it was very old and it was my favourite toy. But I soon got over it and moved onto CDs.

A week later we had to get rid of Butchy. This was because my dad came home from overseas and he hates animals. So we took Butchy to an animal shelter with a few of his toys and one of them was the pink poodle with no tail.

That was a very sad time in my life. About seven years on, I still own the pink poodle's tail. I sometimes look at the tail and memories come flowing back into my mind. Some of the memories are of Butchy, Fluffy or family members.

Diane is a student at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

The Watch

By Rachel

Before my Grandma passed away, she gave me a watch for my birthday. Since I am not really a watch-wearing person, upon receiving the watch, I stored it away more like a 'souvenir' than anything.

The watch was rather small. It had a white face with black numbers and hands and the back was gold. I'm fairly sure it wasn't real gold, though you never know. The wristband was made of leather and was black like the numbers and hands. It had come in a nice bed of dark purple velvet and was covered by a transparent, plastic, rectangular cover.

Soon after Grandma died, I found the watch again amongst my belongings. Now, more than ever, I wanted to look after the watch as a keepsake to remind me of Grandma, above actually wearing it.

I felt it was something very significant, as it was the very last birthday gift I received from Grandma. Although she did buy my sisters and I a silver bracelet each, Mum keeps these stored away specially, so that we don't accidentally lose them. I felt that the watch was my own little gift from Grandma.

The tiny, round batteries in the watch didn't die for quite a while, a couple of years at least, and I remember that every time I opened the draw that I kept the watch in, I would always look to see if the watch was still ticking. I wondered if it would ever stop, and if it did, when. I would count for how many days it had been ticking and guess how many days it would keep ticking.

Rachel is a student at the Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland.

Where is my Chock?

By Angela Deikos

I remember as a child growing up in North Fitzroy always wishing for a pet. My house was small but we had a large back yard. I always hoped for a dog, but mum never cared for animals.

I was eight years old, trying to be a good girl, thinking that if I was good I will get my wish. I don't know how it happened, but one day I came home and there was a surprise waiting for me. I ran to the back yard hoping for a big beautiful dog, just like Lassie on TV. What greeted me was a small white chicken. I was stunned. I didn't know what to say. Where was my dog? Mum explained that a dog was too expensive, but a chicken was just as nice as a dog. Oh well, at least it was an animal.

I grew to love that chicken. It always followed me in the yard. One day I came home from school, and mum said my "Chock" had ran away. I believed her and cried for a week. About a month later mum let it slip that the chicken hadn't in fact ran away, but was given to the next door neighbour and promptly eaten.

"Why?" I shouted.

"Because it was a dirty animal pooping everywhere", she said.

It hurt. I think it still does, but time heals all wounds.

Angela Deikos is an ALBE student at NMIT in Preston.

The Place Where I was Brought Up

By Josiane

My memory of the place where I was brought up was a large brick house with several rooms and a small kitchen. As long as I remember, the house was constantly being renovated. There were always new windows, new doors, new steps and new ramps. I still have nightmares about the unfinished renovations.

The outside was very rocky, huge big pavers and lots of small ones as well. Also there was a spring with clear running water. I remember each time that we had visitors over we would go to the spring and catch golf fish, shrimps, and other little fish. We had lots of fruit trees, mangoes, guavas, tamarins, and jumbos. (I don't know the English word for jumbos—it's a light pink and white fruit, in the shape of a bell, the inside is white and spongy.) We also had avocados,

pineapples and wild strawberries. Most of the trees had ferns around them, as the area where I was brought up is very tropical.

The house was very far from the main road. I remember when we were children and got bored we used to stand around and count how many cars drove past.

We had lots of animals and chickens. My mother used to give us a raw egg every morning on the way out to school. We were supposed to break the raw egg into the mouth and swallow it. Instead, we used to take the egg to the corner shop and trade it for a few cents or lollies.

I absolutely disliked this house. My dream place was to live in a big city, with life at a fast pace. When I think back to my house, my childhood was beautiful. Each time I go back home and spend time at the old house it makes me appreciate what I had.

Josiane is a student at Macarthur Community College in NSW.



Down Memory Lane

This is a collection of stories describing larger tracts of time, an assortment of tales made up of many memorable moments. Students share memories of the challenges faced and the successes achieved, throughout their life journey.



Homemade Damper, Kangaroos and Fish

By *Bevan Malbunka*

I wish things were the way they used to be. Life was different growing up in the bush. Me and my family used to go hunting for kangaroos. We would go fishing and camping. I loved my grandmother's damper. It tasted really good with butter and jam or kangaroo meat.

I used to live on a small Aboriginal out-station called Ipolera, west of Hermannsburg community, near Alice Springs.

When I was growing up I had good times and bad. The good times were going to school, but things were different back then. We didn't have a proper school. Me and the other kids used to sit under the shade of a tree. That was where we used to go to school. The teacher would drive out from Hermannsburg to teach us for two hours every day. In 1985 our school opened at Hermannsburg, after all those years of sitting under the tree. I got better at reading and writing and then I went to Yirara College for my education.

The bad times were when I was sick in hospital for a few months. I missed my family very much. I was in Alice Springs hospital and I was a long way from family and friends but my mum used to come and visit me and bring my young sister and she used to play with me.

I still have these memories that take me back. Home made damper, kangaroos and fish.

Bevan Malbunka is a student at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Listening to Students' Stories

By *Alex Williams*

I believe that helping students find their voice starts with listening to their stories. I work with a group of Indigenous men undertaking vocational literacy and numeracy courses at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre. All of these students come from remote communities in the central Australian

desert region, and as such, bring with them experiences to the classroom that are far outside the scope of experience of most other Australians. Encouraging the students to talk about their experiences and memories of growing up and living *out bush* not only helps with the writing process, but also helps build confidence.

The process begins with students listening to stories about famous people they are interested in—singers Elvis Presley and Jimmy Barnes, Indigenous sports stars Anthony Mundine and Michael O'Loughlin or political leaders such as Barack Obama. Students often find something with which they identify in the stories of these famous figures, whether it be a shared passion for sports or music or an inspirational tale of achieving one's dreams against all odds.

Many students are keen to start talking about their own stories at this point, sharing memories about growing up in the bush and learning from their elders, as well as sharing stories about their past proud achievements in sport or music. The men enjoy recounting these stories to their fellow students and this in itself helps build a closer, more positive learning and teaching environment.

I believe that by encouraging students to tell their stories and providing a space in which those stories can be appreciated by others, ultimately gives students the confidence to start writing. Watching students tackle with a new enthusiasm the previously daunting task of writing has been especially rewarding for me.

Alex Williams is a literacy lecturer at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

My Music

By *David Brown*

My name is David Timothy Brown Janala. I was born in Perth on 4th May 1979.

When I was a 12 years old, I didn't know how to play a guitar but I really wanted to learn to play the guitar and to be a song writer in English and the Luritja language.

So I started to play the guitar when I was 16 years old. I watched and learned from my big brother and I taught myself to play the right chords. I felt good about myself and proud of the music I played.

In 1996, I went to Clontarf Aboriginal College in Perth. I played in some bands with other student musicians. I learned about the different styles of music like reggae, pop, blues and rock n roll. I even made a video clip.

When I went back home to Kiwirrkurra in 1997, I started to write my own songs about my father's and grandfather's countries. I wrote songs about the Dreamtime and the people of this land. I wrote some in English but mainly in my language, Luritja.

Some of my family members wanted me to start a band. So I started a band and we became the Kiwirrkurra Band. I travelled with the band to different communities and places. In 1998, we won the Battle of the Band trophy and prizes.

I feel very proud of myself and my music. I have good memories of making music.

David Brown is a student at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre.

Memory of my Journey

By Akier Nyarnhom

In 1991 when I was twelve years old, the Ethiopian government was overthrown by rebels, so we travelled on foot back to Sudan, facing many difficulties. We lost many people by drowning, hunger and sickness. The thing that killed most people was the river Gilo because many people didn't know how to swim. I was one of them but God gave me planning to jump over people until I had crossed the river safely.

In Pachalla Sudan we stayed six months in the Red Cross camp, which protected us from the bombs. In December 1991 our leader told our head caretakers to move from Pachalla to Nairus because it was not safe to stay any longer. On the way we were attacked by militias, which were sent by the Sudanese government and many of us were killed.

After three months we reached Nairus in Kapoeta County, but after one month this County was captured by the Sudanese government. Then we moved from Nairus to Kakuma in Kenya where we started the refugee camp.

I was in Kakuma Refugee Camp from 1992 to 2005. It was safer than Sudan but we were still attacked by local people in that area because they wanted to kill us to take food and the property we had.

On 20th April 2005 I was called for an interview and medical check. On 18th September I received an approval letter from IOM and I left the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Akier Nyarnhom is a student at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, Castlemaine campus.

The Dream Nearly to Result

By Philip Aguer

In 1988 my mother brought us to Khartoum. It wasn't an easy journey. Some families lost their children or their parents. I have to thank my mother and God for keeping my brothers, sisters and I safe.

As a teenager I had a dream to be a statesman or one of the businessmen across the country. I would like to help my race in the future. Although my family was not wealthy I was thinking about my dream. So because of those ideas I had to study very hard in high school in Sudan. Unfortunately I couldn't finish year 12 in Sudan. In 2001, I left Sudan for Egypt carrying my dream with me.

After five years I came to Australia. The first time I put my legs on Australia I saw my hope come back again, in a country of peace and a world of freedom. I went to the Intensive English Centre in Bankstown Senior College in NSW. After I finished that course I found a job.

I am studying at this moment at TAFE and I work at the same time. I see my dream not far off like years ago. I see sunshine everyday in my life here in Australia. I believe my dream is nearly achieved.

I get support from the Australian government more than I got from Sudan. I want to thank Australia for giving me the chance for a better life and peace and all freedoms, and giving me hope to restore my teenage dream. That is why when I retrace to Sudan in my mind I know one thing, it is Australia that is the best country. You can achieve what you put in your mind if you want to. Even if things aren't going well or quickly, in the end you will win.

Philip Aguer is a student at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE, Castlemaine campus.

A Memory Of Moments

By *Katerina Cervasio*

They call me 'Katie the Party animal' and I agree!

I grew up in Vermont and remember St. Thomas' where I went to school. I enjoyed my years there. Mum & Dad took me to the park very often and my most favourite memory of those years was a family trip to Portalington. I remember it clearly, except that I couldn't swim, which was disappointing.

I remember the Headmaster at Montmorency High. I didn't enjoy my years at High School that much, as things were not easy for me.

I remember daily speech pathology at Yooralla and cooking. I made apple muffins. My hobbies then were reading, writing and canvas painting. I am proud of my special paintings.

I remember Peter Pan and Wendy who give me so much joy and Alice in Wonderland too. BBQ's and party food always make me happy. I made really good cat sounds at my Mad Hatters Tea Party where I dressed as a cat.

I love the internet and Facebook and meeting special people like my cousin Claudia who lives in Italy. We chat a lot. What makes me sad is that I do not have the internet at home because I dream of being able to write stories and write a book, get ideas and surf the web. I hope some day that this dream becomes a reality.

I love and cherish my memories, past and present, happy and not so happy, and other moments that make my life complete.

Katerina Cervasio is a student at Inclusions Melbourne.

A Teacher's Thoughts

By *Rosita Fernandes*

I've been ever so fortunate to know Katie since 1997 when she was a young lass coming out to meet the world.

I guess being able to always communicate on a very special plane with her gave us a bond that stayed strong over the past 12 or so years. We started meeting at the Ashburton library from 10 till 1pm—we borrowed books, we read together, Katie read to me and I to her. She showed a huge passion for books and I would take her some of her favourites and classics.

Sadly, my work commitments forced me to stop these library visits, but we still kept in touch. Birthdays and Christmas

would always be special. Katie would call me to remind me that it was her birthday! I would play games and quiz her affectionately and as often as possible I would make it to Melinga Crescent to share her special day.

Christmas morning was usually (time permitting) breakfast with Katie.

Katie dreams of being a writer—she wants to learn and explore and now her love is her motorised wheelchair, which she is using to bigger and better heights!

My role in this writing edition has been to chat and talk about her memories. It was good for Katie, but even better for me as there were just so many aspects of her life I was not aware of. Being with her is a source of relaxation for me—it's different and fun and most of all completely fulfilling.

Rosita Fernandes teaches at Inclusions Melbourne.

Achievements

By *Judy McDonald*

For a long time I helped a nice old lady who was sick. When she died she left me some money to help me to learn to read. I did not get the money.

Luckily at the Avenue Neighbourhood House I had the chance to learn. In 2007 I began my Certificate IV in Disability and passed in 2008. This helped me get a job and I love it.

But during that year of study I had a lot of ups and downs. First I had to go to hospital to get a lump out. Then my dad got sick and I had to go and look after him. My brother-in-law was sick and that meant running back and forth to hospital daily.

My dad made me executor of his will, which was very hard for me to do. I did not understand all of the paper work. I had to arrange the funeral and sell his house. It took a lot of discussion between my brothers and sisters.

I was nominated for an Adult Community Further Education Life Long Learner Award. The first award night was held at the Regent Ballroom. I walked on a red carpet and we had our dinner before the presentations. Although I didn't win I was given tickets for *Wicked*.

The second award night was held at 55 Collins Street on the 46th floor. The view was marvellous. I met Jacinta Allen, Minister for Education.

I won! I was on cloud nine. I received \$4,000 towards my further education. Now I feel like somebody worthwhile. I have never felt like this before.

Judy McDonald is a student at The Avenue Neighbourhood House in Blackburn South.

Life's Journey

By Mustafa Kaman

I was born in the small town of Kaman, which is the same name as my surname, in Turkey. I finished high school in the same town.

During the time after school I used to help my dad. My dad was a glazier but I didn't like that job. I wanted to be a journalist or a teacher.

When I finished high school, it was very bad for anarchism everywhere in our country. Lefties and righties were killing each other. I was at university but I couldn't go to school. I was leftist. The government was right wing. I resigned from school to join the army for twenty months. Two years after that, the Junta, that is the army, took over the government.

My dad had a lung disease called siroz. The lung collects water. He died in 1980. He was a small businessman but the entire town knew him. When he died, he was only 57. We've never forgotten him. We loved him a lot. He looked after us very well.

I was working in the bank. I met a girl who became my wife. She returned to Australia and six months later, I followed her.

Some people say my life is a film but my life is not a film. It is as ordinary as everyone else's. I'm a happy person all the time. I believe life is enjoyable.

Mustafa Kaman is a student at Kangan Batman TAFE.

Memories

By Sara

I met my husband when I was fifteen years old. When I was eighteen years old I married my prince.

For one year it was wonderful and then I started to get sick. I had problems with my kidneys. The doctor told us that we had to have children before I was twenty-five. I got pregnant and we were so happy but the happiness did not last.

The doctor advised me that I had to be in hospital until the baby was born. I was devastated but if I wanted my baby I needed to stay in hospital throughout my pregnancy. It was so hard because I was away from my husband and my family.

When I was eight months pregnant the doctor informed me that my baby needed to be induced. Two days later I had my baby son. It was the happiest day of my life. After one more week in hospital, I went home with my baby son.

Sara is a student at Macarthur Community College in NSW.



Every Picture Tells a Story

A teacher and her students, from the YAMEC program at NMIT in Collingwood, use photography to shed light, and shade, on memories.

Creative Arts and Language Learning — A Teacher's Perspective

By Julie Palmer

Writing! With limited vocabulary, limited education in their first language, and limited self-confidence, the task of writing for many low level ESL/literacy students is daunting.

My class consists of approximately 16 young adult migrant refugees, mostly from countries in Africa, who have enrolled full-time in the YAMEC (Young Adult Migrant Education Course) at NMIT to improve their ESL/literacy and basic education, in the hope of continuing further study or of getting a job. Many of the students have little or no classroom experience or associated study skills to draw upon, so their needs are vast. Their learning environment must provide a safe place where there is a sense of trust amongst the group and at the same time, be stimulating for young people.

Learning through the creative arts has proven to be a very successful way of engaging students to achieve positive learning outcomes in our program. For the second year running we have collaborated with the Brotherhood of St Laurence/Ecumenical Migrant Centre to deliver the Connect-In program. This year community artists from the Rotary Youth

Arts Project were employed once a week for nine weeks to team-teach with me.

Through photography, dance and drama we enabled students to share creative, enjoyable language learning experiences that culminated in an end of term presentation. Each week the students were asked to record their experiences - who did they meet, where did they go, what did they do and how did they feel. They interviewed people they met, they described things they saw and did, and helped each other to put it all onto paper. Part of my role was to check their work before they then word-processed it in computer class. Asking the students to read their draft writing aloud, with a teacher correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar as they go, I think is the most helpful method of improving their writing skills. Meaningful communication rather than perfection with low literacy levels should be the aim.

Through the enjoyment and satisfaction of creating artistic work, we have all benefited. We have shared authentic experiences through meaningful communication.

Julie Palmer is an ESL/literacy teacher with the YAMEC program, in the Youth Unit at NMIT in Collingwood.



Welday's Story

I took the photo of a police car because when I saw the police next to the traffic lights he was waiting for the people to walk. But in my country, Ethiopia, some police don't wait for the people. They just go.

Then the light was green. The colour of the building was beautiful. It was a bright pink colour. It made me feel happy.



Juven's Story

I took many photos last week of many different things. All the photos were very interesting but my favourite photos out of all of them are photos of number 10.

I chose this photo and it is very special because number 10 represents a good luck sign for me.

Number 10 also used to be the best number used by a good soccer player such as Ronaldinho Ronaldo, and lots of other good soccer players.

It means a lot to me because I play soccer for a club and I've got number 10 and I haven't lost any games, which means it is true that number 10 is good luck and it is very special to me. That's all.



Letebrahan's Story

The photo I chose is the sky and clouds. This photo reminds me of my country, Ethiopia. I lived in the country, not the city, when I was little. At night time after eight o'clock, it is exactly like this photo.

I would go outside of the house to sit and look at the sky and see the trees. I would sit next to the trees and think of sad things and cry. No one could see me in the dark.

I can say a lot of things about this photo. This is one story.



Mawolu's Story

This photo is about life. In this photo you can see different things. The reason I chose this photo is because I like it so much. It makes me think about the past and future and the now of life.

In this photo you can see the darkness, fern, blue and white sky and houses. The darkness is like someone who has no life experience. But when you have new experiences you are shining in the light. I feel like this when I go out and meet new people and when I'm coming to school and learning new things.



Tulizo's Story

I'm writing about my citizenship. When I got my citizenship I was very happy. When I was reading the books for the test, it was very hard. My head hurt, the books were big and hard to understand.

I couldn't understand or speak much English. That was a hard time, but now that I have passed the test things are much easier for me, and I am happy about where I am.

When I got my citizenship I also was able to do many things, like getting a driver's license and a house. My kids are also happy now. I am happy to be an Australian now and so are my children.

Students and Teachers Featured in this Edition

Students

Amy Wu, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Olga, Macarthur Community College NSW

Vu Quoc, NMIT Preston

Kathleen Toohey, The Avenue Neighbourhood House Blackburn South.

Rosina Rossi-Mel, NMIT Preston

Zarife Yalcin, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Muna Arnaoot, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Zeynep Buday, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Zehra Akgunes, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Puangpet O'Meara, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE Castlemaine Campus

Pooja, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Zhong Hua, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Kyunghee (Kelly) Park, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Shulan Wang, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Hau Tran, Keysborough Learning Centre

Djuka Jankovic, Keysborough Learning Centre

Asude Gocuk, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Saadet Anaz, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Donathon Williams, Alice Springs Correctional Centre

Amy Whyburn, Riverina Institute of TAFE Albury

Jake, Chisholm Institute Cranbourne

Wei, Macarthur Community College NSW

Brenda Eastwood, Stawell Campus of TAFE

Maria Deng, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE Castlemaine Campus

Jessica Duncombe, Southern Grampians Adult Education

Writer of *'Love And Independence'*, Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre Brisbane

Kafia Yousif, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Frank Yi, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Michelle Wang, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Hue Ba, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn

Margerita, The Community College Bairnsdale East Gippsland

Jadie, The Community College Bairnsdale East Gippsland

Takao, The Community College Bairnsdale East Gippsland

Diane, The Community College Bairnsdale East Gippsland

Rachel, The Community College Bairnsdale East Gippsland

Angela Deikos, NMIT Preston

Josiane, Macarthur Community College NSW

Bevan Malbunka, The Alice Springs Correctional Centre

David Brown, The Alice Springs Correctional Centre

Akier Nyarnhom, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE Castlemaine Campus

Philip Aguer, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE Castlemaine Campus

Katerina Cervasio, Inclusions Melbourne

Judy McDonald, The Avenue Neighbourhood House Blackburn South

Mustafa Kaman, Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows

Sara, Macarthur Community College NSW

Welday, NMIT Collingwood

Juven, NMIT Collingwood

Letebrahan, NMIT Collingwood

Mawolu, NMIT Collingwood

Tulizo, NMIT Collingwood

Teachers

Jenny Chalmers, literacy tutor, The Avenue Neighbourhood House Blackburn South

Amy Lai-Chow, teacher, Foundation Studies Department, Swinburne University of Technology TAFE Hawthorn Campus

Vishweswar Chilumkurti, tutor and vocational trainer for Griffith University at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and the Women's Correctional Centre Brisbane

Jenny Coutts, teacher, The Community College Bairnsdale, East Gippsland

Alex Williams, literacy lecturer, NT Department of Justice, The Alice Springs Correctional Centre

Rosita Fernandes, teacher, Inclusions Melbourne

Julie Palmer, teacher, YAMEC program, Youth Unit NMIT Collingwood