Celebrations!
Family, Festivals and Feasts

Exchange Students: A Candid Conversation
A Journey Through Peru
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Skipping Stones is a nonprofit children’s magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a unique forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. Skipping Stones expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We seek suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

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From the Editor

Welcome to our holiday issue. The idea of Skipping Stones was conceived at a Gandhian community in Gandhi’s home state of Gujarat, Western India. It’s befitting therefore that we celebrate our anniversary with Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday. Naturally, our 15th year celebration was as eclectic as our magazine, featuring Lindy Hop, Bharatnatyam, classical guitar, Rumi’s poetry, spirituals from India and music from the Andes.

As we conclude our 15 years, Skipping Stones is not in debt, but our expenses are much more than our income. So we’ve tried to be even more frugal, as we choose not to live on borrowed money. Still, when we were preparing our recent celebration, we decided that it would be a gift to the community; a fun-raiser— not a fund-raiser. We sold no entry tickets, nor asked for a suggested donation at the door. We didn’t make a pitch on the stage for donations or subscriptions. We did welcome all heart-felt donations. The program was well-attended and we felt good about the evening!

We do this magazine as a labor of love, as a nonprofit, non-commercial, ad-free enterprise (rather than money-making scheme). For us, your satisfaction with the quality and content of the magazine is most important. We try to provide the very best educational magazine to our worldwide readers, to the best of our ability and we know the Skipping Stones’ seeds of caring, peace and community enrich life around the globe.

So what is our hope, our New Year’s resolution as we enter our 16th year? We want to work for a compassionate world that respects diversity, values friendships, serves selflessly, preserves beauty and practices patience.

Patience! Yes, we can all use more patience.

Last year, I spent the holidays visiting family and exploring our ancestral homeland of India. When we were in Orissa, my brother-in-law had arranged a taxi for the whole day to see the famous Lord Jagannath Temple in Puri, on the Bay of Bengal. But by 10 a.m., two hours past the scheduled time, the driver had not come to pick us up. I lost my patience; I said, “Let’s take the public bus.” As we were boarding the bus, my brother-in-law said, “No, we’ll go by taxi, the driver is here!”

I scolded the taxi driver for being so late. Reflecting back, I feel I shouldn’t have lost my patience that day. I’d made everyone uncomfortable, including the driver and myself. I should have expressed my feelings without anger. The driver taught me a lesson by keeping his cool. As he dropped us off that evening, he apologized and explained why he had been so late. We shook hands and departed on good terms.

When Dr. Barry Nobel explained compassionate dialogue at our celebration, he mentioned a Jewish proverb: We have two ears but only one mouth; we should listen more than we speak! How often do we feel we did not get someone’s attention? How often do we let others finish what they are saying? Let’s become attentive listeners.

If we have conflict with someone, as I did with the taxi driver, we can negotiate in good faith. We might try to develop skills in compassionate dialogue, which allows us to express our needs, as well as to listen and understand what is important to the other person. Both parties give an honest try to meet each other’s true needs. A win-win situation for everyone!

Happy Holidays!
Dear World Citizens:

Twice a day for three hours at a time at my condominium, the sprinklers are running. This is such wicked water wasting. I would be depressed to see any sprinkler on for this long but twice a day for almost a month...I can’t stand it anymore. That is the reason I bring up this issue.

The pollution and wasting of the Earth’s buried treasures must be immediately stopped.

Also, all future vehicles, cars, buses, trucks, and vans must be hybrid or electric.

You shouldn’t be considering, you should be changing, if you want to save the Earth, that is.

—Mel H. Goss, 8, Boca Raton, Florida.

Letters from Taung Village, South Africa

My name is Lesego and my surname is Margwegape. I don’t like school, I love it. My favorite language is English. I want to be a doctor when I grow up.

South Africa is a very special place to me. My country is a hope to many people, including me. I like many things here, like African unity. I am proud to be a South African and a black person. I stand up for my school; you guys should also know that it’s quite fun. Always respect your elders and go to school.

I’d like to visit the U.S. someday, then come back to South Africa. Maybe I’ll teach you guys Setswana and Afrikaans.

Here is a joke:

Q: What do you call a skeleton that doesn’t like to work?

A: Lazy bone

—Lesego Mangwegape, 10.

We plant a lot of things like maize in the fields of Taung village. We use that maize to cook porridge. We work together. My country is not rich enough to help poor people who are suffering and don’t have electricity. They use paraffin to cook. I hope someone can help them. These families are part of my family.

—Moreokami Gaoraelwe, 11.

My name is Onalenna Sebego. I am ten years old. My school is Rabodigelo Primary School. There are 59 people in my class. I like my school because it has good lessons. Our teachers teach us our rights. Every other Friday we clean our classrooms. Our uniform is maroon and white; it is beautiful. Students who don’t have a uniform wear black and white. The sports we have are netball, soccer, and cricket. We also have a small library in our school.

—Onalenna Sebego, 10.

Art: T. Seko-Joe, grade 5, Kgosikcheho Primary School, Taung Station, South Africa.
Dear Dave:

I hear what a burden giving gifts is for you. The custom of gift giving arose out of the urge to let love flow from our hearts to make others happy. I'd like to find a way that you can celebrate the holidays with joy in your heart. I've been very touched by a true gift-giving story. Let me share that with you.

When a small church had a major fire, they decided not to rebuild. Instead they bought a very old downtown motel and restored it to house homeless people. The former office of the motel became the meeting room for the church.

A mother, let's call her Jane, and her four children came to live at the homeless shelter. Jane visited the church service. She and two generations before her had been on drugs. The staff of the homeless shelter told her of a program where she could try to get off drugs, which she courageously opted to do. When her time at the homeless shelter was up, the family moved into a tiny apartment. Life was difficult but they survived. Jane bonded with the people in the little church. Off and on she shared her struggles. Her withdrawal from drugs was very difficult, but she persevered. In due time, the workers at the homeless shelter asked her to volunteer in their office in order to become used to working again. People from the church showed her how to bake bread, and took her grocery shopping at inexpensive outlets.

On September 12, 2001 the church presented Jane with a necklace displaying a silver “1” in celebration of being drug-free for a whole year. She was able to rent a house. The people from the church hosted a housewarming potluck and brought household items. The homeless shelter staff introduced her to a grocery chain's employment office. Making her way in a competitive, commercial work situation was far from easy. However, Jane’s necklace now displays a “3”, signifying three drug-free years. She is now working full time and her children are all heading towards a high school graduation.

In the course of these years, Jane and the people at the church have enriched each other’s life experiences and developed relationships of trust and openness. The gift is that love grew in everyone’s heart.

I have often thought if every little community, school, neighborhood, organization and spiritual body would commit themselves to rescuing one family in such deep need as Jane’s, we would all grow in love, develop empathy, and learn to walk in another’s shoes. That kind of giving does not consist of material gifts. It is a gift of the heart that has the power to transform society.

Dave, you might pick projects appropriate for your situation: befriend a new student, a person who needs support, a homebound person who needs company, people in your family. Coupons make good presents!

- Good for My Sharing a Dessert with You
- Good for One Household Chore
- Good for One ‘Walking the Dog’

Art by Sheree LeDoux and Patricia Chiang, students at Univ. of Oregon

Send your questions or comments to: Dear Hanna c/o Skipping Stones P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403
HEALTH ROCKS!

Starting with this issue, we have a new column—Health Rocks. Get it? Stones. Rocks. Ha, ha...are you laughing yet? Umm, anyway, “Health Rocks” will be about health, of course.

In the coming months, we’ll talk about not only the health of the body, but also of the mind, spirit, and everything else in between. This is your space to share your ideas.

We’ll keep our first ever “Health Rocks” short and sweet. So, without further ado...

What does “health” mean, anyway?

Many people think good health includes having a strong mind, body, and spirit. That’s a tall order, isn’t it? When we make healthful choices, we’re saying “YES!” to living our lives to the fullest. Amazing. Being healthy is about being the best you can be.

There are many opinions about what’s healthy and what’s not; sometimes it can be confusing. To start thinking about your own health, you might ask yourself a few questions.

Think about it!

• How do I keep a positive attitude?
• Which of the three areas of health—mind, body and spirit—is my strongest?
• Which is my weakest?
• Does being the best I can be mean trying to be like everyone else?
• What does it mean to have a healthy spirit?

Share it!

Send us your personal stories, articles, and thoughts on keeping healthy. You could use the questions above to get yourself started. What is your story? How do you keep a healthy body, attitude, or spirit? Send us an email or a letter.

Next Issue:

Being Active.

What’s More Important?

You rush into the house because you just heard there will be some happening party going on down the street in 45 minutes. All the cute boys and all your best friends will be there. You know it’s going to be the best because they have a DJ from FM 102.3, and that’s why they charge $10 for the night. That’s no problem for you because your mom will give you the money no matter what. You hurry up and jump in the shower. Then you quickly iron your never-before-seen outfit. You drown yourself in scented Suave lotion and Chanel perfume. You look good, smell good, and your hair’s all done up. You’ve got your $10.

Dang! You still have 30 minutes until it’s time to go. While you’re waiting, you turn on the TV. At the top of the television screen there is a bold title. It reads, “Feed the Children.” You see children with bugs around them living in a place not even comparable to yours. Then you see a man simply saying, “All we need is $10 to save a life and feed a child. Please help.” They show a couple pictures, a few sad parents, and a lot of other things that make you appreciate things in life. You turn the TV off, and you feel so bad and selfish. Your 30 minutes have passed. Still want to go?

—Sherika Walters, 13, African-American, Riviera Beach, Florida. Sherika writes, “This story relates to an event that happened earlier in my life. I felt really guilty and needed something to express how I felt. Pen and paper came to mind.”

Art: Kristen Dicharry and Li-Chuan Chiang, Eugene, Oregon.
Outside the Box

"Hey cheeseburger, Shamu, or Marshmallow. What did you eat last night? Your whole house?" her peers scream as she walks down the hall everyday. She is just a little ant trying to escape the large sneaker coming to squish her for the fun of it. Squish her like a bug. They mock and tease her just to be funny around their friends. They snicker and point at her as they make smart remarks to her face. She smiles but I know it crushes her heart like a glass bottle being thrown down on a dirty sidewalk. I've seen the tears, tears of wondering why she can't fit in like everybody else.

Who is this person, you may ask? She is the most creative, truthful, caring friend I have. She's my best friend. I met her two years ago when she moved in down the street. We had tons in common and could carry on a conversation for hours. When we got to school, I realized she didn't fit in at all with my group of friends. They all talked about her weight and style and at first, I pretended to agree with them. That was the biggest mistake of my life! I denied being friends with her just so I could fit in with my friends better. I was scared that if they knew the truth, they'd make fun of me, too.

Through the next few months, I realized how much she didn't fit into some groups of people. Some didn't want to be seen with her, or some wouldn't even just give her a friendly hello. They walked into her in the halls because they thought she should move for them. I don't understand how she could hold back all the tears in her brown eyes. For all the times she still gets teased, her confidence level is always at its peak. She still has hopes and dreams like the rest of us.

After awhile, I came to the conclusion that if she doesn't fit in for the way she looks, then I won't fit in with my other friends because of all of the memories she and I have: the shopping sprees, sleepovers, parties, and hours talking on the phone are better than not fitting in. Sure, sometimes I feel like I won't fit in with my group of friends because I'm friends with her. Maybe it's good sometimes not to fit in. Maybe it's all right to step outside the box of the "cool" things to do. Sure, sometimes I'll feel that I don't fit with my other friends, but at least I know I'm not alone.

—Julia Hubbard, 9th grade, Gibsonia, Pennsylvania.

Being the Fat Kid

In elementary school, I felt like no one was my friend. One night, after being made fun of, I fell asleep wondering what it would be like if I were the skinny, handsome boy. For those five minutes, I was jealous of all those kids who never were teased and had everything easy.

Then, I attended a sleep-away camp for three years in a row. Each summer when I came home, nobody would recognize me. I kept dropping more and more pounds. I felt great.

One day in the 8th grade, I saw a boy that was overweight like I once was, walking with his head down. Just as I used to do, he tried not to make eye contact with anyone. I wondered if he was teased like I was. The next day, I saw him again and I was surprised to see what was going on.

"You're so fat!" yelled one.

"You're the fattest kid I've ever seen!" went another as he shoved him against the locker.

My good friends, who I had known since I was little, were teasing this boy and calling him the same names that traumatized me for so many years. I was disturbed, so I went over to them.

"Get away from him," I screamed. "What did he ever do to you?"

Although they walked away as I asked them to do, I didn't feel that they got the message that some things hurt more than others. The boy looked at me, smiled, and said, "Thanks." Then he walked away to his next class. He never looked back, he just kept walking through the glass hallway. But this time, he walked with his head up.

—David Gelbard, 15, New City, NY.
In the daily life of a Westerner, food is generally associated with hunger, taste, and fullness. Living a rush-rush existence in the city, one does not usually pay much attention to one's eating habits, beyond the common notions of cleanliness and good manners, such as not speaking with one's mouth full when consuming a meal. Yes, "consume" is perhaps the best way to describe it. If one eats merely to fill the stomach and satisfy one's taste for the sweet, the sour, or the spicy, the process can hardly be called truly "eating" by Japanese standards. It lacks complexity.

The Japanese tabemono, i.e. "things to eat" are not merely food. Satisfaction from food is expected to be not merely physical but also psychological—the color, texture, shape and size of the food, together with those of the plates on which it is served, is supposed to provide a "feast for the eyes" and for the stomach. Potato chips, steaks, pizza, and other non-Japanese foods are of course, excluded from this general rule. It applies exclusively to the "classical Japanese" (和風) and "modern Japanese" (新和風 or 现代和風) cuisine.

Dishes are almost never big; in fact, things are always brought to the table in very small portions. One finds one's table covered with miniscule plates and pieces of fish, cheese, meat, vegetables, tofu, and beans, all cooked differently, all distinct.

The design, color and shape of the food and plate should not just fit together but also represent something. For example, a red leaf would be present, whether real or representational, if the meal is served during autumn. Often the food on the plate represents a contrast of the soft and the hard, the still and the moving. Food is, of course, never served alive, although often it is uncooked and fresh. A colorful example would be red-and-white shrimps arranged with yellow yolk to form what would be very much like a chrysanthemum, with one or two real leaves added in order to strengthen the likeness. 

One might wonder which one of the many colorful dishes to begin with. In Japanese food, however, one thing is certain—what is served hot is to be eaten hot and what is served cold is to be eaten cold. It is that simple! Otherwise, you are free to begin with anything on the table and are not likely, in a traditional Japanese restaurant, to mistake the dessert for the main course. (The dessert will be served last, as is the drink, usually.) Even boiled or fried food is, at times, served cold, for when cold, it has its best taste and appearance. The most obvious example of cooked food served cold would be the world-famous tempura. If you find it hot, then you are probably in a cheap restaurant during lunchtime... Do not be surprised by obviously unedible leaves and flowers on the plate as decorations.

There are many Japanese foods that require a bit of explaining to be fully appreciated because, despite the striking colors of tabemono, their flavors are much more subtle. Tofu ( 豆腐 ), sushi ( 寿司 ) and tempura ( 天ぷら ) are just three of Japan's most famous dishes, among thousands. Perhaps not even many Japanese people can list all of the wonderful dishes to be enjoyed in the Land of the Rising Sun or all of the millions of things to be taken into account when appreciating tabemono.

Itadakimasu! Dig in!
-Natalia Petrovskaiia, 17, Russian, Tokyo, Japan.
Music

I sit at the table and wait for
Nothing except for the smell
of mom cooking a melody
She tunes the drums as she
Taps on the countertop
She plays the violin as she rubs
The pot with a metal fork
She plays the guitar as she
She slips on the floor
She shakes the rattles as
She places down forks
Plates, knives, spoons
She plays the piano
As she hums slowly
She has created a band
That can never fail.

—Christopher Fox, 11, New York City, NY.
Artwork: Kristen Dicharry, U.O. student, Eugene.

Czech Poppy Seed Noodles

My grandfather Louis Rada arrived in New York City from Czechoslovakia on July 21st, 1910. He came into this country alone at age eighteen. He married my grandmother when she was just a girl of fifteen. They raised two daughters, both college graduates, and had five grandchildren.

As a child, I heard the Czech language spoken a little, but only when Grandpa wasn’t around. It was his wish that our family leave the language and customs of the “old country” behind and become “American” in every way. The only real Czechoslovakian heritage that was passed down in our family was the food.

When I was a young girl, my grandfather died and my grandmother moved next door to us. She would cook and invite me to dinner so she wouldn’t have to eat alone. My grandmother was a wonderful cook and we grew up eating Czech foods. She made things like sauerkraut with caraway seeds, dumplings of all kinds, and mouth-watering desserts like poppy seed cake and kolache.

One of my favorite dishes was the Poppy Seed Noodles. They were delicious and to this day I can almost taste the butter, sugar, and poppy seeds melting in my mouth.

HOW TO MAKE THEM: If you want to make Poppy Seed Noodles, get a package of noodles and cook them according to the directions on the package. Next, melt some butter or margarine in a cup. When the noodles are finished cooking, drain and pour them onto a platter. Sprinkle poppy seeds and sugar on the noodles. Drizzle the butter on top. Yum!

—Maralee Gerke, Madras, Oregon.
Ramadan's End

It's 5:30 a.m.,
I begin to see just a thread of light in the eastern sky.
We wash and get dressed so that we are pure for prayer,
jump in the car and listen to the Holy Book on tape.
Twenty minutes pass...it's time to place the head cover, the hijab, on my head.
I reach the mosque...
Thousands and thousands of Muslims are gathered—different colors, different cultures
on the holiest day in Islam.
More and more gather in the mosque
ready to pray to Allah,
women wearing their hijabs follow the lead of men.
An hour later, Muslims are still entering the holy house of God.
Silently, I wait for prayer.

The man up front, the Sheikh,
dressed in white
with a long beard, faces east, the Kiblah, towards Mecca.
He leads us,
his voice filled with meaning and compassion
as he begins to read the holy book of Qu'ran.
His voice echoes throughout the mosque
as he reads into the microphone in front of him.
We repeat his words in our hearts and minds.
We follow the prostrations of the Sheikh.
Prayer is over.
We shake hands with our Muslim brothers and sisters.
Thousands of Muslims leave—different colors, different cultures
on the holiest day in Islam.
We gather with families, exchanging money and gifts.
We eat one big feast representing the end of Ramadan and fasting...

How strange to think that Ramadan is over, fasting is over,
having special dinners with families for this holiday is over.
This time in which many have dealt with the same hunger and thirst
that others deal with everyday, has passed.
But next year will come, and Muslims around the world will begin
the fasting of the holy month of Ramadan all over again.
And two months from now, millions of Muslim brothers and sisters
will make the pilgrimage to Mecca and around the holy house of God, the Ka'bah.

—Nadeen Alkhawam, 15, Clarkstown North HS, NY. Art by Sheree LeDoux, Eugene, OR.

Our friends, Tamam and Pat Adi of the Islamic Center of Eugene, tell us: "We fast the ninth
month of the lunar year from dawn to sunset to learn self-control and empathy. We celebrate this
achievement at the end of the month with a holiday called Eid, full of presents and great food."
The High Holy Days

As summer plants go to seed, the earth prepares for the long, winter cooking of life beneath the surface. Darkness increases and the trees go bare. Inner fires are lit as the earth is kept warm by the snow until the sap rises in the Spring and another turning of seasons begins. We, too, are part of this natural system of turning in and out; part of this system of Heaven and Earth. The High Holy Days initiate the period of turning inward for Autumn and Winter.

The High Holy Day cycle begins with the daily sounding of the Shofar, or ram's horn, exactly one new moon prior to Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It ushers in a 40-day period of deep soul searching, where we're called to look within with honesty and clarity as well as with abundant gentleness, compassion and the assurance of the Creator's love. This cycle is highlighted by Yomim Noraim (Ten Days of Awe) from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (at-one-ment).

We are called upon during this progression in the High Holy Days to do Teshuvah, which is often translated as Repentance. This includes work of forgiveness and of making reparations. Teshuvah has the root meaning of turning, and is nothing less than the work of becoming co-creator with the Source, the Holy One of Being. Teshuvah teaches us that we are self-creators and that we can manifest the essence of the Divine within us. It is the gift we are given as our human birthright which enables us to change the very course of our lives through free will and intention. It is an expression of our individuality and our capacity to heal ourselves.

Finally, Teshuvah is critical to our calling as people to do Tikkun Olam—the mending and healing of the world. Our tradition teaches: “The human must complete the work of God's creation both physically and ethically.”

The High Holy Days initiates the first half of the Fall cycle. It culminates in Sukkot—the week-long Biblical festival of the Fall Harvest and thanksgiving. It is a gathering for thanksgiving, joy, celebration and reconnecting with our Earth roots.

After the spiritual self-cleansing and healing, doing the work of Teshuvah and transcending our guilt, self-doubts and cynicism, on Sukkot we dance, sing, and eat what we have gathered in the Fall Harvest. We build and live in Sukkahs (flimsy booths) for seven days. We offer prayers for rain and are reminded of the vulnerability and fragile contingency of our earthly lives. We return to a place of appreciation for the simpler blessings of life.

The early Hasidic masters taught us that the essence of the High Holy Days tradition is the worship of the Holy One and of blessing through, and in, joy. For, through joy we can achieve what we fail to bring to pass through the power of prayer alone.


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Skipping Stones

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**An Indian Thanksgiving**

i will just lay out the truth,  
there is no turkey at my thanksgiving dinner.

yet i know it’s the tradition  
to have turkey  
with sweet creamed corn  
mashed potatoes, and warm exotic pie  
but my family prefers to defy convention

it is our Indian thanksgiving that we hold every year  
Indian dishes and sweets worthy of being eaten  
only once in a year

baked breads we would never imagine eating  
tender chicken that would be only fed to the princes  
luscious mangoes that drip when you bite into them  
juice that is so freshly prepared  
it makes our teeth hurt

we do have potatoes  
give us that much credit

i only hope we are no different than other  
thanksgiving feasts  
from Far East, to Far West

the true crux of the matter is  
thanksgiving is celebrated by every culture  
every race, religion and creed

we are just thankful  
because that is the essence of thanksgiving

we are thankful that we have this much  
and we are hopeful to give back to others

we can celebrate this holiday  
even without turkey.

—Shawn Gulati, 17, CNHS, New York.

**An Evening**

You are suddenly on my mind,  
Flashling in the horizon,  
I love you so much,  
Between letters, presents, and a lot of happiness.

You fill my heart,  
Like velvet in the sky,  
Towards spring or summer, winter’s snow  
Dissolving the sorrows,  
Into the final end of happiness.

I love you, my Mum!

—Juliana Matei, 11, Onesti, Romania.

**Speech of Leaves**

White and brown branches  
Leaning upon the blue sky  
Tree, are you lonely?

—Naquisa Kodema, 14, Gibsonia, PA.  
Art: Sheree LeDoux, Eugene.

**Prejudice**

On Halloween just last year, I  
went with my sister to her friend’s house. We were in front of the house, chilling  
on the stairs. I went inside to see how the house looked. I started hearing people cursing  
each other outside. I went out and saw some of my friends and some of my sister’s friends  
cursing back at these Polish people who were saying all these bad things about us Mexicans.

We didn’t like that, so we talked back. They said they were going to report us to the police and bring a gang after us. Finally, we all went in the house.

I think we should have just ignored them from the start, but we didn’t like what they called us, so we talked back. It was a bad idea that we cursed back at them. I think that if this happens again, we should just walk away because maybe we could get into a fight.

—George Carchi, grade 7, Chicago, Illinois.
An Icelandic Christmas

Door Slammer. Shorty. Candle Beggar. Do these names sound familiar to you? How about Sausage Snatcher, Spoon Licker, or Pot Scraper? You would recognize these names if you lived in Iceland, where some people believe in thirteen Christmas elves, or Yulemen.

These elves are said to be descendants of trolls named Grylla (gril-la) and Leppaluoi (lep-a-loi), who have a reputation for being rather mean to disobedient children. Just like their parents, the elves were first known as being dangerous to children, but now they are friendly men who are usually welcomed during the Christmas season.

Each elf has a unique identity, as you can tell by their names. Other names include Sheep Cote Clod, Meat Hooker, Bowl Licker, Skyr Gobbler, Gully Imp, and Doorway Sniffer. Although these are some of the more popular names for elves, there are more than seventy names for these mischievous Yulemen.

The names of the elves describe their behavior when they arrive at Icelandic homes. Door Slammer slams doors to awaken sleeping children. Candle Beggar captures candles from homes and Meat Hooker attempts to take off with the meat. Imagine what it would be like to have a Window Peeper visit your home!

While it might sound as if these Yulemen are unkind, children look forward to their arrival each year. Beginning December 12th, the elves come down from the mountains one by one. Children put their shoes on their bedroom window sills, and each night an elf leaves a treat in the shoes of well-behaved children. Naughty children might find a potato in their shoes, reminding them not to misbehave. Some children leave gifts in their shoes for the Yulemen, such as a candle for Candle Beggar or a sausage for Sausage Snatcher.

By Christmas Eve, all the elves have arrived, and then on Christmas Day, one by one, they start to return to the mountains. The last Yuleman goes home on January 6th. This day is called the Thirteenth because all thirteen elves have left. Families then take down their Christmas tree and decorations, recognizing that the Thirteenth is the last day of Christmas.

Perhaps you have never met the Icelandic Christmas elves, and chances are you’ve never received a potato in your shoe. But if you ever visit Iceland during Christmas, don’t be surprised if slamming doors awaken you!

—Colleen Upton, Littleton, Colorado.
Illustrated by Bobbie Anderson, Eugene, Oregon.
Family, etc.

Little sisters are exuberant puppy dogs.
They jump up and down for hours on your bed
They run into you at lightning speed and knock you over.
They chatter away about everything and nothing.
They emit a unique odor of Play-Do and Spaghetti-Os
and fresh brown dirt
And their sloppy, grubby kisses taste surprisingly sweet.
Their voices sound like the feel of popping powder candy on your tongue,
Popping and bubbling like my cousin Shari in Madison
At our family reunion,
Talking to everyone to make us get along.
We didn’t get along.
My uncle lives in California, and
I have no aunts
Because most people in my family can’t manage to stay married.
My family tree is as complex as a stoichiometry problem,
Since it’s brown and has brown branches.
“You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your family.”
The coveted cup of contentment
Fills up too late. Relatives try to escape each other
Using busy lives as an ever-present excuse,
Like eyes hiding behind dark sunglasses on a sunlit day.
Hurtling through time on flying calendar carpets,
Birthmarks and wrinkles and thinning hair, the thick ticket stubs of an arduous journey.
Hamburgers replace kishka on dinner menus,
And in another twenty years, new inventions take their place—
Steak and cracker packages, sugarcoated praying-mantis.
Until then we live
Paper monuments flapping in the breeze,
Our beginning remembered and our end forgotten.
C’est la vie.
Time sweeps away the charred remains of lives long faded from is earth
Leaving nothing, only
A mound of regurgitated Play-Do amidst newly turned brown dirt.

—Keshet Shenkar, junior, Columbus Torah Academy, OH.

Maintaining a Family

I push the door open,
hear a bell jingle
The smell of old clothes and dust rolls over my head like a wave.

Getting a head start on my Christmas shopping,
I run fingers over a vase,
paint faded over the years, a piece missing.
The faint brush strokes of flowers in a
garden resembles my family:
Now we are miles apart, old, neglected,
our separate pieces all on different shelves.

We come to the same table each year,
But we don’t eat together anymore.
Conversation used to be vibrant.
As the years passed, those conversations dwindled.
This year we will eat in silence.

I pull my hand from the vase,
rubbing my fingers together to rid them of dust.
As I head out the door,
I see movement in the corner of my eye.
A young boy, in only a thin sweatshirt.
I think of icy wind, the slush-filled sidewalk.

What if he doesn’t have parents?
And if he does, they certainly don’t have much money.
Here I stand, crying in my mind for the lost family.
But who am I to complain?

I have the chance at a family.
What if it’s my effort that’s lacking?
Maybe it’s me not doing her part.
Maybe this time I’ll start the first exchange of words.

—Andrea Mendez, 16, Congers, New York.
“You’re kidding,” “I don’t believe it!” “No way!” Those are things I hear all the time. So after awhile, you get used to them. The reason I hear all those comments so often is because I’m a twin, a fraternal twin (twins that don’t look alike). Actually, my sister and I are different in almost every way possible. We look totally different, have different tastes in clothing, and like different foods. The difference in our personalities is what most people can’t get over. You would think, since we are so different, that people wouldn’t get us mixed up, but they do all the time. Even my family occasionally, but, like I said, after awhile you get pretty used to it.

There are many ups and downs when it comes to being a twin. For example, if my sister and I are at school, and we get in a little argument, people think it’s kind of funny. We just say to them, “If you were with your brother/sister all the time, you would fight, too.” That and getting called by each other’s names are really the only downsides.

There are many more pluses though. For example, my sister has a trundle bed, so in the summer I usually sleep in her room. It’s like having a sleepover every night with your best friend! Plus, you always have someone to hang out with and talk to. What I love about being a twin most is that since we are the same age, we can relate to each other. If I have a problem with a friend, my sister knows her, too, so she will know how to help me solve my problem even better than my mom, dad, or brother. Also, if there is a test, it’s always nice to have someone to study with who actually knows what you’re talking about and what the teacher is like. Plus there is the constant game of who can get the better grades. For example, my sister and I are always trying to see who can get her name on the 100% board the most times.

People are always telling us how lucky we are that we’re twins. I used to just nod my head and smile, but lately, since I’ve written this paper, I have really noticed how lucky I am. Before I think we both just took it for granted. I can’t even begin to imagine what life would be like without my twin sister. It would be like losing an important part of myself.

I was always fascinated by the quote, “Friends are like four-leaf clovers; they are hard to find, but you’re lucky to have them.” I guess I can say I was born with my four-leaf clover because my twin is my best friend, and I didn’t even have to look for her! No matter what, no matter where, we would always be there for each other whenever one of us need someone through school, through careers, through marriages, through life. I’ve found that lucky four-leaf clover, and I’m not going to lose her.

—Katie Senkoski, grade 8, Gibsonia, PA.

Art by Li-Chuan Chiang, Eugene.

Good Old Days

When we were young, things did not matter so much.
Friends were friends,
That’s all that mattered.
We played with everyone and played anything.
We were who we were, that’s all.
Oh, how I miss those days.

Getting older took its toll.
You need to be thin, popular, pretty and smart to be on top.
Needing the best clothes, friends and hair style.

Why isn’t everyone equal like they were back then?
Liked for who they were,
Not for what they had.

—Maria Ashton, 14, Eagan, Minnesota.
Gone Loony for Aunt Lottie’s Wedding

Nadine climbed on the stage, remembering exactly how to stand. Everyone gathered around. Two sewing ladies pulled and pinned at the waist of her dress. Grandma sniffed. “She looks like a dainty rose turned upside down.”

“She’s a flower girl picked right from a garden,” commented Aunt Lottie, the bride-to-be.

“Someone pass me a tissue,” said Nadine’s Mom, her eyes spilling tears.

“And her dress fits like a good pair of pantihose! Not another tuck needed anywhere,” said the older sewing lady with the measuring tape scarf. “That’s all for today. Pick up the dress tomorrow.”

Nadine and her family left the dress store, headed to the florist. Nadine listened to talk about the wedding’s eve. Grandma mentioned a Polterbend, an old German custom. She also mentioned cups and dishes being smashed in front of Aunt Lottie’s house!

“Lottie, to bring good luck,” said Grandma, “you’ll have to sweep up the shards yourself.”

Nadine wondered, “Is my family the only one that breaks things when people get married?”

At the florist, Nadine told the lady behind the counter about the Polterbend.

“Many years ago in China, when my great-grandmother married, she had a ‘good luck woman’ dress her hair before the wedding and say lucky words,” explained the lady.

“I don’t think Aunt Lottie has a good luck woman,” Nadine replied.

Their next stop was the bakery. The warm scent of cookies filled the air. Mom and Grandma browsed the pastry displays. Aunt Lottie flipped through a cake book, making notes on a piece of paper.

“Ever been to a German Polterbend?” Nadine asked the baker kneading dough.

“No,” said the baker, “I’m from Italy.”

“Do they break dishes at weddings in Italy?”

“No, but we throw rice and the bride wears a crown of orange blossoms.”

“I don’t think Aunt Lottie’s wearing a crown or orange blossoms,” replied Nadine.

After the bakery, they stopped at the shoe store to pick up shoes dyed to match Nadine’s dress. Nadine tugged on a salesman’s jacket. “Excuse me, have you been to a wedding where people break stuff the night before?”

“We don’t break stuff at Hawaiian weddings. We hula dance.”

“I don’t think there will be hula dancing,” said Nadine. “Unless that’s the funny dance my Grandma does when she listens to the radio.”

The last stop of the day was the disc jockey. Aunt Lottie had prepared a list of songs for him to play at the wedding.

“Do you have any plate breaking songs?” asked Nadine. “We’re having a Polterbend.”

“No,” the Disc Jockey replied, “but at my sister’s African-American wedding, the bride and groom’s wrists were joined with a grass braid, linking them together. I played drums during the ceremony.”

“I don’t think drums are needed for dish breaking,” replied Nadine.

The night of the Polterbend, friends and family arrived with cups, dishes, even toilets and sinks! They smashed their offering in front of the house. Aunt Lottie swept away the shards. She said her best luck would come from Grandma’s false teeth. Grandma had cheered so loud; her teeth flipped from her mouth and broke when they hit the ground!

On the morning of the wedding, Mom curled Nadine’s hair—and cried. Grandma fluffed Aunt
Nicole Hersh, 14, New City, New York. Art: Li-Chuan Chiang.

"Faccia Bella"

She was my great-grandma, and boy was she great. She was a stubborn woman, pure Italian from the port of Bari in Southern Italy. I was only five years old when she passed away, but I have one vivid memory of her.

"English, Grandma, speak English." That is what I heard from my Grandma and mother every time we went to see her at the nursing home. It was like she was pretending she didn’t know how to speak our language. She had “forgotten” as she got older. Or maybe she just didn’t want to forget where her heart was.

Those two words, “faccia bella” were all Great-Grandma would say to me. Once I learned what it meant, it made my face brighten up as I giggled. “Beautiful face” is what she called me. This, and some mumbling dialect, which would prompt me to look to my Grandma. She was the only one who fully understood those words that sounded like marbles rolling across the floor. My mom, every so often would catch a few of them. Me, I just let them roll by.

Great-Grandma would sit there, in her wheelchair, smiling when I entered the room. On her lap, she always had a blue and pink blanket that she crocheted herself.

"Do people cry at your weddings?"
"All the time," he said. “They’re tears of joy.”
"Maybe my family isn’t that wacky after all," she replied.

The driver laughed. Nadine giggled. The limousine stopped.

Mom whispered to Nadine, “Now, it’s time.”

Outside closed doors, Nadine stood first, holding her basket. The organ started to play. The doors opened. The crowd turned toward Nadine.

Nadine gulped. She paused for a moment. Then, as she had practiced, Nadine glided down the aisle dropping flower petals.

—Tabatha Jean D'Agata, Hooksett, New Hampshire.
Art: Sheree LeDoux, Univ. of Oregon, Eugene
Meet Pamela Sastra, a Budding Indonesian Artist

When I was four years old, my mom took me to a drawing class for little kids. Mr. Tino Sidin was my teacher. He was one of the most famous drawing teachers in Indonesia in the 1980s. I really enjoyed the activities in that class so I asked my mom to register me as a real student, not just as a guest. I went twice a week to the class for two years. I entered drawing competitions for kids and I won an award for one of them. I remember that I drew fish that time. I was not expecting to win an award. I was so surprised and excited. It was my first award.

Then, sadly, I had to move to a different part of the city. I had to quit that school. After I moved, my interest in art was gone. I tried many art schools and private drawing teachers, but they didn’t interest me. I never did my art homework. I always asked my mom to draw or do my art homework. I concentrated more on other subjects like math and science because they were more difficult and took me longer to understand. But one thing happened that changed it all. In fourth grade, I was caught. The teacher knew that it was not my work. I tried to lie and told him that it was my work, but he still did not believe me. He gave me a zero for a grade.

Because of that, I wanted to show him that I could really draw. So, I practiced by myself, drawing anything that I had in mind. Finally, my interest in art increased again. I was getting A’s for my art projects, without anybody’s help. The weird thing was that my teacher did not ask if I was being helped or not. He just trusted me. I was very proud of myself.

Since then, I always finish my art homework before the deadline. I started to learn different kinds of art. Perspective art was kind of confusing for me the first couple of weeks because we used a lot of lines and rules, but I managed to understand. I got A’s in art class during high school. However, my other subjects did not turn out well. I got a lot of B’s and C’s, especially in subjects like math, chemistry, and biology. In Indonesia, there are three main subjects that you cannot fail. They are religion, Indonesian language, and ethics. If you fail one of them, you have to repeat the whole year. Fortunately, I did pretty well in those three subjects.
After high school, I decided to continue my studies out of the country in the United States. I went to Edmonds Community College, in Washington, because my English test score was not high enough to enter a four-year university.

I was surprised that studying in the U.S. was not as difficult as I expected, except for the papers that we had to write. In Indonesia, students go to school Monday through Saturday, from 7 am to 4 pm. On those days I had to wake up at 4 am because I had to share the bathroom with my brother and two sisters. I also had to go early because the traffic in Jakarta, the city where I grew up, is really bad and my school was far away. I did not want to be late to school. In the U.S., the bus has its own schedule and people really follow the rules of the road. The buses in Jakarta don’t have a schedule. During rush hours, the buses won’t stop and you have to run and jump into the bus. They also let people in until they are really full and some people have to hang on the door outside of the bus. A lot of accidents happen because people do not follow the rules.

It was hard, but I really enjoyed it. I even learned ceramics, metal-smithing, and printmaking. Before, I knew only about drawing and painting. I chose Fine Arts as my major and I learned multimedia design.

I graduated in Spring 2003. I have so many good memories about my journey in life. My family has helped me so much; they always support every decision I make. I do not know what is going to happen in my future, but I do know I want it to be in art and design. I cannot stay away from it. I will go anywhere and do anything to make it happen.

—Pamela Sastra

has now successfully completed her student internship with Skipping Stones.
Developing Global Perspectives

International Exchange Students Share their Views and Experiences

On June 17th, 2003, just after the school was out for summer, we gathered five international students to talk about their year-long exchange experience in the Northwest. Miloje Chekerevac comes from Serbia; Felizitas Laurent is from Hamburg, Germany; Gustavo Santiago is from Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Andrea Contreras is from Santiago, Chile; and Mila Sufianova came to Eugene from Irkutsk, our sister city in Russia. The students ranged from 15 to 18 years. Alan Siporin, author and news analyst for KLCC Public Radio, moderated our panel discussion. He began with the hot topic of the time: the war in Iraq.

Miloje: When I heard about war in Iraq, I was thinking that, first of all, I’m always against war. At first I wasn’t, but without considering the U.N. and European countries it was kind of like President George Bush wanted to just go by himself to solve the problem. We knew Saddam was really a dictator and it was really his regime that killed his own people. Everywhere you could see misery and I think it was time to end some of that. But I expected the U.S. military to go back home after the war ended because if they did their job and killed those who were responsible for killing and persecuting innocent people, it’s time for them to go home. If United States and British still stayed there it would just show that all they wanted was oil.

Alan: Would your friends back in Serbia agree with you for the most part?

Miloje: I don’t know. There are people with different opinions there. Life in Serbia is pretty tough and people are looking to survive and most people just don’t care about the war. They are occupied with their own problems and don’t really care what’s going on in the rest of the world.

Alan: Mila, you’re from Russia and Felizitas, you’re from Germany, both countries officially opposed this war. What were your thoughts?

Mila: Our president said that we had 20 million Muslims in Russia so we are not going to go against the Muslims. I think a lot of people in my country were opposed to the war, too.

Felizitas: All my friends and all my family are against the war. When I said I was going to the U.S., they didn’t think it was a good choice. I didn’t even want to come here... it was my fifth choice actually.

Alan: But you ended up meeting a lot of Americans who actually agreed with you?

Felizitas: I think Eugene is more to the political left. I mean if I were in the southern states, I’m sure I would find more supporters of the war. Here in Eugene it’s harder to find somebody who’s actually for the war.

Alan: Andrea, you are from Chile and Gustavo, from Brazil. That seems like a long way from Iraq and everything going on. What were your thoughts when you first heard about it?

Gustavo: Well, in Brazil people got really worried about war. They follow the news and I couldn’t find any person who approved of what the president did. I think it’s a shame to have a person like him as president of the most powerful country in the world.

Alan: Well, it wasn’t that long ago that 9/11 happened. Then you were all back home. How do you remember that event being reported and how did you react to that?

Felizitas: I think nobody has the right to kill; in no way would I say this was right or the people...
who did this are good or that they had the right to do it. But in Germany, every single day for a month, we only heard about this. I was thinking that in the world there are thousands of people dying every day and nobody cares about them; nobody ever writes something about them in the media, and now Americans are dying and it’s all around the world and everybody donates money and has silent moments. We had a silent minute in my school. I thought it was a little bit weird that this got so much attention. I don’t think it’s good.

Mila: I don’t think 9/11 is just American because I know a lot of people from all over the world were working in those towers... my friend’s uncle was working there and he died: it’s not just an American thing—it’s a world terrorism thing.

Alan: It was the World Trade Center. People from all over the world were working there.

Felizitas: Seeing the pictures of all the people who are searching for their daughters, sons, husbands, I don’t think there’s anything that could make it better. Still, there are wars that are going on in Africa right now. Is that in the news everyday?

Alan: Gustavo do you remember what you were doing at the time?

Gustavo: I was at school when I got the news and the first couple of weeks it was the main subject to talk about. Everybody was pretty sad, although there are some people in Brazil who have a stereotype of Americans. They think all Americans think they are the best and they own the world. So they were making jokes about it, but I, myself and other people were more open-minded. They got really sad and sorry about this. In Brazil, we don’t feel sorry just for Americans—more innocent people are going to die, too. Brazil’s in the middle; people don’t approve of what the President of the United States does yet they don’t approve of what terrorists do either.

Alan: What were you and your friends and family thinking about your coming to America?

Gustavo: It’s a very complicated question because some people make stereotypes about Americans and they really don’t like them. For example, my mom doesn’t like America. She says, “You shouldn’t go to America. Go to Europe, go to Europe.” She’s been to Europe but she’s never been to America. And I’m like, “How can you talk about a place like that without even going to that place?” So I think the exchange program was really good because when I came here I saw the reality, and not just what they think, but what it really is. My dad wanted me to go to America. He’s been an exchange student here so he had a better idea of the country. I don’t regret that I came here. I think it was really cool, although it’s not very different from my country.

Alan: Miloje?

Miloje: My family, they were really excited for my coming over here. My mother was especially excited since she’s an English teacher. She was really happy for me that I had the opportunity to go and to see a different culture. My friends were really excited and happy, too.

Alan: Mila, what about coming from Russia, what was the response there?

Mila: Well, the American government paid a scholarship for me to go here; they just called and said, “You’re going to America.” Both of my parents were really excited for me. Life is really different there and it’s hard to live over there and so they were like, “Wow that’s cool you can see life with a higher standard of living.”

Alan: Is everybody learning a second language?

Mila: Yeah, it’s mandatory to learn one foreign language since first grade.

Alan: And a lot of kids choose English?

Mila: Yeah, I think English is one of the most popular because, well...to find a basic job as a secretary or something, you have to know English. So, a lot of people study it.

Felizitas: In Germany it’s required. I started to learn English in fifth grade.
Alan: What about you Andrea? Did you have to take a foreign language?

Andrea: Yeah, it’s mandatory to take English, I think from the fifth grade.

Miloje: In Serbia it’s required from third grade; it doesn’t matter which elementary school you attend. But there, since Serbia was in wars for the last 450 years, you can’t expect a good economy. In Serbia, the average income is $150 per month. You can’t really live on that.

Alan: Mila, you said things are hard in Russia too.

Mila: Well, we finished up with Communism a long time ago, but rebuilding the economy is not a one year process. The rebuilding is still going on and it’s hard. We live in these small apartments and my family purchased a car three years ago, which is the first car that we’ve had. It’s just different from America, where everyone has six cars and a big house. We have a two-bedroom apartment and one car and you know, that counts—that’s really good.

Miloje: It’s pretty much the same in Serbia. The first difference I noticed when I came over here it was that as you drive down a highway you see almost every car has only one person. In Serbia, if you see a car on the street, there are five or six people in the car. That’s also because of the price of gas; it’s $5 per gallon there. We don’t have that many cars so people are usually packed in. We have big stores like Safeway, but people don’t have money to buy from them. There are rich people like here, probably 15 - 20% of the population. But 79% of people are poor and 1% of people are middle class. When you want to see if the economy of a country is good or bad you take a look at the middle class...the economy is just terrible there. There’s no progress; everything is going down because of corruption.

Felizitas: I think Germany has an okay economy. If you compare it to other countries it probably seems really good, but we have a few million unemployed, too. We live in an apartment and we don’t have a car. I know a lot of people who don’t have jobs. I think it’s the same everywhere.

Gustavo: Brazil is one of the countries that has the biggest difference in social classes—there are so many rich people and yet, so many poor people; it is the biggest contrast in the world.

Alan: Is that a big issue in the elections?

Gustavo: Yeah. Some people don’t really care about the government, but I think they should think more about it because it’s their decisions that are going to control what happens to the country in the future.

Alan: Do you all think that you were accepted and fit in at a new school? Or did you feel that there was always some distance, not necessarily because you weren’t from this country, but just because you’re the new kid and only going to be here for six to nine months?

Gustavo: Well, in my school people were really, really friendly and one month after school started I had lots of friends and it was great.

Andrea: Yeah, I think the people were really nice. They all said, “Hi, where are you from?” and they really wanted to know about you.

Felizitas: Sometimes I thought it was a little bit too fake, like “Hi, how are you, it’s so nice to meet you” and they don’t even actually really want to know you. Germans are a little bit closed up; they are not really friendly in the beginning. This was a cultural difference for me. People here say, “Hey, how are you? Let me give you a hug!” I’m like, “Okay.”

Gustavo: In Brazil, it’s the opposite—people are more friendly than here. We are way more open.

Mila: Well, at home, in a store you wouldn’t talk with a salesman and here it’s okay. I actually like it and then you sit in the bus and you can start talking with a person who sits nearby. You don’t
do it at home. I think it might be the size of the city. Eugene has about 140,000 people. While my city is not as big as Belgrade or Hamburg, it’s still bigger than Eugene. So maybe that’s why there’s a difference. I really like this kind of warm attitude.

Felizitas: What I’m going to miss is that the people here in the shops are really friendly. In Germany they’re so unfriendly. They’re like, “You want to buy something in this store?” I like the friendly way here.

Alan: What about food? How is food in America?

Gustavo: I really can’t tell what is American food (everybody laughs). There is nothing specifically from the country, there’s just more fast food. I didn’t try anything new here because it’s pretty much the same thing.

Mila: Well, at home we pretty much eat Russian food. Here, my host family cooks a lot of Italian food. I have tried a variety of foods here. In my city, we don’t have fast food at all. Here I ate a lot of fast food.

Miloje: Um, yeah, about food. That was the biggest issue. When I compare the United States and Serbia I would say that the only thing that’s better in Serbia is food.

Alan: How would you describe Serbian food?

Miloje: When I was a kid I grew up with my grandmother and I would ask, “What kind of food is this?” and she would say, “Oh, it’s Serbian, it’s Serbian.” When I grew up I figured out that everything was Turkish. There were just a couple of dishes that originated in Serbia. But it’s all tasty and I like it a lot.

Gustavo: Well, in Brazil, you can find many different kinds of food. We have all kinds of restaurants from many countries, but there are also regional dishes. For example, in my state, they usually eat rice and beans a lot, with salad and meat. If you go south, they eat a lot more meat. On the coast, they eat a kind of fried flower with beans. I don’t think we have a typical “Brazilian” food; it varies from region to region.

Felizitas: My host family here did one of the greatest things they could do for me. They really adjusted to my habits by not eating a lot of meat; the only meat I eat is organic chicken. In Germany, we eat a lot of potatoes; it’s kind of the stereotype about us Germans, but it’s true. My favorite food is Italian food. My mom makes a lot of pasta and pizza. I already told my mom what I want on the day I come back—German pancakes! You can’t compare them to American pancakes, they’re really different, and I really miss them.

Alan: Mila, what’s going to be your first meal?

Mila: Oh, we call it golubtsi—it’s meat with a little bit of rice, wrapped in cabbage leaves. I miss it so much!

Miloje: Yeah, we call it the same thing. Ground meat with a little bit of rice and ground cabbage. Sour cabbage, which originated in Turkey, is one of the most popular foods in Serbia. It’s really tasty. Serbia, Turkey and Greece all have similar food. Yeah, we like a lot of sour cabbage!

Felizitas: Oh, and another thing, everybody thinks all Germans eat sauerkraut. I don’t know one German who likes sauerkraut. That’s really a stereotype about Germans. It’s not true.

Alan: Well, I want to thank you all very much. It’s been a pleasure.

Our thanks to Beth Erfurth for organizing, to Marissa Merrick for transcribing, and to Alan Siporin for moderating the discussion. Alan (author of Fire’s Edge, an award-winning novel about skinhead culture) conducts workshops on preventing racism and hate crimes. FMI: suspense@fires-edge.com. —editors
Pilgrims

The sun was shining, but the wind was blowing so cold that we had to wear our warmest coats over our sweaters. All around us were small patches of color where the wind had forgotten to blow away the leaves. As we entered the car, I wondered what they would be like. They had a son my age and one who was seven. To them, the chill that we felt would be like a summer breeze. They were from Siberia, and they were coming here to New York, the last of our family to leave the former Soviet Union. My mom had been the first, and now, Thanksgiving Day 1999, the family would be reunited at last. Before seeing them, however, we were going to our usual Thanksgiving feast at my dad’s cousin’s house.

“I wonder what grade they’ll put the boys into,” she’d say. “Kindergarten is okay for Lonya, but I’m not sure if they’ll put Misha into the seventh grade because of his age or somewhere else because of his abilities.”

When we finally got to my dad’s cousin’s house, we were seated. I gazed at the diverse meal in front of me. The golden chicken soup with fluffy, perfect matzo balls in the Jewish tradition, the American turkey, cooked to perfection with tart crimson cranberry sauce and spicy stuffing and my favorite Cuban plátanos. My mom finds them disgusting, but I feel that no meal here would be complete without them. In order to make them, the ripest plantains are chosen and fried until they are amazingly sweet and seem to melt on your tongue. I sat savoring this meal with my family, wondering what sorts of Russian foods I would have later. Throughout the meal my mom and I exchanged knowing glances, anticipating the reunion. Before the desserts were put out we excused ourselves. We wanted to make sure that we wouldn’t be late to our next destination.

Back in the car, I suddenly found myself nervous and began questioning my mom about what was soon to occur.

“Will they speak any English at all?” I asked

“Will I be able to talk to them?”

“Misha took English in school, but I don’t think he knows much,” Mom said. “The rest of them don’t know any, but I’ll try to translate some Russian for you if you want.”

“What made them come?” I asked.

“They wanted a better life—the ability to live better and to practice their religion as they choose. They also wanted their children to be able to aspire to higher things than they could.”

We lapsed into silence again, wondering. Soon we arrived at the apartment where we would see them for the first time.

“Alright,” Mom said somewhat nervously, “is everyone ready? Let’s go.”

We crossed the street, our breath forming small clouds ahead of us and walked into the building. As we neared their apartment on the third floor, the air grew warmer and we began to smell the familiar heavy Eastern European scents—a combination of herring, borscht and musk.

We entered the room and were immediately enveloped by a throng of relatives crowding around four people. These four people were dressed oddly, the boys and man wearing leggings and the woman a long black dress that looked like an oversized sweatshirt. They were speaking Russian. These were the immigrants, or as I had begun to think of them in the car, the pilgrims.

My mom led me to them through the crowd. She introduced us, and after a few minutes of happy talk between my mom and them, the older boy and I exchanged a look. This look crossed all the language boundaries that I had feared might separate us. As I led him past all the people, downstairs, and outside to the basketball court, my heart was warm despite the bitter cold outside. I knew that whatever happened, he and I were family, and we would become great friends despite everything. The pilgrims had come to the New World, and I would help them to love it however I could.

—Lauren Steinberg, Senior, CNHS, New City, N.Y.
Haikus From Around the World

ESL Resource Teacher Ruth Hoenick writes, “Atwater Elementary School in Shorewood, Wisconsin is a diverse community of students. In our school of almost 600, we have more than 100 students from 28 countries, speaking 14 different languages.”

Turkmenistan
Periwinkle skies
Climbing Alps of Ashgabad
Feeling powerful.
—Irma Mehtiyeva, 6th grade.

Somalia
Sunset in desert
Giraffe, cheetah walking slow
Hot Somalia.
—Mohamed Hussein, 2nd grade.

Saudi Arabia
Dark Half-Moon Sea Beach
Tall palm trees are sharp and smooth
Beautiful Red Sea.
—Faisal Al-Timsah, 3rd grade.

Azerbaijan
Baku summer joy
Capture stinging bees in jars
Boiling sun beats down.
—Zaur Sosunov, 6th grade.

Iran
Rich Caspian land
Seagulls floating in warm sky
Humid Persian air.
—Farbod Pourvash, 5th grade.

Colombia
Hot Colombia
Hike near little mountain house
Joyful with my Father.
—Sebastian Laverde, 2nd grade.

Bosnia
Cool water swimming
Bosnian sun sparkles hot
Dad taking pictures.
—Mejreme Zuka, 3rd grade.

India
Looking at warm waves
Fish swims in shiny ocean
Breezy, sunny beach.
—Suhith Bayana, first grade.

Ukraine
Squeaky, striped balloons
Red-nosed, big-shoed juggling clowns
Russian circus joy.
—Alex Nebrat, 4th grade.

Belarus
Lovely Minsk Round Square
Singing birds on tall trees
People watch parades.
—Vitaliy Tufel’d, 3rd grade.

Venezuela
Blazing sun burning
Flee passionate Caracas
Georgeous cool mountains.
—Jean Paul Contramaestre, 6th grade.

Guatemala
Hot sun is shining
Smooth grass feels slippery
Running with my dogs.
—Julian Toralballa, 1st grade.

Korea
Bright lanterns hung high
Korean rice on lettuce
Spicy kimch’i treats
—Solbi Ihm, first grade.

Art: Christine Degley, Eugene.
A journey through Peru, the Land of the Incas will change you forever. Peru has many ecosystems—coastal deserts, high mountains and steaming jungles. On the coastal desert located along the Pacific Ocean, no rain falls. However, some water flows down from rivers in the Andes mountains so crops can be grown.

It is also a land of many peoples: About 52% are Quechua and Aymara-speaking Indians and 12% are of European descent (mostly Spanish). Another 32% are mestizos (a mix of Indian and European descent) and 4% have Amazon Indian, African, or Asian origins.

Life is very hard for most Peruvians. Millions have left rural areas and migrated to cities in the hopes of finding jobs and education.

Peruvians have great pride in their country, government, and traditions. Most Peruvians are devout Catholics and religious holidays are occasions for elaborate processions. Today, in the highland Indian villages, the descendants of the Incas continue to keep their ancestors’ traditions alive. They celebrate feast days with native flute music, colorful costumes, food and dancing. *Inti Raymi*, the Feast of the Sun, is the most important Inca festival and is celebrated each year in Cuzco. It attracts thousands of Peruvian and foreign visitors.

Among Peru’s best known treasures is Machu Picchu, the “Lost City of the Incas.” The Spanish never found this famous city that archaeologists believe was a religious center during Incan times. In fact, it remained hidden until 1911, when it was discovered quite by accident by an American explorer, Hiram Bingham.

Today, thousands of visitors from all over the world come each year to see what remains of the ancient stone city built on a ledge between two peaks in the Andes Mountains. Machu Picchu is one of the most spectacular archaeological sites in the world. It is also magical, mystical, and truly awe-inspiring. If you’re lucky like I was during one of my visits, you may even hear the haunting music of pipes and flutes through the “Lost City of the Incas.”

—Katacha Diaz, Peruvian-American, Davis, CA.

Photos: (top) Mysterious Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas. (left) A Vendor at the Sunday market in Pisac.

See back cover for more images of Peru.
Winter
What
Is winter?
Would you call it
Friend or foe?
Do you like its cold
Winds or brutal snow?
Have you considered letting
It pass by without a look or glance
From your eyes?
I believe that winter is
An old friend returning every season
To remind you of good times.
Winter is a child who throws
Tantrums and then becomes quiet.
Do you see winter as an enemy, throwing
Its wicked winds and stinging snows?
Then see the real beauty of its time,
The snow covered ground, the frosted
Pine needles lying intertwined.
For winter
Is only
A season
Passing in
Time.
—Sean Johnston, Grade 7, Rockford, Michigan.

Living Flowers
I sit down in front of the small, round, water-filled vase, spread the old newspaper by my side, and then gently put the flowers on it, carefully separating their leaves from those of the tall grass. I am preparing for my hobby, ikebana.

The Japanese word “ikebana” means “living flowers.” I can never quite figure out whether it is “flowers that are alive” or “feeling like a live flower” and so for me, it has come to mean a bit of both.

When I do ikebana, Japanese flower arranging, I begin feeling restful and at peace with myself (which is a great relief, for sometimes I get worried about the war raging between the me who likes to watch movies and the me who wants to get good grades in school).

This feeling of peace and contentment is especially nice after doing a lot of studying.

After sitting at my desk all day, bowed over textbooks, sitting down with my back straight and slowly cutting flowers is the best side of pleasant. I love shaping these tender weeds and flowers to suit my fancy. It makes me feel closer to nature, and therefore, calmer, more sure of myself.

The methodical click of the scissors and the smell of wet grass and fresh flowers forces me to breathe more deeply and slowly as I enjoy every moment of it. It lets me contemplate on beauty and nature without being rushed.

Being quiet for a bit, inhaling the pleasant odor...resting, the gentle boughs in my hands...

Calming down, seeing the beautiful bends and shapes that come out of it all...feeling nature...seeing the colors...

Living flowers.
—Natalia Petrovskaia, 17, Tokyo, Japan.

Poetry is
the tender flowers
blooming in the wild sunlight;
the empty space
down in my heart that no one likes;
a boy glimmering in the arms
of his gentle grandfather;
a wet clam
at a sandy beach;
a teacher with a sunlight heart
that loves the children of Kalihi;
a pearly cloud floating in the sky
taking me to God’s castle;
a boy trying to buy
a ring for his mother;
a great Easter day
with a sun that is real shiny.
—Jeremy Walter, 7, Oahu, HI.
Yangqu to Taiyuan

I hop into the dirty, silver-gray van, the engine rumbles and we are off. I watch the mule carts. There are lots of mule carts in between the two cities, carrying goods back and forth. They carry things such as fruits and vegetables from their farms. Pulling the cart is a tired, lazy mule. The wooden cart the mule is pulling is old and rundown. The man always wears shabby, plain, navy blue clothes and a matching hat. He sits on one side of the cart and urges the mule on.

After a while we come to some chickens. They are clucking and waddling around scratching for feed. Having nothing better to do, children play. The young girl’s braids bounce as she runs. The boy’s hood hops along behind him. They chase each other and tease the lazy chickens. The chickens ignore the squealing kids.

I close my eyes for a short rest and fall asleep. When I wake up, I feel the wind pull my hair in wisps around my face. Out the window I see two men squatting by the side of the road with their shirts rolled up. They are smoking. Then I realize that they are staring at me. I look away. My younger sister and brother in the back seat sound like a small crowd at a circus. They whine and giggle. I sigh, listening to them play.

We drive by some factories. The smoke climbs the towers in circles to make its way up and out. The smell of pollution is a sickening smell that makes you hold your breath. It's awful!

When we drive into Taiyuan, there is lots of commotion. The daring bikers drive out in front of cars causing them to screech on their brakes. They honk impatiently wanting to get on their way. The sly motorcycle drivers quietly slip through the traffic, avoiding the commotion. The electric buses are far too big to go much of anywhere. The drivers might as well have sat back and had a cup of coffee. After the commotion dies down, we get through to the university. We are home. Thud. I jump out and run to the bell. Ring!

—Sophia Bouwsma, 10, Shanxi, Taiyuan.
The whole day working
They harvest their labor.
They plant all types
Of crops and fruits
All they germinate is
Hot wind.
Clatter! Clatter!
We live near rivers and lakes
But what do we see today?
We see misfortune and misery.
Rain! Rain!
Today the only rain
Is the rain of the sunrays
Which scorch the land
Day and night,
Burning animals and plants
Creating hunger, drought and suffering.
Zimbabweans, go on working
Your tears will water the plants
In your fields.
—Clifford Manyenga, 17, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Survival Rules to Live by
• Never trust a dog to watch your food.
• Don’t pull Dad’s finger when he tells you to.
• When you’re eating crackers, never sneeze in front of mom.
• Never hold a Dustbuster and a cat at the same time.
• Never hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
• If you want a kitten, start by asking for a horse.
• When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she is on the phone.
• Never try to baptize a cat.

**The Goddess of Winter**

White graces us all.
Her silence talks to trees, whose arms reach out, entranced.
She takes her paintbrush, dips it in white, flicks the bristles.
Frail withered leaves cling to mud brown fingers like a child grasping a mother's jacket.
Branches embrace each other, one intertwined with another: like a stream of water colors across the page.
Mother Nature never looked so elegant.

—Tarilyn Tanico, Gr. 12, CNHS, NY.

**God, Whispering**

Inside of one snowflake there is a waterfall where God is taking a bath.

—Helena Markus, Gr. 3, Trenton, MI.

**Nature**

Gift of God is nature
Gift of nature is creature
Sun has no race
Air has an equal place
Nature is the inspiration
God of every creation
As you disturb nature
It will hurt you everywhere
Human nature jumps to rise
He forgets he is not wise
Birth and death is in hands of nature
Foolish man thinks himself creator.

—Aditya Gopal, 8, New Delhi, India.

**Truly**

(to my cousin Anna)

Running through the grass,
There’s no one by her side.
Her heart is full of tears
That she has learned to hide.

Dashing to the trees,
She runs away from life,
To the only place
That she feels free to cry.

The loneliest girl in the world
Is silent as the dove.
Her sadness blocks her sight,
For she is truly
The most loved.

—Jessica Somers, 14, Gibsonia, PA.

**A Secret Unfolding**

When I was born, shimmering stars flashed before my eyes like diamonds flickering through the sky. Then it was like a secret unfolding, my life story beginning.

And when you quietly spoke to me, I slowly fell asleep to the sound of your tranquil voice.

—Erin Yamada, 12, Honolulu, HI.

**My Reflection**

I am a dancer.
That’s what people see
That’s what they see when they look at me.
I am going to be a dancer to the best of my ability
I am going to be a dancer!

The best dancer that a dancer could be.

When someone looks in a mirror
They see the dancer in me.
They also see my reflection
And when I don’t dance that’s a neglection.

People might not like it
But they can hike it
I am a dancer!
And forever will I be
Staring back at the dancer in me!

—Jamie Van Camp, 11, Kaukauna, Wisconsin.
Mix It Up at Lunch Day: Nov 18, 2003

Want to break down social boundaries in your school? Schools across the U.S. are using Mix It Up at Lunch Day to build tolerance and a sense of community at school. So how does a school mix it up? During lunch hour, students visit different tables to eat and chat with students with whom they usually do not share a table. Divisions among students often occur in lunchrooms, on playgrounds, and on buses because familiar friends who share similar academic and extracurricular interests or styles tend to stick together. By “mixing it up”, however, students have a chance to break out of their comfort zones and celebrate diversity.

A Few Ideas for Mixing It Up:

Designate a table for each birth-month. Visit at least three different tables during lunch. Start a conversation with your new lunch companions: ask questions about others’ interests, favorite classes, future goals... Dialogue is the key.

For more details about Mix It Up at Lunch Day, visit: http://newsletter.tolerance.org.

Mourning elephants, altruistic lions and compassionate cows are at the heart of a unique new initiative by Compassion in World Farming Trust (CIWF Trust) to encourage a different approach to understanding the role of animals in society. CIWF Trust has launched a website and interactive forum at www.animalsentience.com to show young people that animals have inner feelings and emotions. The site looks at examples in pets, farm animals and wild animals. It covers diverse topics such as the relationship between a cow and her calf, how dolphins grieve for a partner, how bees sacrifice themselves to protect the hive and the intelligence of chickens, the materials are designed to provoke thought and discussion. Changing our views about animals is vital if we wish to improve animal welfare.

(Source: www.HinduismToday.com/hpi/)

No Name-Calling Week: March 1-5, 2004

Middle schools across the nation are being asked to hold week-long educational activities aimed at stopping name-calling and verbal bullying during the first week of March 2004.

The No Name-Calling Week project grew out of concern about the pervasive nature of name-calling among today’s youth and the destructive impact it has on the entire school community. The American Association of University Women found in 2001 that 83% of girls and 79% of boys report having experienced harassment at school, with over 25% students experiencing it ‘often’.

Students ages 9-13 consider name-calling to be the worst kind of verbal bullying and threatening words or taunting based on race or appearance to have as much negative impact as physical bullying.

Educational programs are clearly needed to demonstrate a school-wide commitment to stop name-calling and to send clear messages of support to all who are impacted by bullying.

A resource guide with lesson plans, a video for classroom use, promotional materials such as posters, and a website (NoNameCallingWeek.org) are currently being developed.

To launch the first annual No Name-Calling Week in your school, you can partner with GLSEN. Visit their website: www.glsen.org for more details.

The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize will go to Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian lawyer, professor and author—the first Muslim women ever to receive the prize!

Skipping Stones magazine will be honored with the 2003 Parent’s Choice Award this November!
I Am a Military Child
I am a sports player and a smart guy
I wonder if the world will ever die
I hear people saying
it’s coming to an end
I even see people
going that extra mile
I am a military child.
I pretend I’m asleep,
but really I’m deep
I feel the touch on my arm,
and it’s saying don’t be alarmed
I touch an imaginary hand
I worry about me being in the clutch
I cry because I’m wild
I am a military child.
I understand that we are in a war
I say that I don’t want it anymore
I dream that a bomb will drop
I try to make it stop
I hope that when this stops
people will have peace
I am a military child.
—Jamal Burse, 13, Faith M.S.,
Fort Benning, Georgia.

“I Want You”
—Danielle Williams, 13, Gibsonia, PA.

A World of Hate and War
If we look around our world today
What does a child see?
A world of hate and war
Is that what you want us to see?
When a little boy asks
“Why does Daddy go away?”
What is a mother to say?
And a child that wonders about war
Asks, “What if we lose, Mama,
What will happen to us?”
Then what do you say?
What about us?

Do you want us to know
That war is the answer?
Do you want us to grow
Up in a world of hate and war?
What will we tell our children
When they ask, “Why isn’t Grandpa
Here today to love me and hug me?”
Then what will we say?
What will we, the children of today
Say when our world is full of
Hate and regret for our children?
—Bianca Datta, 10, N. Potomac, MD.

Suppose

Suppose
all the soldiers
the suicide bombers
all those who hate,
practiced yoga.
Imagine
how they would begin
each day saluting the sun,
light moving in them
like the rivers
they would no longer
have to cross
and instead of guns,
hearts would lift
into Warrior Pose,
millions of stretching bodies
breathing in
breathing out
like birds
or angels,
elbows and lungs
reaching into a sky without
smoke
if hands not bombs
touched the ground
with one unanimous sigh.
—Deborah Narin-Wells,
Eugene, Oregon


**Going Home, Coming Home** by Truong Tran, illustr. Ann Phong. (*Children’s Book Press*). Ami Chi must go with her parents to visit their home in Vietnam. Despite unfamiliar sights and sounds, she finds that she can feel at home in this strange place. Ages 5–9. ISBN: 0-89239-179-0.


**Mud City** by Deborah Ellis (*Groundwood*). A realistic, fictional story of Shauzia, a girl who flees a refugee camp in Afghanistan and must survive on the streets of Peshawar, Pakistan, with only her dog and her wits to protect herself. Ages 10 and up. ISBN: 0-88899-542-3.

**Thirteen: Thirteen stories that capture the agony and ecstasy of being thirteen** edited by James Howe (*Atheneum*). These stories are as varied as the thirteen authors who wrote them. Perhaps the book’s subtitle captures their nature best. Ages 13 and up. ISBN: 0-689-82863-2.


**Questions for Kids: A book to discover a child’s imagination and knowledge** by Michael Smith (*East West Discovery*). This book of 1000 questions and zero answers will get kids and adults talking with each other. For example: “What are parents for?” and “What can’t you buy with money?” Ages 4-11. ISBN: 0-969437-1-6.

**The Nobel Book of Answers** edited by Bettina Stiekel (*Atheneum*). Twenty-one Nobel Prize winners, including the Dalai Lama, Mikhail Gorbachev and Shimon Peres, answer some of life’s most intriguing questions for young people. Ages 10 and up. ISBN: 0-689-86310-1.


**Poems of the Masters: China's Classic Anthology of T'ang and Sung Dynasty Verse** translated by Red Pine (*Copper Canyon*). Finally the most widely studied anthology of Chinese poetry has been translated. Poems in English and Chinese with English commentary. High school to adult. ISBN: 1-55659-195-0.
Not Just for Parents & Teachers

In our confusing and violent world, seeking ways to live in harmony with others is a mighty challenge. Despite the insistence of the US government that we must wage war to promote safety in the world, there are better ways to arrive at a safe and friendly world. It is up to us, parents and teachers, to show our children more peaceful ways to resolve conflicts.

Teaching cooperation and mutual respect is essential. Let’s work with our children to reach a better understanding of ways to struggle through our differences together, in cooperation, rather than trying ways to outperform one another. It will help bring a safer and peaceful future.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, quoted in Yes! magazine, writes, “If it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

Child by child, person by person, we must learn about ourselves and recognize in ourselves the propensities we have toward peace and toward violence. Choosing peace is an active, ongoing process, that needs to be made explicit, to be discussed, to be taught. It is the more difficult path, especially in the face of perceived danger. It takes impulse control, patience and hard work to negotiate a compromise.

I’ve learned much from people I have met while traveling away from my country. Being outside of your own culture provides an opportunity to observe it from a distance, and to compare it with others. I have come to deeply appreciate and seek to emulate some of the characteristics of cultures I have visited, especially the value placed on human interaction and human caring. In the Latin American countries I have lived in, family and community come first—before work, income, and the ‘rat race’ we have begun to take for granted as an inevitable part of our lives in the US. People take time to prepare healthy food as a daily loving act for the nurturing of family and friends. They take time to come home for a meal in the middle of the workday, to spend quality time with their loved ones. People value and appreciate others in their lives, and make an effort to make real connections with those people and continue nurturing their relationships throughout their lives. Those relationships become the precious foundation for everything else they do.

During a visit to Mexico this summer, where I studied Spanish and Mexican culture with a group of Oregon teachers, I lived with a family who used to be financially well off but whose fortunes have fallen along with the value of the peso. They are in their seventies. The husband went back to work in the business that he retired from, and the wife, along with their housekeeper (for 47 years!) continues to cook, care for their huge home, and provide emotional support to ten children and many grandchildren. They have one daughter who still lives with them. She is 45, but because of a problem during her birth, she operates at the mental and emotional level of a five year old. They take in students as boarders, who share meals and domestic life with the family.

After living with this family for a month, I can say with confidence that they are truly happy. Their reversal in finances, their age and health related problems, or their daughter’s disability, do not prevent them from enjoying each other. They appreciate the simple pleasures of preparing a meal for loved ones and sharing their memories of a life full of pleasure despite pain and hardships. They continue to make new memories together. They have put their lives in perspective and choose to operate from a bottom line of love rather than a dependence on material possessions and money for their sense of security.

In my family’s house, when we came home for la comida, we sat together in the dining room. For me, the most moving part of the experience of sharing meals with my family was the way the table was set. There were four students sharing the house, and we sat on either side of the long table. At the end of the table sat the daughter of the home, and often other visiting family members. At the head of the table sat both parents, side by side, as they had been sitting together every day for 54 years.

What a loving and stable foundation those parents have provided for their children and grandchildren! I couldn’t help but believe that the love and caring in their home, and other homes like theirs, spills over into the daily life and interactions of the people. Children raised in that kind of loving and supportive environment do not need to fight for their place in the world. They are on solid ground.

It is up to us, parents and teachers, as the primary adults in the lives of our children, to provide that foundation of love and support, and to teach them loving and respectful ways to solve their problems as individuals who have value and worth, and who deserve respect. In addition to our own work as activists for peace in the world, that is the way we can build hope for a more peaceful future.

—Mary Meredith Drew, ESL teacher, Woodburn, OR.

We invite you to respond to the article with ideas or practices that you—teachers, parents or students—use to promote peacemaking in your home, school or world.
In a village there lived a poor family. Despite their best efforts, the family could not eat a full meal daily. On the days the children slept hungry, Tamarai, the mother, felt sad. They all had to make do with tattered clothes and their roof was on the verge of collapsing.

Their neighbor, who lived in a mansion, was Tamarai’s brother. He frequently entertained friends. Once he decided to invite the entire village to feast at his home for three days. He did not include his sister. Tamarai suspected that her brother did not invite her because she was poor. Since her children were starving, she took them to the feast anyways. As was customary, the host served sweets to guests. When he saw Tamarai with her hungry waifs, he became uncomfortable. Gritting his teeth, he whispered, “Why are you here in tattered clothes? Don’t come here again.”

Tears rolled down Tamarai’s cheeks but she waited for her children to eat their fill. The next day, her children begged her, “Mother, please take us. We are starving!”

“Uncle is feeding perfect strangers! We are his relatives.”

Tamarai thought that her brother would understand the plight of the children. When the brother saw them once more, he shouted, “Can’t you understand that I don’t want you here? I am ashamed of you all. If I see you here again, I will throw you out.”

Tamarai sobbed, but allowed her children to finish their meal.

The next day, unable to watch her hungry children, Tamarai took them again to the feast. This time, they were turned away at the door. Angry and hurt, she fasted and prayed for three days to the Goddess of wealth. Moved by the sincerity of her prayers, Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, blessed her with seven-fold prosperity for multiplying money, food, life span, health, wealth, good offspring and long life for Tamarai’s husband. Day by day Tamarai’s life improved. Soon, they were the richest family in the village. They continued to lead a simple life.

The brother made haste to remedy his mistake. He invited Tamarai and her children for a special feast in his home. Although Tamarai had a forgiving nature, she wanted to teach the brother a lesson. She selected her grandest silk sari. She muted its brilliance with jewelry. Splendid diamonds sparkled on her ears and neck. Rubies shone from the bangles. Her gold waistband was studded with garnets and pearls. She wore tinkling gold anklets and an enormous diamond ring adorned her finger. She wrapped a dazzling gold shawl around herself. She dressed her children in splendid silk garments. Thick gold chains and diamond rings gleamed from their necks and hands. Her brother gave them a hearty welcome.

When the food was served, Tamarai put her shawl aside. Thinking that Tamarai might be warm, her brother asked his servants to fan her. Tamarai began to remove her jewels one by one and place them on the shawl.

“What are you are doing?” brother asked. Tamarai did not reply. She began to feed morsels of rice to her jewels and shawl!

“Why are you doing this?” he pleaded.

“Surely, you know what I am doing,” she replied.

“I do not! I have never seen such a thing in my life!”

“You have,” assured his sister.

“I have no idea!”

Laughing softly she said, “Today, you invited me for my jewels and fine clothes. So I am feeding them!”

The brother was ashamed and begged to be forgiven. He learned that people, not possessions, mattered. From then on he was compassionate to the poor and donated to charity.

A Journey Through Peru Photos by Katacha Diaz, Peruvian-American, Davis, California.
(clockwise) The Reed Island on Lake Titicaca (Photo: Mark Unger); Young girls in the Plaza de Armas in Cuzco; Family raising sheep in the highlands near Cuzco; Sister and brother take their pet bird and lamb for an outing at the Inca ruins of Sacsayhuamán. (center) Corn, maize and watermelon grown in the Sacred Valley of the Incas and sold at the Sunday market in Pisac.