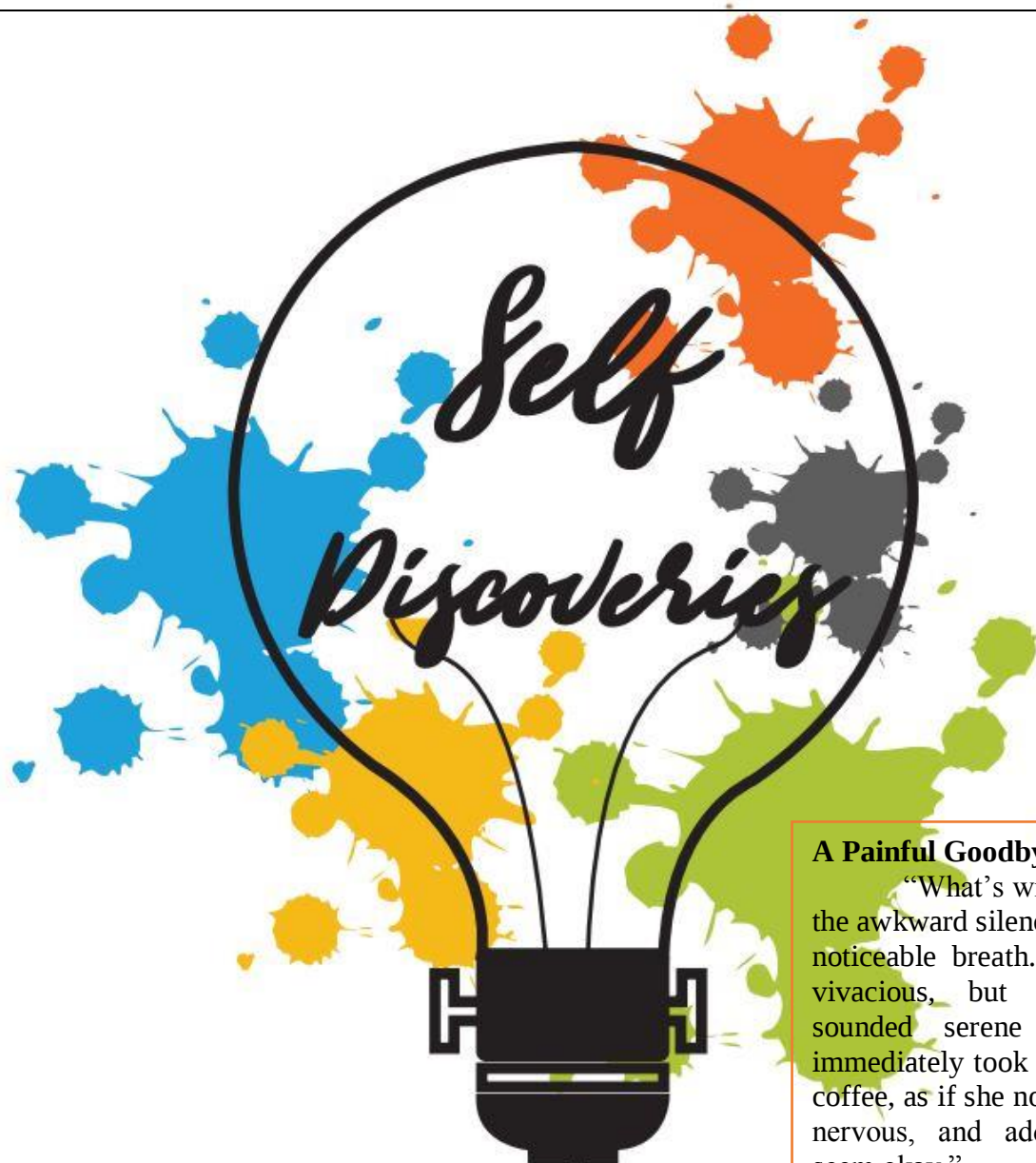




A Painful Goodbye

“What’s wrong?” Julia broke the awkward silence after a short but noticeable breath. Normally she is vivacious, but now her voice sounded serene and thin. She immediately took a sip of her warm coffee, as if she noticed that she was nervous, and added, “You don’t seem okay.”

(Please continue reading on page 11)

ENG 101 Fall 2017 

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE EXPERIENCE
FROM THE STUDENTS OF
ENGLISH COMPOSITION -- ENG 101,
FALL 2017, OIKOS UNIVERSITY,
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Never Forget the Lost Students of the Sewol

In Korean, the word *Sewol* means “the time to flow,” but it is also the name of a tragic accident in South Korea in April 2014 that caused the death of 304 passengers -- students who drowned and are now under the sea and no longer able to flow in their time.

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Are Video Games Corrupting My Son's Values?

By Jerry Jaehark Yang

My son Sam is 10 years old, and like other fourth graders, he loves playing video games, such as *Minecraft*, *Clash of Clans*, and *Overwatch*. Before we came to the U.S., he used to go outside and play with his friends after school. He enjoyed shopping at convenience stores and having a snack of Korean traditional fast foods, like *kimbab* and *topokki*. There were lots of these stores near our house in Seoul, Korea, and it was easy and safe for a young boy to go outside by himself.

When my family and I came to California last fall, Sam felt often bored. He had to spend most of his time at home, and even though he was good at making friends, he couldn't play with them after school without their parent's care and permission. Therefore, he asked me to let him play video games at home. I wanted him to have a way to relax and feel less stressed while he was adjusting to the new environment, so I agreed, and he began playing video games at home after school.

Last Friday, Sam began talking about luxurious cars.

"Which one is the best among Bugatti, Maserati, and Lamborghini?" he asked me.

I wondered how he knew them and why he was asking me about them.

"Sam, why are you asking me?"

"Dad! I'd like to buy the best one with my game money."

"How will you get your money?" I asked, wondering what he was talking about.

"Dad! I'm a robber in the game," he told me. "And I've stolen luxurious stuff like jewels, cars, and bikes to gain my money. I've tried to gain lots of money. This game is called *Jail Break*."

I was shocked! I began to think that this game was dangerous, not educational at all. It was changing his values. I didn't want him to develop bad values, but I couldn't tell him to stop playing the game right away. He was so involved in it and was really enjoying it. What could I do for him? How could I change his interests from one thing to another? How could I teach him good values?

During the weekend, I thought about what to do. I talked with my wife, called my friends, searched for advice online, and read some books for solutions. My wife advised me to spend more time with him, but I didn't have enough time or energy to play with him as if I was a teenage boy.

One Korean friend told me that I had to set a limit to the amount of time that he plays video games each day. I agreed with my friend, but I did not know what I could do if Sam intended to cheat me. Another friend from my church suggested that I should ask him to read the Bible every day. How could I ask Sam to do this? I didn't read the Bible every day myself either! An online specialist said I should help him find another fun hobby. I thought this was a good idea, but how could I help him find a hobby? Would another hobby really teach him good values? How could I teach him good values? What should he do to learn good values? Who could do all these difficult jobs?

Suddenly, I realized I was the only man who could do all of these things. I was his father, so I knew his character and how to control him because he resembled me. I would know what he would like to do, too. I realized that the truth was that I was usually tired and busy and had stopped paying attention to his behavior. I might have thought my wife was doing well with him and everything was fine, but in fact, it wasn't. My turn had come. I needed to become a good friend to him. I needed to become a good teacher for him. I decided that I would try to spend more time talking with him. I would try to learn more ways to play and teach him. I had not been good at doing these things, but I needed to try because Sam is my lovely son. It was time for me to be a good father.



Yellowstone in My Mind

By Oratai Chansri

Last October, my husband and I took our first trip to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. We knew it would take a long time, because we lived in Berkeley and Yellowstone is 925 miles away from our home.

However, we could not leave until after midnight, because my husband finished his work at 11 pm. After he came home, we had to pack our clothes and food for the drive. The drive takes about 15 hours to first stop in Salt Lake City in Utah.

At first, my husband drove about four to five hours. Then, we stopped at a rest area to sleep for a short time. When we arrived in Salt Lake City, we stayed overnight. The next day, we walked around the city. We were surprised by a big church with offices for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is known as the Mormon church.

After that, we drove to Antelope Island State Park in Davis County, and we paid \$10 per car to see the bison walk around on the white salt flats. The herd of bison was walking along the white ground of the lake shore. The ground is white and consists of salt, so it looks like a desert. The day was very hot, too.

The next day, we left earlier to drive to Yellowstone. We had a ticket for 1-year free use to visit and park at Yellowstone. We looked at the map so we could drive around Yellowstone. Everything was exciting. For example, there were Old Faithful, Castle Geyser, Excelsior Geyser, Hot Spring and Gushing Geyser.

We stayed at Yellowstone for one night. Then, we drove to Grand Teton National Park. We wanted to go to the Grand Teton mountain, the highest mountain in Grand Teton National Park. When I saw the mountain, I could not stop looking at the view of the mountain. It was so beautiful and powerful.

Later, we stopped to buy some foods and snacks at the Colter Bay Visitor Center. After that we went to the Lakeshore Trail around Jackson Lake where we ate the lunch we brought. The weather was very cold. We sat in front of the lake next to the Grand Teton mountain. Everything around us made our lunch good and made us happy.

During our lunch, we talked about our trip, and when we were finished, we checked the next places to visit. I was feeling cold, and my husband held my hand. My husband often doesn't express his love, but I know his feelings.

"Thank you AND.... AND..." I said to him and hugged him for everything in my life. It was a very good trip, and we hope to go on another long trip in the U.S. again.

Who Said Snow Makes You Cold?

By Jessie Wilaiwan Phaphithak

Last winter my family and I had a vacation for one week and went to Reno, Nevada. I had lived in the U.S. for three years, but I had never gone there or seen snow because my country, Thailand, is extremely hot and humid in the summer. In the morning when we were going to Reno, I prepared some fruit and snacks to eat on the trip. I drove, and it took about three and a half hours.

When we entered Nevada, snow started falling. I rolled down the window and took a deep breath. It was cold and fresh. Houses and pine trees were completely covered with snow. Everything around me was white and beautiful. Back on the road, I had to focus on driving because it had been snowing; we were lucky because there wasn't too much snow, so we didn't need to get chains for our tires.

At Reno, we stayed at the Boreal Ski Resort. After checking in, we went to go snowboarding, but I decided to ski because they said it was easier. I wore ski equipment, and it was very uncomfortable and heavy. I was walking like a duck, and everyone was laughing at me. So I stopped and sat down and watched them snowboarding for a while. I looked around and saw people enjoyed their time. A dad taught his daughter skiing. Everyone spent time together. It was a beautiful moment. Who said snow makes you cold? I thought it made me feel warm from inside. I felt happy to see my family together.

We stayed there for two nights and had dinner at an American and Asian buffet restaurant. I usually had some hot soup because it made me warmer. It was a wonderful meal. I came back to Bay Area very happily. This was an important memory for me because Thailand is very hot and I had always dreamed about living in a country where it snows. I have a plan to revisit Reno next year.



Snow is Calling Me

By Angkana Wattanadumrong Jeab

I grew up in Thailand, a country without snow. I knew about snow from the movies that I saw on TV, but I could not imagine it. In the movies, they made a snowman, played snowball fights, and went skiing and snowboarding. Actually, before I came to the United States, I always had the dream and desire to see and touch snow. Snow is something that I can't find in my country, and it makes me excited.

Two years ago, when I came to the U.S. for the first time, I had an amazing experience with snow. I had the chance to go to a ski resort, and before I went, I had many ideas of what to do with it. Winter came at the end of the year, and my friends and I went to Lake Tahoe. We got a wonderful cabin with a view of the lake and the snow on the top of the mountains. There were also many flowers and deer near our cabin. Our cabin was not big, but it was very warm and comfortable.

On the first night, we decided to cook sukiyaki by ourselves because we had all the ingredients: lots of vegetables, pork balls, chicken, seafood and others. Suki-yaki was the best choice. It was easy to cook and made us feel warm. The cabin had two bedrooms, one bathroom and one kitchen. The kitchen was small but full of kitchen utensils and housewares.

While we were enjoying dinner in front of the fireplace, I saw something magical outside the cabin: Snow was falling! It was like white feathers or maybe really slow white rain coming down. We heard it falling, a very soft pattering sound. Then, I opened the door to our balcony, stepped outside, and then ran out the front door to enjoy the snow. I sat down and touched the snow without my gloves because I would like to know whether or not it seemed like ice. It didn't have any smell; it was soft and cold. I walked on the snow for 10 minutes with friends and took photos. Then, I saw my red face and blue lips in the mirror. I couldn't feel them. As I went back to the cabin, I saw some people shoveling snow from sidewalks because the snow was so deep that they couldn't pass the way they wanted to go. The snow was causing a lot of other problems with transportation.

The next morning, I opened my eyes and saw the beautiful snowflakes. I was so excited about the idea of trying to ski for the first time. First, my friends recommended that I choose between skiing and snowboarding. I saw many people skiing and snowboarding, and I felt it might be easy, just as they said before I got there. Most of them were good skiers; they could ski as if they were walking on the street. Then I saw some people who were beginning and had the accidents falling down on their skis. That is why I thought I couldn't ski like my friends. Finally, I just walked around the park, enjoyed the snow, took photos, and watched people who were playing, skiing and taking the ski lifts.

Today, I still have those photos, and when I see them, I feel excited and happy. All the thrills are still in my mind. Everything was very wonderful, and time has gone by so fast. If I have a chance to see snow, I want to ride a snowmobile. I still keep in touch with the friends who joined me on that trip and see them often. We had such a quality time together. I will look forward to our next trip absolutely.



What Do I Do with My Life?

By Celine Thunchanok Pankaew

In a windy day of Sunday, the phone rang on the table in my room. The cell phone's screen showed that it was my mother.

The first word that came out of her mouth was, "What are you doing? I have something that I worry about, and I want to talk to you about your life."

I answered, "What's happening? Why do you want to talk about my life today?"

But she kept going. "It's close to your birthday, and this year, you're turning 24 years old." Then she said I should find something that I wanted to do and something that I wanted to be.

Her words made me worried because it made me think that I didn't know myself too well. I didn't want to make her feel disappointed because she expected a lot from me. She hoped that I would have a good life with a good family and succeed in my life. I didn't want to disappoint her, so I avoided giving her an answer:

"I'm not sure yet," I said. "And it's too soon to decide." Then she said something important that changed my mind forever:

"Right now, I'm old and I don't want to worry about you because I don't know how long I'm going to stay in the world."

This made me realize that I should resolve my problems in life and make her happy. We ended up talking for almost an hour and a half.

Finally, I found an answer. This was what I realized: I will live today like it is my last day of life.

I will do everything and go everywhere but not make a problem for myself. Later, I don't want to have any regrets for myself or make the people I love have regrets. For example, if I want to travel somewhere, I will go. If I have something that I don't know, I will learn it. And if I have something that I already know, I will improve by learning it better.

"I'm so glad to hear that," my mother said, when I told her. "It is good for you to start planning something in your life. I'm always beside you."

Then she hung up, but I was still thinking about my plans for the future. I asked myself a lot of questions. How do I start? Where do I start? What do I do first? I sat down on my bed and began to think about these questions and tried to figure out some answers.

Then I came to a conclusion for my life. First, I will try to study in a university, and I will do my best. I promised myself, I will catch all opportunity that comes to me. Meanwhile, I will learn a new thing that I love. I love eating, so I will try to learn to cook international foods and all kind of foods that I want to eat myself. I will watch American movies every day to practice my English.

I think this part of my plan will make me and my mother happy. After that, I will plan a goal for my life every five years to prepare for my life in the future because I think life is too short, and I don't want to miss anything that might make me feel regretful. And I don't want the people I love to feel regretful either.

Car Trouble Teaches Us a Lesson

By Pim Pimtidaruk Buayen

Last year, Wave, my boyfriend and I bought a car because we thought we were going to live in the U.S. for a long time. With a car, it would be easier to travel and go everywhere. We looked on the Internet. Some cars were great, but many were not. We were afraid that the car might have been in an accident. Finally, we found a car that we were satisfied with. It was cheap and had a good band.

We contacted the seller in Berkeley and saw the car, a black 2001 Volkswagen. It was not scratched, but inside, the car was very dirty. My boyfriend drove it for a test-drive, and everything was fine. It seemed like a good car.

So, we asked the seller to give us few days to decide. Two hours later, the seller called us back and offered to discount the price by couple hundred dollars. My boyfriend thought this was a good price for the car, since it was in a good condition and would only cost \$2,300. If we would buy the car and if it would have no problem, we would be lucky. I agreed with him, and we decided to buy it.

(Please continue reading on page 6)



Car Trouble ----- (Continued from page 5)

On that day, we told the seller to transfer the car that day, because we wanted to get it as soon as possible. While we were doing the transfer, we were told at the Department of Motor Vehicles that this car needed a smog test.

This car did not have an updated smog test for about a year, so we had to go to the mechanic and get a guarantee condition paper or call smog check paper to transfer the car.

My boyfriend called the seller, and he said that he would bring us the smog test paper the next day. But at the time of our meeting, he didn't show up. We waited for him and tried to call him many times but never got a reply. We had so many questions about what we should do with this car. My boyfriend and I decided to go to a mechanic to check the car and found out why it did not pass the smog test.

We spent about one month on all of this. The car had a lot of problems. The warning lights on dashboard did not show up, because it had been cut off. The battery was not the proper size, a headlight was broken, and the brakes shook when we tried to stop the car. Finally, the car passed the smog test, and we went to register the car at DMV under my boyfriend's name.

This experience taught us many things. Both of us had decided to buy this car, and when it developed problems, we were responsible together. We had to help each other to think about the problems and solve them successfully. This was a good lesson for us. Now we know both of us to be more careful when we decide on something.



The Lessons from My First Car Accident in America

By Tae Young Lim

This is my real story about my first car accident a few months ago. I've driven in the U.S for a year and half, but it was my first accident after coming here and the first time I've had an accident in my life. I was really scared and frightened. And I don't want to remember it anymore! I wish everything was all a dream. I had a lot of difficult mental stress. It was my first trouble in America and has been meaningful and unforgettable for me.

It was at 9:15 a.m. on August 6. I was driving on El Camino Real in Santa Clara. A woman had stopped at a stop sign and was waiting at the intersection, but I couldn't make a perfect stop so I hit her car from behind.

However, I did not hit her car hard, so I thought it would not be a big deal, and we could agree easily. Instead, she was an Uber driver who was really rude and hot-tempered. She insulted me and warned me not to drive away from the accident.

"Do not hit and run," she shouted at me. "I'll call police. I absolutely think you hit me because you were using your cell phone while driving."

She was absolutely wrong. I never use my cell phone while I'm driving. However, I couldn't say this clearly because I don't think my English is good, and I became embarrassed. Anyway, we called each of our car insurance companies to deal with the problem. A few weeks later, my car insurance company told me that her car repair would cost about \$900. My monthly fee would also increase.

Then, later, my insurance company contacted me again to tell me more of the story. The woman wanted more money because she claimed she had a neck injury. My company decided her complaint was unfair and did not make sense. Even now, my company and her company are still trying to make an agreement. I really hope we'll make it as soon as possible. It was upsetting to me because I think she and her company abused my weakness as an international student who is not good in English.

Although my first accident became a nightmare, I think now I know how to handle another encounter like this. Even though it was a small happening, at first, I didn't know how to handle the situation, but now I feel more able to handle myself and more mature. I really hope as many people as possible who drive cars won't face accidents like my case.

How I Helped a Soldier in the Army

By Harry Sang Hyeon Jin

When I was 21, I was in the South Korean army. Every Korean man has to serve in the army as national service. I was an army chaplain. An army chaplain has to manage *Chung-seong* church for our troops and counsel soldiers who have mental problems.

The Korean soldiers had many emotional problems because they couldn't go out and use their cell phones or the Internet. We could only use public telephones to make calls. Regular soldiers were not allowed to have any electronic devices. Many soldiers wanted to get out their army service, but since they couldn't, they needed to talk to someone. And that someone was me. I had to listen to their stories many times.

One day a very young soldier, who I will call Jim, came to the church and asked for counseling with me. We went into the counseling room, and I listened to his story. He had a girlfriend, who I will call Cindy. He loved her very much, and she loved him too. But his friend Ben also liked her and was trying to get Cindy to drop Jim. One night, Ben got Cindy drunk, and took her to a motel and raped her. She was so scared that she couldn't even call police. The next day she called Jim and told him about the last night.

Jim's heart was broken, and he wanted to kill Ben. I was very sad and angry and wanted to help him so much. But killing would be a very serious crime.

"My friend, I know your feeling," I told Jim. "But you must not kill him. You don't want to ruin your own life because of him. I will help you. I know a very good lawyer so please don't have that thought."

I went to battalion commander's room and asked to see him. He listened to the story, and gave the soldier a permission for a three-day vacation. He met with the lawyer at the lawyer's office, and they accused Ben of his crime. Three days later, Jim, my counseling client, came back to the army base and brought me many snacks and books.

"You saved my life!" he told me. I got an award from the commander because I had helped the soldier with good counseling. I also got seven days of vacation. Six months later, I heard news about what happened to Ben, the bad guy. The court sentenced him to two years of prison labor and \$20,000 US in penalties. I think everybody has mental problems, and most of the problems can be solved by listening to their stories and giving good advice based on Christian values. I haven't heard about Jim or Cindy since the army, but I hope they are doing well. This was my best experience in the national service as an Army chaplain.

Why Thai Food is Best in Thailand

By Pang Panida Chanmai

I live in a rural area in Thailand, and my house is far away from the city. My parents are farmers, and we have a farm. I have been eating traditional Thai food my whole life, and I think most Thai food in the U.S. is too bland or too sweet. The restaurant chefs here use a smaller amount of spices than the chefs back home and add too much coconut milk in curry and soups so that they taste like plain coconut milk. There are also a lot of missing ingredients because some Thai food ingredients are not available in the U.S., and therefore, other ingredients are used as substitutes which make the food taste not as good.

Traditional Thai food is known to be quite healthy, using natural and fresh ingredients, paired with lots of spices, herbs, and vegetables. Some of these ingredients are not common in American food, such as Thai basil, screw pine leaves, finger root, kaffir lime leaves, *galangal*, green peppercorn, Thai eggplant and pea eggplant.

When people say they like Thai food but have not been to Thailand, I cannot help but think, "You have never really experienced Thai food." Thai food in Thailand is leagues better than anywhere else in the world. There is more variety and more flavors, so your mouth dances with flavor when you eat it there. The food has a hot and spicy kick to it too. I always order "*mai pet*", which means "not spicy," because by Thai standards that means only one hot chili. If you are not from Thailand, you should start with this spiciness because Thai chili is very hot, and you do not want to ruin your meal.

Thai cooking is not only about using the right amount of ingredients, but also about using the correct temperature and methods of preparation. For example, it makes a big difference if you grind fresh chilies and garlic with a mortar and pestle instead of buying it dry and already ground from a store. A mortar and pestle really bring out the flavor!

If you visit Thailand, you can spend only about five dollars a day for three full meals, including some drinks and snacks. One meal from the street vendors costs as little as a dollar, and you don't even need to pay tax or a tip.

(Please continue reading on page 8)

Thai Food ----- (Continued from page 7)

Thai cuisine is known throughout the world as being excellent. The CNN Travel Web site ranked *massaman* curry as most delicious dish in the world in an article titled World's 50 Most Delicious Foods. Many Thai people are proud about Thai food. I'm proud about Thai food too because I'm happy that many people around the world like to eat Thai food and come to Thailand to try original Thai food.

I feel really good when someone asks me, "Where are you from?" I say, "I'm from Thailand" and they usually say "I love Thai food! I like to eat *Pad Thai*, *Tom Yum Kung*, *Tom Kha Kai*, papaya salad and mango with sticky rice!" Some people don't know much about Thailand, but they know about Thai food. I hope Thai food makes people who try it want to learn more about Thailand.

My favorite Thai food is *Tom Kha Kai*, a chicken soup in coconut milk. When you go to a Thai restaurant, you can tell them you want *Tom Kha Kai*. It is probably the second best-known Thai dish in America, with *Pad Thai* being the first. Literally translated, *Tom Kha Kai* means "chicken *galangal* soup." *Galangal* is a root that looks like ginger, but the taste is different. It is an important spice for getting the flavor of the soup.

Let's start with the ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1 can (14 oz.) coconut milk
- 1 can (14 oz.) reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 6 quarter-size slices of fresh ginger
- 1 stalk of fresh lemongrass, cut in 1-inch pieces
- 1 pound of boned, skinned chicken breast cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 cup of sliced mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon of fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon of Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce (*nuoc mam* or *nam pla*)
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of Thai chili paste
- 1/4 cup of whole fresh basil leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, in small pieces.

How to Make *Tom Kha Kai*

In a medium saucepan, combine coconut milk, broth, ginger, and lemongrass and bring to boil over high heat. When it starts boiling, add the chicken, mushrooms, lime juice, fish sauce, sugar, and chili paste. Reduce heat and simmer until chicken is firm and opaque, about 5 to 10 minutes. Discard lemongrass by taking it off with a spoon. Serve in bowls and garnish servings with basil and cilantro. Serve with white rice or brown rice on the side.

(This recipe is from

<http://www.periandsons.com/recipe-print.php?p=Thai+Coconut+Soup.>)



Tom Kha Gai
Nourishing Thai Soup

Special Fiction Section



Is the “American Dream” Always a Struggle?

By Minlee Lee

“Hi, how many are you? Four? Okay, come with me.”

Jenny took a family to a table at the restaurant where she worked as a waitress. The family looked quite happy as they sat down. Jenny began to feel sad and thought, “I miss my family and home.”

She started working at this Japanese sushi restaurant five years ago when she first came to San Francisco for the “American Dream.” She still had this dream, even though life had been very difficult for her. She had to make money for the next semester. She did not have enough money for her tuition. She had spent all her money that she had brought from Korea.

She was 29 years old. Her parents lived in Busan in South Korea. They were really worried about Jenny and wanted her to come back to Korea and get married. Whenever she got a phone call from her parents, she did not answer it. She did not want to make her family worried about her.

When she graduated from the University of CBNU in Korea in engineering, she prepared for job interviews like other people did. And she made it. She worked at a small engineering company for about 2 years and it was good at first.

However, when the manager of the business boss changed, everything changed. He ordered her to prepare coffee for him every morning and make reservations for musical tickets for his wife.

She was not doing what she expected to do, but there was no way to change her manager. So she had to quit the job and leave South Korea to move to San Francisco.

When she first got here, she fell in love with the city, the people, and everything. She often went to art museums, like MOMA, because she always wanted to be an artist or an illustrator. She liked to write her own story and draw illustrations on the side. But her parents did not give her the chance to be an artist. They thought that the job is not good for her.

Now, she thought that this time was the perfect chance. She was confident that she could succeed. She registered and started studying at Ollen College. Her first two semesters were perfect. Studying was not easy, but she enjoyed the time that she spent to learn.

After two semesters, she started worrying about paying the tuition for the next semester, so she looked for a job and got hired as a waitress in this restaurant. Even though she had to work every day after her classes were over, she did not give up.

Her goal was to get her own art studio. However, it was not easy. To register for the art school again, she had to keep working after her classes. But even it was not enough to cover her tuition. She needed to work at least 8 hours a day to make money for tuition.

Despite the work, she always smiled and did not forget her purpose. She was such a strong person. Even during her busy days, she found time to make her own art works. When she had day off from her work, she brought her artworks and sold them at the local flea markets, where people brought their stuff that they made and sold it.

Even though going to school and working to pay for her tuition was incredibly difficult, she endured the difficult times, and was able to gain a few fans who liked her artworks. Whenever she felt depressed or tired again, she prayed and kept this verse in her mind:

“Though your beginning was small, yet later, your end should greatly increase.”



Special Fiction Section

The Comfort of Belonging – Finally

By Yohko Iseki

Many people may look happy on the outside; however, a lot of those people on the inside could be sad or depressed. Hiroko was 18 years old and was in her freshman year of college in Japan. She was feeling very comfortable on and off at school and had no struggles. She had a part-time job at the pharmacy after school, had a younger sister, and had 6 cats because she loved to rescue animals from the shelter. She also had many friends and was having the time of her life. However, life was not always that easy and fun for her. From elementary school all the way to high school, she was always a shy and very pessimistic girl. Hiroko would never be able to join in conversations and start something herself because she was so self-conscious and always nervous around people at school and worried about what people would think of her. Everyone was happy, and they had fun conversations in the cafeteria and played sports together during recess, but she was just that one girl who never spoke and looked depressed all the time.

However, in Hiroko's last year of high school, she knew that she could not be this sad person her whole life. One day in the last year of high school for Hiroko, she was reading a fashion magazine during recess while everyone was out on the field playing sports and having fun. Then a girl in her class, named Mary who was another very quiet girl just like Hiroko, came up to her and spoke to her, "Hey, are you interested in fashion?" Mary asked. Hiroko was confused and was silent for a moment because Hiroko did not think that someone from her school would ever talk to her. Hoping that Mary would talk to her, Hiroko answered, "Yeah I guess so. I really like makeup. Do you?" At first it was very awkward, obviously because Hiroko was very nervous and was not used to talking to someone other than her family.

However, she knew that she could not give up because this might be her only chance to get out of her little world and start interacting with others. Therefore, she tried her very best to make conversation, and it worked!

At first, they talked about fashion because Hiroko was reading a fashion magazine and Mary said she loved fashion. After a while, they talked about their dreams, sports, family, and so on. Hiroko realized how much Mary and she had in common. At that moment, she also realized how important it is to share the same interests to make and enjoy conversations. The conversations that they had become less awkward and even came out smoothly. Hiroko had never been so proud of herself.

From that day on, Hiroko spoke to her fellow students about her interests and made friends immediately. She regretted not trying to make conversation with others just because of her self-consciousness and shyness. As she went off to college, she felt so good about herself. She came out of her depressed state completely and gained confidence about herself. The moral of this story: Try not to be so self-conscious. No one cares much about how you look or act more than you think they do because they are too busy with their own lives. Currently, Hiroko is interested in yoga, traveling, and she has a dream of living in a big house here in the United States. When she thinks about her hobbies and enjoys them with her friends who have the same hobbies, it makes her feel very happy and comfortable to be with them. If she ever sees a person who seems lonely, she tries to talk like "Hey, how are you?" or "What do you like to do in your free time?" to them and find something that they have in common so that they could have a conversation and make them feel comfortable because she knows what they are going through. She was one of them until she realized how easy it is to make friends and find somewhere she belong.



Special Fiction Section

A Painful Goodbye

By Jay Jaigon Yoon

"What's wrong?" Julia broke the awkward silence after a short but noticeable breath. Normally she is vivacious, but now her voice sounded serene and thin. She immediately took a sip of her warm coffee, as if she noticed that she was nervous, and added, "You don't seem okay."

Julia and Chris had been just sitting in the cafe for an hour, and it had become so quiet that Chris was able to hear her voice trembling. It took huge courage for Julia to ask. She had noticed that Chris had been a little different and was worried about him.

They had always enjoyed stopping by and relaxing at this café, even though it was located little away from the downtown. They liked to sit on its dusty, faded sofa under the string of blinking lights around the curtain. Julia's favorite drink was a hot latte with whole milk and two pumps of hazelnut syrup. The barista would always draw an astonishing latte art on Julia's drink with steaming hot milk, and the delicate redolence of coffee would permeate the cozy room full of warm white lights and antique ornaments.

Everything in the café felt the same, but Julia sensed that something was different between Chris and her. An hour ago, they walked into the café, and ordered their drinks. Since taking seats on the sofa, Chris had been just looking in his phone. Julia knew that he did not have any urgent businesses or important messages, but he kept web-browsing and checking his SNS, not paying any attention to Julia. Julia had broken that awkward silence.

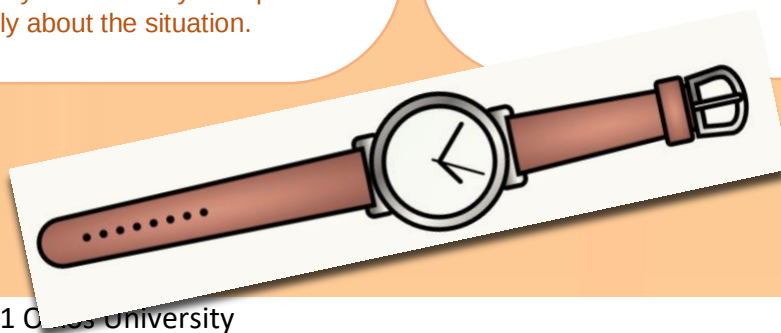
Chris felt quite surprised that Julia directly asked him the question. She was introverted, shy, and quiet so that she often would not be able to say things in a straightforward manner. Before putting anything into words, Julia would always ponder over it several times. Many times, she would not even mention things due to her introverted personality. It was really unexpected for Julia to ask Chris directly about the situation.

Even though Chris and Julia had already been dating for a year and a half, there had been no huge arguments or conflicts. Julia had been a perfect match for Chris; they were both very taciturn and introverted. Just like all other couples, as they spent more time together, the heart-pounding moments and romantic excitements had naturally decreased, but instead, they built intimacy and trust in their relationship. At first, Chris loved how there was a person who could always understand him and be on his side. However, as the relationship had gradually turned into companionship and support, he could not deny that he was feeling different.

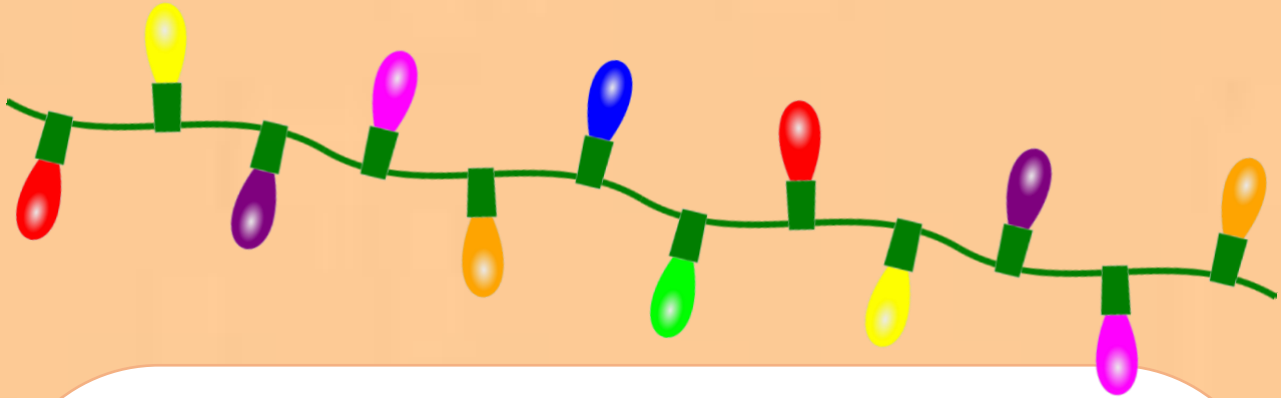
Chris started to become confused whether he was dating Julia anymore. She was definitely the person who would always be there for him, but he felt as if he wanted something different, from his girlfriend. When they first started dating, he was so certain that she was the one who he would be spending his future with. He even believed that his sincere feelings would never change. It was hard for Chris to accept that closer he got to Julia, the more distant his heart began to feel.

He lazily looked down and stared at her watch. The reflection from curtain lights made the scratches on the glass more apparent. The leather band was tattered and no longer tinged with a smooth brown color of a new watch. It was the first gift he bought for her last Christmas. As a student, Chris could not afford the most luxurious watch, but Julia seemed the happiest person in the world when he gave it to her.

He raised his eyes and looked at her silver necklace around her neck which each of them had bought one at a small kiosk in a mall. Its simple Christian cross design was very appealing. Even though it was cheap jewelry, they felt intimate and connected while they were wearing their necklaces at the same time. But Chris had stopped wearing it about a week ago. Unlike the first time they had bought them, the necklace had scratches and stains here and there.



Special Fiction Section



Chris looked into Julia's eyes, the deep brown eyes that Chris had always loved. They would always glow with freshness and excitement. Even though Chris and Julia would not consistently talk to each other while they are together, Chris would always be able to read Julia's thoughts and emotions through her eyes. This time, Chris saw the worry and concern in her eyes. Slightly red and about to tear up, her eyes were waiting for him to say something.

Chris knew that he could no longer simply avoid the truth. He decided to face it. He still could not understand what exactly he was feeling. He still liked her and appreciated all the time that he spent with her, but there was no more excitement. He did not look forward to going on dates with her anymore; the mid-day café trips had become mediocre; he started to care less about the necklace that connected them. His time spending with Julia had turned into a regular schedule rather than something he would be desperately waiting for.

Just like the watch and the necklace, his feelings had changed. Without the romantic excitement in the relationship, he was slowly and gradually becoming bored of Julia. He desperately did not want to accept his feelings. He also knew better than anyone that he would never be able to find someone like Julia. He fought inside his head whether he should fake his feelings and just maintain the relationship, but he knew that holding her without truly loving her would be his selfishness. He had to let go.

He felt a deathly pain in his heart. "I don't feel the same anymore," Chris answered hesitantly. A drop of tear immediately fell down Julia's cheeks. Chris continued, "I'm really sorry but I think we should end this here."

Even before Chris could explain more, Julia stood up and walked out of the café, as if she knew this would happen. Chris could not chase after her and just had to watch her crying outside the café. He was still not sure whether he made a good decision, but he really hoped that both of them would be happy.

He slowly took a sip of his coffee that had become so cold.



How I Found My Bravery

By Kate Ratsameedara Nunkliang

It was the summer of 2014, and I was at a very busy train station in Tokyo, Japan. It was about 8 p.m. already, but no one had a jacket on because it was hot and humid. If people could have taken their shirts off, they would have. Among those sweaty people close to a ticket machine, there was me wearing a cotton top with ripped jeans, holding a big camera hanging around my neck and a couple of maps in my hands, and trying to figure out which train I had to take.

For the first and only time in this country, I had no idea where to go or what to do. Everything looked so new, and I was so nervous. I could barely speak English and didn't know any Japanese words. I had taken wrong trains, passed my stops, and got off at wrong stations for many times, but I wasn't going to give up. My primary mission for this three days and two nights trip was to see the summer fireworks festival here for the first time in my life.

Finally, I gathered all my courage to ask people with my broken English, even though I knew that some of them might not know English or understand me. It wasn't easy, but it worked. With body language, pointing, and pulling, they finally got me in the right train, heading to a city in the suburb where the fireworks festival was located.

As soon as the train doors opened, I truly ran into a real happiness. I got there late and didn't get a good spot for watching, but being around thousands of local people (especially couples) wearing *yukata* (the summer version of kimono, consisting only of one layer of cotton and really colorful designs often including flowers or traditional patterns) under the dark sky that was often bright with different types of fireworks was an unforgettable memory. More than a thousand fireworks kept taking their places. Some were circles, some were fountains, and some broke up as a big colorful ball of stars.

It lasted for about one hour and I couldn't stop smiling. The people were so loud, but my heartbeat was louder. Tons of fireworks were so bright, but my eyes were brighter. Their *yukata* was so colorful that night, but my life was more colorful than ever since then.

I left the country with a full suitcase of joy and happiness. I appreciated all the help from the Japanese people and really love their culture, but more than anything I was grateful that I had taken another step in my life. I found bravery I didn't know I had.



“I Will Aim High – You Will See Me!”

By Pardol Sawatdee

First of all, in the summer of 2016, my friends and I tried to find activities to get together. We usually go snowboarding during the winter, and we go biking, hiking, and camping in the summer. We wanted to do something different. One of my friends suggested golfing.

"NO dude!" I said. I had a bad picture in my mind because, when I was five years old, my father tried to force me to play golf. I didn't like someone telling me what to do, especially my father.

But I agreed to join my friends, and one Sunday, we went to a driving range to try it out. I didn't have any golf clubs yet, but my friends lent me some. When I hit the first golf ball, I was very surprised that I liked it. I felt that it might be one of the sports that I really like.

My friends first guided me how to do a half back swing properly. When I hit through the impact, my movement was outstanding. I didn't know whether it was right or wrong, but my friends told me it was. I felt it myself as well. Among our friends that began at the same time, I was the person who made the most progress.

That was the moment when I began to like golf as a game, and the bad feelings that I had as a child began to change. I don't know why my father pushed me to play golf when I was young. Maybe it was because I was a runner since I was five years old, and I won races when I was in elementary school. Maybe my father saw something in me, so he began to push me to go to driving ranges with him. I played once, but I didn't like it.

I remember my father gave me a golf club. He was trying to show me how to hit a golf ball while I was with him. But it seemed that I had no interest. He attempted to push me hard to play golf, but I only do things when I feel it from my heart. So my father gave up on me.

As I grew up, I was very successful in playing sports that I wanted to play. I started playing soccer in the sixth-grade. And I did really well and played until I went to the university.

I also played ice hockey in middle school, and I kept playing both soccer and ice hockey until I had the highest rank in the Thailand league. I used to play for the Thai national team for ice hockey, and in Division A soccer, the highest Thai soccer league in Thailand.

Eventually, I gave up on both sports to concentrate more on my university study. Even now, I usually play soccer with my friends in summer and go snowboarding in winter. One advantage of playing golf is that it is a sport that I can play until I'm old. When I was younger, I had a lot of energy. I liked to run, and to play soccer was my second favorite.

Nowadays, the times have changed. I avoid playing soccer, because I get injured when I play. I still like to work out and run whenever I feel like it. But I need to find some other sports that I'd be able to play until I'm old, like golf. I enjoy going to golf courses regardless. I enjoy seeing green color. I feel that I'm in a forest.

It is a challenge for me to lower my score in golf. One thing that I have learned from golf games is the importance of your mental attitude. If you practice enough to know how to swing properly, it's all about your confidence.

After that day when I played with my friends, I have kept learning golf from videos on YouTube and the Golf Channel. I read *Golf Digest* and followed other players to develop a better swing and lower my score.

I can't wait to let my father know that if I had played golf since I was five years old as he wanted, I would have become much better today. I can't say that I might be a pro, but I would be a good golf player. Moreover, my father will definitely feel happier. Somehow, he saw that I had the potential to be a successful golf player. I haven't spoken to him yet, but who knows? Maybe I will tell my father next year. Right now, I'm still practicing and will join one of the golf tournaments next year.

I will aim high.

You will see me.



Escaping the Unbearable City, Reviving My Soul in Nature

By Poy Ploypailin Ariyapakdee

I always heard that San Francisco was the most romantic city in America. I came to San Francisco first as a tourist in 2013. I searched on Google to learn about the city and saw amazing photos on my laptop, like the Palace of Fine Arts lit up at night. Every single photo showed how nice the city was.

"I can't wait to visit San Francisco," I thought.

After that, in the summer of 2013, four friends and I decided to visit San Francisco for a week's vacation. We booked the ticket from Khon Kaen, our small, farming town, to Bangkok and waited for the day of our flight to the United States to come along.

When we arrived for our visit, we were so excited. Everything in this city was beautiful. The city was bright and shiny from the lights, and it seemed the streets that I stepped on glittered, as though I was walking on the stars or in a galaxy. We stayed at a hotel in the Japantown area. It was so clean and quiet. We visited a lot of places where tourists go. We learned about this amazing web application called Uber so we could take rides around the city, and we used it to see the Golden Gate Bridge and then Pier 39. We ended up walking to Golden Gate Park. The city really impressed me!

After that visit, I decided to come back to San Francisco for school. I started attending English classes at IIC International School in downtown San Francisco. I just graduated from college, and I thought it would be easy to get a job if I improved my English skills.

When I finally moved to San Francisco to become a resident and study English, everything that I expected was so different. It was hard to find a place to rent at an affordable price. My budget for rent was under \$1,000 a month, but we couldn't find any place at that price, so I had to live in the Tenderloin, an area with a lot of homeless and drug addicts and alcoholics drinking on the street. I didn't expect it would be so bad, but international students who first move here don't have many choices. We don't know people who can help find a good area within a student's budget.

When I approached my apartment door in the Tenderloin at night, it was crowded with weird people. I saw the homeless lying on the concrete sidewalks, and I was not sure if they were sleeping, dead, or on drugs. I saw people who didn't have any shirt or shoes on. They looked dirty and smelled like they had not taken a shower for a long time. I heard sirens from the ambulances and saw their flashing red and white lights reflecting in my bedroom mirror. People on the street yelled at each other night and day. I could hear their voices up in my apartment. The smell of the street on the way to my house was almost unbearable.

The ideal image of the city that I had in my mind was destroyed. I cried when I had to walk through the Tenderloin. The wind was hitting my face, and I became so cold that my body shook to stay warm. I thought to myself how much I hated San Francisco.

I knew I had to escape, so finally, I moved from that place in the Tenderloin to a new apartment near Ocean Beach. But I still needed to take a break somehow. Two weeks later, my boyfriend and I wanted to get a little bit away from San Francisco. I searched on Google for a "Nice beach to visit," and it showed Stinson Beach. I checked the direction -- it was just 45 minutes away! Stinson Beach is located across the Golden Gate Bridge and north of San Francisco in Marin County. It would be easy for us to get there.

We decided to go there on a Wednesday. It wasn't busy, probably because everybody had to go to work. First, when we drove into the small town in Marin County, the warm sun was shining on our car, and we were playing a song on the radio. It was so tuneful, and we enjoyed listening to the songs while we were driving. We took off the roof top of our Jeep. We were driving through nature, seeing the big mountains and the green hills, with the wind of the warm air touching my face. I heard the birds singing, "Jib, Jib" like they wanted to welcome us to their house.

We got to the beach about noon and parked the Jeep in the wide-open parking lot. Compared to the weekends, the beach was not busy at all. Walking toward the beach, we met a lot of people who smiled and greeted us, saying, "How are you?" We met a couple, who seemed older than the 35 to 40 year olds on the beach. They were holding hands like a sweet couple in the movies. They told us to go sit to the nice spot where they had been. We said thank you for their recommendation.

Escaping the City, Reviving my Soul ----- (Continued from page 15)

We walked to that spot where a tree cast a big shadow, so we could lie down in the shade without getting burned by the sun. We lay on the beach listening to the sound of the waves until I fell asleep. I took a nap for almost 20 minutes.

My boyfriend woke me up with his sweet voice. It was 3 p.m. We had spent three hours on the beach. "It's time to go back home," he said to me.

We drove straight to our home full of the good energy from the beautiful beach and friendly people. I felt so good.

I always think about that day and want to go back there again. It was a slow life. On the way back home, I didn't have to worry about the homeless whom I had seen every day. The smell of nature was nice, warm and fresh. The sounds of the ocean were sweet and relaxing.

Now I found the reason of staying out of downtown. It's true that downtown has everything I need. I can go shopping for every brand more easily, and I can find many kinds of food. Also, transportation is convenient because I don't have to wait so long compared to living in a small town. But it's also important in life to stay in a good area with fresh air, meeting friendly people and staying away from environmental pollution.

This is the reason that I need to live closer to a small town as much as I can.





A Gift from God

By Sam Pasakon Kaboonkum

August 29th was my first day of class at Oikos University. It was also my birthday. I got up early since the class started at 9 a.m. I enjoyed all the classes, and everyone was very friendly. The Korean food for lunch was one of my favorite parts of the day. It was very delicious! I ate so much that I almost had a food coma in the late afternoon. It was worthwhile eating too much of that delicious food, even if it made me so sleepy during the afternoon classes.

After school, my friends and I planned to celebrate my 29th birthday at one of Thai restaurants in San Francisco. On the way to the restaurant, I saw a kitten jumping out of a car in front of my car. I saw it hitting its head on the ground and suddenly running underneath another car. I told my friend who was driving to stop, and I got out and ran to the car where the kitten was hiding. I was trying to calm it down, but fortunately it didn't seem hurt, only shocked and scared.

Then I picked it up by the scruff of the neck and by holding its butt. I walked back to the car. I was thinking of taking the kitten to an animal hospital, but it was late, and I guessed the animal hospital would be closed already.

Instead, I decided to head over to the restaurant for my birthday party and bring the kitten with me. My friends were amazed when they saw me walk in holding the little cat in my hands. I told them what happened on the way to the restaurant.

"This little kitten is a present from God," they said.

"Yes, I agree," I said.

It was the best gift that I've ever had, especially since I saved its life from the street where it might have been killed by another car.

I had a great time at the party -- good foods, good vibes -- and I got a lot of birthday presents from my friends. Unfortunately, I drank a little too much and got drunk. I couldn't remember anything that happened after I asked one of my friends to take care of the kitten for

I woke up the next morning, and the first thing I saw was that little kitten sleeping in a basket with a puffy brown towel wrapped around its body to keep it warm. Someone had put a cup of milk inside the basket. The kitten looked much healthier than the night when I found it. I was so happy to see the kitten alive and healthy without any pain or wounds after its accident. I wanted to know what happened so I called my friend.

"How was I last night?" I asked. "How did I end up at your house?"

He told me I took care of the kitten even while I was in a blackout and unconscious. Then I passed out on his couch and spent the night there at his house.

Two days later, I brought the kitten to one of the cat shelters in the Bay Area. I wished I could have time to pet it at home, but since I don't have time to take care of it, I decided to let someone who is ready to take care of a pet adopt my kitten and take it to a new home. The kitten was adopted by an American couple. I hope the kitten lives happily now, especially with my little gift from God.



You Can Have a Great Time, Even in Difficulties

By Nita Kaboonkum

Last summer, my friends and I decided to go camping at South Lake Tahoe for vacation. I had already visited South Lake Tahoe in the winter, but I wanted to see it in the summer. I wanted to know the difference between summer and winter there. Therefore, six of us, including Pang, my classmate, went on this trip.

On the night before our trip, we prepared our supplies for staying in our tent for a week. We gathered flashlights, two tents, our swimsuits, the picnic gas stove, blankets, some food and beverages.

I was so excited because it was my first time camping in the United States. We rented a van for us, spent about five hours driving there, and arrived at South Lake Tahoe around 2 p.m. The first place we went was Sand Harbor beach. It was wonderful and absolutely amazing. There were a lot of boats and people. They were kayaking and sunbathing. I saw families on picnic. It was a very lovely moment.

We put on our swimsuits and walked around the shore of the lake for a while. Some of my friends swam in the lake. Then we rented a kayak, and kayaked around the shore for an hour and took pictures. Kayaking was difficult because we needed to have good balance to keep the boat level. However, it was so much fun, and I enjoyed it. I could never forget the beautiful sights that I saw and how I felt. In the winter, of course, there was ice and snow on the lake. When I saw the lake in the winter, I felt like freezing because the color was white. However, it looked very different in the summer. The lake was more colorful than ever in the summer. The water was very clear, and the sky had an indigo blue color, but the trees on the top of the mountain still had snow. There was snow on the mountains in the summer. That made me surprised.

After that, we looked for a campground nearby, and we found one area with a lot of trees around the campground. We chose a good spot for us to set up our two tents for the night. The campground had old-fashioned toilets and a water faucet with a swinging pump. We were excited and tried to use it, but when we started to pump it, the water came out freezing cold. It was hard to take a shower. We laughed and just washed our faces and cleaned up.

Then we started to make a campfire to cook dinner for a party. We turned on the music and drank beer. Some of us danced. We had so much fun until midnight and then went into our separate tents to sleep. Pang and I shared the same tent. We were so tired, and we wanted to sleep, but we couldn't because the night became "super cold!!!!" It was so freezing that we felt like we were sleeping in a cold storage. We only brought one blanket and an overcoat to put over us for the night, so we couldn't sleep at all until 6 o'clock in the morning. We woke up and went straight to the car parked near the tent to warm up. We were so tired that we fell asleep in the car for three hours.

When I woke up, I stepped out of the car and observed all the beauty surrounding me. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and I could still smell the smoke from the campfire that we had lit to keep the bugs away the night before. We lit the campfire again and cooked an easy breakfast of toast. Pang and I talked about what had happened last night. We both had the same feeling. It was too cold to sleep at all.

"Why did we not prepare and bring sleeping bags??!" I said.

We started laughing and laughing. It seemed so funny. We thought that South Lake Tahoe would not be very cold at night in the summer. Actually, the temperature at night is very different from Northern Thailand, because the temperature at night in Northern Thailand is much warmer, around 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to stay in a tent and sleep that night.

Whatever happened, I was so happy to spend time with my friends. I had a new experience on this trip and learned an important lesson: "Even when we are in a difficult situation, it is still possible to have a good time."



My Five Rules for Happiness

By Pa Praewnapa Ariyapakdee

I think, I'm so lucky to be Thai because my culture teaches us to be flexible, and we grow up with the "Dharma" (this signifies behaviors considered to be in accord with the order that makes life and universe possible, includes duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues, and the right way of living).

When I was in high school, I was a bad student and my life was so terrible. I had so many stubborn friends. I didn't pay attention in class. I went to school and then tried to get out of school to hang out with my friends. I got into a fight with one of my friends, who became my best friend. We hit each other like crazy. Everyone at school was looking at us, some people cheering and some trying to stop us. After that our teacher called us to her room to talk about it. That made me feel bad, and I wanted to be a better person.

My mom told me to read a book about the Dharma. It was called, "*Kod hang Kloem*" in Thai. It talked about one monk named "Jarun." I learned how to think positively.

One part of the book says, "We become what we think about." If we think that today is going to be a good day, we will make it a good day; whatever we are going to say, we must think about it twice to make sure our words are not going to hurt anybody. It also talks about Karma, which means if we do good things, good things will come back, but if we do bad things, bad things will come back as well.

A couple of months after I read the book, I was talking with my friend, and she told me a story about one guy who was always busy with his job, until his dad passed away. After the funeral, he went back to his dad's house full of people he did not know -- such as the postman, the policemen, and many neighbors who stopped by to say they were so sad and talked about how nice his dad was.

He had no idea who those people were, but he finally realized that life is too short, and people will remember how kind you are. So, after that, he decided to quit his job to live in the neighborhood and enjoy his slow life. The story of this guy made me have an "Aha" moment. I realized that I should just be happy.

My life was changed after I read the book. I became a positive person more than I used to be. I think about other people first and be careful with whatever I'm going to do. I have been practicing. That makes me more focused on the "here and now" which means I'm focusing on what I'm doing and who is in the front of me. It really affects my student life because now I pay more attention in class.

Dharma tells me to understand the world, to be kind, and to have consciousness according to what I just said earlier. I also believe that no matter who you are, where you are from, and what religion you have, just believe to do good things because that is what all religions try to teach us.

I hope my story inspires you guys to be better and keep doing good.

The Rules I Made for Myself:

- 1) Smile to everyone even though that person is very angry.
- 2) If something bad happens to me and makes me feel bad, I should think of so many people who are unlucky.
- 3) Try to talk to everyone nicely and treat everyone equally.
- 4) Do not look down on other people.
- 5) Whenever I want to give up, think about my family.

Remembering my Grandfather

By Mint Wipawee Lowchai

Last year, I remember it was a nice and sunny day for the Songkran festival in Thailand.

Songkran festival is the Thai New Year festival. The Thai New Year's Day is April 13th every year, but the holiday period also includes April 14-15 as a family day for people who work outside their home town to come back home and spend the day with their families.

After having lunch, my family and I were hanging out and chilling in the living room. About 1 o'clock in the afternoon, Mee, my grandpa, got ready to install the statue of the Buddha at a table on the first floor of the house and poured water on the Buddha.

We believed that if we do this, we can go join the Songkran festival outside the house, and we would have good luck for the year. We would always go to the temple as a spiritual merit to pray and clean the memorial of the ancestors.

Every year, we have done this with my parents and with my grandfather as the leader of these ceremonies. However, next April, we won't have him at the Songkran festival because he passed away some months ago, on Oct. 2, 2017. He had lived in this world 81 years and passed away with diabetes. He was an inspiration to the family. When he was a teenager, he needed to work as a constructor and send the money to his mom.

When I had a summer break from high school, I usually spent my vacation with my grandparents at their house in another village not that far from my house. I had to go to bed early and wake up early because I had to help them cook and work at their grocery store. I had such great memories with them.

Now I don't have him anymore because he had gone far away from us and will never come back again. Even though I still have my grandma, I will keep my grandpa as my inspiration to live life and to take care of the family like he did.

I miss you so much, Grandpa....

Love.... Mint

Las Vegas was a Party -- then a Horror

By Tha Khanittha Kraithong

Last August, I went on a trip with a few friends to Las Vegas, met some more friends from Los Angeles there and we all stayed at the Mandalay Bay Resort for two nights. Some of us stayed on the 22nd floor, and others stayed on the 32nd floor. Both rooms were huge and luxurious and had great views overlooking the swimming pool, and the amazing night scene of the Las Vegas Strip. I could not stop looking out of the windows in my room and my friend's room 10 floors above us.

I was able to see the mountains surrounding the desert where the City of Las Vegas was built. Moving in closer with my eyes, I kept staring at the crystal blue waters in the swimming pools and the palm trees of the resort. There was a huge wave pool, a lazy river and three or four other smaller pools with artificial beaches built around them with lounges, cabanas and cocktail areas. I felt like I just arrived in paradise.

For three days, we had so much fun! The interior of the Mandalay resort is highly decorated and architecturally beautiful. It has everything: pools, spa, a fitness center, a huge casino, restaurants with delicious meals, bars with great cocktails. We took a lot of photographs and enjoyed ourselves, going for walks in the late afternoon, swimming, going to the rooftop bar, listening to some music and having a few cocktails.

On one day, we all went out to the Strip to walk the streets of Las Vegas and to visit other casinos. We had lunch at Caesar's Palace and one night, I wanted everyone to come with me and join a pool party at the Mandalay.

"Let's go guys, let's have some fun!" I told my friends.

During our stay, I could never have possibly guessed that the place where we had so much fun would turn into a nightmare for other people two months later.

It was October 1, a Sunday evening, when I was about to go to sleep in my apartment in San Francisco. I checked my cell phone as usual for the latest news and Facebook posts. As I was browsing through the feeds, suddenly, headlines of a Las Vegas mass shooting started popping up on the screen.

I couldn't believe it! The shooting had happened at the Mandalay Bay! The killer had been shooting from the same floor where my friends had stayed during our Las Vegas trip in August.

He had brought more than 20 rifles to his room during the last few days of his stay there and decided to open fire on the nearby country music concert audience, just across the street from the hotel. I remember us walking on that side of the Las Vegas Boulevard once on our way back to the hotel.

He fired shots with his almost fully automated rifles during 11 minutes of horror. Later that night, some videos of the shooting started to appear on the social media. They showed the people at concert who were shot and then the terrible images of men and women trying to run away and find cover. But it was really difficult for them to escape since the shooter had chosen an elevated position, a strategic place for shooting. He killed 58 people and wounded another 500 and then committed suicide shortly afterward. What a horrible tragedy! So many innocent lives were lost and so many injured in the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history.

Only two months before, I had been so happy there with my friends. I could never have imagined such a massacre could take place right where we were – or anywhere else in the U.S. My thoughts and prayers have been with the victims, the injured and their families. I can't imagine the suffering of the people who had lost their loved ones in such a senseless act of violence. I believe some legislative changes should be made to prevent tragedies like this from happening in the future.



Never Forget the Students of the Sewol – Lost in the Sea

By Sangmi Park

In Korean, the word *Sewol* means “the time to flow,” but it is also the name of a tragic accident in South Korea in April 2014 that caused the death of 304 passengers -- students who drowned and are now under the sea and no longer able to flow in their time.

The ferry named *Sewol* was carrying mostly high school students who were participating in a field trip to celebrate their graduation from high school. The ferry sank on the way from the Incheon to Jeju Island. The captain and crewmen called the police late, and the police dawdled for an hour and arrived late. The captain and crewmen told the students to “wait” inside the ferry while they abandoned the ferry and escaped themselves. The students and other passengers believed the captain’s announcement to wait and sank with *Sewol*. The maritime police rescued those people who escaped from the ferry by themselves, but only watched the sinking *Sewol* and didn’t try to rescue the remaining students trapped inside.

There was a lot of controversy about the cause of accident. At first, it was believed that the ship was wrecked on an underwater rock. But after investigations, it turned out that no rocks seemed to be near the site of the accident. Instead, it was determined that the ship somehow made a sudden turn during the voyage, causing heavy cargo to lean to one side, which led the entire ship to tilt over.

The sinking of the *Sewol* became very big news. People talked about failures and faults of people who were connected with *Sewol*. The government had not checked ferry’s safety and had not investigated the ferry’s illegal reorganization. And also the government didn’t know how to manage it and they managed it very late. The captain and crewmen’s fault was very big. They had to take responsibility for the passenger’s safety, but they didn’t think about the passengers. They only thought about themselves. If they had sacrificed themselves and tried to help the passengers, more than 200 people would have lived. The maritime police were at fault too, because they didn’t try to rescue people actively. They were only watching while the ferry was sinking.

After the accident, the nation was shocked. The main road to the fence of Jindo port where the closest port to where the *Sewol* sank was lined with yellow ribbons. The sign is part of South Korea’s Yellow Ribbon movement. Bright yellow ribbons with the message “One small step, big miracle” have spread across the country in the wake of *Sewol* disaster to bring hope to the grieving families who are still waiting for the return of their missing loved ones.

The movement was started by a university student organization. A yellow ribbon logo was distributed as a popular Korean social media wallpaper and shared by the social media users to remember the victims of the ferry tragedy. Later on, some students began tying yellow ribbons or strings on their backpacks. Others attached them to trees, posts and fences.

After the accident, the captain was arrested, convicted in court and sentenced to life imprisonment, and the new president of South Korea invited the families of the *Sewol* victims to the Blue House where he lives to share their sorrow with them.

I feel so sorry about the accident, especially because there were many young people. The *Sewol* sank with the students and their big, beautiful dreams. I’m so sad when I think about their families too. I think all the adults were at fault. They avoided their responsibilities. Yes, the work of a ship captain, crew and the police is very risky because it is dangerous, but if they can’t handle the risk, they should get another job. Also, the government officials didn’t know how to manage it either, and when they tried to manage it, it was too late. In this big tragedy, many people didn’t accept their responsibility and show wisdom, so I’m disappointed in them.

From now on, every time most Koreans see ‘the Jindo,’ they think that the *Sewol* has sunk. There will be other scenes, such as the appearance of a tilted *Sewol* besides the sea in our eyes, and every time we hear the word “기다려라(*Gidalyeo*)”, which means “Wait,” it is still shaded with sadness for me.

Nevertheless, as light comes from darkness, I believe that hope will come from the time of sorrow. I don’t want a big tragedy like *Sewol* disaster to happen again, and if a big crisis comes again, I want people to manage it better and show wisdom in their reaction. And people should never forget tragedy of the *Sewol* and the loss of 304 students forever.





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