SLEEPING WITH YOUR CELL PHONE COULD BE DEADLY

BRB, BLACKBERRY
COULD YOU SPEND FIVE DAYS WITHOUT TWEETS, TEXTS & TECHNOLOGY?

TWO TALES OF THE CITY
THE LATEST CHAPTER IN THE CASE OF STUDENTS VS. COMMUNITY

THE NEW GREEN DINNER PARTY

A LIFE OF NEVER KNOWING
SHE'S FINALLY READY TO LEARN THE STORY OF HER BIRTH PARENTS
Florence Program

Study abroad in Florence, Italy, with the College of Communication and Information.

- Study in the home of Da Vinci, Dante and Michelangelo.
- Immerse yourself in a culture other than your own.
- Have a life-transforming experience while earning credits toward graduation.

Open to all students enrolled in the schools of Communication Studies, Journalism and Mass Communication and Visual Communication Design.

CCI students will enjoy:
- International communications courses taught by European professionals.
- Field trips to Italian media outlets and landmarks.
- Long weekends to travel through Europe.

Scholarships are available to help with tuition and housing, and financial aid does apply to study abroad coursework.

Where You'll Study & Live

The Palazzo dei Cerchi is a prestigious building in the historic center of Florence, just north of the Piazza della Signoria and within walking distance of the Palazzo Vecchio. Built in the 13th Century by the Cerchi family, a powerful merchant clan, the palace was fully restored in 2004. It now combines state-of-art classrooms with the historic frescoes and wooden ceilings of Medieval Florence.

Students live in fully furnished apartments in the historic center of Florence within walking distance of the Palazzo.

Contact CCI advisor Deborah Davis at dldavis@kent.edu or 330-672-8293 for more information. For more information on the Kent State Florence program, visit http://www.kent.edu/oia/StudyAbroad/Florence.

38 Kent State is getting hotter

This young, alternative gal knows how to work a camera — but she wasn’t always this comfortable with her sexuality.

50 cover story
Inside the manila folder

She’s adopted, she loves her family. But curiosity and imagination got the best of her — so it was time to take a look.

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International students recognize that not all of their preconceived notions of America were right.

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Students and the community have struggled to see eye to eye, but now there could be an end to the animosity ... maybe.

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46 In the studio with Maxwell

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THE BURR

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ABOUT THE BURR
The Burr informs students and faculty about events, issues and people at Kent State and in the surrounding communities. Readers are encouraged to send comments, suggestions and feature articles to the addresses listed above. The Burr, formerly The Chestnut Burr, is produced by students at Kent State University twice per academic year. No part of The Burr may be reprinted without permission. © 2009, The Burr.

14 Chow down and show Mother Earth some love, too
Host a green dinner party from setup to scrub-down.

18 Sorry, I must not have gotten that Facebook invite
Can a 21-year-old technology fanatic spend five days without modern gizmos and gadgets? Just barely.

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Smoking comes with a lot of dangers, but it also provides a lot of interesting moments, as writer Doug Gulasy found out during his week as a smoker.

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Jinae West photographed by Adam Harris, Nov. 6, 2009, at Kent State

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4 The way you use everyday items may be hazardous
You want white teeth, dyed hair and a cell phone at the hip. But as they say, beauty comes at a price.

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This machine's got everything; it keeps your house smelling great and your belly full for days.

9 Is your room a disaster?
It pays to organize your room, and it only takes a little bit of time and money. It's as easy as saving old shoe boxes.

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Check out the season's hottest glasses — and others will check you out, too.

From the Editor
Aren't we all trying to be better?
We wake up day after day on an innate mission to improve. We make decisions, considering the outcomes.

Wake up or sleep in?
Take the faster route or the scenic back road?
Initiate a necessary, difficult discussion or avoid it?
We choose the better option — for ourselves, for others, for principle or for no good reason at all.

With this issue of The Burr, our mission is to find ways to be better.
For Jinae West, whose story is featured on the cover, being better meant opening a 21-year-old manila folder. Inside, she'd find the names and story of her birth parents — two people she'd always been curious to know but only ever dreamed of before spilling the folder's contents.
Read her story on Page 30.

Kristina Deckert gave up her obsession with social networking and techno-gadgets. I kept her covered in BlackBerry, laptop and iPad on a shelf in my apartment for her five-day hi-tech hiatus — and I'm surprised she never broke in. Follow her journal entries on Page 18.
Ben Wolford talked to singer-songwriter Justin Townes Earle to find out why he's finally kicked his addiction to drugs. Learn about Earle and other rock stars who are dropping the drugs, sex and boost for healthier habits on Page 34. We had a difficult time tracking down Eric Clapton for photos, so my mom let us borrow a few of her shots from the '70s — the heart of the bigot years.
Sarah Steimer asked students and Kent community members why they can't get along. She talked to more than 15 people to get as many sides of the story possible. Find out their ideas for a solution on Page 30.

Browse Brittany Mosley's slow cooker recipes on Page 7 and whip up your own home-cooked meal instead of ordering out again. I taste-tested the chili, and it's delicious.

The Burr began with a mission to be better, and even as these stories blossomed and changed, I watched it emerge. Somewhere in the chaos of reporting, writing, taking photos, designing and editing, we all found ways to be better.

Maybe when you read this, you'll find a way to be better, too.
— Caitlin Saniga

100 words to introduce 100 years of our history
Kent State celebrates its 100th year in 2010, and as you can imagine, a whole lot has changed in those years. While this magazine looks at many current themes, we haven't forgotten the school's past. Throughout these pages, there is a timeline of major events for the university, everything from the construction of its first building in 1912 to the first black squirrels that came to campus in 1961. Take a peek at these facts as you browse through the magazine — you'll be surprised at what you learn about the university you walk through every day. Happy birthday, Kent State!

FACTS COMPILRED BY AMY STANZ

The Chestnut Burr was the Kent State's yearbook until it became this magazine in 1986.
Aren't we all trying to be better? We wake up day after day on an innate mission to improve. We make decisions, considering the outcomes: Wake up or sleep in? Take the faster route or the scenic back road? Initiate a necessary, difficult discussion or avoid it? We choose the better option — for ourselves, for others, for principle or for no good reason at all.

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They’re things you use without even thinking about it. They’re things you may be using right now. Find out how to use the following items the right way.

**Cell phones**

They’ve become the lifelines of 4 billion users worldwide. Many people keep their cell phones with them all day without a second thought to the possible dangers of extended use. Lloyd Morgan, the lead author of the August report, “Cell phones and Brain Tumors: 15 Reasons for Concern,” has given it thought. His study examines independent research and other studies released by the telecommunications industry, including the Telecom-funded Interphone study. He says a person’s exposure to cell phone radiation depends on the length of time used and the power that the cell phone is generating.

**Cell Phone Radiation**

According to the study mentioned to the left, radiation emitted during cell phone use can result in eye cancer, increased risk of brain tumors, salivary gland tumors, testicular cancer, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and leukemia.

A wire headset kept 6 inches from the body can reduce the radiation emitted from a cell phone by a factor of 10,000.

Phone manuals already tell users to keep the phone at least 1 inch from their body.

Children have a higher risk because their cells are dividing at a higher rate.

Researchers behind this study met with communication industry specialists about this concern at a Senate hearing Sept. 14. It was determined that no action can be taken until further research is conducted. Groups on the other side of the debate include CITA-The Wireless Association, representing the wireless industry, the Federal Communications Commission and the American Cancer Society. “No research indicates they are harmful,” says Al Stabilito, spokesman of the American Cancer Society. He added that it will take time to have thorough research on this topic. There is one thing that both sides can agree on: People should keep their cell phones as far from their body as possible. “Anywhere immediately next to your body is highly dangerous,” Morgan says.

---

**AVOIDING POSSIBLE CELL PHONE RISKS**

- Do not sleep with cell phones by bedside or under pillow.
- Use speakerphone or send text messages when possible.
- For longer phone calls, headsets are the safest.
- Turn off the phone when not in use.
- Phones in standby mode are still radiating.
- Avoid use in buildings, especially those with steel structures.
- Avoid use in moving cars, trains and buses around cell phone towers.
- Use a landline when possible.

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**Water bottles**

According to an article from U.S. News and World Report, the National Toxicology Program says the amount of Bisphenol A released may depend on the temperature of the liquid or the container itself rather than the age of the plastic bottle. The Canadian government is considering declaring the chemical toxic. The evidence warrants "a higher level of concern than those expressed by expert (scientific) panel for possible effects of BPA on prostate gland, mammary gland and early onset of puberty," an NTP report states in the article. This chemical is present in our bodies. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has conducted studies that show almost all Americans have BPA levels in their body.
EVERYDAY LIVING

using right now. Find out how to use the following items the right way. KELLY PETRYSZYN

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**The Dangers of Everyday Living**

**Hygiene products**

Cosmetic companies aren't required to list all ingredients on their products' labels, says Stacy Malkan, cofounder of the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, a coalition of non-profit and environmental health organizations that promotes non-toxic personal care products. This becomes a problem when some ingredients may be toxic or may be contaminated. To avoid the risk of exposure, she advises using the simple products that contain the fewest ingredients. "If you don't know what most ingredients are, keep looking," Malkan says. A good source is the Skin Deep database, sponsored by the Environmental Working Group, Malkan says. This database includes more than 50 toxicity and regulatory databases.

**KARMFUL CHEMICALS IN TOOTHPASTE**

- Sodium Fluoride: an anti-plaque oral agent.
- Direct exposure to this ingredient puts humans at risk of cancer, developmental/reproductive toxicity, endocrine disruption, organ/system toxicity and other concerns.

**Source:** Skin Deep database

1914 The Chestnut Burr is first published as a yearbook for the college and is replaced by The Burr magazine in 1986.

1920 Kent State acquires the Slow Aviation Field.

**Success with a slow cooker**

>> Instead of ordering the usual pizza and wings at your next game-day party, impress your friends with your cooking skills by trying these recipes. Even if your team loses the game, this meal will definitely win over your guests. BRITTANY MOSELEY

3-bean turkey chili

**Photographs by Sam Trayler**

BURR FALL 2009
Success with a slow cooker

Instead of ordering the usual pizza and wings at your next game-day party, impress your friends with your cooking skills by trying these recipes. Even if your team loses the game, this meal will definitely win over your guests. BRITTANY MOSLEY

KENT STATE acquires the Still Aviation Field.

1914 The Chautauqua Burr is first published as a yearbook for the college and is replaced by The Burr magazine in 1966.

1920 Kent State acquires the Still Aviation Field.
Success with a slow cooker

Creamy spinach dip

This tasty dip doesn't take long to prepare, and it goes great with everything.

INGREDIENTS
- 8 ounces cream cheese, cubed
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 1 cup frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 2 tablespoons pimento, diced
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated or finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme

DIRECTIONS
Combine cream cheese and cream in slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 hour or until cheese is melted. Add remaining ingredients. Cover and cook on low for 30-45 minutes. Serve with raw vegetables, crackers or pita.

3-bean turkey chili

This crowd-pleaser is the perfect hearty dish for a cool day.

INGREDIENTS
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 or 2 jalapenos, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoons chili powder

DIRECTIONS
Cook turkey and onion in skillet over medium-high heat. Stir to break up meat until turkey is no longer pink. Drain. Transfer turkey mixture to slow cooker. Add remaining ingredients to slow cooker and mix well. Cover and cook on high for 6-8 hours.

Mulled apple cider

This drink keeps for at least a month. Just reheat and enjoy.

INGREDIENTS
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 quarts cider
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons whole cloves
- 1/2 orange, sliced
- *Add 1 cup of rum for a more spirited drink.

DIRECTIONS
Combine all ingredients in slow cooker. If desired, tie whole spices in cheesecloth or put in tea strainer. Cover and set on low for up to 8 hours.

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD OWN A SLOW COOKER

There are always leftovers.

It's the easiest way to cook. Just put ingredients in the slow cooker, turn it on and enjoy. Easy cleanup. No one likes washing pots and pans. Luckily, slow cookers aren't difficult to clean.


It travels well. Take it on your next road trip. All you need is an electrical outlet.

It's a healthy alternative to the fast food joints you frequent.

It's a great investment. You can buy one for as little as $20 or as much as $130, depending on how much you're willing to spend.

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Wondering how you're going to make three dishes with one slow cooker? All of these dishes can be prepared ahead of time and reheated. Make the cider the night before. When ready to serve, either heat individual mugs of cider in the microwave or pour the entire batch into a small pot and simmer on the stove for a few minutes until warm. You can also make the dip the night before and reheat it the next day.

1926 A student's entry of "golden flashes" is chosen to become the school's official mascot.

1925 Kent Normal School becomes Kent State University.
What's a person to do with endless pairs of shoes, piles of coats, armloads of jeans, stacks of T-shirts and bundles of accessories? Not much with a standard closet. However, a few dollars and tweaks to some existing items' closet storage space can transform your tiny storage area into a more efficient and organized space.

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- 1 cup frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 2 tablespoons pimentos, diced
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 teaspoons onion, grated or finely chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon thyme

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**Ingredients:**
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 quarts cider
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon whole cloves
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- 1/2 orange, sliced

**Directions:**
Combine all ingredients in slow cooker. If desired, tie whole spices in cheesecloth or put in tea strainer. (If spices are added loose, strain before serving.) Cover and set on low 2-8 hours.

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TRY THIS: Hang all your clothes back in the closet with the hanger hooks facing you, suggests author Donna Smallin in her book, "The One-Minute Organizer: A to Z Storage Solutions: 500 Tips for Storing Every Item in Your Home." When you wear an item and hang it up again, face the hook in the opposite direction. At the end of the season, all the hooks facing you are items you should donate or toss.

**Getting started**

**Get real.** What don't you want, need or even like anymore? Organize your clothes into piles based on those questions, suggests author Julie Morgenstern in her book, "Organizing from the Inside Out." Keep these tips in mind:

- If you haven't worn it in a year, get rid of it.
- If it doesn't fit or flatter, get rid of it.
- Items that are still in good condition can always be donated.

**Organizing**

For seasonal items like sweaters or anything bulky, Smallin suggests folding and placing them in a container under your bed. This not only helps keep their shape better than a hanger, but also leaves more room in your closet. Then color-coordinate your clothes, which makes it easier to find items and coordinate outfits.

**QUICK TIP** If you don't have additional storage containers, use your suitcases as storage. Placing a dryer sheet inside the luggage helps maintain item freshness.

**Recycle, reuse, reinvent**

This is a chance to truly make your closet as personalized as your wardrobe. You can reinvent common household items or save some money on organizing tools by hitting up a local discount store.

- Use an over-the-door shoe bag holder to store socks, underwear and hosiery, ties, rolled belts or scarves.
- Shoe boxes (on closet shelves) are great for storing recipes, memorabilia, photos or jewelry. Decorate them with magazine cutouts or wrapping paper.

**Hangers** are perfect for scarves, belts and ties. Fold and hang large or heavy scarves or individual pant/shirt hangers with clips. For a lot of scarves, try hooking several shower curtain rings together and hang one ring over the neck of the hanger. Then thread scarves through the rings.

To hang more items, attach wall hooks behind your dorm or apartment room door, closet door and anywhere with extra space.

Outfit dresser drawers with store-bought containers or reuse empty tissue boxes, gift boxes and shoe boxes to store socks, jewelry, hair accessories and underwear.

**REMEMBER**

The secret to a well-organized, functional closet is keeping in mind that everything has its place. Morgenstern suggests evaluating your new closet space after a couple of weeks to make tweaks if needed. Put things back where you had them and resist the urge to use your closet as a storage unit.
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1947 Oscar Ritchie becomes the first black person appointed to a faculty position at a mostly white university in Ohio - Kent State.

1946 Kent State's first branch campus in Stark County.
Bold colors and thick plastic frames dominate this season’s eyewear trends. “Metal frames ruled in the late ’90s, early 2000s,” says Liz Segre, editorial director for AllAboutVision.com. “(But) people are more interested in experimenting with color now.” Unusual combinations of colors, such as brown and turquoise, are coming into play for women this year. Darker colors, such as gun-metal gray and black, are in high demand for men, Segre says. Introducing the eyewear of 2010: a smart, modern twist on quirky, retro roots. LAURA LOFGREN

eye-catchers

MEN'S FRAMES (OPPOSITE, FROM TOP)
OGI $210, Prodesign: Denmark $195, Ray Ban $165, Ray Ban $195, Brooks Brothers $175

WOMEN'S FRAMES (THIS PAGE, FROM TOP)
Vogue $150, Prodesign: Denmark $195, DKNY $180, Juicy Couture $100, Bebe $180

Frames available as of November at Kent Optometric, 330.478.8079
Photographs by Adam Harris, Styling by Adam Griffiths

Go to TheBurr.com to see which frame shapes work for your face
eye-catchers

Bold colors and thick plastic frames dominate this season’s eyewear trends. “Metal frames ruled in the late ’90s, early 2000s,” says LU Segre, editorial director for AS AboutVision.com. “But people are more interested in experimenting with color now.” Unusual combinations of colors, such as brown and turquoise, are coming into play for women this year. Darker colors, such as gunmetal gray and black, are in high demand for men, Segre says. Introducing the eyewear of 2010: a smart, modern twist on quirky, retro roots. LAURA LOFGREN

Frames available as of November at Kent Optometric, 330.678.8079. Photographs by Adam Harris, Styling by Adam Griffiths.

Go to TheBurr.com to see which frame shapes work for your face.
>> Going green isn’t difficult; it just takes good planning. Take it one step at a time. First, a green dinner party. Next, green habits. Most of these eco-friendly tips can be applied beyond the dinner party, and you can find other party ideas at TheBurr.com. CAITLIN SANIGA

1 Party prep
SEND online invites via Facebook or a free invitation Web site like Evite.com. MAKE a note that guests should walk or carpool to the party.

CHOOSE a menu that features seasonal and local produce. Purchase ingredients from the farmers market and local businesses. Aim for free-range, organic, fair-trade and pesticide-free foods.

WHERE? Haymaker Farmers’ Market in Kent holds winter events on Dec. 12 and 19.

BUY alcoholic beverages from local brewers and wineries.

BRING reusable shopping bags when buying party supplies and groceries.

WHY? According to an EPA report, more than 4 million tons of plastic bags were used in 2007. Only 9.1 percent were recycled.

USE things you already own, such as a fishbowl with fish or seasonal plants for a centerpiece.

2 In the kitchen
DEFROST food sans microwave. Set out ingredients four to five hours in advance.

DEFROST COOK

REMOVAL all ingredients from the fridge at one time.

WHY? The more you open and close the fridge, the more energy you waste.

KITCHEN appliances account for about a quarter of total household energy use.

WASH vegetables in cold water on low pressure.

STEAM vegetables.

WHY? This method uses less water than boiling.

PLUS You can use the leftover liquid to water houseplants.

USE small stove burners for small pots and pans and large burners for large pots and pans.

TURNOFF the oven a few minutes before cook time is up.

DON’T WORRY. The oven will hold the heat.

PREPARE food in a slow cooker, instead of an oven, if possible.

(Find tasty slow cooker recipes back on Page 8.)

3 Dinnertime
MOST the party in the afternoon or early evening to make use of natural sunlight.

KEEP cloth dish towels handy in case of spills, and invest in cloth napkins — or better yet, make your own from fabric scraps. Don’t buy paper towels or napkins.

ASK friends to bring extra dinnerware if you don’t have enough for all of your guests. Don’t buy disposable dishes, cups or utensils.

TURN DOWN the thermostat a few degrees in cool weather. WHY? Your guests’ body heat will make up the difference.

DON’T FORGET to label your recycling and garbage bins.

TURN OFF unused appliances and electronics during the party.

What’s for dinner? Find recipes for the dishes below on the next page. >>

4 Clean-up
COMPOST food scraps (egg shells, vegetable peels and rinds, etc.) if possible.

STORE leftovers in reusable containers. Avoid using plastic wrap, foil and resealable plastic bags. Invite guests to bring their own containers if they’re interested in leftovers.

WASH dishes by hand. Plug sink and allow dishes to soak before scrubbing and rinsing.

PLUS Sanitize old toothbrushes with rubbing alcohol and reuse them to clean narrow champagne flutes, vases and intricate dishware.

MIX equal parts water and vinegar to clean coffee and food stains.

MAKE a paste of baking soda and water to break up grease on dirty dishes.

SEPARATE recyclables from garbage, and make sure they get to the curb or recycling center.

1950 WKSU-FM is given a home in Kent Hall. A student staff airs regularly scheduled programming five hours a day, five days a week during the school year.
DINE WITH THE PLANET IN MIND

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1954 Originally published in 1926, the Kent Stater is transformed into the Daily Kent Stater, becoming the student-run newspaper we know today.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TESSA BARGAINNIER

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Maple-glazed meatballs

**INGREDIENTS**
- 1/2 cups ketchup
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon quick-cooking tapioca
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 2 packages (16 ounces each) frozen fully cooked meatballs
- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple chunks, juice drained

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine ketchup, maple syrup, soy sauce, tapioca, allspice and mustard in slow cooker. Thaw meatballs. Carefully stir meatballs and pineapple into ketchup mixture. Cover. Cook on low 5-6 hours. Stir before serving.

Bruschetta

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 medium-sized tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup basil, sliced finely
- 1/2 cup Mozzarella cheese, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinaigrette

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine all ingredients. Serve chilled. Can be prepared a day in advance.

Bacon broccoli salad

**SALAD**
- 4 strips bacon, cooked
- 1 small head broccoli, chopped
- 1 small head cauliflower, chopped
- 1 cup chopped white onion

**DRESSING**
- 2 cups of light mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup of sugar
- 1/4 cup of white distilled vinegar

**DIRECTIONS**
For dressing, combine mayonnaise, sugar, and vinegar in small mixing bowl. Crush bacon into bits. Toss with broccoli, cauliflower, and onion. Pour dressing over bacon-vegetable mix. Stir to combine. Serve chilled.

Warm winter fruits

**INGREDIENTS**
- 3 apples, cubed
- 2 pears, cubed
- 2 peaches, cubed
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons butter

**DIRECTIONS**

And to drink...

Tony Carlucci, an enologist and geography instructor, suggests pairing this menu with Syrah from Ravens Glenn Winery. It's a medium-bodied, dry red wine with soft, fruity notes. $12.99

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TWITTER: @theburrmagazine
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MY FIVE DAYS WITHOUT:

I'm more addicted to technology than anyone I know. My friends and family constantly yell at me for playing with my BlackBerry or looking at Facebook or updating Twitter about, well, everything. So when my editor told me she wanted me to give up all technology that wasn't around in the mid-90s for five days, I was pretty apprehensive. But I figured I could look at it as a personal challenge — even though I knew I'd get frustrated without any means of real-time communication.

Commentary by KRISTINA DECKERT  Photo illustration by DAN MAXWELL

BEFORE MY BREAK FROM TECHNOLOGY

Last night was the last full night with my BlackBerry. Just for reference, my bedtime routine usually goes like this: Brush teeth. Pee. Wash face. Put on Chapstick. Get into bed. Text a friend. Check out Twitter and Facebook. Tweet something on Twitter via BlackBerry. Check CNN via BlackBerry. Fall asleep.

Not many people I know go through steps 6-9 prior to sleep. And it usually takes me about a half hour to do so. Yeah, I'll admit it. I'm addicted ... obsessed ... to the point that my editor will be taking my BlackBerry, MacBook, iPod and digital camera away from me at midnight. I'll also go without Facebook, Twitter, Gmail and my ATM card.

I expect to cry by Friday.

But maybe I'll learn to experience life without a BlackBerry in my hand or an iPod's earbuds in my ears. Rather than texting someone I'm not with or tweeting to the world, maybe I'll focus on the person I'm with (or I'll actually pay attention in class). Live in the moment, all that crap. We'll see.

For the next five days, I'm going to be a hot, hot mess.
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1961 Ten black squirrels are imported from Canada and released in Kent.
And I'm really sick of hanging around the apartment doesn't have a landline.)

Later ..

All I really want is to know what time it is. I bought a disposable camera to take pictures at the homecoming game and other because I don't have a watch. Last time I wore a watch, it had the Little Mermaid on it. That's honestly, I'm sort of excited to see how these pictures turn out. It's a sense of anticipation I haven't had since high school. It'll be a nice surprise to get them developed. I just hope they turn out.

TOMORROW IS MY LAST DAY.

LAST DAY

I'm so close I can almost feel my BlackBerry's keys under my thumbs again. I had a meeting for the newsroom today, and I realized that Franklin Hall is locked on Sundays. With no way of calling someone to let me in, I had to pound on the window to try and get someone's attention so I could get inside. I scared the crap out of some poor student.

And just as a last note: The radio sucks. Ironically, I keep hearing bands like Backstreet Boys and Third Eye Blind ... classic '90s tunes. It's like Northeast Ohio radio stations are torturing me, reminding me that I can't listen to any of my favorite songs on my iPod.

MONDAY 10.12.09
THE DAY AFTER

They feel so nice to have my stuff back. I can actually listen to songs I want to listen to in the car, do work on my laptop from home and TEXT. God, I love to text. yep, I felt like I was wasting time on my way to classes because I couldn't make phone calls. Now, I can get things done ... but I sort of miss just relaxing and enjoying my (really long) walk to campus.

LOOKING BACK

All in all, this was a pretty enlightening experience. By Thursday, I stopped reaching for my phone in my back pocket and began doodling a lot more during class instead of playing on my BlackBerry. There were a lot of perks I hated, but I'm glad I at least tried. And I never cried! I just complained a lot.

Kristina Doekert
is a senior visual journalism major.

As technology has evolved, so has our set of expectations.

Jeff Child, assistant professor of communication studies, says before cell phones, people didn't think much of it if someone didn't respond to a missed call until hours later, or even the next day. Now, if someone doesn't respond quickly, people begin to wonder. An unwarranted response can generate feelings of anger and worry.

"You send someone a text message, and they don't reply for a day.

What are you thinking? Why are they ignoring me?" he says. "Or you send an e-mail, and there are all these implicit norms that develop around what is an appropriate time to respond — how long after? And then you change if you're more connected to your device."

If people turn toward technology as their primary form of communication, they also risk losing the human element of socializing. Child adds that social networking Web sites such as Twitter and Facebook may also add a hint of narcissism to personalities, as "these sites center heavily on the individual."

"If you interact with people, and the only way you do it is send brief messages, I think you take away from that," he says. "You might think, "Well, I'm not very important to them."

Child says that attempting to communicate without technology can show someone how much they mean to you. For example, sending a letter is bound to impress younger people.

"If you send a letter to anybody in the young'uns generation ... they'll giggle. Wow," he says. "It's because of the effort that comes through in doing that. I think people will look at the relative contribution you're making, and technology has just made it easier to send more impersonal messages."

But he says it's overly simplistic to call technology a good or bad thing. As much as it has taken away from human interaction, it has made everyday tasks and distant communication much easier.

"If you take a retrospective look back, there's a lot of things that have changed since the '90s in terms of technology," he says. "The way it changes the way we interact with each other — some people say, 'Is it good? Is it bad?' They're overly simplistic questions because ... there are good and bad that happen simultaneously."

Christina Stahle
Today is 10/7/09

Day One

All I really want is to know what time it is. I feel like I'm going to be late to every class because I don't have a watch. Last time I wore a watch, it had the Little Mermaid on it.

And my alarm clock sucked. I used to wake up to the hot beats of Kanye West on my cell phone's alarm. Now, a loud beeping online harasses me until I wake up.

It's interesting, though, because now that I don't constantly have my hand bowed, staring at my cell, I'm starting at all of Kent State walking to class. The students are a lot like I usually am — constantly texting or talking on the phone. It's weird to watch people text. They always have goofy-ass grins on their faces as they look at their phones. It makes me want to laugh and puke at the same time.

Thursday 10/8/09

Day Two

I have two jobs: multimedia editor for KentNewsNet.com and online editor for The Burr. I can't exactly do my jobs if everything involved in them consists of editing audio, video and updating Facebook and Twitter. Those things weren't around in the mid-90s. Essentially, I've had to quit my jobs for a few days, and, well, that's okay by me if you know if I should wear a sweater or my winter jacket.

Friday 10/9/09

Day Three

I went out last night and thought maybe, for once, I'd have full attention on my friends and "live in the moment." But it's impossible when everyone else is on his or her phone and not paying attention to anything else. It annoyed me that they could use their cells and I couldn't. So I cleaned.

I borrowed a friend's BlackBerry and checked Twitter. I knew it was against the rules, but it felt good. Really good.

Saturday 10.10.09

Day Four

Kent State Homecoming

Looking back, it annoys me that I couldn't go five whole days without checking Twitter. My self-control apparently sucks. I feel bad about it, but I know myself well enough that I should've seen it coming.

I'm supposed to hang out with my friends all day, but I'm worried I won't be able to get a hold of them because I don't have a cell phone.

And I'm really sick of hanging around the newsroom where I work to use the phone. (My apartment doesn't have a landline.)

Later...

I bought a disposable camera to take pictures at the homecoming game and other festivities. I've already turned it around after snapping a picture to see if the film broke. I hope the disposable cameras aren't equipped with a screen on the back. Half the time, I can't even get the flash to work. But honestly, I'm sort of excited to see how these pictures turn out. It's a sense of anticipation I haven't had in years. I'd really be a huge surprise to get them developed. I just hope they turn out.

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Communication changes

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Christina Stahle
Nobody thought it was a good idea.

In the spring, my feature writing class was assigned first-person experience stories. We were supposed to go out, do something and write about it. There was only one problem: I had no idea what I was going to write about. So when my turn came to explain to the class what my story idea was, I hesitated, and then ...

"I think I'm going to become a smoker for a week."

The response was immediate. "You're kidding, right?" Nope. "You're going to get addicted." We'll see. The question they asked most was, "Why?"

I didn't know. But I was going to do it, and nobody was going to stop me.

COMMENTARY BY Doug Gulasy  ILLUSTRATION BY Christopher Sharron

DAY 1

The BP on East Main Street was empty except for the clerk, a fact I was grateful for. I didn't really want my first cigarette-buying moment to be witnessed by dozens of nosy gas-station customers. I wasn't sure exactly what to do, but I acted as though I did. I strolled up to the register with my hands in my pockets, acting cool but feeling nervous.

"Can I help you?" asked the clerk. He was one of those 20-something, smart-alecky types with a soul patch and wrinkled shirt. I disliked him immediately.

"Yes," I said. "I'd like a pack of Marlboro Lights, please."

I said it quietly, but I knew he had heard me. Still, he acted as if he hadn't. "I'm sorry, what was that?" he asked, smirking.

"A pack of Marlboro Lights," I said, trying to sound like I did this all the time but knowing all the while that I was failing.

"Do you have ID?" he asked, snatchng a pack of cigarettes from beneath the counter. I nodded, taking my wallet out of my pocket and sliding my driver's license out of its plastic sleeve and onto the counter. Still, I wondered — I'll turn 21 in three months. Do I really look younger than 18?

He glanced at the license for a second and shrugged. "That'll be $5.25," he said, ringing it up on the register.

I took a 10-dollar bill out of my wallet and slapped it on the counter, then waited impatiently as he slowly — too slowly, in my opinion — got the change.
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impatiently as he slowly — too slowly, in my opinion — got the change.
“Thanks,” I said when he finally gave it to me. He nodded and turned away as I left the store.

Outside, I took my first breath of fresh air as a non-smoker. It tasted more like gasoline. I fumbled with the coffeehouse's flick-pack of cigarettes before getting it open.

Then I realized something: I didn't have a lighter.

After buying a lighter without an incident, I tried again. I managed to light the cigarette, inhaling all those dangerous chemicals outlined in the surgeon general's warning. I'd had cigarettes before at parties, but this felt like a new experience. I was a smoker now, and it felt good — until I started to cough, that is.

Unsurprisingly, that first cigarette was my last one of the day.

**DAY 1 CIGARETTE COUNT: 1**

**DAY 2**

“Doug, let me show you something,” my friend Sarah said, beckoning for the pack of cigarettes clutched in my hand.

I handed them over, and she immediately shook them at me. “Marlboro Lights are the sign of an inexperienced smoker!” she announced to the entire newsroom.

Rolling my eyes, I took back, “I am an inexperienced smoker.”

Sarah’s alone in giving me unwanted advice. By now, everybody knows about my project — and nobody thinks it’s a good idea. Some people are telling me I’ll ruin my health, while others are telling me how I should carry out the experiment. Quite frankly, I want them to leave me alone.

On the other hand, I am getting better at smoking. I didn’t cough today, and I increased the number of cigarettes I smoked from one to three.

However, there are some side effects. "You smell like a giant cigarette," Sarah said later, wrinkling her nose.

She’s right. After my third cigarette of the night, my gray shirt smelled like a tobacco factory. But I couldn’t really do anything about it because it was at work.

When I got back home, I took a shower, hoping to get rid of the scent. It didn’t work.

**DAY 2 CIGARETTE COUNT: 3**

**DAY 3**

All of a sudden, people can’t stand to be around me.

"You smell like ass!" my friend Ben exclaimed when I stood within a few feet of him during a conversation. "Get away from me."

He’s right, of course. By now, nicotine seems to be my natural aroma. I tried to get rid of the smell again this morning by using spray-on cologne, but because I smoked again after that, the effect was short-lived.

As much as I try to explain myproject, nobody seems to understand. They don’t know what I’m trying to prove. I’m not even sure if I know.

But I’m doing on — alone, if necessary. "I hope you don’t get offended," my friend Josh said when I pulled out a cigarette as we walked toward our separate dorms. "But I’m going to take a different way than you. I can’t stand the smell of cigarettes. It actually makes me want to puke."

He sprinted off. Struggling, I took out my Bic and lit the cigarette.

**DAY 3 CIGARETTE COUNT: 5**

**DAY 4**

I couldn’t breathe.

The DeWeese Health Center track was covered with Kent State Relay for Life participants, none of whom seemed to be having trouble navigating the 80-degree heat.

None but me, of course. I was representing the group Students of Scholarship at the 24-hour cancer walk, and I couldn’t breathe because of the tobacco I had been inhaling into my lungs.

I gave up after two hours and went back to my dorm. But something caused me to go back that night for the luminaria ceremony, when the event organizers lit candles in remembrance of people who died from cancer.

As I walked the track, gazing at the hundreds of paper bags filled with lit candles, I felt a lump in my throat. My grandmother had died of lung cancer — her name had been on any of those bags.

All of a sudden, I wanted a cigarette. To this point, I had compelled myself to smoke — but this was a different feeling. I couldn’t stay away from it. It was too much.

Sitting on a ledge outside my dorm, I smoked cigarettes back to back for the first time. I had these while listening to upbeat music on my iPod. Still, I couldn’t get a song that I’d heard at the ceremony out of my head.

"Someone said someone was crying."

Someone was me. But something I didn’t feel alone.

**DAY 4 CIGARETTE COUNT: 6**

**DAY 5**

I need to buy more cigarettes.

That’s the first thought that hit me when I opened my pack at 9 a.m. Sunday and saw that only five cigarettes remained. Without noticing, I had smoked three-quarters of a pack in four days. With three days left in my experiment, buying more cigarettes was a must.

This need for more cigarettes became greater when I smoked the remaining five by mid-afternoon. Unfortunately, I couldn’t go out to buy more because I had to work.

To make matters worse, it was the hottest day of the year so far, and it was 90 degrees inside the newsroom. I spent my afternoon in front of an overheated computer, feeling the only fan in the room circulate the sweltering air around me. I was cranky, not only because of the heat, but because I couldn’t continue my experiment.

Luckily, my buddy Tim came to my rescue that night. He came to the hotline to nose around his secret apartment, and he brought salvation in the form of a fresh pack of cigarettes.

"Stop what you’re doing," he told me. "I need someone to smoke with."

He didn’t have to ask me twice.

**DAY 5 CIGARETTE COUNT: 6**

**DAY 6**

Sarah was right.

Marlboro Lights are the sign of a novice smoker. I found that out quickly. They were awful.

Having learned that important consumer lesson, I stopped at the Circle K on East Main Street to buy a new pack of cigarettes. A few customers buzzed around the back of the store, but I went right to the counter.

"A pack of Camel Lights, please," I said to the clerk, a middle-aged woman whose body language and facial expressions screamed, "I’m irritated because I hate this job."

Two minutes, another $3.25 payment and an ignored "Have a nice day!" later, I was back on the street, wondering what I had to do to have a pleasant cigarette-buying experience.

But the Camel Lights went better, as I soon found out — which I was glad about, as I had the feeling I would be smoking a lot of them because of stress.

I had a 14-page paper due the next day, which we all seemed to work on, I of course, had put it off until the night before it was due.

Tim, who was in my class, hadn’t finished his paper, either. At 3:30, sensing a potentially sleepless night, we decided to have one final smoke break together before we split up to work on our papers.

Tim had told me that he tends to smoke either when he’s out with friends or when he’s stressed.

"When I smoke alone, it’s usually because I’m pissed off," he said. "It gives me a reason to go somewhere and chill out."

That became the case for me on this night. I took a smoke break every time I finished two pages of my paper. Each break enabled me to forget about the homework, if only for five minutes.

**DAY 6 CIGARETTE COUNT: 7**

**DAY 7**

"I’m done."

Those words had two meanings for me on this day. First, I had finally finished my paper, and it had only taken 12 hours to do so.

More importantly, however, I had come to the end of my smoking experiment. Finally, I could answer "yes" to the question people had been asking me all week: "Are you done smoking yet?"

Of course, I still had to get through the day.

"Want to celebrate?" I asked Tim that afternoon, showing him the pack of cigarettes in my right hand.

He shook his head. "I have stuff to do."

"Sorry," I said. "That’s all right with me. I had begun the project by myself, and it seemed almost appropriate that I finish it by myself.

I smoked that celebratory cigarette by myself.

At 11:00 that night, I decided to have one final cigarette before I officially ended the experiment. As I sat outside my dorm, I thought about the week.

**TOTAL CIGARETTE COUNT: 34**
Sarah was right.

Marlboro Lights are the sign of a novice smoker. I found that out quickly. They were awful.

Having learned that important consumer lesson, I stopped at the Circle K on East Main Street to buy a new pack of cigarettes. A few customers buzzed around the back of the store, but I went right to the counter. "A pack of Camel Lights, please," I said to the clerk, a middle-aged woman whose body language and facial expression screamed, "I'm irritated because I hate this job." Two minutes, another $5.25 payment and an ignored "Have a nice day" later, I was back on the street, wondering what I had to do to have a pleasant cigarette-buying experience. But the Camel Lights were better, as I soon found out - which I was glad about, as I had the feeling I would be smoking a lot of them because of stress.

I had a 14-page paper due the next day, which we'd had all semester to work on. I, of course, had put it off until the night before it was due. Tim, who was in my class, hadn't finished his paper, either. At 5:30, sensing a potentially sleepless night ahead, we decided to have one final smoke break together before we split up to work on our papers. Tim has told me that he tends to smoke either when he's out with friends or when he's stressed. "When I smoke alone, it's usually because I'm pissed off," he said. "It gives me a reason to go somewhere and chill out." That became the case for me on this night. I took a smoke break every time I finished two pages of my paper. Each break enabled me to forget about the homework, if only for five minutes.

After my six-page smoke break, I returned to my dorm room and looked at the clock on my microwave. It was 11:55. Day 7 of the experiment had almost arrived ... and I still had at least six pages to go.

"I'm done." Those words had two meanings for me on this day. First, I had finally finished my paper, and it had only taken 12 hours to do so. More importantly, however, I had come to the end of my weeklong smoking experiment. Finally, I could answer "yes" to the question people had been asking me all week: "Are you done smoking yet?" Of course, I still had to get through the day. "Want to celebrate?" I asked Tim that afternoon, showing him the pack of cigarettes in my right hand.

Doug Gulasy is a senior newspaper journalism major.

In my mind, the experiment had been a success. I'd learned a lot about smoking, both bad and good. I had verified some of the "truths" about smoking: It does make your clothing, your skin and your breath smell unpleasant. I'd debunked another "truth": Addiction doesn't necessarily happen after just one cigarette. I also learned some things about cigarettes that people generally don't talk about. I hadn't known beforehand about the smoking subculture - how smokers can spot an outsider - and I found out about it the hard way.

Most importantly, I learned something about myself - that I had the willpower (or stubbornness, perhaps) to carry on with something important, even when people doubted me. I was proud of myself for that. These thoughts were interrupted when someone sat on the bench next to me. I looked sideways, seeing a freshman who lived in my hallway. "Sorry," he said. "I'm just waiting for my friend to pick me up." "That's all right," I said, dropping my cigarette and putting out its ember with the toe of my shoe. "I'm done anyway." And I was.

TOTAL CIGARETTE COUNT: 34

1968 Thurman Mannix, who attended Kent State, signs to the New York Yankees and wins MLB's Rookie of the Year award in 1970.

1969 Tom Batiuk, comic strip author of Funky Winkerbean and Crankshaft, graduates with a degree in fine arts.

Doug Galasy is a senior newspaper journalist major.
If words didn’t come naturally

Attaining a certain level of comprehension is first on these international students’ roads toward success.

Story by Regina Garcia Cano

Like many young adults, Jamal Alsakran owns all seasons of the comedy show “Friends” on DVD. Yes, unlike those who simply watch the series for a hearty laugh, Alsakran does it with the underlying purpose of improving his English vocabulary.

True communication requires language proficiency. Whether for everyday interaction, such as ordering food at a restaurant, or for specific situations, such as those presented in a learning environment, listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities are crucial. Yet, what happens to those who struggle in one or all of these skills?

More than 1,000 international students are enrolled at Kent State this semester. Most of these students met the university’s required score for the Test of English as a Foreign Language, which is an assessment of a person’s ability to communicate in English in a college environment. Still, some of them struggle to convey their ideas in a language that is not their native tongue.

Japanese student Ajisa Fukudenji says she began to learn English at age 13. Years of English lessons and a “good” TOEFL score gave her the confidence to move to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in counseling. Her trust in herself, however, quickly faded when she was unable to communicate effectively in her American life.

Jamal Alsakran, Jordan

Alsakran holds a heart keychain and box his younger sister Fedda gave to him before he came here. “It means everything to me,” he says. “It gives me comfort. It takes all the stress away. I hold the heart with my keys so it’s always close to me.”

“Ah, wow, my English is very bad,” Fukudenji repeated several times as she was shocked by not being able to express her opinions when she first moved to Kent. “I was afraid of making a mistake.”

During a cramming class in her first semester, Fukudenji suddenly found herself alone in the middle of the classroom, while the rest of her classmates worked in teams. Unaware of what was happening, she stared at her classmates for a moment, hesitating to ask for help, hoping somebody would instruct her. Helpless and terrified, she turned around and asked the professor to repeat the instructions.

Fukudenji partially attributes her fear of making errors in English to the way she learned the language in her home country. In Japan, she says English instructors place emphasis on grammar and written tests. Therefore, she learned technical English, not practical English. All Japanese students interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree in their home country must pass a language proficiency test.

Fukudenji adds that her fear of speaking out in classes or social events is also a matter of cultural difference.

“American people — it’s always ready to say opinions or tell something to others. But in my country, people put emphasis in community harmony, so you better not tell your opinion like always,” Fukudenji says.

“You cannot insist in something. Few you have to listen to others and shouldn’t be opinionated.”

From her experience as an instructor of English as a second language courses, Bernadette Mizicko Belser says Middle Eastern students tend to be more comfortable with their speaking abilities, while their reading and writing skills are weaker. On the contrary, Asian students, like Fukudenji, are proficient in reading and writing due to an emphasis on grammar in their countries’ educational systems.

Yet, Mizicko Belser says, across the board, international students struggle with listening, a difficulty students don’t expect.

And certainly, the struggle surprised Alsakran, a doctoral student in computer science.

“I was like totally lost when I first came two years ago,” Alsakran says. “I heard people, but it was not English to me. Every single word here, people pronounce it different from what I (was) used to. I couldn’t understand a word.”

A Jordan native, Alsakran began learning English at age 16. While most of the textbooks he used during his years as an undergraduate student were written in English, Alsakran admits he had only spoken English on one occasion outside a classroom before he moved to the United States when he visited the U.S. Embassy to ask for his student visa.

Alsakran was not ready for a 24/7 English-speaking life. Alsakran says he constantly felt frustrated — and still does to a lesser degree — every time he was not able to convey a message the way he hoped. Describing himself as somebody who was praised for his classroom presentations whether as a student or as a professor in Jordan, Alsakran says he feels anything but satisfied with some of his educational experiences in America.

Alsakran still remembers the first time he had to deliver a presentation to a class and how it ended up with “not-so-good” results.

“I hate myself sometimes,” he says. “After two years, I still don’t have the guts to tell people that I want to teach, even though I want to teach. Deep inside, I just love teaching. This semester, I just do gradina. But it is not fun; it is not what I want to do. I want to teach.”

Mizicko Belser says she encourages international students to interact with native speakers and suggests that they not rely exclusively on other foreign students with whom they may share a native language. She says international students should seek conversation partners and get involved in extracurricular activities, whether by joining a club or simply visiting the Student Recreation and Wellness Center.

Fukudenji watches TV and concentrates on dialogues. Joining and memorizing new words and browsing Web sites designed for English proficiency improvement are all ways she tries to pursue her goal to teach at a university. But even today, she doesn’t know if she’ll ever master the English language enough to feel comfortable asking for a teaching position.

Fukudenji, now in her second year of living in the United States, says she has slowly regained her confidence and isn’t afraid of raising her hand in class to ask a question. It doesn’t bother her to ask people to repeat themselves. She says she found courage the day she confronted herself with the desperate decision of either leaving America without completing her degree or stepping up.

Alsakran and Fukudenji still haven’t decided whether their temporary lives in America will become permanent.

Regina Garcia Cano is a junior newspaper journalism major.

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1970 On May 4, four students are killed and nine wounded when the Ohio National Guard opens fire on Blanket Hill.

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If words didn’t come naturally

Attaining a certain level of comprehension is first on these international students’ roads toward success.

STORY BY REGINA GARCIA CANO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TESSA BUECHL

Like many young adults, Jamal Alsakan (pronounced Al-Suh-KAHN) owns all seven seasons of the comedy show "Friends" on DVD. Yes, unlike those who simply watch the series for a hearty laugh, Alsakan analyzed it with the underlying purpose of improving his English vocabulary.

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On America

Facing a foreign country and culture where you can't speak your native language is a challenge. Five international students share their experiences.

INTERVIEWS BY Arny Cooper • PHOTOGRAPHS BY Emily Horne and Abra Williams-Witkzy

Xinyue Yao
Sophomore international relations and affairs major from China

EXPECTATIONS BEFORE SHE ARRIVED Xinyue says she thought the United States was the land of freedom, but also a place where the law is strictly enforced. She imagined a place full of big cities with tall buildings. Instead, she got miles of countryside and animals. “The only tall building I have seen is the library on campus.”

HOW PEOPLE REACT TO HER She says, although people are very friendly and accommodating, she finds it difficult to make friends with American students. It is tough for her to find topics to discuss with them in social settings. She says it’s easier to interact with other international students who go through the same challenges that she does. “I think it is just two cultures with different interests.”

CHALLENGES IN CLASS Xinyue struggles to keep up with the lectures in class because English is not her first language. “Americans can get through assigned reading quickly, but I take hours looking up the words in my dictionary to get through it.”

Teejay Avans
Freshman aerospace systems engineering major from Kenya

EXPECTATIONS BEFORE HE ARRIVED Avans says he expected a lot more culture and advanced technology than what he found when he arrived here.

HOW PEOPLE REACT TO HIM He says people are very inquisitive about his culture and ask a lot of questions about his country. “People have asked me if my dad is the king of Kenya and if I hunt. They call me ‘Kenya.’ Everyone wants to hang out with the kid from Africa.”

HOW AMERICANS ARE DIFFERENT He thinks people are very open and tend to show more emotion. “It is unacceptable for men to cry or show any emotion in Kenya. Even if your mom or sister died, you are not allowed to cry.”

Andreea Patrasc
Freshman sports management science major from Romania

FIRST IMPRESSION OF AMERICA Patrasc thinks everyone is intelligent and different from the people in Romania. “People in the United States work as one big team.”

HOW PEOPLE REACT TO HER She has found Americans are sociable but admits to getting frustrated, as she is struggling to be herself because her English is not very good. “I miss my personality. I am normally outgoing with my friends at home.”

Teta Gisa
Freshman international relations and affairs major from Rwanda

HOW PEOPLE REACTED TO HER “They are so friendly, but they talk so fast it is hard to keep up with them at times,” Gisa says.

DOES SHE BELIEVE IN THE AMERICAN DREAM? “The American dream definitely does exist. It just is something that is acquired with time and lots of hard work.”

HANGING ONTO HER IDENTITY Gisa says she thinks she’ll always keep her identity as a Rwandan woman, but being exposed to so many cultures in the United States will also be better. “Learning about all different types of people helps me to be more accepting of different cultures,” she says.

Meenakshi Das
Junior psychology and pre-med major from India

EXPECTATIONS BEFORE SHE ARRIVED She was worried that American teaching styles would be different. Another major concern was being alone in a foreign country. “I was worried I wouldn’t be able to do basic stuff because, in India, my family had maids to do everything for us.”

HOW SHE ADAPTED TO THE FOOD Das ate rice for a whole month when she first arrived because she found American food too unhealthy. “She didn’t have access to home-cooked meals, so she had to settle for fast food and what was available on campus. ‘I got sick a lot and had to gradually find healthier places to eat.’”

Learn how other international students feel about America at TheBurr.com

1975 Robert Longhurst graduates with a degree in architecture. This wood sculptor created the Design Emphasis Award for the International Woodworking Fair.

1976 Michael Capellas, the CEO of First Data Corporation, graduates. He has also served as president of Hewlett-Packard and CEO of Worldcom.
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DOES SHE BELIEVE IN THE AMERICAN DREAM? Patrasc says she is working hard to fit in and her dream is to be a professional soccer player. "I want to play for the Romanian national team."

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It's just the way it is?

Local college students and the Kent community have been at odds for decades. Now, the city and the university think they have a solution — but history says otherwise.

Story by Sarah Steimer

The ongoing saga of student-community relations in Kent would be a much easier tale to tell if it were a simple case of good vs. evil. But the good guys do not wear white, and the bad guys do not wear black. This is not a clear “good vs. evil” Kennedy vs. Castro, Perris vs. Sweller vs. the principal.

Finding a resolution to such an abstract problem is nearly impossible. That’s why finding a solution before this year was often mentioned but then ignored for bigger issues. Like sidewalk snow removal.

So what incident finally sparked a possible resolution? The 2009 College Fest that sent many students and non-students to court and gave the rest of us “reminiscence T-shirts” (“We didn’t start the fire: College Fest 2009”).

Let’s look back at the day. That particular April 25 was an unusually warm evening — and half of East College Avenue was on fire.

But don’t worry — everyone was just doing his or her job.

The police got the young people off the streets and generally calmed the situation. Just doing their job. And the young men and women of Kent State were blowing off some steam and celebrating a gorgeous spring day just doing their job.

Each of these jobs, however, will always negate the other. Yet as the old adage goes, there can only be one sheriff in this town — and if we want to read that literally, the job of sheriff will be won up to go to an officer than a 20-something frat boy.

But because cities aren’t run by phrases from the Wild West, and also because we live in the much less exciting Midwest, a student (College Fest?) won’t help decide who’s right and who’s wrong. It’s going to take time. It’s going to take patience, and it’s going to take one smart liaison between both parties to help rid Kent of its hostility. It just may be crazy enough to work — or not.

You just have to assume

“I know the perspective is that there’s tension or whatever terminology we want to use,” Kent Police Chief Jim Peach says. “From the police perspective, we don’t have tension. We really don’t.”

“I think it’s a little worse here (than at other schools),” says Chris Dols, junior hospitality management major and College Avenue resident. “It’s easier to get in trouble.”

Both sides have their assumptions, and there’s really no way to gauge which side is right.

But both seem to stand by their words — with plenty of examples.

Dolan, standing at his house, which has an impressive garbage pile near the road, cites a few instances when he felt the police were a bit too
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The ongoing saga of student-community relations in Kent would be a much easier tale to tell if it were a simple case of good vs. evil. But the good guys do not wear white, and the bad guys do not wear black. This is not a clear "good vs. evil." Kennedy vs. Castro. Ferris Bueller vs. the principal.

Finding a resolution to such an abstract problem is nearly impossible. That's why finding a solution before this year was often mentioned but then ignored for bigger issues. Like sidewalk snow removal.

So what incident finally sparked a possible resolution? The 2009 College Fest that sent many students and non-students to court and gave the rest of us remembrance T-shirts ("We didn't start the fire: College Fest 2009").

Let's look back at the day. That particular April 25 was an unusually warm evening — and half of East College Avenue was on fire. But don't worry — everyone was just doing his or her job. The police got the young people off the streets and generally calmed the situation. Just doing their job. And the young men and women of Kent State were blowing off some steam and celebrating a gorgeous spring day. Just doing their job.

Each of those jobs, however, will always negate the other. Yet as the old adage goes, there can only be one sheriff in this town — and if we want to read that literally, the job of sheriff will be more apt to go to an officer than a 20-something frat boy.

But because cities aren't run by phrases from the Wild West, and also because we live in the much less exciting Midwest, a standoff (College Fest?) won't help decide who's right and who's wrong. It's going to take time. It's going to take patience, and it's going to take one smart liaison between both parties to help rid Kent of its hostility. It just may be crazy enough to work — or not.

"I know the perspective is that there's tension or whatever terminology we want to use," Kent Police chief Jim Peach says. "From the police perspective, we don't have tension. We really don't."

"I think it's a little worse here (than at other schools)," says Chris Dolan, junior hospitality management major and College Avenue resident. "It's easier to get in trouble.

Both sides have their assumptions, and there's really no way to gauge which side is right. But both seem to stand by their words — with plenty of examples. Dolan, standing at his house, which has an impressive garbage pile near the road, cites a few instances when he felt the police were a bit too 1977 — The former Student Union, built in 1949, is rededicated as Oscar Ritchie Hall.
By the beginning of October this year, he and his housemates already had a couple run-ins with the police about litter and noise. Chief Peach, on the other hand, believes Dokter's generation needs to learn a little respect. This, of course, coming from a man whose office screams respect — right down to its leather chairs and tightly patterned wallpaper.

"We see within our community and throughout the country a lot more of the authority by the younger people," Peach says. "It's a societal issue. It's not a Kent issue. They are more challenging, argumentative than ever before... There's a sense of entitlement now with younger people. It's just the way it is." According to each, it's the other's fault. At face value, the situation has a "he said, she said" quality. No one wins in those arguments, though, and it gets annoying after a while.

Karen Cunningham, a professor in the Center for Applied Conflict Management, says part of the problem is that both sides of the situation assume the other is out of control. Therefore, neither side believes it's the one that needs to change its behavior.

It's not just the police and students who hold strong assumptions. Heidi Shaffer, Ward 5 council member, says many permanent residents often blame students for problems. "It's those dart students."

"I think we tend to paint the students with one brush," Shaffer says. "The concern is the relationship with police, and I know it is a concern, but I think that there are all different types of people represented in the student population — and many of them will never have encounters with the police."

Some residents' perceptions about students may stem from Kent State's history. Sour feelings remain from the May 4, 1970, shootings in the city of Kent, the says. The tension between townpeople and students — and resentment on both sides of the story — is still linked to the university. So of course, Cunningham says, no one wants "that thing" to happen again. And just maybe, she says, that's part of the reason there's such a media storm over these things under control as soon as possible — and history doesn't repeat itself.

People in town aren't the only ones making such sweeping generalizations, though. The entire nation is under the impression that Kent, Ohio, is where students go to get in trouble and where the authorities go to throw a big, fat wrench in their plans. Kent is biasy, and it's not a history that will soon be forgotten as long as baby boomers have their memories and the media have their footage.

**NOW**

A quiet day on East College Avenue where the fires occurred months earlier during College Fest

PHOTOGRAPH BY DIAN MAXWELL

Even in April, following College Fest, CNN ran clips of the incident — but not after it ran footage from May 4, 1970. Media across the country replayed both events as if they couldn't be more alike — a black-and-white daytime clip of the campus filled with war protesters followed by a full-color, full-fire shot of an off-campus drinking extravaganza.

"When we do things here, it makes the news because of our history," Cunningham explains. "There's definite differences in the situations, but they get lumped together. It kind of, I think, colors people's reactions. It sometimes obscures what some of the issues and concerns are when you lump those two things together."

London Hancock, a Center for Applied Conflict Management professor, says the fear of a May 4 sequel also leads to one side blaming the other. Each side swears to what quickly, partly because of a 40-year-old incident.

A Band-Aid on a leaky pipe

This situation calls for more than just a quick fix. It needs to be dealt with carefully, not hastily.

"The police can cover students into submission," says David Kessler, associate professor in justice studies. "That only works for a short while, and then it can't be done. I don't agree with Mahiaveli: 'Rule by fear.' You can do better if you work with people. And don't just try to suppress their interest and say, 'You can't have fun. You can't party. You can't make noise.'"

In other words, yanking a cigarette out of someone's mouth, pouring it out with his heel and then throwing it in his face won't get too many people to stop smoking. Catch them before they even light it up, before they even buy the pack. Teach them.

"I think education is important, and I think it's critical to be proactive rather than reactive," Marlene Dorsey, interim director of justice studies, says. "In other words, what can we do together before an event occurs to prevent something from happening?"

Dorsey and Shaffer both pointed out that it's difficult to make permanent progress on an ever-changing group. Although students will live in Kent as long as the university is here, it will (usually) not be the same students. As the students cycle, so will the problems.

**Just the facts, please**

Contrary to popular belief, the FBI has never opened a full-scale field investigation into Kent.

Chief Peach, Kent police chief, will not deny that there have been some bad seeds in the police department.

But they have always been dealt with and never ignored, he says. Four fires were started on East College Avenue, and 53 people were arrested during the April 25 affair.

"We've got an educational university. We should have an educational city," Shaffer says, adding that one of the first steps the city took was to distribute welcome literature to students. The papers not only served as a "gag to meet you" for pranksters, but they gave phone numbers to call, as well as party tips, myths, violations and facts (oh my!).

Council members happily realized it would take more than some fancy graphics and nice second-story town pictures to open a conversation with students. Then came the idea of a town-student liaison, someone who would remain as students come and go.

"It seems like the council itself is willing to institutionalize, which is really kind of key," Hancock says. "That's something to a continuous process, and right now they feel like they have to keep reinventing the wheel. The powers that be probably get tired of that, so if we can institutionalize instead of ad hoc, we can get new people to hear it, too."

As of right now, the specifics of the liaison's job (and who the liaison will be) are underdetermined. Cunningham says this person will meet with rounds of circular meetings in which students, police, community members and business owners would be represented. Each would be given a chance to discuss some issues pertaining to each other.

It could also help put some names to familiar faces. Hancock says. Instead of the police, community members and students all existing as nameless creatures to each other, they can become individuals. He says this focus group will help ease some air grievances much easier without the tight formalities of going in front of city council.

The details of the job are worked out, the position will be filled, and he or she will begin the long road of work ahead.

No one is promising that the position will fix every problem. If you subscribe to Peach's view, it will at least put forth the idea that there is an opportunity to harbor better feelings between everyone involved.

The liaison will not make police officers nicer. The liaison will not keep empty beer boxes and cups from decorating certain yards around town. The liaison will certainly not keep students from partying.

"You're going to get that people like to party," Kessler says. "And people will drink. The issue is how to keep that within safe bounds. And I think that could be done."

But can putting a man or a woman in charge of such a historical conflict really make that much of a difference? It makes about as much sense as forcing the police to give up their Taser guns and pepper spray balls. Or turning Kent into a "dry town" so students can't even get alcohol to turn them on.

The reason this fix sounds too easy is because it's as if creating a liaison between students and the community is no doubt the right idea — but everyone needs to remember to remember it an entire town, and they certainly can't change history.

Sarah Steinmetz is a senior magazine journalism major.

Visit TheBurr.com to see the city's welcome fliers for students and other tip pamphlets.
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Some media reports about situations students may stem from Kent State's history. Sour feelings remain from the May 4, 1970, shootings in the city of Kent, she says. The tension between townpeople and students has lingered on because the legacy of that event is still linked to the university. So of course, Cunningham says, no one wants "that thing" to happen again. And just maybe, she says, that's part of the reason there's such a push to get some things under control as soon as possible — and history doesn't repeat itself.

People in town aren't the only ones making such sweeping generalizations, though. The entire issue is under the impression that Kent, Ohio, is where students go to get in trouble and where the authorities go to throw a big, fat wrench in their plans. Kent has bias, and it's not a history that will soon be forgotten as long as anybody boomers have their memories and they have their footage.

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The weekend after College Avenue's party, there were supposed to be parties on Sherman and South Lincoln streets. The parties were mild, at best, and some think it was partly due to the men and women who walked door to door passing out useful information — on how not to be arrested.

Following College Fest, Kent police chief, will not deny that there have been some bad seeds — the FBI, but not a full investigation, says Scott Wison, Cleveland FBI special agent.

Four fires were started on East College Avenue, and 53 people were arrested during the April 25 affair.

"We've got an educational university. We should have an educational city," says Shaffer, adding that one of the first steps the city took was to distribute welcome literature to students. The papers not only served as a "sign to meet you" for troops, but they gave phone numbers to call, as well as party tips, myths, violations and facts (oh yes).

Council members luckily realized it would take more than some fancy graphics and nice round-the-town pictures to open a conversation with students. Then came the idea of a town-student liaison, someone who would remain as students come and go.

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Justin Townes Earle was headed down the path of many rock stars — toward death by drugs. But unlike some of those who came before him, he cleaned up and gave himself a second chance.

Story by Ben Wolford
Photographs of Justin Townes Earle courtesy of Joshua Black Wilkins
Justin Townes Earle was headed down the path of many rock stars — toward death by drugs. But unlike some of those who came before him, he cleaned up and gave himself a second chance.

Story by Ben Wolford
Photographs of Justin Townes Earle courtesy of Joshua Black Wilkins
Justin Townes Earle died in Nashville, he says on the phone from Manhattan. "I was strung out by the time I was 15," he says in a storyteller's cadence that's befitting of his type of music. Justin's music isn't like his dad's. Steve Earle learns more toward Bruce Springsteen than Hank Williams. That's not so for Justin, the eldest of two boys. Justin sings country.

When it comes to drugs, though, Steve and Justin were both Hank Williams at some point in their lives. Father and son, doing whatever it took to get high. They didn't do it together, though. Steve cleaned up first. But Justin was fading away. He would've died one night if a friend hadn't dragged his doped and dying body off the floor and into a hospital.

That's rock 'n' roll. It's nothing new. Hendrix and Morrison simply didn't have a friend there to call an ambulance. Justin has since gotten off drugs and is into better things. More rockers, it seems, are doing that now. Or maybe it's just that they're less visible and don't have time to get stoned.

Anastasia Pantsios works for Cleveland Scene, and she used to take photos at rock shows in the '80s. At a Guns N' Roses show, the band's manager told Pantsios that the frontman's original lead guitarist Slash had cleaned up in only two bottles of Jack Daniel's a day now. In an untold incident, Slash asked on her friend. "I'd like to think everybody's cleaner than they used to be, but I don't know if that's really the case," Pantsios says. "I still see enough stories going by about, 'Oh, you know, our drummer died, and it turned out to be an overdose.' I think it's still happening but maybe on a less high-profile level." Drugs won't ever leave the rock music scene. They're too ingrained in it. Sex, yoga and rock 'n' roll don't sound right. Kenneth Bindas is the chair of Kent State's History Department, and he's studied jazz and rock musicians. "With the development of popular music and with the rise of it as an industry, the demands on a musician were extreme. They had to perform every night," he says. "Musicians started out performing in dark, smoky nightclubs, he says. There weren't gratifying horizons, 'cause they had to be in a different city in 24 hours to play the same songs again. It was easy to pound shots or shoot up after a set, before getting in van to drive all night. You drank a lot to take the edge off," Bindas says.

To keep you going, as Eric Clapton explains in his autobiography. He's been sober for years now, but around 1978, he spent a lot of time jarring and recording musicians and drugs were all around him at his home at Hartwood Edge.

"We kept ourselves going with fry-ups and a cocktail of drink and drugs, mostly cocaine and Mandrax," he writes. "Mandies" were quite strong sleeping pills, but instead of letting them put us to sleep, we would ride the effect, staying awake by snorting some coke or drinking some brandy or vodka, and this would create a unique kind of high ... God knows how our bodies stood it."


Drug use was built into Justin Townes Earle's name and into the music he listened to. "My dad wasn't always around, but he did a lot of drugs when I was around him, and my mom's boyfriends were no strangers to various substances," he says. "I also grew up a son being raised by a single mother in the inner-city in Nashville, and my mom didn't make very much money at all." Drugs were easy to find in Nashville. But he made sacrifices for them. A 1943 Martin 000-18 acoustic guitar can go for $15,000. He sold his for $80 worth of crack cocaine and Dihidrad. "That's one thing about, especially drugs like heroin and cocaine -- it doesn't matter what you low," he says. "You're gonna hurt it on those drugs. You're gonna fuck it up.

It happened to the best of them. Ozzy Osbourne was fired from Black Sabbath because of his addiction. Drugs strained Johnny Cash's relationship with his wife, June Carter, besides the fact that he was an addict. "I wasn't the cleanest person on the planet," he writes. "I came out of it like a really fucked-up and overgrown child." Steve Earle didn't say much to him about getting clean. He couldn't, really. Justin says his dad hadn't been there before, and, besides, by the time Steve was finally cleaning himself up, Justin was already plummerting toward bottom with a severe cocaine addiction. Steve didn't want an addict coming around, son or not.

"Justin's 27 years old, and it looks now as though he'll make it to 28. Hendrix, Joplin, Morrison and Cobain didn't..."
Justin Townes Earle died in Nashville, he says on the phone from Manhattan. But his polite, country voice is anything but Big Apple. He gets to the point as old friends do, as Southerners do. He's got a charm that's unmistakably Dixie. No, despite what he says, Justin hasn't died in Nashville any more than Nashville's died in him.

He just killed his drug addiction there. "I'd been smoking pot since I was 10," he says in that deep drawl that impressed crowds at the 2008 Kent Folk Festival. "I was strung out by the time I was 15." He says it in a storyteller's cadence that's befitting of his type of music. Justin's music isn't like his dad's. Steve Earle learns more toward Bruce Springsteen than Hank Williams. That's not so for Justin, the eldest of two boys. Justin sings country. When it comes to drugs, though, Steve and Justin were both Hank Williams at some point in their lives. Father and son, doing whatever it took to get high. They didn't do it together, though. Steve cleaned up first. But Justin was feeling awry. He'd worse for wear for two nights if a friend hadn't dragged his dope and dying body off the floor and into a hospital. But that's rock 'n' roll. It's nothing new. Hendrix and Morrison simply didn't have a friend there to call an ambulance.

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Anastasia Pantsios works for Cleveland Scene, and she used to take photos at rock shows in the '80s. At a Guns N' Roses show, the band's manager told Pantsios that the former lead guitarist Slash had cleaned up. He's been off drugs now for about 18 years, he says. He spent a lot of time jarring and recording musicians and drugs were all around him at his home at Hartford Edge. "We kept ourselves going with fry-ups and a cocktail of drugs and drinks, mostly cocaine and Methadone," he writes. "Methadone was quite strong sleeping pills, but instead of letting them put us to sleep, we would ride the effect, staying awake by snorting some coke or drinking some brandy or vodka, and this would create a unique kind of high ... God knows how our bodies stood it."

Pick a rock band in the 1990s or 1970s. They probably did something to ruin their bodies. Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Doors, The Rolling Stones. The Beatles, Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin. The Who. For a time, drugs and rock 'n' roll were indivisible. "They'll never totally part ways. But pick a rock band in 2005. It's not as easy to find a 'V IV! Behind the Music' tale of addiction and abuse, The White Stripes. Coldplay, Green Day. John Mayer. Ben Folds. The Black Keys. None of them have garnered the kind of reputation for heavy drug use that Steve Earle (jailed for drugs) or Townes Van Zandt (drunk himself to death) or Hank Williams (drug-related heart failure) did."

"I ended up in a hospital bed unconscious for about seven days after being scooped up off the floor at a friend of mine's house when I'd literally dropped dead in her living room," he says. "After I kind of woke up and I got high — I had somebody bring me some dope as soon as I woke up — for some reason, that's when the supposed moment of clarity came."

After that, he got his act together. He stopped going bars. He's since started eating healthier on the road. "I don't do the Watt's House thing anymore. I did that for years, too. I'll kill you just as fast as cocaine will." He gets his eight hours of sleep. And he does stretches.

"Most of the people I hung out with back then are dead or in jail," he says, though some are still there and still addicted. "And that's why I left Nashville, Tennessee. I was tired of watching all the same motherfuckers sitting at the same bar drinking fucking Pabst Blue Ribbon until they started talking shit about that they don't have any business talking shit about. That shit gets old."

"I lived an entire life's worth of existence and died on the streets of Nashville, Tennessee," he says. "And I don't think it's good luck to do somewhere twice."

Kenneth Bindas doesn't really think directly to the question about whether he sees hardened drug use in the Kent Akron music scene. His band, the House Popes, in which he plays guitar alongside a group of University of Akron professors, was formed about nine years ago. They've put out two CDs. "As a professor, I'm not ingrained into that life."

But he doesn't doubt it's there. "Back in the day when I started my first band — I was a punk rocker — you start a band because you want, if you're a boy — and this is from rock lore — because you want to get girls and because you're interested in the night life. And night life is in bars."

And drugs and alcohol are in bars. Bindas says he finds different kinds of drugs in bars, though.

"This is from a musician: Music is like a heroin."

Ben Wolfp Pioneer is a junior newspaper journalist major. For a quiz about the history of rock 'n' roll and drug use, visit TheBurr.com
from Denise to Sienna
THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SUICIDE GIRL

STORY BY Denise Wright
PHOTOGRAPHS BY Adam Harris
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was topless in a recording studio, and there were two guys I didn’t know. Music was just something that interested me, something that made me happy. But gradually, those smiles went away. I went to youth retreats and conventions. I was an active member of my faith. I never really knew. By the time I had a great deal of sexual prowess. Ultimately, that sexual development became something I took pride in.

I had only "been with" two people, but I felt like I had a great deal of sexual prowess. Ultimately, that sexual development became something I took pride in.

I was an active member of my faith. I mean, among other factors, there was alwaysarenting new people who were different from the friends I’d cling to in high school. But I definitely played a huge part in my fallout with spirituality. I used to be something that allowed them to feel better about themselves. But that wasn’t going to be enough for me.

I needed a change in my lifestyle. That’s when I decided that applying would be a fun project to do together. During car rides to the mall, we would brainstorm ideas for new sets. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I’m wearing a bathing suit.

I investigated the site myself. I thought it was a good idea to have images of the girls in magazines such as People or Rolling Stone, which had been up for months, were closer to 400. I've wanted to become an SU for a year or so. With my natural brown hair and lack of facial piercings, people probably wouldn't describe me as "alternative." But sometimes I prefer it stays that way. During meetings, I wear a long-sleeved shirt or a bracelet to cover up the tattoo that's tattooed on my wrist. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I'm wearing a bathing suit.

Aside from my appearance, I'm demure in every sense of the word. I'm shy when I meet new people, and I dress conservatively, so most people would never guess I'm a nude model in my free time. To be honest, I never would have guessed I'd end up here, either.

Life before Suicide Girls

I grew up in a rather conservative home, and while my immediate family wasn't too spiritual, I found comfort in my own faith.

I attended weekly services with a close friend's family. I went to youth retreats and conventions. I was an active member of my faith. It wasn't until my first tattoo, the timing was perfect to apply for the site.

A new face in the community

I decided the word "love" on my wrist wasn't enough to appeal to the audience and I was itching for a new set. So, I got "dear... sister..." tattooed on my side. Meaning "beautiful disaster," the tattoo reminds me of one of the favorite Jon McLaughlin songs. Now that I looked a little less like the girl with the short hair and lack of facial piercings, I was able to wear a long-sleeved shirt or a bracelet to cover up the tattoo on my side. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I'm wearing a bathing suit.

I was ashamed that I had allowed my life to go off the rails. I felt like I had a good idea of what I wanted to do on the future, and I was feeling better about myself. He had promised to stay by my side, and I was feeling worse about myself.

I've wanted to become a Suicide girl for six months prior to my breakup. Of course, I was close to the site, which had been living with my boyfriend. My nearly yearlong relationship just ended, and I was moving into a new apartment near campus because I was a Suicide girl. Suicide Girls receive $500 per accepted set. And while "Songwriter's Showcase" hasn't done that for me yet, I feel like it was important to me, something that made me happy. But gradually, those smiles went away. I went to youth retreats and conventions. I was an active member of my faith. I mean, among other factors, there was alwaysarenting new people who were different from the friends I’d cling to in high school. But I definitely played a huge part in my fallout with spirituality. I used to be something that allowed them to feel better about themselves. But that wasn’t going to be enough for me.

I needed a change in my lifestyle. That’s when I decided that applying would be a fun project to do together. During car rides to the mall, we would brainstorm ideas for new sets. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I’m wearing a bathing suit.

Aside from my appearance, I’m demure in every sense of the word. I’m shy when I meet new people, and I dress conservatively, so most people would never guess I’m a nude model in my free time. To be honest, I never would have guessed I’d end up here, either.

Life before Suicide Girls

I grew up in a rather conservative home, and while my immediate family wasn’t too spiritual, I found comfort in my own faith.

my first semester of college. I can’t claim that the experience completely tore me away from my religion — I mean, among other factors, there was always parenting new people who were different from the friends I’d cling to in high school. But I definitely played a huge part in my fallout with spirituality. I’d been told that I’d see when I talked about my faith. It used to be something that was important to me, something that made me happy. But gradually, those smiles went away and I was replaced with bitterness toward my faith. It was as if my first tattoo, the timing was perfect to apply for the site.

A new face in the community

I decided the word "love" on my wrist wasn't enough to appeal to the audience and I was itching for a new set. So, I got "dear... sister..." tattooed on my side. Meaning "beautiful disaster," the tattoo reminds me of one of the favorite Jon McLaughlin songs. Now that I looked a little less like the girl with the short hair and lack of facial piercings, I was able to wear a long-sleeved shirt or a bracelet to cover up the tattoo on my side. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I’m wearing a bathing suit.

I was ashamed that I had allowed my life to go off the rails. I felt like I had a good idea of what I wanted to do on the future, and I was feeling worse about myself.

I've wanted to become an SU for a year or so. With my natural brown hair and lack of facial piercings, people probably wouldn't describe me as "alternative." But sometimes I prefer it stays that way. During meetings, I wear a long-sleeved shirt or a bracelet to cover up the tattoo that's tattooed on my wrist. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I'm wearing a bathing suit.

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many more of my friends might be members who would stumble across the site, I gladly accepted the free promotion. The show went smoothly — aside from my worrying about listeners recognizing me by something I said, I was glad that the hat I'd worn that day, it is difficult to recognize me on the webcams. But those worries began to disappear. The show's producer read listeners' messages about how nice I was, and the employees at the station wandered in to introduce themselves, commenting on my sexy skinny-jeans-and-boots ensemble.

On Suicide Girls Essentially, they're famous — the celebrities of the alternative realm.

Dual roles and addiction

I spent the following week looking forward to presenting my set on my friend’s radio show. I had never told him I was a model on the site, but he sent me a message indicating he was a member of SuicideGirls.com and was surprised, yet impressed, when he saw my photos. As a DJ for a Cleveland radio station, he wanted to have me on his show to promote my set. And while I began to wonder how
I was toplines in a recording studio, and there were two guys I didn't know having music in the room. I was just watching them, I was sure. Yet, the sporadic samples I would listen to lock a hook in my mind when my photographer pointed out my first tattoo.

You could probably wager that, given my involvement in church activities during high school, I would have continued my spiritual walk during college. I always thought I would, too — until I was raped in Fall 2006.

I regained my focus, repositioning my arms and changing my facial expression. I could deal with strangers seeing me naked. I couldn't deal with not getting good shots.

I was shooting my third photo set for SuicideGirls.com, a nude porn Web site for alternative girls with tattoos and body modifications. The set features me in a recording studio, seemingly writing and laying down songs — my favorite pastime.

This just had to be the set to make me "go pink." Going pink on the set meant dropping my unsual status as a hopeful and becoming an official Suicide Girl — one of 31 in Ohio. Suicide Girls receive $500 per accepted set. And while "Songwriter's Showcase" hasn't done that for me yet, I feel like I'm hearing that possibility. As of Oct., the set had drawn nearly 300 comments after being up for just over a week. My first two sets, when they were up for months, were closer to 400.

I've wanted to become an SG for a year now. With my natural brown hair and lack of facial piercings, people probably wouldn't describe me as "alternative." But sometimes I prefer it stays that way. During meetings, I can wear a long-sleeved shirt or a bracelet to cover up the word "f***" that tattooed on my wrist. The only time someone sees the tattoo on my side is when I'm getting a tattoo.

Aside from my appearance, I'm daintier in every sense of the word. I'm shy when I meet new people, and I dress conservatively, so most people would never guess I'm a model in my free time. To be honest, I never would have guessed I'd end up here, either.

Life before Suicide Girls

I grew up in a rather conservative home, and while my immediate family wasn't too spiritual, I found comfort in my own faith, my first semester of college. I can't claim that the experience completely tore me away from my religion — I mean, among other factors, there was always teaching new people who were different from the friends I'd cling to in high school. But I definitely played a huge part in my fallout with spirituality.

I'd been told that if I left when I talked about my faith, it'd be something that was important to me, something that made me happy. But gradually, those smiles went away and were replaced with bitterness toward my faith. It was a difficult thing to come to terms with.

At the time I figured that because God wouldn't take control of my life, I would do it myself. I did so by first taking control of my sexuality, getting selectively selecting new partners and developing a side of myself I really liked. By the time I began dating my second boyfriend in January 2008, I had only been with one other person, but I felt like I had a great deal of sexual prowess. Ultimately, that sexual development became something I took pride in.

Change of pace

Fast forward to 2009. My newly established relationship just ended, and I was moving into a new apartment near campus because I had been living with my boyfriend. Before my roommate moved in, I spent my first few weeks alone in the apartment — usually watching soppy movies that left me crying and feeling worse about myself. I was ashamed that I had allowed my energy around for weeks. I've heard that some women get haircuts after a breakup — a semi-literary change in their appearance that allows them to feel better about themselves. But that wasn't going to be enough for me.

I needed a change in my life. That's when I introduced a friend mentioning the need for Suicide Girls about six months prior to my breakup. At the time, I was familiar with SuicideGirls.com and had seen some of the girls in magazines such as Print. I was intrigued by the idea of modeling for the site, and I realized modeling for the site would give me the chance to express my sexual and creative sides. Ultimately, my friend and I decided that applying would be a fun project to do together. During car rides to the mall, we would brainstorm ideas for our SuicideGirls.com entries. We even went so far as to make a "model profile" to use as a reference.

On April 10, about two months later, I was officially welcome. Well, I looked into setting up a post box for when I went home that summer so my mom would never see any psychedelics that might come in the mail. She would tell her if I had a death wish.

Nevertheless, I still participated in the site after the spring semester by writing blogs and submitting my songwriting set in early August.

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"Congratulations, your set was accepted... Thanks for sending us your photo... we're excited to have you as a member of our community! xoxo, Model Coordinator."
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The show goes on

I wanted to shoot a multi-set — a set with another model — so after the third set went up Sept. 22, I began to seriously explore the option.

On Sept. 26, however, I thought those plans might get cut short. That was the day my boyfriend asked me out. I already told him about the site, and he said he was OK with it as long as I was faithful. He even seemed proud that he was entitled to some “bragging rights.”

But where was the cutoff on that? Did fooling around with another girl for a photo shoot constitute cheating on him? We talked about it, and again, he went along with it, joking that he would only do so if he could watch the shoot. Although I would give my boyfriend priority over my work any day, I was glad my relationship fit in just fine with my side project.

Meanwhile, my birthday was coming up, so I was playing with the idea of treating myself to a Monroe facial piercing and one, maybe two, more tattoos. I had wanted a side piece for months, but I didn’t know how much longer I could keep hiding behind the “tattoos are addicting” excuse. I knew most of my addiction actually came from the compliments I received when I got naked to show off each new piece. And I knew that, with each bigger piece, I would increase my chances of being recognized by my tattoos.

So why do I do it?

Do I enjoy feeling like I put on a show for the rest of the world? Not so much. It becomes increasingly difficult to keep track of who knows what, and I have a feeling it’s going to be more difficult to keep my double life under wraps with a pseudonym that can be found on Google. Alexa.com lists SuicideGirls.com in the top 1 percent of Web sites generating consistent, unique user traffic, so that probably wouldn’t make it any easier.

Maybe it’s because I like being in front of the camera. Up until my first set, I actually hated having my pictures taken. High school senior portraits were a serious pain for me. But I admit photo shoots make me feel special now. I love the attention that comes with people playing with my hair, tugging on my clothes and telling me they loved my last pose. I also love feeling like I’m becoming a better model, which is reaffirmed by the comments I got on my latest set, including: “You’re going from good, to quite good, to particularly great. Songwriter’s intense!”

Who wouldn’t want to read flattering comments like that?

But the deal-sealer for me is how friendly a lot of the SGs are. I was sold when I met my favorite SG, Radeo, and a few others at the Columbus Hell City tattoo convention in May. The girls were really encouraging, giving me tips on how to amp up my sets.

Most of my friends are guys, so I’m really jealous of how closely knit the girls seem. I want to be part of that bond more than anything. Every girl I met that day seemed to have that “thing,” that special quality that gives you stars in your eyes. Essentially, they’re famous — the celebrities of the alternative realm.

So I want to be famous? I don’t think that’s it, either. I actually get weirded out when people I haven’t told ask me about my involvement with SG. And although I like talking about it, I’d rather have money than be famous, and it’s not like SuicideGirls is bringing in any cash for me right now. If anything, it could prevent me from getting a job in the professional world, which I’ve taken into consideration.

Honestly, I can’t really put my finger on exactly why I like modeling for SG or even how long I’ll do it. There are girls on the site who are 30 and have kids. I don’t think I’ll want to do it by that point in my life, but who knows? All I know is that I’m having fun right now.

Denise Wright is a senior newspaper journalism major.
The term "Suicide Girl" was first used by "Flight Club" author Chuck Palahniuk in his novel, "Survivor.

Courtney Love is an active member of the site and even brought three Suicide Girls (Emma, Robin and Rudy) with her to a 2002 MTV appearance titled "24 Hours of Love."

Suicide Girls have been featured on several commercial products such as Pepsi machines and IPhone applications.

Source: SuicideGirls.com

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(Continued from Page 43)

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44 BURR FALL 2009
Dude, you know you love them

... them being Maxwell, Stansbury and Chunk of WMMS' Maxwell Show. After a visit to their studio in Independence, it's obvious why the audience hates to love them and loves to hate them.

INTERVIEW BY SARAH STEIMER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURA TORCIA

It's a lonely drive home from work and school during rush hour. You sit alone in your car, trying desperately to figure out what the vanity license plate in front of you is supposed to spell out. But after flipping the car stereo on — you've got company. Here are your best friends from 3 to 7 p.m. on 100.7 WMMS. Here's Maxwell, Stansbury and Chunk: the Maxwell Show. They're that sometimes crass, sometimes emotional but constantly entertaining radio show that won't stop — won't stop talking, that is.

ON HOW THEY TOOK THE BIG STEP TO AN ALL-TALK PROGRAM

STANSBURY (DAN STANSBURY) That Opie and Anthony is competing radio show thing happened. They put them on across the street from us again.

MAXWELL (BENJAMIN BORNESTEIN) They came back.

STANSBURY And (Maxwell) came in the studio one day and said, "Look, we're either going to be fired now or we're going to be fired later. So I'm going to put both of our jobs at risk right now and take all the records off." And I was scared to death, but what am I gonna do? Maybe if we get fired, he'll take the with him somewhere else and we'll try to work somewhere else. It ended up being right. It was the right time.

MAXWELL We were in a position where you're kind of doing a talk show, but you're still playing some music. This other talk show comes on across the street that people love.

Stansbury's got history — they've been on here before. And I'm like people, dude, they get their music anywhere now. They're not sitting around waiting to hear shit. They're on the radio. I told Dan, we either pull all the music off right now and get fired doing what I think is right, or we do what they want us to do and get our asses kicked by a talk show because that's what people want and get fired in six months. I was like, either way, we're gonna be out of a job. I would rather lose my job doing what I think is right and yank the Band-Aid off now than play thin long, drawn-out game.

NOW THEY COME UPS WITH MATERIAL EVERY DAY

Chunk (Tiffany Pecik) Most of our topics are personal. A lot of the time, we don't even use the audio that we prep for.

MAXWELL For days, we'll talk about (Stansbury) thinking his relationship is over, and you struggle because you sit there and you go, "This is kind of egocentric to think that people care about what's happening to him to me or to her, but they do. It's kind of an awkward feeling. You feel like a dick.
Dude, you know you love them

...them being Maxwell, Stansbury and Chunk of WMMS' Maxwell Show. After a visit to their studio in Independence, it's obvious why the audience hates to love them.

Interview by Sarah Steimer
Photographs by Laura Tonchia

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MAXWELL We were in a position where you're kind of doing a talk show, but you're still playing some music. This other talk show comes on across the street. That people love, you know. If you're in the studio and people love it. It's kind of a crass, emotional, entertaining radio show, playing music. But one day, we're just kind of doing it for the fun of it.
because you’re grandstanding, talking about your life. Why would people care that I went to the pumpkin patch with my wife and my kid and the gay time we had? And then you find out that people do.

CHUNK We talk about a lot of things that people don’t talk about. I had a yeast infection I could talk about all day on the air but did not want to tell my boyfriend.

MAXWELL I had moles lasered off of my penis, and we talked about it for like a day and a half, and people loved it. They’re so scared to talk about that stuff themselves that they’re just like, dude, this guy’s got things growing on his penis, and he’s talking about it?

STANSBURY I wouldn’t tell one person at work, and he told the whole city.

ON HOW TALKING ABOUT MAXWELL’S AND DAN’S PAST WITH USING DRUGS AND BEING SEXUALLY ABUSED HELPS THEM AND OTHERS

STANSBURY A lot of men have that macho, I’m tough, I control my own destiny. And Maxwell and I are just — we’re not those kind of guys. I remember we went to Starbucks, and we had been working together for like two years, and he was like, “Dude, just tell me what the fuck happened.” Not a girl I dated, not my family, nobody knew (about the sexual abuse). Then the next day we walk into the studio, and he’s like, “Let’s do this.” And I remember my heart was pounding out of my body. I was sweating like crazy. But as soon as we let it out, I did feel better. It sounds so cliché, but that really — even though I was in my 30s — that felt like the last day that I lived as a victim. I felt like a survivor of that.

MAXWELL With the drug problem, too, I had e-mails from people about going to treatment. And that’s a dangerous thing to talk about because if you know anything about it, at any minute I could start using again. And everyone was like, “Don’t talk about it. Don’t discuss it.” I was like, I’m going to rehab, and I’m gonna come back and deal with life. And there’s people who have gone to treatment because I have. I guess there’s still a stigma about it because there’s people in the media in this town is recovery, and they don’t talk about it. There’s still a stigma about it. It just shocks me. It’s 2009. We understand.

ON THE CRAZIEST THING THAT’S EVER HAPPENED ON THE SHOW

MAXWELL Metallica was here for the Rock Hall. We decided to say that, at 6 o’clock, Metallica was going to play live in the parking lot, a free concert. We did that for an hour and didn’t really think it through because there’s a lot of implications there. People believed it, and, an hour and a half, all the managers came in and said, “You can’t do this.”

STANSBURY I remember this guy called in, and he was laughing about it, and that’s when I realized people have a decent sense of humor. He goes, “I own a construction company, and I let all three of my crews leave early because I was trying to be a cool boss.” I was like, “Dude, go see Metallica.”

CHUNK One guy actually went home to put on his Metallica T-shirt and was driving to the station.

2000 Ben Curtis, a professional golfer who won the British Open in 2003, graduates with a degree in sport and recreation management.
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I (don't) have to know

By Jumei Wang

My family

There is little information I have in my parents or my grandparents. Most of the things that are written are about the history of China and the birthplace of China. I don't know the childhood of my parents. I live in the United States. On the other hand, they would have to know for me.

By blood, I am related to my parents and their families. By history, I am related to the Chinese people in China. I do not know the childhood of my parents or their family. Sometimes I wonder if they're still alive.

Burr Fall 2009
I (don’t) have to know

Story by Jinae West

By blood, I am not related to my parents or brother. We look nothing alike. In a sense, we are strangers, bound by signed government documents and a last name and obligation and love.

By blood, I am related to a man and woman I’ve never met. They live halfway across the world in miles I can only fathom on elementary school globes. I do not know their names or their favorite colors. I have no knowledge of their birthdays or present whereabouts. Sometimes I wonder if they’re even alive.

The only information I have is 21 years out of date, a frayed manila folder that’s 2 inches thick and 12 inches wide. On the front, it reads: “Jin Yung Ae, K88-1515,” my birth name and case number.

At 8, I was naive to think that finding my birth parents would be like finding a friend in the phonebook. And if then it still proved to be difficult, I had faith in good fortune. Like the Nancy Drews and Encyclopedia Browns I read about in books, I would discover a clue that would lead to their identities. Or better yet, they would come looking for me.

Around the same time I stopped believing in Santa Claus and magic and superheroes, I realized they wouldn’t.

(continued on Page 55)
I'm seventh grade, my health teacher taught us about different families. There were single-parent families, families who had both parents, families who had none and families who had adopted.

It's not that I was ashamed of being adopted; I feared being different. My classmates knew my parents and knew we didn't look alike, but I didn't care to bring it up. It was what set me apart from my friends who were longed to fit in.

Although I sat with my back to the teacher, I felt her eyes on me. "Jasie, you're adopted, aren't you?" she asked.

At the sound of my name, my shoulders slumped forward and I sank in my chair. My face glowed red. I wished she would stop picking on me. But I half-sneered, half-shrugged that yes, I was.

"Do you want to tell us about it?"

I concentrated hard at the textbook in front of me until the words began to blur. I couldn't see her or my classmates. I was disappearing into a haze, safe from all the stares outside it.

"I don't really want to talk about it," I said.

It was something I struggled with for a while. Growing up in a predominantly white middle-class suburb in Akron, I had always felt uncomfortable, always knew I didn't quite fit in and, at the same time, couldn't see why. My parents were white, and I wasn't. That was never a question. Neither was the fact I was adopted. But I didn't appreciate people assuming my mother wasn't my mother because we didn't look the same or I wasn't fluent in Korean or good at math. I was just a little sad.

The mystery gives it a sense of fiction. For all I know, they are all human beings, or the rest of the who, who, how, what's going on.

...I drew stick figures with brown hair and blue eyes. My dolls were blond. I pretended to struggle in school, even though much of the assignments came easy to me. I refused to perpetuate a stereotype I thought others expected me to fulfill. I looked out on my parents unfairly for reasons they couldn't understand, telling them I hated them for bringing me here.

When I was 10, I had a bad fight with my mother. By then, I knew I had nothing else to gain. I screamed at her until my voice was raw and my lungs burned. It started as a trivial argument, the kind you remember for its foolishness but not its cause. I felt backed into a wall and let the words I knew would hurt the most. As a child, it was the only real leverage I had.

"You're not my real mother," I told her.

"I hate you, I wish I lived with my real parents.

The words lingered, hanging between us, stinging a reverberating silence. I waited for her retaliation. A lifetime punishment. A week's resentment. But none came because she sat there and took it and said nothing.

2006 Oscar de la Renta donates four pieces from his spring collection to the fashion museum, increasing his collection at Kent State from 43 pieces to 47.

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n seventh grade, my health teacher taught us about different families. There were single-parent families, families who had both parents, families who had none and families who had adopted.

It's not that I was ashamed of being adopted; I feared being different. My classmates knew my parents and knew we didn't look alike, but I didn't care to bring it up. It was what set me apart from my friends who were longed to fit in.

Although I sat with my back to the teacher, I felt her eyes on me; "Jenae, you're adopted, aren't you?" she asked.

At the sound of my name, my shoulders lumped forward and I sank in my chair. My face glowed red. I wished she would stop picking on me. But I half-nodded, half-shrugged that yes, I was.

"Do you want to tell us about it?" I concentrated hard at the textbook in front of me until the words began to blur. I couldn't see her or my classmates. I was stinging a reverberating silence. I waited for her rebuttal. A lifelong punishment. A week's resentment. But none came because she sat there and took it and said nothing.

I don't really want to talk about it," I said.

It was something I struggled with for a while. Growing up in a predominantly white middle-class suburb in Akron, I had always felt uncomfortable, always knew I didn't quite fit in and, at the same time, couldn't see why. My parents were white, and I wasn't. That was never a question. Neither was the fact I was adopted. But I didn't appreciate people assuming my mother wasn't my mother because we didn't look the same or I wasn't fluent in Korean or good at math. I was just a child when I longed to fit in and, at the same time, couldn't see why.

My parents were white, and I wasn't. That was never a question. Neither was the fact I was adopted. But I didn't appreciate people assuming my mother wasn't my mother because we didn't look the same or I wasn't fluent in Korean or good at math. I was just a child when I longed to fit in.

I had a bad fight with Ben on a walk in the park, pushing my brother in the stroller, my classmates knew my parents and knew we didn't look alike, but I didn't care to bring it up. It was what set me apart from my friends who were longed to fit in.

I didn't want a second child. My parents were unable to have biological children and looked into adopting a second child. On a walk in the park, pushing my brother in the stroller, my mother turned to my father and told him she was ready for another one. He smiled and said, "Me, too."

According to an article by Joan HeifetzBellinger in "Adoption Quarterly," nearly 50 percent of foreign-born adoptees came from South Korea in the late 1980s in the aftermath of the Korean War. At its peak, more than 6,000 children were sent abroad a year, mostly to the United States.

At the time I was born, Seoul was the host of the 1988 Summer Olympics. Holt International, an adoption agency, told my parents, instead of their child arriving in September, the flight would be delayed until February. The agency said it didn't reflect well on Korea, exporting its children to other countries during the international games. My parents were heartbroken. They checked into getting visas to get me themselves but didn't have to. I arrived in September.

"We have no idea why it changed," my mother says. Flipping through my baby book, "Sept. 29, the flight came into Detroit. Look, there you are!"

She leans against the dining room table, staring at the overexposed photographs and handwritten captions. Her fingers glide over each photo, touching it gently and remembering that split-second moment as only a mother could.

"See this photo?" she says, pointing. "Then I was whispering in my ear. I remember he said, 'She doesn't have very much hair, does she?'" "Oh, and this one." she says, "I love this one."

After a while, I leave her at the table with her photos. They are hers, after all, more than mine. She's lost between the pages of memories I'm unable to recall but she'll never forget. 5-by-7s of candid smiles and first birthdays and first everyday things.

When I come back downstairs an hour later, she's still poring over the photo album. "Are you coming up? I asked. "Mom!"

But she's far away and doesn't seem to hear me. I watch as she presses her finger against the laminated page, bemused and bewildered by how all those years have melted away.

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I was 10, I had a bad fight with my mother. By then, I had known I had nothing else to gain. I screamed at her until my voice was raw and my lungs burned. It started as a trivial argument, the kind you remember for its foolishness but not its cause. I felt backed out to birth families. Most of the posts are about how to begin finding them, but not what actually happens when you try. One user is in the process of tracking his birth family. He says it took more than six months for Holt to send the information he requested.

The frenzied manila folder now sits on a shelf in my room and is the only thing that connects me to my birth parents. While I've always been curious, part of me never wants to know what's inside. Knowing for sure why they decided to give me up would make it real and finite. The mystery gives it a sense of fiction. For all I know, they died in some tragic car accident or house fire and abandoned me involuntarily. I've built them up in my mind as a loving couple who would've kept me if they could, not allowing myself to believe otherwise.

I think of them on almost every birthday. It's the only time I feel a real kinship because if I figure they think of me at all, it would be on the day I was born. And it's nice to know...
we're thinking of each other at the same time, a world apart.

In the past, I've told friends I remember my birth mother, or at least, one brief moment with her. I was in my crib, and she was bending down to me—a split-second memory. Of course, it defies all logic. Children don't develop a sense of memory until they're 3 or 4 years old. But I'm positive it sat on my shelf for so long and opened it. The baby. If she saw what I looked like or if she thought it would be better not to know at all. I think they did care for me as fiction, an intangible idea that's far removed from reality.

I've always wanted a sister.
we're thinking of each other at the same time, a world apart.

In my past, I've told friends I remember my birth mother, or at least, one brief moment with her. I was in my crib, and she was standing down at me — a split-second memory. Of course, it defies all logic. Children don't develop a sense of memory until they're 3 or 4 years old. But I'm positive it was her. I don't know who else it could've been. And her face was full of love and adoration. On cue, it.

When I call my mother to ask if she's ever tried to find her parents, he tells me no. His answer is abrupt. He doesn't want that burden. He doesn't want to have to take care of them if they need it.

"You never even thought about it?" I ask.

"No. Never." Around the same time I began to wonder about my birth parents a few years ago, my mother and father had told me about Ben's. His birth mother was deaf, mute and unmarried. Her circumstances were grim. She was very young and didn't have money to support a baby, so she gave him up. They said Ben never asked about his file or his birth parents. On the phone, Ben tells me about how difficult it was growing up, feeling like a loser at recess, having trouble making friends and being made fun of all the time. It's then when I realize we've never talked about this before. My phone calls to him are usually short and polite. I ask him how he's doing in Baltimore, he asks how I'm doing in school and then we hang up. But this time is different.

We laugh and reminisce about what was great and awful about being adopted — the teasing and loss of culture, but, at home, a sense that we belonged. I tell him I don't try to find my birth parents, and by the end of the call, he seems to have a change of heart.

"Well, maybe I'll try to find them, too," he says. "Maybe one day." His voice trails off.

Silently, we both know he won't. And I decide not to tell him I know about his file, to hide the fact that, deep down, I don't think there's anyone to find.

At the beginning of my baby book, a photo is missing. The caption reads, "Time with her foster mother, 4 months old." I ask my mother what happened to the photo. She says she doesn't know but will keep an eye out for it.

"Mom," I say, "what do you think about me trying to find my birth parents?" I don't ask, but what I really want to know is if it will bother her. I wonder if she'll get mad.

"I want you to do whatever would make you happy," she says. I look for hints of insincerity in her voice, in her open face, but I can't find none. She's being honest. All she's ever wanted is for me to be happy.

I go up to my room, back to the folder that has sat on my shelf for so long and open it. My parents gave it me two years ago, and I put it out of sight and out of mind until now. The first page is a pre-flight child report that lists my eating and sleeping habits, speech abilities and personality: "Squawks and laughs aloud. Recognizes a familiar voice. Likes to break (but a bath). Is a gentle, cute baby. Loves to be held in one's arms." Some of the pages are just brochures to take trips back to Korea, but most are agreements between my parents and the adoption agency, saying they can't give me up if they find something wrong — a no-return policy. All signs final.

But there is a pocket stapled five pages deep that catches my interest. "Confidential Information." I can feel my heart race faster.

In movies, the protagonist always has a turning point. It's the moment when his or her life changes forever. He gets bitten by a spider or goes to the mattresses for his family or takes the red pill instead of the blue one. To a lesser extent, I realize this is one of those moments.

The first page is basic information, like my height and weight when I was born. The second is a little more interesting. It mentions my foster family, "composed of five members: her foster mother in her late 40s; two foster brothers and one sister. Her foster mother is a diligent woman with a loving nature."

I turn the page. In cold, flat type, it reads: "The natural parents were legally married and had three children. As they were very poor they practiced birth control not to have any more, but they came to have the baby unintentionally due to failure of contraception. The natural parents could not bring up the baby adequately due to their unfavorable financial circumstances. They relinquished their parental rights toward the baby, wanting the baby to be adopted by a good family for the sake of the baby's optimum future."

The baby

According to the file, they were poor farmers, both receiving only a primary school education. My birth mother was 32 and my birth father 34. I was taken into the adoption agency the day I was born. It doesn't say, but I get the sense she never held me. It makes me wonder if she saw what I looked like or if she thought it was better to not know me. I'm not sure I ever imagined meeting the social worker who named me.

To my birth family, I was, simply, the baby.

The next two pages are medical forms and don't hold my interest. I close the folder and put it back on the shelf. At first, I feel numb, unchanged. There was no tingly car crash or house fire, but I think they did come for me in the only way they know how — by giving me up to someone else. Learning I have three siblings, though, when all this time I assumed I was an only child, is off-putting. Two sisters and one brother, and I got the golden ticket out.

I've always wanted a sister.

I decide to send the request to Holt, but I don't expect it to lead anywhere. And if it does, I don't have the funds to pursue it further. Korea is a long way from Kent, and the older I get, the farther it seems... To me they still exist, an intangible idea that's far removed from reality.

First place, the CyBurr for 2007

Jessica Lentine & Jackie Mantery, editors
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Best Magazine Non-Fiction Article

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Regional Awards — 2009

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Best Magazine Non-Fiction Article

Best Affiliated Web Site
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Stephanie Blackstone and
Adam Griffiths, Webmasters

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Third place, CyBurr, spring 2009
John Hitch, editor
Kelly Pickeral, Web editor
Christabel Devadoss, Web photo editor
Jef Johnson, multimedia editor
Stevan Hauser, Webmaster

United States Alliance for Journalism and Mass Communication

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National Awards — 2008

Society of Professional Journalists, Region 4

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First place, CyBurr, spring and fall 2008 Jackie Mantery and Savan Nusinov, editors Adam Griffiths and Megan Rivas, Web editors
Stephanie Blackstone and Adam Griffiths, Webmasters

Best Student Magazine

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Best Affiliated Web site for any student medium
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