NEED LESS
TO SAY
Good Deed?
Walter Flores

I am sure I have done one or two good deeds in my life but it’s hard to recall them. Although one thing comes to mind. Some might say it was a good deed and sometimes I feel that way, but sometimes I feel like I just got played!

During lunch, I was walking to Ogilvie Station to pick something up for lunch. A homeless woman was begging on her knees for someone to buy her a meal. Usually I walk right by when I see someone asking for something, but when you see someone who is on their knees and you can hear the desperation in their voice it makes you think twice. I asked her if she really wanted food. She said “yes,” so I took her inside and I told her to order what she wanted from McDonald’s. Surprisingly, she ordered from the dollar menu meal, as if she was being considerate of how much I spent on her. In all honesty, I have spent more money on other useless items, so I figured why not offer her more? I told her she could order a full meal, it’s not a big deal. She didn’t want that. She ordered something small and said thank you.

Before I walked back to the office I gave her a McDonald’s gift card I had bought with about 50 dollars on it for her. I figured even if she didn’t get food, I tried my best to help someone.

Introduction

This is the second issue of writings by students in “Academic Writing/Writing Together” at the De Paul University’s School for New Learning. “Academic Writing/Writing Together” is a pedagogical experiment in which students fulfilling their academic writing competence spend an hour of each weekly class session engaging in personal narrative writing as a workshop. Through this innovation we encourage students to embrace academic writing via personal narrative, and to explore the similarities between those two genres. We also reflect on the writing workshop experience through readings and discussion about its popular education underpinnings, exploring the politics of literacy and what it means to be a literate person. Participation in the writing workshop is also meant to prepare students to engage in their own community writing experience – either as observers, participants, writing teachers, or workshop designers.

Following the methodology of the Community Writing Project, we began each workshop session discussing the previous week’s stories, and end the session writing in response to prompts that emerge from the discussion. This term, writing prompts ranged from the mundane to the sublime. Students wrote about standing up to a challenge or facing a difficult loss, a person they admire or their car being towed. Through the group writing process, students drew on initial sketches to develop a story for inclusion in this booklet. In the process they also developed their narrative voice while sharing life experiences, humor, and wisdom.

– Janise and Michelle
My Shining Star
Teresa Medina

I have the sweetest little girl anyone could ask for. My daughter is ten years old and has a heart of gold. She is a very bright young lady. The summer of 2008 my daughter's world as she knew it fell apart.

One Thursday sunny afternoon after school she received news from a neighbor that our home was on fire. She rushed home with my mother and saw the only home she ever knew burning uncontrollably. My daughter and mother arrived first on the scene. My daughter experienced a terrible loss that day. After that day she seemed to forget things easily and could not focus at school or at home. I wasn't sure if the change of behavior was due to the loss of our home.

I asked the school if she could have extra help in school. As her mother I knew something was wrong. My daughter's confidence level and focus in school wasn't the same as before the fire. The school told me not to worry about it was normal for a young girl to be distracted. I didn't agree with what the school told me. It was as if the school wanted to pacify me to stop bothering them. I continued to ask the school questions and told them I believed she needed extra help.

Finally, after some time of pressuring the school, they tested my daughter. She was diagnosed with dyslexia. The school provided extra services and we found her a college student who is interested in teaching to tutor my daughter. It has been a year since she was tested and we received great news during her evaluation: she has improved 70 percent since last year. The system tried to fail me but I didn't let it.

A Good Deed
Joyce Gaston

One Sunday evening in late fall I was taking my son home after a weekend with me. That night, it happened to be raining extremely hard and we were on public transportation. While at the bus stop a lady pulled over, rolled down her window, and asked if I wanted a ride. I was very reluctant as you are not supposed to get in a car with strangers. She insisted that she was empathetic towards mothers with young children in distress. After thinking it over in my head and noticing that my seven year old was getting drenched, I stepped out on faith and got in the car. She dropped us off at the train as planned and I was very grateful.

My Two Girls: Both of Them Are Unique
Adrienne Thomas

My two daughters have similar but different personalities. My youngest daughter is brutally honest, while my oldest daughter will sometimes tell you what she thinks you need to know or what she thinks you want to hear. Both of them speak their mind, except my youngest daughter does it all the time and she is not always tactful. I couldn't pay my youngest daughter to tell a lie. Not that I would want to. I just wish she would sometimes think about other people's feelings. My oldest daughter speaks her mind when she has a point to prove or if she is angry.

The funny thing is that both of them are fun-loving, artistic, generous, and like doing a lot of the same activities. They often disagree, but they also love each other.
Nissan Fun
Bonita Baxter

One weekday morning in the spring of 2007, I woke up to see that my Nissan vehicle was moved from its parking spot. I thought I was seeing things, so I went to grab my eyeglasses just to make sure that it was not my imagination. Nope, it was for real! I could not believe that the neighborhood thugs had stolen my car for joy riding. I just could not or did not want to believe that someone would do such a thing. I went outside to investigate, only to find my car pushed from its original parking spot. I was not happy! I tried to make sense of why someone would steal my car and then try to park it back in its place. What I realized was that I did hear some banging and sounds of a car crashing in the midnight hours, but I had no idea that it was actually my car that was hit. I called the police to file a report and then I drew my own conclusion that someone who apparently could not drive had forced my car forward to that parking space. Well, the police came and looked at me as if I was some sort of nut.

I tried to play detective over the next couple of days. Whoever hit my car had left red paint on it, so I tried looking for black paint on someone else’s red car. That led me to believe that a woman from the same apartment complex whose cars were always banged up had hit my car. Just as I was going to take some pictures, the car disappeared. That was the end of me taking pictures of her car. I am positive to this day she knew that she was my prime suspect. But I had no proof so I had to write that dent off as a loss. My poor Nissan didn’t deserve that.

To make things more exciting, I parked my car a little further down, only to then have someone side swipe my Nissan driver side mirror. I rode around for a couple of years with the mirror dangling until I got tired of it swinging and taking off the paint. I finally got that mirror fixed. Then my daughter started driving the car and came home with some more dings. She cracked the headlight and said she hit a pile of snow — so she says. Well, I’m still driving that Nissan, dings and all.

A Tow Day Triumph
Tracy Stokes

I can relate to the frustration of getting your car towed. First, you get out of your car knowing you should not park there because there is a good chance the tow truck is coming for you. Your mind first tells you not to do it but you dismiss it by convincing yourself that it will not happen today.

Secondly, you constantly check in and out of the establishment’s window to make sure there are no tow trucks around the area. At last, you finally come out and to your surprise, there is an empty spot where your car used to be. Your mind starts to race, anxiety takes over, and the first thing you think is someone has stolen my car.

After thinking long and hard as to why someone would steal a 13-year old car, something (probably that earlier voice) tells you to turn around and look up. Regrettfully, your eyes are met with the black and white letters on the towing sign that now appears magnified. Angrily, you dial the number on the sign only to hear that your car is sitting in some city lot all the way on the other side of town and you have no cash on you.

Nevertheless, you have to pick it up because you know the longer they keep it the more you pay. So you start to call around to family and friends to see if anyone can pick you up. After the fifth unavailable person, you face the fact you are on your own getting your car back. Walking was never an option but you need to find an ATM for a taxi and to pay your $160.00 towing fee. Luckily, you find an ATM about five blocks away. However, Brinks is occupying it to get the cash out and the teller lines are long. While you wait your turn in line you take this opportunity to collect yourself and proceed with the task.

Finally you have the cash and you flag down a taxi to take you to the tow place where you see your baby (the car).
A New Appreciation for the Invention of the Automatic

Monica Siggelkov

“Do you know how to drive a stick shift?” This was the last question presented to me shortly after I had accepted a job to work as a seasonal school portrait photographer. The position would require extensive traveling throughout upcoming summer. Even though it was clearly remember how this interview ended. After responding to the question that I did not know how to drive a stick, I was assured that it would not be a problem. “Don’t worry. It will be easy to just learn when you are over there.” I still wonder if she actually believed those words as they were coming out of her mouth.

Fast forward to a few months later and I am in Germany, deeply regretting having not learned how to drive a stick shift back home. Achieving this goal had not been as easy a task as had been implied during my interview. Apparently, my manager’s idea of learning consisted of a very “hands-on” approach, because for the most part they seemed to leave it up to me to acquire this skill. I had only practiced this driving technique a few times in secluded areas like parking lots where I would be less likely to hurt someone or something.

Then a day came when my managers put me on the spot. The only automatic vehicle available at the rental shop had been considerably more costly. I hardly felt at this point that I had mastered the skill enough to try driving a stick shift on my own. Not to mention the fact that I was in a foreign country where I was constantly getting lost and didn’t speak the native language. Reluctantly, I agreed to try and drive a stick shift for that day. Big mistake.

I don’t think I even made it very far before the words, “don’t worry” were running on repeat in my head, trying to drown out the angry car horns surrounding me. As you can imagine, I spent not once, not twice, but multiple times stalled in the middle of the intersection while other drivers furiously honked at me with disgust and annoyance. Needless to say, at the end of that day I informed my managers that if I was not given an automatic for the rest of my employment I would be on the next flight home. That was my last and final attempt to drive a stick shift.

A Charlie Brown Kind of a Year

Juan L. Latapi

Let me tell you about a year that flipped my world upside down. That year was 2010 and it was quite a handful, to say the least.

The year didn’t start so well; I was starting a new relationship with this lovely girl and everything seemed to be going swell. Well, February was the month when everything started going downhill. Remember that lovely girl? Well, everything changed quickly and the relationship ended when she decided to turn into Charles Manson. Shortly after that my car got towed by the great city of Chicago. After scrambling for money and finally getting it out, someone decided that it would be a great idea to throw a rock through the driver side window. A couple of months later I lost my job (which I had had for seven years) due to some petty situation. This in turn made me lose my car. In September while riding my bicycle to a job interview I got run over by a post office truck and spent the vast majority of three months in bed. The last five minutes of 2010 I was very weary, expecting the roof to collapse over my head.

Despite all that, there were still some good things. I started school at DePaul University and made some fine friendships along the way.

I will always remember 2010 as an infamous year that almost robbed me of my sanity. So let’s raise a glass and here’s to 2011, in hopes that it will be better than its bastard brother 2010.