

SKYLINE 2016

TRINITY UNIVERSITY

THE BLUE PEARL: MOROCCO'S BEST KEPT SECRET

Chef Hernandez: Cooking Up New Ideas | The Uphill Battle: Conquering
Your Migraines | Caffeinated Craze: Finding Coffee in San Antonio

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Skyline lives! As the first managing editor and art director since 2011 to take on the task of creating and reinventing this magazine, we felt honored and burdened by past students' achievements—and production mistakes.

Skyline is something special in the Communication Department at Trinity University. Entirely written, designed, and produced by students, *Skyline* represents more than just a class project. As students, we work on individual and group projects for hours, days, and weeks. We submit final papers, present interactive proposals, and perform 20-minute monologues. Completed, graded, glanced at, we put those projects aside and move on, forgetting the hours, days, and weeks that we spent on them. And then, our work vanishes. *Skyline* is permanent. It remains for years—decades even—after we graduate. Because of this, we wanted to make *Skyline* 2016 a magazine that resonated with ourselves and with others.

Like the many students who have come before us, we have been guided by Professor Sammie Johnson, and for the first time, by Dr. Melissa McMullen. They led us through our journey as we worked to make *Skyline* 2016 a reality. They supported our creative flights, while at other times, they brought us back down to earth. Through it all, they have helped us make *Skyline* a success. Since 1989, Johnson has helped students create their own *Skyline*; we are thankful that she saved the best for last.

Each student came with a specific vision of what the magazine should be. Dramatic, traditional, readable, and modern were a few of the words written on the white board one afternoon. As managing editor and art director, we had the task of transforming these differing concepts into one cohesive editorial and design plan.

Melding these visions required many late nights filled with discussing the tiniest details. For hours, we discussed font sizes, column widths, gutters, and colors. We agonized over questions like “If we bumped the body copy up by 0.5 pt., what would happen?” for half of our meeting—only to revert to our original decision.

While creating the magazine, we tried to walk the fine line between democracy and monarchy. We truly wanted this *Skyline* to represent a piece of everyone and to showcase the entire team's best work. For this reason, we discussed in great detail our plans with the class, but ultimately, made the hard decisions ourselves and set the boundaries for design and editorial content.

We divided the articles into four sections: Create, Cultivate, Relate, and Resonate. The articles in each section reflect the heading. In Create, the articles speak of creating. “Chef Johnny Hernandez” describes how he has created a Mexican cuisine enterprise. The Cultivate section focuses on cultivating knowledge, ideas, and sensory experiences. “Granada” embraces the idea of cultivating new experiences in a historical city. For Relate, the articles are about relating to others, as well as relating one's story. “Florence in 3 Hours” centers on these moments between people that the author relates through photography. Lastly, the Resonate section highlights stories that capture powerful images. “Exploring the Blue Pearl” showcases the breathtaking beauty of a Moroccan city.

Working within the boundaries of our creative dreams, logistical realities, and a tight budget, we created a new *Skyline* that unites tradition with innovation. Through it all, we have learned that magazine work is not for the faint of heart. Blood, sweat, and tears went into *Skyline* 2016. It's a new era for magazines and a fresh start for *Skyline*. ●



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Managing Editor



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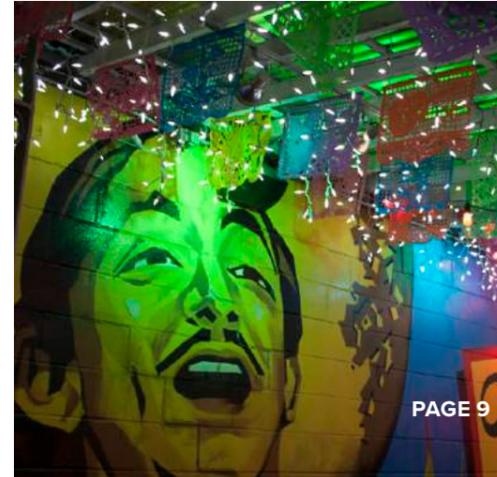


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Cover photo of the blue city—Chefchaouen—shot on location in Morocco by Rose Minutaglio.

A Sweet Transition

Annie Vu's Career Journey

By CATHERINE CLARK



(PHOTO by BRIA WOODS)

Petite and all smiles, Annie Vu radiates a sense of ease. She's bubbly, laughs freely, and possesses a self-assuredness of someone who finally has achieved a long-sought after goal. Unafraid of her future, Vu knows where she's going in life.

This wasn't always the case. As a student at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, Vu thought she had a plan. She was going to work for a non-profit organization and serve the community. At the time, she never would have imagined creating and operating her own bakery, Annie's Petite Treats.

In August of 2014, Vu turned her hobby—making cake balls and cake pops—into a full-time career.

Unlike many bakers, Vu doesn't like sweets, but she bakes them just the same. And thanks to the Texas Cottage Food Law, she's able to work from the comfort of her own home in San Antonio. Always trying new things from cookies to cupcakes, Vu sets herself apart with bite-size treats that will satisfy any sweet tooth. Yes, Vu does it all. And she does it on her own, for now at least.

"I'm mostly a one-woman shop right now," Vu says, laughing. "I hire a couple of girls who help me roll cake balls around the holidays. One of them is a culinary student in high school, and she wants to get into the business one day. So, I'm hoping to bring her on once a week to help me in the kitchen more than just around holidays. And, I usually have family who come in and help around holidays, because some days, it's just crazy."

For Vu, the holidays are the most hectic. When October hits, the cake ball orders come rolling in. "Oh, my gosh. I think this last holiday I probably sold at least 2,000 cake balls," Vu estimates, while pushing a strand of black hair away from her face and into her low ponytail. "It gets nuts! During the week, I can manage. But around the holidays, it gets out of control."

Business is booming, but Vu, 29, didn't always dream of running her own bakery and making cake balls every day. Growing up in Spring, Texas, Vu discovered the joys of cooking through her mother.

"My mom loves cooking. I spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her. A lot of watching her, but also cooking together. I had my first Easy-Bake Oven when I was little and I loved making the little cookies and the little brownies with the light bulb," Vu reminisces.

Still, being a chef or a baker wasn't something that Vu saw as a career. When she arrived at Trinity University in the fall of 2003, Vu had her sights set on law school. But after attending a summer program at American University in Washington, DC called Transforming Communities, she discovered a passion for helping others and giving back to the community.

She believed her future rested in volunteerism, and that's where Vu was headed after graduating in 2007

with a degree in Speech.

"I was interning at Rackspace in San Antonio my senior year. When I graduated, they hired me full time. It was this buffer period of 'I don't know what I'm going to do with my life, but I'll take this job and see what happens.' And I ended up being there almost seven years," Vu reveals, lowering her voice.

At Rackspace, a cloud hosting company, Vu started as a Corporate Event Planner working in planning events for customers and employees alike. Vu spent her last four years working in community engagement, including fundraising, volunteering, and giving back to the San Antonio community.

“It just kind of blew up to a point, where at first it was orders from friends and then strangers. And the next thing I know, I'm up to my eyeballs every night, staying up till 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning trying to get orders out.”

— Annie Vu

During her time at Rackspace from 2007 to 2013, Vu rediscovered baking. In December 2010, she married Austin Deric, an engineer. Life seemed to be moving rapidly, and Vu's childhood love of making treats became her life preserver out in the real world, a place that college doesn't completely prepare you for.

"For a while, it was really just a stress reliever for me. When I had a rough day at work, I wanted to go home and make sweets," Vu explains. "It was like putting all that stress and negative energy into something that people enjoy, so at first it really started off as a way to wind down after a long day."

Vu's stress developed partially from her innate need for reassurance. Switching from being graded in the classroom to working in an office placed Vu in an interesting position. Happy to be helping the community, Vu struggled to get her mind out of grade-oriented work. Throughout her schooling, grades reassured Vu that everything was going all right.

"I think I've always been top in my class, the 'nerd.'



School was really important to me. Academics were really important—like getting that check or that 100 on that paper. I think it was a really difficult transition from school to the work place, too. I think some people, like Type A people, feel that way when leaving school. Because nobody’s there to tell you: ‘You’re doing a great job,’” Vu says, while reaching across the table as if to reassure a student.

Baking gave Vu an escape. This form of relaxation slowly shifted, though, as Vu continued her work in marketing and communications at Rackspace. For the last four years at Rackspace, Vu was finally doing the things she loved—working with the community and giving back. But something wasn’t quite right.

Slowly, baking had started to become more than just a hobby. In 2013, Vu started selling her treats. Vu realized that she had spent more time at Rackspace than she had intended and began to feel an urge for change.

“That was a lot of fun for me, but there was still something missing. I just couldn’t figure out what it was. And I think, there was this ‘Whoa’ moment that I had been working at Rackspace for six and a half, seven years, and I thought it was just going to be a one year stint. It was like I blinked and my life had gone by,” Vu says, staring ahead at a long-forgotten memory.

But always the problem solver, Vu decided to follow her dreams of giving back. She switched jobs in July of 2013 and began working with Choose to Succeed, a relatively new non-profit in San Antonio that seeks to attract and bring the United States’ best public charter schools to San Antonio. Working as Senior Director of Community Engagement, Vu was fully living her dream of helping others. Then in 2014, an opportunity for change arose. Vu finally had to choose between her hobby and her current career.

“I took a promotion at Choose to Succeed. And during that time, my baking business was just taking off. I had to decide what am I going to invest my time and energy in,” Vu says, her dark chocolate eyes sparkling. “Because I was sleeping like two hours a night, working all day at

Choose to Succeed, and then working all night on baking. It just got a little overwhelming. So, I chose one.”

This seemingly simple decision was the hardest part for Vu, and it definitely did not happen overnight. Her business, Annie’s Petite Treats, grew relatively slowly at first, but then quickly skyrocketed.

“It just kind of blew up to a point, where at first it was orders from friends and then strangers. And the next thing I know, I’m up to my eyeballs every night, staying up till 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning trying to get orders out. And then going to work the next morning,” Vu elaborates, crossing her flannel-clad arms.

“It was just a lot of stress, and feeling like I wasn’t balancing my life properly and not giving my family time. Nothing was fun anymore. Going to work wasn’t fun. Baking wasn’t fun,” Vu recalls.

In her dark flannel shirt, black leggings, and black ballet flats, Vu sits at a mahogany pub table and elaborates on what she was the hardest part of the process: making the decision.

“I’m pretty Type A, in control. I like to plan my life out. And this was never part of the plan. It was kind of scary to take that leap and then believe in myself enough to do it,” she explains with a close-lipped smile. “Once I made it and told the company that I was leaving, it was kind of ‘Well, here we are. We just have to do it.’”

With the decision made, Vu and her husband spent the next couple of months planning the switch from working for a non-profit to becoming an entrepreneur. Vu gave her notice at Choose to Succeed in 2014 and looked toward step one: finding a commercial property.

Vu didn’t want a coffee shop or a bakery or a store front. She simply wanted a kitchen, where she could maintain control over who enters and who leaves. A self-described Type A personality, Vu needed to maintain control over her work space, her day, and her work hours. With all the properties they visited, the lease terms were long; or the rent was too high; or retail hours were required. Overwhelmed, Vu and her husband began to talk about leaving Texas.

As luck would have it, they didn’t have to look too far and found their perfect place right in San Antonio.

“We bought our first home in 2008. It’d been about five years, and we were ready to find the next place. We found this property that had a guest house that I could convert into my studio and about an acre, which we could grow into. It was a really perfect timing transition for us,” Vu says, smiling.

Their property, itself, is a little hard to find. Across from a fire station on Vance Jackson, a shaded pebbled road leads back to a somewhat hidden neighborhood. Toward the end of the road, a large, old, stone home appears. At the end of its driveway, a small, pink sign reads “Annie’s Petite Treats.” Up the drive sits a smaller version of the main house. This small house is what Vu calls her studio.

The studio looks like something from Pinterest. Bright, airy, and comfortable, Vu’s space serves as her base of operations. The walls are painted a tinted baby blue, some with stripes and some without. Glittery signs hang on one wall, while artsy photos of Vu’s creations are strung up on another.

Four tables offer space: the pub table for meeting with her clients, a teal desk for paperwork, and two for making cake balls. In the back, raised above the rest of the floor, is the old kitchen, still being used, and equipped with a shower.

“I went from baking out of my kitchen to baking in my own space, which has helped my business grow a lot more than I expected. It’s still kind of flying by the seat of my pants sometimes, but I make it happen,” Vu admits with a slight lilt in her voice.

While Vu’s studio has given her more control, she confesses that in the beginning she struggled with making such a big shift from non-profit to home business. No longer following her life plan, Vu questioned her decisions.

“I think part of it was I felt like I spent a lot of money to go to school, to get a great degree from a really good

university, and I’m doing this manual labor. And I’m not using my degree the way I thought I would use my degree,” Vu confides.

With that mindset, the potential backlash from others could seem daunting, but to Vu, the backlash came from within. “You kind of get in your own head sometimes and start questioning your decisions. I was doing great work with the community and doing something that was important,” Vu continues. “For me to leave that and do something that’s a little more selfish, something that makes me happy and that I enjoy doing was hard for me at first.”

Burdened by a sense of selfishness, Vu had to work herself out of that mindset by focusing on her own happiness. “I love doing it. And it makes me happy. It took a while to understand that this was okay. Doing what you love is absolutely okay,” she affirms, smiling.

If not for the passing of the Texas Cottage Food Law in 2011, Vu wouldn’t have been able to turn her love for baking into her career. Essentially, the law grants Texans the ability to sell food they make in their own kitchens. In 2013, the law was broadened to specify a set list of approved food items and to lay down further guidelines for approved selling venues and required health procedures. At the same time, the law places a sales cap at \$50,000. This cap constrains the amount of revenue a person can make from their home-based business.

At this moment in time, Vu anxiously anticipates the ever-approaching day when this cap will start to affect her business.

“It’s starting to be a problem. But I think that if I account for expenses and what it costs to run my business, hiring staff, and what comes next, I can keep myself under the maximum. That’s kind of where I was putting my eggs in a basket. That our law would evolve before I really needed to make plans,” Vu states.

For now, she’ll continue hoping for a change, that the Texas legislature will adjust the law so that it





Examples of Annie Vu's petite treats and her kitchen are shown on pages 6-8. (PHOTOS by BRIA WOODS and from ANNIE'S PETITE TREATS FACEBOOK)

mirrors that of other states. As of now, 41 states have passed Cottage Food Laws and 20 of the states have no restricting sales cap whatsoever, according to a report by the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, a division of the Center for Health and Policy Innovation at Harvard University.

While the law remains unchanged, Vu makes plans to avoid hitting the sales cap. She wants to remodel that old kitchen in the back, and possibly, hire some more staff members. But letting go of parts of her business may prove to be another unexpected hurdle.

"It's hard to find someone who is going to be as dedicated as you. For someone like me, I'm kind of a control freak. I like the way I do things. So, it's going to be hard to find someone who can keep up with that, who I can trust, who I can build and grow and help along with their own passion and career too," Vu says. "That point is coming up a lot quicker. I have to find someone. I can't be the one who does everything anymore. And that's hard for me to admit to."

Vu clarifies, "I shouldn't be making all my deliveries by myself anymore. I shouldn't be stuffing boxes and doing the things that aren't the creative piece—the parts that I love. I should be able to start letting go. I thought it would be a little easier to do that, but you know, control freaks kind of have a hard time."

As she has defeated her own self-doubt, Vu has slowly begun to overcome her need to control every part of the cake ball process, by relinquishing one task at a time.

"I've let go of certain things, like having the girls help me roll cake balls. I try to let them do their thing and step away. But then when it gets to my part of dipping and decorating, I'm like, 'They didn't roll that perfectly.' It's one of those things that's not important, so I have to learn to let it go," Vu shares.

In the long run, hiring staff could help Vu reconnect with her favorite parts of the business: the ones that inspired her to start Annie's Petite Treats in the first place.

"My favorite part is the creative part, designing the cake balls and taking a customer's idea and bringing it to life. And then, seeing their reaction when they see it for the first time is always great, especially with the kids, because they freak out when their favorite cartoon character is put into food. They love it," Vu says, laughing.

This creativity and love for making people happy is what has made Vu successful. By overcoming her fears, Vu brings joy to countless lives. In this way, her business allows her to still give back to the community not only through monthly donations to auctions, galas, and events, but also through gifts and surprises, especially to students at Trinity University.

Vu estimates that the parents of Trinity University students make up 40 percent of her business. Without them, Annie's Petite Treats wouldn't be where it is today. This ongoing relationship with the parents and their students reminds Vu of her time at Trinity and allows her to give back in a subtle way.

"I've had moms call me because their kids have called crying, having a hard day at school, or a freshman who had a hard start—like a hard first week—not used to being away from home. It seems really personal to me being able to help a parent who lives far away, you know, send a little love to their kids," Vu says with warmth in her voice. "It's a special place in my heart."

More than just a little treat, Vu's cake balls have become a sign of love, of connection. So maybe, Vu's seemingly selfish decision to leave non-profits and to open up a bakery from the comfort of her home isn't all that selfish after all. ●

Catherine Clark graduated from Trinity University in May 2016 with a double major in Communication and Spanish. Originally from Friendswood, Texas, Clark plans to attend the University of Southern California to pursue a master's degree in journalism. Clark loves writing and aspires to work for National Geographic.



MARIACHI MADNESS

A Look at the Hottest Mariachi Groups in San Antonio

By ROSE MINUTAGLIO

(PHOTO by MONICA NGUYEN)

Mariachi music is meant to move you emotionally. Suave melodies speak of passion and love and sex; heart-wrenching yips recall the pain of loss and desolation; romping guitarrón rhythms soothe the heartbroken and weary. If you've ever seen truly great mariachi, you know what I'm talking about—the soulful harmonies float and linger in the air for minutes after the musicians are done playing.

Even so, some critics toss aside mariachi as a commercialized genre, prostituted for tourists seeking an authentic Mexican-American experience. But not in San Antonio, Texas. In this town, mariachi is a way of life. It's a craft passed down from father to son. And, perhaps most importantly, it's an emblem of Mexican culture and a source of pride for the San Antonio community.

And it is evolving. Younger generations taking over the music scene are embracing a more comprehensive identity by incorporating contemporary rhythms and melodies into their songs. While some traditionalists groan over these advancements, it is the nature of music to grow with societal and cultural developments.

The roots of mariachi are mysterious, but it's generally agreed upon that the genre made its way to San Antonio in the 1920s from Jalisco, Mexico. *Guitarreros* (the original mariachi guitar players) would stand in old Haymarket Square and play songs by request. This is where legendary Texas music icon Lydia Mendoza, nicknamed *La Alondra de la Frontera* (or The Lark of the Border), and her performing family got their start playing for pennies on the street. They later went on to



Azteca de America poses with their trophy from the Annual Mariachi Invitation at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in 2016. (PHOTO courtesy of "GINO" RIVERA)

tour internationally, and Mendoza became one of the first real Mexican-American vocal stars in the United States and a hero to the San Antonio community.

The tradition of mariachi runs deep in San Antonio, and today bands can be found playing almost anywhere: at mom and pop taco joints, at touristy cantinas lining the River Walk, and at a range of events from baptisms to quinceañeras to weddings to funerals.

"We joke that we play from the time people are born to the time they die, and at every event in between," says Rene Benavidez, local mariachi expert and former owner of San Antonio's premiere mariachi emporium, The Mariachi Connection. "In San Antonio, mariachi music is a way of life. It is a vital part of our cultural identity."

There are thousands of amazingly talented mariachi musicians in San Antonio. Here's an in-depth look at some of our favorite newcomers gracing the Alamo City music scene.

Las Coronelas

Despite a handful of notable breakout female Latina mariachi stars (think Jenni Rivera's 2009 mariachi studio album that garnered her a Latin Grammy nomination), the genre is typically male-dominated, and it always has been. Recently though, the patriarchal nature of mariachi is becoming more female friendly due to the growth of all-girl groups in Texas, California, and Mexico. Especially popular in San Antonio right now is Las Coronelas, a spectacular group of 10 young women who play everything from love songs to cumbias to bluegrass and country.

The founder and leader of the group, Vanessa del Fierro, hails from the south side of San Antonio and was living in the area when she formed Las Coronelas in 2009. It was at their regular weekend gig at a local taqueria that talent scouts began to take notice of the group and their eclectic style. They perform a mix of English and Spanish songs, modern and traditional, pop and country.

They play everything from "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" to "Malagueña Salerosa" to "Somos Novios." And they do it all in heels. The group is known for matching their *trajes de charro* (the traditional attire) with glittery stilettos and fierce fiery red lipstick. But even without

the mariachi garb, the intimidating shoes, and the oversized flowers in their hair, there is no denying these women are excellent performers and damn good musicians.

In March 2015, Las Coronelas made an appearance at South by Southwest in Austin, where they played at the "Funny or Die" show at the Belmont (they performed in the morning and were followed by comedy acts Will Ferrell and Kevin Hart a few hours later).

Days later they appeared on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!," accompanying Bill Murray as he rode horseback onto the set wearing a cowboy hat and boots. It's obvious that these women don't mess around. They are true musicians with serious ambitions. Although they don't play regularly at that south side taqueria anymore, you can follow them on Twitter (@LasCoronelas) for information on upcoming shows around town.

Mariachi Nuevo Estilo ADM

It was a dream come true for San Antonio's Mariachi Nuevo Estilo ADM when the judges of the U.S. reality hit TV show, "America's Got Talent," unanimously voted to send them on to the second round of competition in 2013. Their highly untraditional mash-up of "Low" by Flo Rida and "Sexy and I Know It" by LMFAO wowed the judges and even elicited a "You created your own thing, and it's bigger than mariachi. I love it," comment from radio personality Howard Stern.

Stern had a point. By playing the melodies of popularized radio hits in a traditional mariachi manner, the fellows of Nuevo Estilo ADM are contributing to the

next wave of mariachi music and even, perhaps, to the creation of an entirely new genre of Mexican-American music.

If you want to see a mariachi band performing "Volveré" or "Cielito Lindo," we wouldn't suggest going to see Mariachi Nuevo Estilo ADM. They aren't exactly traditional. But they do provide a glimpse into what the future of mariachi music might look like. These guys are the real thing—a sneak peek into the rising Mexican-American pop cultural combination that is sweeping the nation.

Nuevo Estilo, which translates to new style, are seven of the most dedicated and passionate performers in San Antonio. And besides that, they put on a seriously good performance. It's not hard to tell that these guys love what they do. As violinist and lead vocalist Rico Contreras explained to the "America's Got Talent" judges, "The new generation is here, and we are here to entertain."

Howard Stern recognized it, the residents of San Antonio know it, and the band members are confident that Nuevo Estilo is the future of mariachi music in San Antonio. You can catch these guys playing a few nights a week at Panchito's Mexican Restaurant on McCullough, and at Pericos Mexican Cuisine at their Bandera location on Mondays and Thursdays.

Follow Mariachi Nuevo Estilo ADM on Twitter (@nuevoestiloADM) for more information about upcoming events.

Mariachi Internacional

Founded in 1974 by Manuel Vega, Mariachi Internacional is one of the oldest and most prestigious bands in the city. The group is well respected by San Antonio music fans for their passion and dedication to continuing the long-standing traditions of mariachi.

Mariachi Internacional has played for dignitaries and presidents such as George W. Bush, Jimmy Carter, Richard Nixon, and former Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. They are particularly proud to have been the band that welcomed Pope John Paul II to San Antonio in September 1987. Locals have dubbed these musicians the "Official Mariachi Band of San Antonio."

These seven musicians are a true San Antonio mariachi staple. They are professional, their musicianship is tight, and their commitment to the art is deep. Their music is beautiful, and they create a compelling musical experience for their audience each time they play.

If you want to catch them while in town, visit Pico de Gallo, a festive San Antonio hot spot near Market Square that serves up a mean menudo, where the band plays every night of the week.

Azteca de America

One of the hottest and youngest (everyone in the band ranges in age from 21-34) new mariachi bands on the San Antonio music scene, Mariachi Azteca de America, is a traditional 11-piece ensemble that was formed in 2006 by local composer Gumecindo "Gino" Rivera. Rivera is a third generation mariachi musician who is a singer, arranger, composer, and violinist. His grandfather Pedro Moreno Sr. and his stepfather Pete Moreno Jr. were local mariachi legends.

Mariachi Azteca de America displays the more traditional sounds of mariachi, including a repertoire of songs by greats such as Jose Alfredo Jimenez, Javier Solis, and Vicente Fernandez, while also performing original compositions written by Rivera for the group. It is unusual to see mariachi bands create music, because they generally cover popular songs.

Azteca de America won the Annual Mariachi Invitation at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo two years in a row, in 2015 and 2016.

Keep an eye out for these young guys as they continue to gain international recognition. Follow Azteca de America on Twitter (@MAzteca2006) for performances and information.

Forget any preconceived notions of mariachi that involve paunchy restaurant musicians playing sad love songs, because it doesn't represent the reality of the music in San Antonio. The next generation of mariachi greats have stepped up and they are breathing new life into the melodies and the presentation of their sacred music.

Young musicians all over San Antonio are rallying around their roots and their traditions. They are proud of the extensive role that mariachi music has played in the rich history of the city, and they will continue to represent it. ●

“In San Antonio, mariachi music is a way of life. It is a vital party of our cultural identity.”

– Rene Benavidez

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CHEF JOHNNY HERNANDEZ

The San Antonio Chef Is Always Cooking Up New Ideas

By ROCÍO GUENTHER

Chef Johnny Hernandez has a busy schedule, and it doesn't seem to be clearing up any time soon. I'm meeting with San Antonio's Mexican food bigwig at the place where his culinary career first took flight: his catering business, True Flavors. Hernandez comes out of the kitchen and greets me with a plate in hand. "This is the rest of my breakfast," he says.

The time is 6 p.m. on a Tuesday evening, and he is not joking.

"I haven't been in the kitchen today. I had a two-hour board meeting this morning, then another meeting, and another meeting," Hernandez points out. "I was in my office for only 15 minutes to catch up on things."

Despite his sturdy physique, he confesses that all he managed to eat this morning was a sausage. Meetings are now part of his weekly schedule, and with a culinary empire growing by the minute, Hernandez has dedicated more time to take on a businessman's responsibilities.

Hernandez's catering business began in 1994 in a small kitchen in San Antonio, and his love of

(PHOTO courtesy of JULIANA IBARRA)

regional and authentic Mexican food pushed him to open several restaurants, a move that has proved to be more successful than he could've ever imagined.

La Gloria, his first restaurant, opened in 2010 at the Pearl Brewery. After La Gloria's success came The Frutería-Botanero by Chef Johnny Hernandez in Southtown in 2012, and later El Machito, located on Jones Maltsberger by the Alamo Quarry Market in 2014. Today, La Gloria restaurants can also be found on I-10 near the Dominion, at the San Antonio International Airport, and most recently at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

Since his foray into restaurants, Hernandez has been featured as a guest judge on "Top Chef," and his recipes have been included in such publications as *Bon Appétit* and *Wine Enthusiast*. How he manages to oversee all his businesses and retain the quality and service he is so respected for remains a mystery to many.

After our initial greeting, Hernandez guides me to an office in the front and then goes back to the kitchen to put away his plate of food. Still wearing his apron and a double-breasted chef's jacket over gray slacks, he returns to wipe the office table with

a cloth. "Sorry, we had a tasting in here today," he says.

After wiping down the table, Hernandez finally sits down. He then nonchalantly takes out a golden bottle of Tequila Herradura and two shot glasses in the shape of small goblets. The shot glasses are hand blown, quintessentially Mexican. He unwraps the plastic from the crystal tequila bottle and pushes strands of his longish black hair behind his ear.

"I'm gonna have a little tequila. I brought an extra glass—would you like a little bit?" he asks. I accept his offer and we clink the glasses with a quick, "Salud." We bond over tequila and a shared Mexican heritage. As we laugh and share memories of Mexico, speaking to Hernandez feels like reconnecting with an old friend.

The bottle, a unique tequila reposado, was especially crafted for his flagship restaurant, La Gloria. Hernandez says this is the first time he is trying it in its bottled form.

Hernandez, now in his late forties, has become a connoisseur of many things, but you can tell tequila is one of his biggest passions; his delectable margaritas at La Gloria are proof. Hernandez explains how his tequila hails from a special program that Tequila Herradura created for restaurateurs. Hernandez took his management team to a hacienda where they learned about the process of tequila.

"I bought a whole barrel; I have different kinds for all my restaurants," Hernandez says. Depending on the

drinking program of each of his restaurants, he picks and chooses from an array of tequila profiles. He explains that it's like a single vineyard wine or a single barrel scotch. He gets to select a barrel before the master distiller blends everything and prepares to bottle it for distribution.

Hernandez has always had a love for the culinary world. His earliest food memory is that of a flour tortilla.

"I used to sleep under my father's cutting board when I was a little boy," Hernandez says with a smile. "The sounds of the kitchen, the hustle and bustle, the aroma—they were always there."

He moves his hands throughout the conversation as he speaks, expressing his deeply rooted passion for the atmosphere of a kitchen. Recognizing food as a respectable career path, his father sparked Hernandez's desire to pursue an education in the culinary arts.

"He wanted me to learn French cooking," Hernandez explains. "My father told me, 'I don't want you to cook

tacos.'" Hernandez lets out a laugh at the irony of his father's wish.

Following a degree in 1989 from the Culinary Institute of America in New York, where he learned techniques based on

French cuisine, Hernandez went on to work in Las Vegas and California. After graduation, while doing volunteer work as a chef in the culturally rich city of Aguascalientes located in north central Mexico, Hernandez discovered street foods and dishes he had never encountered before.

Curious, Hernandez traveled all over Mexico for the next few years, and realized he didn't truly understand the breadth of Mexican food. He discovered the regional complexities and diversity of dishes throughout the country, which consequently opened his eyes to the value of pursuing authentic Mexican cuisine.

He eventually returned to San Antonio to cook all kinds of dishes in his catering business that started in 1994. A sense of entrepreneurial spirit and a yearning for home helped make the return an easier one. In the end, his career came full circle, back to his roots, back to Mexican food.

"Not in a million years did I think I would be cooking Mexican food," Hernandez says, laughing and taking another sip of tequila.

Unfortunately, a lot of people in the United States, including Texans, still don't know the difference between Tex-Mex and authentic Mexican cuisine, which varies by region.

"There's certainly a better understanding of it, but it's still very limited," Hernandez shares. "It's a cuisine

“You never stop learning, your recovery rate just gets better.”

— Johnny Hernandez

that's not yet understood completely."

Hernandez explains that Mexico's cuisine is preserved and very traditional. It hasn't gone through an evolution, like other more famous cuisines, such as the French.

"It's only recently that chefs from Mexico have elevated the cuisine, spurred its evolution, and that it's being appreciated more," Hernandez observes.

The United States still has a long way to go. Hernandez believes there are a lot of fusions that complicate things for the consumer, and the majority of the country doesn't understand the difference in regionalities and styles of food. But this setback is exactly what has ensured Hernandez's success.

Hernandez and his team have set out to do things in the most authentic way possible, and they have stood out for this reason. Nowadays, Hernandez points out, the consumer is being educated at a very rapid rate.

"We're successful and popular because people seek out authentic cuisine," he says.

Each of his restaurants has a different concept, such as The Frutería's more modern twist and ambiance compared to La Gloria. But in essence, all of his restaurants focus on providing authentic Mexican drinks and dishes. Hernandez leans back in his chair comfortably, thinking about everything that led to his success.

Hernandez's return to San Antonio has been key in elevating the city as a cultural and culinary destination. In 2013 Hernandez won the Con Corazón Award, given

Hernandez's flagship restaurant, La Gloria, is located at the Pearl Brewery complex. (PHOTO by XAVIER GARZA)



by the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau. Each year, the city awards a person or organization that has helped make San Antonio a better place to live and visit by bringing long-term and prestigious exposure to the city. Hernandez was praised for his hard work and determination, his efforts in the community, and the pride and passion he brings to businesses.

A national traveler, Hernandez has helped spread the word about San Antonio and has been a great proponent of the tourism industry. City leaders believe his commitment to quality and tastefulness enhances the city. Always on the go and busy attending meetings, Hernandez still manages to lend his time and advise others on their culinary ventures.

Hernandez wants to share authentic Mexican food with others, to educate individuals about what he once was oblivious to. Hernandez explained that not only is Mexican cuisine misunderstood in the U.S., but it is also misconstrued all over the world.

"I have a big project in London that I'm working on right now," he says. He's a consultant for a 40-chain restaurant concept in the U.K., and is advising them on how to rebrand themselves and be more successful.

Even though nothing is set in stone, he tells me he is flirting with the idea of a possible restaurant concept in London—perhaps his very own La Gloria will pop up over there someday. "We'll see what happens, it's exciting," Hernandez said. "There's definitely a big interest in learning about Mexican food and other cultures in the U.K."

Working in the food industry for more than 21 years, running restaurants, big kitchens, and expanding into larger operations has given Hernandez a strong foundation of experience. He says he's had challenges along the way and that success hasn't come without sacrifice, time, and struggle.

"You never stop learning, your recovery rate just gets better," Hernandez adds.

Recently, private equity groups have approached Hernandez about acquiring his brand and expanding it at a rapid pace. These groups capitalize on businesses that are poised for growth, buy the brand, and open dozens if not hundreds of them.

Should he expand and acquire more, or should he keep it small and remain involved in the day-to-day operations? Do these groups have the foundation to execute growth, but keep the quality intact?

These are some of the questions Hernandez ponders every night. "Even if we go down that path, how do we ensure success?" he asks himself. He sighs. "There's



"La Gloria" translates to heaven or paradise. This mural outside of Hernandez's La Gloria reads, "You don't have to die to go to heaven." (PHOTO by XAVIER GARZA)

more opportunity than there is time."

It's clear to Hernandez that there's a world of difference between being a chef and being a business owner. He believes it's all about strong partnerships as well as the importance of finding someone who understands the concept and the level of quality and service to maintain brand quality and standards.

But by now, Hernandez is not afraid to try anything new and has become comfortable with risk and stress. Today he's more involved in the oversight of his restaurants, rather than the day-to-day operations inside them. Last weekend he was in Los Angeles filming a cooking show, and he has another one coming up next week, before flying off to London again.

"My life is pretty crazy," Hernandez says. In the midst of the craziness, he stays afloat knowing he has an awesome team.

"You always lead by example, but as you grow, at some point you have to empower your leadership team," Hernandez reflects. "They are the ones who embody your culture and your philosophy, but that takes time, understanding and channeling talent, and seeing someone's potential."

He touches on London again. "The London project is really exciting, I'm digging it," he says. "I see the need for an authentic Mexican food concept there."

He tells me of his travels there, where he ate, and his research abroad. We end by talking about the Indian food community in London and how it's grown in recent years.

Suddenly, he raises his voice and opens his palm. "Why not try an Indian-Mexican fusion concept over there?" he exclaims.

The new ideas don't stop for Hernandez, and his face lights up like a little kid every time he comes up with something new.

Hernandez stands up and shows me some framed images on the wall as we end our conversation. He points to news clippings of when La Gloria first opened, diplomas, awards, and more. But he hesitates the longest at a single photograph on the wall.

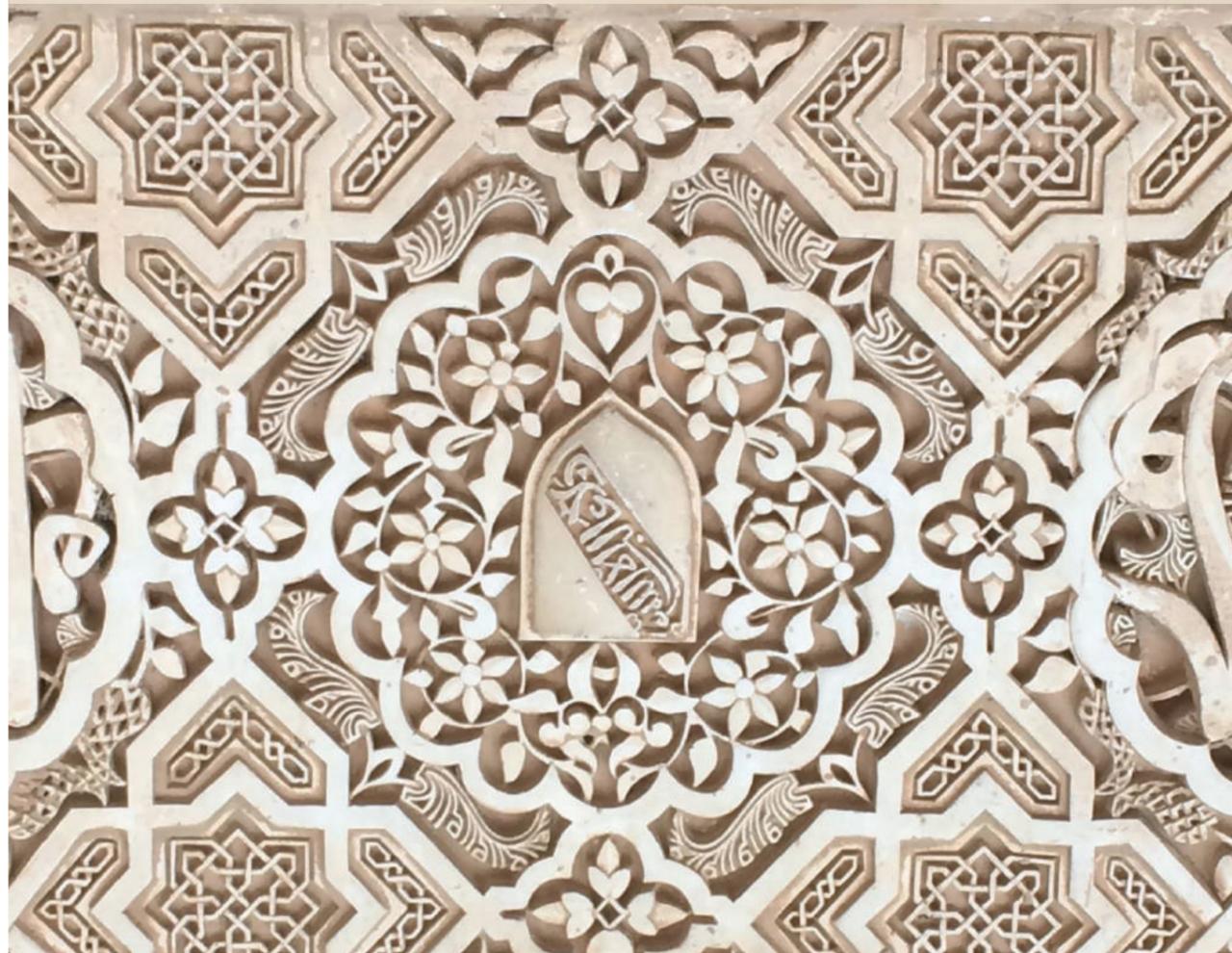
"There's my father, that was his catering business, and there I am," he says, pointing to a sepia-colored photograph. A young wide-eyed boy with messy black hair stands in line next to a group of individuals in a small room with a long table. Back then, Hernandez was already in on the kitchen operations.

Today, his eyes are still wide and alive like that little boy wearing an apron in his father's kitchen. But now with a passion for new ideas. He lingers on the picture a while longer, and says, "It's been an interesting few years." ●

Rocío Guenther graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with a major in English and a minor in Political Science. A native Spanish speaker from Guadalajara, Mexico, Guenther is equally fluent in writing and speaking English. She is passionate about good food and good travel, and writes for Edible San Antonio and the Rivard Report.

GRANADA

An Emblem of Spain's Ancient Moorish Heritage



By **SOPIA VILLARREAL**

(PHOTO by SOPIA VILLARREAL)

Steam floats around our bodies as we sit in shallow pools of heated water that reflect the dark blue mosaic tiles on the walls and ceilings. We're waiting for our turns with the masseuse. We're also trying to pretend that sitting in our bathing suits on the first study abroad excursion, with people we've just met, isn't awkward.

Conversation begins only when we're offered tea by the hostess,

and we all agree on how deliciously sweet and pungent it is. The walls surrounding us look like we should be in Morocco, with jewel-toned lanterns, bronze accents, and flimsy curtains separating the pools—but we're actually north of the Mediterranean Sea.

We're soaking in the Arabic baths of Granada, an ancient city with a population of 237,540 located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains

in the southern Andalusian region of Spain.

The hot tea breaks the ice and we speak freely as we remember the places we've just visited. Before we took shelter from the gray Spanish winter in these warm waters, we had a full day's worth of activities.

Earlier, our group trekked up hills and through a massive garden to get to the Alhambra, the awe-inspiring castle that preserves the

Moorish imprint on Spain's history.

Then, we inhaled southern Spanish food at a restaurant perched on a cliff overlooking the city. When we felt like we could walk again, we explored the markets wedged between narrow stone streets and ended the day here, resting our bones in the Arabic baths.

The Arabic influence comes from when Moors from North Africa invaded Spain in 711 and ruled until 1492; the culture is still present within Granada. Here, Moorish remnants mix with modern Spanish society and show up in different ways—some more subtle than others.

For example, the dialect, typically referred to as Andalusian Spanish, is unique to this region in southern Spain. Similar to Castilian Spanish, which is spoken throughout Spain, the Andalusian accent is characterized by its mild lisp pronunciations on "z" and "c" sounds.

However, in Andalusian Spanish, some sounds come from the back of the throat, making it similar to Arabic. This, along with other reminders of the Moorish empire—such as the architecture and the mixed culture—makes Granada an enticing place to visit.

The Alhambra

Granada is famous for the Alhambra, the vast Moorish fortress that once stood as a very important part of the Muslim empire. The first activity on our list for the day, the four-hour guided tour of the fortress, does not even cover half of the building.

After climbing a zigzagging staircase and passing through a wall made of shrubbery that surrounds the building like a fence, we enter a side door. This turns into hallways and rooms where Arabic writing is carved in the walls from top to bottom, punctuated with lines and sections of patterned tile in white, saffron, and navy.



Granada is famous for the Alhambra, the vast Moorish fortress that once stood as an important part of the Muslim empire. (PHOTO by PABLO VALERIO from PIXABAY)

According to one of our two tour guides, the writings are so old that modern Arabic scholars cannot translate most of it, which leaves the inner history of the palace shrouded in mystery.

The other guide chimes in and explains that researchers have theorized that the writings are similar to a religious text that was meant to keep the last Muslim ruler close to Allah, through constant reminders and visible prayers in his home.

While this translation is up for scholarly debate, it's no secret what happened on the outside of Alhambra. After centuries of rule in Spain, the Muslims were defeated when Granada fell and the Catholic monarchs killed or expunged anyone unwilling to convert.

Guide Number One then shares that some mosques in other Spanish cities were even converted to Catholic churches after the Spanish monarchs took power again, but the Alhambra and its war history is well preserved. It is evident in the ornate, symmetrical detail on every wall and in the sloping arches with pointed tops and dome-shaped

ceilings. This is a fortress far from the gothic steeple churches in other parts of Europe.

Lunch With a View

Even with sore legs and necks cramped from staring at the ceilings, we don't want to leave the fortress as the tour draws to a close. But our stomachs beg for food. When we're reminded that food is free and just a 15-minute walk away, our group suddenly becomes ravenous. We impatiently cross the slippery streets as it begins to drizzle.

Guide Number Two comments that winter in Spain is supposed to be one of the more bearable seasons compared to other parts of Europe; we just happened to be touring on an unforgiving, rainy day.

A professor in our group warns that if we don't stick to the sides of the roads, we could be run over. I think he's exaggerating until we file into a narrow alley and someone yelps as a car nearly swipes his side.

The streets don't look wide enough to accommodate our group of 35 college students and five faculty members, much less the small cars that zip by. We've learned



Beautiful white and blue tiles adorn the Alhambra with crisp geometric elegance. (PHOTO by SOFIA VILLARREAL)

that the pedestrian right of way does not exist here, and we are frequently honked at before we reach our destination.

Lunch is at Mirador de Morayma, a restaurant located at the top of a different hill between the fortress and downtown Granada. The doors of the restaurant open up to a terrace that looks as if it's hanging over a cliff, which only adds to the gorgeous view of the Spanish countryside.

The meal starts with a small, chilled cup of what looks to be expired milk, judging by the smell and the small yellow pieces floating in it. It also smells like garlic.

After a tentative taste, I determine that it's garlic something. Finally someone asks, and the waiter informs us that it is in fact *sopa de ajo*, chilled garlic soup. Suddenly, our tiny appetizer transitions into two rounds of several heaping family-sized platters placed before us.

One plate has cod fish, tomatoes, and olives. Another has Spanish tortillas—a dish that resembles an omelet rather than the well-known Mexican flatbread—with pieces of sausage and potato mixed in.

On the other side of the table are plates with a variety of cured ham and Manchego cheese; farther down are croquettes filled with

more Spanish ham and cheese, as well as others stuffed with a gooey, cheesy potato puree.

Most of us are almost full by the time these plates are removed and we get new individual plates of blood sausage, rice, and asparagus drizzled with a light cheese sauce.

This is a prepaid meal for our excursion, and because we have no menu placed in front

of us, everyone is learning what we're eating as we taste it. Two students in my program, sitting to the right of me, opt for the vegetarian plates and are presented with small, sad platters of salad and fruit.

I take a mental note that the vegetarian lifestyle clearly isn't popular here. Thankfully, slow and casual dining is customary in Spain, allowing us to absorb and deal with the food coma that has settled on us before we head out to explore the city on our own, free of tour guides and faculty.

Shopping in Granada

Free time means walking around the Albaicin district and heading back to the markets that we passed earlier on our way to lunch. We walk down another alley that connects to those awfully narrow streets. And again, the streets resemble what I imagine a Moroccan market looks like. All the store entrances are bursting with colors—it is a bright and welcome contrast to the gray weather.

As we walk past the first couple of stores, vendors shout out prices and lists of goods as they approach us. Inside one crowded store are plates, Moroccan lamps, silk scarves, pashmina shawls, leather bags, and

rows upon rows of gold and jewel colored tea glasses that look to be just a bit bigger than double shot glasses.

We keep comparing prices to be sure that we aren't going to be ripped off, but most of the stores we walk into have variations of the same items with the same price. I practice some haggling and attempt a Castilian accent laid over my Mexican Spanish accent, hoping my dark coat and jeans separate me from the North Face-clad entourage that is my study abroad student group.

But I fail miserably.

This vendor won't budge, and my pride refuses to leave empty handed, so I concede to buying a silk scarf for 35 euros (approximately \$39), an inexpensive but humbling reminder of my foreignness.

My previous experiences in central and eastern Spain show that Granada stands alone in culture and what it has to offer. Barcelona has the beach bragging rights, and the capital of Madrid can't be overlooked. Party people in the know are usually all about Cadiz or Ibiza, but most people forget the gem that is Granada.

Without this excursion, I probably never would have ventured to southern Spain. Within its narrow streets, markets, and hilly landscape, Granada offered a Moorish microcosm of culture underneath the country's Spanish roots.

I'm lightly tapped on the shoulder and brought back to where I am right now, sitting in the Arabic baths. Now, it's my turn for 20 minutes of surreal massage bliss. ●

Sofia Villarreal graduated in May 2016 with a Communication major. A native of Laredo, Texas, she studied abroad in Spain during the spring of 2015. She is still swooning from the Spanish summer wine she drank and the flamenco dancing lessons she took. She plans to pursue a career in public relations.



Farm-to-Table

6 Reasons Why It Matters

By **ROCÍO GUENTHER**

I've never been a big fan of tomatoes. I always thought that the tomato's outer skin felt a little like plastic at times when I bit into it and I never really sensed a deep flavor. Coupled with a few other ingredients, I have always been able to tolerate tomatoes, but on their own they never excited me.

But the past few months I've been going to farm-to-table restaurants in San Antonio and they have revolutionized my taste buds. I've been enjoying many meals with ingredients locally grown in Texas, but my big revelation came with a simple tomato bought at the Pearl Farmers Market.

When I noticed the flavor difference, I began to ask a lot of questions. After befriending a few of the farmers there, I learned that farm-to-table restaurants and farmers markets go hand in hand,

that local supporting local is the most sustainable way to help our environment and our bodies.

My first time buying a tomato at a farmers market made me realize how tasty real tomatoes can actually be. Imagine biting into a juicy tomato. It feels softer than before and as it's chewed, the taste intensifies. This time it's not just watery mush, but has a real depth of flavor. There's a mix of tangy and sweet tones, and on its own it's incredibly delicious. The red skin has never looked brighter. I remember thinking, *Wow! This is the best tomato I've tasted.* And then I finally realized: *All tomatoes should taste like this.*

Taste tells a story and when it shines through, it proves that local, sustainable, and honest farming is the way to go. More than ever before, Americans are asking questions

about their food and wondering where it comes from.

According to research from the Culinary Institute of America in conjunction with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the farm-to-table movement began to gain traction in the early 2000s, when restaurants developed deeper connections with local farmers around different communities.

Today, the local farm movement's growing influence is clear. It spurred the birth of the American Farm to Table Restaurant Guide, which includes countless restaurants in 35 states. In addition, local foods were among the National Restaurant Association's top 10 trends for 2015, specifically meats and seafood sourced at a local level.

So what is farm-to-table? By simple definition, farm-to-table restaurants support and embody

the concept of buying locally and responsibly; its chefs even encourage their diners to practice their restaurant model at home, by attending a farmers market or buying locally. Food associated with the farm-to-table movement comes from specific farms direct to the consumer, often without going through a store, market, or distributor along the way. Chefs place an emphasis on the community effort and local economic benefits that occur from this approach.

San Antonio has several key chefs and farmers from the surrounding area who are working together to encourage the local food movement. They want to educate consumers on the benefits of fresher food.

Farm-to-table restaurants are setting the stage for large community initiatives that give back to the region as a whole. For chefs who own these types of restaurants, the point is to make a meal that communicates a larger message to the consumer.

You might wonder, why should we care so much about what's behind the curtain of a restaurant kitchen? Do local ingredients really make a difference?

Texas farmers from Seguin, Fredericksburg, and beyond shared some thoughts with me, and many well-known farm-to-table chefs in San Antonio offered their expertise. Here are six reasons why the farm-to-table movement makes sense and why more restaurants should adopt its practices:

1. It's Sustainable

According to Chef Elizabeth Johnson, owner of Pharm Table, located at 106 Auditorium Circle, it all boils down to the definition of sustainability. Environmentally speaking, sustainability is the quality of not being harmful to one's environment or depleting natural

Defining GMOs

GMOs stand for genetically modified organisms. It occurs when plants or animals have added genes from one species into the DNA sequence of another, which change the characteristics of the food. Examples include increased retention of water or faster growth on less feed. Although it's a common practice, there is not sufficient evidence that it is safe for our environment, the individuals who work the land, or consumers.

The benefit of the production of GMOs is that scientists can grow multiple generations of crops in a lab in one year. This speeds up the process, because scientists don't have to wait for the seasons to change and conditions are perfect in a contained environment. Another benefit is that plants can be combined in ways that wouldn't occur in the natural world. These plants, specifically corn, are pesticide proof.

However, a drawback to GMOs is that they may have adverse side effects that can be harmful on the body's organs. The World Health Organization has identified a main ingredient within a commonly used pesticide sprayed on GMO crops as a possible carcinogen.

resources. The goal is to support a long term ecological balance.

According to Johnson, the definition of sustainability must include three important pillars.

"In order for something to be considered sustainable, it must be economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable," says Johnson. Those three pillars explain why eating local matters, because practicing farm-to table is environmental, it's social, and it's economic.

Chef Cat New says she opened her farm-to-table restaurant, The Clean Plate, at 1022 N. Main Ave., because she didn't want to be a part of the industrial food system. "It's disrespectful to the land," says New, whose restaurant was among the first in the city to promote better practices. "It places the burden on cheap labor and the environment. The destructive nature of the land and the animals is completely wrong," she says.

Those involved in the farm-to-table movement believe large-scale methods run by corporations are destructive to the land and buying products far from home steals from the local economy. In addition, the food system treats animals like commodities and doesn't give them

the respect they deserve.

"If part of the chain of eating involves us burning fossil fuels and then generating the fossil fuels, it's just not sustainable," Johnson observes. According to Johnson, we must think about how unsustainable it is to live off produce that is grown and flown from other parts of the globe and have that be part of our daily existence.

"It just doesn't make sense from a food miles perspective or from a brass tacks economic perspective. Not to mention the greenhouse gases emitted every time a plane goes up in the sky," she explains. Decreasing the amount of fuel used to transport food helps businesses in the surrounding area, the economy, and the overall welfare of the community.

Although Johnson's observations are generally true, it is important to note that emissions stemming from local foods being brought to market are not lower by default. Depending on many factors, they may be higher or lower than food shipped at a global and national scale.

Researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health say the key to emission discharge lies in the mode of transportation being used to transport the food and the quantity of the shipment.

"For example, a shipment of agricultural products across the nation in railcars emits fewer emissions than products driven 150 miles in a small truck," the researchers say.

Another finicky aspect is the use of fertilizers. The Harvard Chan School experts point out that if a certain product is not thriving within the local climate, local farmers might increase their use of fertilizers, which are intensive chemical inputs that increase environmental damage.

Sustainability is more complex than it seems, but trying to be sustainable in a conscious way is a step in the right direction.

2. It's Fresher

Farm-to-table food just tastes better. A shorter time from the farm to the table means fresher food.

"This stuff we picked yesterday or the day before, it's as fresh as you can get it," says farmer Steven Kubena of Kubena Farms in Seguin, who attends many farmers markets in the San Antonio area to display his produce. Johnson echoes that claim and adds that the taste of the food is unbelievably different because of this.

Most food that travels long distances is harvested before it is ripe to make sure that it survives the journey. For local farmers, the shorter distance means they can pick food when it's at its best and will taste the best.

"If you go to the grocery store, a lot of the produce is at least a month old," claims Bradley Ottmers of Oma and Opa's Farm in Fredericksburg. In addition to selling in farmers markets all over San Antonio, Ottmers also sells food to many restaurants in Austin, such as Oddly Swine, Jack Allen's Kitchen, and Eastside Pies.

"The longer it's off the vine, the fewer nutrients you receive. The fresher your food is, the better you



Chef Cat New cooks a tasty dish in the kitchen of her restaurant, The Clean Plate. (PHOTO by MEGAN DONOVAN)

will feel," Ottmers says.

"Big corporations pump ethylene gas into the food, which is not natural. It's synthetic," New adds. "That's why those tomatoes suck and taste like watery slush, because it's artificially ripened. They also coat the tomato with wax to make it look shiny, and so many other things that just aren't right."

When you buy fresh produce at a local level, such as tomatoes, a tomato tastes like a tomato without all of these damaging processes.

3. It's Cheaper

There's a common misconception that buying locally costs more money, but Johnson says that's not the case, especially if we think of it on a larger scale.

"It's cheaper for us to start gardening in our front yards, for us to transform our grass. Why not create a garden? An urban landscape where we are not dependent on foreign countries and fossil fuels to get our food," she reflects.

Fewer middlemen involved in

your food means fewer transportation costs and less handling of the product. Long distance food travel involves more packaging and refrigeration as well as more waste and pollution.

New says that those farmers who have contracts with big corporations need subsidies to grow food affordably. In the long run, they end up going into debt and have to take out loans to run some of the equipment. Because of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), tons and tons of pesticides are dumped into the environment.

"It's a huge backwards process," says New.

According to New, many farmers in India are tricked into creating partnerships with big corporations and the land gets so damaged over time that the product doesn't act as the corporations promised, so the farmers end up losing everything.

4. It's Better

Buying locally is just better for you. People are beginning to care

more about food quality than ever before and the trend is growing in San Antonio too. Kubena thinks it's mostly due to health reasons.

"People want to feel good and just be better," Kubena says. "If you know what you're putting in your body, it's fewer things you have to watch out for."

Cost may be a factor for some consumers. Why is it cheaper to buy a burger from McDonald's than it is to buy ingredients to make a salad? "It's because of all these crazy subsidies and the corporatization of food," New explains.

Companies promoting unhealthy food use the over-population argument to continue their questionable practices.

"Monsanto and all these giant corporations say they need to do this to feed the third world countries and the world population in greater quantities, but it's just not true. People are buying into a myth. It's an easy answer, an easy way out," New stresses.

According to local farmers and champions of farm-to-table, produce that is grown without synthetic chemicals, fertilizers, or GMOs also help the soil and our water supply. New says fields that use GMOs affect the soil profoundly. Local farming practices that do without those dangerous processes are helping the landscape remain natural and unpolluted.

Researchers at the Culinary Institute of America echo New's thoughts, although additional research is always helpful when it comes to farming practices, as many factors come into play. According to the Culinary Institute of America's researchers, it is true that the use of synthetic chemicals contaminate water and reduce biodiversity, but the level of degradation comes down to the management practices that take place on the farm itself.

"Understanding the environmental consequences of production by farms selling to local and regional markets, in comparison to traditionally marketed food, would require studying their use of synthetic and non-synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, as well as other practices such as crop rotation and tillage," Culinary Institute of America researchers say.

Consumers usually assume farms that are smaller and closer to home will have a lower environmental impact, but this has not been scientifically proven. The way a farm produces, markets, and transports the food is what changes the ball game. Environmental degradation depends on all these factors, and if they are done right, then the environment does benefit, but additional research is needed.

Johnson highlights the careful farming practices that must be utilized in order for food to be

produced properly so chemicals and other harmful pesticides don't have to be added to the picture. Straying away from commonplace practices that most big corporations are using is key to creating a more high quality product.

"Think of what it will do to your health. You're buying yourself life and health insurance," Johnson says.

Gus Bard, chef and owner of Sweet Yams at 218 N. Cherry St., has a small garden behind his restaurant. He believes our mentality as consumers needs to change.

"We've been conditioned to cheapen the primary process in our lives," Bard explains. "I'd rather have a cheaper car, cheaper clothes, cheaper house, and a cheaper pair of shoes but an awesome refrigerator full of food."

Bard says food is the investment in our lives that matters the most and it should be our most important concern when we decide how to spend our money.

5. It's Seasonal

Things taste right when they are grown with respect to the seasons. Besides that, working with seasonal produce encourages chefs to invent new menus to fit the available produce. It becomes a creative process.

For chefs like Elizabeth Johnson, Cat New, and Gus Bard, the local produce in their restaurants is an intriguing supply of ingredients



Farmers markets operate at several locations in San Antonio, including the Pearl Brewery. (PHOTO by MEGAN DONOVAN)

every season. New explains that growing locally involves working with the seasons and that this is beneficial for the land itself.

"A variety of crops, over time, create healthy soil," says New. "It balances the soil when you vary what you grow in the ground; you don't destroy it."

Healthy soil creates nutrients in food, and this in turn, leads to healthy people. It's a win-win situation on every level.

Johnson also stresses that seasonal foods make sense for our diets. "When you live a lifestyle which is around a season, your body starts acclimating to the foods that are in that season and you start having more energy and feeling and looking better," she says.

In the past, before food could easily travel all over the world, people had seasonal diets. Why not go back to something that makes sense? Nature has a cycle for a reason.

6. It's Ethical

Farm-to-table restaurants inform consumers and inspire them through their dishes. It encourages the broader farm-to-table movement

and gets people out to farmers markets, promoting social interaction.

"Buying locally is healthy for the farmer because they aren't exposing themselves to these horrible carcinogenic compounds," says New.

She adds that farmers are rewarded more for their work, they get better prices for their products, and they help keep the money in the community. When consumers decide to buy local, fresh produce, they support the local economy and provide jobs in the area.

Bard points out that people are moving toward a need to eat better, but the majority of restaurants are trying to make money. "Ethics and profit are kind of oxymorons, but it's a balance. People have to learn that when you're doing something ethical, don't look to make as much profit," he says. "If you give love, expect to have a little less coming back."

Nowadays, everyone wants instant gratification instantaneously. "There's enough food to feed the world, but there's not enough food to feed the greedy," observes New. "We don't have to eat meat three times a day. There's plenty of other food, plenty of grains, plenty of

vegetables that people should be using more often."

New adds, "There's not enough room to accommodate the world with a westernized diet at all times. It's just not possible or sustainable for that matter."

Food production is a process involving many middlemen, different farming expectations, and harvesting nuances. What local food brings to the table in comparison to big corporations is a careful oversight of production in specific communities, with the benefit of the farmer and the consumer in mind.

This "labor of love" has the potential to increase health benefits, improve access to fresher food, create a food conversation about agriculture policies, and sustain local businesses in the area.

Farm-to-table is more than just a movement; it's a way of life. ●

Rocío Guenther graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with a major in English and a minor in Political Science. A native of Guadalajara, Mexico, she plans to pursue a career in journalism or magazine writing. She loves to travel and is an avid foodie.



Fresh produce is available at The Trinity Market on the Trinity University campus. (PHOTO from THE TRINITY MARKET'S FACEBOOK)

COFFEE



The Caffeinated Craze in the Alamo City

By JESSICA LUHRMAN

(PHOTO by ZACHARY BROCK)

Coffee culture is on the brink of explosion in San Antonio. Over the past three years, a myriad of new coffee spots have popped up around town. From White Elephant Coffee Company in Midtown, to Indy Coffee Club on the northwest side—and many other coffee spots in between—there are a variety of

new shops, and even coffee trucks, to choose from.

Apart from providing a caffeine fix, neighborhood coffee spots offer a unique purpose for their visitors. Some serve as quintessential corners for community gatherings, while others are ideal for study dates or friendly meet-ups. Each coffee spot has a defined backstory, and that

little something extra that makes them distinct.

With so many new independently owned local coffee shops opening their doors, we asked a few local coffee experts what differentiates one spot from the next. Follow along as we spill the beans on the newest local coffee spots in the Alamo City and assess their ambiance along the way.

CommonWealth Coffeehouse

The Backstory

After six months of pushing through city zoning ordinances, CommonWealth owners Jorge Herrero and Jose Campos overcame bureaucracy and established their coffee shop in a converted cottage in the Mahncke Park area.

Campos recognized potential in the house tucked away in a suburban setting and imagined a Parisian influenced coffee shop offering artisan espresso beverages.

The owners made their dream a reality after adding a third-generation French chef to their staff, and welcomed customers for the first time in February 2015.

The Ambiance

For newcomers, CommonWealth offers a sanctuary similar to home. The cozy couches, window seats, and white tiled bar are the perfect backdrop for sipping espresso while munching on authentic French pastries.

The coffee beans are sourced from Cuvée Coffee in Austin and Ferra Coffee Roaster in San Antonio.

In the back patio area, a chicken coop and garden produce goods used in the kitchen, according to Janel Jasso, a manager at Commonwealth.

“We have three chickens whose eggs we use for our breakfast tacos. All of the herbs in the garden are used in meals,” explained Jasso.

Seek out Commonwealth for a French-style experience without crossing the Texas state line.

*CommonWealth Coffeehouse & Bakery
118 Davis Court, 210-560-2955
commonwealthcoffeehouse.com*

The Fairview Coffee Bar

The Backstory

Sandwiched between Pizza Classics and SA Pops, Fairview joined the Midtown coffee scene after opening in August 2015.

Owners John Sanchez and Whitney Collins concentrate on providing high quality coffee by roasting their own imported beans.



Mark Vollmer Jr., owner of Theory Coffee Company, serves customers in his mobile coffee shop located at the intersection of Nacogdoches Road and Loop 410. (PHOTO by NICOLE BOYLE)

In addition to their beverages, pastry chef Travis Bligen turns out waffles, buttermilk biscuits, and griddle toasted house bread to satisfy early morning cravings.

Sanchez was no stranger to working in a coffee environment before Fairview; he has been a barista for Local Coffee and Nordstrom EBar, as well as the owner of a coffee shop in Houston.

The Ambiance

Sanchez and Collins took care to create a coffee shop equipped with retro flair. The 1960s decade is alive at Fairview, with throwback features including their mint-green Slayer Espresso machine and retro dishware behind the bar.

Fairview offers honey as a flavor for their beverages, and both their caramel and honey lattes are especially popular.

With sparse indoor seating, limited to a community-style table and a few bar stools, it's best to take your coffee on the patio area or to-go.

*The Fairview Coffee Bar & Grub
3428 N. Saint Mary's St., 210-731-8009
thefairviewsatx.com*

Theory Coffee Company

The Backstory

At the intersection of Nacogdoches Road and Loop 410 stands a lone trailer with black and burnt-orange letters exclaiming “Theory Coffee.”

The mobile outpost is a haven for morning commuters making pit stops to get a sip of what owner Mark Vollmer Jr. is brewing.

Vollmer, who previously was a barista at Olmos Perk and Local Coffee, has a clear passion for espresso. This has translated well to his coffee truck that opened in 2015.

Theory sources their beans from Wild Gift Coffee, a Round Rock, Texas based supplier for their coffee beverages.

The Ambiance

When visiting, peek into the windows of the mobile outpost, and you might see Vollmer weighing ground espresso on his portable scale for every order.

Vollmer, who has a noticeable passion for coffee, can often be heard chatting with customers about his espresso method.

The atmosphere is laid back and welcoming to anyone searching for a caffeinated beverage to-go.

Theory Coffee Company
2347 Nacogdoches Road, 512-507-3025
theorycoffeeco.com

Joseph E. Coffee

The Backstory

Two brothers, Isaac and Adrian Cummings, had one bright idea based on their shared passion for coffee. “We needed something to separate ourselves from all the other coffee shops around the city. Isaac had heard of cereal bars around the world, but when he looked for one here, he couldn’t find one,” said Adrian.

Neighborhood coffee spots offer a unique purpose for their visitors.

The duo launched their project idea, and started the first coffee and cereal bar in Texas, according to Adrian.

Alongside an abundance of cereal and milk options, the duo serves up baked goods provided from Romelia’s Bakery, and imported Colombian and Brazilian coffee beans for their beverages.

The Ambiance

The two San Antonio natives describe their coffee shop as more of a West Coast styled spot. Adrian explains that at Joseph E.’s there is a “chill” factor that sets them apart from other coffee spots.

They hope to foster a community in their laid-back space that is equipped with simple wooden furnishings, and art pieces lining the walls.

Joseph E. is an ideal spot to enjoy a bowl of cereal and a cappuccino to kick-start the morning.

Joseph E. Coffee
1111 S. Saint Mary’s St., 210-451-1822
josephcoffee.com

Press Coffee

The Backstory

When partners Bronson Holbrook and Natalie Nazarewicz opened the doors of their little coffeehouse on West French Place, they imagined bringing coffee shops from around the world to the Alamo City.

“Bronson has traveled a lot. He has gone to coffee shops overseas and in major cities here in the U.S. He has seen coffee shops as a creative hub,” said Nazarewicz, who is the general manager.

In addition to their sense of community, Press provides coffee that is freshly ground from beans distributed by Caffe Luxxe in Los Angeles, Barrett’s Micro Roast Coffee in Austin, and Amaya Roasting Company in Houston.

The Ambiance

Press Coffee arrived in Alta Vista back in 2014, settling into a building with an abundant history.

The coffeehouse was most recently a hair salon, and years ago served as a carriage house for Frost Mansion, the historic residence of the Frost Bank family.

“The space alone, the history of this place, what it used to be—is what differentiates us from other coffee shops,” shared Nazarewicz.

The coffee spot is well curated by Nazarewicz, who previously worked at Anthropologie, a popular retail store known for its modern and tasteful design.

Succulents sit on tabletops, natural light streams into the room, and the eclectic logo of Ottoman Empire Sultan Murad IV hangs on a wall—all working together to create a homey workspace or meeting place.

Their baked goods, provided by C’est La Vie Bakery and Bakery Lorraine in San Antonio, coupled with breakfast tacos from Taco

Riendo, another popular local eatery, offer a good variety of choices.

Press Coffee
606 W. French Place, 210-602-6590
presscoffeesa.com

Rosella Coffee

The Backstory

When KSAT weekend anchor Charles Gonzalez and his family returned to San Antonio after seven years in Minneapolis, they had a grand idea. Gonzalez and his wife wanted to create a spot of their own in the Alamo City.

After some thought, the concept of a coffee shop captured their imagination and Rosella Coffee opened in 2014. Gonzalez kept his family in mind when naming the coffee spot “Rosella” after his daughters, Olivia Rose and Ella Sofia.

The Ambiance

The shop has a clean, industrial feel to it with exposed brick walls and a lofted second floor. Two floors and a patio area offer an abundance of available seating for guests.

Rosella aims to be more than just a coffee shop by including wine and beer on the menu for evening nightlife options.

Their good old-fashioned java is sourced from Cuvée Coffee in Austin. On your next visit, give their crowd-pleasing avocado toast a try, alongside their classic latte.

Rosella Coffee
203 E. Jones Ave. #101, 210-277-8574
rosellacoffee.com

White Elephant Coffee Co.

The Backstory

Jose de la Colina, a former financial advisor who dealt stocks and bonds for three years, never expected to open a coffeehouse.

During an internship at a brokerage firm in San Diego, de la Colina stumbled upon coffee kiosks on the streets of California that sparked his passion for espresso.

After several years of visiting



A barista at Indy Coffee Club prepares a beverage in the shop, located on UTSA Boulevard. (PHOTO by ZACHARY BROCK)

coffee shops, he left his day job to become a coffee connoisseur. “I was in a position to settle down and take the next step in my life—and take a risk by opening a business. And White Elephant was born,” said de la Colina.

The Ambiance

White Elephant, a sturdy, blue-tinted coffeehouse that opened in July 2015, stands on the corner of South Presa Street and West Carolina Street.

Inside, there’s a separate room across from the bar where they roast their coffee beans sourced from Guatemala, Ecuador, Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Indonesia, and Mexico.

With clear windows into the roast room, it’s easy to enjoy the roasting action while sipping a beverage. For cold brew enthusiasts, test out their “beaker brew,” a method in which the coffee brews for up to 10 hours in a glass tower.

De la Colina encourages baristas to experiment with new flavors and techniques for beverages. “Sometimes we stumble across something pretty awesome. Then we can replicate it and make something new and unique,” said de la Colina.

White Elephant Coffee Company
1415 S. Presa St. #107, 210-465-9478
wecoffeecompany.com

Indy Coffee Club

The Backstory

They may be new to the coffee shop game, but the men behind Indy Coffee Club have had the food truck business covered since 2014. San Antonio natives Jake Scott, Alex Lee, Andrew Kim, and Henry Shri shifted their food truck to a brick-and-mortar location on UTSA Boulevard in October 2015.

Their food truck had gained a regular following among San Antonians looking for an artisan cup of joe in a casual setting, and today their brick-and-mortar location offers the same appeal.

The Ambiance

Indy has been buzzing ever since they opened their doors. “The turnout has been insane. A lot of people have come and there are never tables or seats for everybody,” said Eddy Fernandez, a barista at Indy Coffee. Fernandez recommends table-seekers arrive early to stake out seating.

Indy brews beans from two roasters: Flat Track Coffee in Austin and Parlor Coffee in Brooklyn. If you’re looking for a unique beverage, try their “Fruity Pebble Cappuccino,” made from milk that is steeped in fruity pebbles for 24 hours.

A few ornaments to appreciate during a visit to Indy Coffee Club include an American flag, a cow’s skull, and hanging terrariums that catch the eye and contribute to the shop’s hipster flair.

Indy Coffee Club
7114 UTSA Blvd., 210-233-9203
indycoffeeco.com

The Alamo City is practically filled to the brim with new coffee spots that are creating a buzz and bringing locals their daily dose of caffeine. After visiting eight coffee joints in San Antonio, we learned the ambiance and backstories that separate each spot from the next.

If you’re searching for a quality cup of joe with a new atmosphere, this guide is a great place to start. ●

Jessica Luhrman graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with majors in Political Science and Communication. Luhrman has written for San Antonio Magazine, San Antonio Current, and The Trinitonian. She plans to pursue a career in public relations. Born and raised in the Alamo City, Luhrman has a soft spot for cats and caffeinated beverages.

Diving into Shark Alley



Coming Face to Face With Great Whites

By LUCY STOCKDALE

I hopped into a cage that was anchored to the side of a boat that bobbed with the ocean's movement. The water of the Atlantic Ocean bit into my wetsuit, which was two inches thick in an attempt to keep me warm in South Africa's 60 degree May weather.

"Down, down, down!" the captain bellowed from above.

I sharply inhaled and plunged under the water's surface. The murky view in front of me slowly morphed into a large, grey blur. At the sight of a set of sharp teeth swiftly moving toward me, I suddenly questioned my choice to dive with great white sharks.

I was safely held within the immovable black bars of the cage and accompanied by five other equally terrified divers—or so I told myself. My positioning on the very edge of the cage made me constantly check to my right for any movement within arm's length. The water in front of us was speckled with bait—known as chum—consisting of fish parts, bone, and blood thrown from the men on deck to attract the sharks that populate the coast at Gansbaai.

South Africa is internationally known for its great white shark population, due to the high number of cape fur seals, penguins, and other sea birds that attract these predators. Gansbaai, sitting at the southwestern tip of South Africa below Cape Town, is a small town on the coast with a population of nearly 12,000.

Because of its dense congregation of great whites, Gansbaai is trademarked as Shark Alley. The nickname and inhabitants of Gansbaai's waters attract underwater thrill seekers from the months of June to September, the time of year when the water is most clear and the sharks are more likely to be resting on the coast of South Africa.

Numerous dive companies are clustered together in this bay, with the goal of bringing customers within near-touching distance of the sharks that swim in the waters off Gansbaai. One of these companies, Sharklady Adventures, was founded in 2001 by Kim "Sharklady" MacLean.

Sharklady Adventures is dedicated to caring for and protecting great white sharks, as well as educating the

public regarding the creatures and their natural habitats. Sharklady offers great white shark diving trips and educational tours in an effort to promote responsible and eco-friendly water tourism. It was with this company that I found myself in Shark Alley, swimming with the beasts themselves.

After a week of conducting research for our study abroad program in Cape Town, my friend Hannah and I decided to check shark diving off our bucket list. At \$185, this adventure did not come cheap. The fact that the package deal included transportation, breakfast, and an unforgettable experience convinced us the investment was worth the steep cost.

So there we were in Gansbaai, at 6 a.m., stumbling off Sharklady's bus and into a pre-dive breakfast buffet. Ten other men and women from around the world, all eager and nervous about the next few hours, accompanied us. Our sarcastic and unshaven dive instructor, Lance, who had a passion for the ocean that dripped from his long, waterlogged hair, greeted us. His face, permanently creased from smiling, stiffened as he led a discussion about safety prior to our departure out to sea. In his thick Australian accent, he soberly covered each safety feature in detail, so as to maintain Sharklady's 100 percent safety record.

We boarded the boat, now familiar with the importance of the rules that Lance had set forth:

1. Always be aware of slick surfaces.
2. Don't dip your hands into the water.
3. Divers are never allowed to stick their limbs outside of the cage.

With these rules in mind, our bright orange splashguards on, and wet suits hanging from the side of the boat, we were ready to voyage out to open waters.

The sky was a shade of grey that spilled into the ocean on the horizon. The cold weather of the high seas seeped into my skin, and the speed of the boat created wind that made my eyes water.

We traveled 30 minutes away from shore to a space scattered with floating metal cages, which I soon learned would protect us from the great whites. Lance pulled up to a cage that was officially assigned to Sharklady;

the others, as it turned out, belonged to various diving companies that also thrived on tourists' adrenaline.

Once anchored, Lance's crew, which consisted of two men well versed in the cage diving mechanics, helped us each into a wetsuit that was still damp and chilled from the group of divers who had been out earlier that morning. As we wriggled and squatted until the neoprene slipped into place, I heard splashes close to the boat. I turned my head and found myself staring into a garbage can of small debris that resembled fish.

The stench of the chum made me immediately step back and hold my breath. I watched as Lance plunged a large cup into the bucket and tossed its contents overboard, surrounding the cage that was now attached to the side of our boat.

"What is that?" a Frenchman behind me stuttered, both from the cold and the confusion.

Lance replied, "It brings in the sharks. The smell of fish and blood attracts them to the cage."

"Blood?" I murmured.

Immediately, one of Lance's men reached into a bag and pulled out two enormous tuna fish heads—without bodies. These heads were tied to the end of a long, thick rope that was threaded through the empty eye sockets. The fish were immediately launched into the water, splashing among the spatter of chum.

"Alright, first group. Who's up?" Lance asked.



Divers in a Sharklady Adventures' cage prepare to submerge and face great white sharks. (PHOTO courtesy of CREATIVE COMMONS)



A shark swims after a piece of chum, which is a mixture of fish bones, blood, and meat. (PHOTO by THOMAS ROVAK)

Without much thought I raised my hand, and with his signature creased smile, Lance immediately guided me to the edge of the boat where the cage rested with black bars opened at the top to allow us to sink in.

I hesitated, suddenly aware that I was about to jump into shark-infested waters. Lance continued to encourage me, telling me to trust him and to trust myself. I soon found myself to be the first one in the water, in a cage, with great white sharks hungrily circling.

My body began to shake uncontrollably, so I clenched my hands together with all my strength to try to stop the movement. The large, uncomfortable goggles attached to my head fogged up as my face grew hot, despite the frigid water around me.

Hannah was second in the cage, bobbing next to me. I released my own hands and reached for hers, tightly squeezing to acknowledge we were finally doing what we'd promised ourselves for so many months.

Once six of us were situated in the cage, the top was lowered and secured shut.

We were there to stay. Lance yelled at us from the boat, explaining that when he began to shout his directions, we were to push ourselves down under the water and secure our feet on the rope that drifted up from the bottom of the cage. Because of the buoyancy of our thick wetsuits, we had to hold ourselves underwater

to watch the sharks swim by.

I turned to Hannah and saw flying fish heads soar above me and splash about 10 feet in front of the cage. The rope that dangled just in front of our vision made small waves in the water as it was rapidly pulled toward us, luring any lurking creatures. When none of the sharks were attracted by the time the heads returned to the side of the boat, the chum was tossed out again, continuing this pattern until something came close enough.

"Down, down, down!" Lance finally hollered as the fish heads began to make their way back towards the boat. I immediately pushed against the bars and

Its direction didn't change once it neared the cage, and my scream was swallowed by the ocean as the shark's body slammed directly into the cage, inches from my arm.

inhaled quickly until I was entirely submerged, my feet catching on the rope.

I saw the heads of the sharks jetting through the water on the surface, but my attention immediately shifted to the dark mass swiftly approaching us. I remained as still as I could, against the movement of the ocean, as I fixed in on rows of pointed teeth, soon to be the only thing I could see. The great white, about 12 feet in length, slid by the cage, changing its direction inches from the bars. Screaming in disbelief and thrill, we resurfaced.

Pretty soon, Lance was shouting at us again and we submerged into the water, as yet another shark sped towards us. This time, its direction didn't change once it neared the cage, and my scream was swallowed by the ocean as the shark's body slammed directly into the cage, inches from my arm.

I floated to the top, gulping for air and composure. Hannah turned toward me, a worried look visible behind the goggles that covered most of her face.

About 30 minutes later, the time had come to switch out divers. I reluctantly pulled myself out of the cage to let the other six see the incredible, startling beasts waiting beneath the surface.

Hannah and I made our way to the front of the boat, where we could see the sharks racing toward the cage from above. As the divers emerged with hollers of disbelief and awe, I remembered my initial doubts about diving with the sharks and laughed to myself.

Riding back to shore, Lance said there were seven great whites circling our boat, reaching up to 15 feet in length. I turned to Hannah and rested my head on her shoulder. "That was definitely one of the most terrifying, thrilling, and beautiful experiences of my life," she shouted to me over the blasts of fast moving air.

I simply smiled, watching as Lance tossed a seagull a piece of leftover chum. As we coasted back to the shore of Gansbaai, I realized my decision to dive with some of the world's most feared predators would stick with me long after I left Cape Town. ●

Lucy Stockdale is a 2015 graduate who majored in Sociology with minors in English and Creative Writing. She swam with the sharks while spending a semester abroad at the School of International Training in Cape Town, South Africa. Stockdale is completing a master's in education at the University of Pennsylvania while working as an English Teaching Fellow at Northfield Mount Hermon School in Northfield, Massachusetts.

Adam Rauch graduated with a major in Communication and minor in Sport Management in 2015. Rauch is currently living and working in Houston, Texas.

Another Excursion With the Great Whites

Like Lucy Stockdale, Adam Rauch went diving with great white sharks off the coast of South Africa during his study abroad semester at sea. He used a different expedition group, White Shark Diving Company, for his morning dive in the Atlantic Ocean near Gansbaai, about two hours southeast of Cape Town. Here's what Rauch had to say about his experience:

GETTING INTO THE CAGE

"Upon entering the icy depths, we all shrieked with surprise to find how cold the water was. My lungs shriveled, limiting my breath. My legs, numbed from the cold, kicked wildly underwater in an attempt to keep myself above the surface. By this time, the sharks had noticed the 10 dangling pieces of meat above them. There was no turning back now."

THE CHUM

"PLOP! A slab of what seemed to be raw meat, also known as 'chum,' landed just 5 yards in front of the cage. Chum is designed to draw sharks close with the scent of blood. The sharks attracted to the chum are likely to swim back for it multiple times, giving the divers several chances to see them in action. Traces of blood began to emerge from the crevices of the meat."

SEEING THE SHARK

"My heart pounded like a drum. A shadowy white and gray silhouette approached the cage from the abyss. A singular black eye focused its attention on me as it glided delicately through the water. Before me, a 12-foot, 2,000 pound killing machine had appeared: the great white shark. The jaw opened to reveal rows of pickaxes as teeth, stained with the dark red remnants of his last meal. The shark effortlessly angled closer and closer, and my eyes widened in fear. CLUNK! The shark grazed by and then briskly swam away. Thank goodness for the 10-foot steel cage that surrounded me."

FINAL THOUGHTS

"Shark diving is certainly not your ordinary daily activity. The hesitancy and angst that had only intensified over the course of the expedition was off the charts. At the end of it all, however, the experience was more than worth it. After all, it's not every day you get to see the most dangerous predators of the ocean face to face."

—Adam Rauch

FLORENCE

in 3 Hours with a Roll of Film

By NAYELI PÉREZ

I focus the lens and wait for the moment when a well-dressed Italian man strolls in front of the bicycle leaning against the wall. Wispy white hair, a furrowed brow, a sweater vest and slacks coupled with nice shoes, and hands behind his back.

He strides by.

I press down the shutter. My camera makes the familiar and soothing sound of exposing the film. One down—35 more exposures to go. I have about three hours left of sunlight and I am determined to get through this roll of 35mm black and white film.

I tend to complain about a lack of interesting subjects and places when I go out and shoot. But, not today, and not this semester; I'm studying art in Florence, Italy—the birthplace of the Renaissance and a well-known tourist mecca. Located in Tuscany, north of Rome, Florence has over 361,679 people in a city surrounded by the art that defined an entire movement. From the 14th century architecture and art casually strewn about in the numerous piazzas to the great people-watching opportunities I think, just maybe, somehow, I'll find something to take pictures of.

It's a Sunday afternoon, and after a string of rainy days, the sky has cleared up. Some much-appreciated

warm rays of sun, along with a light breeze give this mid-October day the winding down, lazy feeling of the last days of summer. I walk vaguely in the direction of the Arno River, one of the more important rivers of central Italy as well as a distinctive part of the Florentine landscape, and try to avoid the usually dense crowds of the main streets. I'm letting whatever piques my interest be my guide.

My apartment is located right next to the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore, the quintessential Renaissance-style cathedral known especially for its majestic cupola designed by Brunelleschi and referred to simply as the Duomo. I'd walked a couple of blocks away from the busy Piazza del Duomo down Via dei Servi before encountering the subject of my first photograph.

A few blocks farther down is Piazza della Santissima Annunziata. This square, or piazza, is bordered by the Basilica of the Santissima Annunziata on the north side and the Ospedali degli Innocenti, Europe's oldest orphanage, on the east side. The facade of the Basilica is ornately decorated with continuous arches, also known as arcades, which are featured prominently in Renaissance architecture.

Brightly colored tents line the large open space of the square, and as I get closer I realize they are stands in

Situated along the Arno River, the San Ferdinando in Cestello, an important 17th century church, stands out in this typical Florentine neighborhood. (PHOTO by NAYELI PÉREZ)

an artisan market, with objects ranging from elegantly crafted wooden kitchenware and ceramics to glass beaded and copper jewelry. A stand with knit sweaters and poncho-like garments catches my eye just in time to witness a woman's exasperated expression. She's trying to stop her son from getting his gelato-covered hands all over the clothing. I press down the shutter as the son laughs and the mother sighs.

I continue walking through the stands, taking photographs of the various objects being sold and the vendors themselves who seem to enjoy chatting with potential customers and window-shoppers alike. Crossing the square, I make sure to pause and take a picture of the bronze equestrian statue of Ferdinando I de' Medici standing at the center of the piazza.

Peering up through the viewfinder of my camera, I compose an image in which the contour of this sizable statue contrasts with the sky. As I press down the shutter I can't help but wonder how many others—churchgoers in the 17th century, artists in the 18th and 19th centuries, and students in the 20th century—have peered up at this very view.

Shrieks of laughter quickly jolt me out of my thoughts and bring me back to the present. I turn to see a group of Italian teenagers sitting on the large steps that lead up to the porch-like area below the arcade of the Basilica. Their loud, animated conversation and rowdy laughter might border on obnoxious, but none of the people lounging on the steps seem to mind. Old and young couples, families, and groups of friends all mill around the square or sit lazily on the steps leading up to the three buildings.

The words of my Italian photography professor in Florence come to mind: "A typical Italian piazza is full of Italians using public space as private space." Certainly, there's a casual familiarity in the attitudes of those enjoying their Sunday afternoon at Piazza della Santissima Annunziata.

As I keep walking, I reach some narrower and lonelier streets. No longer in the car restricted tourist area, only a few pedestrians are present and I have to attentively evade the cars zipping by.

Upon reaching Via Guelfa and turning left, a wall spanning the block's entirety, strikingly full of vibrant



Piazza della Santissima Annunziata bustles with activity as Italians enjoy their Sunday afternoon. (PHOTOS by NAYELI PÉREZ)

graffiti, comes into view. The words and phrases on the wall are in many different languages. From what I can understand, they are predominantly statements of political criticism and radical viewpoints; anarchy seems to be a popular and recurring subject in Italy.

A typical Italian piazza is full of Italians using public space as private space.

I make sure to capture some of these on my film and again ... my mind wanders. The buildings, many still part of the original construction dating back to the 14th century, are now infused with a new life.

The words and phrases fixed to the walls are vivid—in your face—icons of dissent and struggle, but also icons of real life and real people. I find myself appreciating this as much as I did the graceful arcades of the piazza, and feel almost saddened that there aren't more people taking in this juxtaposition of the current and the historic.

My steady meandering gradually brings me back to the bustling streets of the city center. I check my camera: just 10 exposures left. The timing is good since sunset is steadily approaching—25 minutes of good light left, give or take. I speed up my pace, as I'd planned to end my day (and film) at the Arno River during sunset, and at this point have veered off of my intended path.

The Basilica of San Lorenzo is on my right, and I decide to briefly stop in. This structure is famous for being the burial place of the wealthy Medici family as well as for Michelangelo's sculptures designed for some of their tombs.

I begrudgingly pay the 4.50 euro fee to enter, but then am glad I did. The large, open space of the interior is illuminated only by the stained glass windows casting

color onto the tiled floor, something I am immediately drawn to and photograph.

The visitors are few, which could be attributed to the fact that the facade was never completed; the front of the Basilica of San Lorenzo is barren and underwhelming compared to the many elaborate facades around, such as that of Santa Croce or Santa Maria Novella. Consequently, the interior of this church is more tranquil than many of the other major churches, though not any less representative of the Renaissance period.

Exiting the Basilica of San Lorenzo, I jump back into the movement and noise of the streets. I'm now back at the very crowded Duomo, and hurry toward the river.

Compactly filling each block are countless trattorias, pizzerias, "snack bars" (small cafes offering usually coffee, pastries, paninis, and gelato) and shops, all filled with chattering tourists. I pass the Cathedral, its corresponding Baptistery, and the curving, endless lines of people waiting to get in both. I navigate through the lively Piazza de la Republica filled with street performers and vendors.

Finally reaching the Arno River, I approach the bridge Ponte Vecchio, famous for the shops built along it, or rather, on it. Ponte Vecchio is known for the preservation of the bridge-shopping hybrid style that was common in the past. It is considered a very distinctive structure as the shops are built upon each other, reaching several stories with multicolored exteriors. The Ponte Vecchio was, notably, the only bridge not destroyed by the advancing German army during World War II since, purportedly, Hitler was appreciative of its architecture.

The Ponte Vecchio seems to be a prime sunset watching spot, and one I've already had the pleasure of occupying before. Instead of walking onto the bridge, I decide to stand on the sidewalk running parallel to the river. Already, people are trying to find a place to sit or stand on the low wall of the bridge as the sun begins to set.



An Italian couple share a romantic moment watching the sun set at Ponte Vecchio along the Arno River. (PHOTO by NAYELI PÉREZ)

A few remaining clouds speckle the sky as it begins to change colors: red to orange to an indigo-purple that then fades into the blue river in the distance. I use my phone to capture the scene in color, but am also glad to have saved the last of my film for some pictures that capture the expressions of those around me.

To my right is a young couple. He sits on the wall and she stands next to him, looking up at him as he looks to her. They're holding hands and quietly chatting. What could at times seem clichéd—staring into each other's eyes, enamored of life and love—doesn't, at least not at this moment.

It's only fitting that I'm in Florence, watching a young Italian couple share a romantic moment as the sun sets beautifully into the Arno River in the background. I discreetly angle my camera at them and take the final shot of my film.

My Italian photography professor told our class that the hardest challenge when taking photographs in a city as picturesque as Florence was that every beautiful photo had probably already been taken before. I went out in search of those 36 images that hadn't been captured before, those images that could be taken only in that day and in that moment.

Visiting the Duomo, walking through the Piazza de la Republica, buying a selfie stick from the vendors, and eating a slice of pizza as you cross the Ponte Vecchio are all great things to do when visiting Florence. But if you have the time and desire, going a bit further than the normal tourist activities can be much more fulfilling.

Go to Florence to look for those select moments that you and you alone will have. Find that hidden and quiet beautiful church; buy a beautiful antique at a flea market.

Observe the people around you, and attempt to grasp that the streets and alleys of this city have been full of life since the 14th century. Walk past the 10-minute radius of the Duomo; explore.

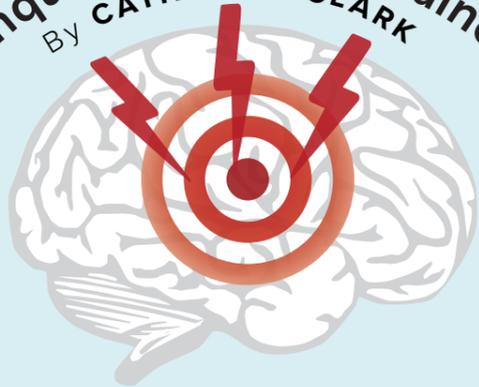
And if you can, bring a camera with you. Find your own 36 moments. ●

Nayeli Pérez graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with a major in Communication and minor in Art and Art History. Pérez, a native of El Paso, Texas, plans to pursue a career in graphic design and photography in San Antonio. She hopes to return to Florence and capture more of the essence of the beautiful city with her camera.

the uphill battle

Conquering Your Migraines

By CATHERINE CLARK



It starts with something simple. Maybe you didn't get enough sleep; maybe you forgot to eat lunch; maybe stress is consuming you. No matter what, you know the symptoms. First, the pounding feeling begins like a jackhammer has gone off in your brain. Your brain continues to revolt, shredding your thoughts, stampeding through your senses. Your whole body seems to turn against you with every sound and smell.

Your migraine is back in town.

And like many days, you leave work early and retreat to your home. The pain is so intense that all you can do is curl up in a dark room. Another day interrupted. Another battle lost to a migraine.

Women are three times more likely to suffer from migraines than men. At least 27 million American women suffer from migraines, according to the Migraine Research Foundation, a non-profit organization located in New York City. Comparatively few men—about 9 million—are affected. But every year, migraines cost American employers—in terms of missed work and

productivity—approximately \$13 billion.

More than just a “bad headache,” a migraine is a debilitating neurological condition. Financially, professionally, and personally, migraines consume your life. Those who suffer from migraines often live in constant fear of a potential precipitous attack.

So, how do you keep going? How do you confront these personalized monsters and finally win the war? Here's one battle strategy for conquering your migraines.

Conduct Reconnaissance

Before you enter battle, you should have a complete understanding of the enemy. An elusive condition, migraines evade medical research and treatment. Even with extensive research and treatment considerations, most researchers and doctors have difficulty explaining what migraines are or how they are caused. But as of now, modern medicine offers some information about and solutions for migraines.

First, migraines are hereditary. According to the National Headache Foundation, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization based in Chicago, 80 percent of migraine sufferers report a family history of migraines. As you age, migraines abate, but if you suffer from migraines now, or have before, you risk passing the condition along to your children.

Second, a migraine is the dilation and expansion of blood vessels in the brain, caused by a number of chemical reactions. The main culprit: serotonin. Serotonin basically keeps your brain happy. A neurotransmitter, serotonin maintains mood balance, regulates cyclic body processes, and transmits messages between nerve cells.

When your body's level of serotonin drops, your brain riots. Your blood vessels expand and constrict against your brain's lining. Your pain begins. In this way, small changes in the brain precipitate your migraine.

At first, you may not even notice. Oftentimes, people identify migraines by the intense throbbing pain. But according to the non-profit American Headache Society Committee on Headache Education (ACHE), located in Mount Royal, New Jersey, the insidious attack starts even before the pain.

Recognize the Intruder

A migraine evolves in a series of four phases. Although most researchers categorize all four phases as a migraine attack, not all sufferers will experience all four, and the duration of each phase may differ from one person to another.

The first phase of a migraine attack is the prodrome, or the premonitory phase. ACHE marks this phase by symptoms like irritability, food

cravings, depression, concentration problems, repetitive yawning, and stiff neck. As you can probably guess, the list goes on and on. But even with all of these signals, many sufferers may not even recognize the pattern. If you can identify this phase though, you can prepare for the next.

Aura is the second and most infamous phase of a migraine attack. According to ACHE, 25 percent of migraine sufferers experience aura. Differing from person to person, aura can include visual symptoms, such as partial loss of sight, wavy lines and spots, flashing lights, and blurry vision. Aura may also appear

Migraine's Mini-Mes: Top Three Headaches

Migraines versus Headaches. Siblings, but not twins. You know how to identify and combat migraines, but what about headaches? Here are the three main types of headaches—as defined by the National Headache Foundation—that many people experience daily, including migraine sufferers.

1. Tension Headaches: Often misdiagnosed as sinus headaches, tension headaches are caused by temporary stress, anxiety, fatigue, or anger. Sinus headaches, on the other hand, are caused by inflamed sinuses due to an infection, allergic reaction, or tumor. Unlike with sinus headaches, fevers do not accompany tension headaches. A tension headache usually begins in your forehead, temples, or the back of your head and neck. When you have a tension headache, you may feel like you have pressure on your head or inside it. To treat tension headaches, doctors may recommend over-the-counter medicine or prescribed medications. Complementary treatment—like relaxation training and biofeedback—is also used.

2. Cluster Headaches: In a pack, cluster headaches attack unexpectedly. Symptoms include pain on one side of the head, a tearing or bloodshot eye, and a runny nose. Many people describe cluster headaches as the most severe and intense type of headache. The National Headache Foundation lists prescription medication and oxygen as treatment possibilities.

3. Rebound Headaches: Overuse of medication can lead to rebound headaches that may become chronic over time. Overuse happens when you use medication—over-the-counter or prescription—more than two or three days per week, week after week, and month after month. When rebound headaches happen, your medicine stops treating the pain and starts causing it. You can prevent rebound headaches by taking the specified amount of medication the prescribed number of times.

“Find ways to cope, find ways to work around it. But don’t kill yourself just to get through the day.”

— Erin Roberson

in the form of other sensory symptoms, which include neck pain, confusion, difficulty finding words, and decrease in or loss of hearing.

Like the prodrome, aura differs from person to person. One person may see flashing lights and zig-zag patterns; others might feel at a loss for words as if their mouths aren’t working properly. Judy Norris, a secretary at Trinity University Health Services in San Antonio, Texas, says her 14-year-old daughter, Molly, suffers from migraines and experiences a ringing in her ears before a migraine fully develops.

In an effort to fight back, Norris has helped her daughter develop a strategy for recognizing aura and confronting her migraines. “Whenever Molly hears a ringing in her ears,” Norris shares, “she takes her medication and doesn’t develop a full migraine.”

Some migraine sufferers do not experience aura, and instead, head straight into the third phase: the headache. You will most definitely recognize this part. Here, your body revolts. Here, you lose the war because you simply can’t fight.

During this phase, you’ll usually feel a dull ache that leads to a throbbing or pulsating pain on one or both sides of your head, according to the Migraine Research Foundation. You may get hot flashes or chills, or become sensitive to light, sound, and odors. You might also feel pain around your eyes or temples; this pain may spread to your face, sinus area, jaw, or neck.

Having dealt with migraines since she was 9 years old, Maria Easton, 21, of Austin, Texas, currently studies art at The University of Texas at Austin. Easton knows the headache phase of the attack is not only the most debilitating, but also the most disruptive.

“I could be anywhere. I could be in a different country with my family and we’re on vacation and we’re supposed to have the best day ever. And I get a migraine. I can’t do anything and I’m out for the whole day. I have to sleep all day until it goes away,” she says, exasperated.

During this phase, most sufferers lock themselves away from the rest of the world. In complete darkness, you can only wait. The headache itself could last anywhere from one to 72 hours. The Migraine Research Foundation states that during this part of the migraine

attack, “more than 90 percent of sufferers are unable to work or function normally.” That’s possibly three days lost. Three days curled up in bed, waiting for the pain to subside. Three days, where you miss out on family, on friends, on work.

But some sufferers still try to push through the pain. Erin Roberson, 20, from San Antonio, Texas, was diagnosed in middle school. Struggling to maintain good grades in college as a sociology major at The University of Texas at San Antonio, she often continues to push herself until the pain overpowers her.

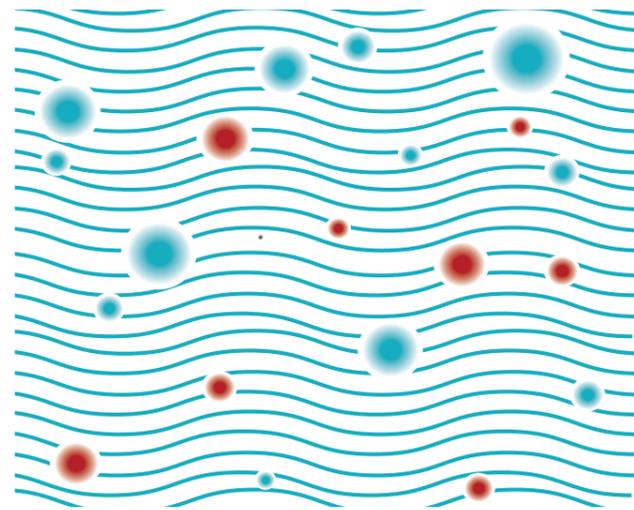
“When it’s at a point that light makes me cry, I know I have to stop. But usually, I can sense when I need to take care of them before it gets that bad,” Roberson explains.

Even once the pain subsides, the migraine attack may not be over. The fourth phase, postdrome, comes next. Called the “zombie phase,” postdrome makes sufferers feel hung over, according to ACHS. Some people will blame the medication used to combat the migraine, but other researchers attribute this phase to abnormal cerebral blood flow. While your body gets back to normal, you may feel depressed or euphoric, experience fatigue, and lack concentration.

Keep these phases in mind for the next battle. Most importantly, remember that migraines are personalized. You may not experience all or any of these phases. But you can conquer this unpredictable beast, if you know them and yourself.

Know Yourself

Everyone can have a migraine at one point or another, but for sufferers, the difference lies in the triggers. Even the smallest change in the environment



Aura can include visual symptoms, such as wavy lines and spots.

can launch the migraine war. In order to gain an edge over migraines, you have to understand your personal triggers and adjust accordingly.

First, you need to rule out hormones as a possible trigger. Hormones keep your body balanced, even within an ever-changing environment. The National Headache Foundation states that when your hormones are unbalanced, your chances of a migraine attack increase.

For women, changes in their estrogen levels during periods unbalances hormones. The Migraine Research Foundation reports that 10 percent to 14 percent of American women suffer from menstrual migraines, which are migraine attacks that occur two or three days before a period. Menstrual migraines are usually more severe and harder to control.

Nasha Holt, M.D., a researcher and clinician at the Headache Institute of Texas in San Antonio, sees menstrual migraines in another light. For her, the migraines start in the neck. Holt explains, “Somewhere around the time a female is to begin her menstrual cycle, a hormone is released that helps her slough the lining of her uterus. This causes her levels of relaxation to drastically decrease. Because of this, a female could end up in a hyper-state of stress and tension, putting those fragile and volatile neck structures in a constant state of compression.”

Like Holt, most migraine specialists consider the neck to be an especially tender area. Holt cites irritated neck structures as the primary culprit. Once irritated, these structures switch on different nerves that link to your head, face, ears, stomach, neck, upper back, arms, and hands. Then, these nerves spark the first phase of a migraine attack.

One particular trigger, exercise—although necessary and beneficial—can strain your neck and potentially cause more migraines. In fact, the Migraine Research Foundation observes that migraine sufferers typically avoid strenuous exercises in fear that they might elicit or aggravate a migraine.

In addition to exercise, a variety of other triggers can provoke your migraines. Some triggers include certain

food groups (like chocolate, citrus, artificial sweeteners, and cheese), weather, lack of sleep, and stress. Roberson knows about triggers. One of her triggers is caffeine, but she just can’t give it up. But even Roberson knows this isn’t the smartest thing to do.

She advises other sufferers to “do what your doctor says, find ways to cope, get an MRI to make sure it’s not life threatening, and find ways to work around it. But don’t kill yourself just to get through the day. It’ll make it worse, and put you through pointless suffering.”

Jackie Bevilacqua, a registered and board certified nurse at Trinity University Health Services in San Antonio, also recommends that you get adequate sleep and maintain other healthy habits to control symptoms.

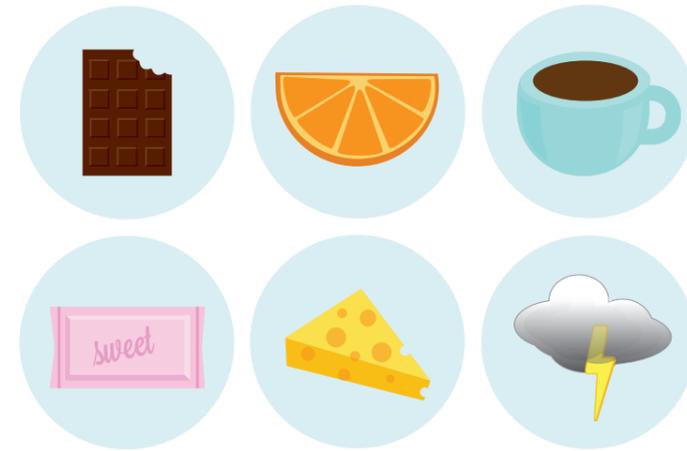
To fully understand your triggers, you should track your migraines.

One by one, work through the possible triggers and clear them out of your life. You can go the old-fashioned route and keep a written diary. The diary should list what you’ve eaten that day and the symptoms you’ve had; most importantly, you can write down when your headache starts and ends, and the nature and severity of the pain.

You also can use a migraine tracking app. While many diet and fitness apps track your number of steps or caloric intake, they fall short in the “tracking my pain” department. Luckily, a plethora of headache-tracker apps exist. These apps have extra categories, where you can type in the day’s weather, the migraine’s severity, and the medicine you used. Once you know your triggers, you gain an advantage over your migraines. Then, you can continue toward victory by seeking new ways to fight back against the beast.

Choose Your Weapon

You’ve talked to your doctor, you’ve determined you have migraines, and you’re ready to take them out. Now, you fight back. This part of the battle can be the most exhausting because of migraines’ personalization. A medication that works for Pam at the office, may not work for you. After years of trying medication after medication, Easton was ready to give up.



Top triggers for migraines include chocolate, citrus, caffeine, artificial sweeteners, cheese, and changes in weather.

"I tried basically everything. Pretty much all types of popular medication. I remember at one point when I was 11, I was taking eight pills a day," she recalls.

When her doctor told her to try one more medication before Botox (a last resort treatment due to the possible side effects, including partial facial paralysis and muscle spasms), Easton became incensed: "At first, I was like no. C'mon! I've had enough of this! I was pissed off at my doctor; I was going to find a new doctor. I didn't even want to give it a chance."

But finally, Easton found the treatment that works for her. The drug she had immediately rejected helped to relieve her migraines. "I was so shocked. I had no hope for it," Easton says.

With all these years of treatment, Easton could have easily accepted defeat, but she never gave up. For her, the battle could never end. She says, "You can't suffer from it. You have to find something that works for you. You can't live your life that way. I did it for so many years. You have to keep trying different things."

This Is Personal: My Battle Against Migraines

At 10 years old, I felt a throbbing in my skull. My pediatrician said it was allergies and prescribed Claritin, and later, Zyrtec. But neither worked. My headaches still came.

Throughout my childhood, I quickly learned how to ignore the headaches. But I still couldn't escape my triggers—my mother's perfume, stress at school, intense basketball games, fatigue. Little things in life set my head off, and my body would betray me.

When the headaches hit, I'd become irritable. Nauseated, I would turn up the car's air conditioner as high as it would go, much to the objection of my family. With the cool air blasting straight into my face, my headache seemed to disappear. Once I reached high school, the headaches worsened. Walking between classes at school became a war zone; my senses became my personal Benedict Arnold. During class, my head would grow heavy. Ignoring the pain, I kept pushing.

Finally, I went to a neurologist. He listened and nodded as I explained that I had a headache about once a day. After undergoing an MRI (everything was normal), I learned I suffered from chronic tension headaches and occasional migraines. The treatment began.

My schedule soon became packed with doctor appointments, and my life quickly switched focus. I changed my diet; I tried to take my 600 mg of Ibuprofen and Axert, my prescribed abortive medication, at the onset of every headache or migraine.

The medication didn't work. I tried another. And then another. School was hectic, and tracking my headaches seemed impossible. I was sent to the Houston Headache Clinic, now a part of the Houston Headache and Neurological Institute, a medical facility specializing in headaches in Houston, Texas. There, I participated in a new study of an abortive prescribed nasal spray for teens with migraines.

While in the study, I went to the office multiple times a month. Each visit, I submitted a urine sample, had blood drawn, and received an electrocardiogram. I was poked and prodded, given meds, and sent on my merry way. I kept a detailed log of hours and activities and food.

For a 15-year-old, this was difficult. The time came when I had to take the nasal spray. I had no idea if the small plastic bottle that I held was actually the medicine or just the placebo. But whatever it was, I hoped it was the cure-all I was waiting for.

I squeezed the bottle and hoped my oncoming migraine would disappear with a quick spritz. Instead, a burning sensation filled my nostrils. My throat was on fire, and I began to cry. Cursing the doctors, cursing the treatment, and cursing this stupid drug that they put me on. I was done.

I went back to the clinic the next week and they dropped me from the study.

For the rest of high school, I saw my neurologist. He helped me find a good preventive medication, Cyproheptadine. I maintained a specific sleep schedule and took my Motrin when needed.

Now, my headaches still come and go, but they have lessened. At times, my head grows heavy and my neck stiff. I still blast the air conditioner. Maintaining a sleep schedule is harder now that I'm in college and I cheat when it comes to eating specific foods. But my head is better. I can handle headaches. I have to.

I take my meds; I drink water; I follow my rules. When it's bad, I take a break. I know my limits, and I know I'm one of the lucky ones. My headaches are fading. And I hope that one day, maybe one day, I can stop taking my medication. I can eat all the chocolate I want, and I can live life without the burden of headaches or migraines. One day.

—Catherine Clark

Enter the Fray

To get to this point, Easton, like many migraine sufferers, experimented with the three main types of treatment until she found the medicine that worked for her.

Acute treatment is the first type. Acute treatment refers to drugs used during an attack to stop the migraine in its tracks. These drugs usually come in the form of abortive prescription medication or over-the-counter pain medicine. For example, Roberson takes prescribed medication, specifically Axert, to terminate migraines. Sufferers who use over-the-counter medicine sometimes find relief in Excedrin or Motrin.

A second option focuses on preventive treatment to decrease the frequency, severity, and length of migraine attacks. Preventive treatment typically comes in the form of daily-taken pills. Common prescriptions include anti-depressants and beta-blockers; other prescribed medicines were originally created to fight anxiety, seizures, or hypertension, according to the National Headache Foundation.

For example, some prescribed preventive medications are Cyproheptadine (an antihistamine), Amitriptyline

(an antidepressant), and Topamax (a seizure medication). As part of her preventive treatment, Roberson takes low strength blood pressure medication, called Maxalt PRN. Easton, on the other hand, takes Topiramate, a seizure medication.

Finally, you can find other forms of relief in complementary treatment, which is

often paired with preventive treatment. Biofeedback—or biological feedback—is a technique that involves learning how to control your bodily functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension. Sensors are placed on different parts of your body to monitor your body's physiological state.

With training, you can control the muscles

that are causing tension headaches with relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. According to the American Headache Society Committee on Headache Education, biofeedback typically results in a 45 percent to 60 percent reduction in headache frequency and severity.

Whatever you try, whatever your doctor recommends, the moral of the story is never give up. You just have to keep moving forward. Keep fighting.

Other complementary treatments include meditation, routinized sleep schedules, less strenuous exercise, and change in diet. While preventive treatment focuses on the migraine itself, complementary treatment centers on your triggers.

Your doctor may experiment with all three types of treatments in order to find your perfect match. During this process, you'll probably go through multiple blood tests and MRIs. You may lose count of how many times you've been to the doctor's office. Some pills won't work. Some will make the migraines worse. Several may get you closer. Others may lessen the pain.

Whatever you try, whatever your doctor recommends, the moral of the story is never give up. Doctors and researchers may not understand migraines completely. They may not be closer to discovering a migraine panacea. But you just have to keep moving forward. Keep fighting.

It's another day, and the possibility of a migraine looms over you. But this time, you're ready for the war. You know your triggers. You know your symptoms. You know that this time, just this time, your fortifications, your medication, may work. But the fear is still there. The possibility that everything could fall apart at the seams. *What do you do?*

Push through. Live and keep living. Don't lock yourself in your room out of fear. And remember the words of Maria Easton. When asked about how she keeps going, she laughs loudly and brazenly exclaims, "I can't just die!"

Life goes on. So must you. ●

Catherine Clark graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with a double major in Communication and Spanish. Hailing from Friendswood, Texas, Clark plans to attend USC to get her master's in journalism. Although her migraines have gotten better, she still gets headaches that sometimes turn into migraines. She says, "Migraines suck, but life is still fun."

A Paralympic Pursuit



Casey Tibbs' Journey to the Paralympic Games

By **BAILEY DRURY**

“Never quit chasing the rabbit.” Casey Tibbs’ grandfather repeated those words to him over and over as a kid. In his West Texas accent, his grandfather would explain to Tibbs how coyotes prey on jackrabbits because that is the only thing in the desert for them to eat.

Those jackrabbits are very quick, so the coyote must strategically plan to catch its prey to survive. The coyote never quits chasing the rabbit.

Tibbs took this mantra to heart after a bad motorcycle accident in March of 2001 when he lost his right leg below the knee. Just like the coyotes in West Texas, Tibbs never gave up.

It is not every day that a person loses his leg and four years later is standing on the podium of the Paralympic Games with a gold medal. Tibbs, who now has four Paralympic medals in track and field and works at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, never quit chasing after his passion.

Tibbs, born May 29, 1980, was a very athletic kid. Growing up, he played football, basketball, golf, and ran track. His passion and love for sports began in middle school. “I ran track in sixth grade. I competed in the 400-meter dash and I was a decent hurdler. It was from that point I knew I was hooked,” Tibbs said with a grin.

In 1999, at the age of 19, Tibbs decided to join the Navy two months after he graduated from high school. “I was out working in the hot sun one day and a Petty Officer came out and asked if anyone wanted to take a class to learn languages—I didn’t even have to think twice,” he recalled.

Learning the Language

After a few placement exams, the Navy told Tibbs that he had an innate ability to learn languages. “When I showed up to the Defense Language Institute in 1999, they put me in a course for Hebrew,” he said.

Over the next year, Tibbs spent his time in class learning the new language. When he was not in class, he played non-competitive intramurals sports with his friends to stay in shape.

As a result of his studies in the Navy, he gained the title of a Cryptologic Technician Interpretive (CTI), working on linguistic code and taking part in national intelligence gathering efforts. While stationed in Monterey, California in 2000, Tibbs met his wife, Robyn, who was also a CTI. Robyn left the Navy in 2006 when her enlistment ended.

A Change of Pace

In 2001, while out on a motorcycle ride with some of his friends, Tibbs’ life changed drastically. After taking

a turn too fast on his motorcycle, hitting a guardrail, and sliding a couple of hundred feet across the asphalt, he had to have his right lower leg amputated directly below the knee. Over the next several months after his accident, Tibbs had to readjust to his new life with his prosthetic leg.

“Comradery from the Navy was really supportive and my grandparents always acted as parental figures,” Tibbs said. “I always had constant reassurance that everything was going to be okay.”

During his recovery, his grandfather played a major motivational role in his life. While adjusting to his new prosthetic, his grandfather mentioned the Paralympic Games. Tibbs, who thought he had left his competitive sports career behind in high school, was very open to the idea. From that moment on, he knew he was going to do everything in his power to make it to the games in 2004.

“The Paralympic Games were a whole new outlook for me, something to look forward to,” Tibbs stated as he glanced down at his prosthetic leg. “I never thought of myself as being worse off due to my accident. Being an amputee opens up many doors and possibilities that I otherwise would not have had. I am a very goal-oriented person and this gave me something to focus on. I knew I had to do whatever it took to achieve this goal.”

Before Tibbs could start running again and get out on the track to start training, he had to get a running leg. A running leg was created specially to fit his needs and made out of carbon fiber. This permitted the leg to be super light, weighing only about four pounds.

Unlike his normal everyday prosthetic that resembles the shape of his other lower leg and foot, this running leg is a “J” shape—allowing him to propel his body down the track. The technology of a prosthetic running leg now lets amputee athletes compete at a world-class level.

“It is the perfect mix of professional sports with a touch of NASCAR. I constantly have to fine tune my leg before practice and competitions,” Tibbs laughed. “That is what makes it so cool; you can push off your leg as fast as your prosthetic will let you.”

The Road to the Paralympic Games

Making it on the Paralympic team was no easy feat. In track and field, a second of time can be the difference between making first place versus last. To qualify for the team, Tibbs needed to shave several seconds off his personal best time.

Six days a week, Tibbs was on the track training for hours at a time. Half of his workouts lasted around three hours before he headed to the weight room for another

Photo at left: Casey Tibbs (center) is congratulated at the Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece in 2004. (PHOTO by GETTY IMAGES)

two hours. On his recovery days, workouts were lighter and he was able to work on the more technical aspects of training, such as drills emphasizing running form and using the starting blocks.

Getting to the Paralympics was a process. In 2003, Tibbs competed in the state games in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he placed second in the 400-meter race. Later that year, he competed in the Endeavor Games in Edmond, Oklahoma, a nationally recognized competition for athletes with physical disabilities.

At this meet, he won both the 100-meter dash and the 400-meter. This was preparation for the pentathlon, a track event that combines a mix of five different races and throws: shot put, long jump, discus throw, 100-meter dash, and 400-meter. During the exhibition for the Paralympic trials in Sacramento, California in 2004, Tibbs turned heads nationally.

“When you get hurt, look at what doors are now available that you wouldn't have had the opportunity to do before your injury.”

— Casey Tibbs

Tibbs had barely made the Paralympic team because his times were not as fast or as competitive compared to other amputee athletes.

“I had never really put my race together in practice, but I went out there to compete and came in second. It was my first big ‘win’ since I had my prosthetic,” Tibbs pointed out.

This was a big moment that prepared Tibbs for the Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece. These games don't receive as much attention as the Olympics, but it is a great inspiration for those who experience trauma and have the opportunity to come out stronger on the other side. In Athens in 2004, Tibbs made history as the first American active duty military member to compete in the Paralympic Games. That year, he received a silver medal in the pentathlon and gold in the 4x100 relay.

“At the games in 2004, it was a really proud moment because it was my first gold medal. Standing on the first place podium at the Paralympics and being around everyone was unreal. The relay is especially fun because you are winning as part of a team,” Tibbs remembered. He had never imagined being able to represent the United States on a world-class stage, much less bring home a gold medal.

Tibbs' grey and black prosthetic running leg is not the first thing you notice when you approach this 6'5" lean athlete. His “just do it” personality got him nominated in 2007 for the ESPN “Best Male Athlete with a Disability” ESPY award. After his accident, he was the first amputee in the Navy to complete both the Naval Aircrew Candidate School (NAACS) and Navy Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE) trainings.

Following his achievements in Athens, the Navy gave Tibbs time to train for the 2008 Paralympics. He returned to the Paralympics in Beijing, at the age of 28, to receive another gold medal in the 4x100 relay and a bronze in long jump.

“From the way they built the Olympic Village, to the athletes, to the city—Beijing was out of this world,” Tibbs explained as his light blue eyes widened with enthusiasm.

After the 2008 Paralympic Games, Tibbs decided to push his limits and try to go for a third Paralympics. In 2011, he flew to New Zealand for the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletic World Championship and placed third in the long jump. A year later, he tried out for the 2012 Paralympic team, but fell short after a standard was changed and he missed the markings to qualify for the team in the long jump by only a few feet.

“The years between 2008 and 2012 were a really hard moment in my life,” Tibbs stated. On top of working nine hours a day with the Navy, he was trying to train for the Paralympics at a professional level. He generally had to travel by himself, leaving his wife and later on his children behind.

“I didn't have any time between coaching, work with the Navy, and my family. I was sacrificing too much and it was exhausting,” Tibbs recalled.

A Shared Passion

Tibbs found his passion in the sport of track and field. “Once you realize you are competing for yourself and hard work on and off the track will help get you better results, it is parallel to how life really is,” Tibbs observed, his tone changing to a more serious note. “We are all going to face challenges in life.”

Tibbs no longer trains or competes. He does not regret retiring from the professional world of track and field. Tibbs now has two sons, Taylor (9) and Trent (4), and a daughter, Reagan (6), who are already starting to share that same interest for sports as their father. He has continued his passion and love for the sport through coaching.

Still in the Navy at 35, he earned the ranking of Chief Petty Officer while stationed in San Antonio, Texas. From 2013 to 2015, Tibbs spent his afternoons training athletes at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas as the assistant track and field jumps coach. This was his



Casey Tibbs participates in the high jump during the Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008. (PHOTO by GETTY IMAGES)

first coaching position with a college athletic team.

“I have coached Paralympians or upcoming professional athletes one on one, but Trinity is the first team environment I coached for,” he proudly said. “I love Trinity because not every coach out there will recognize the Paralympics as the same as track and field. The technique does not differ.”

Running and jumping technique and form for a below-knee amputee is the same for a non-amputee. Therefore, he was able to use his own training techniques such as hill sprints, speed hurdles, and weighted runs to enhance the athletic ability of Trinity athletes.

According to Tibbs, the most important part of training athletes is proving that they can always push their limits.

Marcus Whitehead, head coach of track and field at Trinity, gave Tibbs full reign to train his athletes while there. Tibbs took advantage of this opportunity and trained 15 college athletes for the long and triple jump.

“Casey is a very knowledgeable jumps coach. He has jumped at the highest levels of the sport and understands the type of training and sacrifice it takes to be great in the sport,” recalled Whitehead. “One of his greatest strengths as a coach is his ability to break things down into simple terms to the athlete—and most importantly, keeping things light hearted and positive.”

Thomas Dimitri, another assistant track and field coach at Trinity University, said, “After years of competing in track and field and his military service, Casey is great at staying calm and confident, which is very contagious with his athletes.”

Tibbs' training methods were successful at Trinity, as one of his athletes, Brittany Sullivan, was ranked in the top 10 in the nation for Division III athletes for the triple jump as of March 2016.

Sullivan commented on how Casey related his past training methods to her own experience as a college athlete. “He started training us in the mornings before our Conference Championship because he said it would help us get used to the time we would compete at. Then he mentioned that when training for Beijing, he practiced at two in the morning in the United States to get used to the time change for once he got to Beijing. His training method really helped,” Sullivan said.

In the summer of 2015, Tibbs moved to Monterey, where he works at the Defense Language Institute. When Tibbs retires from the Navy in three years, he hopes to coach full time.

Until then, he volunteers with various amputee clubs and organizations. He hosts a running clinic two or three times a year that focuses on amputee athletes, especially runners with prosthetic legs.

As an amputee, Tibbs can relate to and help mentor others who are going through the rehabilitation process. Tibbs explains that there are so many programs for people with disabilities, such as kayaking or wheelchair basketball. It can tremendously help positively shape the rehabilitation process.

Tibbs advises amputees to think positively, saying, “When you get hurt, look at what doors are now available that you wouldn't have had the opportunity to do before your injury. This will give you a goal to push towards.” ●

Bailey Drury graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with a double major in Communication and Business Administration and minor in Sport Management. A native of Tampa, Florida, Drury plans to move back home and work for one of Tampa's sports teams in their public relations department. Drury was captain of Trinity's track and field team for two years.



A Glimpse Through the Lens

The Story Behind the Humans of San Antonio Project

By JESSICA LUHRMAN

It all started over a drink. In October 2012, Michael Cirlos was out with his friend, Stella Savage, at the Flying Saucer Draught Emporium and he was in a venting mood. Cirlos, a 30-something Latino man and San Antonio native, was fed up with the Alamo City.

His fully shaved head revealed his thick brows and hazel eyes. Standing 6 feet tall with a sturdy build, he sipped his beer and told Savage about his qualms. Cirlos didn't like the layout of the city or the bad image of downtown. He wanted to do something to help the downtown area,

but he didn't know what. Halfway through his rant, Savage stopped him short. She held up her phone and said, "Why don't you just do this?"

On the screen was an Instagram post for Humans of New York, a social media photography project in New York City founded in 2010 by photographer Brandon Stanton.

Cirlos was intrigued.

He had not heard of Humans of New York, so Savage filled him in on the details. She explained the Humans of New York project began with a simple goal to showcase the inhabitants of New York City

through photographs.

Stanton snaps photos of people on the streets of New York City and asks them a few questions. The photos are uploaded daily on the Humans of New York Facebook and Instagram accounts along with a quote from Stanton's interview.

If there was a light bulb above Cirlos' head, it would have switched on. Cirlos was so inspired by the photography project that he followed Savage's advice. At the end of October 2012, he officially founded Humans of San Antonio, a spinoff photography project of Humans of

New York set in the Alamo City.

Cirlos decided to keep the premise of Humans of San Antonio similar to Humans of New York. He wanted to photograph individuals on the streets of San Antonio and learn their stories, but unlike Humans of New York, Cirlos wanted to promote the downtown area and create a sense of community in the city.

Before beginning Humans of San Antonio, Cirlos spent two years in a study abroad program in Thailand followed by eight months of studying in the Netherlands. Cirlos first tried his hand at photography in 2007 during his study abroad trip in Thailand.

His professor was visiting an elementary school in Thailand where volunteers teach English. Cirlos tagged along with an "old school" disposable camera. He loved every second of the day he spent photographing students and professors. After developing the photos, Cirlos came to a realization: he had a passion for photographing people.

Cirlos' time in Thailand not only taught him that he had a fervor for photography, but it also revealed the disconnect he felt with his hometown.

He grew up on the north side of San Antonio and rarely visited the downtown area. While studying abroad, Cirlos spent a large amount of time in the downtown areas of Thailand and the Netherlands and discovered thriving cities. He admired their layout and their sense of community. His dissatisfaction with San Antonio's downtown increased.

After his time overseas, Cirlos returned to San Antonio and graduated from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 2010 with a degree in psychology. He began work as a substance abuse counselor for Hope Action Care, a downtown non-profit.

He felt that something in his life was lacking and he was growing tired of San Antonio after living abroad.

He desperately needed an avenue to channel his frustration and Humans of San Antonio offered just that—a way to reconnect with the Alamo City.

Cirlos halfheartedly went out in search of the first individuals to interview for Humans of San Antonio in October 2012. He didn't know what kind of response he would receive or if people would be accepting.

Second thoughts clouded his head as he left his home just outside of the downtown area and pedaled his bike into the city center. Cirlos rode through the inner city streets and stopped people to ask if he could snap their photo. The interactions were awkward at first and often people would turn him down.

The stories that linger with Cirlos are ones with a message behind them.

Today, Cirlos is far more confident approaching anyone on the street. He has refined his process of approaching individuals to an art.

"My approach is a lot better now. I'm 100 percent comfortable in talking to anyone. I think people see that in me and think 'Oh, that guy's cool. He's chill, he's just doing that art thing,'" Cirlos says with a laugh.

When he speaks, Cirlos does so in a calming voice. When he listens to others, he does so intently—nodding, leaning in, and smiling every so often. He says he's always been a good listener, an ideal skill for his daily interviews for Humans of San Antonio.

The first question he poses to his subjects is a simple one: "Are you from San Antonio?" Cirlos is weary of speaking to tourists who often flood the downtown area and only wants to photograph San Antonians. Cirlos then follows with a second question: "What are your thoughts on the downtown area?"

To this, he receives a myriad of responses. "I hear that it's dirty, that there are way too many homeless people or that it's not very attractive," Cirlos recalls with a somber face.

These initial questions break the ice and ease the barrier between the photographer and the subject. Cirlos then turns to more challenging questions like, "What is one memory that you never want to forget?" or "If you can tell your story in a few paragraphs, what would you say?"

Occasionally, the deeper questions elicit a laugh from subjects who want to know Cirlos' intentions. Cirlos explains, "I'm doing this project in San Antonio where I'm showcasing the individuality of people on the city streets and promoting intercity culture."

Cirlos aims to promote a sense of community through the photos, which are intended to connect San Antonians through shared stories and experiences. After understanding the project, individuals are usually willing to share their stories with Cirlos.

These questions regularly lead to enthralling stories that last anywhere from a few minutes to half an hour. Cirlos rarely uses a recorder, which he believes causes subjects to censor their responses. Instead, he listens attentively for a point in the story that excites him, which he uses as a caption for the photo on social media.

"I look for a really good one-liner or a short paragraph of information that tells a story of that person with the image I take," Cirlos clarifies.

The stories cover all the bases. Some are funny or sweet, while others are exhilarating, tear-jerking, or vulnerable. Some photos are posed before or after the interview, while others are taken as the subjects are telling their tales. Cirlos keeps his camera geared up, ready for a genuine moment from the individual he is interviewing: an emotional expression, a thoughtful look into

“If you can tell your story in a few paragraphs, what would you say?”

— Michael Cirlos

the distance, or a deep stare into the camera all qualify.

One story that captured the hearts of Humans of San Antonio followers was about Liz, a server at a restaurant on the San Antonio River Walk. Liz had been walking down Navarro Street with tears streaming down her face. Cirlos saw her crying and stopped to ask her if she was okay. While she was explaining her circumstance, Cirlos took an emotional portrait of her with tears and bloodshot eyes—exactly how she looked in that vulnerable moment.

The portrait was posted on Facebook in September 2013 with a quote from Liz, which read: “Today was probably the worst day ever. I just got off of work and found out my roommate stole several of my things, including \$700 I had at the apartment. I’m a server and on top of that I lost money at work. You know this is really hard on me. I have two kids and I’m all that they have.”

Her moving story received a tidal wave of comments. The photo even evoked a goodwill response from viewers who wanted to do more than just wish her well in the comment section. In a rare act of kindness, viewers sent in donations and gift cards in varying amounts. Cirlos says Liz was beyond excited to have received such kind gifts from people she had never met.

Liz’s story is just one of hundreds that Cirlos has posted since founding the project in 2012. The posts—uploaded daily—receive overwhelmingly positive responses from Facebook and Instagram viewers.

“I think San Antonio is a great place to do any kind of art,” observes Cirlos with a wide grin, revealing two dimples outside the corners of his mouth. “The city wants more people to be involved in the arts and to stay in San Antonio and make this place a better place for future generations.”

To date, the Humans of San

Antonio Facebook page has received more than 18,000 likes and the Instagram page has more than 3,500 followers. For Cirlos, Humans of San Antonio is a labor of love.

“I’m not making any money off of this. So I don’t really have a whole lot of time and I really need to be efficient with my time,” says Cirlos.

At one point, Cirlos played the balancing game between his photography project and his job as a foster care social worker for the state of Texas. Through social work, he interacted with people of differing lifestyles and backgrounds that he says aided the journalistic aspect of his photography project.

Today, Cirlos still photographs San Antonians for Humans of San Antonio, but he is now a full-time freelance photographer.

Previously, Cirlos took photos outside of the city center, but it was too time-consuming. In an effort to be more efficient, he only photographs within the downtown area and has made that the focus of the project.

The stories that linger with Cirlos are ones with a message behind them. One afternoon in 2012, Cirlos was at a coffee shop on South Presa Street. He glanced out the window and saw a homeless man with an expression mixed between pure anger and genuine sadness.

Armed with his camera, Cirlos crossed the street and asked the man what was wrong. The man informed Cirlos that his girlfriend of 40 years had broken up with him and taken all of his money and clothing.

Cirlos remembers the day clearly: “That man was having a really bad day. I could tell he was upset. He started to cry a little bit. He told me, ‘You know what, man. I really appreciate you just asking how my day was. It put me in a better mood.’”

Before Cirlos walked away, the man left him with a positive message, saying, “We need to pay attention to the good things in our lives and we’ll be just fine.”



Shown here and on page 46 are some of the portraits Cirlos has been able to capture for Humans of San Antonio. (PHOTOS by MICHAEL CIRLOS)

The man, who was clearly heartbroken, was still looking for the good in his situation. This resonated with Cirlos who has not forgotten their meeting.

This meeting is only one example of the many interviews Cirlos has held with individuals of all types of backgrounds for Humans of San Antonio. People of varying ages, appearances, and economic statuses have the potential of being photographed.

The posts on Facebook and Instagram include children, businessmen and women, homeless individuals, hipsters, college students, and more. Cirlos aims to target a wide array of people to successfully encapsulate the diversity of San Antonio.

Between hearing the story and capturing the image of the subject, Cirlos enjoys the photography side more. “I’ve really grown to love photography and at this point in my life, that’s all that I think about. I understand what it means to capture the precise moment and how to tell a story through imagery,” Cirlos says passionately.

The portraits of Humans of San Antonio have turned heads across the city. In August 2014, Cirlos was featured in a PechaKucha San Antonio showcase, a quarterly event

where community members give a 20-slide presentation and have 20 seconds to speak on each slide. Cirlos was one of eight presenters chosen for their impact on the community.

Since beginning the project, Cirlos has shared his passion through presentations regarding photojournalism at The University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary’s University, Our Lady of the Lake University, and the Briscoe Western Art Museum.

Looking ahead, Cirlos is currently working with Trinity University Press to turn his social media posts into a printed book. The portraits of San Antonians and their short stories would fill 224 pages of the book with 300 photos taken since the inception of the project. Once published, the Humans of San Antonio can join the global movement of “Humans of” books for Oslo and New York.

Humans of San Antonio turned three years old in October 2015 and Cirlos has high hopes for the future. Cirlos has found his passion through photography. His work has appeared in the *San Antonio Express-News*, *Rivard Report*, *Centro San Antonio*, and others.

Many of his recent Humans of San Antonio posts have included

fewer quotes and focused more on the photograph in an effort for Cirlos to maintain his photojournalism skills.

Even with all the success, Cirlos has never lost sight of why he began the project in the first place: to showcase individuals in downtown San Antonio and promote a stronger community in the city. After countless interviews, Cirlos believes the city seems to be making an effort to improve the downtown area.

“A lot of people say San Antonio is a place where you sleep, but not a place where you live,” Cirlos says intently. “But I think San Antonio is becoming more of a place where you can actually live and experience different things.”

Humans of San Antonio tells the stories of the everyday people who inhabit the Alamo City. The result is a project that connects us all and introduces us to one another in an unlikely way.

“I love San Antonio. I love being here. In the event that I ever have to leave San Antonio, I can leave feeling like I left it better than I found it,” Cirlos smiles. ●

Jessica Luhrman graduated in May 2016 with a double major in Communication and Political Science. She plans to pursue a career in public relations in San Antonio.



Michael Cirlos is the human behind Humans of San Antonio. (PHOTO by CELESTE MACIAS)

SAND AND SMOKE SCREENS

Exploring the Real Oahu

By DYLAN WAGNER



(PHOTO by PABLO GARCIA SALDAÑA from STOCKSHOP)

While the plane soared over the deep-blue Central Pacific Ocean, I napped, dreaming that Oahu had sunk into the ocean. Crushed under the weight of tourism and luggage, the island simply couldn't take the strain any longer, allowing the illusory place so often depicted on screen to disappear in reality.

But the turbulent descent shook me awake to the sight of the very real Koolau mountain range, its crisp jungled foothills softening into clouds at the top and pastel condos at the bottom.

The kid sitting next to me, a member of a large family in the adjacent central row, was struggling to find a balance between politeness and stepping all over me in order to look out the window. I got up to let him drink in the view, and after a moment of quiet, he said, "We're really far away from Honduras." We were really far away from everything, in truth.

As our plane descended sharply to meet the runway, I had a silly

thought: I wondered if the thousand tropical illusions I had seen depicted on screen would supplant the sandy reality of Oahu. I was about to find out.

The island of Oahu certainly seems real on the surface. It's the third largest island of the eight major land bodies of the Hawaiian archipelago but holds two-thirds of the entire chain's population. This concentration seems appropriate as Oahu has been popularly known as "The Gathering Place" since at least 1922, although the correct spelling of Oahu, O'ahu, has no direct translation. Oahu occupies 597 square miles of mountains and beaches, and has a population of 953,207 inhabitants.

Oahu not only houses the largest airport of the chain, Honolulu International Airport, but also Hawaii's capital city of Honolulu, with a population of 402,500, on the southeastern side of the island. This city was where I started my weeklong journey into the heart of Oahu.

With a relative happy to house

me and a wallet full of cash and plastic, I was ready to stretch my limited resources as far as they would go to explore every facet of the island. My cousin Joanna worked during the day and could not meet me at the airport, so I followed her instructions and hopped onto a hotel shuttle to the Hawaiian Monarch Hotel, a combination hotel and condominium.

Joanna rented one of the condos. From the room high up on the 19th floor, we overlooked the Ala Wai Canal and its adjacent fields and city streets. I watched local kids play baseball and soccer, watched the lights of Taco Bell and tourist traps flicker on as the sun went down, and watched an older baseball team chase off the soccer kids. I watched all of this from above the pavement, wondering how a place so magical could look so much like a cityscape.

Later, on the street and up close to the buildings, I realized a huge proportion of the structures are residential. Condo after hotel after resort after apartment soar into the

cloud-speckled sky, dwarfing the restaurants, chain stores, and strip malls below.

The architectural history of Oahu is written on its skin. I could tell exactly which areas of the island were suitable for habitation, legally or physically, because every appropriate spot was already taken up by a tall building. As the land sloped up into the jungle and the forest, houses rose with it until the elevation was simply too great for any horizontal structure to survive on it.

I got a broad survey of these houses by riding with Joanna on our preferred form of transportation: the bus. For a frugal traveler, there is no other option worth a sea salt. If you're headed for any destination near one of the regular stops (which is anywhere in the greater Honolulu metropolitan area), taking a bus is the way to go.

You can buy a one-way adult ticket for \$2.50, which is cheaper than paying the exorbitant taxi rates in Honolulu. There's simply no question. The buses have another advantage for sightseers. Because they travel so slowly, I got to watch the morning sun paint southern Oahu while the bus grumbled on to Diamond Head State Park, 2.9 miles from our hotel.

My cousin and I watched as the trees started spreading apart, transforming from dense forests into scattered copses. The flora turned from a combination of emerald and chocolate to the more piney green and beige of the arid crater. By the time we had arrived at Diamond Head, the world around us looked less like a tropical advertisement and more like some exotic part of Arizona.

A gaggle of tourists wandered around the ranger station at the base of the massive volcanic crater, but we had higher ambitions than photo ops by public bathrooms. We paid our one dollar entrance fee and started

the steep hike to the top of the rim, landmarked by a bunker from World War II, now stripped and ready for vacationers to wander through its gloomy corridors.

My back was soaked with sweat by the time we climbed the 216 steep steps to the top and strode outside the rusty pillbox onto the skinny path marking the edge of Diamond Head.

The sun high over the crater lit up the sign explaining that Diamond Head was formed by a volcanic eruption probably lasting no more than a couple of days. The ash and cinder settled back down to form a type of rock formation called tuff, and the volcanic material then cemented and cooled to form the crater 300,000 years ago.

The view of Honolulu from the ancient crater was picturesque but strange; most pictures of Waikiki include Diamond Head in it, so the vista felt incomplete without it. All in all, the bus ride, hike, and priceless view took a little more than three hours to experience.

After seeing thousands of eager tourists treading our same path, we were ready for a nice quiet nap. At the same time, I was excited for our next vacation destination—a forest right outside the city called the Lyon Arboretum, a huge expanse of rainforest containing an awe-inspiring place called Manoa Falls.

Rested and ready to go again, we hopped back on a bus, this time headed to the center of the island, deep into the Palolo Mountains. Our stop was the bus's last, and as soon as it turned and skidded back down the road, the rain dropped like buckets from the sky, drenching us immediately. We shrugged and walked uphill, past the houses and the torrential rivers of runoff streaming down the road.

I was beginning to regret the rain when the forest came into view in a clearing. The bamboo swayed and palm fronds gyrated and twitched

under the downpour. As I learned right then, there is only one right way to hike through a rainforest, and that is during a thunderstorm.

Everything around us was unfamiliar. Trees like spiders curled their woody tendrils around rocks, through dirt, and through the branches of other trees. Some plants didn't get the memo about growing up straight, and we saw dozens of ancient trees spreading sideways across the trail and deep into the forest.

At times, the only way to progress was to walk a slippery tightrope between these trees' ageless branches. The rain was the only witness to our dozens of near falls, but we finally emerged unscathed onto the trail again.

I felt I saw through Oahu at that moment, with water streaming down my face and glasses.

We passed no other soul on the path for at least an hour, and the irregular drips and plops of rain, finding their way through the thick canopy, made a tingle run through my spine—I'd swear to this day those drops sounded like the forest was whispering to me. The only other sounds to hear were our hearts beating slowly. The beats of the rain and our chests seemed to align at times.

I was glad Joanna took me to a place where there weren't so many tourists. This land and its trees seemed untouched by human hands, save for the desperate and fading clusters of carved initials, records of old loves soon washed away by the patient pace of time and rain.

I felt that I saw through Oahu at that moment, with water streaming down my face and glasses. There was a heartbeat in that forest, and the roar of the forest's blood rang loud as we approached Manoa Falls.

There are waterfalls, and then there are the Manoa Falls. It's a bit of a misnomer to imply a plural, as there really is just one waterfall with a 100 foot drop of plummeting water. Signs nearby clearly warn against swimming due to the risk of falling rocks and slippery stone, but the foam-blasted pool at the base of the falls called to me louder than my sense of danger did.

I quickly shed my shoes and dove into the reflecting pool, allowing the water to envelop me.

There was a heartbeat in that forest, and the roar of the forest's blood rang loud as we approached Manoa Falls.

Again, our solitude allowed me to see through some of the island's illusions to perceive what Oahu truly is, was, and should be. Cold and clean, I felt connected to the thousands of years that this waterfall had been gushing.

The place cleansed me of whatever sins a tourist contains. From that moment on, I tried my utmost to find the road less traveled, to marvel at the untapped glory of Oahu.

We waved goodbye to the Lyon Arboretum just as a huge rainbow sliced a beautiful parabola across the cloudy sky. At that moment, coated in mud and sweat, I couldn't tell the difference between my tears and the rain.

We finally returned to town and collapsed into an island-induced coma. Waking up late the next day, we spent most of it lounging around the room or shopping for basic food supplies. By sundown, Joanna started hinting at our next adventure, something she would only call "The Islet."

But first, we needed to greet the other pilgrim staying with us, Joanna's friend Ainsley. We picked her up and grabbed lunch from the restaurant in the lobby of the hotel.

After eating a monstrous serving of a modern Hawaiian dish, loco moco, consisting of a hamburger patty, gravy, and a fried egg scooped on top of white rice, I fell into a deep food nap. The next day, I would be glad for the extra hours of sleep as we woke up at dawn to go to the islet.

We strayed from the tourist path as we drove the 45-minute, 22.5 mile journey to Kualoa Regional Park with Mike, Joanna's work friend, who had been living on Oahu for more than 10 years. According to him, most of the natives he had met had never done what we were about to attempt.

Our goal? To wade to a mist-shrouded islet using a path only passable during low tide.

The path, a shallow expanse of painful, coral-lined shore bottom, extended from the beach at Kualoa Regional Park all the way to the islet. The distance was only a fourth of a mile and looked doable when we started the trek. But as our first steps into the water were met by razor-sharp coral shards and slippery rocks, we realized that crossing the expanse would take a lot of time and cost a lot of foot skin.

Crossing this route in such a painful way was our only choice, however. Without a low tide, we would be swept out to sea by the unforgiving currents of Kāne'ohe Bay. During this particular month, the tide happened to be significantly low at 8 a.m., which meant we had to roll out of bed at 4:30 a.m. to get

there in time for a walk.

On the way there, I learned that the islet's true name is Mokoli'i, but it was nicknamed "Chinaman's Hat" by American imperialists in the 1800s for its passing resemblance to the conical hat worn by Chinese immigrants of the time. It sits about a quarter of a mile from the beach in the middle of Kāne'ohe Bay. On a map, the bay looks like the ocean took a toothy bite out of western Oahu, and Mokoli'i might be one of the crumbs left behind.

In fact, there is already a mythical explanation for the little islet. In Hawaiian mythology, Mokoli'i is a piece of a lizard or dragon's tail cut off by the patron goddess of Hawai'i (the traditional spelling of the island chain) Hi'iaka. In Hawaiian, Mokoli'i means "little lizard."

As we slowly sloshed our way through the frigid morning bay water and the islet grew to fill more and more of our horizon, the "lizard" description started to fit. The slick black volcanic rocks bleeding foam and water looked like the scales of an ancient reptile, while the rounded stone peak of the landmass was an old scar from a mythological battle long-lost.

We arrived early so we would not be drowned by the rising tide—we spent little time staring. We started the long waist-deep wade to the sharp black rocks we would be beaching ourselves on, and after about 45 minutes of sloshing, floating, and shivering, we were in the shadow of Mokoli'i. The next leg of the journey was climbing the islet itself, a big volcanic rock strewn with low vegetation and stunted trees.

At the moment that the three of us scaled the final boulder and stepped onto the wind-blasted peak of Mokoli'i, the full force of the seaward gale hit us. We crouched low and peered at the land uncovered by our climb.

A second later, the low sun cut a



The islet, Mokoli'i, sits about a quarter of a mile from the beach in the middle of Kāne'ohe Bay. (PHOTO by DYLAN WAGNER)

blazing line on the water as roiling clouds passed to cast a shadow on the mainland. In that moment, the island of Oahu looked like the land from a dream, a time-forgotten fairy tale existing long before the condos and kitsch and tourists arrived.

Joanna pointed down at the water lapping high on the rocks. We needed to leave. We scrambled down the rust-colored mud and angular rocks, kicking down an avalanche of pebbles and clods of dirt as we descended the lizard's tail. The water had risen greatly since we had arrived, and a chest-high slog awaited us once we finally reached the bottom.

As the other two pilgrims dove into the lapping waves, I slipped and sliced my hand open on the porous black rock, leaving a bit of myself on the islet as we departed. I left a red trail in the water as we swam frantically to shore, panting as we flopped on the beach. The water rose and rose, consuming and concealing our path. The islet was still steeped in shadow as we drove away, leaving Mokoli'i to strike someone else with awe.

Oahu's image as a tropical paradise didn't completely fade once I was back in Honolulu. It shimmered with every ukulele strain and palm frond wave, but there were spots where its self-awareness as a tourist

destination stuck out. Appropriately, this break in character was obvious in the most tourist-friendly locations of all: the ever-present ABC stores, combination convenience stores and souvenir shops.

One clerk jokingly explained the acronym as "All Blocks Covered," referring to the presence of the stores on every block around Waikiki. A one-stop shop for tourists, Ainsley and I would walk into an ABC store every couple of days and walk out with interesting souvenirs, clothing, and alcohol—never spending more than \$25.

In any case, thanks to ABC, we finished our shopping a day before Ainsley and I had to depart, leaving room for a delicious dinner at a Korean restaurant Joanna heard about from a friend in the know.

We literally had to look around every corner we could find to spot Mikawon, a Korean restaurant with a facade sunk well into the brick, hiding it from all but the most persistent passersby.

We sat down and realized we were the only non-Asian people in the restaurant and the staff spoke only Korean. Ordering was an interesting process, but each of us eventually received a steaming stone cauldron full of an assortment of fried vegetables, strips of beef, and

raw eggs that the waiter cracked directly into our bowls.

When we left Mikawon, my stomach was full and my wallet was light. But our frugality throughout the trip showed that even the illusion of Hawaii can be punctured with a sharp mind and a lust for adventure.

The trip was over quickly, slipping through our fingers like the rough volcanic sand we became so fond of. Joanna saw us off at the airport, and Ainsley and I enjoyed one last Kona beer while the rumbling jet engines shook our glasses.

The vacation, and the land on which I took it, felt like a timeless thing. When I boarded the plane and it took off, away from Oahu, there was nothing left to do but sleep and remember the time I spent there.

When I closed my eyes, this time the island was still there with its white sand beaches and gently swaying palm trees. Ever eternal, "The Gathering Place" remains under the tropical sun. ●

Dylan Wagner will graduate in May 2017 with a major in Communication. A native of Houston, Texas, he would like to write professionally for a magazine or contribute to non-profit organizations through research and writing.

53 FOURTEENERS in 53 DAYS

By MADISON SMITH

(PHOTO by MICHAEL RYAN)

On a crisp, dew-coated August morning in southwestern Colorado, a scruffy young man emerges from his green Subaru Outback after having spent the night curled up with a pillow and blanket in the backseat. He shakes a few kinks out of his neck before walking around to the front of the car, opening the door, and grabbing his toiletry bag from under the seat. He begins walking across the dirt-packed parking lot toward a tiled cube structure that contains bathrooms and changing rooms.

Inside, he finds a rank-smelling, dark room with a cracked mirror above a single sink. The water tastes strongly of minerals as he brushes his teeth and splashes his face. He rubs a hand through his hair and checks his worn-down black adidas watch. It's a few minutes to seven. The sun is about to rise.

The man strides back to his car where he climbs in the front seat and begins putting on a pair

of muddy brown hiking boots. He grabs a granola bar from his glove compartment and munches on it as he watches the brilliant yellow light make its way over the San Juan Mountain Range.

He grabs his iPhone and begins searching for trails that will lead to the summit of one of the more daunting peaks that stands in front of him: Mount Sneffels, with an elevation of 14,150 feet. After a quick examination of the path, he grabs his CamelBak filled with water, a packed lunch, and a first-aid kit before leaving his car to begin the six-mile hike to the top of the mountain.

This is how 22-year-old Peter Remington has started his mornings, with variations in location and destination, for the past 52 days since he decided to climb every one of Colorado's 53 mountains that stand more than 14,000 feet above sea level (or a fourteener) over the course of 53 days. He began his task with Mount Bierstadt on June 19,

2014 and completed his journey on Mount Sneffels on August 10, 2014. By the end, he had climbed every fourteener in Colorado.

Remington's tall, yet thin build makes him appear malnourished even though he claims to eat roughly 3,000 calories worth of Lay's Classic Potato Chips every day. His straight brown hair, which falls down to his shoulders, is often strung up in a messy bun and tied together with a piece of hemp fabric. Bits of stubble line his pointed jaw, which he nearly always strokes—either because he is in a deep state of concentration or because he is incredibly bored.

Remington's favorite outfit is cargo shorts, a plaid long-sleeve shirt, hiking boots, and a bandana tied around either his neck or head. Although his smile is friendly and bright, it's difficult not to notice that the lower half of his right canine is missing, which may add another level of intrigue to his character. One might imagine that he lost his tooth in a grand escapade through the

wilderness, when in fact he ran into a wall after a night of heavy drinking.

Between his calloused fingers, Remington almost always holds a six-inch string of wooden maroon beads. He rubs the pad of his thumbs over the beads to calm the constant buzz of energy that runs through him. This endless amount of energy demands both mental awareness and physical movement.

Remington claims that he's been drawn to the wild since he was a child. "I have these vague memories of being strapped to my dad's back in one of those baby backpack things," Remington says. "I'm pretty sure that he would take me on insane hikes. Like, he'd be holding onto the side of a mountain, and there'd be a 50-foot drop behind him. So, he'd have to basically figure out how to get out of some dangerous situations, while a screaming baby was attached to him."

Remington laughs and looks away with a fond expression. "I remember looking out at the

mountains, though, and seeing all the cool colors and shapes. And even though I didn't really get what was going on, I think I knew they were beautiful," Remington reminisces.

Since his backpacking days with his father, Remington has lived in the small mountainous community of Evergreen, Colorado with a population of 9,038 nestled at the beginning of the Rockies about 15 miles west of Denver. He graduated from Evergreen High School in 2012 and began attending University of Colorado Boulder, where he is currently a senior Environmental Studies major set to graduate in May 2016.

"My classes are a cool integration of thinking about the environment in terms of science, policy, and values," Remington explains. "I definitely am most interested in the values part. I love learning about different people's relationship with nature and how it varies from culture to culture. I'm sort of obsessed with figuring out my own relationship

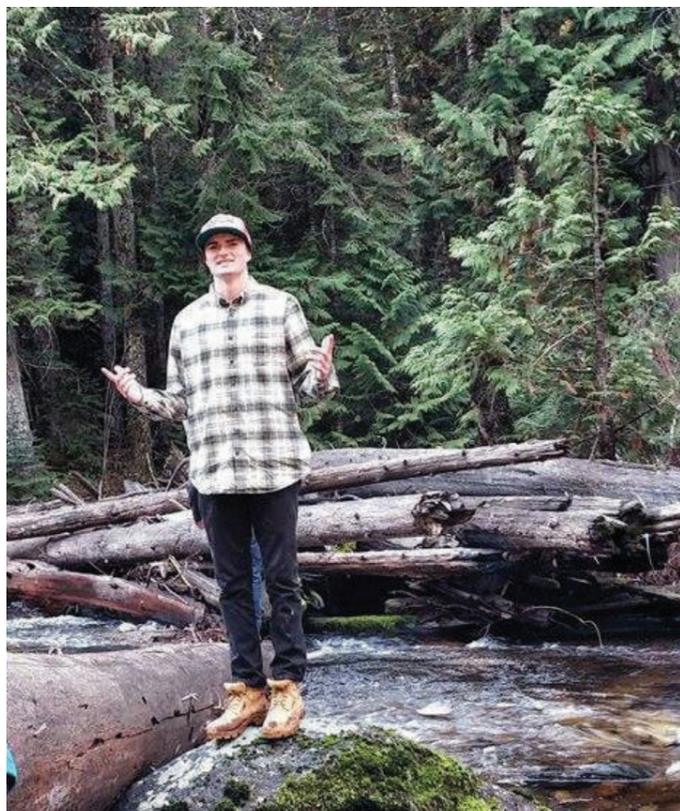
It's important to leave very early when hiking fourteeners. You don't want to catch the hot, dry Colorado sun blazing down on you during your ascent.

with the environment. That's partly why I wanted to do this whole 53-day hiking project—I wanted to explore what my place is in the world and what I can get out of being totally immersed in nature."

At school, Remington spends most days working in the recreation center as a climbing instructor. "I'm the guy standing next to the rock wall, always wearing a harness,



Peter Remington takes a break from hiking to pose for a shot in the woods and cool off by a stream. (PHOTOS courtesy of PETER REMINGTON)



and yelling at some kid to lift their left foot a little higher,” Remington chuckles. “It’s helpful, though. There have been times when I’ve been in a rough situation on a mountain, and I wish there’d been some dude standing around yelling at me to just lift my left foot a little higher.”

The idea to do a 53-day trip arose in one of Remington’s rock climbing sessions. “This guy came in during the winter, and he was a pretty decent climber. A lot of better climbers come inside during the winter because you can’t really go crawl up a solid piece of ice outside. So, this guy was telling me this story about how he used to go hiking every weekend in high school and would just sleep in his car instead of getting a room somewhere or having to drive back. He pretty much made it sound awesome,” Remington recalls.

That winter in 2013, Remington began making plans for a giant summer solo hiking trip. After a few hours of researching different Coloradan mountains, Remington made the bold decision to attempt climbing every mountain in Colorado with an elevation higher than 14,000 feet.

“I was thinking about all the places I wanted to go and how awesome it would be to go to pretty much every serious Coloradan mountain. I talked to my parents and saved up some money and was pretty much good to go,” Remington says.

Remington spent his entire spring semester in 2014 preparing for a summer of climbing up and down mountains. He started running and lifting weights almost every day.

“I was nervous about starting my trip and my body immediately shutting down,” Remington states. “What you have to do is really strengthen your lungs through cardio activities. When you’re up at 14,000 feet, it’ll start feeling like the air you breathe has no oxygen in it. You might get out of breath or tired or sick, so I tried to prepare for that as much as possible.”

Remington also began buying all the supplies that he imagined would be necessary for living in his car for nearly two months. He purchased

a heated blanket, maps of Colorado towns like Boulder and Crested Butte, an electricity power converter, containers for food, thousands of hours of audio books, first-aid kits, flashlights, a rifle, and paper towels. He began setting aside a few sturdy, waterproof outfits for the road and made sure to be prepared for every possible weather scenario—from blizzard to flood.

“During this time leading up to my trip, I also started trying to think a lot more about why exactly I was going. The whole thing may have started off as a bit of a compulsive decision,” Remington admits, “but I had to stick with it because everyone I knew was getting a job or internship. I needed to say I was doing something with my time besides just sitting around all summer.”

Remington begins moving the beads around his fingers more noticeably as he continues: “I began getting worried that I was wasting

my time over a summer, when everyone else was going to be getting jobs or planning their futures—at least that’s what it seemed like.”

He pauses and looks around at his dorm room’s off-white colored walls with a nervous expression. “I talked to my dad about it a little bit,” he continues, “and he basically told me that we have so little time on this Earth, let alone a little time to spend summer vacation the way we want, the way that makes us happy. I started really thinking about structuring my life less around pursuing success, and more around just making myself feel fulfilled. I figured that hiking and being close to nature for a whole summer would make me feel like a part of the stuff I study at school. And I just thought it would make me happy.”

Remington looks down and smiles. Even though he feels that his actions have been validated by his father, there’s still a sense of vulnerability when he talks about his trip. He suddenly doesn’t make eye contact, as if he’s afraid of being judged.

Remington has a contrasting sense of confidence in his knowledge of the environment and ability to enter this state of being “one with nature,” but he is still susceptible to the pangs of feeling inadequate for choosing a different path.

It raises the question of whether or not it is more important to choose a path that many others believe leads to a concept of success, or is it better overall to focus on personal happiness, especially when the opportunities are more available. Remington seems to still be contemplating this question and possibly feeling guilty for choosing what may be perceived as the less successful choice.

Remington made his choice. On the morning of June 19, 2014, Remington left his family home in Evergreen to travel an hour and a half to the base of Mount Bierstadt, a

14,065-foot mountain in the Front Range. He had spent the night before packing all of his personal items into the Subaru he received for his 16th birthday.

on this columbine field because I went off-trail for a few minutes. It was so beautiful. Stuff like that doesn’t happen very often. I loved the opportunity to take in the

“When you’re up at 14,000 feet, it’ll start feeling like the air you breathe has no oxygen in it.”

— Peter Remington

“It was really weird saying goodbye to my parents. I’d always spent the summer at home and it felt strange to be leaving them,” Remington explains. “We all knew that I could come home whenever—I would never be very far. But I think we all knew that I wanted to do this as an independence thing. I wanted to be able to take care of myself for a little bit.”

Remington had two thoughts in mind as he departed alone at 7 a.m. First, it’s important to leave very early when hiking fourteeners. You don’t want to catch the hot, dry Colorado sun blazing down on you during your ascent. Second, tourists are notorious for clogging up the trails later in the morning.

“From then on out, I absolutely loved every second of the next 53 days,” Remington says. “Well, not every second, but I think I overall learned from the whole thing.”

During his trip, Remington was alone nearly every day and night with the exception of a few times when friends would join him for a day.

“I learned both how to be alone, which is really useful, and how awful it can be,” Remington expounds. “There were these days when I would have hundreds of awesome experiences. Once, when I was in the Maroon Bells, I just stumbled

moment and feel completely at peace with both nature and myself. But, I also really wished I had somebody there to see it with. I wished I could talk to somebody about it, not just keep it as a memory.”

Alone in the wilderness, Remington not only witnessed nature’s beauty, but also confronted its challenges.

“The most difficult hike I ever did was probably Mount Wilson, but that’s to be expected. Everyone knows it’s the worst. It’s covered in ice toward the top, so I had to use an ice axe to make it all the way up. It’s pretty scary because you can easily lose your footing and slide down a hundred feet,” clarifies Remington.

“I guess besides that, the hardest part was just the exhaustion. I was doing stuff in a week that some active people do in a year. Sometimes I wanted to give up, and there were a few days where I didn’t necessarily complete the hike,” he admits, “but I tried to go out and do something every day. I’d always get to above 14,000 feet, though. I thought that was what mattered the most.”

As he mentions his few shortcomings with the missed hikes, Remington becomes vulnerable. His shoulders hunch over as he looks down and plays with his beads.

Perhaps he thinks that the only way he could make the summer

meaningful was to fulfill this almost unobtainable goal. Maybe he felt that any flaw in his story or plan would reflect negatively on his character and confirm this fear of wasting his time.

On the other hand, the way his face lights up when he talks about the different views he saw and the places he visited demonstrates that he has some semblance of confidence in his time spent on the road and in nature.

"I learned a lot about the environment," Remington says. "I learned about how I want others to see it. Like it's something integral and precious. I also hope that this gives me some credibility to talk to other people about nature and respecting it."

After completing his journey, the first thing Remington did was hug his mom. Then he slept for 10 hours in a comfortable bed, and followed that with a very thorough bubble bath.

"It felt so good to be home," he recalls. "I had forgotten how great it was to have a fully-stocked kitchen."

During the remaining few days of summer, before he returned to college, Remington caught up with his family and rested his achy bones.

As the summer of 2015 approaches, Remington prepares for a new, slightly more northern adventure. "I've taken a job in the kitchen at Camp Denali in Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska," he proudly states. "I've pretty much found something I want to do and I'm going to do it until I can't pay rent anymore."

His duties will include cooking meals, serving food, and cleaning rooms, but he will have the chance to explore the Alaskan peaks. While he is excited to hike all around the park, he has his eyes set on a very specific prize.

"I'm going to climb Mount McKinley this summer," he pronounces.



Remington explores a stream on his final hike. (PHOTO courtesy of PETER REMINGTON)

Mount McKinley, which was renamed Denali in August 2015, is, at 20,310 feet above sea level, the highest mountain in North America. It takes somewhere between 17 and 21 days to complete the climb, which is significantly more than the four to six hours it took Remington to finish one of Colorado's fourteeners.

"I'll be climbing late May to mid-June. Then I'll start work," Remington explains. "I can hardly wait to begin the climb. It's such a famous mountain. It's the best I can do inside the U.S. and I'm the only one I know who's going to have done it. So that makes me feel pretty special. I'm honestly really happy about the decision to climb for another summer. It's what I love. Why not do it as much as I can?" He looks around, smiling guiltily at his admission.

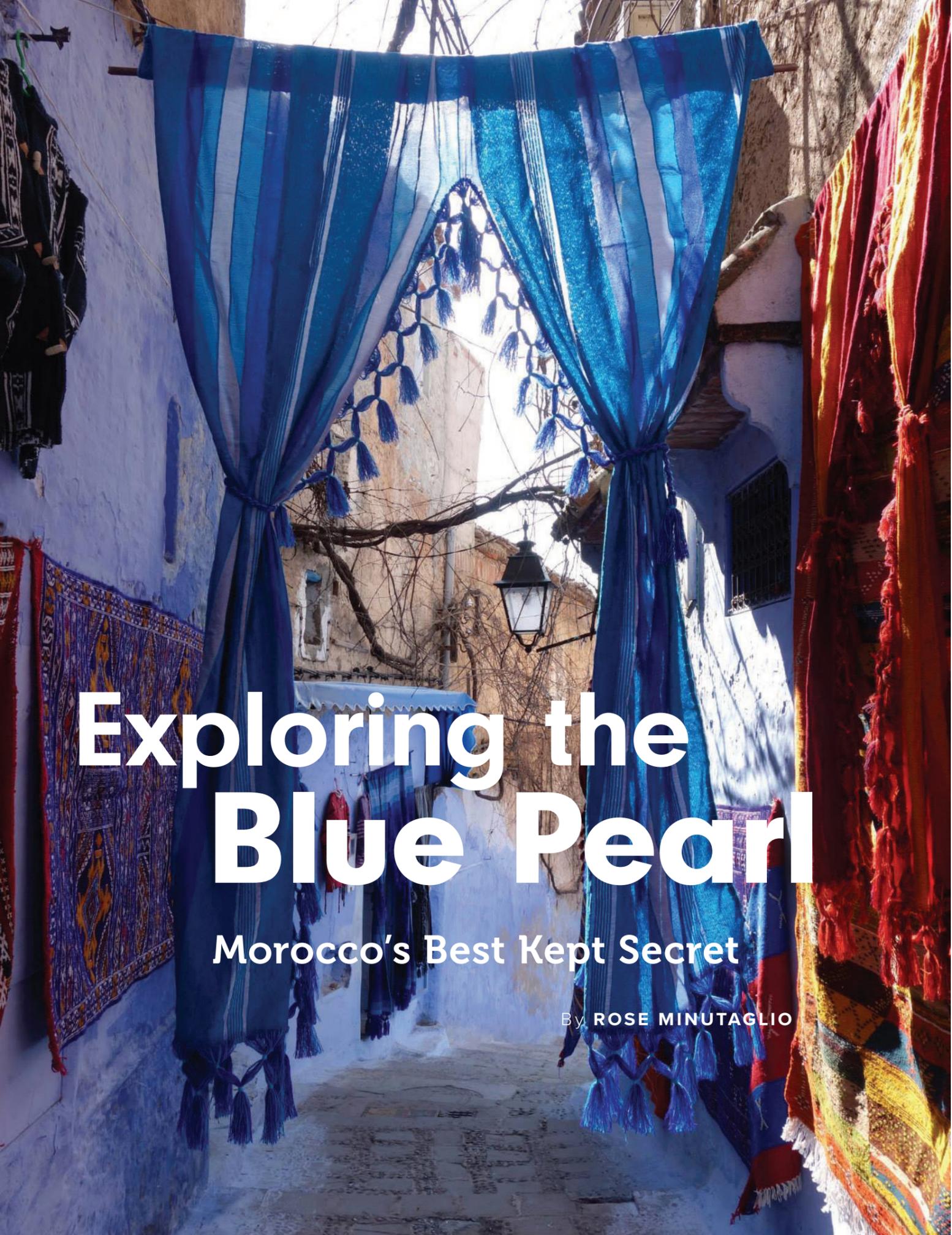
"Also," Remington adds, "I talked to my friend who interned at a law firm. He spent the whole summer making copies and getting coffee. Honestly, sounds like a waste of time." ●

Update: *In the summer of 2015, Remington worked in the lodge at Camp Denali, where he also led hikes with visiting families. Although he originally planned to climb Denali in May before he began work at Camp Denali, Remington ended up climbing and completing Denali in July.*

Currently, he is studying abroad in Mumbai (Bombay) through a program called Global Focus. Located on India's west coast, Mumbai has a current population of 22 million and is home to India's most prolific film industry.

Even though Remington is not focusing on Environmental Studies while he is in Mumbai, he recently took a trip to West Bengal to hike Tiger Hill, which has an altitude of 8,482 feet.

Madison Smith graduated from Trinity in May 2016 with majors in Communication and Spanish. She is working as a grant writer at The Playhouse theater in San Antonio. Originally from Evergreen, Colorado, Smith met Remington in high school. Although Smith loves hiking in the summer, she lives a pretty indoor life.



Exploring the Blue Pearl

Morocco's Best Kept Secret

By ROSE MINUTAGLIO



A local musician plays his *guembri* (Moroccan guitar) on the streets of Chefchaouen. (PHOTO by ROSE MINUTAGLIO)

Every inch of every building I could see in the gated medina of Chefchaouen, Morocco was a variant shade of dazzling blue. The color of the narrow, unpredictable cobblestone walkways was the same as my favorite pair of faded Levi's. Oriental doorways glowed with vibrant cyan hues reminiscent of the blue raspberry snow cones my dad treated me to as a kid.

A woman yelling in French to a young boy on the street stood above me on a brilliant Tiffany-blue terracotta rooftop that blended perfectly with the soft African sky above. I couldn't tell where building ended and atmosphere began.

I was comfortable and in awe. I was mesmerized and completely lost. I had caught the Moroccan blues.

Set against the dramatic Rif Mountain range in northern

Morocco, Chefchaouen is a quiet and quaint African city unparalleled in intrigue and beauty.

Twisting azure pathways led upward, and new sensory experiences awaited around every corner: the sight of women in red, yellow, and orange hijabs and flowing skirts whispering as they hurried past secret alleyways and romantic doll-like doorways.

Wafts of exotic spices and sweet smoke. The laughter of children playing soccer. Colorful laundry hanging above the walkways.

An old man in a tan *djellaba* (a loose hooded cloak) tapping his cane on the cobblestones, the rhythmic sound reverberating through the streets.

I remember thinking that this city was real Morocco. Old Morocco.

With a population of 35,709, Chefchaouen (chef-sh-ow-en) is a

blend of ancient and artsy, bucolic and busy. Artists sell their paintings from open doors, enticing wanderers with window displays. Bags of red, green, and yellow powdery pigments (that can be mixed with water to make paint) line the streets. Mysterious antique shops are piled high with relics and handcrafted goods, like ink bottles and leather *babouches* (slippers).

But those blue walls, they took my breath away—it was nothing like I had ever seen before.

Historical accounts tell of an extinct Jewish population that dominated the city in the 15th century and colored the walls of the city blue, both to symbolize their faith (blue means divinity in Judaism) and to ward off evil. Residents still regularly paint their houses, keeping the blue city fresh and the tradition alive.

Youssef, a local artist with a toothy grin, informed me that the color actually helps keep mosquitos at bay, too. In broken English, he explained that his city originally acted as a fortress to fight off invading Portuguese from the north.

For centuries, Chefchaouen served as a refuge for unwelcome Jewish and Muslim populations in Europe. The town remained so closed off to foreigners that visitors in the 1800s discovered that the Jewish inhabitants were still speaking a 15th century version of Spanish.

Chefchaouen remained relatively protected from foreign influence until 1920 when Spain captured the city, occupying it for 30 years. The city's memory of its ancient tradition lives on today—something I could never fully appreciate until I was able to experience it for myself.

Samantha, an opinionated and funny-as-hell East Coaster, and I decided to take on the ancient and mysterious country of Morocco together only three weeks after meeting each other. Both in our junior year of college, Sam and I ended up randomly paired as roommates during our spring study abroad semester in Rome, Italy.

We instantly bonded over a shared affinity for gossip magazines and Tuscan wine. In hopes of traveling somewhere “crazy,” while living abroad (which is really just code for anywhere that our protective parents would never let us visit), we saved up our euros and began planning.

Of course, we realized that two 20-year-old American women exploring North Africa alone was not a smart way to travel, so we looked into itineraries and group tours that catered specifically to college students.

We eventually settled on Discover Excursions, a program that promised us tour guides, transportation, lodging, and food. We were mostly interested in the

lodging and transportation. We wanted to see the exotic cities of Morocco on our own, but needed a way to get there and a reliable group that we could generally stick with.

Our trip began with a flight to Spain, a ferry ride across the Strait of Gibraltar, and a bus ride through the foothills of northern Morocco. We did it all for under 300 euros (or \$330), including the flight to Seville and the cost of joining the group.

Before setting out, Sam and I carefully researched Moroccan culture and etiquette. Discover Excursions would take us to various cities, but for our visit to Chefchaouen, we opted to wear long-sleeve shirts, slacks, and walking shoes.

While it might be appropriate to wear more revealing clothing in westernized metropolises such as Casablanca or Marrakesh, it is especially necessary to observe local customs and rules in rural areas. So, we respectfully covered our shoulders and legs.

After hours spent on bumpy mountainous roads in our tour bus, we finally arrived in the Blue Pearl, a nickname for Chefchaouen, ready for adventure. We made a beeline for Hotel Atlas, an inn advertised to have amazing mountain views and a bar. Amar, our very kind waiter, wore a blue suit and a black bowtie and tended to us like we were royalty, assuring us he would “do anything to make the beautiful American ladies happy!”

Next on our agenda was a plan to get lost, and fortunately, the meandering streets of the Chefchaouen citadel made that an easy task to complete.

Upon entering the medina (the historical city section found within most North African towns), we were immediately greeted by a horde of 8-year-old boys selling “friendship” bracelets. We politely declined, but the boys followed, bargained, and eventually won us over with their goofy smiles.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE BLUE



Shown here and on page 59 are scenes captured while wandering the blue city. (PHOTOS by ROSE MINUTAGLIO)



Rose Minutaglio poses with Sara and her rainbow striped blanket. (PHOTO courtesy of ROSE MINUTAGLIO)

We continued deeper into the mysterious streets of Chefchaouen not knowing what to expect, but constantly on our guard. The friendly residents made us feel safe though, and the romantic feel of the city was both exotic and comforting.

The streets of the city were absurdly picturesque. Blue stairways led up to even bluer balconies. Endless stalls of textiles and spices lined the breezy alleys. And the sweet, distant sound of a *guembri* (Moroccan guitar) drifted through the spiced air.

As we wandered, Sam and I came upon a series of particularly

beautiful paintings made by a handsome young artist named Hamza. After purchasing four of his works—all images of the city done on the backs of recycled mulch bags—Hamza offered us each a handwritten business card that included his name and a link to his Myspace profile.

Next, we stopped in what seemed to be the textile hub of the sector and began examining the silk-patterned blankets and rugs. Countless young men called to us, begging me and Sam to look at their products, but from afar, a woman in a red and yellow hijab peeking from

inside a doorway caught my eye.

I was instantly intrigued as she motioned for me to come closer. Her name was Sara, she told me, and she had just completed a beautiful rainbow striped blanket this morning. She was 23 years old, and she wanted me to see it. I fell in love with her silky design; it was perfect. I bought it immediately.

Sam and I spent the rest of the day exploring Chefchaouen, soaking in the floral fragrances of the town and trying *sfenj* (doughnuts cooked in oil). There was something magical about that place, and for weeks after returning to Italy we tried to figure out what made this trip so special to us.

In the end, we agreed it was because we had experienced the real Morocco. While we did encounter a handful of other tourists, we mostly observed people going about their everyday lives. We saw locals going to the market and buying spices. We noticed women washing their clothes in a nearby stream. We saw artists create and sellers bargain.

There was something so inherently appealing about getting lost on those cobblestone streets and witnessing the pace of day-to-day life in Chefchaouen. It was like we had stepped into an Impressionist landscape painting from the 19th century.

The vibrant azure walls of the medina set against the steep mountain backdrop were both magical and dizzying. Sam and I have already begun planning our trip back to Chefchaouen, because we can't seem to get those Moroccan blues out of our heads. ●

Rose Minutaglio graduated from Trinity in 2015 with a major in Communication. Minutaglio currently works for People magazine in New York City where she writes print and digital pieces, reports breaking stories, and interviews celebrities, athletes, and everyday heroes.

LETTER FROM THE STAFF

The COMM 3343 Print Communication class, under the direction of Professor Sammye Johnson and Dr. Melissa McMullen of the Communication Department, produced this issue of Skyline. Eleven students acted as story editors and designers who were responsible for the editing, layout, design, graphics, and photography for this 64-page magazine. Editorial copy came from the COMM 3340 Magazine Writing class taught by Johnson in the spring and fall semesters of 2015. Many photos included in Skyline 2016 were taken by photography students in classes taught by Professor Trish Simonite and Instructor Melanie Davis of the Department of Art and Art History.

Stories were chosen from a pool of more than 60 articles by applying a triage method used by most major publications. After the final 14 articles were selected, the story editors fact checked and prepared the copy for publication. Managing Editor Catherine Clark and Art Director Nayeli Pérez worked tirelessly to format Skyline. Having determined the sections and their corresponding articles, Pérez and Clark created two design packages to be used for the layouts in every other section; these packages differed in column format, title and subtitle font, and color. After hours spent discussing type treatment and numerous last-minute meetings interspersed with classwork, food, and sleep, Clark and Pérez presented their design styles to the class. More discussion ensued as the class stretched the limits of their imagination before embracing the final product.

The 64-page *Skyline* 2016 showcases the following design elements:

- Nezeit Grotesk and Bodoni URW fonts for the titles.
- Museo and Museo Sans fonts for the subtitles.
- 10.5 pt. Chaparral Pro font for the body copy.
- Proxima Nova font for the section heads, sidebars, photo captions, and footers.
- 80-pound white text paper with velvet finish.
- Other guidelines involved the spacing of design elements, the placement of photos and bylines, color screen percentages, grid structure, and photo bleeds.

As a team, the class discussed, compromised, and agreed on editorial, design, and production decisions. This issue is the result of a semester of hard work and determination. We hope you enjoy *Skyline* 2016. ●

SKYLINE DESIGNERS & STORY EDITORS



Katherine Groke



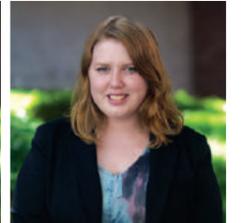
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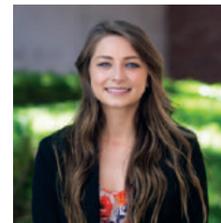
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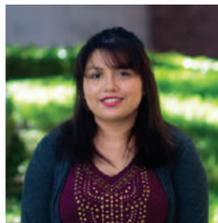
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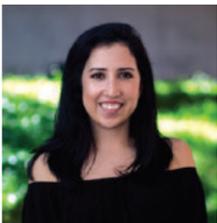
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DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed in the 2016 issue of *Skyline* magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Trinity University, its students, faculty, or staff; members of the COMM 3343 Print Communication class; or the Department of Communication.

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