

# SPRING VIEWS

Spring International Language Center, Littleton, Colorado

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## International Students Share Their Writing

In this 18<sup>th</sup> issue of *Spring Views*, students from levels 1-6 share some of the compositions they have written in their classes during the Winter term. The *View*, which is published each nine-week term, offers students an opportunity to see their writing in print and on the Spring International website and encourages them to practice one of the most difficult skills in learning a new language.



## Does the Internet Encourage Isolation or Build Relationships?

by Najla Zarmouh, Libya

Imagine that all internet services are cut. Would that make a difference to you? How do you prefer to talk to your friends – online or in person? Nowadays, the internet has become an essential part of our lives. Spending hours contacting friends on the internet has almost overtaken physical connections. Even though the internet limits direct connections between people, it promotes building relationships of another type.

One of the direct connections that can be greatly diminished by the internet is parenthood. Parents may not talk to their children as much as before. When my child spends time on the computer, even when chatting with others, this time is taken away from spending time with me. It seems that even if a child is in the same house as his parents, the internet is obviously taking his mind and thoughts away. Not only do parents lose direct communication with their children, but also they will not be able to understand as much because of what made their children busy.

Nevertheless, the internet has made it easier and simpler to communicate. Not far into the past, mail communication took awhile to be received or sent; in contrast e-mails can do this in less than a second. Consequently, with no need of a perfect time to communicate, the faster the e-mail, the more you can receive or send. When my older brother's marriage was announced by cards, it took too much time and effort to choose and buy cards, write on every one of them and not forget or repeat anyone; however, some friends had changed their addresses and never got the announcement. On the other hand, when my younger brother was married, my family decided to send e-mail to all the friends they know with a press of a button. Instantly we received their replies or apologies. It was a more reliable and refined way to communicate.

In addition, people can express their ideas more openly on the internet. Especially for extremely shy people, it is easier for them to talk through the internet without distractingly direct contact. Also it is useful when there is a nervous situation such as work interviews or when questions are asked. "Any time when you have something that is difficult to say, e-mail can make it easier," says Jean Shreve, who is a writer in San Francisco. It serves as a buffer zone," she adds (Leonard 151). Therefore, this kind of communication can be seen as a useful alternative to other ones.

Furthermore, the internet helps keep old friends communicating. The best thing about the internet is not only to make new friends from all over the world, but also to keep people connected with their old friends. The wonderfulness of keeping lifetime friendship is that it maintains close relationships neither affected by distance nor by time. Some scientists agree by stating that instant messages can easily keep teens who like to socialize a lot with two groups of friends: the friends they already know and physically hang-out with and the other friends who have only been pursued online (Farrington 10).

As one can see, the internet can isolate people from real life, such as not connecting with their parents. Nevertheless, it is easy, simple, and flexible and it can give one the ability to retain wonderful old friends. These are considerable communication factors that actually decrease isolation in a different way.

Farrington, J. "Online Friendships." *World of Reading*. Joan Conzaes. International Magazine for High School Students pp 9-13. New York: Pearson Education, 2009.

Leonard, A. "We've Got Mail-Always." *New Directions: Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking*. P. Gardner 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

## Japanese Values and American Values...by Hidemi Fukada, Japan

I recently studied an article called "American Values and Assumptions" written by Gary Althen. He explained American values clearly and in several parts. Before, I used to hear about American values, but I never understood clearly what these values were. Through this article, now I know about a few of the American values, and I am interested in them. Japan should adopt some these values, especially individual decision, informal behavior, and individual work.



The word "individualism" is very foreign to the children in Japan because they often depend on their parents until they become young adults. When children reach 20 years old, most of their parents think that they have become fine adults. There is a big celebration at the "coming of age" ceremony in Japan. On that day, many young adults finally begin to think and behave by themselves and accept responsibility. Until that time, many children are controlled by their parents. A lot of activities are planned and decided by their parents. Unlike Japanese children, children in America can think and plan by themselves because their parents treat them as individuals early. For example, "They are trained from early in their lives to consider themselves as separate individuals who are responsible for their own situations in life and their own destinies" (Althen 5). If Japanese parents would adopt the value of individualism, they could help their children to think and make their own decisions.

We also do not see much informal behavior in public situations in Japan. When we are in the workplace, we need to have very formal behavior in everything we do, such as the clothes we wear, talking to each other, and so on. Even when we go shopping at department stores or supermarkets, or when we travel around Japan, we also need to have formal behavior. Sometimes I think that Japanese people cannot relax except when they are at home. However, in America, even in the very formal environment, people can speak or greet others with casual words. (cont. p. 2)

## Japanese Values (Cont. from p. 1)

For example, "Idiomatic speech and slang are liberally used on most occasions, with formal speech reserved for public events and fairly formal situations." For example, "Here is a college president who is just like anyone else. He does not think he's too good for us (Althen 5). If Japanese people want to relax their minds and bodies, they should embrace American informality.

Japan should not only adopt individual decision-making and informal behavior from America, but it also should embrace individual work. In Japan, usually a group does work together, not an individual doing an original task. That's called "combinational work" or "together power." If someone wants to think and do any project independently, he may be excluded by other workmates and his future situation may be difficult. A person who works hard is very important, but one person achieving alone is not good, and everyone has to combine to do the work together. The group achieves a goal without individualism. In Japanese values, sometimes good ideas of one person may not be used or individual power cannot be exhibited. To people in America, this may seem beyond their comprehension because in the U.S., individual ideas and work are very important and are rewarded.

In conclusion, Japan has its traditional values, and it is admired by many people in the world. But if Japan adopted some American values, such as individual decision-making, informal behavior, and individual work, Japan would change. It would be very interesting to see what changes would be made.

Althen, Gary. "American Values and Assumptions. *New Directions: Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Peter S. Gardner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 5-13. Print.

## Subway at Midnight...by Meshari Dawood, Saudi Arabia

Have you ever been robbed at midnight? Robbery is a very frightening thing. What matters is not the money. What matters is you life. If you see someone robbed, it will scare you even though he doesn't rob you.

One night I was in the Subway sandwich shop, and the guy who worked there was robbed in front of my eyes. I can't forget that day when someone put a gun in front of my face. I was in my friend's house in Littleton. We were studying. After I finished studying with him, I went back home, but on my way, I stopped at Subway because I was starving. I went inside to order my meal. When I was ordering, a man in black glasses, black mask, and black jacket came inside. He was a big man, more than six feet tall. He had a gun. He put the gun in front of my face and said, "You! Don't move or I'm going to kill you."

I didn't move. I didn't even get my hand out of my pocket. He came in front of the desk where the money was and said to the guy who works there, "You! Give me the money."

The guy said, "OK., don't shoot. I'll give you the money."

After the robber had the money, he ran away. I didn't say anything. I couldn't believe it. After that, the Subway guy called the police. After five minutes, the police came. Before the policemen told me, "You can go home now," they asked me some questions.

Finally, I came back home, and I hadn't had my dinner yet. After this experience, I didn't need to eat anything. I've learned a lesson. I will never ever go to any restaurant at midnight. Now I know it is important to eat at home. The good thing is that, hopefully, I have a scary story to tell.



## Evelyn, the Brave Old Lady...by Nisren Shah Hussein, Iraq

**Note: Nisren's class was given the beginning of a story, written below, and the students were asked to finish it.**

*This is a true story. It happened in 2000 in Millburn, New Jersey. Millburn is a beautiful little town. It is located close to New York. The schools there are one of the best in the country. People move there to raise their children. Everybody feels safe in Millburn, and many people keep their doors open.*

*On a Friday morning, Evelyn, a retired ESL teacher in her 70's, was listening to Mozart when she heard a noise on the first floor of her house. What could it be? She was at home alone and did not expect any guests to visit. She rushed downstairs. In the middle of her living room she saw a young man, a stranger.*

*"I have just robbed a bank!" he yelled, pointing a gun at Evelyn. "I need a phone! Now!"*

Evelyn was very scared. Her voice was trembling with fear.

"Ok, Ok. I have a phone at the top of the stairs in my bedroom," she said.

Evelyn was a very smart woman. She was able to make the strange man speak.

Then she asked him, "Why are you in need of a phone?"

She was thinking why didn't he ask for car keys? Why the phone? Then the man's face changed from an angry man's face to a sad and scared man's face.

"I need the phone to contact the hospital."

"Why do you need to call the hospital?" she asked.

"Because my son is very sick, and he needs surgery. Now I have enough money to do the surgery for my son."

Then Evelyn knew why he had stolen from the bank. She told him, "Don't be afraid. I will help you!"

The man was surprised. "What?"

"I will help you and your son. But on one condition. You must hand yourself over to the police," she said.

"Only when I know my son is doing very well. Then I will hand myself over to the police."

Evelyn said, "Let's sit and drink a cup of coffee and think about what we can do." While they were drinking coffee, she asked him some questions.

"Where are you working?"

"At the bank as a security man." he answered

"Why did you rob the bank?"

He told her it was because he and his family didn't have health insurance. He didn't have enough money to do the surgery for his son.

Evelyn didn't call the police. Instead they contacted the hospital for the surgery for the man's son. The doctors did the surgery and his did very well. They went to the hospital to visit his son, and then the man went to the police station and turned himself in. After listening to the circumstances of the case, public opinion was affected, and that caused health care to be a big issue for a large segment of the people. This led to the U.S. Senate to work on a solution for health insurance.

## **Too Late to Say Thank You...by Gloria Young, Taiwan**

"Gloria, come to my office now!" This was the sentence that he used often. Jack was the vice-president in an organization that taught children English where I had been working before. He was smart, tidy, and humorous, but a solemn person. He always had a vision and knew how to make money. Because of his personality, he taught me to prioritize work, always work hard, and inspired other team members. He was so strict with me that I disliked him very much. Now, however, I realize that he was trying to help me be an independent person whom he could trust. But I did not know that at that time. When I think about Jack now, I find he is the person who has influenced me the most.

"I need you to do this first!" I hated this sentence because it meant I had to reschedule my work or do my occupation overtime. I really did not know which I should do first between "Top priority," "Most important," and "immediately." He did this several times, and these really confused me. After making many mistakes, I learned how to achieve his goals and exhibited the best way before the deadline. No matter how terrible the situation was, he always trusted that I could handle it. Jack used to say, "Gloria is a good helper. I feel safe because she is always looking out for me." I had to report to him how many things I should finish that day at 8:30 in the morning. There were so many things to memorize that I had to use a planner and a to-do list. That was the way he taught me to arrange an organized system. Under his high workload, I was trained to concentrate on everything and analyze things quickly. I could plan things in order in a short time. That was the first gift that he gave me, and it helped me progress in the future.

No matter who hired me, they made a good decision, because I was industrious. I was diligent because he taught me to be. I have never seen a person who worked as hard as Jack. Although he was a vice-president, he always worked overtime. He had a dream that he could train a group of assistants so that they could help him to improve business in China. He asked us to research numerous books and web-sites that he collected. We needed to study them before a deadline. Then we could discuss that information with him. I found he had already finished and digested it all. He let me know that I cannot say "I can't do it" before I have even started. If I want to accomplish something, I must work hard and try to do my best.

Although the plan which expanded business failed, he built up a role model for us. I received his e-mails or hand-written notes when I arrived at the office. No matter when, he was always vigorous and energetic. He loved his job and affected me to put all my heart into my work. My friends called me "a capable woman" after his exact training. Working hard and being held responsible supported gained me appreciation from others. That was one of my important assets that I got from him in my life.

My team members loved me because I knew how to cheer them. He taught me this, too. He loved to eat spicy chafing dishes and delicious food. He would like to find luscious meals and treat us to dinner. Every time when we finished a big event, he rewarded us with these delicacies. Because of him, I have tasted hairy crabs, *foie gras*, sea urchin, oysters, king crab and caviar. He cooked for us by himself and ate spicy chafing for lunch several times. We relaxed after watching TV, doing karaoke, drinking wine and playing cards at his house. Besides this, he gave an extra bonus to each person who did his job well. I got a \$200 dollars bonus from him in a great meeting and raised my salary \$100 every six months. He was the first person who taught me to work hard and play hard. Suitable reward is a way that he wanted me to grow up and do more for him. I awarded my team members in the same way. We got the greatest achievements in that year. I left this company after five years; I followed his rules of how to lead a team and treat people. I was appreciated, and I obtained friendship and respect because of his harsh drilling.

I didn't have a chance to say "thank you" to him. I heard unbelievable news two months after I left that company. Jack had caught a serious disease and he could not live over six months. After four months, he died of liver cancer. He was only forty-four years old. During the period when he was sick, he was too proud to allow us to visit him. It was a pity that I could not express my feelings. He gave me courage to solve many problems and face any difficult situation. I became a person who could be relied on because I always completed things before the deadline. I had positive attitudes in my life style. I worked hard and relaxed appropriately, and I knew that he gave me more than I could imagine. I felt an immense gratitude to him, but he would never know. If you have a chance or you want to express thanks to someone, just do it, please. That is the way I do it now.

## **Large Cities Bring More Opportunities...by Waleed Khaled, Saudi Arabia**

There are good opportunities if you live in a large city. In order to get a better life, people move to the big cities. There are reasons why it is better for people to live in large cities, such as education, services, and entertainment.

The greatest reason that most people prefer large cities is the choices of education. Large cities give you more choices to attend any school of college that you want. For example, in the small city, you could find two or three schools, but in the large city you may find two or three in one neighborhood. Also, there are better opportunities to develop your career. Universities now have more majors and a good education. As a result, young people after graduating from high school prefer to move to the cities.

Another reason is that large cities have more services. Now everyone wants to obtain a good job and a huge salary. You can find more job opportunities in different places, and anyone who doesn't like his job can switch to a different job. On the other hand, people want to be healthy, so there are hospitals everywhere in cities. Consequently, most people have health care. Also, if you have a dangerous accident and you are in a small city, you may never survive because there are no hospitals as good as those you find in huge cities. In addition, the big cities have more banks and more malls that people need to have.

The most important reason that people prefer to live in large cities is the great selection of entertainment. It's obvious that people travel from small to large cities looking for fun. In large cities there are movie theaters everywhere, so people can go out to watch movies any time. Also, people are interested in going to museums to discover new culture. For example, there are people who have to move from the countryside to the big cities looking for fun and happiness. Kids want to have fun most of the time, and women want to go shopping all the time.

Last but not least, big cities have some disadvantages like traffic and high prices, but I prefer to live in a large city. Now kids and teenagers dream about moving to big cities to get a good education and to have more entertainment.



## Concept of Time Is Different in Other Cultures...by Hamdan Al-Shehi, U.A.E.

Have you ever met anyone who does not care about time? Time is an important concept for many people, but time is used in different ways from culture to culture. Americans care about time more than any other culture. The United Arab Emirates has a contrary view about time. Although America and the UAE have some of the same goals, such as trying to find another source of energy instead of fossil fuels, they have different concepts about time in areas such as education, religion, and work.



The first difference between the U.S. and the U.A.E. in the concept of time is in education. In America, time is an important concept that almost all people care about. As we know, each culture has different values and assumptions that change the ways of education. American education is not like UAE education because in America everything is busy all the time. For example, when I came to the U.S., I did not know that Americans cared so much about time. On my first day in school, I was late approximately 30 minutes. The teacher was not happy. She was angry. On the other hand, in the UAE, time is not very important for some students and professors. Also, in the UAE students usually come late to class, but the teachers does not say anything.

Almost everyone in the U.S. has religion, and it takes up part of their time. In the U.A.E., people give time to their religion every day. For example, I am a Moslem, so I pray five times every day at special times and go to the mosque on Fridays. On the other hand, America has many different people who are from different religions and cultures. In America, people pray less often than Moslems and go to churches, synagogues, and temples different times of the week. In the U.A.E., people have Ramadan. Ramadan is a very important month of fasting for us. During Ramadan, we cannot eat after sunrise and before sunset. People care about their religion more than anything else during Ramadan. Religion takes up most of our time.

The last difference in the use of time between the U.S. and the U.A.E. is work. Work arrangements are different between these two countries because the values and assumptions of time are different. For example, in America workers work longer hours than in any of the other countries. In my country, teachers end their work at p.m. and sometimes later. I would say that America and the U.A.E. have different work times because of the culture and religion.

As you can see, America and the UAE have different concepts of time, especially in education, religion and work. Finally, I would say these concepts of time have both good and bad aspects, but both countries are very modern and use their time carefully.

## What Love Means...by Israa Al-Aidrous, Saudi Arabia

Love is the greatest gift we can ever hope to give or receive. Love is one thing that can overcome so many of the difficult times that we face in life. Love is so powerful, it can turn frowns into smiles, and it can help mend the most broken heart. It can even turn all of the ugliness in the world into the most beautiful portrait we could ever have the pleasure to behold. Love, in its broad sense, is the feeling of strong attraction, and often attachment and protection.



Love is a universal feeling or emotion. Every human on this earth loves someone. There is love between brothers and sisters, between parents and children, between husband and wife, between neighbors, between all relatives in a family. Love also exists between human beings and other living beings, such as animals.

Love is like the wind. You cannot see it, but you feel it all over. People cannot live without love. It is important to love our life, to love everything in this life. The important point is to see and feel everything with the emotion of love. Then we will be happy.

Some people are hurt by love and that's so bad that sometimes it makes us disappointed, but if we let bygones be bygones and try to remove the bad thing, we can fix them. We should be grateful because if we think about love, we will find people around us who will love us, family, friends, parents, and relatives, for example.

In conclusion, people all over the world cannot live without love because it is the emotion of strong affection. Love is the greatest gift we can ever hope to give or to receive. We should never give up on love but just take it easy and we will find it.

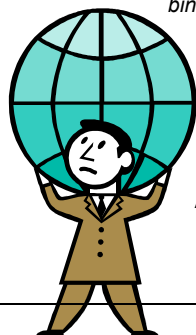
## Love, the Most Important Thing in Life...by Muath Binmqbyl, Saudi Arabia

When we talk about love, we talk about the most important thing in life. Love is the feeling that makes us gravitate to someone or something. However, love is really chemistry between two people. The body excretes the hormone oxytocin. This hormone comes from the mind to all the body and makes us feel attracted and happy.

There are many kinds of love: self-love, love of God, love of friends, and so on. It seems that love make life a better place, and makes people more friendly. Without love, all people would fight.

## Food Around the World...by Wael Al-Hobaishi, Saudi Arabia

There are many different foods in the world. I want to write about food in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, and America. I chose America because I am adapting to American food. In Saudi Arabia, there are many kinds of food. The first special food is *kabseh*, which consists of rice and chicken or other meat. We eat *kabseh* with our hands or with a spoon and fork. There are different kinds of *kabseh*. For example, *mende*, *binyani*, and *kable almazbi*. In addition, other popular foods are okra, potatoes, and *molokhia*.



In Turkey, there are different types of food. I chose Turkey because the food is very delicious. They have *lail*, *choubasih*, Turkish *kofta keft*, *fattouch* Turkish, and *bulgwa* chicken. All this food is eaten with a spoon and Turkish bread. Some of these foods are similar to Saudi Arabian dishes.

Sushi is a famous Japanese food. Sushi can be eaten with your hands or with chop sticks. I want to talk about American food because I live here. In general, the main food in America is hamburgers and fast food. I always eat hamburgers with my hands. It consists of meat, beef, chick and fish with potatoes. There are also pancakes and American coffee. Also, my favorite is pizza. I like pizza with cheese.

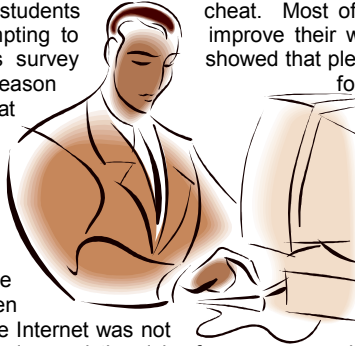
Finally I have adapted to American food because I am living in the U.S.A., but I miss Saudi food.



## The Problem of Plagiarism...by Mohamed Khalifa, Libya

Is plagiarism a serious offense or just a harmless crime? Plagiarism means intentionally taking someone else's words or ideas and presenting them as your own work. This problem of cheating or plagiarism is very extensive. Most educational institutions still face the problem of academic dishonesty. It seems that almost all students know that plagiarism is wrong, including those who commit the offense. However, the problems of cheating and plagiarism among international students are caused by several factors and require solutions to reduce this poor behavior.

There is no doubt that many international students plagiarize or cheat, but they are only attempting to improve their writing. I conducted my own survey with some of the international student views at my school. This survey showed that plenty of the international students plagiarize from time to time, because to them, this isn't a big deal. Their reason for plagiarizing may be the pressure put forth from teachers to do well academically, which may at times appear to obligate students to do things they would not ordinarily do. Also, some international students measure the risk of getting grades versus the risk of poor grades. My informal survey at Spring International school showed that cheating is wide-spread among international students. Seventeen students took the survey, and nearly 4 per cent of the student respondents told me that they have known other Spring International students who plagiarize their assignments.



Most of them go on saying that they don't believe they are cheat. Most of them go on saying that they don't believe they are to improve their writing. I conducted my own survey with some of the international student views at my school. This survey showed that plenty of the international students plagiarize from time to time, because to them, this isn't a big deal. Their reason for plagiarizing may be the pressure put forth from teachers to do well academically, which may at times appear to obligate students to do things they would not ordinarily do. Also, some international students measure the risk of getting grades versus the risk of poor grades. My informal survey at Spring International school showed that cheating is wide-spread among international students. Seventeen students took the survey, and nearly 4 per cent of the student respondents told me that they have known other Spring International students who plagiarize their assignments.

The problem of plagiarism has become increasingly important as the Internet becomes widely used. Most instructors have not given sufficient attention to detect plagiarism or cheating from the Internet. For instance, plagiarism from the Internet was not as easy in the past as it is today. Before the internet era, resources were limited for students to plagiarize and the risk of detection was very high. Hence, they used to be caught easily and either asked to rewrite the homework or get no mark for it. In contrast, plagiarism from the Internet nowadays is a piece of cake because instructors cannot have possibly researched everything that a student can use to write their assignments or homework.

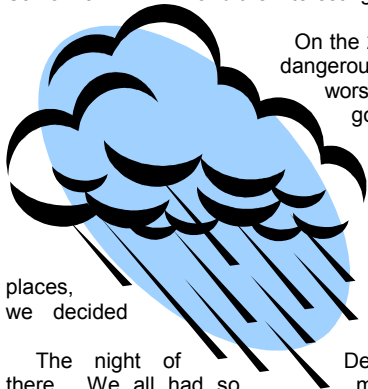
The attention of the instructors can lead student to several different solutions for this problem, such as encouraging them to write many essays or articles, demanding consistent accuracy in class work and homework, and concentrating on reading development. Specifically, in order to solve the problem of plagiarism among international students, teachers, instructors and volunteers should accommodate and assist the international students by using various techniques and ideas to improve individual skills and lessen the pressure to cheat. Teachers should know that they have resources, techniques and power that can restrain students from resorting to plagiarism.

Fundamental solutions that the student should rely less on electronic information. There are many solutions for students to be more confident in their own skills and ideas. Firstly, the most common method is asking of the teachers to clarify any unclear topic from their assignments, homework, or research. In addition, students should understand that plagiarism robs them of any benefit from doing the work themselves. Students who rely on other people's words, ideas, or work are bound to be less successful in their lives. Furthermore, international students must know that when they completely eliminate plagiarism and cheating, they will be sure that the quality of their research and papers will be accepted. In other words, my personal research confirmed that those student who destroy the quality of their papers use plagiarism. The most important solution would be for the students to have personal integrity and honesty. They will learn more and feel better about themselves.

In conclusion, the administration of the schools should organize many programs that can help to reduce the problem of plagiarism. These programs should focus on the students and how faculty members can assist them to improve their skills so that they are more dependent on their own ideas. I conceive that faculty members trust international students because most of them are intelligent enough to use their own personal ideas and skills in their papers. Clearly, plagiarism is a dark method that can be fetching to students and problematic to educational institutions, producing inferior production, organization, and lower success rates in student accomplishments.

## A Road Trip to Las Vegas and California...by Ali Magbool, Saudi Arabia

After a long fall semester of classes and much school work, my friends and I decided to go on a long road trip to Las Vegas and California. We had a small group of four people and a small car. In this essay, I am going to explain my road trip troubles on the way to Las Vegas and California and the interesting places that I visited.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December in the morning, we started driving. It took us two days to get to Las Vegas and it was dangerous because we had a very bad storm, so we had to stop in Utah for a night until the storm stopped. The worst thing was that the car we were driving had no heat, so we were too cold. I was so cold that I felt I was going to die. The weather was -19 F., so this explains a lot.

On the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, we arrived in Las Vegas and decided to spend three days there because my friend Mazen had just turned 21 years old and he was so excited to go and play Blackjack. This is one of Mazen's favorite games. We stayed in one of the biggest hotels. The service was amazing and the hotel had seven stars, which is really good. The funniest thing was the name of the street address, The Strip Street. We went to a sea food restaurant and visited a lot of such as the New York Hotel, the Paris Hotel and the Egypt Hotel. We had so much fun in Las Vegas, to come back on New Year's day after we were done with California.

The night of December 25<sup>th</sup>, we arrived in San Diego. We went to Sea World, because my friend Nelly wanted to visit there. We all had so much fun. We also swam in the hotel swimming pool and had lunch in an Arabic restaurant. After that we went to Mission Beach. The weather was so nice but we couldn't swim because it wasn't allowed. At night, we had dinner in a Greek restaurant, and I was surprised that Greek food was exactly the same as Middle Eastern Food.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, we arrived in Los Angeles. It has a beautiful downtown, but we couldn't go there at night because it was too dangerous. We went to the beach and rode a big boat in a sea trip for two hours. At night we went to the Habibi hookah bar and restaurant and ate dinner and smoked hookah. The next day, we went to Hollywood. We took pictures of the Hollywood sign on the mount. After that, we went to Universal Studios where we shopped and took pictures. (Cont. p. 6)

## Road Trip (Cont. from p. 5)

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December at night, we decided to go back to Las Vegas for the New Year. We went to the same hotel where we had stayed before and took a nap until the sun rose. After breakfast, we took pictures from the tower of the hotel and then went walking in downtown Las Vegas. At 9 p.m., we went to The Strip Street because fireworks were there. At 12 midnight, the fireworks started and 2011 started too. After the fireworks, we went to the hotel to sleep because we were so tired and we had to be ready to drive all the way back to Denver.

Our drive to Denver was better than what we had the first time. It took us 14 hours to get to Denver, which was better than the two days we had spent before. But we also had the same problem we had the first time because the heater didn't work. Thanks to God, we found a small heater in one of the gas stations that we stopped in. Actually it wasn't very helpful, but it was better than no heat.

We arrived January 1<sup>st</sup>, and all our friends were waiting for us in our home because they missed us and we missed them too. We met our friends, and then we went to sleep because we were so tired after that long trip. We had so much fun, and I don't think we will forget this trip all our lives. We had a total of 1200 pictures that we took on the trip. I wish we could take a trip like this in the future because this trip is one of my best memories. I will never forget it.

## My Hometown... by Turki Al-Balawi, Saudi Arabia

My hometown is Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. Tabuk is in the north part of Saudi Arabia, and it is a big city. It has about three million people, but there are also many people from Jordan, for example, and from other countries. The weather in my city is very cold and sometimes it snows in winter. Summers are hot and dry, but sometimes it rains. Spring and Fall are very nice.

Tabuk has many mosques and many shops. There are many famous and popular restaurants. In Tabuk, which means flower, you will see flowers, nature, and the sea. It also has many places for fun. You can drive ATVs and dive in the sea. Many foreigners come to my city because of the diving and to take photos. Finally, Tabuk is a very good place. I like it because my family is there.

## Weddings Can Be Funny and Scary ... by Rham Assas, Saudi Arabia

A funny thing happened to me in my country. The story was nine months ago. On my sister's wedding day, many things happened to me.

The



first thing happened when the servers were bringing in the wedding cake at the same time that I was walking toward my sister. I was quickly trying to give my sister her rings. At that time, I didn't see the people who were bringing the cake to the table. I ran into the cake, and tasted the cream that covered it. People told me what happened was that my face went into the middle of the cake. Not only that, but I also cut my dress and dropped the wedding rings. My sister got angry when she found out what had happened. The people were laughing at me, and I cried for a long time.

In the end, it is something that made me so afraid to go to any wedding again. When I talk with my sister about what happened, we laugh for a long time. I won't forget this story because it is a funny and special story for me.

### By Amnah Tariq Mimash, Saudi Arabia

A scary thing happened to me in Malaysia two years ago. It was my first time visiting and seeing a waterfall, and it was very big and high. The water tasted good. The waterfall was in the middle of a forest, and the forest smelled fresh and green.

At first there were some small steps and then a big drop, and I went close, too close to the edge. I stood on a soft stone and suddenly I fell down into the waterfall! The water was so cold, and my legs were stuck between the rocks. Also, the water current was so strong that it started to pull me down. Then I started to scream and cry. My sister and the tourists heard me, and they looked for help. Our driver was a Malaysian man. When he realized what was happening, he jumped into the water and rescued me. I had some small injuries to my legs, but I was fine.

My mother and father couldn't believe what happened to me. They thanked the man, and they gave him a gift for what he did for me. After this scary experience, I was afraid to go close to the waterfall.

**Students from 18 different countries have been studying at Spring International during the winter term. Countries represented include Angola, Colombia, Congo, Guatemala, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Peru, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. These countries and others will showcase their cultures at the annual International Day, Wednesday, April 6, in the ACC cafeteria.**

**Thank you to the writers who submitted their essays and stories for the Winter issue.**