



Passages Press

Konichiwa (Hello) Japan

by Misha Taylor

Misha and her son are spending a year in Japan with her brother and his family. These are her journal entries about her experience.

May 3, 2009

I arrived in Japan 3 p.m., which in Maine time would be Monday at 2 a.m. Alongside me was my son Treeth and many hopes in my heart. Sleep was the first thing my body and mind craved. But the excitement of seeing my brothers, their wives and my nieces pushed sleep out of my mind.

The Japanese Government checked everybody for swine flu, a.k.a. H1N1, as soon as we landed in Tokyo at Narita Airport. The seriousness of it made me a little worried that my cough or the black circles under my eyes would give me a one-way ticket to quarantine kingdom. As I was trying to tidy up my hair and make my son look like he just got a clean bill of health, Treeth yells out, "Momma, my throat feels like it is on fire!" I told him that we could get some water as soon as the men were all done checking everyone. He started to cry, which then made him snotty. So, as I am brushing my hair with my fingers and wiping his snot with my sleeve and saying things that usually make him laugh, the men come with their huge camera contraption taking UV photos or something. I can only imagine the look on our faces as the men arrived at our seat - I, with a look of horror and Treeth pouting, snot and all. Thankfully, we were let into Narita Airport to collect our bags, go through customs and so on.

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Then, as we were going through customs, a man asks us to write down how much money we had on us. I exchanged all of our money at Chicago O'Hare; it was 1,500 American dollars for 1,300 American dollars. I was trying to calculate what it was in yen but couldn't think. I said to write down 110,000 yen but in front of this man my mother says, "No, we have way more than that." The man runs over to an associate and they in turn motion us over to them. I was thinking, "Oh no, now they think we are suspect, because we are arguing with each other." As we follow him over there, I thought he was going to have someone speak to us; instead, he just put us in the front of the customs line.

Overall, the people at the airport were very nice and helped us as needed. Finally we arrived in Saitama and did the greeting and catching up. We got to bed around 8 p.m.

May 4, 2009

Awoke very early and left for Nasu. It is in the countryside of Japan. We went to see Naoko's family (my oldest brother's in-laws). It is Golden Week here in Japan, so there are many people on vacation for a whole week. Which in turn means Matthew and his family have other plans as well as having us here. The countryside is so beautiful. I enjoy the calm and slower life. I saw many tea plantations and rice fields. I played in the empty field with my son and nieces. We caught many

frogs and got a chance to see different bugs and the beautiful gardens that people have around their houses.

In Saitama you don't really see any gardens because the space is limited. Literally, you can touch your next-door neighbor's house just by reaching out the window. You are more likely to see concrete instead of flowers, with the exception of a few flowerpots. We went to a cow farm and saw a baby cow that was only a few minutes old. We also saw a baby pig. We then went to a famous homemade ice cream shop. I bought Treeth two ice creams because he did not try any of the food Naoko's family had. This is one of my biggest worries. Treeth is picky in the states, so I believe he will be even more hard to please foodwise.

May 8, 2009

We went to see my youngest brother and his new in-laws. I have met his wife because she came to America not that long ago. But I do not know her immediate family. They live in Akashima, which is part of Tokyo. It isn't like Tokyo, though; you can walk without bobbing and weaving through the mass of people. Daniel, my youngest brother, rented us a nice room to stay in for the night.

Earlier that day I had to have one of my wisdom teeth pulled, courtesy of Naoko's sister, Lee Chan. She is a dental hygienist. They were more than kind, staying after hours just to do my tooth. Daniel and his new family had plenty of brewskies, plus they were going to go out to Sakura (Daniel's wife's brother's bar). I, on the other hand, was told absolutely no alcohol. So I stayed at the room with Treeth. Treeth was already asleep before they left for the bar.

When we woke up we went to a really nice park with tons of flowers and bonsai gardens. There was also a huge bubble thing that was like a trampoline.

We went to Ikebukuro for shopping and sight seeing. We also went to two different temples - one was in Asakusa city. The temples were huge and there were many souvenir shops. The other temple was in Harajuku. While we were there we got to see

a traditional Japanese wedding already in progress. It was interesting.

May 9, 2009

Tokyo Disneyland - this was my first time and Treeth's. I thought it was very creative and all of the rides were kid appropriate. I went on many. Splash Mountain had to be the best one for me and Treeth enjoyed Buzz Lightyear's laser game.

I also got to go to a funeral. Naoko's grandfather passed recently. The funeral is way different than American style. A Buddhist monk came in and did the ceremony. He kind of sang it. I wasn't expecting that, so I started to laugh. My timing is always so off. Thanks to Treeth sitting on my lap, I was able to just shove my mouth into his back so no one would notice. Then, once I got my laughter under control, Treeth says, "Momma, is he going to kill us or something?" I am starting to believe my son has the same problem with timing as I do.

Anyway, we also went to another amusement park. It was called Yomiuriland. My oldest brother and his family did not come. We went with my younger brother and his wife Sakura. When we got there we wanted to ride some rollercoasters. So I said, "Let's start with the little one first and work our way up." So we started with the shortest. It was pink and it did a full loop. Once we got to the ride I asked why it was standing up. We got all strapped in and I tried to sit down, but they told me no. So, we had to stand the whole ride, going through the loop and all. After that I just said, "Let's just go to whatever. I am not scared, because that had to be the worst."

May 31, 2009

Today I went and planted rice in the countryside of Japan. It took two hours to get there. I went with my brother, his wife, his kids and Naoko's brother Hitokazut and his girlfriend. Treeth of course also was there with me. We planted rice for about three hours. I went in my socks because the mud was about 8 inches high. There were newspaper men there taking pictures of us. Today, in the newspaper I saw a picture of us. After the planting came the eating. We had some kind of

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soup, some brown rice with sesame seeds on it and a pickled salad that I thought tasted like cologne, so when no one was looking, I threw it in the bushes.

Then, after that, everyone decided to go to the hot springs. I know that this is some beautiful "get-one-with-the-earth" type of experience. But, I also knew that you had to be naked. What I didn't know was that I couldn't hide myself with a towel and slyly slip into the springs. Instead, I was told I could use a hand towel to cover what little I could. Oh yeah, did I mention they forgot the hand towels? It wasn't a liberating experience like so many say. The only word that comes to mind is "awkward". Being naked with my brother's wife and her brother's girlfriend, who the other night shyly refused to sit next to me, and know we are butt naked together was weird. Everyone else seemed to be fine with it. Matthew said there would probably be no one there. As we pull in I see the huge amount of cars in the parking lot. The first part was like a big open changing room where everyone came in and started undressing. I thought, "Great." It is not only being naked in the water, it is being naked for the walk to the shower, which is in front of everyone, then the walk into the pool. Then, when you get back out of the pool you have to go back to the showers and wash off, and then finally you can go into the hot springs. It is pretty much a big naked walkathon. Everyone minded their own business. They were even polite enough to look at me when they thought I wasn't looking.

June 29, 2009

Treeth is starting to speak some Japanese. The toughest part of the Japanese language is the pronunciation. I don't know why, but Treeth always has it right on when he says something. I am grateful for that. Treeth is going to an English school 2 – 3 times a week. I am still looking into Japanese schools for him. All of his friends in the states are enjoying a nice three-month vacation, while Japanese school children only get about a month. There are a lot of other differences here, too.

1. You always take your shoes off when entering someone's home and your own. Even some

businesses will provide these little slippers to wear instead of your shoes.

2. As soon as you get your shoes off, it is over to the sink to wash your hands and gargle.
3. I see tuna sandwiches and meat ??? sandwiches in stores that are just sitting there not refrigerated.
4. It is okay to leave supper sitting out for hours, sometimes even overnight. They will eat it later.
5. It is okay to slurp your noodles in public.
6. You say, "Tahdakiimoss," which is like a quick grace before eating.
7. Marshmallows are 500 yen, which is about \$5.00 U.S. More than anything this bugs me, because I cannot figure out why. I know watermelons are 30,000 yen (\$30.00) because they are hard to grow. But marshmallows - WHY??
8. There are no jugs of milk, only old school cardboard liters.
9. Everyone recycles. Well at least 99 % do.
10. When someone has a get-together it is usually at a restaurant, because the houses are too small and/or they are very private people. The worst part about this is, no matter what you eat or drink, you and your spouse will be paying such and such percent. So say I only got a ten-dollar meal, but the whole bill came to 50,000 yen (\$500.00), then I would be paying a good \$75.00 or so.
11. I can't read hiragana (Japanese writing) so I have to use my eyes to register this and that to remember my way around places.
12. No one says thank you to store clerks. But the store clerks always say thank you. I make it a point to always say thanks when I get back my change.
13. You sleep on the floor on futon mats. In the morning you should take them out on the balcony, hang them out and beat them with a big brush thing. This way it gets all of the dust off and sucks up the fresh air, which leaves them all fluffy for the night.

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14. I noticed the parents have a lot of school papers to fill out, more than the kids have for homework.
15. You have to pay for your child's education - different schools, different fees.
16. The school system doesn't start with kindergarten. When you're six you start real school. All the other stuff like preschool and kindergarten aren't required, but you can still send your kids there to get a head start, I guess.
17. Your child's health care is free until they turn a certain age. That also includes free medicine. And the government gives you some money every few months for diaper expenses and such.
18. You get your paycheck once a month, so budgeting is a must.

I am sure many more things will pop into my head, but that is all I can think of at this time. Until next time, America.

Interview with Dean Abramson, Photographer

by Jane Tarbox

How did you start photography? What got you interested?

I am just interested in the way things look. When I was a kid, I drew pictures a lot. Photographing things that interest me is a way of experiencing those things. For example: I like trains. I cannot own one or drive one, but I *can* photograph one. It is satisfying when a photo can convey the feeling of something in an emotional way.

How do you find your subjects?

I just drive around, walk around, look around. Subjects are everywhere.

Did you have to do any kind of schooling?

I took just a little bit of photography in college (where I was majoring in something else). Mostly, I learned on my own from reading and taking tons of photos. Sometimes, I go to workshops.

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How long have you been doing this?

About thirty years, full-time.

What's your favorite thing to photograph?

Landscapes with man-made things in them. Towns, roads, trains, ships. Events, sports. I like photographing many things at dusk, before it is actually dark, but after lights start coming on.

Is there anything that you don't like about photography?

To do it professionally and make a living, you have to constantly promote yourself, network, advertise, etc. I don't care for that part much at all.

Is there anything you can share about your work?

I still love photography, but wish I were a better businessman. Actually, I should say: I wish I enjoyed the business part more.

Photography is a wonderful pursuit *if you really have a passion for it*. If not, there are easier and more lucrative ways to make a living. If you love photography, or whatever it is, you should pursue your dreams. If you focus on a goal, you can go pretty far. I did not do everything I would have dreamed for in my career, but I did do a lot of things I never even dreamed of.

I hope that you will look inside yourself and find what truly interests you most and go for it!

Best of luck.

Graduation 2009



Saturday, September 26th

2 – 4 pm

John St. Methodist Church
Camden

A Day at the Beach

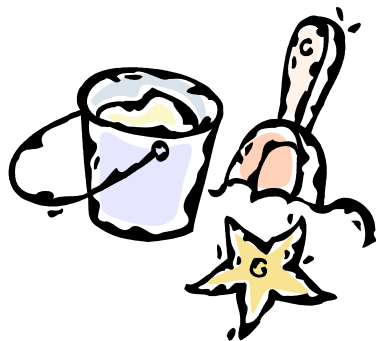
by Renee Grey

Today was a wonderful day. My mother had invited us to a cookout she was having at Birch Point State Park. The weather was beautiful. We packed the kids up with their bathing suits and off we went. By the time we got there pretty much everyone else was already there, the food was on the grill, and the kids were going crazy. Have you ever seen a child so happy you can't help but smile no matter what mood you're in? Well, my kids were those kids when we got to the beach. The kids were anxious; they helped us bring the food to where there were picnic tables, but you could see the excitement in their eyes, just waiting for the okay. Finally, for what I think felt like a lifetime to them, they were able to go explore. The tidal pools had kids all through them looking for gold. Well, for them starfish, crabs, shells, anything from the ocean was gold. They were running and running. Every time they found something new they had to show us. Their eyes lit up like the Fourth of July.

While waiting for the tide to go out further so they could explore new tidal pools, we went to the sandy part of the beach. They attempted to make sandcastles and tried to jump over waves, often falling on their bums. The water was cold, but that could not stop them. They just kept going; like the energizer bunny. They collected tons of crabs, starfish, and shells.

Though they were not allowed to bring the crabs and starfish home, they tried by putting them in their pockets. We finally got them to let the sea creatures go so we could come back and find them next time.

Days like these are ones that just make me proud to be a parent. There are many days they drive me crazy, but they make up for it. I know that unless you have kids you could never experience



the kind of joy that your children bring. With all the ups and downs, the thing that will stick out in your children's mind are days that you spend as a family doing simple things like going to the beach. I cannot wait for another day at the beach, so I can see them amazed like they were today.

Caring for Kylie

by Kristina Ott

Knowing what your child needs is very important. I know what my baby needs by listening to her cries. Her cries have different sounds for everything she needs: needing a bottle, diaper change, wanting to be held, and even wanting to be played with. Babies may be small and can't talk to tell you what they need, so you have to find a way to know.

Bonding is one of the most important things to do with your child, but bonding is a process that takes time. Some parents are different than others and they have a bond almost immediately and others may take until their baby is a couple days old and that's fine. When you bond with your baby you're letting him/her know that you're there for them. When I bond with my daughter we laugh and play and even get closer during her feedings; she also loves it when I sing to her. By taking care of her needs I always make sure she's never wet or hungry and that she gets in bed at a good time. I've had a schedule with my daughter pretty much since she started sleeping all night when she was 3-4 months old; babies on schedules tend to sleep better and not be overtired. If you don't bond and spend time with your baby, then they could have problems later on down the road with communication and possibly even a speech problem.

The times that I play with my baby are really the best times in the world for me. She's the reason I get up in the morning and the reason I look forward to the next day. Listening to her laugh and just learning something new about her every day - new foods she likes, different things she learns and discovers, the new sounds she makes. It's like she knows that I want to see all these wonderful things that she has learned. To me bonding and getting to

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know your baby and taking care of all her needs is the best way to show her you love her and that she can always count on you.

Beautiful Sweet Baby Girl

by Rachel Emerson

Beautiful sweet baby girl, when I first learned you were going to be coming, so many people told me how my life would change. They told me my life was over. They had no idea that my life wasn't ending, but just beginning. Before you were born I used to rub my big belly and talk to you and tell you how much I loved you. I promised you I would be the best mother I could be. And, when you were born I realized just how much I loved you. What a miracle you are! I'm truly blessed to have you in my life. And as you get older that love continues to grow and grow. I never thought this would be my life, but I'm so happy that it is. You're everything I never knew I always wanted. I never thought I could love someone this much until you came along. I couldn't imagine life without you. I love you more than anything in this world. You're my everything and so much more. As you get older, I hope you realize just how much I love you and how much I want you to be happy and grow up to be a kind, thoughtful, and successful young woman. I'm sure that's what you'll become. When the time comes and you stumble across

this letter, just know you are my biggest achievement in life. I might not have been everything you wanted in a mother, but know I tried like hell to keep my promise to you. I'll never stop loving you baby. No matter how old you get, remember you'll always be my beautiful sweet baby girl.

How We Get By on a Budget

by Renee Grey

To me budgeting is not blowing your money on unnecessary items or trips. I am not saying it is bad to go on vacation or buy something you want, as long as priorities are taken care of first. When my husband got into his accident we went from a comfortable living to... well, a pretty shitty living. That's when this whole budgeting thing really hit us. We had to learn to make it on an income less than a quarter of what we were used to.

Our first lesson: STOP DINING OUT. Not saying completely, but not as often.

Second lesson: NO MORE LONG TRIPS. Gas prices are complete outrages and driving everywhere in a minivan is out of the question.

Third lesson: NO MORE BUYING WHATEVER WE WANT. Shopping is fun, but if you're not careful it can cost a lot. When I go shopping I make a list of needs and wants. For example, I *need* milk, eggs, butter, and sugar. I *want* a bag of chips, soda, and cookie mix. I have found cooking from scratch is cheaper than buying mixes and box foods. Most of the time you already have the ingredients, so instead of buying cookie mix, use the milk, eggs, butter, sugar and flour you already have to make cookies.

It is also cheaper to buy most store brand foods. They also taste the same as name brand foods. Another way to save money is buying in bulk. When you buy family packs you get more than you need, but you can freeze meat in packs sized right

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for your family. You can buy most anything in family packs, so I buy big when I can. We learned that to buy family packs of meat and freezing it saves a lot of money, especially with four kids. Also, that buying name brand items, such as clothes, food, and so on was much more expensive than buying store brands. When you look at the store brand items it may only be a few cents or a few dollars cheaper, but when added up you can easily save fifty dollars, so that's worth it.

Fresh vegetables can cost a lot of money. That is why most people prefer to buy canned or frozen vegetables. When you buy canned vegetables you are not getting the nutrients that your body needs from vegetables. This is because there are so many preservatives in canned foods; to make them last longer, it takes away the nutrients. My way of dealing with this was still buying canned and frozen vegetables, but buying fresh vegetables when they were on sale. The prices are always going up so I decided to just grow my own. It is real easy and cheap.

Step 1- Decide if you are going to grow in a garden or in plant pots.

Step 2- Decide on what vegetable you would like. What will grow best in the area you picked out or in plant pots.

Step 3- Plant after danger of frost, if in the ground. Always read the instructions, unless you are an experienced gardener; some plants are very picky.

Step 4-Watch and wait.

You may also be able to find more on gardening online. I recommend if you do plan on starting a garden, you do your research first.



So far my garden has only cost me \$21.00. My mother in-law let me use her gardening tools and my landlord let me use a piece of property. I planted a lot of vegetables such as squash, lettuce, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumbers and more. I think this was a great

investment because by the end of summer, and for years to come, the vegetables I get out of my garden will pay off. I will also can and freeze my vegetables so I can have them all year long.

Another budgeting technique I have learned is going to lawn sales. During the summer you can find lawn sales everywhere. I pick up toys, kids clothes, movies and books real cheap. Just the other day I found a Dora bike at a lawn sale that I had been looking at up to Wal-mart that cost about fifty dollars; I got it for a buck, it was clean, looked new and the batteries still work. At some lawn sales you can get a bag of clothes for a dollar or two. I have four kids that run, play and grow fast; spending a fortune of money on clothes is out of the question. I have no problem going to lawn sales. Also, second hand stores always have children's clothes that you can get real cheap. I love going to second hand stores and lawn sales and getting clothes and toys for my children. It is a great way to save money.

If you shop with credit cards you are more likely to spend more than you need to. That is why my husband and I do not use credit cards. I do have a Visa bank card that only allows me to use what I have in my bank account. This helps build my credit without overspending. This I find very useful. Someday we might get a credit card, but only when we are sure we can pay it off each month. I have found from other's experience that if you are not in a good financial state, credit cards will only put you further into debt. Also, if you spend more with your credit cards, then what you can pay off will hurt you, too. Credit cards create misconceptions. It's not free money. You do have to pay it off.

Like I said before, shopping can be fun, if you do it right. Keep a list of things you need. Make a separate list of things you want. Bring a calculator with you and check the difference between store brands and name brands. Buy in bulk, check to see if you save more buying a family pack compared to buying a normal pack. Don't use credit cards unless you can pay them off. If you need to build your credit, get a checking account; use checks to pay for things. Make sure you keep track of the money in your account so you do not bounce checks. You can grow your own vegetables; it saves money. If you

follow these simple steps you will have more money, better credit, and feel happy even after you're done with your shopping.

Oskar Schindler

by Sarah Troxel

World War II - there is so much information about how the Germans almost wiped out an entire race of people, but it really took some digging to find out about people who helped the Jews. One person in particular is a man named Oskar Schindler.

Oskar was born April 2, 1908 into a Roman Catholic family. In 1928 Oskar married his wife, Emilie Pelzl. During the 1930's Oskar changed jobs several times. He tried starting many different businesses, but soon became bankrupt due to the Great Depression. In 1935 he joined a Sudeten German Party, which led him to working for German military intelligence. Oskar was exposed and thrown into jail in 1938. He was let out in 1939, and from there Oskar joined the Nazi party.

Now, with Oskar being a businessman, he was one of many that made a profit from the German invasion of Poland in 1939. He gained ownership from the bankruptcy court of an enamelware factory in Krakow, which he renamed Deutsche Emaillewaren- Fabrik or DEF. Oskar obtained around 1,000 Jews to be forced laborers, with the help of his Jewish accountant Itzhak Stern. Oskar did not stop there. He became a well-respected guest at Nazi SS elite parties, easily chatting with the high-ranking SS officers, often to his benefit.

Although at first Oskar was only driven by money, because Jewish labor was the least costly, soon Oskar would claim that certain unskilled workers were essential to the factory. But when Oskar witnessed a raid in 1943 on the Krakow Ghetto he was appalled with the number of Jews who were murdered who had worked for him. From then on Oskar used his many skills and talents to protect his Schindlerjuden, (Schindler's List). He did everything in his power to protect the Jews who worked at the DEF. Whenever the fact of

“Schindler Jews” were threatened with deportation, Oskar would not let it go easily. He would claim that he needed women and children because they had small hands for the parts on the machines. He also taught women, children and even handicapped people to be mechanics and metalworkers. Oskar also began smuggling children out of the ghetto and delivering them to Polish nuns, who either hid the children from the Nazis or claimed they were Christian orphans.

Oskar was arrested twice on suspicion of participating in the black market. Goth and SS-guards used Jewish property that they took for themselves, although according to law it belonged to the Reich. Even though he was arrested twice for this, he always managed to be set free, due to the fact that he would bribe the government officials to avoid investigation.

Towards the end they did an evacuation of the remaining prisoners westwards. Oskar did convince them to allow him to move his 1,100 Jewish workers to Brnenec, which saved them from going to an extermination camp. In Brnenec, Oskar gained another Jewish factory, which was supposed to make missiles and hand grenades for the war, but not a single weapon produced could actually be fired. So from there, Oskar's money grew smaller and smaller from bribing officials and the care of his workers.

Eventually, at the end of the war, Oskar spent his entire fortune on helping Jews. It led him to receiving assistance from Jewish organizations. Oskar went to Argentina in 1948 where he went bankrupt. In 1957 he then left his wife Emilie and returned to Germany. He went through many different jobs, but did make his way back to trying to help Jews. He went to West Germany to establish a cement factory to help Jewish organizations, but this went bankrupt also in 1961.

From there on out Oskar went to live with friends in Hildesheim, Germany. But due to a heart complaint Oskar was taken to a hospital on September 12th, where he died October 9, 1974, at age 66. Oskar was buried at the Catholic Franciscans cemetery at Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the only member of the Nazi Party to be honored in

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this way. Oskar's grave is located near the Zion Gate. Stones were placed on top of his grave, which is a sign of gratitude from the Jewish visitors, according to Jewish tradition. This is what Oskar's grave reads: "The Unforgettable Lifesaver of 1200 Persecuted Jews."

Now, even though Oskar has passed away does not mean he has been forgotten. Oskar has had a movie made about him and many biographies written. I feel that it is a great way for people now to see how in even the darkest times it is true that one person, just one, can make a difference.

Book Corner



The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

by John Boyne

reviewed by Sarah Troxel

This book starts off with a 9-year-old boy named Bruno. Now, Bruno and his family lived in Berlin during World War II and his father was an officer in the army. Like a normal 9-year-old boy, Bruno's life revolved around family, friends and school. When he found Maria, his family's maid, packing up his belongings one day, he discovered that his family was moving. Bruno did have a sister who was three years older than him, but they did not really get along very well, so Bruno knew he would have no one to play with.

From his bedroom window in his new house, Bruno could see Auschwitz concentration camp and all the people in it and couldn't understand why they had to stay on their side of the fence and he had to stay on his. Now, being a 9 year old, Bruno did not listen to his parents and went exploring one day and met a young Polish boy, Shmuel, on the other side of the fence. The two young boys immediately

became friends and saw each other almost every day.

At the end of this book Bruno ends up going onto the other side of the fence where Shmuel is. He does this to help his friend find his father, but still does not realize what is going on. Soon the two boys, along with all the other Jews in that camp, were stripped down and all put into a chamber for a "shower". Bruno's family finds out about his death and how he died inside a gas chamber, which was turned on under Bruno's father's command, although his father did not know that his son was inside the gas chamber. But I like to think that it made his father realize that he was killing other peoples' sons, brothers, cousins, fathers, uncles, and friends; that every life that was taken during World War II had a meaning somewhere in the world, even though certain people may not have known that or believed that "Jews" would be missed.

A Man Named Dave

by Dave Pelzer

reviewed by Renee Grey

This book is a very, very good book. In order to really understand this book you really have to read the previous books by the same author. This is a true story about a boy named Dave who grew up in a very abusive home. It tells you about his life after he left that home, how he joined the Air Force, and how his father passed away. This man endures a lot in his life but still comes out the other side smiling. He learns to move on from his past, and he grows up to make something of himself. This is the first paragraph of the book right before he is taken from his mother's house.

"I'm scared. My feet are cold and my stomach cries for food. From the darkness of the garage I strain my ears to pick up the slightest sound of Mother's bed creaking as she rolls over in the bedroom upstairs. I can also tell by the range of Mother's hacking if she's still asleep or about to get up. I pray Mother doesn't cough herself awake. I pray I still have more time. Just a few more minutes before another day in hell begins. I close my eyes as

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tightly as I can and mumble a quick prayer, even though I know God hates me.”

I think this somewhat shows what this man went through. Dave faces his past and the people in it. He confronts his mother, which is a big thing. He does great things in his life like joining the Air Force. I think his greatest accomplishment was overcoming his family history and creating his new family in a new way.

Stop Pretending

by Sonya Sones

reviewed by Kristina Ott

I read the book Stop Pretending. The author is Sonya Sones. This book is full of poems that are all about this girl's feelings about her sister going crazy.

It was a really good book; it was almost like you could actually feel what she was feeling. I really liked the poem about Cookie taking her new boyfriend to meet her sister. He understood Cookie, while her other friends stopped talking to her when they found out about her sister and made fun of her. After Cookie took her boyfriend to see her sister, Cookie started going to see her sister more and more, and I really think that her sister's attitude kind of changed. She wasn't as tweaked out all the time like she was in the beginning. What's really great about this book is that it's based on a true story that the author herself experienced.

I think that I did relate to Cookie in a way because I have experienced one of my close family members having mental breakdowns and having to be put away, and it really is a hard time for you and your family. Everyone's always sad and depressed and they wish they could do something about it, but really they can't and that makes them feel even worse. It really is hard to go and visit them while they are away in such a place because they are so different. It's like meeting someone you've never met before.

Meeting Sister

*My sister
Wants to meet my boyfriend.
And she won't stop bugging me about it.
"What's the matter?"
she keeps asking.
"Are you ashamed of me?"*

*I finally make myself tell John.
I say I'll understand completely
if he doesn't want to.
I'm secretly hoping
he'll refuse.
But he doesn't.*

*We ride the subway
over to the hospital.
John jumps
when the heavy iron door of the ward locks
KUCHUNGGGG
behind us,*

*but when he meets Sister,
he handles it pretty well,
even when she whacks herself hard
on the side of her head
and tells us she's trying to kill the fly
that's buzzing around in her brain.*

*Aside from this,
she manages to seem almost normal.
Charming, even.
She's working so hard
not to embarrass me.
I could kiss her.*

*On the way home
John says,
"I like her. I like your sister."
And I love him more
at this moment
than I've ever loved him before.*