

1999 Kurt Benjamin Writing Contest

How I See the World Today

Miranda Dean

In this year of 1999 I am in my mid-twenties. A lot has changed since my parents and my grandparents were my age, but in some ways, things have stayed the same. I just hope that by the year 2149 everything will have changed for the better. I'm not saying that everything in my time is bad. Things could be much better, and hopefully things can't get much worse. Let me tell you how I see the world today.

Now I'm the kind of person who likes to tell people bad news, and then the good news. I will not change that now. A lot of people say that we are living in the time of Armageddon, which in the Bible is the last days or the end of the world. These same people think that when the new year gets here, the world, as we know it, will be no more. As for me, I say that this is partly true. If we are living in Armageddon, it is just the beginning. As far as the world ending in the year 2000, I really don't buy that. The world will end when it ends.

Things are very bad, however. There was a time when you could walk down the street, day or night, without living in fear of being raped (and that does not just apply to women) shot, beaten, or killed. A lot of times there is no reason for these things to happen. You can just be one of the unfortunate victims of this mean world. Then you have some people that have these really dumb excuses like, "They had on the wrong color, the wrong shoes, that person looked at me the wrong way," or the most common, "They belong to a rival gang." This has been going on for years and it is not getting better.

The school system nowadays is a big issue with me, so I must apologize now if I get too in-depth with this subject. When I was going to school we had a lot more than they do today. Now I'm not saying that the school system did not have problems, but it is past outrageous now. We had music classes, automotive classes, woodshop; we even had acting classes. Nowadays you can't get these classes in school on top of your regular school.

Like anytime, I'm sure you have kids that are at a lower level than the rest of the class. Now you have kids that drop out of school because there is no way for them to catch up. They feel that they don't have the degree that they need to graduate, and they never will. You see the rooms are overcrowded, and no one can get the one-on-one help that is sometimes needed. Teachers will not even stay after school and help anymore. So kids grow up dumb and don't care. That is why we have programs today like the Reading Program, so that people can learn what they did not learn in school.

On top of all that, you have teachers that are afraid to go to work and teach because kids nowadays are dangerous. Teachers get stabbed, raped, and beaten by their students. There are even some teachers that have gotten beaten and stabbed by parents for giving their student a bad grade. We have kids that fear for their lives when they go to school. You see kids have made some schools into battlegrounds. They shoot up the schools, then if they have time, they bomb them up. This makes me very upset. Schools were meant to be a safe place for the young to go to get an education so that they can have a future for themselves, and maybe even have a better life than their parents did. Now I will get off this subject.

Now for the government, that is really bad. I know that we have to have the government, but they have a lot of work to better our community. It seems that we may be at war again soon. If the war happens, it will be World War III. You see, once again the good old USA cannot take care of the problems of their own, and yet they want to take care of other countries. Yes, it is true that other places are worse than we are, but you have to help yourself, and get yourself together before you can run off and help someone else. We have people here in our own country that have no food to eat or homes of their own, or a home period. We have people dying of fatal diseases with no care, and people on drugs who can't do for themselves, let alone their kids. The cost of living is so high that if you don't have a high paying job or a rich family, you have no choice but to live with family or out on the streets. But yet, the government thinks that they can help someone else. Funny, don't you think?

Don't get me wrong. It is not all bad living here in my day. We have very creative people that have made life a more convenient, and an easier place to live. We have computers, and you can do a lot with them. You don't have corns on your fingers from writing too much. You don't even have to run to a dictionary every five minutes when you are writing if you don't know how to spell a word, because the computer has a spell checker already in there. At the click of the mouse you can check your work. We have this service called the Internet, which really makes life easier. Just from your computer you can go shopping, make and pay for vacation plans. If you're doing something that requires research, we have programs that can help you find just about any-

thing. We have chat rooms where you can sit and talk with people that you know or don't know. This is different from E-mail. With E-mail you send a letter or a note to someone that you know and wait for a response in a day or two. The chat rooms are like you are talking on the phone. But instead of talking you are typing. Now they are beginning to bring out the videophone that you can put on the computer too. This is where you can see the person that you are talking to.

We also have cable. Now cable has been out since I was a kid, but we have upgraded it. We now have digital cable. You have up to 80 channels with ten or more movie channels, and about five pay-per-view channels. Now if you don't want to spend ten dollars to go to the movies, you can wait a few months and watch it at home.

While we are on the subject of movies, we have moviemakers that in their movies show how they see the world in your time. So if you have any interest in viewing old movies like a VCR or a DVD player you can check them out and you may get a laugh or two. Here are some titles. We have "Demolition Man," "Starship Troopers," "Star Trek," and there are even a few cartoons like "Futureama" and "The Jetsons." We have come out with virtual reality. There has also been talk for years about coming out with a solar car that will run on the sun's energy instead of gasoline. I think that they are coming closer to their goals. That is if they do not destroy the ozone layer by then.

Well, I think that I have bored you enough with history. I know that History was very boring for me, but I hope that is better in your time, too. This is how I see the world today. There is a lot more about my time than this, but

I'm sure that you will read about that in your history books; but if I tell it all to you now, you might find history boring, and you may lose interest in your schooling, and I don't want that. Also keep in mind that this is just one person's view of how the world was in the year of 1999.

Miranda Dean is a 24-year-old mother. In September, she will have been with the Reading Program for three years. When she started, she was reading at a third grade level. She says she isn't sure what level she is at now, but she is much higher than that. Before she would not read, but now she reads every day. She is in the middle of her third book and it has only been eight months.

She would like to thank her family, the Reading Program, and Betty.

Peace

Ruben Dozal, Jr.

I hope and pray that when you read this letter, peace and tranquility are all over the land. Yes, even on the other side of the great oceans. This would have made me very happy indeed to have seen it.

Because in my time, life in some places meant nothing at all. People were being killed like cattle in a slaughterhouse, just because of different religions, or color of skin, and in some cases even because they were from a different country. This, my children, has been going on for five thousand years. So I hope that things might be better in your time.

My children, when you read the book in the case that I left for you please write your part in it and pass it on to the next generation.

Do not harden your hearts to your loved ones, for it will only split the family up. Let love and understanding be your strength and your beliefs and morals your food, that will never leave you hungry.

The winds of the four directions have made it possible for you to have made it to this year, and it is up to you to reach for the stars and see if you can touch the face of God himself.

You have made it this far already and be grateful for the past generations that made it possible for you to see what they only dreamed of seeing.

One day you might think I am seeing and feeling with their eyes, feeling with their body the pains of the day with my open arms.

So go forth now, being content that you have read a little of your past, which was as stable as a bottle of nitroglycerin, but nevertheless we made it without destroying ourselves.

Go now, gather your family together and bend your knees in prayer, giving thanks to God for making it possible for you to see another day.

Your Great, Great-Grandfather,
Ruben Dozal, Jr.

The Time Book

Ruben Dozal, Jr.

Do not be afraid, go ahead and open the book.

Time has truly gone by because you are reading it now, so please read on.

The time is nineteen ninety-nine and man has come a long way in finding ways to destroy himself without the help of anybody.

Man has invented airplanes, cars and trains to transport people from place to place.

Computers to further educate ourselves, and telephones to help us communicate with each other.

Yes, we have invented hundreds of wonderful things to help man.

But we have also invented hatred, discrimination, and slavery, and in some places the art of killing people for money or just for fun.

There were many different races on Earth, or there used to be. Now only memories and legends are left, thanks to our own destruction of mankind.

Look to the heavens and go bend your knees with your loved ones and give thanks to the Almighty God for granting you another day.

I hope and pray that everyone is living in harmony all over the world. And peace, my God peace, has finally conquered the hearts of mankind.

Your great, great-grandfather,

Ruben Dozal, Jr.

To the Future

Ruben Dozal, Jr.



A boy goes to school but does not know what the other kids are talking about, so he stays by himself. Yes, in the 50's.

He tries very hard to understand the other kids and it is the start of the struggle that will shape his life forever. Yes, in the 50's.

He keeps going to school and some days he does not want to go because he starts to hear words that he does not understand. Kids make fun of him because he is a greaser. But it is the 50's.

Ha, but in the 60's the boy understands well what the words mean and the fighting begins with himself and others to find his place in the 60's.

War is in full force in Vietnam. Young people are dying to save a country but are slowly being pushed out of the fight and evil is the victor. But it is the 60's.

Flower children are trying to be heard. Racial tension in L.A., fire and killing is the answer. But it is the 60's.

Farm workers are united and are heard all over the land and a leader is born. Cesar Chavez was his name. But still, it is only the 60's.

A president arrives in Texas for a visit and leaves in a coffin. His brother arrives for a visit in L.A., both by the name of Kennedy. Both are killed in the 60's.

The war keeps on, people are still dying left and right, friends, brothers, fathers never returning to hold their loved ones. But it is only the 70's.

New laws are put down to protect people from themselves. The world is starting to see the end of the war and it does come to an end in the 70's.

New hope starts to take shape for the lucky ones who served, but the healing will last a lifetime. But it is the 70's.

The world is starting to come to its own, so it seems. Countries are starting to cry for freedom at last in the 80's.

Children or kids having kids is the talk of the day. Son against father, daughter against mother, seems to be growing more common in the 80's.

Gangs and drivebys are talked about freely with no remorse for the dead. How can they have any if they do not even know whom they have killed? But it is only the 80's.

And the wars keep on coming, the poor and homeless cannot see any peace in the 90's.

Millions of people having children to carry out a fight that happened thousands of years ago, but still cannot shake hands and live in peace. But it is only the 90's.

People live and people die and peace still does not ring true in the ears of man. But it is only the 90's.

Planes drop bombs, guns are fired in the night-light, and in the morning everyone is counting their dead. More graves are dug, massive graves that

could take upwards of one hundred people who are just pushed in and covered up, never to know the names of the dead. But it is only the 90's.

So my children, these are some of the things that I, your Great, Great-Grandfather, have been able to put down on paper for you to read.

I really did not want to scare you, but that's the way it has been in the fifty years that I have lived.

So if you have a chance, gather all your loved ones, bow your heads and bend your knees in prayer to the Almighty God for not destroying mankind . . . Yet.

Your Great, Great-Grandfather,
Ruben Dozal, Jr.

Write in Me

Ruben Dozal Jr.,

Come here, what are you doing? How many times do I have to tell you not to play in the closet?

But Grandma, I was just looking at the pictures.

Again with the pictures, what pictures are you talking about?

The ones in this book, Grandma.

What book? There is no book in there.

Yes, Grandma, see?

Oh my God, where did you get that book?

I told you already, in the closet.

Read it to me, Grandma.

Okay, sit down and be quiet.

What does it say, Grandma?

Why are you crying, Grandma? Is the book bad?

No, it is about your great, great-grandfather.

If anybody or anyone of my seed reads this book I will have been gone for over one hundred years by now.

My name was Ruben Dozal, Jr. and I was born April 2, 1949 in Brawley, CA

To Maria Dolores Armenta and Ruben Granados Dozal,

Who were born to Bertha and Rafael Dozal in San Francisco, CA on

August 17, 1922.

My mother was born in Guasave, Sinaloa, Mexico on March 17, 1919.

And she was born to Angelita Pina and Matillas Armenta.

My wife was Maria Delia Bustillos born November 3, 1952 in El Paso, Texas

and we were married June 20, 1968 and her parents were

Juana Villaneva and Santiago Bustillos. Santiago Bustillos was born in

Chihuahua, Mexico on July 26, 1913.

Juana was born to Refuja and Teofilo Villanueva in San Bernadino, CA

on June 26, 1922.

Sadly, we cannot go back any further.

The time is Nineteen ninety-nine and I am fifty years old,

around the corner of my last days.

I hope that people have finally found peace for all humanity all over the world,

and that the killing of innocent people like cattle has stopped.

I wish that I could say more, but you have the proof in your hands. The only

thing that is left to say is, hold your family close together the best way you can

and love them. Always let them know how much they mean to you and you will

never walk alone.

Remember us, pass the book to the next generation, and do not be afraid to write in it your part of Life.

Your Great, Great-Grandfather

Ruben Dozal, Jr.

Ruben Dozal, Jr. started in the Reading Program in October of '98 so that he could learn how to spell better. He has two daughters and five granddaughters. He enjoys writing and fishing. He also enjoys working with his hands. He has been a truck driver, tractor driver, welder, plumber, and fabricator.

Life in the 20th Century

Loretta Fonseca



Sunnyvale, April 29, 1999

To Future Generations of my Family,

I'm writing this letter in 1999. Probably you have never heard about me, but I'm one of your relatives, a person who is part of your past, just as you are part of my future, and very important to me. The reason why I decided to write this letter is that I would like to tell you about what it is like to be an immigrant. The land where I was born, is in South America, thousands of miles away from here. It is a continent composed of poor countries and is called the Third World. Peru is a nice warm country with many years of history, where Spanish is our first language, and the economy is not good. I don't know about economy and government problems. I just want to say that living there is hard, and crime and abuse are everywhere all the time. The rich are richer and the poor are very poor, the social classes are very obvious. There is no way to support a family with one paycheck. Most of the time, at the end of the month, they don't have anything to eat. They have to survive every day with desperation, hunger and an uncertain future. I'm just one more of thousands of people who are looking for a better future in the United States. Living here is not paradise, but it is much better than Peru. This is an organized country that has a clear definition of freedom. The people have more opportunities in the fields of study and labor. Being an immigrant is not easy; you have to improve yourself and understand that you

are in a different world with different people, culture and language. Immigrants have to confront the problem of the languages. Without English you can't do anything; you get only the lower paid jobs. Everything looks like a big problem. Every little problem looks like a big one if you don't know English well. Even if you are a professional in your own country, here you are just beginning. That's why when you move to another country that the most important thing that you can do to be successful is to study their language. That is the best way to reach your dreams and goals. So, work hard and make your dreams come true. Do the best you can.

Love,
Loretta

Loretta Fonseca is from Peru, and she likes to read history and classical books. There are four people in her family, her mom, her two sisters, and herself. They are trying to assimilate themselves into American culture. She works at a store as a salesperson and has been in the Reading Program for about one and one-half months.

If I Could Talk to Anybody in 150 Years

Raymond Hernandez

If I could go back in time, I would get an education and learn to read. I let myself down because I was not good in certain classes. I let my track coach talk me into running instead of reading.

When I got out of high school, as life went on, I faked reading in my jobs. I was a cook and a waiter and a busboy. My mom got letters from my sister, and she told me to read to her. I told my little sister to read to my Mom because I was embarrassed to read to her.

As time went on, I knew I had to learn to read. I applied to Job Corps for an education and to learn to read, and again I let myself down. I got sidetracked again. My cooking came first again. I didn't take my reading seriously.

Ten years later I made a friend and his name is Marc. He told me about the Reading Program. We get together twice a week to read. I said if I could go back in time, I would be a better student. The Reading Program is giving me a second chance.



Raymond Hernandez has been a cook for 17 years.
He is from New Mexico and has five sisters and twelve brothers.

A Letter for the Future

Lydia Lan



Dear Great, Great-Grandson,

It is hard to know where you be will in 150 years. Hard to imagine, isn't it? My great, great-grandfather lived in Fu-Jan, Mainland China in the 18th century. He moved to Taiwan, the other side of the ocean, to look for a better life. Taiwan was part of Mainland China at that time, but it seemed so far away. Then, at the end the 20th century, my husband and I immigrated to California.

There are a lot of different stories about Chinese immigrants in California between 1850 and now. Many years ago, people traveled by horses and wagons. At that time there were a lot of Chinese who gave their lives to build the convenient railroad that connects the whole country together. These early people made a great contribution to the United States.

In the 1850s, during the California Gold Rush, a great quantity of Chinese gathered around the San Francisco area to look for their fortune. They called San Francisco "the Old Gold Mountain."

Now near the 21st century, Chinese come to California for many reasons. Many outstanding Chinese students come to the USA to study science and technology. Most of them earn advanced degrees in the universities. Silicon Valley, the cradle of science and computer technology, is full of Chinese engineers and scientists. They contribute lots of knowledge and skills to the society. We are proud of them.

The State of California is full of economic and development potential. There are advantageous opportunities that attract investment. Numerous Taiwanese enterprises have joined this growing computer market. Finally, the warm weather fascinates Chinese and draws them to California.

Recently, Chinese people have gradually taken more interest in their community and in the idea of community service. Some extraordinary people participate in community works and have a hand in politics. It is a good sign. As more Chinese people participate in their communities and governments, human rights and race relations will improve, and the society will have greater success and peace.

You must be interested in why we came here and how we live. My husband earned a bachelor's degree in computer science in Taiwan. He then came to the States to continue his education and earned a master's degree. During his computer career, he has been a top computer engineer in the Silicon Valley. The important thing is that, while he likes to see the improvement in the technological world, at the same time he enjoys his life. I earned my bachelor's degree in Taiwan, too. Then I did my favorite, social work, for several years. After I would married, I moved to California. Because my husband and children are my first priority, I have not worked in the past couple of years. I am working hard to take care of my husband and children. I want my husband to get strong and warm support from me, and I want my children to be successful. That is why I'd rather stay home instead of working. I believe that if I build a strong family and cultivate goodness in my children, it will make California better for everyone.

I am also curious about what California will be like after 150 years. No doubt it will be more than I can imagine, more convenient and more advanced. Maybe you will only have to push a button and you will get anything you want in your life. People will no longer need to labor in heavy and dangerous jobs; also the advanced equipment will save a lot of time for people. It is possible that the population will grow fast in California, but it may not be a problem. Maybe most of the people will have immigrated to the Moon, Mars or other planets.

I hope that California not only is still the science pioneer of the world but also that it encourages good morality and good spirit throughout the world. Whatever happens, California is my dream and a place of happiness. I hope that California will be a lucky sign and spiritual support for everyone. Let us strive to be diligent, have self-respect and love in the present age and future generations of California.

God Bless You!

With love,

Your Great, Great-Grandmother

Lydia

Lydia Lan has been in the Reading Program for three years. She really appreciates the help from all staff and tutors from the Reading Program.

They help her family a lot, especially to build up their confidence in learning English and all the joyful events. She hopes she can also contribute her learning back to the community and society in the future.

My Journey and My Dreams for the Future

Connie Ledesma

Dear Great, Great-Granddaughter,

My name is Connie and I am 26 years old. I have four kids, two who live with me now and the other two, twins, were taken away from me when I was 17 years old.

I grew up with my father. I had my mother just until I was about six years old. At the time, my father moved me, my sister and my six month old brother to Watsonville. My mother stayed in Gilroy.

As a child I had something very bad happen to me with my father. I ran away from home because I was tired of what was going on. I met my twins' father, and he introduced me to heroin. I was only 15 years old. I got very strung out and things for me got very unmanageable. I did not have anywhere to live. I was sleeping by the railroad tracks or anywhere I could find, and I still wanted to do drugs. About one year later, I became pregnant. When I was six months pregnant, my boyfriend went to jail not knowing that I was going to be sick from withdrawals. He was the one who helped me shoot up the drugs. When he went to jail I had to learn how to do it on my own. At first it was very hard, but I felt I had to learn quickly so I wouldn't feel sick.

As time passed, I was tired of using so I went to my mom's house to live with her in Gilroy. In the seventh month of my pregnancy, I had my twins prematurely at Valley Medical Center. At the hospital one of the nurses saw the heroin tracks on my arms and called Social Services. In order to bring my

twins home from the hospital, I had to attend a program that included parenting classes, daily testing, and NA meetings. After I graduated, I moved to Gilroy with my aunt.

The twins' father got out of jail when the twins were about one year old. My boyfriend and I started using again and we both got very strung out. When the twins were 14 months old, we both went to jail. The twins stayed with my aunt while I was in jail and have not seen their father since. I got out of jail four months later and went to live with my mom in San Jose. The twins live with my aunt and are nine years old now. I still see them, and we have a good relationship.

I met another man in 1992 and had a son by him in 1993. Things with his father did not go well either. He was very jealous and abusive. I started using again because I was not happy with him. When my son was two years old, I left his father in 1996 and used for about six months and lived anywhere.

I finally was just tired of everything and went and got on methadone. I have three years at the methadone clinic and eight months at the Perinatal Substance Abuse Program. I am trying to get off methadone now. I have learned how to be a better mother from parenting classes. I started classes to get my GED. The counselors also have helped me understand how to take better care of myself and my family.

Ten months ago my daughter, Sophia, was born. Having a baby girl has changed me in a lot of good ways. I want to give Sophia things that I never had, like a mother, love, a safe environment and an education. After finishing

the program and getting my GED, I want to go to school to be a Medical Assistant. I have a lot of dreams for the future. So, Great, Great-Granddaughter, I hope you won't have the hard things in life like I had. Instead, I hope you have a lot of love and happiness in your life.

Love always,

Your Great, Great-Grandmother

Connie Ledesma

Connie Ledesma would like to let you know she is a happy person now and realizes that she doesn't need drugs in her life to solve her problems. She has been in the Reading program for two months. She loves to spend her spare time with her family. She was inspired to write her story so other people will know that they're not alone. It happens to other people too.

This is a Feeling of Anger

Robin Mullett

This is a feeling of anger and bitterness, a world of confusion and stress that makes me wish sometimes I would breathe my last breath. To find that place of peace and rest, to wish for nothing more or nothing less. Where all my love and joy lies. Instead of the pain that brings the tears within my soul, a cry that makes this heart turn cold. When you're hurt and feeling all alone, now beginning to face the fact on your own. Paying the price for wanting to be grown. Sometimes, it hurts to even laugh so you begin to believe you were destined to be sad. These are the feelings this small world brings, a place of hope and shattered dreams. The mind is a dangerous place. You should never go in it alone, but when you're locked inside your cold dark cell, all you can do is allow it to roam. As your night turns into day, you see the light, God shines your way. Now you may start anew, a fresh look with a new attitude. Knowing that God has a plan for you, so know your gray skies are turned to blue. Say, goodbye to your grief and strife and let God guide you to a long and joyous life!

Robin Mullett has been a learner in the Reading Program since April of 1998. She has eight brothers and two sisters. Her hobbies include horseback riding, movies and computers.

My Life

Sheng, Jonathan Samuel

My lifestyle is not complicated to people these days. But I am not sure how people 150 years from now would think of my lifestyle.

My mother said there were vast improvements from 1953 until now, 1999. But she always told me to be ready for any sort of hardships and not to rely on high-tech engineering too much. There was a minor leaking problem because of "something I don't know." When I heard about the situation, I was sort of panicked. But my mom already knew how to deal with these minor problems, had everything mostly under control. Since then I understood why she said, ". . . be ready for any sort of hardships and do not rely on high-tech engineering too much."

My basic opinion and advice is: stay away from violence, drugs, and sex; choose logically; be a good citizen; have good communicating and social skills; exercise.



Jonathan Samuel Sheng is ten years old. He has been in the Reading Program for about six months. His mother, Li-Li, inspired him to write this piece. His dad, Chu-Chin, supports the family. His brother, Michael, is very adorable (except when mad). He thinks FAMTRACK is great.

Do Not Completely Depend on High Technology

Li-Li Sheng

Thursday, April 29, 1999

I am sitting here in front of the computer trying to organize my thoughts into words. It is very hard for me to write or speak clearly, correctly, and effectively. I would like to share with you about what I have learned recently. Do not completely depend on high technology.

Recently, the water heater was leaking in our home and gave our family the opportunity to experience, somewhat, the life back in the old days. In the beginning, I was upset that my husband, Chu-Chih, did not want to fix it right away. However, it is true that it is time to remodel our laundry room. We did not know why the water heater still kept leaking after we turned off the inlet valve of the water heater. We saved some water, and then he turned off the main water valve of the house. It was very inconvenient without tap water. It was like the life back a long, long time ago. We learned to conserve water.

The next day was a very stressful day for me. The water heater was still leaking, there was no running water at home, and we were going to have a Bible study in our home that night. Around 2:30 pm, the drain cock of our water heater did not work. I needed to dump the dirty, rusty, leaky water every one or two minutes. When the phone rang, you could imagine how nervous I was. "How can we have the Bible study in such a messy situation?" Luckily, the water stopped leaking around 4 o'clock. We had a

very peaceful night. I thanked God for giving me the peace and joy in my heart.

The next day (April 8), we looked for a new drain cock for the water heater. I found a substitute part at Orchard Supply Hardware Store. We spent most of the day in the Milpitas Library. My kids read books, played chess, went on the internet to print the most popular Japanese cartoon pictures from Pokemon and Sailor Moon. Since I couldn't install the tax software on our computer, I got the forms from the library and started to file our 1998 income taxes.

On Friday (April 9), we were out of water. I turned on the main water valve but there was still no running water. "What could I do without water?" I knocked on our neighbors' doors to ask for help, but no one answered. I thought about the book "FIX-IT-YOURSELF MANUAL." I found out that the directions on how to turn on the main water valve were opposite to the way I did it. I hurried to fix it and "SSS . . ." We had water again!!! From that day on, I heated water on the stove top and told the children to experience the way my family took a bath when I was a child.

Now we live in the fast paced "Silicon Valley." There are many temptations: video games, computer games, stocks, toys, etc. We have to try very hard not to drift in the stream. It is not easy, but at least we try to set limits. I can't imagine life in 150 years. From recent experiences, I realize that we should be very appreciative to have so many inventions that provide us a great convenient life that we can enjoy. Nevertheless we should not completely

depend on high technology to pursue our happiness. How about having some experience of the old day's lifestyle? Take one or two days to experience life without a water heater, car, refrigerator, TV, electricity . . . etc. Take time to show your love to the one you love through writing a love letter, playing, exercising, cooking, and reading, etc. Let's have "Positive thinking" and try to remind ourselves that "Understanding, Acceptance, Forgiveness, and Love are the keys to rebuilding broken relationships." According to my experience, let's equip ourselves to be able to survive in a more basic and simple lifestyle, and "do not completely depend on high technology."



Li-Li Sheng has been with the Reading Program for about six months.

She and Chu-Chih have two boys, Jonathan and Michael. She and her children have enjoyed the learning in FAMTRACK a lot. She likes to learn the organizational skills to keep her home neat. She thanks the program for encouraging her to write. Now she is learning how to put her thoughts into her writing.

Who Are You?

Emma Torrez

I wish I could see and speak to you to ask these questions. Who are you? What is your name? Do you have a mother and father, sister or brother? Since it's 150 years from now (1999), did you come from your parents or the results of a test tube in a laboratory? Are you related to us or a distant product of our genes? Who is your family? Which of my children did you come from? We have three daughters and three sons. In my life right now, I am married to your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Jess. We are neither rich nor poor, just happy in love and happy to be alive.

Can you love? Who do you love? Do you know what love is, and is there someone in your life that you love? I know that I would love you the same as I love all of my family now.

What has mankind done to the earth in 2149? Is there food for you to eat? What kind of food do you eat? Do you know how to cook food? Are you in good health? If not, are there hospitals and medication to treat illnesses? Do you have money to buy things, or do you need money? Do you have cars that drive on the streets or do they fly in the sky? Do you live on Earth or on another planet? Does the United States still exist? Is it still made up of separate states?

I would like to tell you something about myself, so that you could try to picture me as I was 150 years ago. I am an American of Mexican and English descent. I am 52 years old and live in a house; do you live in a house? I live in

a town called Milpitas, California on the west coast of the United States. I am a wife, mother and grandmother who loves her grandchildren. I love cooking (for all of our family and others), also eating, listening to music, cleaning house on a rainy day, traveling and watching television. I look forward to seeing my grandchildren when it has been a month since I last saw them. Playing with them on the computer and other games is one of the many joys of my life.

We have a CD - ROM that we can put music and pictures on; I love to listen to "Somewhere In Time" by Rachmaninoff, "What a Difference a Day Makes" by Diana Washington. I like all types of music. I have made one or two CD-ROMs so if you can get one, you could see what I look like.

I work for the Reading Program. It helps people learn to read and write. I am not a good reader or writer and that is how I started in the program. It is said that 20% of adult in the United States read below a fifth grade level in 1999. I hope that this problem is not still going on in the year 2149 and this world did something right!

I didn't tell you all of the bad things that are going on in the world right now, because they are all in the history books. I wish that there are books to read and music is still being played. I hope that you are strong, wise and full of love.

With all my love to you, your Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandmother Emma Torrez.



Emma Torrez has been in the program for nine years. Not only is she a learner, she is also on staff as a Learner Advocate and loves her job. She is a wife, a mother of five, and a grandmother of two boys that she loves very much. She enjoys music, arts and crafts, eating, and cooking.

A Few Words About Feelings

Natalya Vaynshteyn

It was April and it was night, and it was raining in San Francisco when the plane landed at the airport.

A few minutes later they stood face to face in silence. Almost two years had passed since they saw each other last time. And words lost their sense and there were only eyes to express their feelings. "Nevertheless, you came," said Walter finally, and he embraced her and their son Daniel.

Then they drove in the dark night of California to their new place and they behaved as if nothing special had happened. But an unpredictable and a bit intimidating future was looking at her through the window of the car. Her past was also standing behind her shoulders at that moment. She asked herself, "Was it a transgression to leave her parents in Russia and was it a transgression to leave her beloved people in Russia, and was it a transgression to leave Russia itself?"

She opened the door of her new home as if it was the entrance into her new life. Walter did his best. White roses in a vase produced a beautiful fragrance, and two big old lamps lit up the snug room.

In the morning the great blue sky appeared in front of her eyes and the first day of her new existence demanded of her, "Are you ready?"

She was not ready. She was not ready at all. She understood it later when the longing for her beloved people and Moscow had almost transformed into a physical pain. She liked California and Californians, who always said to her

and Daniel, "Welcome to America!" But she did not love this land. She even was afraid that she could not be able to love deeply anything here. "What a beautiful country!" she thought to herself. "But maybe I am not good for it." In her dreams she wandered along her favorite streets in Moscow and met her friends. Her subconscious sometimes replaced the reality for her, but reality was there. Through the window she often could see Daniel happily playing with his Dad on the green grass. She listened to their laughing as if it was music.

. . . It was April again, her third April in America. She looked at the blue California sky and felt that she loved it almost as much as she loved Moscow clouds. She has worked hard in her soul. Time has done its job, and her heart has finally opened toward the great country. But in her dreams she has still seen her beloved people in Russia. They stood face to face in silence. Then they embraced her and said, "Nevertheless, you came . . ."

Natalya Vaynshteyn has been in the Reading Program for almost two years. She feels very lucky to have an excellent tutor who helps her not only improve her reading and writing skills, but also to understand more deeply the new reality in her new life here in the new country.

A Poem

Paula Velasco

You entered my life when I was just a young girl. Now I never believed that I would love you as much as I do now. You're my reason for living, waiting for your future to be prosperous and from here, where I am, I hope that you use what you have learned from your father and me in life.

Paula Velasco has been in the Reading Program for one year.

Her family works very hard and long hours.

Her dear family inspired the writing of this poem.

Learning to Spell and Read

Pong Wrench

I was born in Korea on October 10, 1943. I don't remember anything about my early childhood until I was about five or six years old. I remember that we were very poor and never had very much to eat. In the winter time, we were always cold and hungry because we didn't have any warm clothes, shoes, or socks to wear, nor any heat for our home.

At about eight years old, the Korean War started and we were even poorer and hungrier than before. My parents did not send us to school, so we started out life with no education. The war dragged on for several years and then finally, it was over.

When I was about eleven years old, my father got sick and died. I went to live with my aunt ("Big Aunt") and helped her work around the farm. This went on for a few years until I moved to Seoul to live with another aunt ("Little Aunt"). I helped this aunt with the housework, but I never did get to go to school. My uncle worked for an American army base. He was transferred to a base near Los Angeles, California. My aunt and uncle brought me with them to California and I eventually moved to Northern California, where I got married. My husband and I had two children, a boy and a girl.

Once my children graduated from school and found jobs for themselves, I decided that I was going to finally try to learn to spell and read. I realized that I was as dumb as they come, and that I would really need some help. I tried to go to classes two different times, but it was always completely impossible

for me to figure out what they were trying to teach me. So, I gave up taking the classes.

I was lucky to have the library system find me a very nice lady who spent a lot of her time teaching me with the beginning lessons in spelling and reading. Her name is Carolyn and she has been a great help to me in wanting to learn. I feel that she has changed my life because I not only want to learn, I feel that I have to learn for Carolyn, as well as for myself.

When I am working in my garden, I always think that I have to make time to read my library books, practice my spelling words, and write in my diary just about every day. I know that I still have a long way to go, but I also feel that I have learned a lot. I will continue to learn English.

Pong Wensch has been in the United States since 1969.

She has always wanted to learn English.

