Editor’s Note

I want to frame the following set of works with a fact: people take up time and space. Your body occupies a certain volume in the universe, and your actions occur across a series of seconds, minutes, hours, and years. This is simple stuff, but stuff that’s hard to remember in an increasingly busy world that tries to ignore basic physical limitations; a world that is constantly trying to be more and do more with less effort and less time.

It’s a sort of environment that sets the standards for success in our culture today: getting the best things the fastest, or overcoming the hardest obstacles with the most measurable results. The people who do these things, typically, are the people who get their names all over the internet, who get their pictures in the paper — the people who get your attention. In this world, under these standards of success, time and space seem like things to be earned.

All art, at its best, plays a double role: it exists as itself in its own particular time and space, and it serves as a representative of another certain time and space. Every story, every photograph, every collection of words and images is almost a sort of time travel — allows you to be where you are and also wherever the work takes place. If I tell you I am at my desk right now, in a green director’s chair and waiting for my hot water to be ready for tea, you might be able to picture it well enough to feel like you’re there. You can be in two different places, two different times, all at once.

Stories cheat time and space, but they can only do that if two things happen: if the storyteller pays attention enough to create a real time and space, and if the story-reader pays enough attention to see the real time and space created before them.

As a staff, we’ve done our best to create real time and space. We tried to remove those standards of success that make life a contest. We took the time and made the space to hear and re-hear and look over and over again at stories from a group of people who gave us their time and shared their space. When we did this, we found all kinds of good things, all kinds of hard obstacles, all kinds of evidence, all kinds of ways to measure all sorts of successes — all this in one person, all this in every person. Everyone became suddenly more multidimensional than we ever expected.

This magazine is really about the amount of attention we pay to ourselves and to others. It is about the idea that it takes time and space not just to be, but also to see and to hear. Sound and light waves travel across space, and they take time to get to your ears and eyes. It’s why you hear the thunder and see lightning at different times — unless you get really close.

So get close. Read the stories, spend time with the pictures. Be with them. Existence is not a thing to be earned, but a thing that is there already. All you need to do is make space, take your time, pay attention, and enjoy.
I like doing alterations, and I like people, too.

Ruth has owned and maintained Express Cleaners for the last twenty-two years. She is a warm, friendly woman, and she expresses her deep love for Biola students (10% off dry cleaning services). Her customers quickly become a part of the family; Her daughter explains that 80% of Ruth’s clients have been with her the last 22 years. It has become a generational loyalty — older customers’ children bring in their children to get their clothes cleaned, altered, or hemmed.

Her background carries a traditional working mindset — very few family vacations, work everyday, and invest in the latest technology. Ruth is a dedicated employer, providing excellence and high quality, but her love for the business revolves around her customers. Her daughter shares, “I think the reason why customers keep coming back is her personality. I think that beyond the language barrier, I really believe that my mom has a warmth about her and people gravitate towards that.”

Ruth, Express Cleaners

We mostly serve residents from La Mirada. That’s most of our business because we’ve such a small town — they’ve grown up here, they’ve lived here all their lives, and so they want to be buried here.

Ted started working as a groundskeeper at Olive Lawn Memorial Park while attending La Mirada high school. Maintaining the 11 acres for 2 years, Ted then left to pursue other things, and eventually came back to the family operated business in 2008. Although the 25-year-old supervisor is not part of the original family owned company, Ted explains that he’s in it for the long run, and will have the privilege of taking over the company in the future. Ted proudly shares that this is possibly one of the oldest run businesses in the town of La Mirada — started in 1924, in close competition with the water company.

Ted, Olive Lawn Memorial Park

I have a lot of regulars. I have this old man — I don’t even know his name. But he came in every Thursday, and I knew his whole order. So whenever he walked in the door I would just put his order in, and he would always play the Lotto, and he always said if he won I’d get half. They call him my boyfriend, but he’s definitely not my boyfriend — he’s like ninety.

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Amy started working at the Carriage House when she was 17. She lives right down the street, and she felt comfortable with this restaurant because her family ate there often. Accepted as a hostess, Amy worked that position for two years and rose to a waitress position, which she’s had for the last three years. Balancing the lives of student and waitress, Amy works at the restaurant four days a week and attends Fullerton College two days a week.

Amy, the Carriage House

I’m about the youngest guy here, and I try to get them going.

Lou waved the East Coast goodbye and moved from Connecticut to California in 1959 — and has been here ever since. He worked with sporting goods his whole life, but after retiring last October, moved to local retirement home The Palms. Lou’s wife passed away in 2009 from leukemia. His love for people helped solidify the decision of moving to The Palms. Lou’s day is packed with activities, games, special events, and visiting his daughter and two grandkids down the street. His specialty sport is beanbag baseball, and although he’s only been on the team a few months, Lou shares that the Palms team has held the championship title eight years in a row. The team practices three times a week, and competes with surrounding retirement centers.

Lou, The Palms
When I was a kid… we would swim all day and they could never get me out of the pool.

Carla comes to Splash Aquatic Center to swim almost every day. She keeps swimming to maintain peace of mind. Listening to a wide array of music—jazz, R&B, funk, and even Gregorian chant—Carla freely dances and swims in the 25-yard pool to the waterproof iPod in her ears.

Her vivacious and friendly presence is well known to the staff and other regular swimmers—she likes to go “where people know [her] name”. “This will be my fourth year [swimming at Splash]. You know why? It makes me happy. I try to spend a lot of time where people know me, people see me—you feel like you’re part of the family”.

We as a public library really have this mission to have free access to information for everyone. It doesn’t matter if they’re rich or they’re poor or they’re new to the country or they don’t speak English very well or they’re uncomfortable with the whole idea of libraries.

Jennifer has been the La Mirada community library manager for twenty years. She’s been interested in library work fresh out of high school, and dedicated to her love for literature and equipping the community with free information. Jennifer feels responsible and eager to share about the plethora of resources the library has to offer, including printers, free WiFi, public events, children’s story readings, a large database of free resources, and of course, books.

Jennifer, La Mirada Library

When someone walks in the door, I don’t even have to take their measurements. I already know what coat size they wear—what pant size they wear…I use a tape measurer, but I really don’t need to.

Javier became the Rent-A-Tux owner six years ago. Purchased from an “Uncle”-type figure, Javier now partners with the previous owner’s son. He explains that the original store opened in 1965, and it has been family-operated by various La Mirada citizens. Together the tux rental duo serves La Mirada and beyond, assisting men of all ages in choosing formal attire for various occasions, particularly weddings and high school proms.

Javier, La Mirada Rent-A-Tux

I work seven days a week, 14-16 hour days—my only break is on days that I’m racing. I ride to work a few times a week, I ride home a few times a week… on those days I’ll have up to four hours on a bike… I’m immersed in cycling, I get to play all day.

Steve, a lifelong cyclist, combined his passions for riding and business and opened The Cyclery Bike Shop in 2010. In this environment, Steve manages paperwork, builds bikes, and loyally serves his customers. He has been racing for 15 years. Steve loves his job and loves his hobby—it’s all about biking.

Steve, The Cyclery Bike Shop

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We have a gentleman that comes in who was part of the original Band of Brothers—they have that show on HBO, he’s one of the original guys from the unit and he comes in on a regular basis—at least once a month.

Brittoni, a Biola junior, landed a unique job last December: a café worker for Oxman’s Surplus store, which consists of a museum, the Mess Tent café, and a warehouse. Mr. Oxman, now 95, celebrated the store’s 50th anniversary last July with a grand reopening of the café and a redesigned war museum, which holds guns, rockets, WWII memorabilia, gas masks, helmets, and other objects from Mr. Oxman’s personal collection. Customers can get a taste of military life by trying an MRE [meal ready to eat] from the mess tent.

Brittoni, Oxman’s Surplus

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Brittoni, Oxman’s Surplus
Sometimes it’s hard to get out of bed. Everyday fears, anxieties, weariness, and stress make it difficult to leave the comfort and safety of sleep. Still, there is something that coaxes us into action in the morning, into the struggles and triumphs of each day. On a good day, this something could be the anticipation of seeing a certain pretty face or learning something new. On other days, it’s nothing other than pure necessity. It’s something differs from person to person, and whether it be the drive of hope, the press of responsibility, or the conviction of their calling, it gets them up and going. I asked familiar faces around campus what gets them out of bed in the morning, and their stories show how their experiences get them into each new day.
Angie Ramos

Angie Ramos has been working at Biola for eight years. She began as a regular employee and was promoted to a manager position after only two years.

“When gets me up in the morning is remembering I have to be ready to get to work,” laughs Ramos. As manager at the Eagle’s Nest eatery on campus, her job is nothing simple. “People think it’s easy,” she shares, “but there is a lot of responsibility involved.” Striving to keep Eagle’s stocked, running efficiently, and keeping student workers in line keeps Ramos busy. “I enjoy the challenge of it, but it has definitely been hard for me to become a manager, because sometimes it’s hard for me to tell others what to do.” Ramos admits to feeling weaknesses in her management, but she acknowledges the consistent growth that she’s experienced over the past five years she’s worked as a manager.

Ramos’ mother, who also works for Bon Appetit at Biola, has greatly shaped her work ethic and the way she approaches her job.

“My mom is a very important person in my life. I’ve always looked up to her,” Ramos says earnestly. Her mother, Olivia, the third of eight children, was orphaned at a young age and had to raise her five younger siblings while her older brother and sister worked to support the family. The youngest sibling was only six months old when her parents died. “My mother had to struggle to care for her siblings, and I admire her for her strength in going through with that, in spite of all the hardship.” Seeing her mother’s strength has empowered Ramos in the struggles through with that, in spite of all the hardship. “They were so poor that sometimes they went days with no food,” Ramos says. “My mother had to struggle to care for her siblings, and I admire her for her strength in going through with that, in spite of all the hardship.” Seeing her mother’s strength has empowered Ramos in the struggles and joys in her own life.

“When I was little, my mom taught me how to work hard and how to take care of myself.” Ramos works to share the strength and work ethic she has learned from her mother with her own daughter Samantha, and, as he grows older, her baby boy Salvador. In the mean time, she continues to set an example of dedicated hard work in each aspect of her job and her life.

Arek O’Connell

Senior Arek O’Connell has been deeply impressed with the importance of living life to the fullest. Two years ago, the murder of his father drove this belief even further home. His father had stabbed several times by an intoxicated assailant and never recovered from surgery.

“If you told me that my dad was going to die at 45, I never would have believed it,” O’Connell says. His father’s unexpected death has shown O’Connell how valuable every opportunity in life is: “I want to ask the questions ‘what does God want me to do, why did God choose to give me life, and what do I need to do with that?’” O’Connell’s investment in junior high ministry, coupled with his conviction of life’s value gets him out of bed every morning.

During his early teen years, he found out his biological father had abandoned his mother after impersonating her. “In the beginning, it was hard for me to accept,” O’Connell says. “This revelation brought many inner struggles of feeling unwanted and worthless. At this difficult time in his life, O’Connell’s youth pastor pressed upon him the great value of and possibilities for his life.

“He told me, ‘Your life is counted worthy by the Lord, so you need to make the best out of it.’” O’Connell recalls. Looking back at the trial-filled period of his own youth, he realized the best way to make an impact was to interact with kids that in the same place he used to be. O’Connell has come to realize that his story allows him to reach youth on a level that, without his life experience, would be impossible.

O’Connell hopes to set an example by living his life for God and for others. “My prayer is ‘Let Arek be forgotten and God be remembered.’ “What am I doing with my life if I’m not doing that?” Even though O’Connell has had to endure hardship and great loss in his life, the gift of life that has become so precious to him inspires him to get out of bed every single morning. “God has given me today for a reason,” he states, “and I don’t want to waste it.”

Stephen Adamcik

“My dog gets me out of bed in the morning,” Steve Adamcik, professor and golf instructor here at Biola University, grins. He turns to a more serious note, and begins sharing about his drive to build strong relationships while teaching golf and working towards his master’s degree — the things that encourage him to rise each day.

He enjoys teaching because he loves interacting with his students. He hopes to work spiritual formation into his golf instruction, especially as he pursues a Master of Arts degree in Old Testament at Talbot School of Theology.

“My swing was horrible,” says Adamcik of his golf skills when he first moved to California. “Here I was, small town Michigan kid, and I thought that my golf swing was great and that California was going to be my golden ticket.” Adamcik shares his struggles on moving out to California and plugging in to the professional golf community. Not long after moving, he joined The Professional Golfers Career College to hone his skills, where he met professional golf instructor Kent Brown. Brown took Adamcik under his wing and helped him improve his swing, but he learned more than he expected from his instructor. “Kent showed me that, as a Christian in this world, relationships should be one of the priorities in life,” shares Adamcik. “He was really interested in getting to know you and investing in you, and not just valuing you for what you could offer by way of skill and connections.” Adamcik hopes to foster this kind of relationship with his own students as he teaches here at Biola.

Adamcik’s extensive experience in the professional golf world and his friendship with Kent Brown taught him the importance of relationships and made him a strong advocate of golf as a bridge for relational gaps.

“Golf is like another language,” says Adamcik. “You could have absolutely nothing in common with a person besides the fact that you both pick up a club once in a while, and you’ve got a great starting point to build rapport with someone.” Using golf as a ministry has become an avenue to unite both his motives to build meaningful, invested relationships and his desire to encourage spiritual growth. “Hopefully, I can be a blessing to everybody, and we can have a little fun on the golf course at the same time.”

“I want to ask the questions ‘what does God want me to do, why did God choose to give me life, and what do I need to do with that?’”
Discipline. For most, the word means self-denial and willpower: losing sleep to study for an exam, remembering to pay the phone bill on time, or passing by the display case lined with plump swirly-top cupcakes. Afterwards, it’s the ‘A’ on an exam, the perfect credit score, or the clothes that fit that make the small triumphs seem worthwhile. Few enjoy the process of disciplining themselves. It seems a bit monastic to actually appreciate the solitary triumphs that receive little attention from others. What if those solitary moments of discipline themselves, and not only the end results, were actually the most rewarding part?

The lives of artists and monks often seem very similar, says Biola senior art major Katherine Long, referring to several artists and thinkers who have compared the two. Creative acts are primarily solitary processes, so confinement and self-denial seem tied to both artists and monks. For creators, like artists and musicians, the public acknowledgement of their work seems a flicker of time compared to the hours on hours spent preparing in studios or practice rooms by themselves. A composition that an audience spends a mere six minutes listening to likely took the composer four to six months to write, explains Joel Balzun, a junior music major. A full-length opera may even take two years to compose.

“If you aren’t diligent, then composers just kind of drop out,” Balzun says. A piece of music takes such an extended time to create that composers often have to take a break to refresh their mind and their sonic palate. While the audience might perceive only one homogeneous hum, the composer has spent days creating a unique voice for each instrument. Thus, composers need a broad knowledge of different instruments. Balzun’s own one-man band consists of the piano, baritone, trombone, violin, viola and his own voice.

Tyler Wigglesworth, a junior music major with an emphasis in voice, studies the communication of music.

“You can never turn off musical training,” he says. The information students learn in one class bleeds right into the next class session, he explains. “It really does come down to discipline and trying to build that discipline right away.”

by Sarah Jean Seman / photos by Jennifer Trahan

In Process
Music and art go beyond just poring over books and papers, demanding instead that the creator train his or her body’s senses and perception skills. As Katherine Long turned through the pages of her sketch book, which were covered with nimbly-formed faces, she explained that a lot of art is “taking the time to actually look and record it and not letting it pass by.” An artist has the pleasure of really studying the qualities, the colors and the unique characteristics of the elements that most others rush past. “Beautiful things are exciting,” says Long. “When you create something, you’re making the world more beautiful in your own little way.”

Wigglesworth talks about the way music also teaches you to be in tune to your surroundings. Despite the fact that his emphasis is in voice, Wigglesworth says his ears are often emphasised instead of devoting them to the text,” he admits.

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In the fourth quarter of a riveting basketball game, the home team’s head coach paces up and down the sideline. A player on the bench, still in his warm-ups, sits in silence amidst the crowd’s deafening cheers. He tries to hide his frustration, but is unable to camouflage his deep and evident desire to contribute to the game.

Any individual in the stands would be quick to label this player a “bench warmer,” or sometimes even just “the bench.” This collegiate player, however, is both the embodiment of hard work in grueling practices, and in many cases, a former high school star — details often overlooked when it’s down to the buzzer and all eyes are on the starting point guard taking the final shot.

Many players find themselves in this position — accepting the crowd’s applause after a victory without having broken a sweat in the last four quarters — yet only a select few have the character to respond with perseverance and positivity. Every one of them shares something deeper that drives them to push through hard circumstances: a dedication that goes beyond the love of the game. Without such dedication, no team would have a bench — and the bench is vital to any team’s success. Without this player, the one still in his warm-ups, the team lacks the chemistry it needs to succeed.

Senior point guard Elliot Tan is that player. As a senior in high school, the basketball court was his kingdom. He was captain of the Morrison High School basketball team in Taiwan, and led them to their league’s championship game. He also earned impressive individual accolades — including breaking the 1,000-point career scoring mark for his school and recording outstanding statistics with 25 points, six assists, nine rebounds, and three steals per game during that year. When he entered Biola in 2007, however, his role changed entirely. He went from being the player for whom the coach designates the game-winning shot to the player peering over the shoulders of his teammates in the huddle.

Tan worked hard and pushed himself in practices for two years, but still did not receive significant amounts of playing time. Many athletes who feel that they deserve more playing time simply transfer to different schools where they can be the stars of the team. Tan chose to stick it out — even if it meant fighting through the hardships of intense practices only to occupy the bench during games.

by Zachary Fu / photos by Jordan Nakamura
Although Tan doesn’t always contribute on the court during the games, he does all that he can to help the team perform. “I just want my team to win,” he says. “A lot of it is working hard in practice, trying to do what I can to make the starters play better.”

Many people fail to realize that it is the bench players who scrimp against the star players at practice. Without facing a challenge in these players, the starters would find it much harder to improve. Still, many question why a player would remain on a team without a place in the spotlight.

“What drove me to stay on the team was just having the possibility to work hard and have the opportunity to play,” Tan says, adding that he has enjoyed being around his teammates and coaches every year. Simply having his name on the roster and the chance to earn any playing time at all, he says, is a chance many would love to have. “Sometimes when you’re in there at practice running lines, you forget that it’s a blessing to do that,” says Tan.

Other bench players include those who have proven themselves to be star collegiate athletes, but have been banished to the sidelines because of serious injuries. These players find themselves feeling totally helpless while they support their teams from off the field. As they watch from the sidelines, they itch to be released from the bondage of their crutches or arm slings.

Former Biola lacrosse player Jonathan McMahan tore the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) in his right knee during his freshman season, and then the ACL in his left knee the night before his junior season began. The rehabilitation process for torn ACLs differs in each case, but generally requires surgery, physical therapy, and around 12 months to fully heal. For an athlete at the collegiate level, this means a quarter of your career down the drain.

McMahan’s first injury occurred during the championship game of his freshman year. While racing toward the goal, he leaned his body into his defender and took an awkward step with his right leg. The pain struck his body, eliciting his own screams as the lower half of his leg dug into the turf and the top half twisted over it. Even the goalie on the other side of the field heard the tear.

“You could hear the popping and cracking of everything in these tearing and it just gave out and I went down,” McMahan recalls. He underwent surgery for his knees in summer 2008, and the doctors prescribed him six months of physical therapy and six more months of avoiding contact sports, preventing McMahan from playing in his sophomore season. He seemed to be recovering just fine — returning to practice and getting voted team captain — until the second injury. McMahan tore his other ACL during a night practice before the team’s first season game. After a year of rigorous physical therapy and counting the days until he could play again, he was back to square one.

“I got overwhelmed,” says McMahan. McMahan struggled psychologically this time, battling depression for several weeks. For athletes, the real place of victory and defeat is often more in the mind than on the field. Psychological barriers can prove devastating to even the greatest player’s ability to perform. McMahan played a reserve role for the team in three games during that season and coached as much as he could. It was the best he could do, but it was not enough to satisfy his hunger to play.

“I hated it,” McMahan says. “It’s hard to go from leader on the field to trying to coach and lead off the field. Things can change so fast and you’re not even expecting it.”

Like McMahan, freshman soccer player Alexia Mendoza also understands getting stuck on the sideline by injury. In her freshman season — the second game of her entire collegiate career — she suffered a tear in her right ACL. Ironically, she’d also torn her left ACL during her freshman year in high school. Like McMahan, Mendoza went through the same scenario twice. Since Mendoza received her second injury during her first year in college, instead of her last, she dealt with the psychological aspects at a much younger age than McMahan.

“My confidence level went down a lot,” she says. Prior to the injury, Mendoza was reaping the benefits of her hard work during pre-season, and her collegiate career was going better than she had expected. When she came to Biola, she had decided that she would be satisfied with even five minutes of playing time. She averaged twenty-two minutes of playing time in the few pre-season games she played before the injury; when her knee went out of commission, the average quickly dropped to zero.

Like McMahan, Mendoza had surgery, and longed to support her team from the field as she watched from the bench. “It was frustrating because I’d want to be in there … it was hard not being able to contribute,” she says. Instead of dwelling on her circumstances, however, Mendoza used her time to learn more about the game so that when she returns to the field next season, she will be better equipped to serve her team. She doesn’t just cheer from the bench, but alsouhes her attention to the play going on in front of her. She notices every pass, every run — the way the players move on and off the ball.

Many athletes, if not all of them, fear the public criticism and personal feelings of failure that are associated with anyone not listed in the starting lineup. Often, when athletes who are used to playing significant minutes face injury, they become apathetic and lose their passion for the game. Uninjured players who sit the bench can easily become jealous or embittered, putting up psychological barriers between themselves and the team. When either of these happens, the players’ attitude brings the team down and becomes a hindrance — the team loses not only a good player, but also a general spirit of confidence. In the midst of all these challenges, Tan, McMahan, and Mendoza have all worked to turn their mindsets away from themselves, and made efforts to restructure the way they contribute to their teams. Of course they desire to play, but they’ve all experienced the undeniable value of playing a different position — the one on the sideline.
Transferring to college means facing the unknown—leaving behind your home and childhood friends, learning to live in a new world, and wondering, “Who are these boards of twenty-year-olds in flip flops?” Whether moving just a few hours away or across an entire country, transitions make life more exciting, but also more difficult.

American-born college students wonder if there are any points of contact between themselves and an international student, or if they should respect cultural differences by holding off on cultural assumptions. Newcomers wonder if America is a safe place to learn and grow, or if they must constantly struggle against prejudice and misunderstanding. As college campuses nationwide strive to include a more multicultural student body, these students meet one another in classrooms and cafeterias, churches and coffee shops. Their interactions create a third space where international students and American nationals can relate to. Abby Chua

While the Toscans’ lack of English skills immediately marked them as foreigners, Abby Chua’s perfect English allows her to blend in with the other Asian-American students at Biola. Unlike most of those Asian-American students, however, Abby grew up in Taiwan, and this is her first time in the United States.

American culture was different from Chua’s expectations. “I expected the people here to be way more confident than any group of people I’ve been around,” she says. “Really confident and bold and outgoing, every single person.” She also expected Americans to be laid-back in their attitudes toward school, and to eat fast food every day. She was surprised to see that students were serious about their classes, and that the cafeteria had healthy options.

Culture shock was not the biggest issue for Chua, who had already been exposed to different cultures through going to an English speaking school and traveling around Asia with her family. Instead, the hardest part of her first semester was dealing with being away from her family for the first time. Homesickness is an experience most college students can relate to.

Chua’s message for other international students is not to make the same mistakes she did in dealing with this displacement. To feel less alone, Chua filled up all her free time with activities with her friends. Outwardly, this looks like an international student successfully “assimilating” into American culture.

“I said yes to anything, anywhere, anywhere, anytime,” Chua recalls; “I had a lot of fun doing that; my way of living somewhat mitigated the pain I had from homesickness, but it didn’t heal me the way God heals and it destroyed my health.” Chua has a PSVT — or paroxysmal supraventricular tachycardia — which makes her heart palpitate. Normally, PSVT would not limit her goals, but the stress and lack of sleep made her heart palpitations worse.

Humberto and Joao Toscan

“Language was the hardest challenge,” Joao Toscan says of the problems he and his brother faced in coming to an American college after growing up in Brazil. 

“Coming here was like being born again, because we had to start from the beginning — [it was] like being 17 years old and reading kids’ books,” says Humberto Toscan. Joao’s older brother. Writing a two-page essay, something most students do with hardly a thought, could take the Toscans three hours.

Joao came to Biola on a soccer scholarship in fall 2009, after Humberto had already transferred from a school in Michigan. Humberto originally visited Michigan as an exchange student in high school, finding the weather there much too cold — during his first blizzard, he discovered that a hoodie did not qualify as “warm clothes.” He came to Biola on a soccer scholarship, and now runs the school’s intramural sports organization.

The brothers came with negative expectations about American culture. Joao admits he expected Americans to be unfriendly to outsiders: “I was expecting people not to talk to me because I’m international, that they would not show their feelings. We heard in Brazil that Americans and Europeans were not as open as we were.”

Instead, the Toscans found people acted friendlier because of their cultural difference. Humberto cannot remember any encounter where people were rude to him because he came from Brazil. Instead, he says, “Everyone is really nice and asks questions. They think we’re really bold to come here, especially because we didn’t know any English.” Joao points out that people are more likely to get to know the brothers because people are curious about Brazil. In the Toscan’s case, coming from a different culture has led them to meet more people than they would have met otherwise.

Joao also describes the support and friendship he has received from students and faculty at Biola: “Here you can talk about any topic you’re struggling with, and someone will try to help you out. People will do their best and there’s no one here who’s a jerk.”

After they graduate, the Toscans hope to stay in the United States to play professional soccer, or they could return to Brazil and help with the family transportation business.

Like many seniors, Humberto is still not sure where God’s plan will lead him. “We’re both gifted with the skills we have,” he says of himself and his brother. “We have what we need to make it at the professional level, but we don’t know if that’s God’s calling for us. No matter how much I want to play, if it’s not God’s calling we shouldn’t be doing it. It’s not like God’s going to come and say ‘I don’t want you to do this.’ It’s a process.”

by Stephanie Gertsch / photos by Jennifer Trahan

Exchanged
...the greatest struggle of living in a different culture was, and still is, being misunderstood.
David Ottestad attended Biola in the fall semester of 2008 before he realized that the American Dream wasn’t for him.

When the time came to make post-high school plans, Ottestad had no idea what he wanted to do. His parents encouraged him to pursue the four-year college experience, believing, like many American families, in the ability of a bachelor’s degree to ensure some sort of future security. Ottestad wasn’t interested, but he eventually decided on Biola after getting accepted into the film program.

In his first semester, Ottestad realized his true passion wasn’t for film, but for music.

“Instead of studying,” Ottestad says, “I was writing music in every class.” He began reconsidering his original major, but worried about turning music — something he loved — into an assignment or an obligation.

In this same semester, however, Ottestad also realized that Biola wasn’t the best place for him to pursue this passion. He withdrew from Biola and started his band, The Workday Release, now known as The Wandering Tree.

“I think for a lot of people, college is a great place to be,” Ottestad clarifies. “It’s a good place to define yourself and figure out what God has called you to do, but that wasn’t what it was like for me.”

Although Ottestad now feels more free, working in the music industry presents various challenges of its own.

“I wake up every day knowing I’m pursuing a dream, or an industry, that is completely broken,” Ottestad says. “I’ve always heard that the industry is really dark, there is no God.”

Ottestad stresses the amount of manipulation that takes place in the music industry. A band will befriending another in order to tour with them and build up their own name. David realizes that the best way to avoid becoming consumed by such ambitions and to find real success is by not focusing on labels, managers, and producers. To combat this consumption, The Wandering Tree purposefully spends time meeting people and getting to know them. They learn names and listen to problems.

“Once you put more focus on making those relationships, it’s a more genuine and joyous experience,” Ottestad says.

While Ottestad enjoyed his time in the music industry, his parents continued to be wary. “Don’t you want to meet people in college?” David’s mother asked him after he left Biola. David feels that being in the band is his social experience.

“We go back to a city where they’ve previously played, it excites him to see the people he’s met there.

“I wouldn’t have these people or have these relationships if I hadn’t pursued this dream,” he says. It’s not monetary
gains that determine their success, but rather the growth of their fan base, the relationships they get to make, and the lives they get to influence.

“I don’t think the Bible really talks about success the way we’ve defined it,” Ottestad says. He feels that in America, success is commonly defined by money and academic standing. But for Ottestad, real success has nothing to do with money, and nothing to do with one’s self. Ottestad tries to align his vision of success with the Bible’s. “Anytime I consider myself successful,” Ottestad says, “is when I genuinely stop thinking about what brings me glory, and instead, what brings God glory.” He feels that in order to accomplish this, Americans need to stop thinking about money and personal reputations — contrary to the norm for most on the track to fame and fortune. They need to let go of part of “the dream.”

People like to dream — of happiness, of love, of success. Everyone’s dream looks a little different, yet a certain phrase has been used over the years and throughout the nation to describe them all: the American Dream.

What happens if someone doesn’t want a six-digit income or a white picket fence? What happens if what a person dreams doesn’t look the same way this dream does? What happens if life doesn’t go exactly as planned?

“Although the door to Biola closed,” Krake says, “another one opened.” The internship may not have been a part of her plans, but she thoroughly enjoys working with the junior high students.

“I love student ministries,” Krake says. “I’ve always wanted to work with young people, but [the internship] wasn’t the way I saw God using that [desire]. I’m learning so much about myself, and ministry, and ways to do ministry, just using the gifts that God has given me and being social.”

Along with interning, Krake currently attends Golden West College in Huntington Beach. Next year, she plans to take a year off from college to attend a cosmetology school. She hopes to eventually get a degree in business with an emphasis in marketing. Cheryl says that most people in the cosmetology industry use it as a back-up plan when their dreams don’t happen, but this is actually something she would enjoy doing for the rest of her life.

“People always define success as how much money you make,” Krake says. “I’ve always wanted the nicer things in life. I’m going into the music and fashion industry, doing hair and what not. People pay money for these things. I don’t want it to be about that, to be about the money. I want it to be about the relationships that I’m going to make.”

Klake says she doesn’t like the word “success” because it looks different for every person. For her, a successful day is one where, at the end of it, she can look back and say, “I did well, and God is good.” She considers her life a success if she’s doing something she enjoys and loves the people she’s around.

Cheryl enjoys working with her students and feels that part of her success comes from getting to actively love people all the time. Krake currently lives in an apartment complex where the majority of the residents are over 65 years old, and she really enjoys interacting with them.

“Every day, I realize that God has me where I’m at to bless the people around me,” she says, noting the importance of her interactions while doing small things like parking the car, checking the mail, and shopping for groceries.
God guided her to Biola, but Cortez was shaken by what came next. Two weeks into her freshman year at Biola, she received some distressing news: one of her closest friends from home had passed away. The news of death never comes at a good time, and the shock hit Ann out of the comfort of home, overwhelming her with grief and pain. Cortez says it was incredibly difficult at the time, because she didn't know anyone at Biola and she felt alone. She says that God used the circumstances to focus her reliance on him and the strangers he had put into her life at the time. 

"It was a kick-start to my community life. I started friendships when I was in this very vulnerable state," she says. At first, she did not want to tell anyone what had happened, but she eventually poured everything out in one of her classes. She says the people God had placed around her prayed for her and comforted her during this difficult time. 

"[This experience] forced me to be vulnerable with people and to open up to them and to lean on them, which is something that I'm not used to," says Cortez, acknowledging her independence. 

Through all of this, her mindset about college has changed. "[College] is not so much a way to reach an end, as it is a home and a community," says Cortez. "This is where I need to be and this is where I fit in."

Aaron Kleist was able to attend an Ivy League school, but that didn’t keep him from wrestling with different ideas of success. One might say that his life coincides nicely with the American Dream: he holds a doctorate from the University of Cambridge in England, has accumulated countless awards and honors, contributed to many publications, and has a loving family. He has had an adventurous life, having been raised in Saipan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Despite all this, Kleist feels success should be defined by much more than earthly accomplishments.

"Say I am successful in all that I set out to do, and all my to-do lists I have ticked off, and at the end of my life, I look back and I have achieved success as this world would define it... Ultimately, that is very small to a Sovereign God."

"I love that my story is different," she says. "I don’t like being like everyone else. I don’t like my life being defined by a dream, as some people would say. I like to shock people."

While Krake wasn’t afraid to defy common expectations, Ann Marie Cortez, a sophomore communication studies major in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola, struggled with her decision to come to Biola. During her college search, her goal was to attend an Ivy League school, like Harvard or Yale, and then continue on to a law school. All her actions and decisions during high school were dedicated to this goal—she had the grades and accomplishments needed to make Harvard or Yale a reality.

"To everybody on the outside, it was a story wasted," Cortez remembers. She recalls others saying things about her like: "She had so much potential and she went to Biola, of all places." Cortez says she was constantly looked down on because of her decision.

Cortez says the circumstances surrounding her decision were hard because she was focused on what she could do to attain success, as opposed to where God might be directing her skills and talents.

"I was looking at success in the future versus success in the now," Cortez says. "My only goal should be to be where God wants me in the moment, not to be somewhere where I want to be twenty years from now."

Although Cortez does have goals of attending a renowned law school—such as Stanford Law or Pepperdine Law—and becoming a judge, she says that today she doesn’t define success in worldly terms. Instead, she suggests that it has more to do with serving God with her gifts and talents in every moment. Success, she says, doesn’t come down to who she becomes in regards to a career, but who she is as an individual. She feels she should not be motivated by money, position, or power. She asks herself, "Am I striving to be as Christ-like as I can be?"
The problem with the “white picket fence” of the American Dream is that it doesn’t let in the pain and the problems — the unexpected trials that get in the way of our plans, the financial burdens that limit our options, the hidden passions we have that don’t match up with surrounding expectations, the gaps between the ideal and the real.

Kleist understands the personal longing to have our actions matter and be remembered.

“It’s painful! It’s extraordinarily painful.” In a culture of going after current position.

loan statement, accepting a job offer, stepping down from making significant and deliberate transitions: signing a pattern of himself being more drawn to God through these experiences.

“The Lord uses the waiting for good in the end,” he says.

Kleist notes that much personal strength and character gets built not by finally making such decisions, but rather through all the time of consideration and deliberation that leads up to them. “The waiting, the striving towards him, the seeking of the Lord, that’s a privilege and a gift and has a beauty in and of itself.”

Yet, most people still worry. So many, if not all, seem to want what they are meant to do and where they should go — that in the end, it’s obvious that if anything’s happened, it’s happened through him.”

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Fortunately, the other versions of success not only allow for, but often — if not always — include the surprises and struggles involved in finding our place and purpose in the world. It can get hard when it seems like everyone around us seems to be accomplishing all their goals while we’re just stuck in the same old story of trial and error. Even when we are able to take our eyes off the American Dream, the social pressures of a powerful and productive society can leave us feeling as if we’re getting left behind. The real American Dream is that everyone has a different story to tell, so we shouldn’t let the picket fences keep us pent up in paralysis.

True success comes in figuring out what each of our stories looks like, a process that often involves the kind of waiting that Kleist speaks of. We will never be satisfied if we chase a dream that’s not our own, so the wait — however uncomfortable — is worth it.

“So what have you done with your life?” Today, with a Fulbright scholarship, a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. over 5,000 friends on Facebook, and even his own Wikipedia page, few would think it hard for Biola University President Barry Corey, Ph.D. to answer this question. If you’d had asked him fifteen years ago, though, he wouldn’t have been so sure.

Five years out of college, at the age of twenty-seven, Corey went through what he calls a “crisis of normality.”

“We were just a middle class family, everyone was a Christian, we all loved Jesus, we all loved each other.” Corey says his “security crutches” were never kicked out from under him.

The cure to his normality crisis? Bangladesh. The Fulbright scholarship paid for his trip to the small country bordered by India and Burma. He lived there for a year doing research and working with children in schools. Other graduate students were going to other countries too, but mostly to pursue international careers — not to live among the poor.

“It gave me perspective,” said Corey. “I remember walking out of my apartment this one time, and right in the middle of the road was a guy who had no arms no legs and just kind of hald a tin bowl in his mouth.”

The problem with the “white picket fence” of the American Dream is that it doesn’t let in the pain and the problems — the unexpected trials that get in the way of our plans, the financial burdens that limit our options, the hidden passions we have that don’t match up with surrounding expectations, the gaps between the ideal and the real.

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31 - America Dreaming

Dr. Barry H. Corey
by Sarah Jean

Corey’s repulsion in this encounter stemmed from feeling out of control, a feeling he now realizes everyone does — and must — experience.

“You want to have children and you can’t, you want to get married and you don’t, and you want to save to buy a house and you get laid off. Whenever we’re trying to measure our success by those certain things, the stuff that we can touch, invariably there’s going to be great disappointment, because so much of that we have so little control over.”

Whether a personal or communal disappointment — discomfort from losing a job or discomfort from meeting someone like the man Corey met in Bangladesh — the answer isn’t to freeze and turn in the other direction. Corey suggests instead aiming for something other than certainty.

“If you live your life for confidence, confidence is different than certainty. Confidence comes from the Latin words “con” (‘with’) and “federe” (‘faith’). We have to trust what is going to happen tomorrow because all the certain stuff can disappear. Marriages fall apart, parents get divorced, investments fail, houses burn down, children aren’t born. If we were defining our success by banking on certainty we’re going to be disappointed. Certainty means we know what’s going to happen tomorrow, and we don’t. Confidence means I trust what’s going to happen tomorrow.”

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“It gave me perspective,” said Corey. “I remember walking out of my apartment this one time, and right in the middle of the road was a guy who had no arms no legs and just kind of held a tin bowl in his mouth.” The man was able to...
In this portraiture series, I initially set out to capture a completely honest and unhindered expression of the self. In seeking the ever-elusive ego, however, I stumbled upon something profoundly more breathtaking: the dignity and innate liberation afforded by the process of image-making. That is to say: to receive an image offered by another and to return it as it was given is equivalent to sharing one’s vulnerabilities and saying, “Yes, you are worthy!”

Where I first sought to create a thought-provoking product by means of whittling the traditional constructs of portraiture all the way down to their most basic form — the face — I soon realized that the real charge in this body of work did not lie in the end result, but rather in the tensions of engaging both process-oriented film photography and the perplexing mechanisms surrounding the human condition.

“To have the rare opportunity to express, “I’m wounded!” is just as dignifying and liberating as saying, “I am well!”
Little House on the Heights

If you have just turned onto Interstate 101 heading north from Biola and are winding through its maze of concrete walls and climbing ivy, veer off onto the Soto St. exit, and you will find yourself dumped into the neighborhood that is Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. The residents of Boyle Heights hasten to correct any misconceptions that their community is an inclusion of L.A.’s East Side and the stigmas that accompany it. Their identity is unique — a hodgepodge of ethnicities that have mingled into a neighborhood mosaic within their shared vicinity.

“There are a lot of subcultures within L.A., and while there are many individual identities within Boyle Heights, it also has its own collective identity,” says resident Alicia Miller.

In June of last year, Alicia moved in to the “Hollenbeck House,” a newly established communal house in the Hollenbeck sector of Boyle Heights. During her last year as a nursing student at Biola University, Miller became involved in Multi-Ethnic Programs on campus, and began the process of discovering her ethnic identity as a white woman. Taking ownership of her ethnic identity attracted her towards the idea of personal displacement and integration into a more diverse locale. She had originally wanted to break free of the U.S. and move overseas after graduation, but as her senior year approached, she experienced a growing appreciation for local diversity.

“God really confronted me with the fact that it was really easy for me to love people who were far away from me and in a dire situation,” Miller says, “but in reality he had a lot to teach me about loving the people who are next door to me in my neighborhood of L.A.”

The Hollenbeck House is the brainchild of owners Larry Smith — an English professor at Biola University, L.A. City College, and Rio Hondo Community College — and his wife Niki, an independent print editor. Larry had been a professor at Biola for seven years prior to moving to Boyle Heights and was already making efforts to immerse students in L.A. history, culture, and communities via his L.A. Literature classes at Biola. The Smiths have lived in multiple regions of the world — from Washington to Papua New Guinea — and in the spring of 2010, they were ready to make another transition. Larry had led several of Biola’s cross-cultural excursions to the Middle East, and he and Niki had made a point to saturate their everyday ordinary life with Los Angeles culture and people. In addition, they hatched a new idea: invite Biola students to live with them as part of an affordable urban experience.

Larry and Niki’s first task was to find a house. It seemed that almost every subsection of L.A. they were interested in specialized only in subdivided houses. One day, in the midst of his housing search, the real estate program Larry had been using to browse houses built between 1900-1930 wasn’t operating. He began using another program to scroll through houses, and soon found the Hollenbeck House, built in 1888. At the time, the house was owned by a couple in their 90s who were looking to relocate.

“We made an offer the first day for the full price. We just knew the Lord wanted us to have the house,” says Larry.

While they awaited move-in day, the Smiths sold and vacated their home in Highland Park Beach and moved into a motel in Pasadena. They were excited to live closer to the people of Los Angeles and become a part of the organic culture residing there.

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Resident Ashlee Morgan moved into Hollenbeck House last April, along with the Smiths and the first batch of Biola students. A Biola intercultural studies major from Colorado Springs, Ashlee has acclimated to life in Boyle Heights and

“God really confronted me with the fact that it was really easy for me to love people who were far away from me and in a dire situation… but he had a lot to teach me about loving the people who are next door to me.”
Ashlee echoes the sentiment that holistic living should be a natural part of being in community. "Living and working in Los Angeles and Boyle Heights, specifically in neighborhoods with a lower income, you experience genuine people," she says. "We had a really good conversation one night about how we can minister to this neighborhood, and we decided it’s not about bringing God into the neighborhood because he has always been here. We are just another component of this community."

"We can often perceive places like L.A. as ‘we have so much to offer them’ and ‘we’re bringing God with us,’ but God is already at work in L.A.,” agrees Miller. “We’ve stepped into something that is already going on. It was really affirming to step into a community that embraced me and that really focuses on doing life together and loving each other and walking alongside each other.” After graduation, Miller set aside her nursing degree to focus on her position as the Multi-Ethnic Programs Coordinator at Biola. The department works to build community on campus through ethnic identity development and inter-ethnic dialogue, so the job fits perfectly with her daily life in Boyle Heights.

"We all want to get involved because we have strengths and ideas that we want to share,” Miller explains, “but we also want to be good listeners and receivers of those around us.”

“Nobody’s ever asked ‘What are you doing in this neighborhood? Why do you live here?’” says Smith. “We’re really here to focus on serving in the ways that we can. If that leads to relationships then that’s great. People always think in terms of financial security, safety, and a traditional family life. We don’t necessarily think, ‘I want to raise my kids around MacArthur Park.’ But why wouldn’t you? Elsewhere there’s social strata. Boyle Heights has its own issues and problems like anyone, but here if you live in Boyle Heights, you live in Boyle Heights. This is our neighborhood and we stick together.”
Cities whose homes average a million-dollar plus price tag and more than a quarter of households with an income over $200K? Welcome to modern Orange County, and Dave Keehn’s world.

Keehn moved from San Bernardino County to become Associate Professor at Talbot Theological Seminary ten years ago. He transferred his other job, battalion chaplain at Rancho Cucamonga Fire District, to the Orange County Fire Authority. Additionally, Keehn runs the youth ministry at his church in Dana Point. In all of these roles, he constantly works to burst what he calls “the OC bubble.”

“My students don’t necessarily think of themselves as rich because they always know someone who is richer,” Keehn says. Someone else always has a newer car, a bigger house, a better ocean view. As youth pastor, Keehn saw the real problem with this mentality: the affluence prevented people from investing in one another.

“The OC is a very programmed society where parents will use church or soccer leagues to program their kids. We realized that the thing that they don’t have is significant mentors and healthy adult relationships,” says Keehn. His ministry helps students build cogent and dependable relationships with mentors, hoping to make up for the disconnect they experience with their parents. Keehn also replaced all of the group’s “fun” trips with missional experiences.

“Here, the kids live at the beach and travel all the time,” said Keehn. “I realized pretty quickly that they didn’t need me to provide them with opportunities to give them trips. By getting our students very involved in missions, we are trying to show them that their money can’t solve all these problems.” Keehn explains, he’d rather take them on a missions trip so they can use their personal gifts and talents to continue building relationships with others.

The missions trips involve things like building relationships with inner city churches in Hollywood of Chicago, heading to New Orleans to fix damage from Hurricane Katrina, or serving the homeless on the streets of Washington D.C.

“My students don’t necessarily think of themselves as rich because they always know someone who is richer.”

In getting the students ready for these trips, Keehn and his wife realized one of the OC’s major downsides: the reluctance of its people to admit their need. Outside the selling of Girl Scout cookies, Keehn notes the community’s hesitancy to fundraise and accept aid.

“When we do missions trips, parents don’t want their kids to send out support letters. It’s either they pay out of their own pockets or the kids don’t go.” As a result of the recession, especially, much of the residents’ money got tied up in real estate or stocks — or even evaporated completely, causing panic in a community that prioritizes wealth. In the worst moments of the recent economic circumstances, Keehn observes, OC residents were most unwilling to receive help. “Our church is willing to give the kids scholarships,” he explains, “but we have the parents saying that they don’t take scholarships.”

The self-sufficient mentality extends to the county’s school district. “Back in the Inland Empire, we had good relationships with the schools because they knew they didn’t have all the resources they needed and that we were able to provide a portion,” Keehn says. “When I tried to do the same thing with schools in the OC, they just turned me down saying they had everything that they needed.”

The Keehns both seek to bridge the gaps between harsh stereotypes from many angles — between Christians and non-Christians, between the “rich” and the less so, between person and person. In a society where the focus lies in what you look like and what you have, finding the balance as an employee, a pastor, and a father can be trying.

“It’s a struggle as a dad to live in the OC,” Keehn says. “One of the things we negotiated was a salary that was going to have a lifestyle not of affluence, but one that didn’t make my kids feel like they were the poorest kid in the room.”

Few have the opportunity to live as most in the Orange County do, but even fewer have the opportunity to be so intentional about their income. Every county, though, could use a few people — like the Keehns — who could be so intentional whatever the income.
English budgies, lineolated parakeets, cockatiels, and canaries populate and color Peggy Burke’s life. Cacophonous chirping and the sound of fluttering wings fill her home so much that we can hear it from the outside. Within seconds of walking in the door, a large, regal green Macaw named Tiki had already found a perch on my photographer’s head.

In addition to Tiki, several other birds flitted around the main room, chirping happily and playfully at each other. Burke gladly showed us around her rooms filled with cages containing around one hundred birds of all breeds, sizes and colors. She allowed us to hold a few as she spouted off-the-cuff facts about each of them — where they’d come from, their personalities, and tendencies. After we had been through all of the rooms of her aviary, we sat down to talk to Peggy Burke about herself and her family of birds.

Burke first started keeping birds as a ten-year-old. One day, out of curiosity, she put the birds in a nesting box, and they made chicks.

“I was ruined,” she says. “It was absolutely the most marvelous wondrous thing in the world. You crack an egg open, and it’s full of clear, liquidy stuff with a yellow blob in the middle. And then twenty-one days later it’s a perfectly formed little bird. It’s just magic for me.”

Burke had fallen in love with seeing the formation of life through the birds; however, many years went by before she had the chance to keep them again. She spent several years as an artist on the mission field in North Africa. When her time overseas ended, Burke returned to California and became an English language professor at Biola. In the midst of two big life challenges — her transitions back to the United States and a divorce — Burke bought a little parrot named Tiki to keep her company. He instantly reignited her love for birds.

“He seemed lonely,” she says of Tiki, “so I got a canary to keep him company. Then, I got another canary to keep that canary company.” Looking around the room filled with cages, she smiles. “One thing leads to another…”

Today, Burke keeps the birds to breed them for sale. Burke appears to be completely in her element when discussing and taking care of her birds. She even started a bird supply business, called Peggy’s Feathered Friends.

Burke treats her birds like family, and the birds treat her like family as well. “They’re just so affectionate, so sweet,” she says. “I just walk into the room and feel loved.” Her best friend, Tiki, constantly hangs closely around her, in her hair or on her shoulders. As she sat with us, she lavished him with kisses, which he returned obligingly.

Burke is convinced that birds have just as strong a need for family as humans do. “I believe very strongly that birds should have others of their same species. It is very important for their health,” she says. “They’re okay because they have each other. There’s something to the saying ‘birds of a feather flock together.’”

**Echoes of Eden**

by Claire Callaway / photos by Sarah Snyder
This philosophy has greatly influenced her method of breeding. “If you really take care when raising them, people know the difference between this and going to Petsmart and getting some poor creature that has been living behind a glass case with very little contact.”

Raising birds means more than just feeding and caring; for Burke, it has become a method of personal growth. The pleasure and pain brought by Burke’s passion for these feathered friends has changed the way she sees God. By viewing the beauty and intricacy of life through her birds, Burke has gained a deeper understanding of God and his role as Creator. “I’m constantly amazed at God’s provision. How he sustains his creation is extraordinary. And on top of that, he has made it so incredibly beautiful. I feel like [raising birds] helps me to praise him,” she says. “It’s an echo of Eden, because we left the garden and have always wanted to go back.”

Burke’s love of birds has also brought a greater community of human friends. Since her experience in breeding is relatively limited, Burke receives mentoring from a fellow breeder in Arizona. This mentor has taught Burke how to properly feed and care for the birds, and provided her with quality birds for breeding. Burke also has neighbors who are fellow bird-lovers. “We often share meals together,” she says of her bird-loving community.

Even though breeding the birds brings her such joy, doing so sometimes brings her just as much pain. Learning how to properly care for birds is a long process that inevitably involves loss. Because of how small and delicate the young birds are, Burke can accidentally choke chicks when she is feeding them. Last year, she lost about 75 percent of the canaries and at least half of the Linedotted Parakeets because she didn’t know how to properly care for them.

“There’s a definite learning curve,” she says. “With every one that I lose, a little piece of me dies.”

However beautiful the formation of life, however great the awe Burke experiences at seeing tiny beaks poke through shells for the first time, it at times demands such hardships. Burke learns, through her birds, to value intensely the present things — the sounds and colors of fluttering wings — even as she winces over the losses.

The birds have brought so much brilliance to her own life that Burke feels it is her duty to share her birds with others.

“Often I’ll give birds away, even expensive ones, to families that couldn’t afford them, just because I think it’s such an educational experience. They changed my life,” she says.

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