



Spring Banquet

by Coleman Dietrich

Banquet nights are very interesting nights, and they seem to go two different ways. The romantic nights are not always as great and glorious as most participants hope.

The lucky people get away with an easy and stress-free night of wholesome fun. These people are doing banquets the smart way. These are the people that are going as friends. Their nights are filled with casual simple talk that does not shake their nerves at all. The night is easy and not scary in the least.

But there is a different way a banquet night can go when kids ask the people they have their little crushes on and hope for an awesome, romantic night. When their dates arrive, it is nothing but awkward. Instead of being able to casually chit-chat about what is going on, these kids have no idea what to say and are terrified. Interaction with the opposite gender can be quite stressful, and the stresses from this, mixed with that of schoolwork, can really mess with the levels of joy in their lives. Instead of having the extremely romantic night they had hoped for, they just decide to try and ignore their date as politely as possible. This sums up the night for kids that take the romantic approach to a banquet.

Both ways will let you get to know someone a little better, but it seems one is a lot better than the other. So instead of expecting a romantic night, go as friends first so future experiences can go well.

Academy Day

by Brandon Rich

Every year during April, new faces appear on campus. They wander around in awe at their potential home in the years to come and eagerly take in new information from the student tour guides showing the different areas of campus. As one young visitor said, "I have been looking forward to Academy Day for months!"

After lunch the visitors go to the gym where there are booths from each campus department. The booths have many games and quizzes for the young students to win scholarships. Two challenges were to guess the total weight of all the guys in the dorm and to guess the number of stuffed animals in the girls' dorm. After this, all the UCA music groups performed, followed by a performance by the gymnastics team. Student Jake Carlson said, "I love seeing all of the potential students for next year and do my best to be courteous and welcoming to them." Jake is not alone in the sentiment: all UCA students eagerly look forward to representing their school to the future students of Upper Columbia Academy.



The blood moon

by Caleb Carter

The night was here. The much anticipated event was only a few hours away. The moon was going to turn red. Various conversations fluttered around the dorm, all consisting of the phrase "blood moon," as the excitement rose.

What is a blood moon? A blood moon is a complete lunar eclipse (when the earth's shadow completely covers the moon). As the shadow of the earth passes over the moon, the moon begins to take on a reddish hue. The reason for this change in color is the light from the setting sun on the other side of the world shooting through the atmosphere and reflecting off the moon. The entire process takes about 2 hours. One hour for the lunar eclipse, and one hour for the moon to begin taking on its reddish hue.

Chairs were set up on the steps of the boys' dorm, food was cooked, blankets were brought as about 15 EKE dorm residents waited in suspense to see this rare phenomenon. To be completely honest, however, the process was extremely slow but did provide a rather peculiar sight. All in all, the whole experience was worth the effort and the late night.

A different break

by *Mason Parks*

Spring break is anticipated by all students at UCA. Most look forward to it because it's a time to relax and forget about the pressures of school. Others are excited for the vacations their families are planning. Still others are stoked because they are going on a vacation with a purpose: a mission trip.

Multiple mission trips often occur during spring break at UCA. Many students go on a mission trip for the first time and have no idea what to expect. Some worry about what they will eat or where they will stay. Parents also worry about sending their little Susie or Tommy to some distant country. I know several parents who were more worried than their kids about the trip. Mission trips also require a great deal of planning, packing, and preparation: bags must be stuffed, tickets bought, and homework made up. This all makes the weeks before spring break just a little more hectic.

The point of a mission trip is to help people in other countries and share what you believe. The cool part is that when you go and serve, you actually benefit yourself. When students focus on others, life is just better, not to mention that trips are fun and students get travel to exotic foreign countries. Mission trips are a win-win situation for everyone involved: people are helped and students are blessed by the experience.

Privileged

by *Saige McCann*

Being back from our mission trip to Africa has made me think of a few things that I am blessed to have. For one thing, there is running water plus the added bonus of hot water. While in Africa, we were lucky enough to be by the great Zambezi River. Though there are other countries in Africa which are struggling to have water, we had an abundance every day and so did the villagers we were living by. We still had to pump, filter and chlorinate what we drank but it was still a big blessing to have.

Another blessing is that we don't have to worry too much about dangerous animals and large insects. Being by the Zambezi presented certain problems, of course. The river was full of hippopotamuses and crocodiles. The hippos were able to come up at night and walk around where we were sleeping. Although we never saw one do that in the time we were there, we could hear their mumbles and grunts from down the river. There were also giant spiders that ran across the floor during worship and bad monkeys that tried stealing things. One of our biggest fears was malaria. Fortunately, there were not as many mosquitos as we expected, and none of us ever got sick with it.

Another of the things that really struck me during our time in the Mukuyu Village in Zambia was their education system. One lady asked me if I was going back to school. She wished she could come back with us to America to learn and get a good education. She spoke very good English and wished we could return and teach her more.

Coming back to school, fighting jet lag, and facing much homework, I still realized how privileged we are to be able to be learning anything at all. I see so many people becoming worried when a test comes around, and we carry on saying how much we hate school and how we haven't learned anything. Yet we should stop and appreciate where we are and that we have a strong system that will carry us through rough spots in our future.

I've never disliked school, but I encourage everyone else to try and see the special times and opportunities we have here. A good education is a privilege that can lead to many great places.

110% happy

by *Niqolas Ruud*

No matter the remoteness of the location, time of day, or soaring temperatures, when the Vacation Bible School mission team from Upper Columbia Academy arrived at the little village of Mukuyu, Zambia, the scene always looked the same. Hundreds of children and adults were waiting, waiting for the time of their lives.

Each day the crew followed a similar routine. After an early breakfast, a short walk to the worksite, and a hard morning of work, they would head over to a small building and simply play. Twenty-year-old men were playing the classic Duck Duck Goose, what appeared to be babies were playing soccer (or football), and even the housewives would join in with the younger boys in the action-packed game of African Keep-away. According to many, it's like nothing we see here in the States—it's 110% happiness.

On the final day of the Vacation Bible School, a giant yellow parachute was brought out. The staff quickly unfolded the enormous piece of fabric and took hold of the handles. Soon an enormous throng of Zambians, big and small, ran underneath the uplifted parachute and shouted at the top of their lungs from pure joy. A UCA senior, Alex Moseanko, said, "The kids had nothing yet had everything. They had joy, happiness, and the desire to learn. They gave me more than I ever could have given them!"

Those who were able to participate will cherish the memories of the trip. "I will never forget the children's smiling faces," said Ronnie Sue Parks after returning to the US. "The stories shared and experienced have been a constant slideshow in the back of my mind since our return home."

India mission trip

by *Natalie Schmidt*

This year, my world traveling experiences took me to India. At first, it was not an easy decision because I was worried about safety and public speaking. After a lot of prayer and advice, however, I decided that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I could not let it slip by.

Traveling to India went by with few difficulties except for the major jet lag we faced. During our twelve day trip, we spent a lot of time preparing our sermons, sleeping, hanging out with each other, taking pictures and enjoying the warm weather. In our free time, we also enjoyed a few outings to town and the beach. Both places were equally wonderful; each had its own unique surprises and interesting things to see or do.

Our flight back was uneventful, and even though the jetlag was worse, I would not have traded this trip for anything. It definitely taught me that if I am willing to listen and follow Him, God will protect and be with me always. We may not know what we are going to be or what we want to accomplish in life, but if we have God on our side, anything is possible!

Peru

by *Cameron Smith*

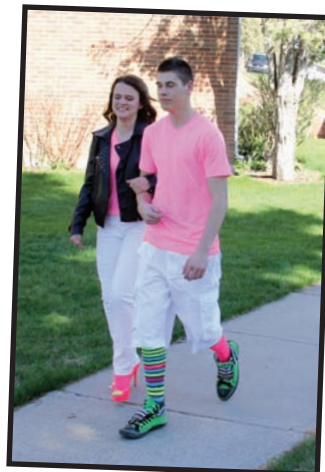
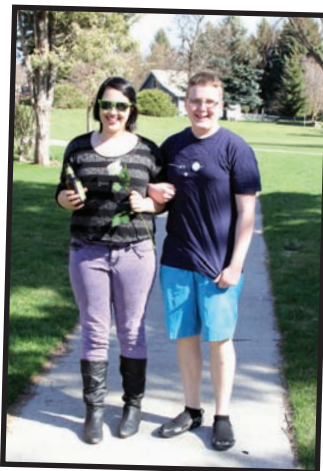
As you may know, there were almost 50 students from UCA who went on mission trips over spring break. Large groups went to India and Zambia, and a smaller group went to Belize. However, I was one of four people from UCA to go to Tarapoto, Peru. Dean Archibeque, Mike Evans, Connor Smith, and I flew down to Peru and joined other members from the North Pacific Union (NPUC) to put on a week-long series of evangelistic meetings.

It was an amazing experience! Although Connor and Mike were originally planning on sharing a site, we learned in orientation that each of them had been given their own church. This meant that each of them would have to preach a whole week of sermons instead of alternating nights. However, God had already provided, and I believe that the our impact in the city of Tarapoto was greater because of it.

The people were overjoyed that we were there to share with them the good news. We arrived about thirty minutes before the meetings started, and the people already there stood up to shake our hands and hug us as they smiled as broadly as they could. While attempting to converse with them, I was very glad for having taken Mrs. Humbert's Spanish 2 class.

But it wasn't just the Peruvians we met. I got to know many people from the NPUC who also had come along to preach in Tarapoto. The two biggest groups were from Souls Northwest, an Adventist Bible college, and Portland Adventist Academy (PAA). It is strange that sometimes we have to travel all the way to South America to meet people who live only hours away from us. We made a point of getting to know them.

I went to Peru for the people, and 583 of them had been baptized by the end of the week. But we also met people from our own state, and they got to know us, and all of us got to know hundreds of grateful Peruvians all because we are united under one faith and one God.



Thoughts on the final stretch

by *Giovanna Girotto*

“ . . . and today we have a new author: John Steinbeck. Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford, but he never graduated. For five years he traveled across the country working as a journalist and . . . ”

Riiiiing. You're awakened by the bell. You groan as you realize you just slept through class . . . again. This is the third time you've slept through a class this week—and it's only Tuesday! It doesn't help that you only got three hours of sleep last night because you were studying for an English quiz, a Chemistry test, and a U. S. History test.

Unfortunately, it's that time of year when you're sick of school. You've lost your motivation, and even the sophomores have senioritis. All you can think about is summer, lunch, and that cute guy sitting next to you. You think you can't get through these last few weeks of school, but, believe it or not, you can. On those nights when you're up late studying, just remember that home-leave is coming soon. When you're tempted to zone out in class, remind yourself that you'll be done with that class in just a few more weeks. And above all, motivate yourself to get the job done because it will all be worth it in the long run.

by *Coleman Dietrich*

As time passes by, nature takes its course, and seasons change. Once April comes around, it seems that UCA is a different place. With only two months of school left, everyone becomes eager to finish off the school year and go home. The gloomy fog of winter has passed, and spring rolls in. The sun is out, plants are growing, and summer is drawing near. The change of seasons seems to always cause a few things to happen.

When these months roll around, it seems every kid needs a boyfriend or girlfriend. The warm weather warms everyone's hearts, or maybe everyone just looks a lot more attractive in the sunny weather. Whatever the reason is, no one wants to be lonely in the last few weeks. All of the guys are on the prowl, as are some of the girls for that matter. It is quite foolish, though, because summer is almost here, and so we will be separated from these people for about 3 months.

Everyone also becomes more reckless. The fact that soon they won't have to worry about school at all gets to their heads. They are just waiting for that carefree break in their busy lives. But they can't wait long enough, and they start living their carefree lives during the school year. As this happens, you see many suspensions and stupid things happening.

These changes are part of what makes the school year interesting. The final two months are one of my favorite times of the year. We are finally there, and the excitement is kicking in. I just can't wait for summer now.

Yep

by *Clayton Haggerty*

Yep, it's that time of year again, the time when the sun comes out.

The first day the sun came out I couldn't stop smiling. It was just so beautiful and relaxing: the birds started chirping and the people started singing and everything was just so nice. That morning when I woke up, I looked out the window and thought, "It sure would be nice to see the sun today."

So I went to Bible class at 7:15 and slept through that class. When I woke up, there was still no sun. After that, I went to English class (which, by the way, is my favorite class of the day) and slept through it as well. When I woke up, there was still no sun. My next class was US History. Every day in that class I sit on the counter in the back and the blinds are always closed. We were watching a movie that day and about halfway through I decided to peek through the blinds. Instantly the sun flooded into the room and I almost started to cry the sight was so beautiful. All I wanted to do was jump for joy, so I did. Then I looked around and saw Pastor Sid looking at me so I just sat down and pretended like nothing happened. The excitement was just so hard to contain but I managed. The clocks seemed to move so slowly and the excitement inside me was just bubbling over.

I made it to lunch and just sat at the lunch table gazing outside and decided to skip my next class, Spanish, because all I wanted to do was frolic in the fresh air and sunshine. To my astonishment, it actually smelled like spring, which made skipping class all the more worth it. Anyway, the rest of the day went well and I was sad to see the sun go down, but the next day it was back!

Now I am sitting here staring out the window wondering why I am writing this story and not running around outside. That's it. I'm done. I can't take it anymore. I am done with this story and am going outside!



UPPER COLUMBIA ACADEMY

ECHOES

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U days reveals possible futures

by *Melissa Petrello*

There comes a point in time when people decide where they want to go in life after high school. For some it may be college, for others it may be taking a year off to work. For the seniors, graduation is close at hand and their time to choose what they want to be is running out. For some this may be overwhelming, but the sponsors are doing their best to keep senior minds at ease and help guide them in the right direction.

At UCA there is pressure on the seniors to go to Walla Walla University. They have had recruiters visit them on multiple occasions to tell them Walla Walla University is the school for them. But how can they be sure Walla Walla is the right school to attend? This is where U days comes into play.

April 6 – 8 was when U days took place for the seniors, giving them the chance to explore the campus and the options the university provides. There were many different activities such as class visitations, financial aid workshops, meeting professors, the knowledge bowl, and scholarship opportunities. There were required appointments to meet as well as the chance to explore on our own. Some of those things included worship, ministry opportunities, prism concert, and even a showcase the University students put on for the academics. The final evening they had a party which included grilled cheese sandwiches, a just dance video game, and karaoke.

Most of the seniors would say that they enjoyed U days and meeting new friends that may end up being their classmates, roommates, or maybe even the one they'll marry someday.

This was the reality check for the seniors, reminding them that graduation is right around the corner and so is their future.

RA tryouts

by *Jake Carlson*

For most students the school year is split up into four distinct quarters, two semesters, or, perhaps, simply from home-leave to home-leave; but for some, the year is split into two different sections: normal school and RA tryouts. Normal school makes up the bulk of the year, but when the RA tryouts come along, the stress and anticipation becomes much more palpable. The reason for this is quite obvious. Out of the 20-50 students that try for the jobs, only a select few will actually receive the prestigious positions.

Thus, the elimination begins. Over the course of a couple months, the applicants must fill out a questionnaire, send out recommendation forms, and, if they fulfill the previous requirements, participate in a private interview with the deans. After the interviews, the deans spend a week or so talking and praying about the options for the future dorm staff. A common belief is that the deans drag out the choosing period on purpose. According to Brandon Rich, "The deans achieve devious delight in our earnest anticipation!" During this time period, tension levels run high in the student body as the participants discuss their individual interview processes, flaws in their résumés, as well as dean preferences. Angst then reaches a climax when the day finally comes for the deans to present the list of successful applicants.

After the information is learned, there is plenty of happiness, pity, as well as sadness circulating among the hopeful students. Friends console or congratulate each accordingly as regular homework is relatively forgotten. These effects linger for differing amounts of time, but eventually all signs of the ordeal fade back into the daily sequestered continuity of life out in the wheat fields.

La Comida de Española

by *Mariya McCombs*

It is a rarity and a privilege when you can get your hands on authentic ethnic food out here at UCA, and recently Spanish class was given this opportunity, all thanks to Mrs. Humbert. We even got to cook the food ourselves and make it our own. Even for those kids who aren't master chefs, it was a great experience.

We were given dough (to make our own tortillas), beans, rice, tomatoes (for the salsa), avocados (for guacamole), rice, peppers, limes and seasoning. With all these supplies we made authentic Mexican tacos. We also made arroz con leche (rice with milk), which was sweetened with condensed milk and cinnamon. All of this was muy delicioso and filling. Even though a few things got burnt and those not so skilled took the chance of chopping off a finger, it was worth the danger.

If you ask me, we should definitely do this more often—for the food and the extra learning experience, too, which should really please the teachers. So in the end, cooking good food makes everybody happy. Food really does satisfy!



In the girls' dorm they hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil

Fatherhood *a week in the life*

by Braden Stanyer

The morning of March 10 dawned bright and clear. The school week began. But for many senior guys, the world would be flipped upside-down. The next five days would hold challenges and lessons they would never forget. So, why all of the sudden panic? What was so different about that week? Well, that week had been selected by Pastor Sid to be project week. What was the project? Simply stated, the senior boys would have to put on their man pants and become husbands and fathers. During this week, these youths would learn that fatherhood is no walk in the park.

The boys weren't the only ones with projects, though. Senior girls had a hard week ahead of them. Many wore rice bags on their bellies to simulate later-stage pregnancies. Some worked alone, yet most of them worked with a male partner. Commonly referred to as a baby daddy, this young man would have his work cut out for him. His responsibilities included doing research assignments, carrying books, and, most importantly, providing emotional support. In general he took care of his newly pregnant wife.

Over the course of this week, everything the senior guys did was to learn how to become good husbands to their wives and good fathers to their children. From reading books to interviewing fathers, no stone was left unturned. They even had to learn how to empathize with their pregnant wives.

Physically, the boys had it easy. Carrying a few extra books and a laptop was nothing compared to lugging several pounds of rice on the stomach. However, these lads became gentlemen. They learned to care for others and put others before themselves. It wasn't an easy experience, but what the senior boys learned would help them to become not good, but great fathers.



Interesting interior

by Suzanna Officer

Recently, the girls' dorm lobby transformed into the classiest room on campus. The once blank walls and drab couches looked dull compared to all the other stylish hangouts. In fact, even the guys' dorm lobby with its modern colors and large pictures surpassed the girls' lobby. But this is no longer the case.

A few weeks ago, Dean Chelle decided it was high time for the lobby to experience a make-over. Paint cans, hard work, and oodles of creativity turned the lobby into a masterpiece. The old brown couches were traded for trendy green sofas. The walls were painted beautiful earthy tones, embellished with the finest décor Target can provide. The furniture was tastefully arranged, making the room seem larger. But nothing was as glorious as the large, colorful rug in the middle of the floor. It was strategically placed at an angle to give the room a hip and twenty-first century look.

The girls' dorm lobby is now one of the most-visited spots on campus. With its friendly atmosphere, convenient location, and recently renovated interior, there is no doubt it's the most fabulous hangout around.

Nutrition matters

by Natalie Schmidt

Going for a walk. Eating a balanced diet. These are two of the steps to take to be in the best shape possible. Nutrition is a crucial part of our lives; it defines and controls us whether we like it or not. Many people start to freak out when the topic of nutrition comes up because they think that it is extremely hard to be healthy. In reality, there is only one skill necessary in order to be healthy, and that is self-control. We have a choice about nearly everything, so choosing good nutrition should be easy for us.

What is nutrition anyway? Webster's says it is the process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth. Most people do not realize it, but nutrition is an essential part of our day. Without it, we would be hopeless starch and carbohydrate corpses stretched out for the sun to fry us into crisps. In order to help maintain our bodies and to live healthfully, good nutrition is vital.

So I challenge every one of you to choose to eat healthfully. If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your body!

Band Clinic

by *Kristen Cottrell*

Thursday February 27 seemed like a normal day: the birds were chirping in the trees and the sun was shining on the fresh snow just as peacefully as it had done every day. But that peace was shattered when hordes of middle-schoolers suddenly appeared on campus. They came pouring out of buses with all their stuff and then dragged their stuff into our rooms, where we had graciously offered to let them stay. Then, we got to sit the rest of the day in the gym with them playing our instruments until our lips felt like they were going to fall off. What was this strange event? It was Band Clinic and those hordes of middle-schoolers were aspiring musicians and friends from around the Upper Columbia Conference.

Band clinic is an opportunity for students in other schools in the Upper Columbia Conference to come to UCA for a weekend and learn to play better with the UCA band, but it is just as much a learning experience for UCA students.

The clinic started on Thursday, February 27, and ended Saturday night after a brief concert for our parents. One of the songs we performed was "Light Eternal," a story of a ship that sunk in WWI.

It was a really fun and cool experience for both the visiting students and UCA band members.

Last of the rec skiers

by *Melia Nash*

Sunday, March 9, 2014, started at 5:45 for those loading to go to the last rec ski of the year. (And let's not forget about the end of Daylight Saving Time making it seem exactly like 4:45!) Only 4 brave souls showed up, but that could be because of all the tours that were taking place.

After a grueling 2-hour drive to Sandpoint, a small group of gymnastics students were picked up and, with the original four, headed to the top of the mountain where they stepped out into the cold, wet weather. Throughout the day rain and sleet and fog surrounded the bedraggled kids. But, as the day grew old, the fog lifted a little and, for a while, the rain stopped.

At the end of the day it was a happy but soaked group that reached the bus for the long ride home to the dorms. Another successful day and year of rec ski was over.

Hartman the Handyman

by *Aleece Cazan*

Whether the bells aren't working, a bus is broken, a bus needs to be driven, a teacher is in distress, a kid is in need of the chemical eye wash, or something has caught fire, we all know the man to call. He teaches Algebra 1 (during the wee hours of the morning), Informal Geometry, two Chemistry classes, and a Physics class. He is a firefighter, a husband, and a father. His intelligence amazes, his dedication astounds, and his compassion exceeds all borders. He works behind the scenes. He holds this campus together. He is Hartman the Handyman.

Band tours BC

by *Katie Folkenberg*

The Upper Columbia Academy band, Choraliers, and orchestra had the wonderful opportunity to go on tour to Canada starting on March 6, 2014. They stopped and shared their talents with different privileged listeners in places like Brewster, Washington, and Vernon, British Columbia. Finally, they reached their final tour destination in Nakusp, Canada.

Nakusp is a quaint little town and had the sweetest people we met on the entire tour. They were so welcoming that many students said it almost made them want to move to Canada. All three music groups had the opportunity to perform and work with some of the community members, and after a fun and successful performance, some grasped their inner Canadian and went curling or ice-skating while others returned to the gym and played different sports available there.

The next morning many of the students had the opportunity to go to a hot springs located right by a lake amongst grand mountains. This was just what everyone needed after a long and tiring trip. The hot springs had three different temperatures. The warm pool was located on the far side by the hot pool. To many people's surprise, the last pool was not warm at all but quite the opposite—it was practically a cube of ice! Some were brave and were able to dip their bodies into its extreme iciness. One such brave soul was Emma Tucker who was able to keep her composure for ten whole minutes!

The tour was a wonderful experience and everyone would enjoy returning to the great country of Canada. It truly was a privilege to be able to share God-given talents.

More than a rainy day

by *Sarina Meservia*

The day dawned cold and overcast as most days do during winter in Spangle. Beaten-down cow paths twisted through the dirtied snow, leading here and there all around campus. No one suspected what was coming. How could they? How could they know that in less than 24 hours the Upper Columbia Academy campus would be transformed by our own modern day flood? "Build the arks. Summon the animals!" said no voice out of the sky, and yet it came. In one fateful, humongous downpour that melted all the snow, the UCA campus quickly acquired a series of ponds, big and small, and many swamps, marshes and slip-and-slides.

If you looked out beyond the old cafeteria you would spot a glimmering, gargantuan, pond taking up both parking lots. Across the street, the field which once lay in front of the church was now a swamp, covered in about a half a foot of water. The river ran freely and happily, unaware of the amazement and fascination it wreaked. Donning mud boots and other waterproof (or not) accessories, many a student tromped happily into the murky waters, glad for a change of scenery after a drab, depressing, and long winter. In search of even more fun, some students even went canoeing. All around campus students could be seen in awe of the wonder Mother Nature had just created. Also, to the girls dismay, "mini Lake UCA," as many came to call it, formed over the entire walkway leading into the courtyard of the girls' dorm.

After a few days life went back to normal and paddles were put away, but I know that many will not forget the momentous day a flood was sent to UCA.

A plastic performance from trashy to classy

by *Suzanna Officer*

The girls' dorm experienced a wild evening full of creativity, laughter, and duct tape during the Girls' Club Annual Trash Bag Fashion Show. At the time the ladies usually would meet for evening worship, they gathered on each of their halls awaiting their RA's.

Each RA came with three large black trash bags, a pair of scissors, and a roll of duct tape. From there, the girls chose a model from amongst themselves and began their designing careers. Pieces of plastic and tape were flying as the girls frantically tried to make the most stylish dresses possible out of the trash bags before the intercom would happily announce that the fashion show was about to begin.

The show took place in the chapel with a state of the art light-up runway. As Madi Mallot announced each hall, the models walked down the runway in their plastic attire. The model from the hall with the loudest cheer was to be named queen of the show. Though every dress was Paris ready, there was no one who owned the catwalk quite like Ronni Sue Parks, who was later named queen.

The fashion show proved to be one of Girls' Club's greatest successes.

Better than a cactus

by *Jesse Humbert*

Weekly I ask myself why I'm spending a large part of my life sitting in a small plastic desk that's impossible to sleep, stand, relax, or sit in. My personal physique, being on the slender (also known as skinny) side, I find my "haunches" have a less than desirable feeling after about 3 hours of riveting assignments and lectures.

Even though we don't appreciate what we do in school some of the time, our education is important. I know it's not easy or entertaining, but becoming an adult isn't about fun necessarily—it's about progressing through our lives. What people do today influences the rest of their lives whether they're in academy or busting out of college with their lives ahead of them.

Today I challenge everyone to become a better person in some small way. As students of Upper Columbia Academy, we should be concerned about our actions and be the best we can be. We are the ones who control our outlook, and our outlook influences everything. Even though full appreciation for the fine education we are receiving is sometimes lacking, we should still be grateful for the time our teachers and parents put into our welfare.

Today, look at life with a different outlook. Be thankful for the things you often don't think twice about: air, food, money, religious freedom, friends, parents and staff who love you.

So the next time you wedge yourself into the inhumane pieces of plastic, just imagine we didn't have plastic chairs and had to sit on logs or cactus!