

AMERICA'S CHOICE 2016

Chief Editor: Ronak Tallur

In the year 2016, American news has revolved around one major event: the Presidential Election. This year, the candidates are, from the Democratic Party, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and from the Republican Party, billionaire real-estate developer Donald Trump. Clinton defeated her major opponent, Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Primaries, and Trump defeated his major opponents, Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, as well as John Kasich.

The buildup to the election has been, frankly, dramatic. Clinton became the first female to ever be nominated by a major party for President of the United States. Trump's run for President has been marred by drama and scandals, several controversies, but also decisive victories in many states in the Republican Primaries. At the Democratic Convention, Sanders supported Clinton for President, while at the Republican Convention, Ted Cruz refused to nominate Donald Trump. Coming out of the convention, Clinton had much needed momentum, which propelled her to strong months of July and August. Trump had a slight lead for most of September but following the first two debates, Clinton regained the lead. Clinton nominated Tim Kaine, former Governor of Virginia and now Senator of Virginia as Vice President and Trump nominated Governor of Indiana, Mike Pence, as Vice President.

Hillary Clinton, former Secretary of State during Barack Obama's first term as President, ran for President in the primaries against Obama in 2008. Though Obama defeated her, on his way to winning the presidency, Clinton endorsed Obama, and the two became very close friends. Clinton is the wife of former President Bill Clinton, who has also spoken in her favor on the campaign trail against Trump. As Secretary of State, Clinton focused on foreign affairs: she saved the signing of a historic peace treaty between Turkey and Armenia and, much more notably, was part of the secret organization working with the President that led US troops into Pakistan to take out terrorist Osama bin Laden. She also helped in relief efforts after 9/11.

However, many notable controversies and scandals have marred her political career. Trump shifted his focus to the African-American community for most of August and September. . On September 11th, 2012, US Government buildings came under attack from terrorists in Benghazi, Libya. Ambassador John Stevens was killed in the attack, as were four other Americans. Clinton took responsibility for a series of security lapses that many believe cost Ambassador Stevens his life. Clinton testified for eleven hours in front of the House Select Committee on Benghazi. Though Clinton emerged largely unscathed from the hearings, she was still criticized for her handling of the situation.

In March 2015, another scandal emerged, involving accusations that Clinton had used a private email server as Secretary of State to conduct official business. She was criticized for having put "national security" at risk and many believed that terrorists and other threats to the nation may have gotten their hands on highly classified information. She was found not guilty after a hearing in July 2016, despite being scolded by FBI Director James Comey for reckless handling of classified information. Comey said that Clinton and her colleagues were "extremely careless in their handling of very sensitive, highly classified information".

Donald J. Trump is an American billionaire who announced that he would be running for President on June 16th, 2015. Many considered his running for President to, initially, be a joke, but he quickly began gaining support from inside and outside the Republican Party. He was nominated by the party as candidate for President in July, 2016, but immediately fell behind in polls. Trump, with little political background, was once a Democratic supporter and a friend of the Clinton family. Trump's campaign has been marred by controversies: he suggested a ban on Muslims entering the United States and suggested building a wall to prevent Mexicans from illegally entering the country. He has been called racist on several occasions and engaged in a major feud with the Khan family, a Gold Star family who lost their son in Iraq in 2004 when he sacrificed himself to save his troops in a bombing. He also criticized and expressed hate for hundreds of people, places, and things during his campaign. However, his support during the primaries was higher than any other running for President in the history of the Republican Party.

Despite the fact that Clinton had an overwhelmingly greater support among African-Americans, Trump's attempt to appeal the

community was covered by CNN, NBC, FOX, and many other major news networks. He made speeches in Milwaukee during the violent protests amidst the shooting death of an African-American and spoke about the rioting in Charlotte over the shooting and killing of Keith Lamont Scott, an African-American killed by a white cop. Both candidates have spoken about the racial tensions between the African-American community and white police officers, who have been accused of killing blacks out of racial hatred. The situation came in major light during riots in Ferguson in 2014, Baltimore in 2015, and over the summer, when an African-American sniper killed five police officers in Dallas in anger over the recent shootings of African-Americans. Despite Trump's attempt to appeal the African-American community, he was still criticized because of his statement that African-Americans would vote for him because "they have nothing to lose".

Though Trump held either a narrow lead or was tied with Clinton for most of September, the first debate caused a swirl of momentum in Clinton's favor in a manner seen only after the conventions in July. Clinton was believed to have won the debate and carried the momentum into the second debate, which she also won. The candidates spoke about economic problems, security issues, and addressed racial tensions across America. Clinton's lead only expanded when a tape emerged showing Trump making vulgar comments about females in 2005 on a talk show. He lost several key endorsements and was seemingly alienated by his Republican party. Clinton jumped ahead in polls but as of November 1st, polls showed a tightening race. Trump gained momentum and the email scandal came back to light as the investigation was reopened. Director Comey was slammed for his poor handling of the investigation and Trump believed the new developments would propel him to the presidency.

On November 8th, 2016, Donald Trump was elected as the 45th President of the United States, winning with 289 Electoral Votes to Clinton's 218. Trump delivered a speech to unite the nation and Clinton graciously conceded to him. President Barack Obama delivered a statement outside the White House, saying, "Democrat, Republican, Independent...at the end of the day, we're all on the same team." He and Clinton urged the nation to unite behind Trump. Now, the next four years of our nation are in the hands of Donald Trump.



Kids Under Construction

Journalist: Nicholas Fantle

For the fourth time at Rocky Hill the 7th graders had a blast at Kids Under Construction (KUC). This field trip was meant to work on team play and build friendship between the 7th graders. We asked Ms. Fong the 7th grade team leader some questions and this is what she had to say:

Nick: What was the whole purpose of Kids Under Construction (KUC) and do you think you achieved it?

Ms. Fong: Kids Under Construction is a team building experience provided by a group from Williamsport called Cedar Ridge Adventures. The organization provides training and team building experiences on school sites in our area and we have had the pleasure of working with them for the last 3 years. The goal of the day is to provide a different environment in which students have an opportunity to work with and meet different students to achieve various goals at each of the stations. I think the goal of having students interact and work with students they are not familiar with was definitely achieved as each group was creating through random grouping. If at least one student felt more comfortable being in the 7th grade at Rocky Hill and met someone knew, I'd consider that a success.

N:What was your favorite part about KUC?

Ms. Fong: My favorite thing has to be the excitement students show on their faces as they are engaging in the various stations around the field. When they don't notice we're observing we (as in the teachers) can see how much they are enjoying themselves. That makes all of the planning and preparation for the day completely worth it.

N: Do you think KUC 2016 was successful?

Ms. Fong: I think we had a very successful day! While I would have loved temperatures about 7 degrees cooler as the day progressed, I think the vast majority of students that participated really enjoyed themselves and seemed to appreciate all of the hard work their teachers put into planning the experience for them. Definite success!

N: Why did RHMS plan KUC?

Ms. Fong: This was our 3rd year of working with Cedar Ridge Adventures to plan and provide Kids Under Construction as a unique school based team building activity for the 7th graders. We have found this to be an excellent way to break the ice for many of our students with new friendships forged each year. Community and a sense of belonging is very important to all of us at Rocky Hill and the experience helps to foster those ideals for our students.

N:Do you think RHMS will do KUC next year? What would you do to improve it?

Ms. Fong: I think we will plan Kids Under Construction again next year, as we seem to make upgrades every year that help make it more successful than the previous year. I think we'll definitely look for a time of the year that it might not be as hot as the day gets later, though. And work out a system to make sure everyone brings or has a water bottle for the day.

N:Do you have anything you would like to tell the students of RHMS?

Ms. Fong: To the 7th grade in particular, thank you for being so positive and open to the experience as that is a huge part of what makes the day such a success!



DEAR EDWINA JR.

Journalist: Marley Pinsky

Last year, Rocky Hill Middle School's drama production was a hit; the actors and actresses performed *Shrek Jr.*, based off the *Shrek* film series. This year, the drama program is making a comeback with *Dear Edwina Jr.*, an unknown yet heartwarming and hilarious musical.

Dear Edwina Jr. is a story about a young girl named Edwina Spoonapple who is an advice-giver-extraordinaire. She is a very spirited girl who shares her wisdom with the people of her neighborhood through *The Dear Edwina Show*. Edwina has three siblings: Katie, Joe and Myra. She is disappointed because she notices that her siblings have won several awards but her talent of advice-giving has no tangible award, apart from a chance at going to an advice-giving convention called the Kalamazoo Advice-a-Palooza Festival. Her friends and family keep her going through her many adventures. To find out more, make sure to attend the play, which will take place on November 17th, 18th, and 19th.

While several seventh and eighth grade students have performed in school drama productions previously, there are also several sixth graders who are going to be playing important roles. Sixth grade lead actors and actresses include Sofia Arnaiz, Isaiah Proctor, and Christian Baldwin-Guevara. The lead role of the play is Edwina Spoonapple, who will be played by Vanshika Shah. Vanshika is an eighth grader who starred in *Shrek Jr.* last year. Other lead roles include Edwina's siblings, who are played by both Sofia, Isaiah and Carley Neidecker. Carley is a seventh grader who was a dancer in *Shrek Jr.* last year. The characters played by these students are Katie, Joe, and Myra Spoonapple.

Despite the very whimsical character names, the actors and actresses have worked extremely hard to make this production possible. For the first audition, any student could sign up in the cafeteria. Upon sign up they received a packet of material to study. The students had to practice a number entitled "Sing Your Own Song," which will be sung in the play by lead roles including Edwina (Vanshika). After the first audition, there was a list of students who were invited back to the callbacks. The callbacks subsequently received their rolls and practiced another song, "Paw Paw Michigan," for the second audition. They also had to rehearse lines from the play. When the students went into the callbacks, groups of students took turns to see Mr. Heinemann to audition for a singing part.

When the hopefuls had their roles picked, rehearsals began. Characters with smaller roles were called to rehearse once a week while characters with bigger roles practiced up to three times a week.

The student playing the role of Myra Spoonapple, Carley Neidecker, was interviewed about the experience of being in the play. She described how lead roles have parts throughout every scene of the play, while smaller roles have big parts in very few scenes. She was also asked about why she joined the program and tried out for this year's drama production in the first place:

"It's a good way to make new friends and be a part of a big commitment." Neidecker says. She described the actors and actresses as hard working but made sure to add that the members of the production still have a blast.

She was then asked what she most looks forward to in the play: "Performing every show, because I always have so much fun doing it. At the end, when the curtains close, we all celebrate and goof around because we are so happy that we completed each show, have shown that we can do it, and have gotten over our nerves and stage fright." Carley answers with last year's show in mind. You can tell why they are so excited: After working for so many weeks together, it would be such a relief to finally perform the completed play. It will be a major accomplishment for all of the cast members.

She was then asked about the performers in the play who she thought were some of the best singers, dancers, and actresses or actors: "I would definitely say Edwina, because of her singing skills. When she is performing, she transforms out of her natural self and moves into her character; the way she moves, the way she speaks, the way she sings. Elaina Luzquinos, who plays several small parts, is also exceptional. Just like Edwina, she fully moves into her character. She has a really good personality and she's great at singing."

Neidecker was then asked about her favorite part about the drama club. She described how she loved getting to know people she didn't know before. She also remarked on how the cast members get to become close, as a family would.

While many parts of the play are humorous, some scenes of the production are meaningful. The original author of the play is Marcy Heisler. The play was first performed in July 2006. The whole production has been organized by the amazing Paul Heinemann, who is also the school chorus instructor. He has been working hard behind the scenes since the very first audition and will continue going lengths to ensure everything is successful until after the play has been concluded.

The dates for the play are November 17th, 18th, and 19th. Make sure to go out and watch the play! It sure will be worth your time and you would not want to miss it!

Mr. Delescavage Softball Interview

Journalist: Jasreen Lucman

Jasreen. “Why did you choose to coach the softball team instead of any other sports teams?”

Mr. D. “I have played baseball since I was six and softball since I was too old to play baseball. I just love the sport, and wanted to share that love with the students here at Rocky Hill.”

J. “How long have you been coaching?”

Mr. D. “This is my first year coaching middle school students, but I have coached younger students before, and also been the coach for several co-ed adult softball teams. I would say I have been coaching for about 8 years.”

J. “What do you like most about your role as coach?”

Mr. D. “To see the whole team come together. Softball is a game where individuals have to come together and work together in order to play well. So after teaching many individual skills, you get to watch the result of the athletes coming together using those skills and working together to become a team. It isn't about winning or losing, it's about coming together and helping the players become better each day and helping them to work better together.”

J. “Who are some stand-out players on the team?”

Mr. D. “All of our players are great! However, I will use this space to highlight a few of our 8th graders. Jason Fritz is a very strong infielder, and he also pitched during our first game. Elijah Katzenell played 3rd base our first game, and is set to pitch during our second game. Tommy Messina plays first base and is always encouraging his teammates. Finally, Tristan Massiatte-Luna, and Logan DuBoise were very strong outfielders for us in our first game.”



Artwork by: Lilah Ashery



Artwork by: Epiphany Grant

When you think of school sports, what may come to your mind first is football, softball, basketball, and other sports of the like. What might not immediately come to your mind Rocky Hill has an archery club that meets on Thursdays for intramurals. In fact, our school has a top-notch archery team.

The great thing about archery is that it is open to everyone. Unlike cross country and softball, students in all grades can join the club. You do not have to be extremely athletic or agile since the sport does not require you to run, kick, throw, or have a certain amount of strength to compete. All you have to have is good aim and concentration when you are shooting, which anybody and everybody can learn to do.

At a recent practice, the archers were split up into groups of more or less experienced archers. Those who were more experienced were the ones who had attended previous practices and intramurals. The beginners were the students who had never attended archery practices and intramurals before. The majority of the students had attended other practices, while only eight or nine students were shooting on the other side of the gym for their first time ever. Most, if not all of the beginners were sixth graders. However, several seventh and eighth grade boys and girls also attended the intramural as helpers.

The helpers mostly stayed with the beginners on one half of the main gym. They instructed them on when to get their bows, how to aim, how to shoot, and how to collect the arrows once the shooting was finished. The helpers were older students who have competed with the school archery team before. They are very helpful and encouraging with the beginner shooters. They know exactly how to guide them through the complicated steps of perfectly shooting a bow and arrow. At the end of the practice, the helpers got to demonstrate their own skills through a friendly shoot-off against one another.

Before shooting, archers tried to find their dominant eye, which signifies which type of bow they used. Helpers told students to make a triangle with their hands and try to look at the helpers' nose through the hole they made. The eye they used to look with was their dominant eye. This changes which type of bow they used. The students who had a left dominant eye used a specific red bow, but everybody else used bows of any other color.

After the groups of beginners and advanced shooters have been split up, students get into lines of about two or three people. They then wait for Mr. Leck's cue to get their bows. They get into their shooting position and rest their bows on their toes until the next cue. They then pick up their bows and place an arrow on the bow to shoot. They place their arrows on a certain spot on the bow, pull back the string to get ready to shoot, aim at the target, and then let go. At the practice, there were several lucky attempts that got bullseyes. After shooting and another cue from Mr. Leck, the students put back their bows and collect their arrows from the target. They have to stand next to the target in a certain way and pull the arrows out with their hands next to them for safety. Once they have the arrow, they drop them onto the floor. When they have taken off all of their arrows, they pick them up from the floor, balance them to make them straight, and carry them away carefully. After that, they put away the arrows and sit down to wait for their next turn to shoot.

Like mentioned before, Mr. Leck has several different cues that all mean different instructions to the archers. He blows his whistle different amounts of times to make different whistle cues. For instance, two whistles means get your bows from a shelf. After everyone is standing in shooting position and nobody is in the way, two whistles will be blown. This signals the archers that it is okay to begin shooting. Once everyone is done shooting and has



Activities on the Hill

put back their bows, three whistles will be blown. This tells the archers to collect their arrows from the target. They put their bows back, sit back down in line, and the process begins again with the next set of archers. However, if five or more whistles are blown, the archers must stop whatever they are doing. If five whistles are blown, there is either somebody or something in the way of the targets that could get hit or another emergency situation. For example, while archers are getting ready to shoot, someone walks through the door and through the area where people are shooting. Five or more whistles would be blown and the archers would stop. When the coast is clear, everyone would be informed to remain shooting.

In addition to regular archery practices, there is a select archery team that represents the school in competitions and tournaments. All students from all grades can try out for the archery team. Last year, as a seventh grade member of the archery club was describing, in order to make the archery team, you had to score a certain amount of points in a shoot-off against other players. Regular archery intramurals practice only for certain times each year, only once or twice a week. The archery team practices more frequently and the club lasts for about half the school year. According to older and more experienced members of the archery club, the archery team participated in an archery tournament against other schools. Last year, representing Rocky Hill, our archery team won the whole tournament.

The person who is behind this entire program is John Leck, who also teaches eighth grade general science. Mr. Leck is the coach of the archery team. He enjoys getting a chance to work with kids, help them, and watch them improve over time. He considers the recent practices as large turnout, especially from sixth grade. He is glad to see so many people giving archery a try.

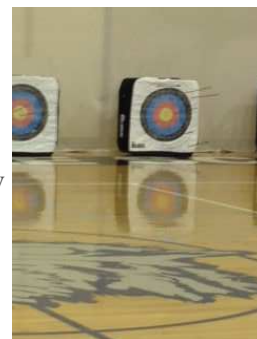
Mr. Leck was then asked why he chose to be the coach of this program. He answered describing how he had been in archery since he was a young boy. He has been involved in archery for over forty years. He recalls starting archery in a club in around 1972 as a child.

Mr. Leck graduated from West Virginia University in 1983. From there, he received a professional teaching certificate in Science Education. He has been teaching for thirty-two years, but he has not always been teaching science and he has only taught at Rocky Hill for nine years. First, he taught at three different elementary schools. From elementary school, he switched to four different middle schools. After working with different middle schools, Mr. Leck worked at NASA for five years! Finally, he came to Rocky Hill Middle School and now teaches general science in eighth grade.

Mr. Leck was then asked about his favorite parts about teaching and coaching archery. For coaching, Mr. Leck enjoys watching kids 'get better and better' at archery. He also likes competing in tournaments as a team and hopefully winning them. As a teacher, he loves working with children and helping them understand science.

The first year that Rocky Hill even participated in the state archery tournament, the team won third place. For two years after that, the team won second place. Last year, the team won first place. One year, a seventh grade girl earned the title of the top archer in the state. Samaneh Ali, the champion, is now a sophomore in high school. Mr. Leck is looking forward to this year's tournament and is hoping to make it to Louisville, Kentucky, where the national tournament is held.

While the school's archery team is successful and elite, anyone can join. There are no restrictions to anyone who chooses to participate and there are no limits to the amount of people who can make the team. Our school's archery club is a fun and exciting experience, full of great opportunities. Intramurals take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the main gym. Don't hesitate to try something new! Once again, the archery club and the archery team is available to all students at Rocky Hill. Even if you are extremely new to the sport, archery is not extremely challenging. You can improve your archery skills very quickly, but just like any other sport or activity, you must try hard and practice in order to succeed.





A New Edition To Our Band

Journalist: Shreya Barua

We welcome one of our newest teachers, Ms. Helen Kong. She took time off her busy schedule to answer a few questions for the Wildcat Roar. Here is what she has to say about herself, her job, and her family:

Shreya: Can you tell us a little about your background in education?

Ms. Kong: I studied at Johns Hopkins University and Northwestern University. I learned how to play piano at age four and started flute lessons in fourth grade.

S: How long have you been teaching?

Ms. Kong: I've been teaching for five years and this is my first year at Rocky Hill.

S: What is your favorite thing about your job?

Ms. Kong: I love interacting with my students and hearing them play and eventually, perform.

S: Is there an important person or role model in your life?

Ms. Kong: My mom was a big role model in my life. She was a musician and teacher which inspired me to take on the same roles. She also taught me how to play piano.

S: Would you like to share anything about your family?

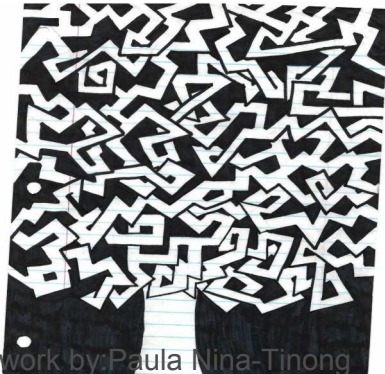
Ms. Kong: My family is from Korea. They now live in Silver Spring. I have one older brother, a newborn niece, and two dogs.

S: Do you have any advice for the students at Rocky Hill.

Ms. Kong: My advice for students is to never give up no matter how hard life gets. Stay strong.

We thank Ms. Kong for meeting with us and helping us get to know her better. This new teacher has brought joy to our band! She can play all of our band instruments very well and we are lucky to have such a talented teacher.

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Artwork by: Paula Nina-Tinong



Mr. Gerald (Jerry) Delescavage Jr., Teacher, Special Education

Journalist: Jashreen Lucman

Jashreen- “Can you tell me a little about your background in education?”

Mr. D “I went to college at Bloomsburg University (in Pennsylvania) where I earned my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Elementary Education, I have since taken classes in Mathematics, health and PE to earn my masters +60.”

J- “How long have you been teaching?”

Mr. D- “I have been teaching since 2001, however, I did take some time off to pursue my masters degree full time.”

J- “What is your favorite thing about teaching?”

Mr. D- “When I can see the light bulb turn on...when students struggle with a concept, but then they get it. That is my favorite part of teaching.”

J- “Is there an import person or role model in your life?”

Mr. D- “My mom. My dad passed away when I was 11, and my mom took on the role of both parents. She did everything she could do to make sure my sister and I had a great life. She made me want to be a positive role model in the lives of other people. She is a big reason I wanted to become a teacher.”

J- “Any advice for students at Rocky Hill?”

Mr. D- “If you aren't sure about something, come and see your teachers. We are here to help, and want you to succeed!!!”

J- “Finally, would you like to share anything about your family?”

Mr. D- “Sure. I am married, and Mrs. Delescavage and I have 2 boys (Jerry, age 4 and Joey, age 2)”.

Black Eyed Susan Book Review

Journalist: Desiree Smith

Do you need help finding a good Black Eyed Susan book? Mrs. Gramatges recommends "When," by Victoria Laurie. The book is about a girl who can see everyone's death dates. Cool! Right? She said, the book was very enjoyable because, "...it kept you on the edge of your seat." She also said, "It had an unusual plot." One of the characters in the book is Mrs. Dunkin. Mrs. Gramatges said, "She was a caring and kind person." The mystery book, "When," by Victoria Lori is clearly a pretty cool book. "When" is just one of the great Black Eyed Susan books waiting for you in the library. You can check them out today!

Book vs. Movie

Journalist: Emily Tran

The movie "The 5th wave" and the book had many differences. The movie left out major events and concepts that are in the actual book. It's obvious you can't fit a twelve hour read into a two hour film, but The film left out many ideas, as well as development of unique characters. It quickly threw multiple characters at us, resulting in each character, besides the main ones, being easily forgotten. Other than the main three, the rest of the characters were not described very well. In the book the characters were steadily developed, sparking curiosity in the reader.

The movie not only developed the characters in a mediocre way but changed the gender of a character and completely eliminated characters to fit the movie's specific time limit. One of the characters in the book named Resnik drove Ben, a main character, into becoming who he is: A fighter. In the book Resnik is a boy, but in the movie Resnik is a girl. changes such as these made understanding each character more difficult in the movie, in comparison to the book.

All in all, "The 5th Wave" movie was a mixed bag, in comparison to the book. The movie has some plot holes that the book accounts for, but overall, the minor changes in the movie didn't necessarily mess up the in general feel of the book itself.



Artwork by: Rosita Sueydie

Winning story submission

What Matters Most

Smrithi Chakravarthy

I clearly recall the day when it all started.

The sky was gray, rain pouring from it continuously. I heard thunder every five minutes. What a miserable way to start a day! I glanced at my phone. 6:47. Great, I thought to myself. 30 minutes behind schedule. I got dressed, then sprinted down the stairs to gulp down my breakfast. Soon, I was out the door.

“Bye!” I yelled to my mom.

Yet my mother who was always cheerful seemed preoccupied.

“Don’t forget the umbrella.” she had said half-heartedly.

The next few hours went by slowly. When I came back home, my mother was clearly upset. Her face was as red as a tomato, and her signature smile was nowhere to be found.

“What’s wrong?” I inquired apprehensively.

She hesitated for a moment before replying, “We’ve declared war on them”

I stared at her, not being able to comprehend what she had said. Then it hit, and suddenly I stood there, open mouthed.

“No!” I exclaimed. “It can’t be!”

Our country had had border disputes with the neighboring country, but I never thought there would be a war. My mother stared at the floor, speechless. She was an optimist and was always able to find something positive about every situation.

Even she was stuck.

“Do your homework, Maggie.” she said after a long pause. “Let’s pray this mess gets better. There’s nothing else we can do.” She forced a smile.

I nodded and reluctantly went upstairs to do my Pre-Calc homework.

But my mom was wrong. Way wrong. Things didn’t get better. In fact, they took a big turn for the worst.

I was in the summer after my eleventh grade year and was beginning to plan out what colleges to go to and what I wanted to major in. Back then, I was in the top ten percent of my class and was sure I wanted to study biology and then go to medical school. I had aced all of my science classes, and I found great joy in helping others. I figured that studying medicine would be a great way to achieve that.

But I never got the chance.

One miserably hot day in August, I was finalizing my top colleges. There were flyers of every color scattered on my bed and I was typing rapidly on my computer. Then, I heard a knock on my door. It was my dad.

“Maggie, we need to talk.”

“What about?”

“About college.”

“Oh, college! I was just deciding which colleges to apply to! I definitely want to go to a selective school...and if I get in...” I stopped, noticing the concerned look on my father’s face.

“Something’s wrong, isn’t it?”

Winning story submission

“Honey, the government made a new law. Now, we can’t afford college.”

“WHAT?” I shrieked, on the verge of tears. “But... you said... WHY?”

“Crazy government wants more people to study weapon science... so they literally tripled the price for every other college major. They even banned scholarships for other majors. I looked into every option-Maggie, there is just no way you can study biology.” he said in despair.

I was devastated.

“Maybe you should study weapon sci....”

“DAD!! Are you crazy?” I interrupted furiously. “I don’t want to kill people!”

“Just think about it, Maggie. It’s better than sitting idly.” he said as he walked out of my room.

The summer after my senior year, I found myself packing for weapon school. I truly did not want to go, but the thought of sitting at home doing nothing was motivation enough to make me.

Those next four years were the worst of my life. I would stare out the window hoping I could somehow be teleported to biology school. I would think about what I would do when I go there. I imagined inventing a cure for cancer or Alzheimer’s.

“Maggie Simons!” my professor would interrupt my dreams. “Listen!”

Naturally, I was thrilled when those four years were over. However, they were only the start of my problems.

The day before I graduated from college, a government officer came to see our class. He congratulated us and said we had a “unique opportunity”. The government had started a project called “BIO-WAR.”. It’s goal? To come up with the “most effective” (deadliest) biological weapon. The person who discovered it, he claimed would receive millions in cash.

I, like everyone else at my college, joined the program.

Fast forward three years to the present, and I’m still working on the same project.

I gasp. This can’t be happening! I tell myself. Double-checking the formula, I run the test again, waiting anxiously, in hopes I have made a mistake. I am literally shivering as I check the results again. I try to calm myself. I am unsure of how to take the news; my heart-beat is a cheetah, at full speed.

I have just invented the biological weapon everyone in the country is trying to invent!

I feel like my head is going to explode! I decide to take a break. Clutching the formula, I step out of the lab.

I sit down on a bench in the lobby and think, Maggie, you can be a millionaire!

That would certainly be nice, I could even go to medical school.

But at what cost, I ponder. Would I really be happy?

Millions of lives would be lost, millions of families shattered.... and it would all be my fault! I had wanted to help people, not hurt them! I had wanted to save lives not take them!

I glance at the formula in my hands and then at the paper shredder in the supply room. I smile. I know exactly what I’m going to do.

As I walk back into the lab, I don’t regret my decision one bit. Even though I won’t be getting fame or money, I know I did the right thing, and that is what matters.

Four years ago, the Washington Nationals were getting ready for their first playoff appearance in franchise history. In the city of Washington, the Nationals had known only woes and disappointment. But after a 2012 season in which they were the best team in the MLB, the Nationals had secured themselves as a true World Series contender. And after another brilliant season in 2014, despite losing in the NLDS to the San Francisco Giants, the Washington Nationals were considered a real threat in the MLB. With franchise stars like Bryce Harper and Stephen Strasburg continuing to blossom, the Nationals had their eyes on the future.

But in 2015, they fell short. Despite Bryce Harper hitting 41 homeruns and being unanimously voted NL MVP, the Nationals underperformed in almost all categories. After a disappointing campaign, the Nationals came into the offseason, hoping to make key additions to their squad. They signed veteran slugger Daniel Murphy from the rival New York Mets ballclub, as well as leadoff batter Ben Revere, but were unable to add stars such as Ben Zobrist, who went to the Chicago Cubs from the Tampa Bay Rays and Darren O'Day, who remained with the Baltimore Orioles. Nevertheless, the Nationals hoped to remain a threat in the NL East and become a serious contender. They started off the season strong, winning on Opening Day in Atlanta 4-3, backed by solo shots from Harper and Murphy. In the second game, Strasburg notched his first victory of the year, paving the path for a historic season.

Strasburg, the former first overall selection, started off the season 11-0 and did not lose a ballgame until the tail end of July. An All-Star year, Strasburg finished 16-4. Unfortunately, a series of injuries including a debilitating flexor mass injury sidelined him for the entire August and for all but one game in September. Nevertheless, Max Scherzer, coming off a debut season with the Nationals in which he rounded up two no-hitters, finished the season with 20 victories. Tanner Roark stepped in as the number two pitcher in the rotation with perhaps the best season of his career. On the offensive side of the ball, catcher Wilson Ramos put up career numbers with 22 homeruns and 80 runs batted in. However on September 27th, Ramos landed awkwardly on his left knee while making a play. The next day, it was announced that he had torn his ACL. After undergoing successful surgery, it was announced that Ramos may not be ready to play until mid-July, 2017.

Daniel Murphy's signing prompted many offseason questions: coming off a monster NLCS with the Mets, it was questioned whether he would end up being a flop with the Nationals ballclub. Many critics assumed Murphy would have a poor 2016 campaign. However, after starting off the season with a homerun on Opening Day, Murphy never looked back. He hit .347 with 25 homeruns and 104 runs batted in, good for the best season of his career, and landing him in MVP discussion. The stepping up of Murphy ended up overshadowing the season of Bryce Harper. Despite hitting 24 homeruns, he was considered to have had a down season, coming off his historic 2015 run. Other key players on offense included Anthony Rendon, who had, in 2014, finished in the top five in NL MVP voting. In 2015, he missed over half of the season with knee and quad injuries. But in 2016, he hardly missed a game. Finishing with 20 homeruns for the second time in his career, Rendon was one of six on the Nats club to reach the 20 homerun plateau.

Finishing the season 95-67, the Nats wound up with the second seed spot in the National League. Though underperforming down the stretch, partly due to Murphy missing the final two weeks with lower body injuries, the Nationals were set to face the LA Dodgers in the NLDS. In the first game, Clayton Kershaw, the Dodgers ace, struggled through five innings, but ended up holding the Nats to three runs. Scherzer, however, gave up a pair of blasts to Corey Seager and Justin Turner, allowing the Dodgers to take game one 4-3. Game two ended up being postponed by a day due to rain but when it took place on Sunday, October 9th, Washington came out swinging. Trailing early by two runs, the Nationals were backed by backup catcher Jose Lobaton and the great Daniel Murphy, who led them to a 5-2 victory. The stone was set for game three in Los Angeles. In the game, the Nationals hit the Dodgers hard early in the game. Pitcher Gio Gonzalez pitched four and one third inning, but that was all the Nationals needed. Aided by a two-run homerun by Anthony Rendon and a solo bomb by Jayson Werth, the great left fielder for the Nats, the Nationals took game three 8-3.

The Nationals had two opportunities to send the Dodgers home. They failed in both attempts. Game four went to the Dodgers, 6-5, who sent Kershaw back to the mound to save their season. The Nationals had many key opportunities to put the Dodgers away but came away shorthanded. Two nights later, game five took place in DC, where Scherzer set up against Rich Hill. After tossing six innings of scoreless ball, Scherzer gave up a game tying homerun to Joc Pederson. The seventh inning went on for one hour and most of the scoring took place in that time: the Dodgers took a 4-1 lead but pinch hitter, Chris Heisey, ate into the lead with a two-run homer. In the ninth inning, Kershaw was sent out yet again to close the game, and he was successful. The Nationals were eliminated from the playoffs in the first round for the third time in five years. A Washington baseball team has not won a series since the Washington Senators won in 1924.

The Nationals may have been sent home but there is hope in the air. Though Ramos may not be seen for nearly a year and Strasburg is still dealing with elbow discomfort, Murphy finished the season strong...as did Rendon, Werth, and Ryan Zimmerman. The Nationals hope to make key additions in the offseason, but as of right now, the Nationals are back in training, ready to return in 2017 and make another run at the pennant.



Thanksgiving is a holiday that is celebrated in the United States and Canada on the fourth Thursday of November. The holiday celebrates the pilgrims' first harvest in "The New World," which is now the United States. The first Thanksgiving was in 1621, very shortly after the pilgrims sailed to America on The Mayflower. There are the basic pieces of information about Thanksgiving that most people are aware of, but here are some fun facts: some of which will surprise you!

The first Thanksgiving feast was attended by 90 Native Americans and 53 pilgrims.

Instead of just turkey, the first Thanksgiving meal also consisted of venison, which is meat from deer, fish, lobster, and eel. Even though the first Thanksgiving took place in the early 1620s, it was only declared a national holiday in 1863, nearly 200 years later.

91 percent of Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving day.

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, once said that the concept of Thanksgiving was the "most ridiculous idea I've ever heard."

The national bird of our country is the bald eagle. However, Benjamin Franklin wanted the national bird of America to be the turkey.

Turkeys were one of the first animals to be domesticated. The first animal to be domesticated was the sheep, but the first bird was the goose.

The place where the Pilgrims landed and started their colony was in Plymouth. Plymouth is a town in Massachusetts. Not surprisingly, the town is right next to large bodies of water, including Cape Cod Bay and Plymouth Bay, which both eventually lead into the Atlantic Ocean. This is how the Mayflower got to what is now Massachusetts.

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is a parade that displays floats, giant balloons, music, and celebrities. However, in 1958, a helium shortage almost kept the balloons from flying.

Watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on television has become a Thanksgiving tradition for millions of people. However, the parade was initially Christmas themed.

Turkey was the first meal enjoyed by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin when they were on the moon. It may be impossible for turkeys to fly, but they have been to the moon.

