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# *PALS NEWS*

The Newsletter of the Program in American Language Studies of Rutgers University-Newark  
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## **An Embarrassing Situation**

Angelica Becerra, Colombia  
Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

When I was three years old, I had an embarrassing situation in Kindergarten. This experience happened to me in the second week there when the teacher decided to give us time to eat our lunch. I was sitting at a table with three girls and one of them, I knew it, didn't like me. We started to eat. That day I was drinking my favorite milkshake that my mom used to prepare for me when I was younger. When I started to drink my vanilla milkshake, Carolina, the girl that didn't like me, took my bottle and started to throw all the liquid on the table. I tried to take away my bottle from her, but when I did I hurt her hand and she began to cry. At that moment, the teacher came into the room and she started yelling things at me like: "Why did you do that? You are a bad girl!! You have to learn how to behave with your friends!" When I heard all of these words, the only thing that I did was cry, and when I said something to explain the truth, she raised her hand to make a sign of silence to me and told me that I had to stay in the corner of the room alone for the rest of the day. The next day, the teacher talked to my mom about it, after Carolina's mother went to the school to ask about the injury of her daughter's hand, but I had already explained to my mom the true story. Now I can remember all the details, because it was an awful experience in my childhood when the teacher made me feel so bad in front of the class.

## **Friendship**

Elaine Lu, Taiwan  
Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

What they don't understand about friendships and what they never tell you is about when you make friends with your true heart but they don't like you. You expect to feel we are good friends, good classmates, and good roommates during the new session, new environment, or new period, but they don't think so. You think about this by yourself and understand it's a lie in your life. Some days you might feel nervous when you get somewhere you've never been. Or maybe some days you might need someone to be friendly with you when you suffer from troubles but there is nothing you can do. And maybe one day you're confident and can finish your work on your own, but you still need someone who can hear you in your mind. That's what I tell my best friend when she's upset and needs to cry, "I'll always be there."

I remember that there was a girl who was kind and outgoing. She came into my life when I met her six years ago. She was my classmate in the university. I assumed we were close friends until two years ago. For starters, we were a group. We always attended activities together and I always followed her steps doing everything. I thought I was happier when I stayed with her because she cheered me on and she encouraged me to improve my studies. We

discussed all kinds of things together, especially personal concerns. Sometimes she laughed at me but I didn't take it seriously. To accumulate over a long period, I found there was a big problem between her and me. She laughed at me on purpose not only to my face but also in front of other people. I know I'm not a smart girl and lack self-confidence. I couldn't believe that she broke my heart deeply and let me feel like a fool for my college life. How could she treat me well only on the surface? How come? That was the reason why I didn't feel I could trust her anymore. Suddenly, I realized the meaning of that sentence saying, "It takes time to know a person." Now we are not friends anymore, even though I am still concerned about a good friend I had once. This case let me learn that "one's heart is spent finding out" especially when you go through this kind of experience. Personally, however, I won't slander people behind their backs. I never did that before and I won't do that in the future.

### **My Day at the Hospital**

Kunanya Intakham, Thailand

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

When I was seven years old, I had a stomach-ache, so I went to the hospital with my mother. That day it had a lot of people there. Everybody looked busy. While I was waiting for the doctor, my mother went to the restroom. I waited alone for a long time. The nurses weren't interested in me. My symptoms were extreme. I couldn't wait but nobody helped me. Then I was crying, crying, and crying aloud. Everyone looked at me. They said, "What's wrong with her?" but they didn't take care of me. Somebody carried me to the emergency room. Finally when I felt better, my mother came and everybody apologized to me. It was a terrible day for me and I can't forget it.

### **A Horrible Day at School**

Edith Chen, Taiwan

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

Almost everyone has a happy, no pressure childhood. The same goes for me. My dear mama always prepared breakfast when I woke up. After the delicious meal, I had full power and energy to start the beautiful day. These wonderful days continued until I was thirteen, when the horrible day came. The horrible teacher came too. The teacher was a woman. She liked intelligent students. So I must say that I'm not smart. Therefore, the result was visible that she didn't like me. There were forty-five students in my class. My grades for each course were not very good, especially English. Unfortunately, she was my English teacher. When I got a low grade, she always punished me severely. But when I got better grades than other classmates, she never said "Good" or "Good girl" to me. She just said loudly to everyone in class, "Everybody's grade is not as good as before and Edith's grade is higher than yours. How shameful you are! Everyone can't lose to her. You should be smarter than her, so cheer up!!" At the same time, my face turned red with embarrassment. Today, I still hate her, although time has already passed. When I tell the story about her, I feel angry and I'll get a nightmare tonight.

## **An Embarrassing Situation in Class**

Nelson Yucuma, Colombia

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

A week ago I was in Pronunciation class with Professor Tim. One minute before he finished the class he said, "Ok, everyone, does anybody have a question?" but nobody said anything. The teacher said, "Come on, nobody has a question about anything?" At that time, I remembered that a few days ago I had seen a movie about a gang in the United States. This movie used many words that I could not understand very well, but one word had made me very curious because it was used a lot in the movie.

For this reason I said, "I have a question," and Mr. Tim said, "Ok, go ahead. What is your question?" I replied, "What is the meaning of this word (\*)?" The professor didn't understand the word the first time. Nevertheless, I saw the movie with subtitles and I knew how to write this word. So I wrote that word and showed it to the teacher. The face of Professor Tim changed completely. The color on his face changed from white to red, his eyes opened like two big globes, and he had a little smile and said, "Nelson, I can't tell you what that word means, but I can tell you it is a very bad word." One classmate read the word and he pronounced it very loudly at that moment. I wanted to die because everybody laughed because all my classmates knew the meaning. I felt embarrassed and stupid.

After that, my friend Liana and other classmates explained the meaning and finally I knew why everyone was laughing and why the teacher felt embarrassed. That day was terrible for me because one classmate said, "You watch porn movies." I felt very sad and embarrassed. I just wanted to know what the meaning for that word was. Now I know the meaning and also I know never to use it with women.

\* The word I don't want to mention because it is an insult and a bad word.

## **An Upsetting Day**

Andreia Melniski, Brazil

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

I remember one day when I was finishing my graduation (the middle of the last year). I had a practice exam on a very bad day for me because I wasn't recovered from a virus that I had had. I asked my teacher if it would be possible to do the exam another day. She said, "No," so I started to take my exam.

The teacher stopped in front of me, called the patient, who I had never seen before, from another student and began to ask me about the best course of treatment with him. I said: "Teacher, first of all, I need to know his diagnosis. I don't know who he is, and I cannot answer your question without some information about him."

She took a deep breath and looked very upset. Then she answered me: "You should know who he is. He is here every day! Don't you take a look around you at your classmates' patients? What are you doing when you are here?"

I politely said: "I'm sorry, Teacher, but when I'm here, I'm concentrating on my work, my patients, and sometimes I see who is by my side, sometimes I don't. Do you think that I should know every single patient here, almost 100 patients? If so, please tell me, because I didn't know that!"

I was already crying when she replied: "You are not going to be able to pass this

internship. You chose the wrong career. You don't have the ability to be a physical therapist." I looked down and left the clinic sobbing like a child, attended by all my friends.

After that, I never talked with her again until my graduation. She didn't hurt me because I was in front of everybody. Even I was hurtful because it happened on my favorite internship—I was doing my monograph, my scientific study in Neurology. I was thinking about studying Neurology as my Master's, but when the teacher complained about my ability, I felt like a beginner in that matter.

Later, I understood that she was very angry with me because she was the chair of the Neurology department and she was always chosen by the students to coordinate the scientific study, but I hadn't asked her. I was the first and only students to ask another Neurology teacher to help me.

At the end of that year, I did my presentation and I got 100 percent. I passed in all the other internships and my scientific study was considered the best field job by all the teachers! So, during the ceremony of graduation, she handed the diploma over to me, gave me a hug, and just said: "Congratulations!" She didn't tell me anything else, but I could see into her eyes she was completely embarrassed by that situation.

### **A Humiliating Experience**

Ana Diaz Hernandez, Mexico

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

Four years ago, Monica made me feel like a big pig. A long time ago when my mom was in college, she had her best friend called Monica, and at that time Monica lived in Acapulco, a place near the beach. So one day my mom decided to visit her and we went with all the family (my sister, my younger sister, my mom, and my dad). At that time I was a little fat and my sister Claudia had always been very slim. We went to a nice restaurant, and at the beginning she was nice, but then she suddenly started telling my sister: "Oh, you are so beautiful. You are so pretty. You have a perfect body shape. You look like a model." I was next to my sister, so she told me, "And you...are so *big*. Yes, so big!" So I was traumatized and she looked at me with a very mean face. I was very sad and a year later, my best friend Cecy was at my home. When she was leaving, we realized that Monica was visiting my home. Again she told me sister, "Oh, you are so beautiful. You are so good-looking. You look almost like a model." Then she looked at my best friend and she told her the same thing, "You are so beautiful. You are so cute. You have a beautiful body." After that she told me, "Mmm...you are bigger every year." What?? I was so frustrated, and after that I started doing exercise and went on a diet. When we saw her the next year, she told me, "Oh, now you look so different. You look so nice." But now I have learned that I shouldn't have listened to what everyone told me because they sometimes only want to make you feel down, ugly, and fat. I remember that awful feeling because I was humiliated in front of my friend and my sister, and I wanted to cry and cry, I felt so sad. But now I try to stop listening to all that people say.

### **A Great Birthday**

Ozgul Karacay, Turkey

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

I will never forget my nineteenth birthday, because my best friend prepared that party. I was nineteen that year. My birthday is that day but I didn't guess she had prepared that party; that's why I was surprised. I was so happy. She told my sister, "I know that today is Ozgul's birthday and I want to prepare the party. Don't tell her." My sister didn't tell me until it was time for the party. After dinner, my friends came to my house for the party. My family and friends had prepared a great party for me. Everybody celebrated my birthday and we had a great day. In short, it was such a great day for me because actually everybody that I loved was with me.

### **The Fairness of Grades**

Pierre Lin, Taiwan

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

The most important thing for children in Taiwan is studying. The parents always ask their kids to keep studying after school until bedtime at 10 o'clock. However, the teachers at the school judge students good or bad by students' grades. But it is fair? To judge people only by grades, it is too ridiculous. Unfortunately, I was in school when I was 13, studying in junior high school. I remember one of my teachers. She gave bad grades to many students in my class including me. For example, each student was responsible for their clean area. Our teacher would come to check it, clean or dirty. If the area was not clean, but it belonged to a good grade student, the result was "Ok" or "Clean it again." Opposite them, for me, the teacher blamed and yelled at me why couldn't I do an easy thing at one time. If other teacher said our class was too noisy, our teacher always called us first to ask who made the class so noisy. Her first impression was bad grade students had done bad things. Even now, I can't forget her face and the words she told us. As what I said in the essay, I don't like her at all.

### **A Women's Only Party**

Lisha Arroyo, Puerto Rico

Jessica Wilson's High Intermediate Writing

One day in my house, my mom decided to have a party with all her friends. I told my mom that I wanted to stay in the house, but she said to me that I couldn't. I was surprised because I thought that I could stay and enjoy the party, but the thing was that the party was only for adults. I started to think, what kind of party are you going to have here? She said. "Lisha, it is for women only." I didn't understand "women only" until I snuck around the house to see what was going on. Then I understood the theme of the party, that there was a stripper and things weren't G-rated. Even though, in my mind, my mom never saw me, I still felt like a little girl.

## **A Day to Remember**

Piedad Flores, Ecuador

Tim Keane, High Advanced Writing

I remember one Christmas, my favorite holiday, more than any other. That day was magical because my family celebrated in a special way. First my mother explained to my brothers and me about Christmas. She told us that on that day, we celebrated the child Jesus' birth, a big day in the world. The child Jesus would bring many gifts to children that had behaved all year, and we had to give welcome to Jesus as a king.

A few days before Christmas, my mother had decorated the house with garlands, strung the lights, and put up the Christmas tree and Nativity scene. We enjoyed decorating the house. My father decorated outside; he put up lights and, together with our neighbors, participated in the decoration of the neighborhood. In addition, my parents bought new clothes for the whole family because we had to be very elegant on that special day.

My mother began to prepare the turkey on the day before Christmas because she put special seasonings in the food, which took a lot of time. My brothers and I also had to write letters to the child Jesus about our preferred toys. On Christmas Eve, we had to put the letters inside of our shoes and go to bed until midnight. When we woke up, it was magic because we had our preferred toys and special dinner with turkey, cake, fruit and wine. We were very happy.

Everything was like a wonderful fantasy. Today I think that Christmas is a special day because it is about Jesus, but it doesn't have the magic that I felt at that time. Now I enjoy the holiday with my family in a different form, but it will never be the same.

## **Christmas in Ecuador**

David Guerrerero, Ecuador

Tim Keane, High Advanced Writing

In Ecuador at Christmas, our celebration is similar to that in the United States. We start to decorate our houses on about December 12<sup>th</sup>. Each home is decorated with Christmas lights, and we put a Christmas tree inside the house. We use a lot of green and red wrapping paper at Christmas for presents, and we also wear some red and green clothing. Something that we do at Christmas in our country but I don't see in the United States is to place a representation of the Nativity of Jesus next to the Christmas tree. The Nativity for us is so important that the municipalities give trophies to the families who make the best Nativities of the year.

On the morning of December 24<sup>th</sup>, we also prepare the meal that we are going to eat at night. The mother, grandmother and daughters are usually in charge of the meal. The men of the house usually prepare for the after-dinner party: what we are going to drink and what music we are going to dance to. Then in the afternoon we go out to see a parade that the city organizes in the downtown area. There is usually a show recreating the Nativity. Also, we like to go to church to sing Christmas songs and listen to the Christmas sermon.

At 6 p.m. the Christmas celebration starts. The whole family gets together in the house where the meal was prepared. As the family enters the house, they leave presents under the tree. The adults stay in the living room talking, and the kids play or watch a movie. At 10 p.m. the dinner starts, and before we eat we give thanks for all the good and bad things that happened in the year. After we finish eating, the party starts, and everybody starts dancing and drinking until midnight, when it is time to open the presents.

The teenagers at Christmas have their own celebration. The first part of the Christmas party

we spend with the family, but after we open the presents we go to a friend's house to have a party with only friends. We dance and drink until the next morning. Sometimes when we can't find a home to have the party, we go to any city park, close the street with some cars, and use the cars' radios for dance music. We spend all night dancing until 6 or 7 a.m. the next morning. Then we go to breakfast and finally back home to sleep.

In Ecuador, Christmas is one of the most important holidays that we celebrate because it is a holiday when almost the whole family comes together to celebrate. Also it is the holiday where the people give thanks for everything that happened in the year. In Ecuador, Christmas is the day of giving without expecting to receive anything in return.

### **Abortion in Bolivia**

Josette Meave, Bolivia

Tim Keane, High Advanced Writing

At this time, abortion is common in Bolivia even though it is illegal, except in special cases such as rape, to save a mother's life or to preserve her physical health. According to statistics in the past year, 115 abortions are performed per day, most of them secretly. These abortions are common among teenagers because of the immaturity and lack of information among them. The views on abortion among young people and adults are mixed. There are young people who support abortion and others who don't, and the same is true with adults, but in general, the young people support abortion and the adults disagree.

Bolivian adults' beliefs about abortion are based on saving innocent life. Most feel that it is a sin in any situation because they are religious and think that abortion is a crime. For them life begins at conception, and nobody has the right to take away a life, especially when that human being cannot defend himself. On the other hand, there are some adults who agree with abortion in special cases because they think that is important to take care of the physical and psychological health of the mother.

Bolivian youth feel that abortion is a free decision. The thinking among young people about abortion is that it is not something bad. They say that each woman can decide about her own body because she is free to do whatever she wants with herself.

In conclusion, abortion is a controversial issue because it makes us think about the consequences of abortion, which involves two lives, the mother's and her baby's. Both have the right to live. To avoid this difficult situation, we have to try to teach people how to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

### **Christmas Eve in Poland**

Aneta Balawejder, Poland

Tim Keane, High Advanced Writing

A few days before Christmas families in Poland start to prepare for the big holiday. The most important rituals, however, are performed on Christmas Eve.

Everybody is busy. Children with their grandmothers make beautiful, colorful decorations with apples, wrapped nuts, various shapes of chocolate, candies and handmade decorations from paper or hay, such as angels, stars, bells, chains, and birds.

Women go shopping for special food and buy gifts for family members. They cook up to 12 dishes, including beet soup, four kinds of fish, "pierogi," "golabki", compote with dried fruit, and poppy seed cake for dessert. The men have already been to the forest in the morning to cut

the most marvelous Christmas tree, and after they take it home, the children decorate the tree with the handmade ornaments.

In accordance with tradition, young girls set the table, spreading hay under a white tablecloth to remind them that Christ was born in a manger. Also on the table must be one extra dish for a lost stranger who doesn't have a family.

In the evening, when the first star appears in the sky, the Christmas Eve supper begins. The oldest person at home starts supper by praying, and each person shares a special wafer called "oplatek" and wishes for a blessing from God. Then people start eating. After dinner, the family sits around the Christmas tree and sings traditional carols.

Afterwards, the father changes clothes and dresses up as Santa Claus. He gives everyone presents after they prove that they were good for the whole year. Santa then asks other family members whether they are telling the truth or not.

At midnight, the little ones are put to bed, and the older children and adults attend a mass called "Pasterka," which means the Shepherds' Watch. There is a popular belief in Poland that as the congregation is praying, peace descends on the snow-clad, sleeping earth, and that during the holy night, the humble companions of men-- the domestic animals-- assume people's voices. But only the innocent of heart may hear them.

Christmas in Poland is a wonderful and happy time spent with family and friends. People smile at each other and forget their disagreements. It's a time of peace, prayer, rest and unity.

### **Abortion in Colombia**

Juan Ortega, Colombia

Tim Keane, High Advanced Writing

Colombia is a very Catholic country, and most Colombians disapprove of abortion because a fetus is a human being from the union of an egg and sperm. Our older people, especially, reject the procedure because they think that it is important to value the fetus, a small creature that is innocent and sinless.

The old are very surprised at the new generation because they have more freedom to do many things. They drink alcohol very young, use drugs, party, and have sex without looking at the consequences. Our grandparents say that the young are babies and not yet responsible for their own actions.

The young are blind and missing an important part of their lives: a good education and values. They consider abortion a good way to solve a "problem" as they call it, but the real point is that after an abortion, women have frequent complications. Some are mental: After a woman has an abortion, she may need psychological treatment, or she may start to use alcohol and drugs, develop an eating disorder, get a divorce and, finally, have repeat abortions. Others are physical: breast cancer, cancer of the ovaries, poor health in future children, or even death. Abortion also kills one's spiritual life, so women don't feel comfortable with their lives afterwards.

Right now there is a group of women in the Colombian congress trying to legalize abortion. The women want the choice to terminate a pregnancy in cases of violation, fetal malformation, the mother's death, and family abuse. These are common reasons for abortion, but our biggest problem now is that abortion is increasing every year in private clinics by about 400,000. In Colombia, it is the third leading cause of death among women.

*The PALS News is devoted to presenting the writings of our intensive English language students.*

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