

Oak Grove Inquirer

Oak Grove School Student Newspaper

STUDENT ESSAYS • MUSINGS • ART • OPINION • POETRY • PUZZLES

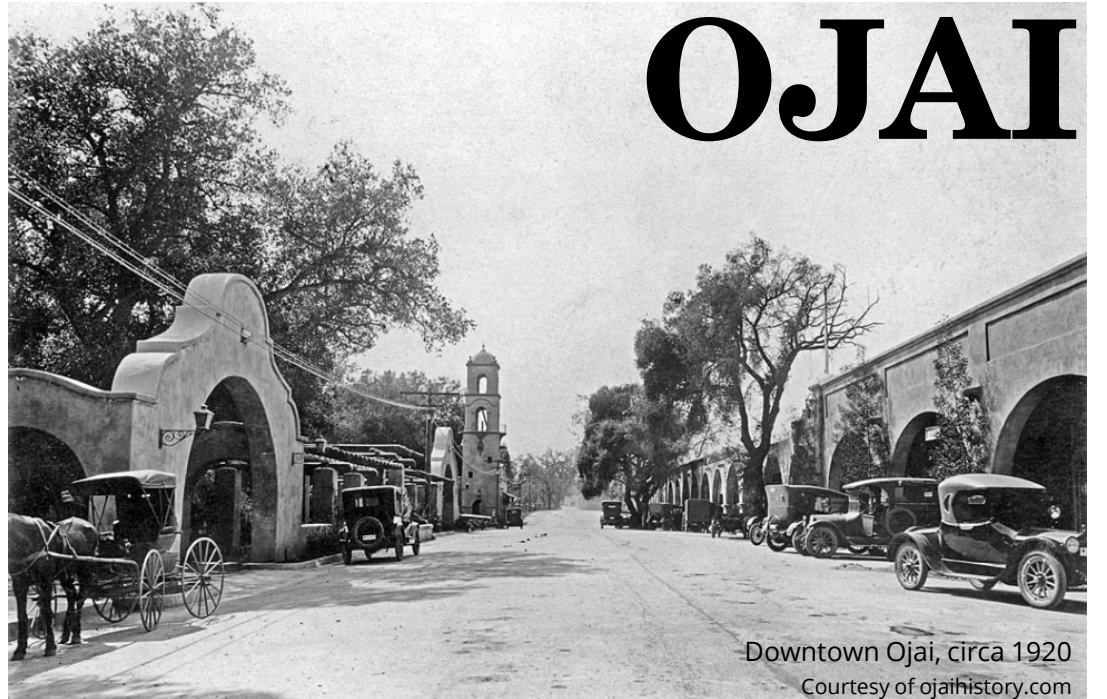
By Coco Fitzgerald-Williams '25

His last name might ring a bell, because our local park is named after him, but Edward D. Libbey had a much larger impact on the beginnings of Ojai than you may think. Mr. Libbey was a millionaire glass manufacturer from, don't laugh, Ohio. His first visit to Ojai was in 1908, when he decided to spend a rustic winter vacation in the all-new Foothills Hotel in the Ojai Valley. Back then, the "Nordhoff" district was little more than a dusty main street with no distinction apart from the background of sprawling oak trees (an oak grove, you might say). However, Mr. Libbey saw immense potential. He took it upon himself to transform the town into something worth becoming a beloved and beautiful destination.

The first big change Mr. Libbey helped make was the transformation of the now iconic arcade. They hired an architect from San Diego named Richard Requa to figure out what to do with the then dismal street. Requa proposed a long arcade inspired by the architecture of the Spaniards, and so the team got to work. With the collaboration of the local merchants, Mr. Libbey soon had the title to all the land on the southside of Ojai Avenue, which let him make some aesthetic decisions. He ordered many of the decaying buildings to be cleared, leaving almost nothing but the oak trees.

LIBBEY, PAGE 3

ONE MAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO OJAI



PATHFINDING

An essay by Rubina Davila '24

I stumbled backwards as I hoisted my backpack on my shoulders, forty-five pounds and the realization of what I was about to do digging into my hips. Far from the city, the woods grew eerily silent, and I wondered... Should I run to the van and drive back to the airport? The sun taunted my back, and a breeze swept the Weminuche Wilderness as I eyed the trail before me. It stared back, daring me to embark on a journey filled with tears, sweat, and pain. I took a step forward and started hiking: 13,870 feet, 173 miles, 26 days. I will not quit.

We were allowed one luxury item. I chose a small, blue notebook with hummingbirds on the cover. Over boulder fields, across rivers, and through valleys winding through mountains, I carried it, pouring my most raw and vulnerable moments onto its pages. When hailstorms cut my legs, water seeped through my raincoat, or homesickness ached in my bones, I wrote. When I clung to the face of Vestal Peak, a falling rock broke my

PATHFINDING, PAGE 2

NEW ELEPHANT LAW

By Surya Pulipati '24

The city of Ojai recently made history by becoming the first city in the United States to grant basic liberty rights to elephants. The Ojai City Council voted 4-1 to approve a novel ordinance giving elephants legal personhood protections against unlawful imprisonment.

Specifically, the ordinance states that all elephants within Ojai city limits have a fundamental right to bodily liberty and autonomy. It forbids any person from capturing and confining an elephant against their will, except in very limited cases like accredited wild-

circus acts in Ojai, including roller skating tricks to amuse human audiences. For years, Tarra was deprived of an authentic life and confined to profit and human amusement.

Tarra was finally freed from the circus in 1995 and transported to a spacious sanctuary in Tennessee that became her first real home. At the sanctuary, Tarra was able to live unchained and socialize with other elephants in a natural setting for the first time. Her traumatic story of captivity and yearning for freedom inspired the author of Ojai's ordinance, councilwoman Leslie

All elephants within Ojai city limits have a fundamental right to bodily liberty and autonomy

life sanctuaries. The law effectively recognizes elephants as legal persons rather than property that humans can imprison for their own purposes.

This groundbreaking legislation can be directly traced back to the story of one special elephant who lived in Ojai over 30 years ago. In the 1980s, an elephant named Tarra was exploited for entertainment and forced to perform demeaning

Rule, to recognize that elephants are not mere property but extraordinarily cognitively and emotionally complex beings who deserve the basic dignity of liberty.

The city worked closely with the Nonhuman Rights Project, an animal rights legal organization, to draft the ordinance and pioneering legal framework. The group pointed to ample scientific evidence showing that elephants

ELEPHANT, PAGE 2

LOST HOLIDAYS

By Lucas Halbrook '25

A whole lot of people celebrate Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, Passover, Halloween, and Thanksgiving too. Some people might remember Oktoberfest or the Lunar New Year, but only a few people celebrate Midsummer or Boxing Day or Veteran's Day. What makes these holidays any less important than Christmas, for example?

There's actually been a long history of hiding celebrations. When the American colonies were being formed, many of the people in charge of running the government, and therefore recognizing holidays, were Protestant. Protestants celebrate far fewer holidays than Catholics, and Protestants called Catholics lazy for having so many days off. To keep people working, they didn't recognize many Catholic holidays as legitimate, so many saints' days and other traditional Christian holidays have been lost to time.

The reason for hiding holidays goes deeper than religious conflicts, though. America has historically been a very religious country, and we don't tend to be too open to other cultures.

Many people would choose not to recognize Diwali, for example, as a holiday in the United States, because of its association with India and the "undeveloped" world. In 2023, a survey by Statista, a German statistics company, found that seventy-eight percent of Americans recognized Christmas, whereas only thirty-seven percent recognized Ramadan, an equally popular holiday around the world but considered a "foreign" holiday to many Americans.

Many holidays have been added to the calendar in recent years to offset the lack of holidays, and to give groups more representation. Many "awareness" days and months have sprung up around the year, but these don't help nearly as much as people seem to think they do. Of the holidays shown on the survey, only one "awareness" holiday showed up as being consistently celebrated: Black History Month, with only fifty-four percent of people celebrating. Some lesser-known holidays, such as Native Peoples' day, are very important representation for groups that rarely are given any time in the spotlight, but get passed over since they're not the "big days"

that Christmas, Halloween, and Thanksgiving are. Some, like Labor Day and Veterans' Day, are in remembrance of those who worked their whole lives to keep society together, but they become lost to time as well.

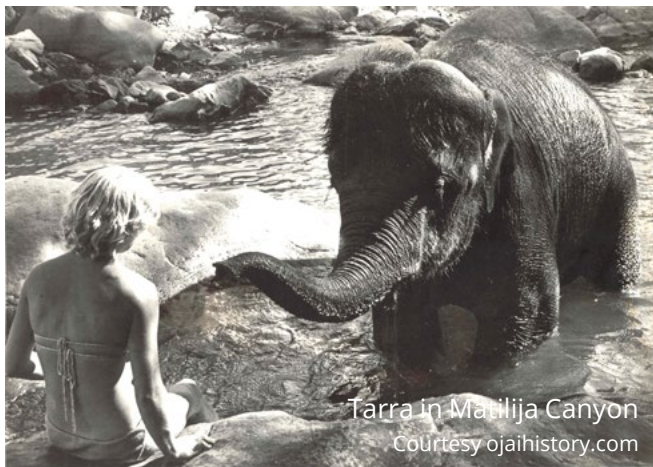
Many argue that too many holidays would keep people out of work and would hurt the economy, but many philosophies argue against this. For example, the early 20th century English philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell argued that much of people's unhappiness came with a connection to work as a part of their being, and if they could loosen that connection, they could find more solace in their lives. His thinking behind this was that people have a sort of dogmatic belief that if they work harder and more hours they will be happier, when more times than not it's the other way around. He encourages us to take more days off, to relax for a bit

Those ideas might seem extreme, but the underlying sentiment, that being a workaholic isn't always worth it, is definitely worth considering. According to a survey

HOLIDAYS, PAGE 3

ELEPHANT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 • BY SURYA PULIPATI



Tarra in Matilija Canyon
Courtesy ojaihistory.com

are profoundly intelligent and self-aware beings with memories, empathy, and abstract reasoning abilities. Elephants demonstrate mourning rituals when family members die, abstract thought through painting, compassionate actions like aiding other species, and complex problem-solving skills.

These qualities and their inherent capacity to suffer make confining elephants in zoos or circuses unethical and warrant greater protections, advocates argue. Ojai's law is rooted in moral and scientific arguments that certain nonhuman species with higher-order awareness and emotional lives deserve the fundamental right to be free from human exploitation. It pushes society to reframe how we view and treat other highly sentient beings.

While Ojai currently has no zoos or elephant tourism, the ordinance prevents any future captivity of elephants within city limits. Detractors question if the law has any teeth for enforcement or is mainly

symbolic. But precedence from environmental protections shows even symbolic laws can produce ripple effects. Ojai's stance reflects growing societal discomfort with intelligent animals in captivity and puts businesses on notice.

Ojai is so far the only U.S. jurisdiction to declare elephants as legal persons with a right to bodily liberty. But the ordinance gives momentum to a wider movement to recognize certain whales, primates, and other species as legal entities beyond human property. Ojai provides a pioneering model of moral progress to elevate animals, building on past reforms like child labor laws, women's suffrage, and civil rights.

By honoring Tarra's journey and memorializing her struggle against exploitation, Ojai now stands on the right side of history. The elephant rights law encourages society to appreciate these emotionally complex creatures and break outdated notions of humans dominating nature. Ojai's compassionate stance toward elephants reflects our highest ideals as a society. It offers hope that human civilization is gradually awakening to create a world where the dignity of all conscious beings is respected.

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PATHFINDING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 • BY RUBINA DAVILA

counselor's thumb, and I was forced to give her emotional support despite my fear of heights, I wrote.

Amidst these dramatic challenges, joy was born. I scribbled details about how plants continued to flourish the morning after being thrashed and torn at the roots by a rainstorm. I described how cold streams and rocky gulches breathed with life and consciousness. The mountains overflowed with inspiration for my writing. The tiny notebook, its pages brittle with rainwater, its spine broken and ink bleeding, holds my most profound and authentic writing.

The trip culminated with The Solo: three nights alone in the woods without contact. On the first night, as the sun sank behind the mountains and the blue hour deepened, it became apparent how slowly these days would pass. By the second day, the sound of my voice receded from memory. I heard only the faint hum of mosquitoes, the gentle trickle of a stream, and the sighing of the wind through the glittering aspens.

As I sat with the stillness, feelings rose, and there were no distractions to escape them. Next year, a new school waited. When I envisioned the next two years, I saw static – no predictions, no promises, just blankness. What would my classmates be like? Which would be my friends? Would I be happy? I opened my blue notebook. The blank page of the year ahead stared back at me just as the trail had done a month ago.

I realized I needed the same courage to find my place in an unknown community. I began to write.

I reentered civilization understanding that I thrived outside my comfort zone, and for me, writing was sacred. The blue notebook became a symbol of my courage I carried into the next year and beyond.

In Poetry class, we were prompted to write about something we were "sick of." I longed to share my experiences with objectification and the male gaze but struggled to reach that vulnerability. I had never heard the topic at my new school, which made me hesitate. Again, the blank page dared me to defy the norm and write my truth. I channeled the courage I earned in Pathfinding and wrote my most provocative poem – Girlhood. At the end of the year, I stood at a podium and read it to my friends, teachers, and family. The audience's discomfort was deafening, but so was the applause. Mothers and female teachers approached me to thank me for sharing my truth.

Sometimes, I think of my poems as artifacts in a museum of my life, tributes to my journeys. Poetry gives me my most powerful voice, forcing down my defenses and revealing elements of my truest self, like my thirst for adventure. Undaunted, my blue notebook and I returned to the mountains the next summer and did Pathfinding again.

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HOLIDAYS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 • BY LUCAS HALBROOK

done by the Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand in 2006, many parents were dissatisfied by the amount of time they were able to spend with their families because of long working hours. "He'd be gone at 6 in the morning, didn't see him until 7 at night. I used to keep the kids up until 7.30 so he could see them for half an hour. Then they were off into bed. That was the norm during the week, gone at 6 and back at 7," the mother of one family reportedly said.⁽¹⁾ This disconnect within families can be solved with more time off from work, and many times this takes the form of holidays. Many workers even work overtime, because of the "grind" mindset. According to a study done by Pew Research⁽²⁾ in June of 2023, 46% of workers don't even take off all of the time their job allows. There are many reasons for this, but the facts still stand; people aren't getting nearly as much vacation time as they seem to be. This is particularly alarming because 62% of workers stated in the survey that they place having paid time off very high on their list of priorities. This means that many workers are deliberately asking for time off, and then not getting to use that same time off.

Holidays can provide an outlet for over-stressed families to bond, as well as for workers to relieve stress that can build up from long hours. Many people enjoy spending the holidays with their families or friends. This doesn't happen too often, however. According to a survey done by OnePoll in 2021, 62 percent of Americans haven't spent the holidays with their families in TWO YEARS.⁽³⁾ That's kind of a long time. It's also made worse by the fact that in that same poll it's stated that 73% of Americans feel like they bond with their families more during the holidays than any other time of the year. Taking away those holidays also removes the chance for many of those families to build closer connections, and it tends to make tensions in those families worse. The fact of the matter is that we're not giving our workers a chance to live their lives, and holidays are a lot more necessary than people seem to believe.

Overall, many holidays provide workers a chance to relax and bond with their families, and also a chance for many underrepresented groups to

LIBBEY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 • BY COCO FITZGERALD-WILLIAMS

Now with a blank slate and the help of Robert Winfield to construct his ideas, Requa designed the iconic post office and tower, and soon the tennis courts of Libbery Park were built. Mr. Libbey paid for much of the project and considered it his first gift to Ojai. In 1917, a picnic celebration was held by the newly formed Ojai Civic Association to present a plaque thanking Mr. Libbey for his philanthropy. You can see the plaque today on the wall of the post office tower.

Unsurprisingly, Mr. Libbey still wasn't done. He had even bigger plans for the Valley. After he donated the land that would be first named Civic Center Park, the city raised money from the rental of the new post office to maintain the nearby area. Much later in 1971, the area would become a park officially, and would be renamed Libbey Park in Mr. Libbey's honor.

But back to the time frame. In 1918, the present day Oaks Hotel was designed. It brought the old gang back together, with old friends like Richard Requa as architect and Robert Winfield as constructor yet again. Mr. Libbey paid a fourth of the \$40,000 construction cost, with the rest being raised by local citi-

zens. The Ojai Catholic Church was also remodeled around this time to be matchy-matchy with the mission aesthetic of which Requa was so fond. Also, the site of the current public library was a gift from Libbey to the trustees of the Thacher Memorial Library, along with \$10,000 toward its future construction.

One of Mr. Libbey's biggest contributions to the community is one with which I'm sure many of you are familiar. One of his earliest land purchases was several thousand acres of land south of the Foothills Hotel. He first built his own home there, and soon after designated an area first known as "Libbey Park," but later renamed "The Arbolada." Many of Mr. Libbey's friends began buying parts of the land and building their own homes there, and Mr. Libbey saw to it that every home be constructed in harmony with the surrounding area and the pre-established mission aesthetic. The land was later open to more of the public to buy, and Mr. Libbey was very happy to see that all the homes matched. He was very intent on the visual appeal of the neighborhood!

Another aspect of Ojai with which many of you may also be very famil-

iar is still not exempt from the hand of Edward Libbey. In 1923, Mr. Libbey gifted land from the Arbolada area to a then new establishment called the Ojai Valley School. He did this in the same year he planned and financed the Ojai Valley Golf Course.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



SURYA PULIPATI

Dear Oak Grove Community,

I'm thrilled to present this semester's edition of the Oak Grove Inquirer! We have assembled a diverse collection of articles, art, and poetry, toward which students devoted considerable time and contemplation. I encourage you to slowly take in and appreciate each contribution.

I'm proud of this edition, and I hope you find it both educational and entertaining. My sincere gratitude goes out to all the students and staff who made this publication possible through their hard work. Thank you for supporting our school paper!



Edward and Florence Libbey
Courtesy of ojaihistory.com

iar is still not exempt from the hand of Edward Libbey. In 1923, Mr. Libbey gifted land from the Arbolada area to a then new establishment called the Ojai Valley School. He did this in the same year he planned and financed the Ojai Valley Golf Course.

Sadly, only two years later he died of pneumonia, to the great shock of many of his friends in the Valley. You can still see his presence in so much of Ojai today. In fact, when he was still alive, citizens wanted to commemorate his gifts to Ojai through an annual celebration they were going to call "Libbey Day." Mr. Libbey declined their flattering offer and instead suggested they simply call it "Ojai Day." Of course, the suggestion carried, and we can thank him for one of our most beloved annual city celebrations. Today, Edward

Libbey is buried in his home town of Toledo, in the sculpture garden of his museum. Although it's been nearly a century since his death, the incredible mark this man from Ohio made on this small community is undeniable.

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THE TRUE MEANING OF LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE

By Arianna Macias '25

Language is all around us, and language is the base of all cultures. It is a tool that we use every day, and in many ways we might not think much about it, but there is so much to learn through language. There are many reasons why people learn languages – some reasons might be for traveling, others might be to learn how to communicate with family and friends in their native language, and some even do it as a hobby. Whatever the reason is, learning a language is a great way to strengthen memory skills and multitasking, and it helps slow down cognitive decline. When a young child is exposed to a language early on in their life, neurologically, we see that these useful skills are exhibited early on in their brain. However, this is not only limited to children. Adults can also see many positive neurological effects when learning a foreign language.

Many studies show the positive impact of language learning. The brain is made up of neurons which have dendrites attached to them. Dendrites receive or input information to other neurons around them; these neurons make up the gray matter. According to a study from the University of Cambridge, a bilingual brain is filled up with more neurons that make up more gray matter, which controls memory and emotion.



Bilingual individuals also present more white matter integrity in their brains than monolingual adults. White matter is made up of nerve fibers that connect all four parts of the brain; therefore, stronger connections between these four lobes allow better function and communication, which helps internally with learning and strengthening brain function. Older adults find learning languages useful for preventing dementia – degenerative neurological conditions – by continuously re-enhancing and building upon their previous knowledge of language.

Being able to speak in a different language allows us to submerge ourselves within the culture from which the language came. Many people shy away from learning a new language because of fear of making mistakes, but in reality making mistakes is all part of learning. As someone who is bilingual, I have been able to personally notice the impact of speaking two languages. There are so many people to learn from, and their experiences are unique and special in all their ways. When we put ourselves out there, we develop life skills that are essential for living in this rapidly expanding society.

Culture itself is submerged within the language people share. There are many things that can simply be shared through the lens of the language, because some things are only understood through the language itself. Personally, I have learned so much from learning another language, because it has the ability to change our perspectives in life. Distinct cultures carry their own stories and their life lessons; people can truly carry these lessons close to their hearts. However, some of these lessons cannot be translated into another language, because it

侘寂

does not hold the same meaning. One example is the Japanese proverb 侘寂 (wabi-sabi) which is briefly translated to, “Finding beauty within the imperfections of life and peacefully accepting the natural cycle of growth and decay.” Wabi (侘) refers to the imperfections of objects and the simplicity of everyday objects. SABI (寂) means that not everything lasts forever; the signs of an aging object can remind us of that and help us appreciate its value more. All things experience a life that then later decays. There is so much to learn from this, and there is so much to appreciate from the lessons that other languages have to offer. So no matter how old we are, we can still learn a new language. We can embrace all parts of the world and all different cultures, because that is what helps us grow as humans. When we are aware of the environment, culture, and tradition around us we become more aware of who we are and what we want for ourselves. What we hold true to our hearts is something worth sharing.

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One of the hardest English words to spell and pronounce:

“Antidisestablishmentarianism”

Pronunciation: an-teye-dis-es-tab-lish-muhnt-air-ee-uh-niz-uhm

Meaning: Opposition to the disestablishment of the Church of England.

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FAST FASHION

By Danielle Jowell '25

Fast fashion is one of the main contributors to human exploitation, carbon dioxide emissions, and waste. Fast fashion is a term based around manufacturing and a marketing method focused on rapidly producing high volumes of clothing. Garment production utilizes a high trend replication and low-quality materials (like synthetic fabrics) in order to bring “inexpensive” styles, making them more affordable to the public.

This concept started to become an issue around the late 1990s through the first part of the 21st century. Many people in the modern day are starting to take action on the fast fashion cause, but not enough to expel the concept fully. Oftentimes fast fashion workers are exploited and are forced into inhumane conditions such as overworked hours and dirty workplaces. Garment workers are often forced to work about 14 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. During peak season of the fashion industry, the workers will most likely work until 2:00 or 3:00am to meet a specific deadline for the fashion brand. The workers' average wage range is extremely low, not allowing the option to refuse working overtime. Many of these people will also be fired if they refuse to work overtime, which would result in not making money at all.

Less than 1% of used clothing is recycled into new garments, whereas most of the clothes are being incinerated or end up in landfills, resulting in heavy

*Less than
1%
of used clothing
is recycled into
new garments*



pollution of the environment, which will eventually result in climate degradation. It is extremely sad to discover that your favorite brands manufacture their clothes through fast fashion. Many brands are way worse than others when it comes to wasting products or throwing them into the landfill. When overlooking the negative qualities of fast fashion, however, this way of garment-making is helpful to many families around the world. A big majority of our population can't afford to buy a good quality piece of clothing for a ridiculous price. Fast fashion gives many people the option to buy “cute” clothes for cheap. There are many pros and cons to fast fashion, but this production process is completely unsustainable, so please try to buy from healthy, eco-friendly brands whenever possible!

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CHESS IN THE PARK

By Rena Badami '24



It is inspiring when someone from our small community makes an effort to reach out and bring people together.

Our illustrious editor, Surya Pulipati, has done just that with Chess in the Park. Hosted every third Saturday of the month in Libbey Park, Surya sets up tables, chairs, and chess boards so anyone who walks by can play chess.

He gets to play and teach chess and engage with the community. Chess in the Park is a gem of the Ojai Valley. It is open to beginners

and experts; it is an opportunity to get to know someone new and have fun.

The game of chess can be quite daunting to a beginner, but Surya does his best to ease their stress. One of his favorite parts of Chess in the Park is that it opens people up to an opportunity they wouldn't normally get. There are kids who don't normally get the chance to play chess, but Chess in the Park gives them that chance. “Chess in the Park impacts the community because it gives people a place to play,” says Surya. “I often get people who say they haven't gotten the chance to play in person in a long time because there just aren't many boards. I am also able to teach people and give kids their first chance at playing chess.” Chess in the Park also provides seasoned chess players with the chance to rekindle their love for the game.

One of the best things about playing chess in the park is the engagement with the community. Surya recounted a heartwarming experience where his game sparked the interest of his opponent's child. “One moment that was one of my favorites was when I was playing with someone, and their kid wanted to learn. Then I taught the kid the game with his dad, and the dad and kid were having so much fun that they wanted to get a chess board and play

all the time. I had the tradition of playing with my father every week, and I'd like to think I started that tradition with their family.”

Chess in the Park is not just about the game, it's about fostering connections, nurturing curiosity, and leaving a lasting, positive impact on the Ojai community. Thanks to the dedication of Surya Pulipati, it has become a cherished opportunity to those lucky enough to participate, making Libbey Park a place where strangers become friends and lifelong memories are created.

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Noah Schrewe playing unknown opponent
Courtesy of Ojai Valley News

ETCHING WINGS OUT OF LIFE

By Zoey Halbrook '27

Three words
Can't

Etch out
Life

To keep
Her

Head from
Falling

Past her
Shoulders

Relief won't
Collect

Where tears
Fall

And I
Decide

To touch
Life

As a
Feather

Forgetting to
fall

And never
Leave

Her shallow
Wings

Etched out
Of

Life's careless
Hand

SEA GLASS

By Violet McMurry '25

My broken bottles become sea glass

the things that hurt the most
Are the ones I don't write about
The empty spaces left between pages
Filled back in hindsight
When it doesn't sting so bad
Because to really feel when my heart stops
Plummeting to the ground beneath me
Just to end up washed up
smooth and soft like sea glass
The shattered pieces only collected
Once their sharp edges
Have been worn down by time
I try and love every moment of it
Because time turns my life into a series of lessons
I know it's my job to learn right now
But the glass still cuts deep
Right before I drop it
Across the tiled floor to be buried
in the sand under my head
So I can pick it up later
Once it is smooth and harmless again
Hundreds of bottles line my windowsill
Waiting to be broken
Their contents invisible
Until poured across my bedside table
I sweep my thoughts into empty journals
With smooth corners
Slipping them in the spaces between my ribs
They sink easily
my lungs are quicksand
Collapsing inward
to be swept out by the ocean
My broken bottles become sea glass

UNTITLED

By Mica Petersen '27

i hope i can get this sticky feeling off my hands

i used to squint
hiding pupils
from the sun spilling through thin leaves,
delicate as a short breath
drawn from a blunt rock

i used to eat pomegranates drawn by folds of water
i would rest between the river's rifts
and welcome their harsh commands

i used to listen to myself,
but now I follow every other song, every
short line, every
laugh and glance

you're rushing me,
give me one minute to
get this sticky feeling off my hands

ORANGE LANGUAGE

By Surya Pulipati '24

my language is orange
it peels

it stings
burns
and it's sweet

its bright
but its darkest
parts
rot

2ND GRADE POEMS

I am peaceful like a tiger.
My eyes are brown like dark honey.
My hair is wavy like the ocean.
My skin is brown like peanut butter.
My voice is gentle like a bird.
My heart is kind like a cat.
I am Poppy

I am strong like a lion.
My eyes are brown like a bear.
My hair is light and brown like an owl.
My skin is tan like brownies.
My voice is soft like a cat.
My heart is kind.
I am Lawson

I am beautiful like a flower.
My eyes are burnt like honeycomb.
My hair is bark like an oak tree.
My skin is sand on the beach.
My voice is gentle like the wind.
My heart is loving like a warm hug.
I am Willa

THE DEER IN THE STORM

By August Shields '32

A storm -
Thunder roaring, lightning flashing, water
falling from thick gray clouds.
Then the light struck.
It hit the dark shape below it and heat
exploded.
Then the storm stopped.
The heat was still there.
It engulfed the trees around it and spread.
The fire was blazing through the morning light
and the forest was set ablaze.
The animals ran and flew in panic!
A new storm came and - unlike the first -
it was not angry and aggressive,
but it was calm and cool
A light drizzle sprayed the flames below it
and the fire slowly went out
and - one by one - the animals returned and
slowly did the green.
The forest grew back.

BLACK DEER

By Anna Scibetta '32

A doe and her fawn,
licking the
morning dew
from spiderwebs,
shimmering in the sunlight.
A buck entering the clearing
from
the lush
green woods,
nuzzling the doe.
The fawn chomping the
wild flowers and shiny
wet grass.

Seasons passing.
The fawn
growing and
leaving,
The doe and buck
Searching for nuts
In the
newly
fallen
snow.

A black shape
looming in the shadows.
A lunge.
A yelp.
The sound of a neck being
snapped.
The doe bolting.
The buck
lying
still,
blood seeping from
his neck.

Seasons coming and going.
The doe
returning
to the clearing with
a new
fawn.

The
blood-stained
trampled
grass, returning
greener than
before.
The doe and fawn
chomping the
wild flowers and
grass from the
ground.

A black
bear
moving into
the clearing.
The doe tensing.
The bear and her
cubs
gently eating
the grass,
ignoring
the deer.
The doe lowering
her head and
continuing to eat.
The fawn
tentatively
stepping closer
to the
bears.
The doe stopping
it.
The animals
continuing to
eat in
silence.

A HEART MADE OUT OF GOLD

By Aishy Badami '27

If she was gold then I was rust,
If she was the sun then I was a distant planet
Even Astronomers would never find me.
A smile that could destroy armies,
And a laugh that melted hearts

There's a part of my heart that screams for you,
Not lovingly, but with devastation.
You are devastating,

Devastatingly beautiful,
Lovely,
Smart,

Tere haabth kabhi na aani

Igniting fires where you see fit,
In my heart,

You burned down my walls
Then you stepped on my pride
You stripped me bare,
Then tossed me to the side

You always had friends,
Always were popular,
Wherever you went,
Attention, love and open arms followed

Tere haabth kabhi na aani

Even when I'm alone,
I see you when my eyes close,
Like a blanket over my vision

You cloud my judgment, make me think in different ways,
Good or bad.

Are you good or bad?

Is that even what it comes down to
If you are the superhero of my dreams
Or the villain that's in my nightmares.

Now instead of your laugh I hear a siren's melody,
You don't just melt hearts anymore you destroy them,
Tear them into ribbons,
Tie the ribbons into a bow,

You tied me into a bow,
Made the ugliest part of me into a gift,
The most crucial organ,
The one I can't live without,
The thing I hide away,
I don't let anyone near,
You turned rust into gold.

EMPTY

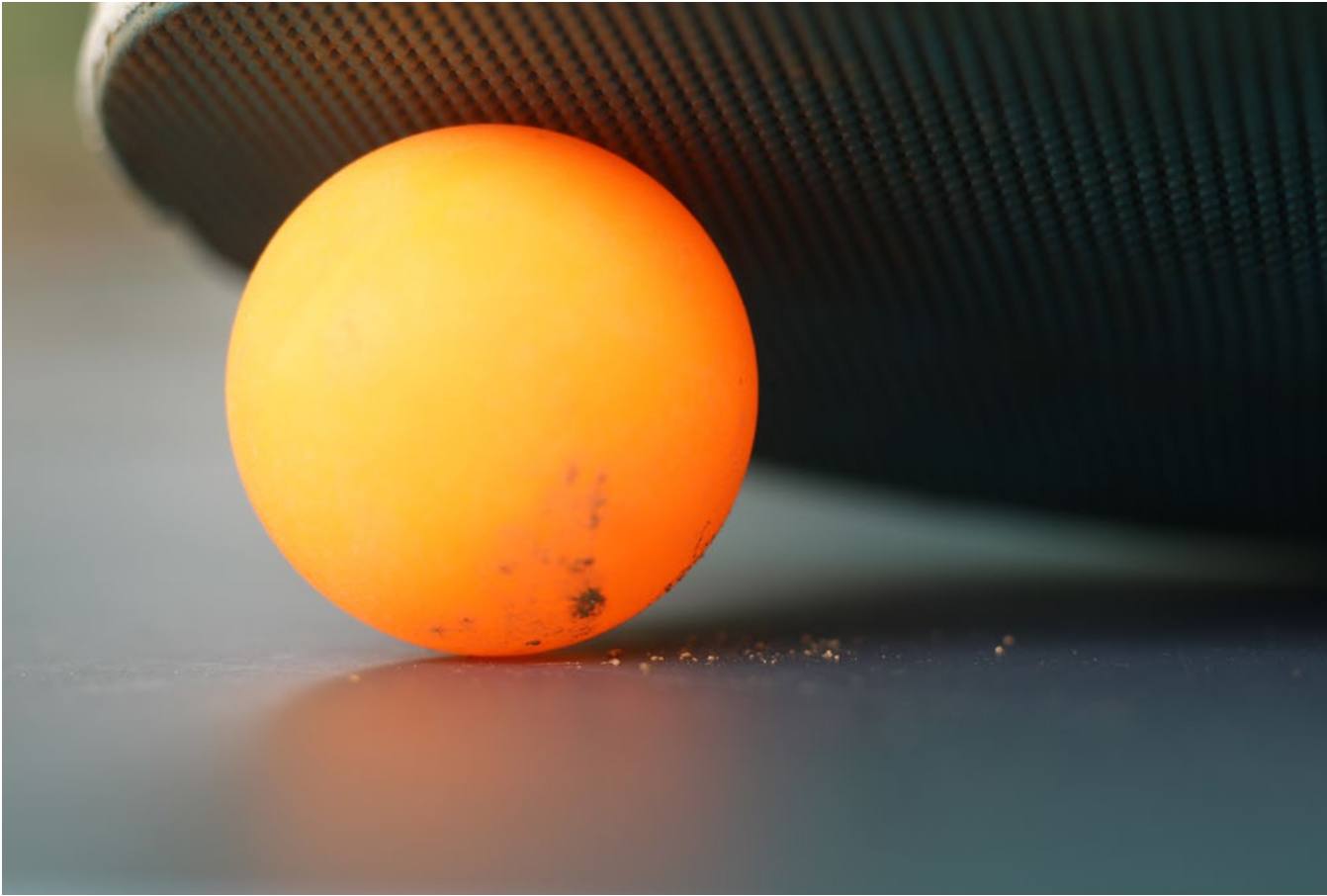
By Isla MacCalla '32

I gaze into the empty eyes
of my beholder
gray and silver
like a lightning storm on a foggy day
as stiff and smooth as a cardboard wall.
As I sit there
looking at it,
as if it was a relative.
It, lying in its den,
In a long slumber
As its home - the forest - hunts it
lying there
with the warmth of its young
sleeping
Never
Never to wake again

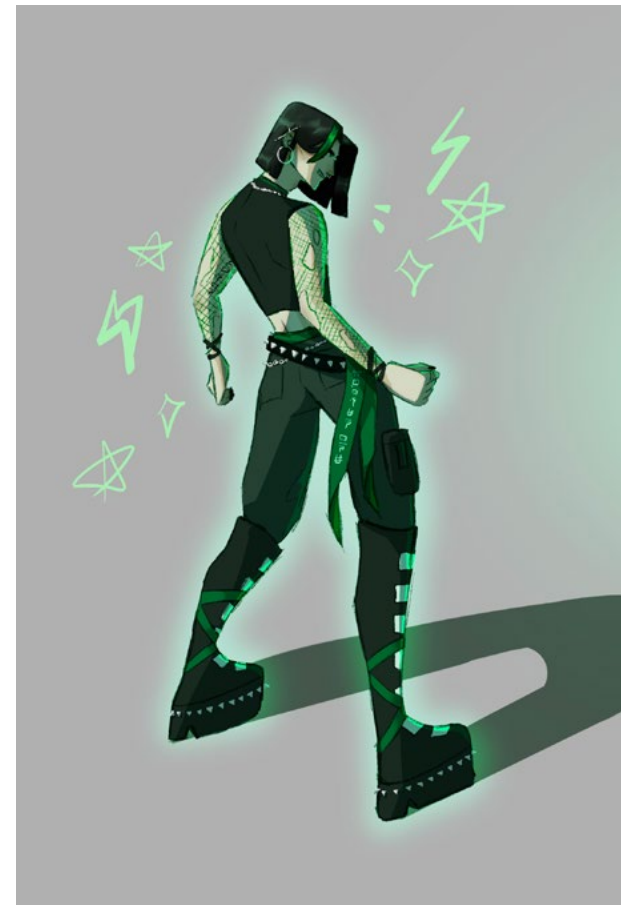
LIFE AND DEATH

By Hudson Cowen '32

The white broken signal of life
and death can come in any way,
but when it does, you have a choice
to adapt to death's grim face
or to accept.
For when the time was right
it chose, for if it died from a messenger
of death
being one of our own
or a peaceful end,
for when its soul is no longer in the
forest's warm, mossy hands,
you know that it has gone
to a better place,
where it can gallop
and eat peacefully
without having to worry
about leaving
this beautiful
place.



Oliver, 12th grade



Coco, 11th grade



Evan, 11th grade



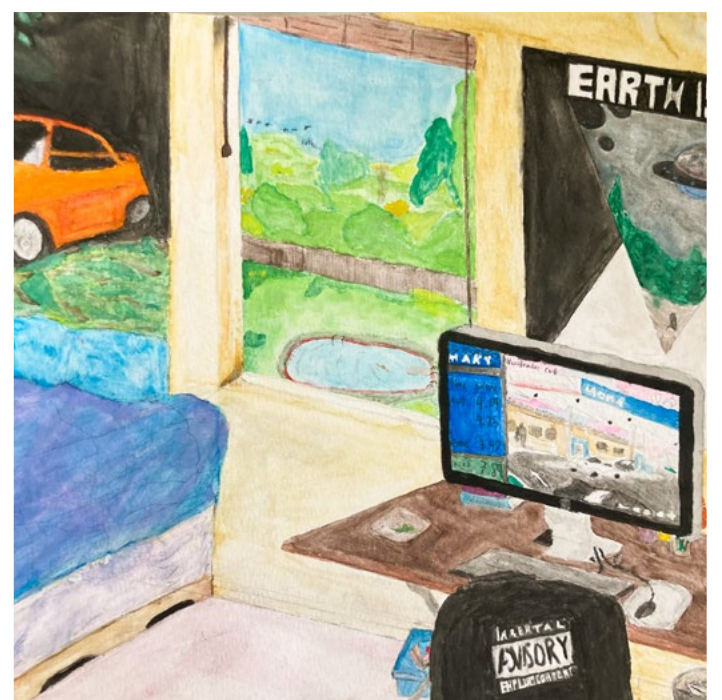
Stella, 9th grade



Andrés, 3rd grade

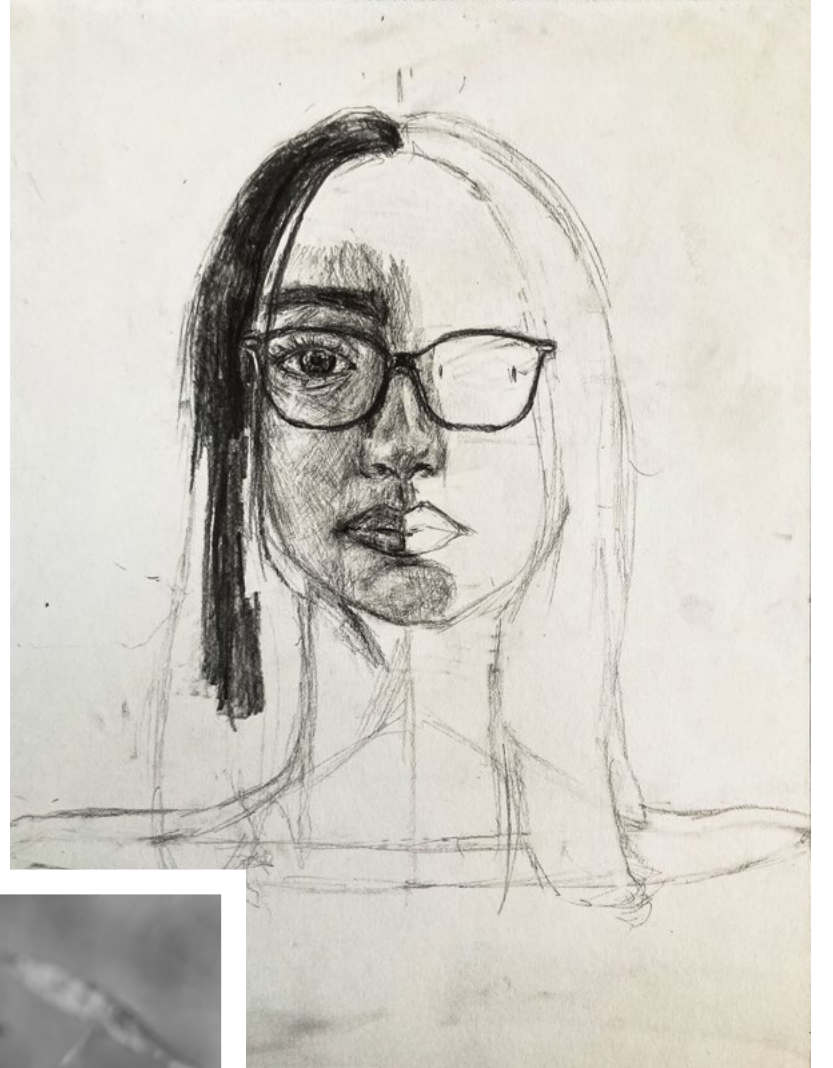


Jojo, 6th grade

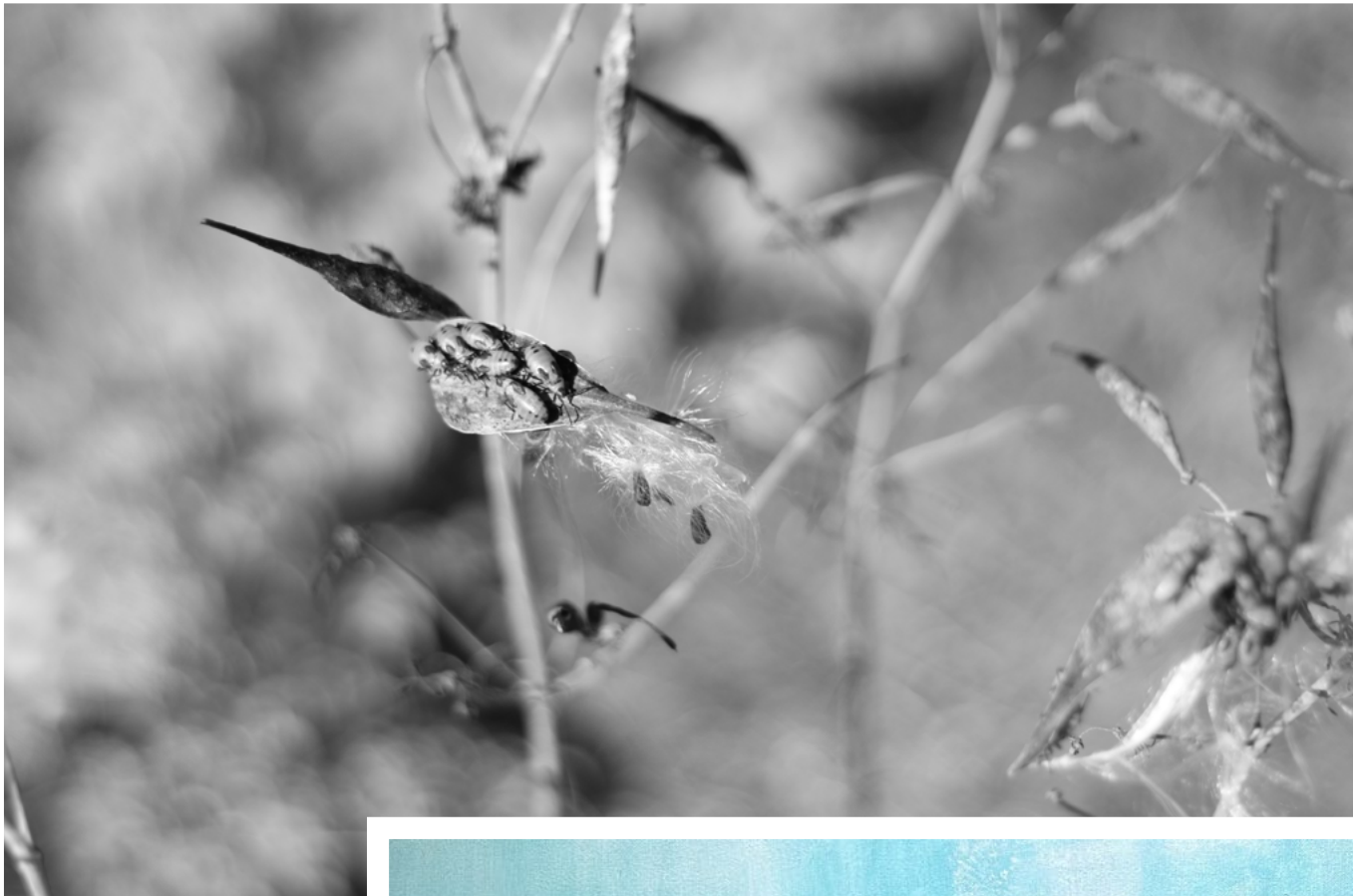


Hastine, 11th grade

Umani, 11th grade



Aanya, 10th grade



Diego, 9th grade



Danielle, 11th grade



RESTAURANT REVIEW – OJAI RÔTIE

By Ula Leavitt '24

Nestled in the Topa Topa mountains in the town of Ojai is a Lebanese-French restaurant called Ojai Rôtie. The restaurant was opened in 2019 by Larry Nicola and Claud Mann.

Ojai Rôtie was a hit from the start. On busy days a huge line can be seen entering the restaurant. You can smell the chicken and potatoes roasting from a mile away. The reason for its popularity has to be because of the flavorful food and quality. All of the food is organic when possible, and the majority is made at the restaurant. "Our chicken is from Rocky's, Free Range, raised without antibiotics, on a 100% vegetarian diet, and non-GMO." Says Ojai Rôtie.

The handmade sourdough bread is made fresh every day. Although the restaurant does not offer indoor seating, the family picnic style makes up for it, with wooden tables and string lighting that bring on a warming ambiance and vibe. The music, if not soft country, is a romantic playlist with Sade, the Gypsy Kings, and other pleasant artists.

When you walk through the small front gate, hosts explain the ropes of the restaurant and show you where the Wine Box is with welcoming smiles on their faces. If you happen to talk to the amazingly kind kitchen line staff, they will happily answer any questions you may have about the food.

Although many people think that there is a limited vegetarian selection, the menu has quite a few options like delicious skinny cucumbers, cardamom carrots and quinoa, caramelized cauliflower, tabooli, an amazing eggplant sandwich, and so much more.

Without a doubt, Ojai Rôtie is one of the best restaurants in Ojai.



LOOKING BACK ...



147 DAYS ON STRIKE

By Surya Pulipati '24

After 147 days, the longest Hollywood writers' strike in history has finally come to an end. The Writers Guild of America (WGA) reached a tentative agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) on September 24th, ending the crippling walkout. The strike severely disrupted TV and film production for nearly five months, but in the end, the writers emerged victorious with significant improvements to their contracts.

The strike began on May 1st after the WGA's previous contract expired without a new deal in place. Negotiations between the two sides broke down over issues like short TV seasons, shrinking writing staffs, and stagnant wages in the streaming era. The WGA argued that writer incomes have declined by 23% in the last decade when adjusted for inflation.

With TV and streaming becoming more dominant, the economics of writers have worsened. Half of all TV writers now work for the minimum pay rate allowed, up from a third in 2013-2014. The WGA accused studios of exploitation, like cramming full seasons of work into abbreviated "mini-rooms" with reduced writing staff.

The strike immediately shut down the production of scripted shows, from network sitcoms and dramas to late-night talk shows. Only unscripted reality shows and documentaries could continue filming. Some programs like daytime soap operas ran out of new episodes weeks into the strike. Networks relied on reruns, reality shows, and imported foreign programs to fill holes in their lineups.

Many anticipated summer blockbuster films were delayed. Release dates for major franchise installments like "Dune: Part Two" and "Indiana Jones 5" were pushed back to 2024. Some analysts estimate the strike cost California's economy nearly \$5 billion as 100,000 cast and crew members lost work.

Previous Hollywood strikes like the 100-day walkout in 2007-2008 have been disastrous, costing the industry billions. But this time the WGA would not back down until their key demands were met. After months of stalled talks, negotiations finally resumed in late September.

Under their new contract, writers won major improvements in several key areas:

- Pay minimums rose significantly, including minimums for feature film writers up 20-26%
- Contributions to the health plan increased over 3 years from 9.5% to 10.5%
- TV writer teams were guaranteed a minimum number of writers based on series length
- Residuals from foreign streaming rose from 15% to 40%

The WGA also secured protections regarding AI content generated by writers. Studios cannot use

long months on the picket lines, the new contract delivers long-overdue improvements. But the strikes also sounded an alarm about the fundamental fairness of compensation in Hollywood's digital future.

In securing better deals for its members, the WGA took a courageous stand against unchecked corporate power. Their victory opens the door for other Hollywood unions to address similar inequities. The strike was a proving ground that tested the ability of creative talent to organize in their own interests.



AI to eliminate writer jobs or reduce compensation. The agreement lets writers use AI tools voluntarily if permitted by the studio.

While the SAG-AFTRA actor's strike continues, the WGA contract sets an influential template for other Hollywood unions. Some experts think the improved terms could even entice more people to pursue writing careers.

Now the WGA membership has ratified their new contract by an overwhelming 99% vote. Writers are returning to work, and production is ramping back up. But it will still take time for normal TV schedules to resume. The fall lineup remains packed with reality and game shows for now.

As the dust settles, many are reflecting on the wider significance of this historic walkout. For the thousands of writers who sacrificed over five

By rebalancing power through collective action, the WGA struck a blow for the middle class in an era of rising inequality. Their win keeps the dream of comfortable artistic careers alive. Stories matter, and the people who write them deserve to thrive. This strike was an inspiring example of solidarity that could motivate workers far beyond Hollywood. When confronted by consolidated corporate power, the will of organized labor remains strong.

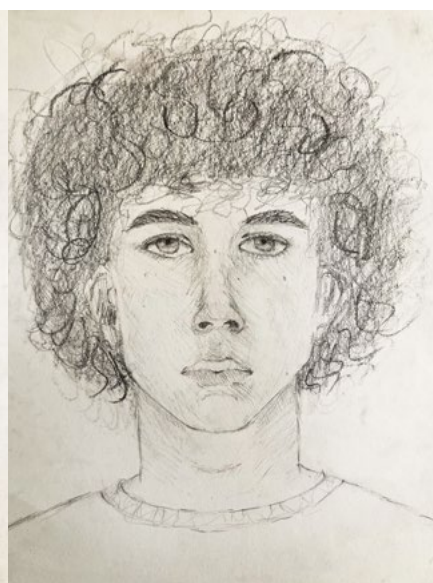
One thing is clear, after securing historic gains, the writers emerged from the longest strike in Hollywood history with their heads held high. Their victory proves the power of solidarity and collective action. When workers stand together, even the most powerful corporations have to come to the bargaining table.

—◇—

SELF PORTRAITS



Danielle, 11th grade



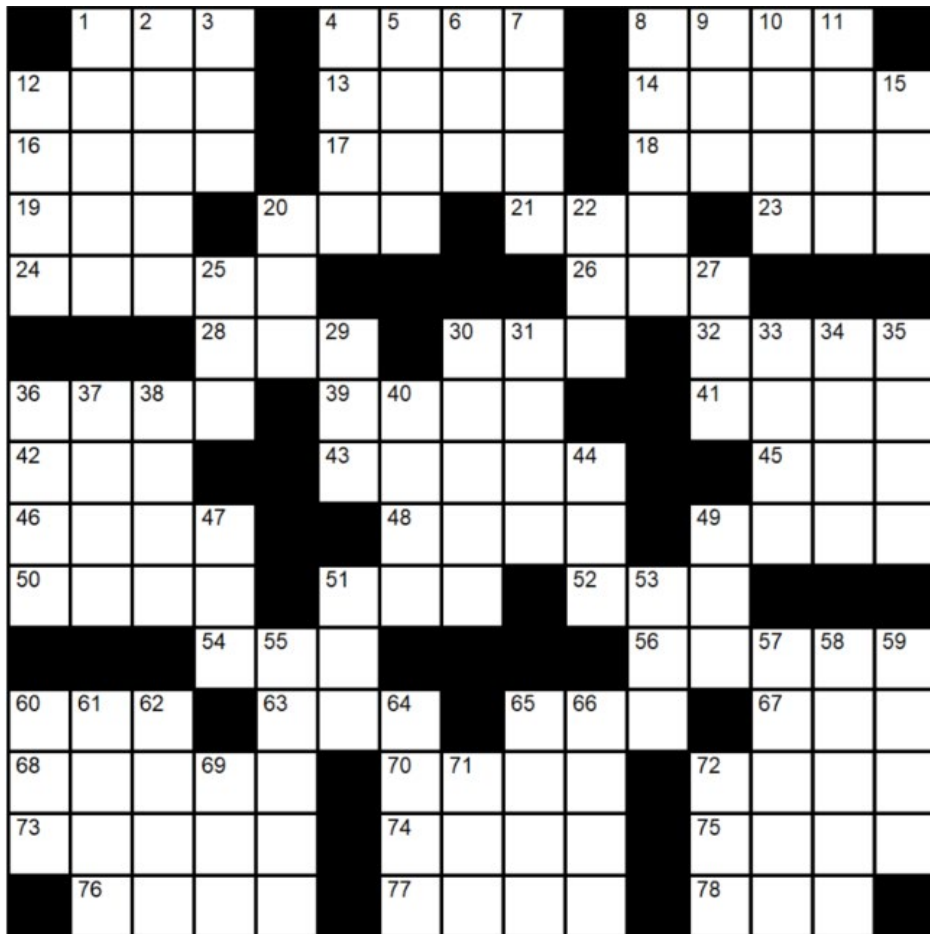
Mica, 9th grade



Freya, 9th grade

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By Surya Pulipati '24



Across:

1. Healer of pets
4. Advance, slangily
8. Two-masted boat
12. "Why me?" sound
13. Very good or well
14. "Snowy" bird
16. Therefore, consequently, thus
17. Astute
18. House noise
19. "The Matrix" hero
20. ___ down, rather than stand up
21. "i" lid
23. Fun plaything
24. Island nation east of Fiji
26. Existed
28. Serve unable to be passed; volleyball
30. Head of the family
32. Commonly in boots, cat
36. A body of poetry in which the tradition of a people is conveyed
39. ___ by ___
41. Buffalo's relative
42. Archaeological site
43. Domesticate, break, train
45. ___will, ___prepared, _judged; sick
46. Anything
48. --- -- .-
49. Departure
50. Thysself with 4 letters
51. "My boy"
52. Apprehend
54. Exclamation of fun: Pop Smoke
56. Construction girder
60. "Something's ___"; on and ___
63. "I_ you one"
65. "Wheels"; something people drive
67. Deception, untrue, falsehood
68. Fountain sound
70. June 6, 1944
72. Acknowledge
73. Church donation
74. Opera star

Across (continued)

75. Vendor
76. Broke the seal
77. Another exclamation of fun; Usher
79. Telekinesis

Down:

1. Bird that builds a hanging nest
2. Encourage
3. Even if, briefly
4. "The Open Window" writer
5. Someone who writes poetry
6. "___ moment"; comes before two
7. Be inclined
8. "Fiddler on the Roof" role
9. What goes up and never comes down?
10. Habeas corpus, etc
11. Branded amusement bricks, also what one might say if being held onto
12. Delivered
15. 'Your' in Shakespearean
20. Amniotic ___
22. Control, possess, keep
25. The price of this is rising
27. ___ day, day ___
29. "C_ la vie!"
30. Angel opposite
31. Kind of column
33. Alternative to Windows
34. Plural of solo
35. NaCl; in the ocean
36. Correct, check, improve
37. Core
38. Arch type
40. ___ Bell; fast food chain
44. Animal house
47. ___two; pokemon
49. ___ and flow
51. Boar's mate
53. Inside of a balloon
55. ___ and aahed
57. Santa's little helpers
58. Garlicky mayonnaise
59. Cry like a baby
60. Decide to leave, with "out"
61. Something done front and back
62. Destiny, providence, kismet
64. Ed, Edd n _
65. Champagne alternative
66. Indian maid
69. Her_y; candy
71. Live opposite
72. A small southern European snake

Crossword Answers



Quick! Count the number of Fs in this sentence.

"Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of years."

How many did you find?

Solution: Most people say three. Why? We often don't correctly process the word "OF" for two reasons. First, the letter F usually makes the "f" sound, like in "fox". However, in the word "of", it makes a "v" sound. Second, you have probably read the word "of" so many times in your life that you process it as one unit, overlooking the second letter/sound.