

# Art spreads across dreams, defines life



**editor's  
commentary**

Once in a while, a sunset will take your breath away; a delicious hot cup of tea will make you relax, and a friend will make you smile. Then for that moment, life isn't quite as horrid as it sometimes feels.

Other times that perfect song comes on the radio while you are driving through town on a calm, cool night, and you feel so inspired to write music that captures that moment perfectly.

Indeed, art is that one element of a society that gives life character and defines culture. It speaks what is sometimes hard to say. It can change a mood, create an atmosphere, express a style.

But the most amazing element about art is it can inspire and make us see the world differently.

For example, sometimes when I hear a song, I want to shoot some photography. Other times when I read a story, I want to write a song. Still other times I see a photo and want to write a poem.

It's fascinating how an artist can create a work, and then another artist can create more work based on that, and then more kinds of art are created.

Watching this inspiration chain reaction in art can be replicated in music, too.

Recently, the author Neil Gaiman wrote 12 short stories, one for every month, based on answers to questions he tweeted about and then he asked for art to be created and submitted by others based on the stories he wrote. This was really cool because I love watching the inspiring chain reaction that happens in art.

Or awhile back a showing at Exhibit A Gallery in Los Angeles was dedicated to art inspired by Metallica songs.

When I attend a concert, I always feel so inspired by others' performances that I just want to play music and to photograph to create my own art. A billion ideas swirl in my head, and that feeling of inspiration causes me to see the world a bit differently, a bit more beautifully.

When I listen to Pink Floyd's "The Wall" album, its passion inspires me. I want to be able to write a song so filled with emotion and passion that it speaks to the heart of the listener the way that album speaks to me.

The same goes with IAMX music. Every time I listen, I want to shoot photography and make obscure art that goes with the dark, ambient electronic sound I heard in the music.

Inspiration is such a powerful feeling because everything has the possibility of becoming art.

That imaging domino effect of creativity keeps art alive and vibrant. What encourages me to attend concerts, read books and look at photography is each exposure to another art form becomes another piece of inspiration.

# You define yourself, not your disease



**editor's  
commentary**

As we prepared for this issue, I saw a story plan about the human services students

volunteering at the Hemi Lighted Forest of Hope (See story on Pages 8 and 9). As I scanned the print out, I saw every tree in the forest stands for a child with intractable epilepsy. I didn't need to read any further. I took the story. It hit home on many levels.

I understand what those kids go through.

I was born with epilepsy.

The doctors were shocked and puzzled when they witnessed my first grand mal seizure at a mere 3-days-old.

While I had different kinds of seizures, my doctors mostly counted the grand mal seizures. It was unusual to have so many grand mal seizures that young and, well, survive it. In the first six years of my life, I had anywhere from one a week up to

eight grand mal seizures a day. However, my memory is rather fuzzy. It comes back to me in flashes. There might have been a few good weeks I don't remember.

The kid who falls down seems to leave her body, appears to be staring off into nowhere or goes into convulsions while foaming from her mouth was even more of a stigma than being the only black kid. Still, the mean songs and names weren't the worst part of my life. Worse was waking up without knowing where or who I was.

And there was a lot of pain.

I fell down stairs, off walls I was climbing and just plain collapsed.

There was the uncertainty of what would happen next or where I would wake up the next time.

Then came the day I died.

I was 3-years-old and had very high fever. Later a relative told me it was scarlet fever. I also had two grand mal seizures back-to-back.

I was lifeless for close to two and a half minutes.

The doctors almost declared me dead just before I came back to life. Apparently, I was a glutton for punishment.

I have no memory of those moments, other than being pain free and relieved.

I am unsure whether the memory of my death is real or one my brain invented to help me deal with what happened. I will never know. After that, the doctors said I might not live to become an adult.

Out of defiance, I became a daredevil.

I jumped out of windows, ran through glass doors, picked fights with the biggest boy on the playground, jumped around in the bed and almost cracked my jawbone. I was a kid; if I were to die soon, I might as well do all the things that came to mind. I figured, why wait to have experiences until I was grown when growing up might not be a chapter in my book.

Looking back, I must thank the doctor who never gave up on me. He kept me in the children's cancer station, where my mother worked. He always put me in the same room in the same bed. My relatives said, aside from comfort, it was also to protect me from any East German agency that might think I would be a great lab rat for epilepsy testing.

When death always walks with you, you fight harder to stay alive and appreciate every day.

I never shared what a seizure feels like with anyone until last fall when I found a quote from Fyodor M. Dostoyevsky's book "The Idiot" as part of a research essay:

"He remembered that during his epileptic fits, or rather immediately preceding them, he had always experienced a moment or two when his whole heart, and mind, and body seemed to wake up to vigour and light; when he became filled with joy and hope, and all his anxieties seemed to be swept away forever; these moments were but presentiments...of the one final second (it was never more than a second) in which the fit came upon him...Since, in the last conscious moment preceding the attack, he could say to himself, with full understanding of his words: 'I would give my whole life for this one instant,' then doubtless to him it really was worth a lifetime."

Dostoyevsky described perfectly what passed through my mind before an epileptic seizure. This is what the oncoming seizure felt like to me.

I am grateful still to be here even with some of the aftermath that is associated with my epilepsy. The doctors think, for the most part, I have grown out of it, but there is always the chance it will come back. No one can explain where it came from, and I am ever aware of the possibility of being reduced to that scared little girl.

# Guns: Firearm laws need to adjust to new times

➤ Jump from Guns, Page 11

Understanding the context of the time, a well-regulated militia would be a body of citizens who were trained and disciplined in the use of the arms that they bore. So let us have learners' permits for citizens of a certain age.

Let them be trained on any firearms they may wish to carry when they have passed the licensing and training (and maybe a little psychological evaluation) and practical qualifications. Let them have an AR-15 with a 50 round clip if they have reason for it.

Then let us all sleep safe at night knowing only the people who are responsible and qualified legally have them, and if the Redcoats ever do come back, they'll find a 350-million person militia armed and waiting.