

THE DECREE

since 1960 “of, by, and for the Wesleyan community.”

May 31, 2017

NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Junior Sebastian Sikh was one of 32 athletes to take part in the NCAA singles championships in Chattanooga, TN. Turn to page 3 for coverage of tennis and other sports.

SI photo

Jason Buel Excited to Begin New Communication Major

Fresh from graduate studies at North Carolina State, Jason Buel is excited to join the Wesleyan community as the college introduces a new major next fall.

Buel, 30, was hired as the first faculty member in the new communication department. Born in Sarasota, Florida, he was raised in Boone, where he attended Appalachian State, earning a degree in psychology and English with an emphasis in film studies. He then studied for a masters in English/film studies at NC State and just finished his doctorate there in communication, rhetoric and digital media.

He comes to Wesleyan with extensive teaching experience. He has taught courses in writing, film, business communication and applied communication at NC State

as well as schools such as Vance-Granville Community College and Durham Tech.

The Decree conducted a recent email interview with Buel about his plans for the new major and his life outside the classroom.

Q. What about the NC Wesleyan job appealed to you?

A. It seemed like a perfect opportunity for me. I want to be at a small school that emphasizes teaching, and I love living in North Carolina. I also like the idea of getting in on the ground floor of a new major, having a hand in curriculum development, and teaching a variety of courses across my discipline.

Q. Describe your teaching style.

A. I try to be a “guide on the side” rather than a “sage on the stage.” Sure, I know lots of things. But simply telling you about things I know isn't terribly helpful to you. Instead, I want to learn about your interests in the course and guide you as you research them for yourself. This approach can be uncomfortable for many students at first, because it means I'm not going to tell you exactly what you need to know or give you any easy answers. However, it will help you improve as a researcher, communicator, and critical thinker in addition to helping you learn specific course content.

Q. What can a student expect to do in a typical week of your class?

A. Students will encounter new ideas through our assigned readings and videos outside of class. You might demonstrate your understanding of new material by contributing to a class Wiki page or by writing a blog post on a topic covered in the readings. In class, I want us interacting with one another as much as possible. Sometimes this means class discussions. More often, it means tackling small-group projects in class. We might have a conceptual workshop where we test the limits of our understanding of new ideas or a virtual scavenger hunt where we track down examples of some media phenomenon out in the “real” world. We might debate a controversial topic raised in the readings. We might craft our own communication strategies in response to historical conditions that others have faced. As much as possible, I like to design activities that give students room to be creative and learn from one another.

Q. What's the most important lesson you've learned so far about teaching?

A. 1) As much as I personally enjoy nerding-out and listening to a good 90-minute lecture, most people would rather have a root canal.

2) Shame and fear structure an awful lot of students' actions (or lack thereof) in class. We have to make room for each other to take risks and make mistakes if we want to learn. If we're not occasionally failing, we're not really learning.

Q. Describe your dissertation.

A. My dissertation is called “Whose Screens? Our Screens!: Digital Documentary and Social Activism.” It's an examination of amateur and independent video practices in the context of social media and contemporary social movements. It looks at how digital media technologies complicate what we know about documentary film/video and political communication.

Q. What will be the focus of your future research?

A. In general, it will focus on how digital media practices shape political expression and the democratic exchange of ideas. What new potentials do they open? What new limits do they place on us? What old patterns do they recreate?

In addition to revising my dissertation into a book, I've got several projects in various stages of development: a book chapter on amateur video practices in Canada's Idle No More movement, a journal article on the use of networked digital media around Moral Monday here in North Carolina, and a conference paper on citizen journalism connected through the #NoDAPL hashtag. Early next year, I'll have an article out in “Public Culture” about alternative modes of archiving

developed during Occupy Wall Street.

In the past, I've collaborated with students and faculty to produce multimedia showcases (websites, interactive video installations, curated screenings, etc.) to share our research with the public. I hope to continue such collaborative, public-facing research in the future.

Q. Try to make connections between your research interests and your work with students in the classroom.

A. At the heart of my research are two questions that are central to the classroom: How do different communication practices facilitate the free exchange of ideas? How can communication help to build community? Effective communication isn't just about having a “good” idea or the “right” answer to a problem. It's about packaging your ideas in a way that not only makes sense to other people but also makes them feel that you share common interests—that your idea will benefit both of you.

Any good communication course will not only give you practice doing this, but it will also give you space to critically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of other paths you might take as you shape your message. In some courses, that might mean analyzing the word choice of a political campaign speech. In others, it might mean breaking down a scene from a movie shot-by-shot to understand how the camera placement, set design, and lighting contribute to its overall impact on viewers. In still other courses, it might mean collecting data on a Twitter hashtag to understand what factors impact its spread. In each case, what we're doing in the classroom is effectively a smaller-scale version of what I'm doing in my own research.

Q. In the past, communication has often been called a “jock major.” Argue against this impression.

A. Like any major, it's exactly as serious and intellectually deep as you make it. In terms of methods, we draw on work in history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and political science. In that sense, we're similar to most humanities and social science majors in terms of the workload and type of work you can expect to be doing in your classes. The “jock major” stereotype, like most stereotypes, has little to no basis in reality. (And “jocks” can be serious students, too!)

Q. Describe your ideas for building the communication major at Wesleyan.

A. I see the major focusing on media history and emphasizing a strong liberal arts foundation in communication theory. I want to develop courses that blend theory and practice to give students a broader understanding of problems in communication so that their skills will remain useful to them long after graduation. To that end, centering media history and communication theory will allow students to anticipate trends by understanding not just our present media environment but also the forces that shape it—and the forces that will continue to shape the media of tomorrow.

Q. What classes will you teach next fall?

A. I'll be teaching COM 195: Film Analysis, COM 200: Introduction to Mass Communication, and COM 495: Documentary Media.

Q. What courses would you like to add to the communication curriculum as it's now constituted?

A. I'm interested in adding courses in political communication, the history of media technologies, and contemporary media theory, where we can critically examine the ways that media practices shape our world. My background is in film studies, so I also anticipate offering special topics courses in film history—perhaps on topics like American independent cinema, revolutions in world cinema, North Carolina on film, etc.

Q. Imagine I'm a student still not sure if communication is the right major for me. Persuade me to give it serious consideration.

A. Listen: it might not be right for you.

See BUEL pg 2

‘Fiddler’ Cast Shows Collaborative Spirit

By Jessica Brown
Senior Staff Writer

“Fiddler on the Roof” was a resounding success with performers drawing standing ovations from the more than 1,100 who attended three showings on April 7 and 8 at the Dunn Center.

The musical, a collaborative effort by The Wesleyan Players and Faith Christian School, was directed by Danelle Cauley, an instructor at both schools.

In Cauley's words, “Fiddler” “tells a timeless story with an important message and it's a much recognized theatre classic.” It focuses on a poor Jewish dairyman (Tevye) and his family. While living in Czarist Russia at a time of mounting anti-Semitism, Tevye tries to protect his five daughters while instilling in them traditional values.

The first two performances went well, but in the third performance, Wesleyan student Aleksandr Shiriaev, playing Fyedka, stumbled and appeared to be favoring one leg. After the scene ended, it was announced that he had sustained an injury and would be going to the hospital. The students wanted to go on with the show so Fischer Vaughan took on Fyedka's role. Sainabou Jallow thought that Vaughan did a great job. “He had a script in hand, but he acted and didn't just read out lines,” she said.

Trey Russell played Perchik as well as an ensemble member. He said costume changes were a challenge. “I've never done a show with costume changes, so this was new,” he said. “It seemed like during the show I was either on stage or changing costumes.”

Savannah Flanagan played one of the Russians and one of the bottle dancers. She was nervous taking on such a dance-heavy role. “I'm not a great dancer,” she explained. “I got to improve my skills and I'm proud of how I did on the bottle dance.” She added that this was her first time playing a male character.

Many audience members loved the bottle dance. Eleven actors put a glass bottle on their head while executing an elaborate dance. Many thought the dancers had put Velcro on their hats to keep the bottles attached, but there was no trickery involved. The first and third performances resulted in a few broken bottles. Toni Tutt, one of the villagers, revealed that the bottles were custom-made from sugar glass by a teacher at Faith Christian. A handful of rice was poured inside the bottles to keep them weighted, but the dancers relied on skill to keep them from falling. They had to attend more rehearsals than the other actors to practice.

Two NCWC alumni, Katherine Crickmore and Kaitlyn Davis, returned to help out. Crickmore played Chava, one of Tevye's daughters. Tevye was played by Jacob Smith and Golde, Tevye's wife, was performed by Victoria Thompson. Both are Faith Christian students.

There were few technical difficulties and, other than Shiriaev's injury, the show went off without a hitch. The set gave off the vibe of a small village. There were large stage pieces that looked like houses and that could be turned to resemble businesses. Tevye's house could open and close, making set changes quick and easy.

Stephanie Garrett enjoyed the play. “The actors definitely put in some serious hard work,” she said. “I had friends on the stage, so I saw how hard they worked.”

Cast members commented on the

great chemistry of the ensemble and it showed when they pulled together after Shiriaev's injury. “We finished the performance strong,” Russell said. “It was nice having such a talented cast and crew that could keep going even with the challenges in the production.”

Flanagan agreed, stating the cast was a team and a family. Having one of them go down was scary and it affected all of them, she said. “I'm proud of how we pulled together,” she said. “Fischer picked it up and handled it beautifully. I think it showed how close we got to each other.”

Wesleyan Profile: Brian Moody

Brian Moody was enjoying a busy mid-April day. He had met with his professors about upcoming final exams. He had attended an open house for students interested in criminal justice careers. And he had participated in a meeting to discuss his role as director of a Boy Scout camp set to take place on campus in June.

In less than a year, Moody has become a popular figure at Wesleyan. It's not just his friendliness and sense of humor. Many Bishops have been drawn to Kate, his seeing-eye dog, which, until retirement in May, led the blind 41-year-old Moody around campus.

Dean Ed Naylor has been impressed with Moody, one of the few blind students to attend Wesleyan in the past decade. “Like other students, he's just trying to get the best education he can,” the dean said. “He really adds to our campus in an interesting way, because a lot of people aren't exposed to others who are different from them. The fact that Brian is able to live his life like everyone else, even though he doesn't have eyesight, is an inspiration to me and to most people who come in contact with him.”

Moody dislikes the label “handicapped.” “That sounds like something major. To most blind persons, it's not a handicap, just a lost sense,” said Moody who lost his sight in his early twenties.

Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, Moody has lived in western North Carolina since his family moved to Lincolnton when he was in fifth grade. A lover of camping and fishing, he grew up a dedicated Scout.

During his senior year at West Lincoln High School, Moody had considered enlisting in the military. Then a car wreck led to a change of heart. Driving a 1982 Datsun 200 SX, he tried to buckle his seat belt after the car was in motion. Losing control, he broadsided four pine trees and sustained a serious knee injury. While his girlfriend, a passenger, was not injured, her father, the owner of the vehicle, was incensed. “Boy, was her daddy mad,” Moody said. “The car looked like a W.”

Rather than military service, Moody entered the construction business after high school. He was a multi-skilled craftsman, performing electrical, roofing,



Brian Moody A. Sundbom photo

and glass work for three years. He specialized in commercial construction in the Carolinas, while he pursued one of his other passions, volunteer firefighting, which he had discovered in his early teens.

It was in November 1998, while working at a construction job in Greenville, South Carolina, that Moody was struck by a serious illness. He recalled that his then-employer had brought chicken plates from a local fundraiser for the work crew. “I felt like crap,” Moody said. “At first, I thought I had the stomach flu or food poisoning because I was so sick. It just came on that quick.”

Moody thought he'd feel better in a few weeks, but by Thanksgiving, he was weak, achy, still very sick. “I just thought it was a virus,” he said.

He went back to North Carolina the first week of December and remained in the hospital for six weeks. He soon noticed his vision fading. In a week it was gone.

The eventual diagnosis was meningitis and permanent blindness.

Had the doctors been more aggressive in the early stages of the illness, Moody believes he would have retained his sight. But he's not bitter. “I'm not mad about it,” he said.

Moody said that he's become more open-minded over the years. As one might expect, he said, he experiences life in a new way. Less judgmental about the way a person looks or dresses, Moody has befriended “folks I wouldn't have liked” in his previous

See MOODY pg 2

NEWS & OPINION

Issue In-Focus: Students Want More Dining Options, Other Changes Decree staffers were asked to identify one change they would make on campus

Toni Tutt

I would propose that we become more efficient with the mailing system. I would like to get an email message when our packages and letters arrive. There have been multiple occasions when incoming mail was not received on time.

Quinn Tobias

Wesleyan does a great job of making the campus feel like a home. But home life means good culinary options. Students pay a high price for a meal plan. The Sodexo food options offered are not commensurate with the price. Though the student body is composed of a high percentage of athletes, the dining options are seldom healthy. The main

line food is always coated in grease or fat, the pizza line offers minimal health benefits, and the grill offers burgers and fries, also unhealthy. The sandwich bar provides a chance at an exception but falls short. The rolls are soaked in butter and the meat is so over-processed there is minimal nutritional value left. School is taxing, and healthy food options will keep students properly fueled. With so many students-athletes, shouldn't there be an emphasis on giving us a healthy option? It wouldn't be hard to provide non-greasy chicken and rice at each meal.

Santanlia Scoggins

If I could change anything about Wesleyan, it would be the dorms. I would renovate Collins, Nash, Boddie and Jin, the rooms and bathrooms. I've noticed paint peeling in Jin Hall's bathrooms and the dimmed lighting in Nash. I feel a modern touch would excite the students and make them want to stay on campus over the weekends. I would also improve the security of the dorms by making them card-accessible and getting rid of the keys. I've noticed that students often "pop" the lock on

the door in some of the dorms. While at times it doesn't bother me, it does make me feel unsafe to see the front door to my dorm open after I've walked back from the library or come back to campus late at night. I don't feel safe knowing that an outsider can just walk into a place that's supposed to be my home away from home. You can't really call a place your home if it doesn't feel like it.

Mary Reynolds

I would put kitchenettes in the residence halls that do not already include one. I've heard several complaints around campus from residents of Edgcombe, Collins, and Pettaway who believe that a kitchenette would be very helpful. Because I'm a vegetarian, it's a struggle to find decent food in the cafeteria. To be honest, food options are limited. I think a kitchenette would be great for students with dietary limitations, or who just enjoy cooking. A kitchenette could also bring the residents closer together because a kitchen is the center of a family. Besides, food brings everyone together because everyone gets hungry.

Johnathan Pickler

There is nothing worse than driving to campus, arriving five minutes before class, and finding nowhere to park. I can name a couple of times that this has happened to me and caused me to be late because I had to park far away from the classroom building. And although parking is limited, tickets are handed out daily. The limited parking causes students to use a "No Parking" area. Until there are more available spots, security shouldn't give out tickets. I understand that this is an issue that can't be fixed overnight, but it would make a lot of students happier if there were more spots.

Sydney Jackson

I'd make changes to the cafeteria food. Although there have been improvements, I think there needs to be better food quality and more options. The remodeling looks great. I just believe that if there was a change in the quality

of food, it would make a world of difference. It would be beneficial for Sodexo to conduct a survey to identify foods that customers want in the cafeteria. The salad bar is a nice feature; the cafeteria needs more healthy options, I think.

Jessica Brown

If I could change one thing about Wesleyan, it would be the food situation. As a cash-strapped commuter student, I can't afford a meal card to eat in the cafeteria. And I sometimes forget to bring a lunch. While it's true that I could travel off campus to eat, I don't always have enough time between classes to do so. On those days, I'm restricted to the Internet Café. The food there isn't bad, but there's little variety. I would love to see another place on campus that offered hot, fresh food. If that's not possible, perhaps the Internet Café could give the students more options.

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life. He's found that, as the saying goes, "the true person is on the inside." Becoming accustomed to life without sight, Moody transitioned into a series of new careers. For 13 years, he was a dispatcher for towing companies in the Salisbury and Concord area, handling 80-100 calls in a typical shift. Then he joined a family-operated hot dog cart that traveled to area festivals and parades.

He went on to enroll at Rowan Cabarrus Community College and Malone College in Canton, Ohio, but he's found Wesleyan more hospitable, though he admitted that the lack of sidewalks is an issue for him.

He likes the small size of Wesleyan and the "friendly atmosphere." He said his other schools promoted a "family feeling" on campus, "but it's nothing compared to Wesleyan. It's just a lot closer community here."

Besides taking classes, Moody holds down two jobs, one as a cook in the cafeteria grille. "I love to cook," he said, noting that his specialties include chicken alfredo, shrimp alfredo and steak.

In his other position, he serves as a receptionist at the college's health center. "It's either 'Jessica is busy right now,' or 'She'll be right with you,'" Moody quipped.

Jessica is Health Center Director Jessica Brys-Wilson, who said she appreciates Moody's outgoing personality. "Brian's always happy to chat," she said. "That really puts the students at ease."

Moody is majoring in business administration with a minor in criminal justice. After graduation he would like to open his own business. For his studies, he uses the voice-over feature on his I-Phone and Mac computer, which read the words on the screen to him. He knows very little braille. "I know enough to determine a restroom or elevator floor," he said. "My life is on my phone. It talks to me."

With most exams, Robin Pietryk, director of Wesleyan's Disability Services, reads Moody the questions and he gives oral answers in response. She's found it easy to work with Moody as he progresses toward his degree. "Brian has a great personality," she said. "He's laid-back and very funny."

(Mary Reynolds contributed to this article.)

2016-17 Research Projects by Honors Students

Christina Huber - "Physical Fitness, Hemodynamic and Affective Responses to Psychosocial Stress in Women" (Co-directed by Meir Magal and Shannon Crowley)

Abby Leonard - "Physical Fitness, Physiological and Sleep Responses to Stress in Women" (Co-directed by Meir Magal and Shannon Crowley)

Leigh Hales - "Exploring Vigilantism in Popular Culture and What it Suggests About American Society" (Directed by Carl Lewis)

Jacob Wilson - "Examining Factors of the Rise of Radical Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe" (Directed by Young Kim)

Katie Tyson - "Analysis of Curves Generated by Intersecting Tangent Lines" (Directed by Brent Dozier)

Ayla Brewer - "The Correlation between Injury, Goal Orientation, and Athletic Identity of Injured Female Athletes at a Division III College" (Directed by Molly Wyatt)

Bikash Thapa - "Understanding Neurobiology and Regeneration of Planaria through stress and memory retention process" (Directed by Erica Kosal)

Michael Bhujel - "My Greatest Strength and Weakness: Self-enhancing and Self-criticizing Tendencies in Eastern and Western Culture" (Directed by Greg Preuss)

Daniel Washburn - "Camp Butler and the Economy of the South" (Directed by Jonathan Sarris)

Vann Brock - "Impact of a Basic Firearm Safety Course on Attitudes toward Gun Ownership and Second Amendment Rights" (Directed by Gail Marsal)

2017 Science Symposium Poster Competition Winners

1st Place: Trevor D. Harris And Sullivan C. Reece: "Determining Concentrations of Food Coloring in Various Sports Drinks Using Colorimetry"

2nd Place: Ben Bolyard, Mykayla Jefferson, And Kelli Wynn: "The Effects of Soils on the Filtration Rate of Bivalves"

3rd Place: Jeremy Carr And Trey Russell: "Habitat Preference of Cricket Color Morphs in Relation to Temperature"



Christina Huber (volleyball) and Adrian Moore (basketball) received Student-Athlete of the Year honors at the college's recent sports banquet. SI photo

2017 Awards Convocation

Student Support

Supplemental Instruction Leadership Award
Peer Tutor of the Year Award
Internship Award

Carolynn Davern
Bikash Thapa
Starr Mitchell

Science and Math

Biology Award
Environmental Science Award
Exercise Science Award
Mathematics Award

Joshua Williams
Matthew Caleb Rose
Julia R. Rebellon
Katie Tyson

Education and Social Sciences

John Paul Jones History Award
History Major Outstanding Student Award
SNCAE Education Award
Susan B. Taylor Excellence in Educational Practice Award
Psychology Outstanding Student Award
Excellence in Sociological Studies Award
Criminal Justice Outstanding Student Award

Timothy Sauls
Jessica Brabble
Linda Cooper
Robin Todd
Michael Bhujel
Vanessa Villar
Leigh Ann Hales

Business

Accounting Outstanding Student Award
Business Administration Outstanding Student Award
Marketing Outstanding Student Award
Computer Information Systems Outstanding Student Award

Christopher Richardson
Brittany McGraw
Motoko Asano
Dante J. Hardy

Adult Degree Program Awards

Outstanding Adult Student Award

Jerry Lee Shoemaker

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But if you take a class in communication and do some research on your own to get a sense of what you can do with a degree in communication, then you'll be in a much better position to make the right decision for yourself.

That said, here's why you should at least give it a thought: a degree in communication gives you a lot of options in terms of your career path, it fosters creativity, and it will teach you skills that will never go out of date. Digital media is making it easier than ever for more people to get their messages out into the world, so understanding how to effectively shape a message to influence your target audience is more important now than ever before.

Q. Based on your experiences, what careers do communication majors tend to pursue?

A. The communication major can prepare you for a wide variety of careers within almost any industry: business, education, government, health care, law, media production, nonprofit, or public relations. Within these industries, communication majors often work as project managers, communication analysts, web content developers, media relations specialists, communication coordinators, etc. If students are interested in media production, they might become camera operators, editors, writers, production assistants, or producers.

Q. Who might want to either double-major or minor in communication?

A. Employers regularly cite effective communication skills as among the most sought-after attributes a job candidate can possess. Double-majoring or minoring in communication will ensure you have the skills you need to communicate effectively through speech, writing, and multimedia. Those skills, in turn, will set you apart from other students in your major who don't have such formal training.

Q. Let's shift to Jason Buel outside of the classroom. What do you like to do in your free time?

A. Outside of teaching and research, playing music is my passion in life. I play drums, guitar, and bass. I'm learning the tenor banjo. I'm also an avid hockey fan and enjoy playing pick-up games when I have the time. My partner is an excellent gardener, and I'm trying to learn from her (though it hasn't really worked out for me so far...).

Q. Discuss your use of social media.

A. Twitter is my favorite platform because I find I learn the most on it—often from new and interesting people who I've never met and would have no way of connecting with otherwise. I also like Instagram—my cat even has a profile (@claude_lemeow). While I have profiles on Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, and probably others, I'm not really active on them. I try to keep my social media time to less than 30 minutes a day. Because a lot of my research is about digital media practices, though, that usually doesn't happen.

Q. What are your favorite video games? How much time do you spend playing them each week?

A. I play video games, but not very often these days. Over summer break, I might get a few hours in each week. I like open-world "sandbox" games—Skyrim (and all of the Elder Scrolls games), the Fallout series, Red Dead Redemption, etc.—and also strategy



Jason Buel Photo courtesy of J. Buel

games like Civilization and Tropico.

Q. What's your response to the criticisms faced by the video game industry?

A. Many video games are incredibly violent and sexist, but that's true of our culture generally and not unique to gaming. Most problems are really with the structures around games rather than with the games themselves or gaming as an activity. Should we have a class on this? I feel like we should have a class on this.

Q. Identify your favorites from the following list:

CUISINE: Pulled pork BBQ.

TRAVEL DESTINATION: My grandparents came to the United States from Ukraine, so I've always wanted to go there. Going to a game at every NHL arena is on my bucket list (so far, I've been to four).

SPORTS TEAMS: Carolina Hurricanes, Durham Bulls, NC State Wolfpack.

FILMS (RECENT): "Get Out," "Arrival," "Kedi," "Hooligan Sparrow."

FILMS (ALL-TIME FAVORITES): "The Big Lebowski," "Slapshot," "The Godfather," "Moonrise Kingdom," "The Big Sleep," "The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On."

FAVORITE BOOKS: Haruki Murakami's "Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World," Kurt Vonnegut's "Cat's Cradle," Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony."

MOST INFLUENTIAL BOOK: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "A Thousand Plateaus."

TV SHOWS: HBO dramas like "Game of Thrones," "Westworld," "Deadwood," etc. I also like irreverent comedies like "South Park," "Archer," "Parks and Recreation," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," etc.

MUSICAL ARTIST (CURRENT): The National, Arcade Fire, Run the Jewels, Kurt Vile, TV on the Radio.

MUSICAL ARTIST (ALL-TIME): Bob Dylan, The Velvet Underground, Parliament Funkadelic.

Q. You visited Wesleyan earlier in the year for your job interview. What impressed you most?

A. I love the sense of community I felt among the faculty, staff, and students. Everyone seems genuinely invested in one another's success. In the class I guest-taught, I was also impressed with how eager students were to jump right into discussions of brand-new material (and with a total stranger, no less). I'm excited to be part of such an active, engaged community of learners.

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SPORTS

Record-Setting Men's Tennis Team Ousted by Emory Again in NCAA's

Sebastian Sikh, one of only three Bishops ever to qualify for the national singles competition, lost a hard-fought first-round match May 25 in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Facing Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Tyler Barr, Sikh lost the first set, 6-4, but battled back to take the second, 6-2. In the third set, Barr edged Wesleyan's number-one player, 6-4.

The USA South Conference Player of the Year, Sikh was one of 32 NCAA Division III athletes to compete in the singles tournament. He was selected based on his record (18-5 overall, 15-2 in dual matches) and strength of schedule. A 6', 5" 230-pound junior from Sweden, Sikh was vying for Wesleyan's first national title in tennis. Former teammate Robert Kjellberg and Artsiom Prostak were the previous two qualifiers in singles for the Bishops.

As a freshman, Sikh participated in national competition as a member of a Wesleyan's double's team, partnering with fellow Swede Kjellberg to finish second.

Before traveling to Chattanooga, Sikh said he'd benefit from his previous exposure to a national stage. "It will help me control my nerves and hopefully lead to a good performance," he said.

Sikh's serve has always been a strength and he's felt more confident with his forehand this season. In the days leading up to the tournament, he put in hours of practice with NCWC Coach Albie Brice. "We've been focusing on my baseline game, considering serve and volley has

been my strength in the past," he said.

Though Sikh advanced to the national singles competition, his team was eliminated in the second round of the NCAA's, once again by Wesleyan's tennis nemesis, Emory University.

After claiming their ninth consecutive USA South Conference men's team title, the Bishops (20-5) opened regional play by shutting out Thomas More College, 5-0, in Atlanta.

Wesleyan swept the doubles competition, as the number-one pairing of Sikh and Ioannis Brokakis set the pace with an 8-1 victory. David Chang/Richard Gende (8-2) and J.D. Telles/David Appelqvist (8-1) turned in the other wins at number two and three doubles.

Dominant in singles competition, the Bishops forced suspension of the match following wins by Appelqvist (#4) and Gende (#6), who won with ease, 6-1, 6-1 and 6-1, 6-0. The Bishops were well ahead in the other four individual matches.

Earlier in the year, Sikh was asked about Wesleyan's history with Emory, which had ousted the Bishops from the national tourney six times in the previous eight seasons. Besides highlighting Emory's "amazing" tennis facility, Sikh said that the Eagles always boast a deep roster. "The program uses its previous national success to draw in the top recruits," he said. "Their lineup is strong from top to bottom and it's a dogfight within their team for every position."

In Atlanta, the host school ousted its mastery over the Bishops, winning 5-1.

The Eagles (18-4) tallied the first point of the match with an 8-4 win at #2 doubles, but Wesleyan countered with a 9-7 victory by Telles and Appelqvist at #3.

Emory then won a crucial match at #1 doubles. Scott Rubinstein/James Spaulding battled Sikh and Brokakis to an 8-8 tie to force a tiebreak and then posted a 7-3 win to claim victory.

Leading 2-1 after doubles action, the Eagles clinched the match by taking straight-set matches at the numbers 3, 4, and 5 singles positions.

The Bishops won a conference championship and advanced through one round of NCAA's despite losing their head coach late in the season. According to the athletic department, Dustin Hale left his position in April to "pursue other opportunities."

Sikh minimized the overall effect of the change, as assistant coach Brice served as interim coach for the remainder of the season.

"It's never easy with staff changes in the middle of the season, but Coach Brice was with us for a good amount of time before the change occurred, so all the players already had a good connection with him," Sikh said.

After winning the conference championship, 6-3 over Averett on April 15, the Bishops faced a month-long layoff before the NCAA's. Once final exams ended, the team began two-a-day practices. Sikh said team members used the inactive period to strengthen their fitness levels, get used to playing in the heat, and focus on details from their singles and doubles games. In an interview before the NCAA's, he noted that, in contrast to past teams, the 2017 Bishops were stronger in singles than in doubles. "That made doubles even more important than in the past," he said.

He said the team also used the down-time to bond. "Off the court we've been trying to relax and just maintain a good team chemistry," he said. "We're a group of players who see each other a lot. Team chemistry has been a key component in our success."

The 20 wins represent a program record for the Bishops. Next year's team should again be well stocked with talent. Only Ben Tolhurst graduates from the current roster. Sikh and Chang will play one more season. Brokakis, Telles and Gende just finished their second seasons, Appelqvist his first.

(Sports Information contributed to this report.)



T.J. Wilkie capped his career with a complete game in the conference playoffs. SI photo

Wilkie Completes NCWC Career With Fine USA South Tourney Outing

By Santanlia Scoggins
Senior Staff Writer

"It's been a fun ride," says senior pitcher T.J. Wilkie as he reflects on his time at Wesleyan.

Grateful for the chance to play baseball after high school, Wilkie thanks Wesleyan for providing him with an opportunity to better his game. "They gave me a shot and I'm appreciative for playing here four years," he said.

Wilkie, an April graduate, capped his Wesleyan career with a strong performance in the USA South Conference Tournament. Starting the second game, Wilkie pitched a complete game, scattering nine hits and striking out four in Wesleyan's 8-2 victory over Ferrum. By throwing 137 pitches—91 for strikes—he helped preserve the bullpen in a busy weekend of baseball.

"T.J. had a great performance in the tournament," Coach Charlie Long said after the season. "He stayed ahead of the hitters most of the day and battled like a true competitor. This was a tremendous way for him to complete his career."

Wilkie began playing baseball at age five. He knew he was destined for collegiate play when he was in high school. "When I realized that I was an above-average player, I knew that I was going to play college baseball," he said.

Wilkie came to Wesleyan from North Myrtle Beach High School, where he said was a hot-shot pitcher. "I pitched, played right field and I DH'd a bit too," he said. In regards to being a "hot shot," Wilkie felt like he had to be in order for his team to succeed. "I didn't have any help as far as other players on my team."

That changed once he got to college, citing the deep talent pool he found on Wesleyan's roster. "I felt like I didn't have to do all the work as much as I did in high school," he said. "It felt good to come out here and have a team. It was nice to come to a team where all the players were good."

At Wesleyan, it took Wilkie some time to get used to the playing style and competition level of college baseball. "It's a lot faster, it's a lot more competitive," he said. "It took me about a year to adjust and get into the college mentality of playing baseball because it's so much faster."

Long said that while Wilkie's stuff was always strong, control was an issue when he began at Wesleyan. "He was able to make adjustments quicker as he matured on the mound and found more confidence," Long said. "When he first came, he would sometimes panic if he walked a few guys. He definitely got better with his poise and his ability to settle in when the plate was moving a little on him."

Teammate Holden Taylor echoed his coach that Wilkie's control has improved over the years. "He used to throw up pretty high, but he's kept it low and done a lot better with that in recent years," he said.

Wilkie acknowledged that locating his fastball was a problem early in college career. He has not made changes in his delivery or other elements of his pitching style. But he's focused more on the mental side of the game. "I worked on my control, my mentality, and my work ethic," he said.

In the past two seasons, Wilkie's felt much more confident on the mound. "Once I locate my fastball," he noted, "I'm good to go and everything takes care of itself."

Wilkie said his favorite pitch is his curve. "I've been throwing it for a very long time and it just keeps getting better and better and I like throwing it," he said, noting that it's as natural to him as his fastball.

As his performance improved, Wilkie

formed an effective 1-2 tandem with fellow senior Ryan Grant, the team ace. Last year was a breakout season for Wilkie as he struck out 68 batters and yielded only 36 hits in 53 innings enroute to a 4-2 record and 2.52 ERA. This year his stats were less impressive, but still respectable. The right-hander finished 3-2 with a 3.22 ERA, striking out 44 in 55 innings.

Wilkie would like to play professional baseball. "If that doesn't work out, that's all right," said Wilkie, who said he would then try to find a job in his major field, environmental science.

Baseball Team Wins 2, Loses 2 In Tournament

After two impressive wins, the Bishops baseball team lost a heartbreaker to the top seed and then got eliminated in game four of the USA South Conference tournament at LaGrange.

In a pivotal game, the Bishops were defeated by the host school in a pitcher's duel as Wesleyan's third starter, Nate Gardner, yielded just one unearned run through eight innings before losing in the bottom of the ninth on an infield hit. Gardner gave up just four hits against the Panthers, who got strong innings from starter Richie Post (7 innings, 5 hits, 8 strikeouts) and reliever Austin Perez (2 innings, 1 hit, for the win).

"I was very pleased with our effort," Coach Charlie Long said of his team's game against the Panthers (38-4), who went on to win the tournament. "The pitching was outstanding on both sides. Nate gave us a great game and we gave the top seed all we had."

Playing in a double-elimination format, the Bishops were crushed in game four by Piedmont, 15-2, with action halted after eight innings.

Having already used Gardner and top-two starters, seniors Ryan Grant and T.J. Wilkie, the Bishops sent fourth starter Richard Harrell to the mound. He gave up five runs and eight hits in 5 2/3 innings and the bullpen was torched for 10 more runs, while Piedmont's Riley Presnell held the Bishops to two runs and eight hits in a complete-game victory.

Wesleyan opened the tournament on a positive note. Grant pitched seven strong innings and Joey Borgerding struck out two ninth-inning batters to earn a save, as the Bishops beat Greensboro, 6-3. First baseman Tony Sanchez bashed a two-run homer and drove in a third run to pace the offense.

In game two, Wilkie pitched a complete game, and the Bishop offensive exploded for 13 hits in an 8-2 win over Ferrum. Brad Pennington had three hits and Brandon Wheat hit a two-run homer.

Long said the pitching staff was a strength in 2017 for his team, which recorded an ERA of 3.97, a point and a half lower than the opposition. "Our pitching overall was very good," he said. "When you post an ERA under 4.00 in college baseball, you've been successful. I'm super excited about what we have to build on with the pitchers we have returning."

Though the team is losing sluggers like Sanchez and Luis Palencia to graduation, many key starters will return, among them Gardner, Wheat, third-baseman Trey Croom, and outfielder Cedric Kornegay. Pennington, D3Baseball.com Regional Rookie of the Year, will be a sophomore.

"I'm looking forward to next season," Long said. "For many of the guys this will be the third year playing together. We should be motivated by the tough way we finished the conference tournament. But we gained confidence in the way we played in the league overall."



Athletic Director John Thompson congratulates Wesleyan Athletes of the Year Sebastian Sikh (tennis) and Timyra Staton (basketball). SI photos

Viewpoint: Who is Basketball MVP?

By Johnathan Pickler
Decree Sports Writer

The NBA MVP race is up for grabs. There are many reasons why each candidate deserves the award, but only one can win. In this season, many records were broken, history was made, and what used to be average players turned into superstars.

The NBA is starting to become a league full of emerging stars. The new era consists of young players like Isaiah Thomas, Russell Westbrook, Kawhi Leonard and James Harden. But LeBron James has made a compelling case on why he deserves to be MVP every year since he has been in the league.

Thomas plays point guard for the Boston Celtics. He is 5 feet 9 inches tall and 180 pounds. In a league full of players who tower over him, Thomas managed to finish third in scoring by averaging 28.9 points per game. He grabbed 2.7 rebounds and dished out 5.9 assists per game. "Isaiah Thomas is a dog, there is no other way to describe him," stated Bishops guard Jahziah Dyer. "Without Thomas, the Celtics would have trouble scoring the ball." Thomas also averaged more points in the fourth quarter than any other NBA player in the past 20 years. He led the Boston Celtics to the top of the Eastern Conference, earning a one seed for the playoffs.

Leonard is a small forward and plays for the San Antonio Spurs. In recent years, he has shown flashes of stardom. This season Leonard scored 25.5 points per game, his career high for a season. He averaged 5.8 rebounds and 3.5 assists per game. Leonard is a reliable scorer for the Spurs, especially in clutch moments. However, Leonard is also the best defender on the Spurs and arguably the best in the NBA. Leonard's defense is what sets him apart from the other MVP candidates. He was the best player for a Spurs team that won 61 out of 82 games this season. "Kawhi

is the best all-around player in the NBA and this season he proved it," said Greg Joseph, who, like Dyer, is a Wesleyan guard.

James has dominated the league since the year he was drafted. He is a small forward for the Cleveland Cavaliers. At 6 feet 8, 250 pounds, you would think James would play more of a big man. But James brings the ball up and runs the offense for the Cavs on a regular basis. He averaged 26.4 points per game, 8.6 rebounds per game, and 8.7 assists per game this season. "LeBron has been doing this for so long it almost feels like nobody appreciates it anymore because they expect it," stated Bishops captain Adrian Moore. "I feel like he should win MVP because he can go to any team and make them championship contenders." James' rebounds per game and assists per game were his career highs. He also shot 54.8 percent from the field which was also a career high. James led the Cavs to a 51-31 season which put them second in the Eastern Conference.

Westbrook had an historic 2016-2017 season. He is the only player other than Oscar Robertson to average a triple-double for an entire season. Westbrook averaged 31.6 points, 10.7 rebounds, and 10.4 assists per game. The top scorer in the league, Westbrook led the Oklahoma City Thunder to the sixth seed in the Western Conference. If you base MVP winners just on numbers, then Westbrook would be the clear winner. An NBA study also found that only about 3 of his 10.7 rebounds per game were contested. It's tough to look at those kinds of numbers and say that he doesn't deserve MVP, but team success matters most.

Harden, point guard for the Houston Rockets, made a name for himself this season. In the off-season, the Rockets coach decided that he would move Harden from shooting guard to point guard. This turned out to be a great decision for the team. Harden proved to be a productive point guard, averaging 29.1 points,

11.2 assists, and 8.1 rebounds per game. He led the league in assists and ranked second in scoring. What stood out about Harden was that he led a team with no other all-stars to the third-seed in the Western Conference. Harden created for his teammates all season as they broke the NBA record for most three-pointers made as a team in a single season. Harden should be the NBA MVP because of his success, and his team's success. Without Harden, would the Rockets be a three seed in the Western Conference?

NCWC Golf Team Impressive Against Tough Competition

Wesleyan's golf team finished fifth, two places higher than last season, in the ultra-competitive USA South Conference golf tournament hosted by LaGrange College in mid-April.

Mariano Silvestri (67-74-75) led the Bishops with an even-par score 216 over three days at the par-72 Highland Country Club. He earned all-tournament honors by placing in a tie for third place.

Silvestri was one of three freshmen who competed for the Bishops. The others were Luke Thornton (tied for 19th) and Dustin Wood (35th), who joined sophomore Grady Anderson (32nd) and junior David White (tied for 19th) to record a three-day total of 900 strokes, 29 behind Methodist, the tournament winner and one of four conference teams with high national rankings.

Their 900 team score meant the Bishops averaged 75, or 3 over par, per round.

In the tournament, the conference's top nine teams were each represented by five golfers. With each round, a team's four lowest individual scores counted in its overall total.

The Bishops have completed the most impressive season in recent memory, having placed in the top-five in all nine of their tournaments and cracking the top-45 in national rankings.

(Sports Information contributed to this report.)

CAMPUS LIFE

2017 Wesleyan Graduates Urged To Be 'Game-Changers'

By Mary Reynolds
Decree Staff Writer

The Wesleyan community gathered April 28 to pay tribute its 2017 graduates.

The college handed out 234 degrees to students from the traditional day and ASPIRE adult-degree programs. Among the graduates were internationals from Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Iceland, Japan, Nepal, the United Kingdom and Venezuela.

Chaplain Barry Drum led the baccalaureate service, while Mitch Mason, a former football star at Missouri Western State University and the arena league, gave the commencement address. Now Fellowship of Christian Athletes Football Chaplain at UNC-Chapel Hill, Mason urged Bishops to "be game-changers" in their communities and in their personal relationships.

The college's two main student awards were announced during the ceremony. Leigh Hales, a Raleigh resident, received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for her contributions to the college community.

The President's Cup was awarded to a second traditional day student, Lauren Gosselin. A Nashville native, she was honored for overall academic excellence. She majored in elementary education and graduated summa cum laude.

Dr. Fred Sanborn, professor of psychology and founder of the college's Teaching & Learning Center, was recognized as the 2017 Exemplary Teacher.

The Decree interviewed some of the graduates from the day program about their memories and plans for the future.

Leigh Hales

Hales, a 23-year-old criminal justice major, started at Wesleyan as a history major in 2013, added criminal justice and eventually dropped history. Hales faced many challenges during college and she says the biggest challenge was "balancing all that I was doing." She was on the tennis and cross-country teams, a member of Christ Covenant Church, and a student in the honors program. While at Wesleyan, Hales and her tennis teammates won the conference championships for the first

time in program history. She also received the criminal justice outstanding student award and the scholar athlete award for tennis and cross country.

"My best memories are definitely from being on the tennis team," Hales said, remembering the times when team members sang and made up hashtags and inside jokes during road trips. "I enjoyed the practices and working hard together. Of course, winning was fun and when I'd win a tough match, it was the best feeling."

Hales said she's "going to miss the people" at Wesleyan. She plans on finding a job in the criminal justice field, but is first returning home to enjoy time with family.

Ben Tolhurst

A native of England, Ben Tolhurst, 22, was an exercise science major with a minor in English. One of his biggest challenges was adjusting to life in a different country. "The U.S. and England aren't all that different, but there are little, subtle things that I noticed and, to be honest, they made me feel homesick," he said. But he added that "within weeks I had made new friends and I was inducted into the Wesleyan family."

Tolhurst was on the men's tennis team and this year helped the Bishops win their 9th consecutive USA South Conference regular season and conference tournament titles. He was also part of the Wesleyan Wookies, a group of student-athletes who, in an informal and often comical fashion, led the cheers at Bishops sporting events. "We made up chants and songs about the players and we helped bring an amazing atmosphere to every game we attended," Tolhurst said.

He plans on going home for the summer and is applying to graduate assistant coaching jobs in the U.S. If that doesn't work out, he'll attend university in England. Tolhurst will miss the college community.

"Wesleyan isn't the most amazing place in the world," he said. "It's good, but it's not amazing. The people here, however, make it amazing. I've met people from all walks of life from loads of different countries and that's what I'm going to miss most."

Katie Tyson

Katie Tyson, 21, said a major chal-

lenge for her was balancing a full-time job with school, a social life, her honors thesis and other obligations. A math major, she was a member of Delta Phi Epsilon and the college's honor program. "Time management was very important in order to make it all happen," she said.

After graduation, Tyson plans on applying to graduate school. She will miss the friends she made among fellow students and faculty. "Even when it seems like everything is against you and you can't get through it, you can," she said. "And in the end, it will all be worth it."

Jessica Brown

A non-traditional student, Jessica Brown, 28, was a history major with a writing

minor. A staff writer for The Decree, she transferred to Wesleyan in the spring of 2015 as an education major, but decided that she was better suited for a career in library science and changed her major. Balancing work, commuting, school and procrastination was Brown's biggest challenge, but she enjoyed her time at Wesleyan and made many friends among faculty and students.

Her favorite Wesleyan memory was taking the college's recent spring break trip to Atlanta. Brown enjoyed looking at the various animals and fish at the aquarium with her friends. An animal lover, Brown said she liked the beluga whales in particular. She will miss her friends, but said she will visit. "I always feel so welcome here," Brown said.

Bikash Thapa

Thapa, a 23-year-old native of Nepal, was a biomedical science major, and math and psychology minor. He was a student tutor in math, but is planning to become a neurosurgeon.

About Wesleyan, he said, "Everything is different. Every day is funnier."

At first Thapa struggled with learning a new language. Though his skills have improved since his arrival in 2013, he still finds it difficult to speak English. As a member of the honors program, he says he had the chance to learn the language better and make countless friends. "I want to go out but I want to stay," he said. "There are a lot of memories here."

ASPIRE Program Graduate: Tavie Tunstall

Tavie Tunstall, a student at the Durham site, was among the students who received their diploma April 28 at the Dunn Center.

A resident of Bahama, North Carolina, the 49-year-old works as a quality assurance specialist at a Triangle-area aerospace company.

He was interviewed by the Decree prior to graduation.

Q. What are your future career plans, now that you've finished your degree?

A. My plan is to continue my career in the role of quality. I'm in the process of getting my ASQM quality engineer certification.

Q. Talk about your career and your path to a four-year degree.

A. I received an associate's degree in mechanical drafting and design right after high school; that took two years. I thought that would be enough for the lifestyle that I wanted to live. At the time I graduated from high school, I wasn't interested in attending a four-year college. After receiving my degree I worked for a number of years doing mechanical design for the aerospace industry. Six years ago, I wanted a career change and decided to further my education and pursue a BS degree. I started by taking college transfer courses at Durham Tech.

When I decided to attend Wesleyan, I was able to transfer credits from there and from Alamance Community College. I'd like to add that by not going to college right after high school, I hadn't accumulated student loan debt. While at Wesleyan, I used the educational benefits that my employer offers.

Q. What was most challenging about obtaining your degree while working full time?

A. I would say it was spending nights and weekends trying to juggle homework, studying and family time. My son was 9 years old when I returned to school. I wanted to be there for him as much as possible and participate in his activities. I took online and seated classes. Sometimes the seated courses



Tavie Tunstall

Photo courtesy of R. Fatteh

were held when my son was playing middle school and high school baseball and I would need to miss his games. So that was hard. Weekends were a struggle as well when it came to juggling family time and school work.

Q. What did you like most about the ASPIRE program?

A. It was a good fit for several reasons. Location was one. My job was within two miles of the Durham facility, and my employer allowed me to leave work and go straight to class. Another bonus was the cost, as my employer picked up most of the tuition. The Durham facility and staff were superb. When necessary, they would go above and beyond to provide me with extra help. They were always available; they would provide their personal cell phone number so I could contact them in times of need.

Q. What motivated you to earn a degree at your age?

A. Besides the sense of accomplishment, I wanted to be a role model for my son. I wanted him to see that if you set goals and work hard, you can accomplish almost anything.

Q. What makes you about most proud about your time at Wesleyan?

A. I would say it was not only completing my business degree but earning my minor in accounting and getting inducted into Sigma Beta Delta and Alpha Sigma Lambda honor societies.

FICTION: Killing Bunny Foo Foo

By Jessica Brown ('17)

Lucy sat on the ground with her homework in her lap. Long division had given her a headache and now she was distracted, watching Mr. Foo Foo.

He looked so innocent with his pink eyes and long fuzzy ears. His whiskers twitched in the most adorable fashion. He delicately took a chomp out of a clover flower and chewed it calmly.

Lucy narrowed her eyes. She had no proof, but it had to be him. Her rabbit was a murderer.

Fluffy had been the first one to go missing. Lucy found the blood-stained collar of her neighbor's beloved Persian lying in her yard with one fine, white hair caught in the gleaming gold buckle. Lucy had tossed the collar back over the fence once she was sure Ms. Hinkle had left for her weekly bingo game.

The next disappearance was that of Brutus, Mr. Fink's Chihuahua. Lucy had seen the spiked collar almost completely hidden in the very clover patch where Foo-Foo was taking his afternoon snack. Lucy made sure the collar found its way back to Mr. Fink's yard.

The latest victim was a weird-looking poodle named Gilligan. He had a bulging eye and his tongue always hung out of his mouth. He was so grotesque that Lucy tried not to look at him. She was almost relieved he went missing, until she found his collar in the alley, pushed up against the fence.

Lucy had linked them back to Foo-Foo. It couldn't be a mere coincidence. Lucy climbed to her feet and walked the perimeter of the fence. There was no way out, but...

"Wait a sec," she muttered to herself.

She pulled back the branches of a spiky shrub and there it was: a small hole lined with fine white fur. She glanced back at Foo-Foo. Was it her imagination, or had his calculating eyes been watching her?

"Lucy?"

Lucy's mother, a tall willowy woman, walked outside. As delicate as a glass butterfly, she looked as if she could break with the slightest breeze, but Lucy had seen her cow the most towering men. It was an impressive sight.

"Lucy, what are you doing? More nonsense about this rabbit?"

Lucy scuffed her bare toe against the ground.

"Not exactly," she said, unable to meet her mother's eyes, knowing the lie would show. "I did find a hole in the fence, though. I'm worried he could get out."

"I'll get your father to fix it once he gets home. Come on inside and wash up for lunch and leave the poor rabbit alone. You're the one that wanted him, after all. Did you finish your homework?"

"Almost... Dad was supposed to fix the door on Foo Foo's room too. I went to get some water last night and I tripped over him."

It had been terrifying. She had been creeping down the hall late that night, terribly thirsty, when suddenly there was a thump. She looked up and saw Foo Foo's blood-red eyes staring at her. She had screamed impressively and woken her parents, and possibly the neighbors.

Lucy reluctantly followed her mother inside, but cast one last glance at Foo-Foo. Thunder rumbled far in the distance and a cold wind began to blow, tossing fiery-colored leaves up high and swirling them through the air.

She grabbed her homework before the wind blew it away and her mother scooped up Foo Foo to bring him back inside the house. They put him in his room and Lucy firmly shut the door.

Yes, she had wanted a rabbit, just not a killer one.

Lucy sat on the couch, peering outside as rain streamed down the windows and the wind whipped through the branches of the towering oak tree in her back yard. She was nearly blinded at the blue-white lightning bolt that snaked across the sky and she flinched at the deafening clap of thunder that

followed. A loud slam shook the wall, startling her so badly she tumbled off the couch.

She stumbled to her feet and bolted into the kitchen. Her bare feet immediately lost traction on the wet floor and she skidded right past the open door, rain slashing through the doorway.

Laughing, her father caught her and spun her around. As he was closing the door, Lucy thought she caught a glimpse of white disappearing behind the prickly bush against the fence.

"Dad, did Foo Foo get out?"

"Isn't he in his room?" her father asked, looking through the blinds. "I didn't see anything..."

"No animal in their right mind would be out in this mess," Lucy's mom said, walking into the room.

As usual, her parents settled in to watch a movie that either had bad words or gross kissing, and Lucy went to her room. Normally it was to color, but not tonight. She had checked Foo Foo's room and he wasn't there. Once in her room, Lucy pulled on her jacket and carefully opened the window. The frigid rain pelted her skin until she pulled her hood up. Lucy hurried through the back gate and looked up and down the alley. In the shelter of the bush she found blurred prints in the mud. Rabbit prints. Lucy hurried down the alley, shielding her eyes while she scanned the darkness.

"Foo Foo!"

She paused under Mr. Jensen's tree, wiping rain from her eyes.

"Everyone must have their pets inside because of the storm..."

Just as she was about to give up and trudge home, furious yapping erupted from the alley. Lucy scrambled over a chain link fence, a jagged edge tearing through her knee. Now back in the alley, she peered over Mrs. Gilford's tall wooden barrier. Her fancy Pomeranian's tail could just be seen disappearing through the tiny dog door.

Lucy surveyed the yard, but it was empty. A cold feeling trickled down her spine and she looked down the alley. Glowing orbs were floating down the dark alley, moving steadily towards her. It was the new neighbor's Rottweiler, a broken chain trailing through the mud. Lucy heard him growl over the sound of the rain. She remembered that last week when she had been walking back, he attacked the fence as she walked past, scaring her so badly she ran home crying. Now, there was no fence. She turned to run, but she slipped in the mud and went down. She rolled over and screamed as the black shape hurtled towards her.

A white shape slammed into the Rottweiler with an audible thump and the dog yelped. The white shape let out a furious scream and pummeled the dog's ribs. Deciding enough was enough, the Rottweiler turned and ran, its stub of a tail pressed flat against his body.

Lucy stared as the shape hopped towards her and into her lap.

"Foo Foo!" she exclaimed, hugging him tightly. "You saved me!"

Lucy gathered Foo Foo into her arms and trudged through the mud back home. She walked inside and there was her mother, phone in hand.

Lucy burst into tears and ran into her mother's open arms.

"Mr. Stan's Rottweiler tried to eat me and Foo Foo!" Lucy wailed.

Only after crying for over an hour and promising to never go outside alone at night again did Lucy calm down.

Lucy went to bed soon after, exhausted but reassured from her ordeal. She was no longer afraid of Mr. Foo Foo.

A few days later, she was walking down the street, holding her mom's hand at the crosswalk. A poster fluttered in the breeze, stapled to a tree. A missing Rottweiler was pictured, a black collar around his neck. Last night she had found a black collar in the rose bushes. She tossed it down a storm drain and poked around the bushes until she found Foo Foo, cleaning red liquid from his whiskers.