My First Trip to America

By Yingqi Guan

I have known about America since I was born. I saw American movies, watched NBA games, drank coffee, and ate fast food at KFC or Pizza Hut. I thought I understood America a lot, but the fact is, I didn’t. After I arrived at JSU, I learned many things I didn’t know before. The American people have brown eyes, golden hair, white skin, and a positive attitude towards life. I enjoy living here very much, and I enjoy being a member of the campus. Everything for me is so fresh, just as it is for a newborn baby. I am seeing things with new eyes and noticing differences and similarities.

One of the reasons for the differences between America and China is based on religion. In the eighteenth century, many settlers carved out a new nation from the uncultivated country which we call the United States. Also, they brought all kinds of customs and lifestyles because different immigrants belonged to different Christian sects. Almost eighty percent of American people have their own faith. Whereas, only twenty percent of Chinese people have their own faith. I can see that religion has a strong influence on the American people’s lives. For instance, each bookstore has a shelf for selling Bibles; every Sunday morning people go to church for worship. When they get in trouble, they say “Jesus” or “Oh, God” to express emotions.

Just like the Chinese, people living in America are very friendly and hospitable. For example, last Sunday night, I was invited to my teacher’s house for dinner. We conversed in an easy, familiar manner and talked lightly and casually. He and his guests made me feel at home. The atmosphere was comfortable, and conversation was colorful.
I loved the food at the party, especially the potato salad. I ate chocolate cake at the party and at the cafeteria, and I have to say that it was really delicious but too sweet for me. Wherever I am eating, generally, the desserts are sweeter here than they are in China. Maybe I need a little time to get used to cold and sweet food and drinks here. American people love iced coke, chocolates, all kinds of desserts, and ice-cream. These delicious items seem to be as necessary to Americans as water is to fish.

As for campus life, most of the processes are familiar for me because students do the same things in China as they do at JSU. Chinese college students work hard on compulsory courses, prepare for final exams, worry about passing them, and choose other courses that are more interesting. During vacations, we find some part-time jobs to keep busy and to know society better. Students at JSU also take part in extracurricular activities, such as study groups, music groups, social work, and jobs. As a new student at JSU, I went to a pottery workshop and made a funny musical instrument last Saturday with the English Language Institute staff and students. According to the schedule, we will go to the Birmingham Museum this Friday, and later, I will teach a young American-Chinese girl how to speak and write Chinese. How cool.

Actually, there is a difference between my university and JSU. The buildings at JSU are not like those in China. Between buildings often lies grassy land or small woods. When I go walking, I can see many squirrels looking for food or happily playing with their tails. That is fantastic. The buildings in China are built in a tight or constricted manner with little or no grass between them.

In the future, maybe I will go back to China, but I will never forget all the time I spent in America and at JSU because the people here are giving me a totally different life experience.

[Yingqi Guan is a graduate of the Zhejiang University of Media and Commerce in Hanzhou, China. She is beginning a Master’s Degree in English at JSU this fall. These are her impressions of her first month in America.]

On The Brink

On the Brink, JSU’s conference on emerging Southern writers, faced a genuine obstacle this year: a giant snowstorm. So, when the conference was held on February 13, 2010, there were four authors instead of eight. Ted Dunagan (A Yellow Watermelon), Amanda C. Gable (The Confederate General Rides North), Thomas Lakeman (Broken Wing), and Neil White (In the Sanctuary of Outcasts) got to campus despite the snow. Dr. Don Noble of APT’s Bookmark
presented the authors who weren’t able to attend: Melissa Delbridge (Family Bible), Emyl Jenkins (The Big Steal), Joanna Catherine Scott (Child of the South), and Susan Rebecca White (Bound South).

Over 50 of the conference registrants were able to attend the event this year at the Stone Center theatre, despite the weather. Included were two author readings, a book signing, and lunch. All judged the conference its usual success. One registrant noted: “Oh, we just drove around the barriers in our way,” much to the delight and dismay of the On the Brink committee: Christy Burns (English), Linda Cain (Library), Gena Christopher (English), Margaret Copeland (English), Kenneith Calvert (Community Representative and retired School of Education), Steven Whitton (English).

Plans are underway for the 2011 On the Brink conference to be held on February 19, 2011, in the Leone Cole Auditorium at JSU. For more information about the conference, please contact Dr. Steven Whitton (256-782-5414; swhitton@jsu.edu) or Ms. Gena Christopher (256-782-5856; genac@jsu.edu).

 Imagining the Holocaust

Imagining the Holocaust is a writing competition for Middle School and Senior-High School Students.

“Why teach Holocaust history?” is a question that many have struggled to answer. “Imagining the Holocaust” is one way to teach Holocaust history and its importance to our daily lives.

To this end, interested English faculty at JSU developed the idea of “Imagining the Holocaust,” a writing contest designed to teach Holocaust history and its continuing influence in today’s world to middle school and high school students in Alabama. The competition is open to many kinds of writing, from essays to more creative approaches in poetry and fiction. Entries are due each spring, and prizes, including U. S. Savings Bonds valued at $100, $75, and $50 for the top three winners in each category, are awarded. This year, Margaret Copeland oversaw the middle-school entries and Susan Ashley, the high school entries. Steven Whitton was project coordinator.

Another Successful Year for Sigma Tau Delta

This year, Sigma Tau Delta has been busy with several activities. The group had its annual Scary Story read-around in October and its induction ceremony for new members in November. The group also sponsored two Get-
Acquainted-with-Sigma-Tau-Delta sessions in Stone Center to recruit new members. In February, the group hosted its annual Worst Love Poem contest. Members of Sigma Tau Delta viewed the Zeffrelli version of *Romeo and Juliet* as one of the year’s programs. The group sponsored a “Nuttist Professor on Campus” contest to raise money for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, a book project for children from birth to five years old, spearheaded by United Way of East Central Alabama. The group presented a check for $75 to United Way of East Central Alabama.

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**Jacksonville State University Writing Project**

The Jacksonville State University Writing Project site had another successful year, beginning with the summer institute in June 2009, at which 13 teacher fellows read, wrote, presented, and learned together as much as they could about being successful teachers of writing. The participants for the institute were as follows: Susan Ashley, Gena Christopher, David Myer, and Joy Maloney, all of Jacksonville State University; Ann Blackwood, White Plains Middle School; Deborah Fancher, Oxford Elementary School; Vanessa Bonner, Childersburg High School; Julie Higdon, Douglas Middle School; Jesse Kennedy, Munford Middle School; Sharon Meeks, Jacksonville State University graduate student; Julie Samples, Alexandria Elementary School; Theresa Thomas, Munford High School; and Allyson Tyler, John Jones Elementary School.

In addition to the summer institute, the site held a number of other events, beginning with the Writing in the Twenty-First Century Conference in July, cosponsored with the JSU Regional In-Service Center, at McClellan. More than fifty area teachers attended the event, keynoted by Michael W. Smith, author of *Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys*, with concurrent sessions provided by JSU Writing Project fellows. Another successful event was the second annual Technology Conference, sponsored by the site in October. In March, we held our first annual Administrators Luncheon, which was attended by 20 area administrators. The luncheon was a great tool for recruitment for the summer institute. It was coordinated by Gena Christopher and Rodney Bailey.

The past year has been busy for our site in other ways. It hosted the annual Advisory Board meeting; 20 of our board members attended the event. The *JSU Writing Project Newsletter* was published in the spring. The ninth annual Language Arts Olympiad was held in April. Our writing group, Scribblers, continues to meet monthly, and a number of the group’s members have had works published this past year. Two of our teacher leaders, Gloria Horton and Rodney Bailey, participated in a Web Presence Retreat in Denver in May. Two others, Lisa Light and Enithie Hunter, spent two weeks in July at the Holocaust Seminar for Educators in New York City.
JSU Writers Bowl

On October 28, 2009, the English Department sponsored the Fourteenth Annual JSU Writers Bowl. Fifty-five teams from high schools throughout northern Alabama traveled to the JSU campus to compete. The team competitions required students to write a series of text messages in response to their new substitute teacher: their choice of the Frankenstein monster, Count Dracula, the Wolfman, the Invisible Man, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, the Mummy, or the Phantom of the Opera. The teams were also required to write an Italian sonnet on the subject of their school’s Homecoming. For the individual essay competition, students were asked to discuss either the impact of the recent recession on the lives of their peers or the negative and/or positive effects of social networking via the Internet. JSU’s Steven Whitton was the chair of the Writers Bowl Committee, assisted by Gena Christopher and Randy Davis. Submissions were judged by the following JSU faculty: Susan Ashley, Don Bennett, Christy Burns, Margaret Copeland, Jennifer Foster, Larry Gray, Gloria Horton, Bill Hug, Raina Kostova, Susan Sellers, and Julia Wooster.

Southern Playwrights Competition

The winner of the 2009-2010 Southern Playwrights Competition is Southbridge by Reginald Edmund. It will be performed as part of the JSU Drama Department’s 2010-2011 season. We received 52 entries this year, and the committee is especially grateful to the dedicated group of readers who helped to choose the winner. For more information concerning the Southern Playwrights Competition, contact Joy Maloney (256-782-2835; jmaloney@jsu.edu).

Writers’ Club Article

The JSU Writers’ Club had another successful year. The RUM Fiction Contest brought a number of new writers into the club, and the RUM Poetry Contest had a record number of entries. At the poetry awards, the club hosted a
reading of favorite poems by several members of the English faculty. Finally, this year’s *Something Else* includes a broader and more diverse group of writers than the journal has previously represented. The club is looking forward to continuing to grow in the coming years.

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**New Faculty**

We are welcoming two new Instructors to the English department this Fall. **Tanya Trammell Sasser** is a graduate of the University of Montevallo and Jacksonville State University. Her teaching experience includes being a teaching assistant at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland; teaching 8th and 12th graders at Munford Middle School; and, serving as adjunct faculty at JSU. Ms. Sasser was named the William J. Calvert Award recipient in 2009 and presented her paper, “A Humdrum Life Indeed: Women’s Work in the Poetry of John Clare,” at the ACETA Conference in February 2009. She is a member of the Alabama Humanities Foundation and a volunteer for the Southern Voices Writers Conference, held annually in Hoover, Alabama. **April Dawn Walker** is also joining the English Department this Fall. She received her BA and MA from Jacksonville State University. After working in the homebuilding industry for some time, she came to JSU in 2008 as an adjunct. Ms. Walker volunteers with the Knox Concert Series and for the Intersession Program at the Donoho School in Anniston, Alabama. We are very pleased to welcome Ms. Sasser and Ms. Walker to our faculty.

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**English Department Foundation**

We appreciate the large number of alumni, friends, and department members who have generously donated to the English department over the last year. Your donations help support our many programs.

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**Donations can also be made online by clicking on “Make a Gift” on the JSU Homepage ([www.jsu.edu](http://www.jsu.edu)). Thank you.**

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**Postscripts Bios**

**Susan Ashley** participated as a judge for several writing and speaking competitions including Southern Playwrights, Imagining the Holocaust, and the College of Arts and Sciences Student Symposium.

**Rodney Bailey** is the Technology Liaison for the JSU Writing Project. He also directs technology conferences for the writing project along with his teaching duties for the English Department.

**Don Bennett** has been an instructor in the JSU English department for eight years. Last year, he taught Freshman Composition 101 and 102, Oral Communication, American Literature, English Literature, Advanced Composition, and the Theory of Composition. He serves on the JSU National
Writing Project Advisory Board. Away from school, Don and his wife Amy (singer, vocal instructor, blogger and mom extraordinaire) both like to perform with the Theatre of Gadsden and are active members of their church. They have two children: Timothy, age ten, and Paul, who just turned four.

Christy Burns served on the On the Brink Committee for emerging Southern writers and as co-sponsor for Sigma Tau Delta. In addition, she read entries for the Southern Playwrights competition and for the JSU Writers Bowl.

Gena Christopher teaches technical writing, American Literature, and oral communication. She serves on the JSU Writers Bowl Committee, the College of Arts and Sciences Student Research Symposium Committee, the On the Brink Committee, and the Writing Project Advisory Board. This year, Christopher directed the newly-opened English Department Writing Clinic, and she traveled to Taizhou University in Linhai City, China, as a representative of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Margaret R. Copeland has served on the Assessment Subcommittee and the JSU Institutional Effectiveness Committee. She also served as Coordinator of the Middle School Division for the "Imagining the Holocaust" Writing Competition and on the planning committee for the On the Brink Conference.

Randall Davis served as discussion leader for the Eighteenth Annual Literature and Medicine Retreat sponsored by the Alabama College of Physicians. Works discussed included Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses, Herb Gardner’s A Thousand Clowns, poetry by Thomas Hardy, and James Joyce’s Dubliners.


Robert Felgar received a faculty research award last May. He also submitted a 22-page article, “From ‘Native Son’ to ‘Eight Men’ and Beyond: Wright’s Optics as Recursive Symbols in His Post-Exilic Fiction,” for a collection of essays on Wright to be published by the University Press of Mississippi, and he taught an experimental course on film noir this spring.

Jennifer Foster worked as an advisor for the 2009 Orientation team and will do so again during the summer of 2010. Her course, The Bible as Literature, will become a part of the regular curriculum beginning in the Fall 2010 semester.

Joanne Gates was elected to a new term to serve as chair of the board of the Friends of Houston Cole Library. In November, the Friends hosted Robert Morgan (author of Gap Creek and, most recently, Boone). In January, local author Gene Howard spoke on his biography of former Alabama governor John Patterson. Joanne attended the Writing Project Advisory Board retreat and has edited fiction for the on-line repository of the works of Elizabeth Robins.

Larry Gray delivered papers at conferences held at the University of Notre Dame, at the British Film Institute in London, and at the University of York, UK, during the past year. His paper on Ayn Rand at BFI was one of the
few singled out for detailed review in *Adaption*, and Oxford University Press journal. Dr. Gray has been selected as one of twelve participants in a summer institute on the short story—led by Pulitzer Prize winner Louis Menand of Harvard University—to be held at the National Humanities Center and funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

**Pitt Harding** published an essay on Milton and Philosophy in a book-length collection titled *Milton in Context* from Cambridge University Press. This spring he taught an online section of the Survey of English Literature II, and he continues to teach courses in Creative Writing (Poetry and Fiction).

**Gloria Horton** serves as the Liaison Officer to NCTE for the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama, representing that organization on the NCTE Board of Directors. She is the chair of the steering committee for Academe, Jacksonville State University’s organization in support of faculty teaching, scholarship, and service. She served as Faculty Chair of the 2009 United Way Campaign and served on the United Way 2009 Campaign Cabinet. She served as ex-officio chair of the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Council Merit Pay Committee, and she was the 2009 chair of the Jacksonville State University Research Committee. Additionally, Ms. Horton has served as editor of the *JSU Writing Project Newsletter*, editor of the *JSU Writing Project Anthology*, and editor of *The Academe Newsletter*. She serves as a reviewer for The New *McGraw-Hill Handbook* 2nd edition, as editor for the publications of the office of the Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and has written an article on the teaching of reading to be published by the National Writing Project’s National Reading Initiative. She is a coordinator of the JSU Language Arts Olympiad. She is Director of the JSU Writing Project.

**Bill Hug** had an article accepted for publication in *Ethnic Studies Review*. The Title is “Jacob Riis and Double Consciousness: The Documentary/Ethnic ‘I’ in *How the Other Half Lives*.

**Katie Johnson** continued teaching English Composition, Oral Communication, and American Literature. In addition, she assisted other faculty by reading for the Southern Playwrights’ Competition and the Imagining the Holocaust writing competition. She also served as a judge for the College of Arts and Sciences Student Symposium.


**Raina Kostova** worked as an advisor for the summer orientation team. Along with her teaching duties, she presented papers and organized panels at conferences in Montreal, Canada; Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Saskatchewan, Canada. Her essay “*The Intricate Evasions of As: Supreme Fiction as an Escape from the Metaphysics of the Past*” was accepted for publication in *The Wallace Stevens Journal*.

**Joy Maloney** served on the Writing Project Advisory Board and acted as judge for the Language Arts Olympiad, the Robert U. Moersch Short Fiction Competition, the Imagining the Holocaust Writing Competition, and the Robert U. Moersch Poetry Competition. She participated in the 2009 JSU National Writing Project Summer Institute and tutored in the English Department Writing Clinic during the Fall and Spring semesters.

**Mica Mecham** teaches Freshman Composition, Oral Communication, and American Literature courses. She has served as a judge for department-sponsored writing competitions and is the Scholarship Advisor for Zeta Tau
Alpha. She presented “Using Active Reading as a Tool for Learning” at the Literacy in the Twenty-First Century Conference and served as an advisor for the summer orientation team.

David Myer serves on the Editorial Board for the Journal of the Alabama Academy of Science. He served as a reader/judge for the Imagining the Holocaust student writing competition. Last summer, he was assistant director of the Taizhou Teacher Workshop at the English Language Institute and teacher-fellow for the JSU Writing Project Summer Institute. Myer traveled to Taizhou University in Linhai City, China, as a representative of the College of Arts and Sciences in May 2010.

Elizabeth Nelson served on the English Department’s Competency and Review Committees. She teaches both regular and online classes for the department.

Hilda Norton continues to teach Advanced Grammar and English Grammar, along with American literature survey courses. She completed her seventieth year of teaching this spring.

Doug O’Keefe was delighted to have the opportunity to teach British Literature, and particularly enjoyed developing the courses in Eighteenth Century Literature. He was also pleased with the changes he made to previously taught courses, including the development of “contract grading” for graduate students. Further, he completed a comparison of the playwrights Charles Johnson and Isaac Bickerstaffe, a study that highlights some previously ignored cultural changes in eighteenth-century London. Finally, he continued his work as a creative artist, beginning to write a new musical in collaboration with the composer and JSU Drama department member Eric Traynor.

Andrea Porter presented her paper titled “Vietnam and the Expatriate Voice” at the 41st Annual College English Association Conference, held in San Antonio, TX, in March. She is currently revising an article for publication in the journal CEA Critic and is co-authoring a second edition of Moves Writers Make, a first-year composition rhetorical reader. Dr. Porter again taught a course on Literature of the Vietnam War for May Term 2010, and is serving on the Summer Reading Program committee, which is responsible for bringing author Dennis Covington to campus this fall.

Deborah Prickett is the English Department’s Technology Liaison. She also chairs the EH 101-102 Committee.

Teresa Reed is enjoying her tenure as the adviser for all the English majors & minors, learning a lot about not just our students but also the university. We currently have over 100 English majors registered. She also serves on the Honors Program Board, which has very actively been refashioning that program since May 2009. Dr. Reed recently returned from a trip to Italy, where she attended the 17th Biennial Congress of the New Chaucer Society in Siena. She helped to organize and chaired a session at the congress called “The Literary, Horticultural, and Historical Garden Traditions behind Chaucer’s Poetry.” Next summer, Reed will be traveling to Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the 46th Annual Medieval Congress, where she will be chairing and presenting a paper in a session called “Touching the Past in the Present.”

Valerie Rimpsey continues to sit on the advisory committee for Student-Life Multicultural Programming. She also serves as secretary for the African-American Faculty Organization for Responsive Education (AFORE), and she is
the faculty advisor for the Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Common Sense Media, and Exposure.

**Susan Sellers** just completed her 9th year as Director of the English Competency Exam, which includes coordinating the campus and Distance Learning exams. She serves as Scholarship Advisor for Zeta Tau Alpha, and she is the English Department representative for the Teacher Education Council and the Department of Secondary Education Advisory Council. Ms. Sellers serves on the following English Department Committees: EH101-102, Competency, Advanced Writing, and Speech.

**Steven Whitton.** He continues to work with On the Brink, the JSU Writers Bowl, and the Southern Playwrights Competition. He also remains an active part of JSU’s annual Holocaust Remembrance and of regional and state Holocaust organizations. He is Director of JSU’s new Honors Program.

**Julia Wooster** continues to be the English Department “social director”; she also continues to serve on department committees, as well chair the Education-English Liaison Committee. Ms. Wooster judged Imagining the Holocaust entries, volunteered for the Language Arts Olympiad, judged essays for The Writers Bowl, and attended various sports activities and Drama Department productions. She served as a judge for the College of Arts and Sciences Annual Student Symposium, and she continues to work to improve her Detective Fiction course.

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**Town and Gown: Norton continues to touch lives through teaching**

2010-07-13

*From the Jacksonville News
July 13, 2010*

*By Dr. Bill Meehan*

Jacksonville State University is fortunate to have many hard-working and dedicated faculty members.

One, Hilda Norton, is the epitome of hard work. Norton became a teacher in 1941 and began as an Instructor of English at JSU in the fall of 1965.

Norton recently celebrated her 90th birthday and will soon celebrate her 45th anniversary of teaching at JSU.

Over her many years of teaching, Norton has touched the lives of countless students who have entered her classroom. In fact, in the fall of 1968 on the third floor of Bibb Graves, she taught my freshman English class.

I remember Mrs. Norton as being very thorough and an outstanding teacher. She set a high standard for her students, but she made sure to help us meet
her expectations. After all these years of teaching, I think it is wonderful and amazing that she still continues to teach a full load of English.

When asked why Norton continues to teach, her reply is, “If I gave it up, what in the world would I do?”

Norton was raised in the local Williams community. She says she can still remember walking to the first day of school with her teacher when she was a child. Many of the people that Norton looked up to when she was younger were teachers, as that was the occupation of many of her family members.

“When I was six years old, I knew I wanted to be a teacher,” she says. “I guess that’s the reason I’m still hanging onto it, because I love what I do.”

Norton is very passionate about the material she teaches.

“Maybe sometimes I’m too serious, but I just want everyone to learn everything they can,” she says.

One of Norton’s favorite subjects to teach is American Literature. The course covers literature written during the early settlement of the United States. Norton says she loves to teach the course because students discover that the founding fathers of our country are “just men” who made a big difference. She says that the lessons learned in literature can be applied to life, and by working hard day by day, she believes people can fulfill their dreams.

Throughout her life, Norton has not only served as a teacher, but also as a wife and mother to two sons. She is also active in her church.

“She’s a really good person,” says Fred Williams, Norton’s brother. “She’s so caring and helpful.”

Norton says that one of the things she has learned throughout her years as a teacher and a mother is that listening is just as important as teaching facts. She says that many of the students who have stated that she has had an impact on their lives said that it was because she simply listened to them.

Williams, who also taught at JSU and helped to found the school’s Department of Technology, says that Norton is a great teacher because “she really enjoys it.”

“I still work because I love people and I love what I do,” Norton says. “You never cease desiring to learn and better yourself.”
Lauren Cunningham, student worker in the Office of Public Relations, contributed to this article.

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Postscripts, the English Department alumni newsletter, is now an online publication, available at http://www.jsu.edu/depart/english/postscrp/index.htm. You may download it there.

Please look for Postscripts online each year in August.

If you prefer a print copy of the newsletter, please call Susan Hurst, the English Department office assistant, at (256) 782-5412.

Thank you for your continued support of our endeavors,

Gena Christopher
Postscripts editor