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Alex Boles  
Junior

## Unwritten Letters

Junior publishes compilation of letters from students in the style of Frank Warren’s ‘PostSecret’

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“It’s such a good community being part of the University that it would be really easy to get it out there. So I went to Diane Johnson, and I told her about my idea, and she was really supportive throughout the entire process. She let the class use it as an extra credit assignment and it was pretty amazing, and it immediately took shape, and I had letters submitted from a number of people across campus that I know but don’t really associate with that often, but they were really cool.”

**Index:** Are the letters signed or anonymous?

**Boles:** “Most of them, if not all of them, are anonymous. It’ll say, ‘Love, Me,’ or ‘Love, The Girl in the Second Row’ — stuff like that. If they do sign them, it’s usually just like a first name or a nickname, but I usually, if they include a last name, I don’t keep it because on the Web site, I say that I will preserve anonymity as much as possible, but if you include something that gives away your identity then I’m not liable.”

**Index:** What were your expectations when you first set out to do this?

**Boles:** “Really my expectation was just to see who else did it, to see how popular it was as something you’d done in the past or something that people still do, or something that people really use for expressing their emotions because I know, in the past, you want to say that special thing to a guy but you’re too scared to, or you want to tell your parents how you really feel, but you never do. You just write it down or you keep it pent up inside. Eventually it has to come out, and I’ve always found that writing it really helps emotionally in just letting it go.”

**Index:** How many responses did you initially get to your blog?

**Boles:** “There were multiple communication classes, English classes, psychology classes that really wanted to incorporate it into — not their curriculum, but as an extra thing. So I got a lot of letters initially. I was getting upwards of 10 a day, and I was like, ‘Wow, this could really be something that people use.’ Now it’s mostly anywhere from two to five a day, but it’s still a steady trickle.”

**Index:** Did you always expect it to turn into a book?

**Boles:** “Well, since it was kind of inspired by Frank Warren’s ‘PostSecret,’ I figured if it ended up becoming popular then I would probably collaborate them into a book depending on the type of letters I received, and since I did receive such a diverse grouping of letters I figured it’d be beneficial because so many people can relate to it.”

**Index:** What has been the most interesting letter you’ve received?

**Boles:** “The one letter that always sticks out to me that I tell everybody about was someone who worked at a drive-thru, and she had a customer one day that had a daughter in her back seat. The daughter asked the mom to roll down her window, so she did, and the little girl looked at the woman in the drive-thru and called her pretty. So the letter was to the little girl saying, ‘No one had called me pretty before. It means so much to me, and I just want to thank you and your mom for rolling down your window.’ I cried. It’s not something that should be that emotional, but it made me realize that people do notice the little things, like a smile or telling someone they’re beautiful when you don’t know them. It could be the first time that day or ever they’ve been told that, so it means a lot.”

**Index:** Do you have a letter in the book?

**Boles:** “I have a letter in the book, yes. It’s to an old best friend.”

**Index:** Do you have any plans for another book?

**Boles:** “Yes, we actually just created a sister site called ‘Letters to our Fallen Heroes,’ and it’s heroes in the sense of military, firefighters and police officers, but also anyone you could attribute the word hero to. That’s what we want the second book to be. We have a lot of other ideas, like going through nursing homes and having elderly people write letters about their past and their history. One of the major ideas that we had is going to the children’s ward of cancer patients and having the family and the children write letters to each other. I’m still collecting letters, so there will probably be another ‘Unwritten Letters’ book.”



Mayank Dhungana/Index

The house located at 111 E. Patterson St. provides a home to eight international students who decorate to represent their country.

# Students lodge in history

BY SHANNON WALTER  
Staff Reporter

## Historical Homes

Amid academic buildings, residence halls and administrative buildings, there is one house on campus that is home to eight students, with the luxury of proximity to campus and a lot of space.

The building is known as the International House and is located at 111 E. Patterson St., between Magruder Hall and its adjacent parking lot.

E. Sandborn Smith, partner of Ezra and Edward Grim, built the house in 1924, according to the 1987 Historic Inventory. He was born in Salina, Kan., but relocated to Macon, Mo., in 1883 so he could attend St. James Academy. He went to University of Maryland Medical School to complete his degree, but immediately returned to Macon. He left again to serve as a field doctor in World War I but returned home at the end of the war.

In 1924, he built the Tudor Revival style house with his wife, Emily Frey Smith. In 1946, the home was left to their only daughter, Emily Montague Frey Smith King, and her husband, Boyd King.

When the Kings passed away, the house was left to their surviving family members, said House Coordinator Josh Huber, a resident

of the house.

Several members of the board for the house decided to use it as an international house for Campus Christian Fellowship, a group that reaches out to the campus and community to spread the word of God.

“Kevin McClumphrey, who is the international minister for CCF, had been praying for an international house which can be used to reach out to international students as a place for them to live and do other activities in, and that was also in line with what [the board] wanted, so it just worked out in an awesome way,” Huber said.

The house currently is home to seven international students — four from Nepal, and one each from Japan, Indonesia and Nigeria. Huber, from Nebraska, is the only American who lives there, and serves as a house adviser.

“The upstairs is defined as living area but the downstairs is pretty much [for anyone],” Huber said. “It’s weird when people knock. Everyone just walks in.”

Junior Berhan Prasetyo is

from Indonesia and has lived in the house for two years.

“It feels really nice to live in the middle of campus,” Prasetyo said. “That’s why I’ve been here so long. If they kick me out of here, I’m not going to leave. I’m staying here until I graduate.”

Prasetyo and Huber both said international students are free to use the house whenever they want for cooking, hanging out or studying. This feature is important most international students who want a home away from the residence halls. The residents of the house dislike people knocking on the door, Huber and Prasetyo said they would rather have people come inside without the formality.

“There’s always people hanging out everywhere,” Prasetyo said. “There’s people doing homework, playing music or doing whatever. We don’t know what to do when it is quiet.”

In early January, the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Cole Woodcox, department chair of English and Linguistics, played an important role in placing the house on the list.

“Much of the scholarship that I try to do now is [working] with local history to nominate buildings [for] the National Register

of Historic Places so that Kirksville buildings receive national recognition that they deserve,” Woodcox said.

Woodcox said the house shows what was important to the owners when they built it. The rooms open up very nicely into each other, providing a very informal layout that is suitable for everyday use and parties, he said.

The current residents use much of the space to relax. The atmosphere is welcoming, with comfy chairs throughout the living room and a large table in the dining room with homework and notes strewn about.

Many residents of the house have put up decorations representing their country of origin or other countries, Prasetyo said. There is an African room, Indonesian room, Chinese room and Nepalese room, he said. Past residents have left behind old decorations that truly make the house international, besides the people living in it.

“My room is bright green, which is very Indonesian, with lots of decorations around,” Prasetyo said. “I like the decorations from home. They make me feel comfortable and calm.”

# Play explores two time, space frames

BY HÉLÈNE BIELAK  
Staff Reporter

Complex but fun. Moral but off-the-wall. This begins to describe the atmosphere of “Skin Of Our Teeth.” The Truman Theater Department will perform the 1942 Thornton Wilder play at 8 p.m. tonight through Saturday, free admission, in the James G. Severens Theater in Ophelia Parish.

The play takes place in both 1942 and the Ice Age. George and Maggie Antrobus are living peacefully in New Jersey with their two perfect kids: Henry, who was originally called Cain, and Gladys, who is overprotected by her mother. The family employs a sexy and provocative maid, Sabina.

As Mr. Antrobus is inventing things such as the lever, the wheel and the alphabet, his family is threatened with extinction by an ice wall moving southward from Canada. Because the Antrobuses’ house is the only remaining house with a fire, refugees arrive from everywhere. Professors, musicians, neighbors, a monk, a dinosaur and a mammoth are gathered in the Antrobuses’ living room, for better or for worse.

All these characters cross time and space frontiers. Each act of the play finishes or begins with a catastrophe: Snowstorm, rainstorm and war, to name a few.

The “play within a play” is also a theme of “Skin Of Our Teeth” — Junior Sarah Hitzel, who



is playing Sabina, is not only analyzing her character, but she is also analyzing her role as an actress. Thus, at several times during the play, Hitzel stops the performance to talk to a fictitious stage manager to complain that she still does not understand the play in which she is performing.

Behind the constant offbeat humor, the play conveys a real philosophic lesson: Whatever the experiences we have as humans, we still won’t change, making the same mistakes again and again, which is expressed by Sabina when she says at the beginning and end of the play, “That’s all we do: always beginning again! Over and over again. After each disaster, they just rebuild the world again. Don’t forget that a few years ago we came through the depression by the skin of our teeth! One more tight squeeze like that and where will we be?”

The costume work fits the different periods and locations represented, such as the mammoth’s and the dinosaur’s costumes for the Ice Age or the shiny party costumes of the main characters in the second act, which takes place



Brian O’Shaughnessy/Index

“Skin Of Our Teeth” offers philosophic lesson about the mistakes humans make.

in the 1980s.

Senior Carley Surkamp said that another peculiarity of this play is the large cast. She said in total there are 26 actors.

“Normally we have smaller groups, from two actors to 15,” Surkamp said. “For this play it was a challenge because there were so many people playing several parts. But it is a very close group, and it has been a lot of fun.”

As the actors hung out peacefully backstage during a recent rehearsal, Joan Mather, the director of the play, remembered difficult past moments.

“We had a rocky rehearsal period,” Mather said. “Last Thursday was our last rehearsal with the cast, and of the 26 people of the show, nine of them had the flu.”

Saying that the cast got through the last rehearsals by the skin of their teeth is both ironic and true.

## International Professors

Professors hailing from foreign countries adjust to U.S. culture and the atmosphere of Kirksville

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“That was my first time ever coming to the state of Missouri,” Macauley said. “When I first came to the United States, people were asking me about culture shock, and I didn’t quite understand what they meant until I moved to Kirksville.”

Washington, D.C., is more similar to Sierra Leone, Macauley’s home country, than Kirksville. She was raised in the city, so life in the rural Midwest was unknown to her.

“I grew up in the city, so moving to D.C. was moving to another city — a more advanced city, but still a big city. Plus, there’s a lot of diversity in D.C.,” Macauley said.

Hena Ahmad, associate professor of English, is from Srinagar, Kashmir, India. Ahmad first came to the United States in 1989 to complete her graduate and Ph.D. work at the University

of Massachusetts-Amherst. Ahmad’s first trip to Kirksville in February of 1998 was all she needed to make her decision to move to Missouri.

“I was called here for a campus interview, and I fell in love with Truman and Kirksville,” Ahmad said. “Whatever I saw, even though it was the last week of February, I still remember it was a beautiful day, one of those rare things you have. It was almost like spring.”

Ahmad said her hometown is more picturesque than Kirksville because she is surrounded by the Himalayas and experiences the four seasons.

“Kashmir itself is located in the valley,” Ahmad said. “It’s 5,000 feet above sea level. From my parents’ house, on a clear June day, you can see the peak in the distance of the Nanga Parbat.”

While making their own adjustments to life in the U.S., Teillard, Macauley and Ahmad also help international students feel at home.

“I am the adviser to the Muslim Students Association and Sigma Lambda Gamma,” Ahmad said. “In the past, I’ve been asked to talk to the international students and I’m more than happy to do that. I would like to do more.”

Sometimes it’s just about coming together as friends and celebrating a shared heritage.

“I spend a lot of time with the French students on campus,” Teillard said. “We go to the international film festival. Every time that one of them has a birthday, we really try to do something [together].”