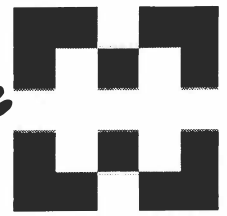




The Challenger



A Publication of:
William Rainey Harper College Honors Program

Remembering Lauren

“Laurie” Leanne Boncimino by: Kristin Kowynia

In early March the Honors Society faced one of the most difficult situations one can imagine. One of our members, Laurie Boncimino, passed away. Her disappearance was startling. When word came of her passing, we were shocked. But, when it was announced that she had chosen to take her own life, we were speechless. Nothing could have prepared us, or anyone, for this. It was so unbelievable, and no words could explain.

Learning to accept this loss was difficult for everyone who knew her. There are so many thoughts, so many questions, that each one wants answered. Some answers, or responses, may come with time. They may satisfy and they may not. Other answers will never

come. But answers are not what are important. What is important is to remember and celebrate the life



Laurie led and learn from her.

Laurie’s life was a blessing to each of us who knew her in any way: as a friend, a classmate, a student, a smiling face in the hall. Who can forget that contagious smile? One of those smiles that no matter the mood you may be in, you can’t help but smile right back. Each person I have spoken to about Laurie quickly mentions her smile and the personality that came with it. Laurie was the type of person who could make your day just by smiling or saying hello.

She said hello to everyone she came in contact with, whether she knew you or not. She made an extra effort to learn your name and find out more about you. Her family, friends, classmates,

(Continued on page 2)

April
2005

Editor:
Kristin Kowynia

Inside this issue:

<i>Remembering Lauren “Laurie” Leanne Boncimino (cont.)</i>	2
<i>Out of the Darkness (cont.)</i>	3
<i>One Wish Started It All</i>	4
<i>Thoughts from Laurie</i>	4
<i>Thoughts, Smiles, Stories, Memories</i>	5 to 8
<i>The Letter</i>	5
<i>How is Heaven?</i>	5
<i>From a Sister</i>	6
<i>Editors Note</i>	8
<i>Honors Program Announcements</i>	8

Out of the Darkness Overnight Walk for Suicide Prevention by: Chrystine Hanus

“Whenever you see darkness, there is extraordinary opportunity for the light to burn brighter.”
— Paul Hewson

In the time it takes you to read this article, 10 people will have attempted suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death—accidents being the number one cause—among college-age young adults. According to SafeYouth.org, in 1998 more teenagers died from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia and influenza, and chronic lung disease combined.

Experts at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) estimate that a suicide attempt is made each minute, every day. Depression is the leading cause of suicide—ninety percent of those

who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of death. Depression is among the most treatable of all mood disorders. More than eighty percent of people with depression respond positively to treatment. Unfortunately, many young people do not receive treatment because of the social stigma of disgrace surrounding treatment for mental health and suicide prevention.

Asking for help is not a normative behavior in our present culture. Additionally, many people believe moodiness and negative feelings about oneself are common traits among teenagers. These beliefs often make it difficult to distinguish between normative adolescent behaviors and serious problems associated with suicide and depression. Conse-

(Continued on page 3)

WE’RE ON THE
WEB!

[http://www.
HarperCollege.edu/
cluborgs/honors](http://www.HarperCollege.edu/cluborgs/honors)



Remembering Laurie Boncimino (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

and co-workers will attest to this.

In class, Laurie was nothing short of a dream student to her instructors; she was always prepared for class and eager to learn and participate. Her enthusiasm in the classroom is clearly undeniable. Her instructors have commented upon the sincere interest and participation she showed in each class. In her speech 101 course Laurie gave two memorable and worth-telling speeches.

Laurie took Jeff Pryzbylo's Honors speech course in the summer of 2004. It was a small class, even for Honors. One of the first speeches assigned was entitled "My Hero." Laurie gave this speech about her mom, Barb Kovacevich. She talked about how much her mom had meant to her throughout her life, how she had guided her and been her foundation. Laurie lost her father several years back, but was blessed to have her mother, step-father, and family right by her side. She explained how her mother was always there and how she wanted to be just like her mom. This speech was recorded for class, and surely this is a piece of Laurie that everyone, particularly her mother, will cherish forever.

Her final speech was the famous Cheeseburger Speech, a speech most every speech instructor, if not class, should hear.

Laurie walked in to her final speech with a bag full of McDonald's cheeseburgers and handed them out, but quickly instructing that they not be eaten until she had finished her presentation. As each student in the room stared down at that warm burger (most everyone had failed to eat breakfast that day) she continued to explain why not to eat them. When the class concluded, each ended up in the wastebasket next to the door, still packaged in its yellow and red wrapper. (However, a few were later recovered and replaced by only the crumpled wrapper once Laurie had left the room.)

Outside of the classes, where

most Honors members knew Laurie, she was a sister, a daughter, an aunt, a fiancé, a co-worker, but most of all a friend. Not only was she known for her smile and personality, but also for her ability to wear flip-flops year round, through the slush and the snow. You always knew Laurie was just steps behind when you heard that familiar *thunk thunk* on the ground just after Christmas.

From the enormous outpouring of support, she clearly was a friend to thousands. Many of her friends were among the one thousand that attended the wake and stood in line for upwards of three hours just to say goodbye, or the other thousand the following day at her service.

But Laurie also had friends in places far and wide, many of whom may never know of her passing and plenty more who could not travel the distant miles to show their support.

Laurie spent much of her time working and helping with those in need, both near and distant. Through her church she was able to reach out to hundreds, if not thousands. She worked with several of Willow Creek Community Church's youth programs as a counselor. She also worked at the Lake Geneva Youth Camp. Laurie chose to take a year off of school following graduation to work in Queretaro, Mexico as a missionary to help Universitadas college students there work through school and

make a better life for themselves and their families. She also volunteered in Chicago at a homeless shelter over the past few years, helping those in need find a warm meal, a cozy bed, and a smiling face to take comfort in.

One of Laurie's life passions was her love of the Chicago Cubs. She was, perhaps, one of their biggest fans. Her car was covered in Cubs gear. Both her front and back license plates were held in by Cubs holders and the car had a good coating of Cubs stickers. But her loyalty went beyond her car.

Perhaps you read her articles in the

March 2005 issue of *The Challenger*? Page 3 contained a full page article she wrote showing her excitement and anticipation for the upcoming season. The image of the "most beautiful baseball field you have ever seen" is breathtaking. In reading her article, you feel as though you are walking with her through the inner guts of Wrigley, to come out at the end of the tunnel into complete excitement, happiness, and beauty. You feel you are sharing her joy and her eagerness for the Cubs "to win it all in 2005!!" The feelings found in this article are Laurie: her happiness, her joy, her excitement...Laurie

Boncimino.

Both Laurie and her fiancé, Scott, worked at Starbucks coffee. Laurie was a shift manager, dealing with each and every customer that came in the door with her exceptional smile.

She would start work some mornings so early that many college students are finally crawling into bed, and then she would attend class all day once her shift ended.

Even while most students complained about their tiredness, Laurie would happily go through her school day, having probably risen earlier than anyone else in her class.

She was an exceptional student and was awarded the Motorola Scholarship for Excellence. She was recently accepted to Indiana University for the fall of 2005, and had just applied for an internship with the Make-A-Wish foundation.

Laurie wanted to pursue a career helping others. Her choices in life made that decision an obvious one. Laurie loved everyone, and everyone loved her. She will forever be in each of our hearts and we will always have beautiful memories of her in our minds. She will never be forgotten.

For more information about Laurie Boncimino, suicide awareness, and support, please visit:

www.LaurieBoncimino.com





Out of The Darkness Overnight (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

quently, every year thousands of young adults are lost to the black hole called suicide.

AFSP literally works through the night to expose light on the social stigma of suicide. Its Out of the Darkness Overnight event recognizes that suicide prevention and advocacy requires a community moving forward together, one step at a time. This summer thousands of people will walk from dusk to dawn along Chicago's lakefront in the largest single event ever for suicide prevention. When the sun disappears under the horizon on July 16, 2005, thousands of people will embark on a 20-mile emotional and physical journey. They will walk until the sun rises on July 17 to symbolize the dawn of suicide prevention. As they walk 20 miles through the night, they

will share stories, hands, tears and hope.

A glowing aurora of hope will branch through the sky this particular evening because every Out of the Darkness Overnight event participant will have raised a minimum of \$1,000 to support AFSP's "College Student Suicide Prevention" program. By walking in the darkness, they also will be helping to support new treatment research to improve the identification and treatment of those at risk for suicide; to develop new survivor support groups; to produce public awareness cam-

paigns; and to create an AFSP office in Chicago to offer ongoing suicide prevention efforts in the Chicago area.

The family of our own Laurie Boncimino has already begun the necessary training to enable the 20-mile all-night walk. Laurie's family is planning to raise at least \$6,700 in Laurie's name (Laurie's birth date is June 7, or "6/7"). If you would like to help Laurie's family reach their goal, please visit www.TheOvernight.org and search for their team name, "Laurie's Legacy."

Please consider making a donation to "Laurie's Legacy." Each step honors Laurie and others lost to suicide, and each donation is one step closer to saving a life by breaking the silence and stigma surrounding suicide and depression.

A special thank-you to Laurie's family and to the staff at Out of the Darkness Overnight for providing resources for this article.



Chicago • July 16-17, 2005

Out of the
DARKNESS
Overnight



Thoughts from Laurie

"Be thankful for the things that you have. Life is so short; don't waste the time you have here. Your family and friends are so special; don't take them for granted."

"Make history... in your schools, with your friends, in your families, or with complete strangers."

"Know that you are living a life with so many opportunities. Don't take all of the things that you have for granted. Appreciate the gifts that...

[have been] given to you. I hope and pray that you are loving life."

"Humility is knowing your limits and not stating them. And humility is letting someone else take the stage and clapping for them."

"Remember that love is nothing without trust."

"[G]rab your dreams and run with them. Allow them to shape who you are and who it is that you are becoming."

"We only have one life... what are we doing right now that is going to affect history?"



"We are often so caught up in wanting to change; we want to look like someone else. What are we looking for? We get so caught up in the outside we lose joy, confidence, contentment, and peace on the inside. Our insides need to be worked on and will be reflected on the outside."

"I'm eager to serve the homeless. Listen to hurting hearts. Pray for strangers. Share flowers. And love others."

"Take risks...especially when it looks like a challenge."

One Wish Started It All

by: Scot Laudenbach

Christopher James Greicius wanted to be a police officer his entire life. Chris believed that the police were the good guys in life. In 1977, Chris met a U.S. Customs officer by the name of Tommy Austin. The five-year-old Chris charmed the officer by announcing, "Freeze, I'm a cop!" The two became steadfast friends from that moment on and that afternoon Tommy promised Chris a ride in a police helicopter.

On April 29, 1980, Chris was granted the wish of riding in a police helicopter. Tommy called in a favor from Ron Cox, an officer at the Arizona Department of Public Safety, to fly Chris around the city of Phoenix. Ron asked other officers at the D.P.S. to assist with Chris's visit. Four other officers chipped in their time; one even offered a motorcycle ride to Chris. Chris politely declined, but thought the bike was "Neato!" Later that same day, Chris was sworn in as the State of Arizona's first and only Honorary State Trooper.

On May 1, 1980, Chris's new friends also presented him with a uniform made especially for him. The troopers even gave Chris a set of motorcycle wings for his sharp new uniform. On May 3rd, just two days after receiving his uniform and only four days since his wish had come true, Christopher James Greicius passed away. Chris was buried in Kewanee, IL. Two officers from the Arizona State Police made the trip to the funeral to say goodbye.

While flying home together these two officers, Frank Shankwitz and Allen Schmidt, decided that by becoming an officer Chris had realized his dream even though he had only been seven years old. These officers watched as Chris's life, although cut very short by illness, was transformed by the granting of his life-long wish. These two officers decided there must be other children, who were also ill, whom they could somehow help. The flight home from Chris's funeral is where the idea that became The Make-A-Wish Foundation started.

By the end of 1980, The Make-A-Wish Foundation had come to fruition. With a modest bank account of only \$2000, the foundation decided it had enough money to grant a wish. The first wish went to Frank "Bopsy" Salazar. Frank wanted to

be a fireman, ride in a hot air balloon, and go to Disneyland. With donations from the local fire department, a hot air balloon company and Disney, all three of Frank's dreams came true. Frank became the first "Wish Child."

Shortly after The Make-A-Wish Foundation granted Frank's wish, NBC aired a news piece about the organization on a weekly magazine program. This flooded the NBC offices with calls from people all over the country asking how they could donate or open a chapter in their areas. This was really the start of the foundation as it is known today. Today, 28 different chapters of The Make-A-Wish Foundation are operating around the country, with more than 25,000 volunteers. To date, more

than 127,000 wishes have been fulfilled for children who are facing life threatening illnesses, and Christopher James Greicius inspired it all.

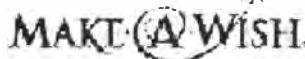
The children that are granted wishes today choose many different things. Most wishes fall into four categories: they are I wish to go, I wish to be, I wish to meet, or I wish to have. The Make-A-Wish Foundation tries to grant as many of these wishes as possible. To accomplish this, the foundation relies on individuals donating their own time and money. Although the foundation accepts money



from corporate sponsors, individual contributions still make up the bulk of its funding. The foundation has never used telemarketing or door-to-door promotions to raise funds, just the publicity that it gets through news agencies and word-of-mouth.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation grants the wishes of children from 2½ to 18 years of age. These children do not have to have a terminal illness; the qualifications are such that the child need only be facing a life threatening medical condition. The attending physician gets a say as to if and what type of wish may be granted.

Anyone can help support the cause of The Make-A-Wish Foundation. You can volunteer your time, purchase Make-A-Wish products, or donate through the foundations web site at www.wish.org. The Harper College Honor Society will be making a donation in Laurie Boncimino's name with some of the proceeds of the Harper College Honor Society sweatshirts; contact Andrew Wilson if interested.



Share the power of a wish.



. . . Thoughts. . . Smiles. . . Stories. . . Memories. . .

The Letter by: Barb Kovacevich — Laurie's Mom



I feel compelled to read and reread Laurie's letter left for us. Though most of it is too intensely painful and private to share with the masses, I know that there is keen interest in what she wrote. What did she say, what was she feeling? To answer, I'd like to share a glimpse of her words with you all.

The first several pages were actually written earlier, on Feb. 10th, to Scott, telling him of how and why she loved him, and how she wanted the world to know that their love was strong and unique. The next four pages are deep, a heartfelt analysis of what she had always thought was "right"...how she took her beliefs very seriously but doubts were creeping in: expectations, and frustrations with a world that separated people from each other rather than drawing them closer together. She pondered the concept that life is just one big game and it all goes back in the box in the end.

And then this in her distinctive hand, "WHAT DOES LAURIE NEED TO DO TO BE HAPPY?" She answers herself with "to find some-



thing that she is passionate about... and run towards that something with all of her strength. Those things: People. Loving people. Studying people. Watching people. Offering a glimmer of hope to the hopeless." She writes that

the things attractive to her are unconditional love, serving others, acceptance, faithfulness, and honesty.

And then the dark parts...she is sorry, she is very sorry, the pain, no way out, her pride; "I cannot handle the stresses of this world...it's not made for me." Oh, Laurie. If

only you had known...this world wanted nothing more than to cradle you and love you for who you are.

My prayer right now, this minute? That all those things you found attractive, Laurie, would be the heartbeat of all of us. To unconditionally love each other, accept each other wherever we are at, to be honest and faithful, to serve others in any way we can. That we would do this to honor you, but more, to honor the God we love.

How is Heaven? by: Greg Boncimino — Laurie's Brother

Laur, I just can't get over the fact it's been 4 weeks since you moved from 921 to your real home. You know that we miss you (that is, if you have listened in on our prayers or have been reading our blogs -- does heaven have wi-fi?). However, based on my understanding of heaven, there is no sadness -- so by that token, you probably do not miss us in the same way.

The reason is that you're with God now.

You are no longer in this temporary place; you are in your real home — the place you were destined to go since the moment you found Jesus. A lot of people like to comfort themselves by imagining loved ones in a place called "Heaven," but really that's nothing more than wishful thinking unless they have a sound basis for belief



imagine that. My tiny mind blows up. You must be experiencing life in a way that makes the moment you had on earth seem like Detention Hall. Back here on earth, we joke about heaven -- we picture angel wings... harps... the Cubs winning a world series.. Must really seem trivial from your perspective now, huh?

One thing I bet you really would want us to know is that it's better and further beyond anything we could conceive even in our wildest dreams. You'd probably tell us that it can't be grasped using earth-terms. Wow. I really can't imagine. But, you're there now -- even though you began questioning God in the end, and there was nothing wrong with that. It wasn't wrong to

feel like you needed to explore other views. What DOES matter is that God's promise wins no matter what. You had given yourself to Him earlier, and nothing changes that. You were (AND ARE) His.

I can't wait to see you again Laur. I have a real, truth-based faith. On that basis, I'm not making "wishful thoughts." I know I'll be there. Just a matter of **when** I've fulfilled the purpose God has called me to down here. I love you, Laur. See you soon enough. Your Big Brother

I wish that I could say that in the fall of 2004 I taught Laurie Boncimino's Honors Great Ideas of World Civilization course, but it is probably more accurate to say that I didn't teach the class, I refereed it. The class was a lot of fun for me; it was filled with strong personalities and even stronger opinions. It is the only class that I've ever been a part of that could turn a discussion of Plato, Marx, or Freud into a full-contact sport. Any teacher will tell you that over the course of a 16-week semester, students will naturally assume certain roles in a classroom. And Laurie's role was the peacemaker.

When the class would polarize around conflicting viewpoints and the volume started to increase exponentially, we could always count on Laurie to try to bring some semblance of peace. She would



offer some compromise position between the factions — some point of commonality around which the class might coalesce. I wish I could say that her

efforts were usually successful or even appreciated, but entrenched minds can be difficult to change.

In the last several days as I've listened to Laurie's friends and family share their memories of her life, I have realized that Laurie tried to be the peacemaker at all times. She didn't just try to bring peace to our factious classroom; she tried to bring that sense of peace wherever she went — to her classes, her friends, her family, her community, and even the world. What a tremendous gift to carry through life.

History repeatedly shows us that peace is a very fragile state and is seldom truly valued until it is gone. Perhaps so too the peacemakers. I think I speak for all of us who were touched by Laurie's life when I say that Laurie, I wish we could have given you the peace you so badly needed. And I hope that you've found the peace you were looking for.

"Seeing death as the end of life is like seeing the horizon as the end of the ocean."

- David Searls
— Professor David T. Richmond



... Thoughts... Smiles... Stories... Memories...

"Laurie had a very contagious smile. I remember she stood up to make a speech in front of dozens of adults & managed to spread her smile to each one of them."

— Mohammad Mooyi

"I didn't know Laurie, I never met her. But I met her through this tragedy & only wish to have met her. I feel as if a part of me knows her now through pictures & testimonies. She inspired me through this."

—anon.

"It's amazing how most of us had so little contact with Laurie, & we were so majorly devastated when she left us. Laurie has made me a better Christian through reading her words and learning about her life. She is what I now aspire to be."

— Nicole L. Ejzak

"I will always remember Laurie as the Cubbies Fan who wouldn't give up on her team. Laurie and I would talk a little baseball right before or right after a class we had together last semester. No Cubs fan ever truly gives up, but Laurie seemed to embody the "wait 'til next year" attitude. With her unforgettable smile she would tell you how the Cubs were the team to beat, no matter what, even if they were the team to beat next year."

— Scot Laudenbach

"I had the privilege of having Laurie in one of my classes. She had a sweet personality and somehow she had a unique way of standing out. When you spoke, you knew she listened and really did care about what you had to say. She was a humble human being with a big heart. Laurie left a legacy that I will always remember..."

—anon.

From A Sister by: Kristin Kovacevich—Laurie's Sister

Laura Boncimino. Laurie. Munch. La. Laur. Little Laur. Bonc. Boncimino. These are all names that describe my beautiful sister. They describe years of family, friendships, loves, co-workers, and classmates. Each name tags a memory with it. My sister loved people. She made it her life to know and understand those around her. She loved individuality and differences. She loved exploring the depths of people from their eyes to their heart. She loved being challenged by you. Thank you, Harper College, for making her better. She was better because of your thoughts, opinions, ideas, and questions of the world. Her and I often talked for hours of how impressed she was with each of you. Your knowledge of the world intrigued her already curious little brain.

My sister was a gem. She sparkled and shone her own light into this world. People craved to know her and to have her in their life. Lucky were the people who got to know her. She was spectacular, loved by thousands of people, and cherished to her depths for her heart, laugh, smile, hugs and words.

I loved her. I love her still to the last fiber of me. She was my past as well as my future. I was lucky enough to have her as a life partner. She knew the depths of my soul and we had plans for the future till we were 80 and in wheel chairs. My challenge to you all is to find a person like that in your life and dedicate your life to knowing that

person. Know the good and the bad. Know their favorite cereal. Know their favorite childhood story. Know what stirs their heart toward taking action in a community. Know what makes their stomach hurt with laughter. Know what makes their heart ache with pain and take the time to learn to the ways to make it better.

Laurie knew my life and I knew hers. I have found no greater blessing in my life. And while now the future often feels empty, I know exactly what she would say about every area of my life. She can still help me make good decisions for my life. She can still make me laugh and cry and feel better.

I have a lifetime of memories behind me and a lifetime before me. I wrote these words two weeks ago to a friend. I hope they can be with you as they were with her.... Ache if you need to ache but know that you are loved and cared for!

Mike Breau, a pastor at my family's church,

told us he found joy in watching a little boy skip. Then he did it and found joy. Skip down your hall or on your way to class. Even if it's only for 10 seconds. I did it with my nephew and it honestly makes you smile. Trust me, you'll feel like a little kid and the world will seem just a tad sweeter. You'll feel alive when you notice your heart beating just a little faster, each time your feet hit the ground or when the air becomes just a bit swifter across your face. And slowly you will notice a smile coming on. I'm learning that I need to remember that I'm still alive. And while often I don't feel that way or want to, I am. I am alive! And so are you and that is a gift.

I had to read a whole section for one of my classes, but this is an excerpt from The Buddha —"Meditation: The Path to Enlightenment"—that has stuck with me since: "Consider how strange and wonderful it is that man, on drawing in his breath, can immediately afterward breath out again; so little can life be trusted! And this is another strange and wonderful thing that, having slept, he wakes up again, and that, having got up, goes to sleep again, for many are the adversities of those who have a body."

We get small gifts of life every moment of every day. You know that! I know you've written about it and thought about it and yearned to live life remembering it. Live life as Laurie did...running, skipping, playing Frisbee, jumping out of airplanes (very carefully, of course!). Play hopscotch or golf in a hole in your front yard, swing as high as you can, lie down at a forest preserve and rest. Live life through your five senses and pay attention to them! They enhance the quality of life and the moments of your days.

Laurie robbed me, my family, you, the world of a lot of memories, time, help, smiles and experiences. However, she did not leave a lack of love or encouragement or spirit. You have similar gifts. Run with them and make the world better because of you. You already have and I know without a fraction of a doubt that you will continue until the day you breathe your last breath. You are so unique and so special; I pray that you will discover that for yourself.

Kick and scream and cry but smile a little, too, and maybe laugh. Don't let her ended joy rob you of all of yours. You are beautiful when you smile.

A beloved sister, Kristin





... Thoughts... Smiles... Stories... Memories...

I cannot adequately put into words how the loss of Lori Boncimino, a fellow Harper College student whom I never met, so deeply affected me. I have nothing noble or profound to say. I too have had to battle inner demons throughout my life and during some of my darkest days, I often turned to the writings of Leo Buscaglia.

Buscaglia was teaching in the Department of Special Education at the University of Southern California in the late 1960s when one of his students committed suicide. She had been one of the sets of "kind eyeballs" he always looked for in the large auditorium, because her responses showed him that at least one student was hearing what he said, so the news that she killed herself had a great impact on him. ("What are we doing stuffing facts into people and forgetting that they are human beings?") This incident led him to form a non-credit class titled Love 1A. There were no grades. (How could you potentially fail someone in this class? That wouldn't be very loving!)
http://www.buscaglia.com

At times like this I once again find comfort in Leo Buscaglia's words and hope that many of you will as well: "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of



caring, all of which have potential to turn a life around" "It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of mankind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely." "If I had my life to live over again, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I wouldn't try to be so perfect. I would relax more. I'd limber up. I'd be sillier than I've been on this trip. In fact, I know very few things that I would take so seriously. I'd be crazier. I'd be less hygienic. I'd take more chances, I'd take more trips, I'd climb more mountains, I'd swim more rivers, I'd watch more sunsets, I'd go more places I've never been to. I'd eat more ice cream and fewer beans. I'd have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones."

"In fact, I'd try to have nothing but beautiful moments – moment by moment by moment. If I had it to do all over again, I'd start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I'd ride more merry-go-rounds, I'd watch more sunrises, and I'd play with more children, if I had my life to live over again. But you see, I don't." —Leo Buscaglia (1924-1988)
— Jennifer Stevens



I first met Laurie in August of 2003 in one of my sections of Introduction to Philosophy. She was a great mix of being a serious student -- smart and inquisitive -- yet at the same time full of fun. Laurie made friends easily in our class. The next term, spring of 2004, I was delighted to see Laurie again in the Ethics/ English Composition link that Andrew Wilson and I taught together. Once again, Laurie really got into the subject matter and was a vibrant member of our class.

During that term, Laurie decided to apply for the Motorola Scholarship, and asked me for a letter of recommendation. We got together in my office so I could learn more about Laurie's academic and career goals. I learned that she had already been accepted at Indiana University for this year but had decided to stay at Harper. She talked about her desire to major in outdoor recreational sports to help people discover their unique talents.

Much has been made about Laurie's smile, for good reason. Her smile came straight from her heart. Her feeling for others was so genuine. She was so comfortable with people, giving, caring, and loved in return.

This year, this semester in fact, I'd often see



Laurie in the Honors office. And every Monday and Wednesday morning on my way to class, there she would be sitting on one of those metal benches in the Avante building concourse, just opposite the snack shop there. The last time I saw her was the Monday before. There she was talking with friends, smiling... being Laurie. It is still hard to grasp, a month later, that she was planning her death.

In philosophy, we talk about the difference between appearance and reality. Laurie, at least in the closing weeks or months of her life, seems to be a paradigmatic case of appearance and reality not meshing. To be clear: all of the lovely wonderful things about Laurie were genuine to the end. But it is obvious now that Laurie was suffering enormously even while she appeared to be doing well.

I imagine that all of us have yearned to turn the clock back to give us one more chance with Laurie. But we cannot. So we are grateful for the chance to know her; we honor her life; we carry her memory in our hearts.

— Professor Barbara Solheim

Fall semester 2004. Guitar class, 15 kids to a room, all of us forced to play, most of us terrified at the prospect.

The teacher: Mr. Vazquez-young guy-incredible guitarist, hysterical teacher-the man will do anything from a polka to a Yoda imitation, don't ask why, there are no reasons. Laurie: Young, noisy flip-flops, honest smile, always kind, 1st semester guitar student. Music is a wonderful thing-that is until you are forced to play it. And 1st semester guitar students are, overall, bad guitarists. Our fingers are always out of place, the strumming of our fears suddenly comes to life.

November 2004. Mr. Vazquez offered extra credit for anyone willing to play and sing and dress up as Elvis. The song? Falling in Love. Now call me crazy, but tight white pants, a big black wig, and a whole lot of hip shaking to our own bad playing, does not strike most of us as appealing. Laurie? She jumped at the opportunity. When the day came she walked in; huge smile, guitar

in hand, tight white pants, wig and all. When she played there was no fear, no twitching, and no nervous muttering. There was only laughter, a crazy Mick Jagger smile, the voice of fearlessness, simple, pure charisma. Laurie made us feel at ease, so we messed up, we pulled strings, we ruined songs, and we offended each of our musical ancestors. It was all ok, and she reminded us of that...

Back to the Elvis suit— she was supposed to wear it all day, but just between you and me, she didn't. She jumped right back into her colored tops and noisy flip-flops; she grinned and made me promise I wouldn't tell Mr. Vazquez. I was so relieved to see that horrid black wig gone that I more than consented. And now that you know the truth, I trust you will be kind, and help me keep my promise. — Natalia Serna



... Thoughts... Smiles... Stories... Memories...

Editor's Note

With this issue, we honor our friend, a friend we so dearly love and will forever miss. Laurie was a part of our team this semester, and her absence is strongly felt. We will never forget the joy she brought to us and her work.

We hope that those who were never so blessed to know Laurie know her now through this issue, and those who did know her can remember her through it.

Please live your life to its fullest. May your every day be filled with beautiful flowers, and every word you say be kind and loving.

Remember, there is always someone in need of you, your heart, your love, your personality, you. You are important to someone, and just that one someone makes life fruitful.



The rainy days will again be sunny, there is always a tomorrow, and there is always someone there for you.

— Kristin Kowynia

Please visit

www.LaurieBoncimino.com

to keep in touch with Laurie's family, learn more about her, suicide, and depression, find support, and grieve with the family. Also on the site are links to Laurie's family and friends blogs (web journals), a place where many have found help in coping and understanding. Please visit their blogs and the website and we can remember together.

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Editor: Kristin Kowynia

Contributing Editors:

Scot Laudenbach

Christine Hanus

Editor In Memorium: Laurie Boncimino

Faculty Advisor: Dal Harris

Honors Program Coordinator: Andrew Wilson

Phone: 847.925.6000 x6791 or x2139

E-mail: Awilson@harpercollege.edu

A very good poem hangs on my office wall. (If you're interested to know the author and title, let me know... or stop by and have a look.) This poem complains – rightly, I fear – that we're sometimes like a train of circus elephants: each enormous, wrinkled head pointed shyly downward, and each trunk curled weakly around the tail of the next one, and that one's trunk wrapped around the next one's tail, and on and on. We follow each other around and around the great tent, but what if the ringmaster – the man with the long coattails, top-hat, and grand gestures – loses his way? Aren't we likely to wander, too? Perhaps this happens more than we realize. We depend too much, and too often, upon the confidence of others, and we end up missing some things, some pretty important things. Perhaps more than anything, this is what makes me sad, even bitterly disappointed, about Laurie's death. Conventional wisdom told us that she was fine – obviously happy and healthy – so we missed the pandemonium lurking beneath Ms. Boncimino's (seemingly) endless good cheer. I, at least, was guilty of such costly oversight. I saw her often: in my classroom (I think she never missed a day) in the spring of 2004 and, afterward, in the hallways and byways of Harper. And I never worried; instead, I went about my day and assumed, with my head pointed shamefully downward, that all was well in the world according to Laurie.

Each of us inherits his/her own set of blessings and curses. Each is poised, too, to receive his/her own twists of good and bad fortune, and with experience each constructs a private notion of lawfulness versus unlawfulness, good versus evil, endurance versus surrender. Laurie held her own set of rules, and most of these rules seemed to blend quite perfectly with the planet's best rules: study hard, have fun, be respectful, be concerned, be loving. Now, though, it is clear that Laurie was pocketing a few other rules – rules about how to wrestle with confusion and pain, among other things. Many would say that Laurie's method of problem solving was probably (almost certainly?) stunning and grievously misguided, and they may be right. Personally, though, I'm beginning to close the book on this question, because however I classify Laurie's sudden departure from this life, one cold fact remains: Laurie herself is gone, and this is a tremendous, heart-sinking loss. It's really that simple. I would like to echo my friend David Richmond's remark (see p.5) and say that I wish desperately that Laurie had chosen another path, one marked by life. But she did not, so I hope, at least, that wherever she is, she has found what she was looking for and is resting very comfortably in peace.

— Andrew Wilson

I knew Laurie Boncimino for just a few months, but I am among those on the extended list who will remember her forever. She swiftly became one of my favorite people to see at school. Many people will remember her for her ever-present distinguished smile. Others will remember her kindness... the sound of her flip-flops in the snow... her generosity... the list goes on. I will remember her for the way she changed the atmosphere when she walked into a room. Her potent belief in justice and fairness for all could be sensed wherever she walked; if you could see her aura it contained the full-spectrum of colors because she felt all emotions and summoned every one of them to bring balance to her environment.



I feel her loss more than I ever would have expected; losing Laurie caused my faith in the universe to implode, then explode, and then to reassemble again. Laurie's faith in people extended to the ends of the Earth and back again, and in complete and utter contrast to mine which goes as far as I can throw a bowling ball. But I believed in her. I nearly shut down as I tried to analyze how someone pure as white light could be removed from a world that so obviously needs her healing.

But that's what happens to the great ones; the souls ahead of their time are brought to a more compatible dimension to continue their work. I'm studying so I can graduate with Honors from Harper, and I'll leave here with an Associate degree—a degree worth two years of work. But Laurie has already graduated with Honors from this lifetime. She is generations ahead of all of us.

— Christine Hanus

Honors Program Announcements

General

Honors Sweatshirts are still on sale for \$35 each. Funds raised will be used for spring events and to donate to "Laurie's Legacy" to support her family in the Out of The Darkness Overnight Walk

Upcoming Events:

April 29, noon — Faculty vs. Students Softball Game. Who will win this year?

May 5—Cultural Event, Romeo & Juliet at the Shakespeare Theatre.

May 12—Inspiration Café

Upcoming Discussion Topics:

May 4—The 60's & 70's with Guest Professors to be announced

May 11—FOOD AND FUN! CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

http://www.harpercollege.edu/cluborgs/honors