

The Wall

Fremont Scott

Course: ENGL 101

Instructor: Ramona Cutrer

Essay Type: Personal Narrative

I remember the van. It was the gray of dry clay, and it had maroon stripes on the sides that were the same color as maple leaves during the fall, but it was winter now. It was my mom's van, and I was riding in the back seat. I was eight years old, and she had pulled over on the side of the road because she had "some sad news" to tell me. My legs didn't touch the ground. They just dangled with my sorrels about to fall off. I was all bundled up in the puffy winter clothes that mothers dress their children in to protect them from the cold, but it was only slightly chilly out. She turned to me with tears in her eyes. And then she said, "Andy died yesterday."

Andy was my best friend. I met him climbing on the wall in my backyard. I would climb up on that wall and follow it to the right; it was the freeway from backyard to backyard. I would see how far I could take it before I would run into a bush or tree that blocked my way and turn back, not in defeat, but in preparation for another attempt on another day. And then one day I got to the end, and I saw Andy sitting under a crab apple tree in his yard. His yard that I had discovered. I showed him my wall. I showed him how to take it up and down, from yard to yard, and how to take it to my house. And from then on, it was our wall.

No one even told me he was sick. There wasn't any time to, even if they thought I could have comprehended it. He had some rare form of leukemia, and no one knew anything about it until three days before he passed away. My mom tried to explain to me that they had tried to help him get better, but that it didn't work. She said that he had gone to heaven. I knew that heaven

was where good people went, so I decided that if he wasn't here anymore, then she was probably right. But I don't remember being sad. I remember being confused.

When I saw him at the funeral he didn't look real to me. I turned to my mom and said, "He looks like he's asleep." The priest gathered the children and took a theologian's stab at trying to clarify the facts of life to a small group of children my age. I don't remember a word he said. I remember watching Andy's younger brother cling to his mom's leg, and the look on her face.

The tears came that night, at home in my own bed, by myself. I cried and cried and cried until my parents came into the room, and then I cried some more. I wasn't crying for the tragedy. I wasn't crying for his parents. I was crying because I was scared. I didn't want to go to sleep.

When I woke up I went to the wall. I pulled myself up and looked down towards Andy's house. But I didn't go that way. I went left, to explore the other part of the wall. Andy had always said that we should go that way, but I always told him there were too many trees in the way. But that was day I started to try and get to the other end of the wall, the part I had never seen before.

Fremont Scott is a pre-med major. Ramona Cutrer was his English instructor.

Ms. Cutrer's Comments: *The purpose of this assignment was to relate an event that changed the direction of your life. Not only does this student successfully accomplish this task, he does it with a certain amount of understatement. The instruction "to show, not tell" is beautifully and subtly completed. There is also a nice balance of long and short sentences, unusual similes, and the sense that the author allows the reader to view this event through the eyes of an eight-year-old. Overall, the writing is clean, simple in technique, yet powerful in its message.*