

The Prisament Paper

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Governor Cuomo announced school buildings in New York State will be closed for the remainder of the academic year.
- Elena participated in the first Virtual Theater-O performance, titled “In My Room”. See photo, page 2.
- The New York State Board of Elections cancelled the Presidential Primary on June 23, due to the coronavirus pandemic and lack of competition.

THE CARDINAL AND THE CHECK-ENGINE LIGHT

A TRUE STORY

by Rozanne Prisament

Back in the olden days, cars were simple-- no seat belts, air conditioning, fog lights-- but most importantly, no “check-engine” light.

If this mysterious warning appears, the car cannot pass inspection, get reregistered, insured, or be driven. Many times it is simply the result of a technical glitch, but just try, try getting it to go off.

This happened to Clifford’s beloved Passat. He spent days, weeks and months trying. He went to mechanics in Ossining, Dobbs Ferry, and Anthony’s friend in Yonkers. In desperation he even tried a dubious national chain in Tarrytown. Nothing worked.

As the registration deadline approached, I went to the Cabrini Shrine for their annual birthday celebration. Mother Cabrini would have been 167 years old. Cardinal Timothy Dolan presided over the ceremony. Afterwards, he mentioned he was looking forward to eating a hot dog at the barbecue, something he didn’t have at his home in midtown Manhattan.

In the garden, though, he was sidelined by well-wishers and clearly did not want to interrupt their photo-taking and conversation. Every once in a while he would glance wistfully over at the barbecue, with its tantalizing aroma. Seeing this, I skipped the line and flung money at the aproned chef, urgently yelling, “the cardinal needs a hot dog!” He grabbed a succulent frankfurter, smothered it in sauerkraut and delivered it to him. When Cardinal Dolan found out I was responsible, he gave me a bear hug.

Moments later, I could hear the beep from a text message:
“Mom, you can’t believe this! The check engine light is off.”

Sometimes the best solution is the simplest one—that is, if you can find a hungry cardinal!

4/24/2020



Signs of Spring

Clayton Prisament (left)
Evelyn Prisament (right)



CHAIN STORY INSTALLMENT 6

Continued by Lucas and Clayton Prisament

Email us to submit a continuation. The only rule is you can’t end the story!

I tried remembering, but I couldn’t. And then suddenly I had a flashback of me as a little girl playing in my backyard collecting acorns in a basket. I remembered calling mom and dad, but there was no answer.

“Mom, Dad, help me!”

My mind instantaneously went black. I realized that was the first time I ever had a mental block. Not when my mom died. Or was it? I had no recollection.

I must have looked pale as I looked at the glass.

“Who is she?” I asked.

The “FBI” agents seemed to ignore me.

The younger one replied without answering my question, “C’mon, the commander is waiting”.

The older one led me to the commander’s room. I could not help but notice that the younger one was missing now, again. I stopped in my tracks. My eyes were glued on the older man’s gun. I knew I should not, but I also knew I would die here anyway. I made my move, grabbing his pistol. He noticed, but did not resist. I took the pistol and pointed it at him.

I opened my mouth to yell something when I heard a deep voice. “Now, now, you do not want to do that, do you.” I shivered.

“You heard the commander”, the agent said. “Lower that blaster”.

My hands shook as I lowered the pistol. Then I heard somebody whisper in my ear:

“We’re not the FBI, we’re the FBIA, that being Fenriz’s Body Imitation Agency”.

to be continued..

THE WORST FORM OF MOVIE-SELECTION (EXCEPT FOR ALL THE OTHERS)

by Elena Prisament

One of the most common causes of discord among family members is choosing entertainment. Everyone has had the unpleasant experience of siblings yelling for a half hour over what board game to play, who gets to play video games first, or which movie to watch that night. In our family, there are a wide variety of types, styles, and genres of movies that different people would find enjoyable, leading to long hours spent arguing, debating, and yelling.

However, last year, we came up with a system to overcome this repeating conflict. Sometime in May or June of 2019, one of us had the simple and genius idea... to vote! Having been raised in a democracy that worked well, this was the one thing about movie choosing we could all agree on. It transformed movie night from a chaotic to an enjoyable experience. The first time we did this, every person in the family chose 2 movies they really wanted to see. Then, we all watched the trailers together. After that, we voted!

The voting first began as a very archaic process. Everyone would rip a piece of printer paper off a sheet, and rank all of the movies from 1 to 10 on it. Then they would fold it and give it to the vote counter (a member of the family). The vote counter would then take another piece of printer paper (a whole one this time) and make 10 boxes - one

Continued on Page 2 ...

FROM CAPE TOWN TO CALIFORNIA

Interview of Alecia Siegers, Au Pair to Skyler Prisament

Questions by Elena, Clayton and Lucas Prisament; Transcribed by Clayton and Evelyn Prisament



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ALECIA SIEGERS

Far from Home
Alecia Siegers, au pair to Skyler, is far from her family in South Africa, but thankful she can talk with them daily.

Q: How is your family doing in the current situation?

A: At this present moment my family, my parents are doing well. Right now everything is going back to normal [in South Africa]. In South Africa everybody is expected to wear face masks. They have to take precautionary steps such as washing hands. They were in lockdown for a full month. This past Friday the lockdown ended. Some of the business just opened. But there are some guidelines that we have to follow such as wearing a mask when entering and when leaving the premises. But other than that everything else is back to normal. They are doing better than the US.

Q: What is it like to be away from your family at this time?

A: Being away from my family is not that difficult because I am literally in touch with them every day when I’m off work. It’s like I’m here, but I’m also there tomorrow. Technology has made it easier to communicate with them. I know eventually I will go back home and see them.

Q: How are you spending your time during this lockdown?

A: I am currently busy with an online course on stress management, so I have assign-

Continued on Page 2 ...

COVARIANT COMPUTER CATS

by Ray Prisament

A common misperception about computer science is that it’s primarily a “technical” pursuit, as popularized by movie hackers typing into fast-moving screens of cryptic letters, deciphering secret codes.

It can be those things. But what draws me to the field are where it intersects with the more abstract inquiries of philosophy, metaphysics, and ontology.

Ontology studies the nature of being. What entities exist? How can they be grouped into categories? And most relevant here: What are the relationships among categories?

As a child (and sometimes still) my mind raced with ontological questions, though I didn’t know the term. And I didn’t know that Plato and Aristotle had grappled with versions of these same questions, thousands of years prior.

For example: you must be 16 years old to drive a car. (Unless you are my kids, who will be allowed to drive when they turn 35.) What, I used to wonder, would happen if a 15-year-old were pulled over, and presented the defense that in fact they were driving a *Buick*. There are no laws against driving a Buick. The obvious retort, that a Buick is a kind of car, simply invites more questions: prove it. I say a Buick is a fancy bicycle. Or perhaps, it is a new thing, in its own category, but certainly not a *car*.

What are the attributes of a *car*, and can an object ever truly be said to be a *car*?

I had a lot of time on my hands.

The connection between ontology and computer science is most apparent in the concepts of **covariance** and **contravariance**. This sounds complex, but it’s quite intuitive, and I promise I’ll start talking about cats now.

In the last issue of the Prisament Paper, Aunt Barbara shared Mimi’s advice: get a cat. My own kids agree wholeheartedly. They adamantly want a cat, as soon as we can decide on a name. The finalists are “Password” (my choice) and “Pikachu” (theirs.)

Here’s a scenario. You ask your parents for a cat. They arrive at your birthday with a box (with air holes!) Before you open it, they tell you what’s in it.

• If Mom says: “We got you a cat” – you will be thrilled.

• If Mom says: “We got you a calico cat” – you will still be thrilled. A calico is a specific kind of cat.

• But – if Mom says: “We got you a pet” – you will be upset! A pet could be a goldfish or a bird. You did not want a goldfish or a bird.

So, lesson one: when someone asks for a thing, you may give them what they asked for, or a more specific version

Continued on Page 2 ...

On page 2: Poetry! Fun Zone! and more!

MOVIE SELECTION

From Page 1 ...

for each movie. In each of the boxes, she/he would add all the scores given to each movie. After the mental math is done, the other voters would come as the counter announced the movies in order of rank (The movie with the smallest score in first, and the one with the largest number in last place).

Although our method of casting votes has changed and modernized dramatically, the basic idea remains the same: The top three movies get watched, the last two get kicked out, - or relegated - and the five in the middle stay in the running for the next time.

Each round, every family nominates one new movie. Combined with the five surviving nominees from the previous round, this keeps the total number of options at ten.

After a few times of doing this process, we began to update the task. The first improvement was to have the computer do the math instead of a person doing it by hand. We still had everyone write down their choices on paper, but the vote counter had a much easier job. They would simply type in the numbers onto a Google Spreadsheet, and it would automatically calculate the scores! This was an enormous upgrade, but we soon found that we could modernize our process even more.

Our current form of voting is by using a Google Form. In it, there are all 10 of the nominated movie trailers, as well as a table to rank the films! This development made our voting system completely digital, and brought it up to date with the times. We now have an effortless and argument-free way of choosing which movies to watch! Our family often enjoys joking that we are our own democracy, and truly, it works well. The movies that win almost always are ones that we all end up enjoying. With this system, we are all exposed to each other's tastes in drama while still getting to watch our own styles. We spend quality family time together, without any conflict!

Our family has learned that democracy doesn't only have to be for powerful governments. Even within a household, a new and peaceful way of making decisions can make a large difference in family interactions... especially when it comes to movie night!

FROM CAPE TOWN TO CALIFORNIA

From Page 1 ...

ments that I am busy with. When I am not working on that I am usually either talking with my friends and family or I am watching a TV series.

Q: Can you give us advice from what you have learned from your Stress Management class? The topic seems very timely!

A: I have learned a lot from my class such as taking a negative situation and twisting it around to see the positive side of it. It is very good. I can apply what I have learned in this time of the coronavirus. The coronavirus lockdown has given us more time to spend with our family and learn about each other more.

Q: What made you want to come to the U.S.?

A: When I was in high school I always wanted to become an Au Pair, because on career day there was this Au Pair that came to our school and told us it was such a good experience to be in the U.S.A.. She said she loved independence and said it was great to see the world outside of South Africa. My parents said that I should study first and get a career, and then do what you wanted to do. Before coming I went to school and I studied at a nursing college. My parents then gave me the permission, you can do what you want to do. Then I worked a few months at the hospital to save my money and that's how I got to America. So basically it was a way for me to see a different culture. At the same time is a way for me to grow as a person and work on developing myself before all the responsibilities of life start. Almost like my break to find myself, travel the world and find myself. This is why I came to the USA. It has not been even a year yet, but I have learned a lot already.

Q: How does Skyler contribute to your goals when coming here?

A: A lot! She is like a bundle of joy. She says the sweetest things. I do not know if she can tell when I am not feeling well, but when I need it she comes and tells me "I love you". I go "Oh girl". Also she is learning some Afrikaans. She says "I love you" in Afrikaans now.

Q: I remember you telling me that you won a playwriting contest?

A: When I was young, I invested a lot of my time in arts and culture. I would do poetry and say it in front of a crowd. There was a contest and since I was in poetry, and some of my friends as well, we decided to write a play in Afrikaans, so we wrote a drama and we got highest honor. We even got a trophy! Our play was also published. Sadly some people are trying to ban Afrikaans completely, and an organization is trying to help us and keep it running.

COVARIANT COMPUTER CATS

From Page 1 ...

of that thing. But you may *not* give a more general version of it! In computer science, this is called a covariant relationship.

It seems obvious. Yet surprisingly, there are situations where the opposite holds true.

Pets occasionally need to be transported. Imagine you have a friend about to buy a cat, and you want to surprise them with a carrier.

• If you buy your friend a carrier for cats, it works fine.

• If you buy your friend a carrier that fits any pet, that is fine too: the cat will fit.

• But if you buy your friend a carrier that is (somehow) specialized to hold only Siamese cats, that may not be work! You don't know exactly what kind of cat they plan to buy.

Ergo, lesson two: if someone needs a container into which they will place things, you may give them a container that holds more general things. But you may not give them a container that holds more specific things. This is called a contravariant relationship.

Finally, imagine you regret owning your Calico Cat and want to trade it for a dog.

• If someone says, "I know a man who trades unwanted pets for German Shepherds" - this is great news! Your cat is an unwanted pet. A German Shepherd is a dog.

• If however - "I know a man who trades cats for other pets" - this is a bummer. He'll take your cat, which is good, but can't guarantee you'll get a dog (vs. a goldfish) in return. No deal.

• Also bad - "I know a man who trades Siamese cats for dogs." The dog part sounds great, but you don't have a Siamese cat to give him.

Thus, lesson three: functions are contravariant in their inputs (what he buys from you) and covariant in their output (what he sells back to you.)

What fascinates me about these relationships is that they are fundamental to the nature of existence. Like the laws of mathematics, they are discovered, not invented. If an alien society exists in another galaxy, gifts in that society will presumably still be covariant, containers contravariant (for insertion), and functions contravariant in inputs and covariant in outputs. Their pets might be different though.



Virtually Me...

Elena performed in the first-ever all virtual Theater O Performance, an original work written by the performers titled "In My Room".

MIDNIGHT RAIN

by Evelyn Prisament

Poetry

Lying in bed
Closing my eyes
Feeling the heaviness of my tired body
Concerned for our tomorrow
Hopeful for another day
Listening to falling rain starting to stop...
But then,
As soon as I feel slumber coming
Loud drips of rain stream down at a steady rhythm
Enveloping my whole being
I feel united to the rain drops
Beating to my heartbeat
Making me dizzy while I keep my eyes closed
Partaking in something bigger than me.
I just listen.
I just experience
I become one with the rain
One beat at a time
One drop at a time
But then,
As it slows down...
As the rain stops...
I fall
A
S
L
e
e
P

Answers to Are You Smarter Than A 4th Grader:

1. Robert Kraft
2. Denver Broncos
3. Tampa Bay Buccaneers
4. Joe Burrow, Chase Young, Jeff Okudah, Tristan Worfs, Tua Tagovailo
5. Tea Tax

6. Sons of Liberty
7. George Washington
8. Plymouth
9. 1492
10. Gabon
11. Chevrolet
12. #10
13. 47 rating
14. 8 and 1/4
15. Positive
16. Multiplied by Itself

17. Product
18. Prime Number
19. 5,050
20. Wuhan, China
21. Sweden
22. Cells
23. Make a Hypothesis
24. Johannesburg
25. Brazil
26. United States of America

27. Egypt
28. Atlantic and Pacific oceans
29. Alaska
30. Reykjavik
31. Alaska (look it up!)
32. Bering Strait
33. 21 hours (b/c of int'l dateline)
34. V Bucks
35. Ninja

36. Epic Games / Burst Assault Rifle
37. Wood
38. Mythic, Legendary, Epic
39. Season 2
40. The Halloween October Update
41. Secret Service
42. Speaker of the House
43. 2/3 Majority

Solutions to last week's Word Scramble:

- Universe
World
Physics
Imposter
Newspaper