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Junior - Majoring in Journalism

On my sixth birthday, I received two magazine subscriptions from two equally well meaning aunts. The first was Highlights magazine, and other than some interesting picture-search puzzles, I can't really remember what it contained. The other was National Geographic.

From the very beginning, that magazine captivated me. At first, it was the beautiful pictures, so dynamic and evocative. I would sit for hours and just look at them, marveling at the strange people in their strange clothes, the washed out city vistas of third-world metropolises, the incredible green of the deep jungle. I was entranced by the ruined grandeur of crumbling pyramids and fascinated by the taboo thrill of the occasional bared breast.

As I grew older and my tastes matured, the words started to have as much significance as the images. As I read the stories associated with the pictures I loved, I realized that the reason so much of what I saw in the magazine seemed alien was because it *was* alien. The plight of a Buddhist monk in Burma, even when presented in beautiful full color, was not something with much meaning or relevance to my everyday life. Yet that didn't mean that monk didn't exist, and it didn't make his burden any lesser for the fact that I'd never heard of him. Gradually, I became aware of just how large and complex a world it was that I was living in.

For me, this is the essence of what journalism is. At any given minute, there's so much more happening in the world than most people are aware of. Important, interesting, even groundbreaking events take place every single day, but they only rarely intrude into the surface level humdrum of people's everyday life. The journalist, however, is there to make them aware. He or she goes out and finds these stories, and brings them back to the people. And, as was my case, those people have their world expand just a little.

I didn't really realize it consciously as a six year old, rooting through yellow-rimmed magazines looking for colorful animals or the odd naked lady, but this was the sort of person I wanted to be.

With the techniques I'm learning here at San Jose State, I hope to be able to go out and find the things that people don't normally see, to talk about the things people don't normally talk about. And while with technology changing, tomorrow's children are more likely to find it on a computer screen than in the pages of a periodical, I hope my work can someday provide someone with the sort of experience I had.