

2005

A Window to the Past

Christopher Ouimet
St. John Fisher College

[How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?](#)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ouimet, Christopher (2005) "A Window to the Past," *The Angle*: Vol. 2005: Iss. 3, Article 4.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2005/iss3/4>

This document is posted at <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2005/iss3/4> and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.

A Window to the Past

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I knew I shouldn't be there, but I was there just the same. I had no business peeking into the window of this strange man, in this strange town. But that was the funny thing. This man shouldn't be strange to me. And if things had turned out differently, I might have actually lived in this town. But things hadn't turned out differently, and everything was strange. I was strange. My childhood was strange. My father had left our family more than nineteen years ago, and I hadn't even seen the guy in thirteen of those years. Hell, I wasn't even sure this was his house. But I knew it was. I could feel it. I had the Internet to thank for that. It's amazing that you can find anyone's exact address, as long as you know a name."

Cover Page Footnote

"Third Prize Winner" Appeared in the issue: Volume 5, Issue 3, 2005.

CHRISTOPHER OUIMET

A WINDOW TO THE PAST

I knew I shouldn't be there, but I was there just the same. I had no business peeking into the window of this strange man, in this strange town. But that was the funny thing. This man shouldn't be strange to me. And if things had turned out differently, I might have actually lived in this town. But things hadn't turned out differently, and everything was strange. I was strange. My childhood was strange. My father had left our family more than nineteen years ago, and I hadn't even seen the guy in thirteen of those years. Hell, I wasn't even sure this was his house. But I knew it was. I could feel it. I had the Internet to thank for that. It's amazing that you can find anyone's exact address, as long as you know a name.

So there I was, three steps away from the bearer of half my chromosomes. I couldn't bring myself to knock on the door. What if he had a whole new family? What if he forgot about me? What if he just doesn't ever want to see me again? What if I have brothers and sisters? I was so excited and so scared at the same time. I was beginning to think I was better off pretending he doesn't exist. I mean, there really never is a reason to disturb the status quo if things are fine. My mother and brother and I were doing just fine on our own, and we had put all of this "dad" business behind us. It took years to get over the fact that I have no dad, or to at least pretend I had no dad. Upon knocking on this door, I could be reopening a Pandora's box of emotional strife.

It was beginning to snow, but you could only tell by looking at the streetlight's beam. The flakes would suddenly appear at the top edge of the beam and disappear just as fast at the bottom edge. While staring at the snowy phenomenon, I was startled by the front window suddenly illuminating with yellow light. Life. Not yet sure I wanted to make my presence at this house known, I stepped over to the window and peered in. I only did this because of something I learned back in sixth grade. Mrs. Taft taught us that if the source of light is greater on your side of a window than on the other; you can't see through to the other side because of glare. But if you are on the darker side, you can easily see through to the other side. In this situation, I knew I would be safe from sight, unless of course an unexpected visitor was to show up on my side of the window and catch me peering in. That wouldn't be good.

Upon looking in, I saw a Christmas tree, full of lights and homemade decorations. There were four warm smiles in the room. And along with those smiles were the cozy bodies of a happy family. I was jealous. And I couldn't believe I was looking at my father, stepmother and two half-sisters. The window turned into a television set, and I saw a movie that could have been a non-fiction documentary, but has always remained a fantasy. I stared at the love seat where my mother sat, alone, alongside the vacant cushion, which was perhaps wondering why it wasn't being occupied. I envisioned a man sitting there next to her, his arm around her shoulders. He had dirty blonde hair and blue eyes and that brown t-shirt I always see him in, and he was smiling at my mother who was smiling back. In my mother's hand she's reading something, but it's not the letter. It is the weekly Democrat and Chronicle TV book. We're sitting as a family deciding what we are going to watch on TV as we unwind at the end of the

day. We are so happy, like a normal family.

The image was suddenly shattered as I heard a noise from behind me, and I knew I was caught. I'd probably go to jail or something for snooping. I would have to explain to my biological father why I was spying on him, and he'd probably take out a restraining order. I would have to explain to my mother why I had come all this way just to see this man she had forever forbidden me to even speak about, let alone go visit. Oh god, I was fearing her finding out about this much more than I was afraid of going to jail. I would eventually get out of jail, but mothers, they are a life sentence.

Luckily, the noise was just a raccoon rummaging through the garbage. I watched him crawl around the garbage can, scrounge around for scraps, and then knock over the can, spilling the trash all over the ground. Then he just nonchalantly walked away. No regard whatsoever for the mess he made or for the people who have to clean it up. What a disgusting animal. It didn't seem like the bodies inside the house even noticed. They were too caught up in their happiness and smiling. I wondered what was so special about this family. I wondered why this would make "dad" so happy and we couldn't all those years ago. I supposed it would be much too easy just to ask, so I tried to figure it out standing in the cold outside the house.

I don't know if it was because I had to find out about the father I never had, and the family that never was, or if it was because I was just tired of standing out in the cold; but either way I had to go in. I found the doorbell button and pushed it. This was the moment of truth. The moment I saw the door swing open, the light from the foyer burst out toward me, and the tall thin figure behind the door, I went numb.