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ness. The sun beat on the back of my neck and my mind wandered.

I remember the summer when we were nine. We would play baseball in my side yard with the other neighborhood boys until the sun went down. We would hide from our chores under the seemingly misplaced grape trellis in your backyard.

Biting into the enormous grapes, there was a flood of sweetness

until you hit the seed and the bitter aftertaste took over. The ground under the trellis was littered with the rejected seeds and skins expelled from our greedy mouths.

We climbed the huge tree in the empty lot across from my house. I remember pushing you out of the tree when you tried to occupy my favorite limb—the trip to the hospital was the longest ride of my life.

We thought it was cool. I wished I had broken my arm. My father had never been so upset with me.

I felt a jolting pain in

my ribs as my father elbowed me out of my daydream. I looked up at the crowd and quickly dropped my eyes back down to the ground. My neck hurt and I could feel my ears getting sunburned. I looked at the coffin and turned cold.

My eyes found the ground because I didn't want my father to see me cry. But I wanted to cry. I wanted to yell and scream and ask every person I saw "why?" This was a nightmare. It had to be. I would wake up any minute in a cold sweat.

But I didn't wake

up.

Instead, I had spent the last eight months pretending like nothing happened. Then I woke up this morning and realized what was wrong: I had spent the last eight months doing something completely unnatural—something I have never done before—ignore my best friend.

I pulled the car into the tiny parking lot of the cemetery. I stepped out and the snow crunched loudly beneath my feet.

Even though I have lived here all my life, the place felt foreign.

I started at a slow saunter, passing angels and crosses. I pulled my jacket close around me. I felt the cold on my neck and raised my head to take in what was really around me. I began to quicken my steps.

I jogged, as I got closer to where you were. When I could see your stone, I broke into a run. My lungs felt heavy and tight, I could see my breath and my glasses slipped down my nose as I began to sweat. I reached you and fell straight to my knees holding your stone for support. I cried, I finally cried.

Lighting up the "City of Lights"

By Rachel McElwain
Staff Writer

It was my first trip to Europe. I spent five weeks studying abroad in Athens, Greece and then headed to Italy and France with my mother and one of our family friends.

The last stop on

our journey was Paris—the city of love—and the city I'd been dreaming about for the better part of my childhood.

Deciding to flaunt convention and rent a

car instead of taking the train like most sensible tourists, my mother, our friend Pam and I set off from Rome to Paris.

Our journey through Tuscany, the Italian Alps, and the French countryside passed in a blur of beautiful vistas and unforgettable memories,

but the three days we spent in Paris were the most remarkable.

On par with the rest of our trip, our Parisian adventure began by us getting lost

in the city.

After several hours in a fit of desperation, we ended up flagging down a taxi and paying the driver to find our hotel for us so we could follow him there.

It was early on a Thursday morning when we ventured out into the streets of Paris in an

attempt to return our rental car.

Our concierge offered very little help in directing us to the train station we needed.

My time in Athens

had drastically improved my map reading skills, which came in handy as we clumsily navigated the busy avenues of the 15th Arrondissement.

It appeared as any other normal day in the city, with people hurrying to work or running

errands.

Then everything changed, and the day no longer seemed ordinary.

As we rounded a street corner, my first glimpse of the famed Eiffel Tower came into view.



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