

Corrina Kirby  
March 15, 2004

American Literature  
Ms. Sawick

### **Moving On: An essay about changes from the novel I read this month**

This month, I read a book called The Dead Circus by John Kaye. This is a novel describing the chaotic era of the 60's in Hollywood. The main character, Gene Burk, went through a lot of changes as he dealt with the death of his wife, Alice Larson. As Gene works to take his mind off his loved one's death, he discovers more about his past and the past of his friends and family. As most novels have a main character that changes and develops as a person, The Dead Circus also holds this quality. Though the plot can be described as confusing, complicated, and explicit, it is obvious that by the end of the book, Gene Burk has become a person who is ready to move on and make something out of his life.

The protagonist of the novel, as I mentioned before, is a man named Gene Burk. Gene Burk is an ex-cop who formerly worked on the mystery case of how rockabilly star, Bobby Fuller, died. Gene was engaged to a woman named Alice Larson before she died in a plane crash. His life was also conflicted by his alcoholic brother, his confused father, his deserting mother, and his former career. Since the tragic plane crash that changed his life, Gene desperately tries to distract himself from his state of depression. He attempts to solve the case he never solved, about how Bobby Fuller died and why. Like most people who have lost someone they love, Gene tries to take himself away from the place where he can do nothing but tremble over his lost love. Gene throws himself into the case, devoting all of his time and energy into questioning people who had been a part of Bobby Fullers life.

As Gene works to solve the case he begins to discover more about Alice's past, he is able to connect with who she was and the enclosed parts of her that were never revealed. When Gene finds Alice's diary, he is surprised at the feelings he has. "Gene knew he didn't know everything about Alice's past, he was just surprised to realize that none of her past made him feel any differently about her, it just made him love her more." In this quote you can see how much Alice meant to Gene and also how much he was willing to keep her memory positive. Gene shows how hard it is to stop loving someone but that your life does go on. After Alice's death, he goes back to something that interested him before he met Alice. He goes back to solving mysteries and finding a deeper meaning to events that take place everyday. Each day that he gets closer to figuring out the case he finds out something new about his past and the past of people around him. He doesn't struggle to forget Alice; he just struggles to keep his memory of her happy.

As Gene investigates the death of Bobby Fuller, he starts meeting a lot of people and finding a lot of instances that are having more and more to do with the Manson murders. This part of the book makes you really think about how this would help anyone cope with death. He discovers another Alice, a woman who was indirectly a large part of Alice's life and a large part of the Manson murders. The 'Other Alice' shows Gene that covering your past is not a disrespectful thing to do; she shows him that he can live a new life without forgetting his love for his fiancée. The other Alice teaches him that all he needs to do is "keep her in his heart."

Throughout the book, Gene has a lot of flashbacks to his early childhood, his teens, and his days as a cop. Gene seems to find out more about the large web of crime that existed during this time period in Hollywood. Everyone seems to be connected and everyone seems to be constantly doing illegal things. Though Gene does not find out who killed Bobby Fuller, he becomes able to grasp the reasons why Fuller may have killed himself. The main thing he realizes is that even if you don't solve the case, the understanding you find is reason enough for all the effort you put into solving it. This holds true for Gene's relationship with Alice, even if she's gone the point isn't to grieve over her, but to keep her memory alive as the person Gene knew and loved.

In my life, I have never really lost someone I loved. I had a dear babysitter of mine die and a lovely dog but I have never really experienced the feeling of picturing your life with someone and then having it suddenly shatter. I think that change is a scary but necessary thing and that everything happens for a reason. Though I can't directly relate to what Gene is going through, I can relate to change and beginning a whole new life. I also agree with the other Alice's opinions and I share the same beliefs that when someone dies it is not necessary to forget them but to move on with your life, keeping their memory positive and strong.

In conclusion, Gene Burk went through a difficult and important change throughout this book. He learned that life isn't about finding the bad guy; it is about discovering what happens inside people and what their inner motives are. Life is about learning to live and love and cope with the decisions you make everyday, not stress over the ones that bring you down. Though this book involved many characters and showed growth in almost every one, Gene Burk was both the protagonist of the story and the one that went through the most significant change. He learned how to continue living his life after he lost someone, that the more you love someone, the stronger your memory will be. The more he thinks about Alice in a positive way, the easier it will be to move on. And that's what it is all about, being able to move on.