

Imagining Tomorrow: Alternate Energy Futures™

A Short Story Contest for Massachusetts High-school Students

Presented by NESEA  Northeast Sustainable Energy Association

About the Author – Michael Grzyzga, “The Last Scientist”



Michael Garrett Drzyzga is 18 and just graduated from Chicopee Comprehensive High School as the 2006 valedictorian.

He writes: "In the fall I will be attending Williams College to study chemistry. I plan to work in the medical field, specifically in research for cures. I am a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation College Scholar; http://jackkentcookefoundation.org/jkcf_web/home.aspx?Page=Main.

I entered the Imagining Tomorrow contest because of Mr. Clark's Alternative Energy class. Whether or not I entered the contest, I had to write an eligible story for a test grade in the class.

The idea for “The Last Scientist” came to me while reading suggested starting points. The word apocalyptic stood out and left me wondering, “What about post-apocalyptic?” This train of thought led to a world similar to the Dark Ages, more closely resembling fantasy than sci-fi. I

decided the Blackout occurred in the 1980's for two reasons: first, the last scientist had to be dying, but was young when the Blackout occurred, as no one else remembers the time - it is magic; second, in the real 1980's there was in fact an oil crisis. Although I had to rewrite history, I didn't want to be too radical.

In his afterward, Michael explains:

“From my research I found that there is serious debate about when the oil supply will be used up. Besides, if I wanted to have my main character meet one of the few sages who remember the time of power, the Blackout had to have occurred in the 1980's (the time of one energy crisis in history, now expanded). Finally I had to research the different forms of alternative energy. The “sage” was likely working on a way to restore power to the world; what did he use? What could possibly be built with limited power? And so the Wizard had been enlisted by the government to help fix the problem – a job that the Wizard abandoned, in favor of preparing for the Blackout, saving what he could (texts and a personal power reservoir. But how could the loss be more devastating? If, like in the Dark Ages, years upon years of knowledge was lost. Logically, computers would have to be more commonly used than they were in the 1980's. And to further culminate the loss, people at first panicked, and burned all they could for power. And so most written records have also disappeared.”