This issue of Klipsun concerns itself with "Beginnings" and Spring's hopeful sense of renewal and the restoration of life.

As a theme open to interpretation, "Beginnings" has been examined here in a number of ways, not all of them inspirational or hopeful. A beginning, by its very nature, reflects the end of something else.

The photographic essay on Western itself is meant to acknowledge this year's graduating class, for there is certainly an ending and a new beginning there.

— Pete MacKenzie
Springtime had lured me to Pleasant Bay in hope of soaking up some rays and tossing around a frisbee. Notebooks, calculators and lagging lectures had been left on campus — my only responsibility was to relax.

While working hard at getting a tan, I noticed a group of rock climbers had converged on the cliff at the end of the beach. I couldn’t figure out what strain of spring fever had infected those nuts to risk their necks messing around with ropes and rocks. It was a long fall from that cliff. You could get killed.

Nine climbers were climbing up and rappelling down the cliff like it was child’s play. While one of them was making the slow, tedious ascent of the face, another would be descending, skipping, bouncing and covering 40 feet in a single bound. Still another would be “dangling” from a secure rope, turning upside down and doing jumping jacks against the side of the cliff. At the bottom some guys played handball against the rock wall, awaiting their turn to use the ropes.

Those climbers were crazy. Didn’t they know rock climbing is a harsh, hazardous sport? I’d seen it in the movies. Man against rock, struggling for every inch of advance. Rock is hard, insensitive, immovable and cold. Rock never budges or gives way.
I'd heard about ropes that fray and send climbers crashing to their doom, and knew that a slip of the foot can send a climber cascading down with an avalanche of boulders chasing him. Why would they want to do it; they must be crazy.

I walked down the beach to the foot of the cliff and craned my neck way back to see the top. The slope was almost perfectly vertical, with no ledges or foot holds, and only a few patches of moss and clover. Near the bottom, a few guys with bare feet and hands were free climbing the rock, feeling with fingers and toes for the slightest scratch to grasp onto. They were flat against the rock face, arms and legs stretched, straining to hold on. With fingernails almost digging into the stone, they blew away dust from the rock and felt for the one crack that would let them move another inch further up.

They made me nervous; what if they fell, what if they slipped? Oblivious to my concern, they concentrated on the rock, searching for each handhold and scaling the cliff like spidermen.

With my neck still arched back, I noticed one climber with a single handhold from the ground, and felt for the one crack that would let me move another inch further up.

No way, god, no way am I going all the way up there. My mouth just hung open as they strapped the harness around my legs and waist. I stood there as one of them cinched it up and said, "Well, you're all ready."

He handed me his worn leather glove, and I slipped it on. My heart was pounding but a voice inside of me said, "Go for it!"

"Rock climbing is as risky as driving a car," my newly acquired instructor assured me as we hiked up to the ridgetop.

"The Hollywood climbing they do in the movies is fakey," he said. "They are unorganized and don't use protection. With the proper equipment and protection you can't fall too far or hard. Fall too far, I thought to myself and shuddered as we scrambled up the hill.

At the top I saw the rope set up: two 160 foot nylon ropes were anchored around a tree, and then strung over the cliff. The man called the "belayer" was hooked up and strapped to the tree. It was his job to assist the climbers on the way up by gathering slack in the ropes, and giving them tension.

For rappelling I wouldn't need a helmet or special boots and would use only the leather glove to protect my hand from the rubbing of the ropes. They snapped a figure-eight descending ring to my harness, then looped the ropes around me and through it. The ring would decrease some of the speed and friction of the ropes, and I would control the rest by grabbing the ropes with one hand behind my back. This would leave my other hand and feet free to navigate the way.

All I had to do was walk backwards, keeping myself horizontal to the ground, and perpendicular to the cliff face. One of the climbers said the cliff was rated at 5.6 difficulty, compared with 5.11 which is like scaling a piece of glass. They said it would be a cinch.

They told me to look over the edge so I could see what to expect, and pick my course. I clung to a tree branch and peered over. My head started to whirl as my eyes raced down the sheer gray face and then back up again. It was steep and stretched far down. There were no steps, ledges or anything to hold me. I felt limp, closed my eyes and said god I can't do it.

Sure you can, one of them coax me with a smile. I asked him why he did it, and if he wasn't ever scared. He said sometimes there are close calls and it gets tense out there, but that was the beauty of it. "People were made to go run in the woods and climb on rocks, and just live," he said. "They should do things that excite them and make their own adventure instead of watching it on T.V."

Standing on the edge clinging with both hands to my ropes, I asked if anyone had ever fallen. One of the guys yelled back that they hadn't lost one yet. They had a good laugh: I started sweating like crazy.

One of them smiled and said, "If you can walk, you can do it." I shook my head, and he started to push me over. "Lean straight back, and let the ropes slide through your hand."

Clutching the ropes, I took a few steps and then froze. "Lean straight back and watch where you're going," they yelled. I took a few steps more and loosened my grasp on the ropes and found myself hanging like a gangplank straight out from the side of the cliff.

I moved down about 25 feet and glanced down over my shoulder. The sun was glaring off the water and the few people on the beach so far below were staring up at me. The waves were just a murmur, the wind was quiet and warm. The ropes were whirring through my fist as my tennis shoes squaked along the smooth rock.

I watched my footing as I approached a small patch of moss and clover. A few loose rocks tumbled by me and then something yanked at my head. I grabbed the ropes, jerking to a stop. My hair had got wound in the ring with the ropes and I couldn't lift or turn my head. God, I was alone in the middle of this cliff with my stupid hair caught in the ropes. I ripped the hair loose and shook it back over my shoulder without looking down.

I was kind of shaky, and moved over to the clover patch to rest a minute. I stared out over the glaring water, then heard something and saw a big bumble bee buzzing around my foot.

I couldn't believe it — just me and that bee together on the side of the cliff. It made me feel like a part of the sun and wind. I was suspended above the earth and water, surrounded by nothing but air.

Running my hand over the hard, smooth rock I felt tense and relaxed all at once. Here was life and the chance of falling to death all whirled together in the rock and wind. Hanging a hundred feet in the sky with a rope around my waist, I felt the challenge of the cliff.

The craze of springtime sun and summer wishes I'd always known couldn't match the power and trust I felt in the lonely ruggedness of these rocks. High up on the gray rock I felt the sharp, harsh reality that has become the world as I knew it.

The secret of spring I had searched for couldn't be found wallowing in the sun, it hid in striving and trusting and throwing off winter fears.

I started slipping down the cliff, letting the ropes rush through my leather glove, jumping against the face and bounding my way down.

When I reached the sand, I took off the glove and wiped my hot, sweaty palm on my jeans. I tilted my head back and smiled at that piece of rock, wondering which was the quickest way back up.
OUTSIDE LOOKING BACK

By Erik Magnuson

Mark Rees was 18 when he was escorted through the front entrance of the state prison at Shelton, Washington. "During Expo they brought in a lot of narcs — I sold some drugs to one of them and they got me for cocaine and speed. I got busted in July of '74 when I was in my first quarter at Spokane Falls Community College, and got sent to Shelton in September."

Now 20, Rees is the youngest member of "Bellingham Training Release," a program which gives nine former residents of state prisons a chance to live on the "outside." They live on the lower floor of Highland Hall on Western's campus and attend classes at Western, Bellingham Vo-Tech Institute or Whatcom Community College. All are carefully screened before they are admitted to the facility.

The program is a mixture of freedom and strict control. None of the residents are parolees — they are still prisoners of the state, subject to rules which include nightly bed-checks, a curfew and no drugs. If a resident wants to go for a hike, attend a movie or go shopping downtown, he or she must be accompanied by a sponsor — someone from the community who has volunteered to take brief responsibility for him. Yet residents are often given weekend "furloughs," provided they have an acceptable destination.

Rees has been with the program since January and hopes to be paroled in June. He laughs easily and talks openly of his experiences.

"Shelton really blew me away at first. It took me a while to accept that I was in prison, just like it's taking a while to accept the fact I got out. I'd never been in jail before."

"Prison life is a very negative experience all the time," he added.

Other inmates were sometimes quick to be offended, Rees recalled.

"I got in a hassle with a guy in the chow line once — I thought we were reasonably good friends and I said 'hey man, how's it going?' He thought I said something like 'hey fat boy give me some food' — he was kinda chubby — and started a big hassle. So we had it out in another room."

He tells of a riot at the prison (in which he was not involved):

"About 30 people were pretty drunk after some guys made about 20 gallons of brew — they make it out of apples, other fruits or anything they can get, and some of it comes out pretty raunchy. The hall sergeant was kind of a 'little Napoleon' and for some reason wanted everybody to go to their rooms. Finally everybody got crazy and there were about 40 pigs and 120 residents going at it —
the pigs had tear gas and big clubs. That probably put 50 people in the hole [isolation]."

Prisoners at Shelton are almost exclusively under 25, he said, "and 90 per cent are there for reasons that are drug-related — selling drugs, ripping off to get drugs or they did something while they were on drugs. It's incredible that they had no good drug program while I was there."

Rees earned 58 college credits at Shelton, and now majors in bio-chemistry at Western.

"It's ironic — I was selling drugs to go to college and they sent me to the joint to go to college."

Programs like Bellingham Training Release, which take persons who will be paroled within two years, are designed to soften the transition from prison to the outside. Although he is weary of all the rules, Rees believes such programs are necessary.

"When you get out of the joint, things have changed and you're a lot changed."

Mark Lehmann, a Western Soc./Anth. graduate, is "facilities supervisor" and head parole officer for the program, and has worked there since October. He and the others who work with him serve sometimes as counselors, occasionally as police, often as friends.

Lehmann has tightened security at the facility and certain privileges have been restricted since February. A resident, Frank Prill, was a prime suspect in a tavern shooting incident. He has still not been found.

"We're considering moving off campus," Lehmann said. "Security is difficult here. This is probably the best contact area for drugs." That includes alcohol, he added — a reference to an abundance of dorm keggers.

Both Lehmann and Rees believe the shooting incident hurt the program's image with the community.

Lehmann emphasized that inmates have been exposed to an alien and hostile environment in state prisons.

"The institution is a negative world — you take what you can get and fight the system for any victory and don't ask for anything. Your status is based on negativity — a murderer has automatic status and if he's strong as well he has more. In the institution if you don't like somebody you set him up so he gets busted or have somebody thump him in the night."

Programs like Bellingham Training Release are essential, he said.

"If they cut back the budget in corrections any more and programs like this didn't exist we'd see some terrible riots in this state. We haven't had them because Washington is one of the leading states in corrections."

Alan Foster, a 27-year-old Mexican-Indian, served nearly three years at the Washington State Reformatory at Monroe, Wash. Stockily built, he has medium length dark hair, a dark moustache, and wears a variety of turquoise jewelry, including several rings and bracelets.

"Monroe isn't like Shelton — it's closer to Walla Walla in that dudes are older and it's set up for keeping people locked up. There are only two major recreation areas — the 'Big Yard' and the gym. And Washington weather ain't too cool.

"It's pretty ugly there — there's not much room with over 650 dudes and not much place to go. There's a lot of tension.

"The cops try to make you bump heads — they don't want you to work together."

"Foster remembers what he calls a "lightweight riot."

"You could almost call it a race riot, but it was more of a 'clique riot.' It was just blacks and bikers at first. You see, anytime a fight comes down and it's over, only somebody feels it's not over — he'll get his friends. And he'll start a hassle with the other guy's friends, and it's like a mass fight. This time they were breaking up tables and stuff. They call it a riot.

"There were about nine of us in the middle of it all, pulling sticks out of guy's hands and trying to stop it, 'cause if I didn't try to stop it I'd have had to pick sides. They deadlocked everybody in the joint for nine days afterward — you're locked up and you don't go out of your cell while they search the prison."

He believes there are two factions among the prison administration, those who favor "custody" — just locking people up — and those who believe in "treatment."

"The treatment-orientated always get stepped on by the custody-orientated," he said bitterly. "Treatment-orientated see you as real people with real problems. Custody types see you as a con — a number. That's why Monroe is such a hot spot — it could flare up at any time."

Judy Rice, 34, is tall and thin, with curly, light brown hair which falls below her shoulders. She has four children, now living with their grandmother. Rice served nine months at the "Purdy Treatment Center for Women," near Bremerton, and entered the Bellingham program in March.

"When I was a kid I had an uncle and a foster brother who went to prison. It broke my heart then, and I couldn't understand why they went back. I didn't understand until I was on probation myself."

"Up until '73 I'd never shot dope. Then I shot and 13 days later I got arrested. I'd never even had a traffic ticket.

"After that I was picked up 11 times. When they see you at four in the morning on Capital Hill in a pink Cadillac they're suspicious. But I never had anything on me."

Rice was arrested on two other occasions, once for using a stolen credit card, and again for using stolen credit cards and for forging checks.

"The charges were forgery, but what got me in was lack of control over drugs.

After serving time in the King County Jail she was released "with 9,000 probation restrictions and 22 cents in my pocket."

She violated one of those restrictions and was sentenced to a 20-year maximum term at Purdy. She was later given a two year minimum by her parole board.

"The sad thing about Purdy is there's a sign out front that says 'Treatment Center.' Only there's no treatment."

There is no "con-code" at Purdy, she said.

"There's a lot of people snitching on each other — there's no trust factor. And there's a lot of racial tension."

Rice said she refused to use drugs at Purdy.

"When I told them I didn't want to get into any dope deal they were leery of me. But now I know I can't handle drugs — it's been a year and a half.

"I had two good friends at Purdy; one got out four days ago. One's not out yet and I won't feel right until I know she's not in there jumping through those hoops. There's two different groups that put you through your paces — the residents and the staff. It a snakẹpe; you've got to get out of there in a hurry or they'll eat you alive."

She hopes to be paroled in October and go to work refinishing antiques, which she did for six years.

"I want to be with my kids, have a home and finish school (at Bellingham Tech.)."

"You have no idea what you've lost until you've lost your freedom — and it'll be the most disheartening, look-at-yourself-in-the-mirror trip you'll ever go through."

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Photographs by
Kyung Sun Hong
These are the people I want to paint, people who've worked hard and lived hard and show all the pain and laughter of that living in their faces . . ."

By D. Starbuck Goodwyn

I looked for the cameras, directors, and John Wayne. They were not in sight. They should have been — the scene made a Hollywood Western look like stills from a Sunday School picnic. Underneath the pool table two ladies were pulling hair, scratching and giving vocal descriptions of each other's ancestors, none complimentary.

Beyond the pool table, a bull of a man with a giant chest splintered a pool stick over another's head. He shouldn't have, because it made the fellow mad. Shouted commands, curses and entreaties swelled into a chaotic roar. Someone yelled "Call the police!" and someone else screamed for an ambulance. Meanwhile, furniture and bodies flew through the air like fur at a cat fight.

The diminutive bartender rushed from one group of gladiators to the other, breaking up one fight, only to turn around and find two more in progress. He of the pool-stick-remodeled-head had his opponent on the floor, doing a job on him with a pair of sharp-toed boots.

It would have been perfect for today's TV violence fare, except there was a flaw in the script.

In the middle of the maelstrom, a quiet, dignified, gray-haired lady sat calmly painting away. A body rolled under her feet. She picked up one foot, steadied her easel and kept on painting.

The fight ended, the ambulance hauled off some half-dozen casualties, and peace was temporarily restored in the bar. The Painter Lady, as many of her patrons call her, took a last critical look at her latest work, made a few minor corrections and handed an amazing likeness of her subject to the proud owner. Without pausing to sip from the full glasses of beer that the bar patrons had sent to her, she very calmly said, "Next!," and minutes
later she was painting another customer.

If business held as usual tonight, she would paint from one to four portraits, oil on a canvas-covered panel, charge the patrons fifteen dollars each and stay busy most nights of the week.

"I've been painting and studying art for twenty-five years. When I first became known, I worked a lot with people in the upper income group. I made a decent living and enjoyed painting many of them.

"I've been a working woman all my life and I relate to the working people. So many of my friends said they would love a portrait but it was out of the question to pay the hundred and fifty to four hundred dollars I charge for a five to six sitting, oil on stretched canvas portrait."

She concentrated on her subject. The bar was loud, the smoke thick and she had a number of critics looking over her shoulder. She was removed from her surroundings. She measured her subject with her thumb against a brush handle, checked his skin coloring, bone structure of his face, characteristics of mouth, nose and eyes.

She talked as she blocked the head in. "I make a comfortable living with my land-and-seascapes, still lifes and character studies. I've no illusions about art being some kind of gift from God that only a few possess. I think some people pick up the desire early in life to paint. A number of these people keep working to perfect their craft, try to paint honestly and don't worry about how much they may or may not make. These people become artists, and as long as they don't try to fool themselves, most of them are happy artists."

As she talked a face began to emerge from the white canvas. To the novice it was uncanny — as though looking at a mirrored reflection of the subject. She had been working thirty minutes and the picture was assuming definitely recognizable features.

"I can paint a portrait like this in about an hour. I can't in that time do the glasses, background and some of the more subtle shadings that I do in six or eight sittings, (and presumably three or four hundred dollars) but I'm able to do a good oil of a person with good features, skin tones and the right highlights."

Four or five critics or distractors were gathered around the table easel. A port little red-haired woman who had earlier cashed her welfare check and bought a round for the house, said her sister had never had an art lesson in her life but she was a marvelous painter. A tall, slim Robert Redford gone to seed said he used to be a hell of a painter but got bored with it and hadn't picked up a brush in twenty years. With a beer glass in each hand, he probably didn't have any place to put a brush. To one particularly obstreperous critic, the Painter Lady said smilingly but emphatically, "One more comment out of you and I paint your nose blue." He subsided.

"In here everybody is a critic or an ex-artist," he said. "Hell, I don't mind. It's uncanny how many really good points about my subjects I pick up from them. They may not know how to paint, but they know how to look at their fellow human beings." She painted away, stopping to look at the subject, getting up and walking around to check the light, posing him again. As the picture began to firm up, her critics became more vocal.

The red-haired lady leaned over her shoulder and said, "You've got too many lines in his face, you're making him look too old." The tiny bartender, appropriately called Pee-Wee, came over, gazed at the picture and said, "You've got him, honey, you've really nailed him to the canvas." The subject gleamed and preened. The Artist Lady acknowledged each comment with a nod and went on painting.

A couple of cops came in and looked around. One came over, looked over her shoulder and said politely, "That's pretty good, Ma'am, but he sure looks young. You gonna gray his hair up some?"

She nodded and kept on painting. Two drunks at the bar started an argument. They talked about fighting, but one was scared and the other glad of it. They were shouting and using language that would curl a longshoreman's nose hair. People stopped talking to listen to them. She finished the picture and handed it to the man.

Her next customer, a pretty young Indian girl, was shooting pool. While the Painter Lady waited for the game to end she talked a bit about herself.

She remarried, served as a deputy sheriff for her husband who was working as a lawman in a tough town on the high plains of East Colorado. When he bought a tractor and trailer and began cross-country driving, hauling explosives, she put her paint brush down, learned to drive the rig and became one of the first women 'over-the-road' drivers.

The truck was sold and she went back to painting and teaching art.

Her name is Dorcey Goodwyn. Dorcey is separated from her husband and supports herself painting. She came to Bellingham three years ago. She said she finds more natural beauty that inspires her to paint, in and around Bellingham, than any of the many other places she has lived and worked.

She said her dad had been among other things, a rancher, saloon owner and bootlegger in Wyoming when she was growing up. She entered visual arts by way of the camera, worked as a photographer in the WAC during World War II and became a commercial photographer after the war.

That career ended when she married the first time and she and her husband ranched in the summer and ran a hunter's guide service in the winter.

Ten years and a divorce later she was into serious painting. She studied art at the University of Wyoming, worked to support herself and spent her spare time painting.

She began to sell her work, but ever restless, she lived at various times in Colorado, Idaho, California and Missouri. But she kept on painting.
The pool game was finished and the pretty girl sat down to be painted. Dorcey said enthusiastically, "Gee, this is a pretty girl. I'd never be able to pay for models like this. They pay me fifteen dollars and I'd have to pay at least that just to have them pose for me." It sounded like a business where everybody benefited.

"It's just been lately that I've been able to drop my prices and work with these people. It's great. They're so damnedly honest, and really appreciative, that it's a pleasure."

Poo1 players walked over between shots to look and comment. Beer split from over-turned glasses, the smoke got thicker and the talk louder. She kept on painting.

The tide of people behind her ebbed and flowed as people came, watched her work, made comments and drifted off. "I used to think I couldn't work unless I had absolute peace and quiet." She laughed at the remembrance. "Now I don't think I could work without an audience."

The picture was finished and the girl took it over and put it behind the bar for drying. With no other customer in immediate sight, she lit up a cigarette and tasted one of the beers on the table.

"Some artists in town tell me I'm foolish to work so cheaply. Many of them say that aren't selling anything at all, and certainly aren't able to devote the time that I can. I like working with tavern people. There aren't many phonies here. Most of them are pretty basic." She shrugged slightly. "And it pays pretty well, too."

She sat, enjoying the cigarette, abstractedly studying the bar patrons. "So many studies. So many different faces, and characters reflected in the faces. No work shop could compare to this."

A neatly dressed little man walked hesitantly up to the table, holding a portrait as though he were embarrassed. Dorcey recognized him and gave him a warm smile.

He fumbled for a starting place, and finally said, "My wife don't like this. I took it home and gave it to her and she wanted to know who it was. My, uh, my kids say it don't look like me too . . ."

He pushed the portrait at her in a tentative manner. I looked at his bland features, nondescript hair and wondered what she could do to improve the painting. I didn't need to worry because she was busily explaining ways the picture could be changed to look more like him. "I'll pay you again, you know. I'll pay the full price again."

"The chin, see, the chin, my wife says it don't look very strong in the picture." On second look, he did have a chin. "And the hair isn't right. I usually wear it more fluffed up and kinda swept back."

The Painter Lady was sympathetic. She assured him she needed no more money, sat him down and started to make the suggested changes.

"Sometimes I don't really get the person, and often I do but the person is not satisfied with it. I guess there is a little of the Walter Mitty in all of us. If I paint a portrait and the customer is not happy with it, I've wasted my time and his, unless I make it right. There are times though when I finally just have to give up, give the money back and call it a day!"

She made the changes on the portrait. The customer looked at it, suggested a couple of insignificant lines. She made them and he got up and came around to look. He beamed down on the picture. "Now that's me. That's really me." He bought her a beer and walked happily away.

The bar crowd was thinning out. She said it was probably over for the night. "Some nights go decently like this one. Sometimes I get a lot of zero nights one after the other. "I get all sorts of people. I paint a lot of young college age people. Some of them go to school and some of them work. Most of them get portraits for their families or their sweeties. Many of the older clients want to give the picture to their children, and in all age groups there are some who simply want to keep them."

While her land and seascapes have sold well, she said her character studies have brought the most money.

"I look at a person and try to find the characteristics that most nearly place him or her in an ideal setting. Then I try to reproduce that feeling, era, or social condition in the painting."

Some of her works have transformed bankers into formidable looking gun slingers, coeds into emergency mercy workers and American children into natives of strange and exotic lands.

"It's fascinating because it makes you search deep into the subject. Far below the level of his outer appearance. I like it, work hard at it, and I guess that's the reason people buy them."

PeeWee the bartender gave last call. The Holly Tavern began to empty of the last few stubborn hangers-on. The lights dimmed and the Painter Lady began to gather up the tools of her trade.

She smiled wryly and her voice connoted a shrug. "Not a great night, but a good night. I'm tired, and tomorrow's another day."

She swung a red cape over her shoulders, picked up her neatly packed paint box and headed for the exit. The Painter Lady was finished for another day.

D. Starbuck Goodwyn, a retired military man, is a Senior at WWSC. A three-time Editor and frequent contributor to KLIPSUN. Starbuck has also sold articles and fiction to national magazines. He has won two SDX awards and the Columbia School of Journalism Medalist Award. The names of the writer and the subject of this article are not a coincidence.
saving lives in bellingham

By Scott Johnson

Most people have never thought about what happens after you call an ambulance. Not very long ago in Whatcom County, you didn’t get qualified help when you called. The private company that operated until a year and a half ago didn’t pay enough to keep well-trained people.

In July 1974, the fire department took over the ambulance service when the private company went out of business. Aid calls weren’t new to the fire department — they often assisted in car wrecks and other emergencies, hosing down spilled gasoline and freeing trapped people. The company, told to meet new requirements upgrading training and equipment, decided not to comply and the fire department was given responsibility for ambulance calls in Whatcom County.

“We got a phone call and they said you’ve got it,” explained Fire Chief Jack Baker. “At first we were responding with station wagons or whatever we could find.”

Cards

The phone call didn’t upset firehouse routine much.

“We went back to playing cards,” one fireman said. “Then somebody suggested, maybe, shouldn’t we do something to get ready. We gathered up whatever we could find. All kinds of stuff. And put it in the chief’s car. We no sooner had it in than we got a call.”

“It was up by the college,” Jim White said. “Somebody with a broken leg, I think."

“Don Spady went on that call. He had more training than the rest of us. From then on, we were in the ambulance business.”

Spady was one of only nine emergency medical technicians (EMT’s). Today there are 35, more than a third of the department. Until then, ambulance crews were all EMT’s, which takes 80 hours of instruction and 10 hours of observation at the hospital. Today they are paramedics with more than 2,000 hours of training. That’s one measure of the change in quality — from 90 to 2,000 hours of required training.

Helping People

No one is assigned to ambulance crew who doesn’t want to be there.

“They’re here because they get a deep satisfaction from doing their job,” Don Spady said. “Sometimes you can do things that will make such a big difference. Take a guy with congestive heart failure. One side of the heart has failed and the blood backs up in his lungs. He has real trouble breathing. You’ve got a guy drowning in blood. He’s struggling so hard and he can’t breathe. You go to work and before long he’ll look up and tell you how glad he is you’re there, you saved his life. It’s so easy to see you’re helping people. It’s really rewarding.”

No Comparison

“How would you feel about going from a tricycle to a Mercedes?” Dr. Marvin Wayne asked. “That’s the kind of change we’ve had here. There’s no comparison. In between we had a Chevrolet, but now we’ve got our hands on the Mercedes.” Dr. Wayne is medical director for the county Emergency Medical Services Council, which is responsible for the ambulance service. He is also a physician in the St. Luke’s emergency room and has seen patients treated by both the old ambulance company and the paramedics. And he trained the paramedics.

In 1974, when the ambulance company and the fire each handled about half the patients, 41 people were dead on arrival at the hospital. Last year, there were 13. The hospital staffs credit superior care from the fire department for the improvement. And, more significantly, they handled more calls while they were doing it.

“We’re getting more calls all the time,” Don Spady said. “But a lot of people still don’t know what to do if they have trouble. A wife will watch her husband having a heart attack and ask, ‘What do we do?’ And her husband will say, ‘I don’t know. What do we do?’ But it was that way in Seattle. At first nobody called the fire department. Now they get called for everything. Cramps. Everything. After a while it will be the same here.”

Best in the World

Nine Bellingham firemen took their final test as paramedic trainees a few weeks ago. It took them 2,000 hours, over more than a year to make it. They have spent most of their time since December in Seattle in a program with the University of Washington and Seattle Medic One. It cost nearly $8,000 to train each man in Seattle, but Dr. Wayne feels it was worth it.

“The Seattle program is recognized as the best paramedic program in the world,” Dr. Wayne said. “Our paramedics have been trained by the best in the world and passed their tests, so we are equivalent to the best in the world.”

Within their specialized focus — keeping people alive until they reach a hospital — they are better than doctors. “They do things every day that most doctors learn, but never get to practice,” Dr. Wayne said.
A second group started paramedic training in February. When they finish next year most ambulances will have two paramedics at all times; until then they have one paramedic and one EMT. State law requires only an EMT.

**Training**

Gary Hedberg, who administers the program within the fire department, built the course from programs all over the country. It includes classroom instruction and many hours of observation and assisting in both the emergency and operating rooms, most of it on the paramedics' own time. They also watch and assist in childbirth and autopsies. Before they finish, each paramedic delivers at least one baby.

"We're required to spend 20 hours a week at the hospital," said EMT Rick Ambrose, who is in the second paramedic class. "We watch and assist in all those areas."

No standard definition of "paramedic" exists; no minimum training or skills are required. Around the country training varies greatly, from 45 hours more than the EMT training, to 2,000 hours. Washington has no state-vdeck standards and some communities certify paramedics with as little as 45 hours.

"But maybe they don't need it like we do," Hedberg said. "They may be close to hospitals and not need highly-trained paramedics in the field. Here a lot of places are a long way from either hospital."

**Goal — No Rush Trips**

A paramedic — in radio contact with a doctor at one of the Bellingham hospitals — can give treatment at the scene that couldn't be given before. Now they can give drugs and other treatment that could only be given at the hospital. Before, the firemen could only give first-aid and transport the patient to the hospital.

Now they want to eliminate rush trips, according to paramedic Don Spady. "We will emphasize getting the patient stabilized at the scene, or, if it's hopeless, we'll get the coroner out and terminate treatment."

"On a long cardiac case, where we go a long time before the patient's heart will stabilize, we may use up half the drugs in our kit," he said.

Bob Spady, Don's brother, is an EMT in the second paramedic class. He has been with the ambulance since it started. Before, as an engine driver, he was paid slightly more than other positions. He doesn't like to make a big deal of giving up money to work in the ambulance, even though he agrees it means more work.

**Never Got the Sheets Warm**

Don Spady said, "A lot of guys gave up pay to give their time to this job. It really is a lot harder than other work. Hardly a night goes by without at least one run."

Jim White thought he had a record. 13 shifts without getting out of bed at night. But that was very unusual.

"Maybe the next thirteen he'd have a call every night," Bob Spady said. "I've had times I couldn't get the sheets warm and we'd have another call. You get tired of taking your clothes off."

"People are gaining in their respect of our expertise," he said. "A paramedic is the next thing to a doctor. They can even do things a (registered nurse) can't do."

"There will still be people we can't save," Hedberg said. "people we can't get to in time. Right now it takes 45 minutes to drive some places in the mountains, but I've now got the OK from the Navy and we'll get a helicopter when we need it."

"Our job is to get people to the hospital alive, and now we can," he said. "I feel great about it. It's the best thing in the world that could happen, a dream I've had for a long time, and now it's real. One thing that's always gripped me is the emphasis that's been put on the protection of property. Fire and police — that's property protection — have been funded for years, but medical services is just getting off the ground."

"At the end of our training," Don Spady said, "we'll be nearly as good as Seattle. But it will take time, too. They've been doing it in Seattle for six years, and there's no substitute for six year's experience."

There are people alive today who wouldn't be if they hadn't been treated by the Bellingham paramedics — saving lives is what it's all about.

Scott Johnson is a native of Western Washington who has been in Bellingham five years. He is a broadcast and journalism student who enjoys the study of people.
GRINGOS EN SANTA MARTA
By Kyle Jones

There are 40 American women among the 300 inmates of Mexico’s Santa Marta federal prison. Last winter, Western student Patty Brown visited the women’s prison, and brought back a tale of poverty, abuse and neglect.

Enroute to study in Mexico, Patty met a man named Bill, who was going to visit Maria Wiezbowski, a 21 year-old American arrested in Mexico City in 1974 for importing cocaine. She was caught while changing planes from South America to the U.S., and was sentenced to seven years in the Santa Marta federal prison, near Mexico City.

When in Mexico City in late February, Patty and her boyfriend, David Crabb, decided to visit Maria.

From a distance they could see the high adobe walls of the prison and tall towers standing at each corner. As they drew closer they saw guards standing in each tower holding submachine guns. As they came closer still, they saw more guards, more guns, and a small barred metal door that was the entrance.

To get through the first barred door, they found that women must wear skirts and men must have short hair and be clean shaven. Patty had to rent a skirt for five pesos (40c) and David had to cut his hair about eight inches and shave his beard right on the spot.

They passed through the first door, only to be confronted by a second. There they had to give their names, Wiezbowski’s name, and present two pieces of identification. Their pockets and purses were emptied and the contents scrutinized.

Cameras or any reading material deemed the least bit political or controversial were excluded.

“It was unreal that there were so many requirements to get in,” said Patty. “They’d ask me a question and when I tried to speak, I stuttered and my hands were shaking. I said to one of the women guards in my broken Spanish, ‘I am very nervous.’ And she said, ‘Ah, that’s good that you’re so nervous, for this is a bad place.’ ”

At yet a third door they were frisked. The two pieces of identification were turned in, and a small, hexagonal, gray metal tag given in return.

Patty and David walked through the door and found themselves at the edge of a large courtyard surrounded by high walls. Most of the women were clustered at one end of the courtyard — it was Sunday and they were not required to work.

Patty had expected to see coarse, tough women with hardened faces. Instead, many were attractive and seemed gentle. They did not appear remotely dangerous.

They found Maria sitting on a blanket in the dirt with a group of other American women — a slender, tall, and beautiful girl of 21, with long blonde hair which fell down past her shoulders. Mexican women sat in similar fashion nearby.
"We explained how we'd gotten her name," Patty recalled. "She said, 'Far out!' She was very warm, very friendly and glad to have visitors."

She was not reluctant to talk of her experiences at Santa Marta.

All but two of the American prisoners ranged in age from 20 to 30 years old, Maria said. All were there on drug convictions. The other two women were grandmothers, one of whom had tried to export drugs to the U.S. because her son had been doing it. She had planned to retire on the money she earned.

Prisoners live in rooms housing up to eight people. Each is given a cot and one meal a day at 2:00 p.m. — consisting of horsemeat, beans, tortillas and contaminated water. Prisoners may purchase additional food with their own money from a food vendor who comes into the prison, or from the prison commissary at high prices.

The women must wear light blue or beige skirts with white shirts and must work in the prison to earn money to buy them. One is required to work in the sanitary napkin factory within the prison, or in a large vegetable garden.

In addition to working in the vegetable garden, Maria scrubbed clothes five hours a day, five days a week for 50 pesos ($4.00). Her seven year sentence may be reduced to five years if she continues to work.

Maria told many accounts of torture, which usually occurred in small local jails just after the arrest. She was never tortured, but she knew women who were forced to stand naked on damp floors or in pans of water while their genitals and other areas were touched by an electric cattle prod. Some were forced to have oral sex with their interrogator. Some had scars on their earlobes where their earrings had been ripped out.

"Nobody has seen a 'pig' until they have been to Mexico," according to Patty. "Cops are of the lowest class, uneducated, cruel and dangerous."

In Mexico a person is guilty until proven innocent. There is no writ of habeas corpus, which requires that prisoners be brought before a court. Of the 40 Americans, Maria had heard of only three who had a trial or seen a judge. Maria was in prison one year before she was driven downtown and sentenced to seven years by the judge's secretary.

"The American Embassy is in a political bind because the U.S. is paying the Mexican government to try and control drug importation," Patty said. "So, their reaction is 'We can do nothing for you.'"

The Embassy does provide a list of "reputable" lawyers, but according to Maria, the two Americans who did contact lawyers never heard from them again after they paid money in advance for their services. One American woman's family vainly spent $10,000 trying to get her out of prison.

"Some of those women literally begged me to try and get some publicity going," Patty said.

The American women stuck together, helping each other when sick or in need of support, and trying to keep each other busy.

Maria and several others were involved in Aztec dancing. They performed twice outside of the prison in Mexico City for foreign ambassadors, performing only half-clothed.

Maria kept busy with leatherwork, arts and crafts and the small amount of reading material available. She seemed resigned to her fate, but complained of the lack of variety and stimulation. Strangely, she did not want to hear about what was happening outside in the world, perhaps because it would only make her keenly aware of her own depressing situation.

Most of the women at Santa Marta appeared to be in good physical condition, but very thin. One woman however, lay in bed dying of untreated tuberculosis. She had lost sixty pounds and had not been taken to a hospital, because it was feared she "would escape."

Most of the Americans suffered from recurring cases of amoebic dysentery.

The American and Mexican women were basically friendly though there were cultural conflicts, Patty said. The Americans complained that the Mexicans left dirty toilet paper lying around in the bathroom, and that they didn't fix up their rooms.

Violence and lesbianism are common in prison.

"Maria said she was attacked by a gang of Mexican women soon after she arrived — beat up but not sexually assaulted," Patty said. "She found out later it was because she was trying to play the role of the 'liberated American woman' in talking to this lesbian, and her girlfriend got mad. Later when she complained to a visiting representative of the American Consulate he laughed and said, 'We can't solve the internal problems of this prison.'"

Like U.S. prisons, there are a lot of drugs in Santa Marta. When first imprisoned many women are on the verge of mental collapse. Downers are doled out by the guards to calm them, and later anything can be purchased from marijuana to heroin — the drugs are brought in by the guards, Maria believed.

One joint of marijuana sold for 30 pesos ($2.40).

Patty visited Maria a second time with David Crabb and Laura Manning, a student from the University of New Mexico. They fasted in the holding cell until Maria finally got through. That was the last time she saw them. Patty had raised after telling other students of the women's plight. The vitamins had to be chemically analyzed before the women could receive them.

When leaving they were let out of the prison one at a time.

"Laura was last, and had put her metal tag in the zippered pocket of her back-pack and the zipper stuck," Patty recalled. "She got scared and yelled 'Help me!' What am I going to do?'"

The guards taunted her. She fumbled with the zipper and finally got it open — she pulled out the tag, handed it to a guard and stumbled through the last barred metal door.

As they turned to go they saw Maria through the bars, a lone figure in white and beige garb, watching them leave.

Kyle Jones, a sophomore majoring in Accounting, came to Western after attending her freshman year at the University of New Mexico.
By Bud Rechterman

He braked hard to slow down for the curve, made a couple of quick turns, then gave her the juice and went roaring down the blacktop. Off to the right he could see the white Datsun hatchback racing alongside. Forty-five miles an hour . . . fifty-five . . . sixty-five . . . still the Datsun hung in there. They passed through seventy-five neck and neck, and then, at eighty miles an hour and what must have been the most hyped-up fraction of a minute in Craig Kistler’s whole life, the nose wheel picked up, the main gear lifted off, and he was airborne.

No longer in a race with feeble earthbound creatures, he climbed straight ahead, pushing Teenie Two higher and yet higher, further and still further — free! — finally free from Mother Earth, strapped into a meager 370-odd pounds of airplane that is as much a part of Craig as his soul.

For Teenie Two is the mechanical extension of that soul, the hard, physical manifestation of long, weary days and sleepless nights, of monotonous, persistent and dedicated effort, of countless numbers of wrench turns, rivet pops, tube welds, sheet-metal bends, corner filings and angle fittings.

But that cold, hard, evidence could not vindicate all the back aches, knuckle raps and scrapes, finger pinches, and welding burns that Craig had suffered during Teenie Two’s construction. Only the first confused moments of successful flight could ever fulfill those long hours of hopes and dreams and wipe away those harried memories.

Craig was born to be an aviator. Nothing turns him on quite as much as airplanes do. He got his pilot’s license when he was 16, and has been zooming around boring holes in the sky ever since.

But Craig was also born a totally independent — and usually impatient — free-spirit. With his natural urge for bird’s-eye views and a feeling that the conventional rent-a-plane route was too slow and expensive, it was inevitable that he would want his own airplane.

So, inspired by the propaganda of a do-it-yourself mini-plane featured in an old Popular Mechanics, Craig decided the quickest route to an unlimited number of flight hours was to build one himself. Now, over 600 hectic and often frustrating man-hours later, the prototype Kistler Teenie Two, fresh off the line of the Kistler Airplane Factory, was aloft on its maiden flight.

The factory, located near Dugualla Bay on Whidbey Island, starts with the fabrication shop in the living room, spills out the front door onto the front-porch pre-assembly platform, and straggles down the steps into the front-yard final-assembly area.

The rest of the house belongs to Craig’s wife, Joni, a Western physical-education junior. She’s the overall project manager, general expediter, parts and inventory control person, plant maintenance director, and finder of often-misplaced tools, odd-sized nuts, bolts, washers and miscellaneous.
She looks wistfully around at the various plant areas sometimes, trying to remember what her house looked like before Teenie Two; at the test flight, though, she was obviously as anxious as Craig to see it airborne. Airplane fever, apparently, is a highly contagious affliction.

It infected me, too, when I took a free tour of the factory just three days before the test flight. My first reaction to the "sub-compact" — which occupied a surprisingly small portion of one corner of the front yard — was a thought that it resembled a giant-size model airplane.

Craig was fitting some minor accessory parts and making last minute adjustments at the time. With a three day countdown already begun and what looked like dozens of things left to do — insignificant things like brakes and a gas tank to install, and a canopy and a fuselage fairing to fabricate and install — I would have expected him to be at least a little anxious about the coming event. But Craig just wasn’t made that way... that independent streak again!

He was a bit more serious during the FAA pre-flight inspection, though. The examiner looked at Teenie Two for nearly an hour. A casual bystander, who must have felt the same first reaction as I had, suggested that Craig rig up a radio control and fly the first hop from the ground. But Craig wasn’t in that much hurry; the inspector hadn’t really said “Do it” yet.

Finally, after a long discussion, he gave Craig a short benediction, a handshake, and the important, official-looking piece of paper that said Craig could operate one "experimental" aircraft, side number N31093, "within a limited radius of the Bayview Airport." Short minutes later Craig joined the long list of adventurers that was begun years ago by the Wright brothers.

A small group of us — all similarly afflicted by Craig’s home-made-aircraft fever — had assembled to see it happen. As we watched the Teenie slowly fade out of sight, we wondered whether Craig had forgotten what his “limited radius” was, or if maybe he just couldn’t bring himself to try the turn, or even — worse yet — if the Teenie refused to be turned. But finally we saw the midget 18-foot wingspan angling back toward the east, and heard the unmuffled drone of the Volkswagen engine that powers the diminutive silver bird.

Craig spent several minutes flying around over the Skagit valley, gingerly feeling his way through all the controls, and giving us a special mini-airplane mini-airshow as he got acquainted with his serious-toy flying machine. There was no way for us on the ground to distinguish the tiny Teenie from any other airplane; the distance was too great to recognize anything but its general shape and there was nothing out there with which we could compare Teenie’s reduced scale.

Teenie’s last “first” came with an anxious first landing. It dropped quickly from the 2,000 feet that Craig had first introduced it to, making a long, graceful curve toward the end of the runway, and then turned onto a straight final approach course. It settled slowly, following an easy glide slope, and touched down firmly and neatly. And so it was done; Teenie Two had made its first cycle — tested and found fit.

The two able hands which had collected, formed, assembled, and transformed that unique set of parts into this genuine flying miracle now yanked off helmet and goggles. There it was again, the broad-smiling face of that totally independent, usually impatient, free spirit.

A most appropriate epilog, perhaps, is that Craig left for an enlistment in the Air Force two weeks after Teenie’s first flight. One can only hope that Air Force regimentation won’t destroy that unique character of his... on the other hand, knowing Craig, maybe we should be hoping that this unique character won’t create too many irreversible distortions in that regimented system.

Bud Rechterman is a middle-aged adolescent, currently being recycled through Western’s journalism and VICOED programs. A retired naval officer with a left-over typewriter and camera, Bud is interested in observing, describing and being a part of the “human condition.” Mostly, he says, he’s waiting for the chance to take what he hopes will be a grandson to his favorite fishing hole.