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PAYNE’S WORLD
From The Who to Metallica, this guitar doctor has seen it all

Acorn Project
Open mic or opening act, this B’ham band attracts crowds

On H and Dupont
Sean Humphrey’s legacy helps those sharing his illness

Ain’t No Llama
But alpacas are similar, and so are some Western students
Editor’s note

To scrap literally means to fight with fists. To me, however, the term “scrapper” encompasses a certain attitude.

Genuine scrappers take each day in stride, no matter how discouraged they might be. Life isn’t predictable, but instead of hating, complaining or seeking sympathy, they face the changing events before them. They play the cards they are dealt and, win or lose, don’t hesitate to ante up for the next game. It’s an attitude defining them.

Among the stories, I encourage readers to direct their attention to “Solace” or “A Light Within.” These stories deal with unexpected life events and how the people in them reacted. My hope is for readers to engage in these people’s lives and see that despite their unpredictable situations, they still get up in the morning.

Thanks for reading,

Shannon Barney
Editor in Chief

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In a galaxy far, far away, Bo Davis, 29, a gaming enthusiast, looms over his powerful army and curls his white knuckles around a miniature tape measure. He cracks a smile through his poker face, picks up a handful of dice and rolls them with precision and style. The dice bounce and roll around the handmade, superfuturistic, industrial battlefield that was, until two hours ago, a dining room table. He counts the damage and visibly gloats at the confirmation of another kill.

Every weekend Davis and his friends get together for Warhammer 40,000, a game of strange new lands and extraordinary situations. The players’ aim is to pit their force of miniatures against other players’ armies across fantastic, self-made battlefields. Win or lose, all battles are challenges in which the players try to outthink and outplay their opponent, taking advantage of what good luck comes their way via the dice, but ultimately relying upon tactics to win the game. Also, having a good-looking army doesn’t hurt.

Davis picks out a small piece of metal from a portable organizer the size of a suitcase. As he holds it up, closer examination reveals a tiny alien warrior no larger than the tip of his thumb.

“This one took me five hours to paint,” Davis says.

In his organizer, scores of minute metal men, tanks, scenery, armed spacecraft and other assorted ultramodern war machines are enveloped in green, protective foam. All of the figurines are meticulously detailed, right down to the shading of the tiny, silver bullets strapped to the little aliens’ chest.

Sitting across the battlefield from Davis is Addie Pobst, 30, a Western alumna and an import coordinator for an organic produce company. Every weekend Pobst’s main export becomes death and destruction as she unleashes her deadly militia onto the army of an unlucky opponent. As she bends down to clear the table of her dead and wounded, she explains some of the main ideas behind Warhammer 40,000.

Any person interested in playing will need a few things. First, a player needs to get his or her hands on the massive, 250-page rule book that explains everything one needs to know about the game. Next, that person should go down to a local hobby shop and buy an army. The miniatures are sold singly or in sets of various sizes. According to the rule book, the army cannot be used in a game until the player paints each piece at least three colors. After that, the person must find an opponent, Pobst says.

Spending approximately $800 on his army, Tyson Timmer, 22, a Western alumnus, has played Warhammer 40,000 for about two years. He says it takes about $250 to $300 to start an army, and his armies are not small. He was thinking about getting back into building models when he played Warhammer 40,000 for the first time. After that, he was hooked.

“I spent the next few days thinking about how to win,” Timmer says as he annihilates Davis’ reconnaissance.

He says one aspect of the game that grabbed him is what players refer to as the fluff, which comes from Games Workshop, the British company that produces the miniatures. A book is available for each of the 11 races of armies that gives background information. A monthly magazine, White Dwarf, is also available and is filled with pictures and information of Warhammer 40,000 paraphernalia, Timmer says.

With a thoughtful, almost meditative, demeanor, Cary Mapes, 33, a Western alumnus, sits deep in his soft, tan sofa and drags a small paint-brush over the green skin of one of his many tiny extraterrestrial fighters.

Often, he invites other players to his apartment to assemble, sand and paint their armies. Sometimes they get together and read the newest fluff. Mapes says an attractive feature of the game is the social aspect.

“Getting an unfinished piece from the hobby shop and then bringing it home to work on with friends is just as much what draws me to the game as actually playing it,” Mapes says.

—Ted McGuire
Gabriel, 4, zips around the house as a caped crusader while Sophia, 6, and Grant, 9, argue about whose turn it is to play video games. Sophia and Gabriel are Ethiopian and Grant is their American brother, but the cultural divide does not prevent them from acting like typical siblings. Sophia and Gabriel’s new life in America is one of happy children, manicured lawns and pretty houses.

A year ago Sophia and Gabriel played in a dirt courtyard chasing broken toy cars and balls. No mother, no father. Their clothes were mismatched and too small. Their faces were no longer consumed with grief — for a brief moment they could be children.

Shadowy figures disappear in the red dust that billows in the hot African sun. The sick are emaciated, their eyes sunken deep. Days later another silent death occurs in the village, with muffled cries coming from cotton shawls. No one ever dies of AIDS but of other diseases such as meningitis or malaria. The word “AIDS” is never spoken.

The stigma of AIDS in Ethiopia is debilitating. The parents too poor and sick to care for their children have no choice but to leave them at the doorsteps of orphanages overflowing with orphans. The parents die and their children live with the burden of AIDS.

In 2010, there will be an estimated 18 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the UN-created Joint United Nations Program on AIDS Web site.

ADOPTION

Sophia and Gabriel are AIDS orphans. Their father died in 2002 of AIDS, and a year later their mother died. The extended family could not care for Sophia and Gabriel, so their uncle made the three-hour journey to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to an orphanage in April 2004.

A world apart from Ethiopia, Bellingham resident and child activist Kate Haskell and her husband, Alan Regimbal, decided to adopt Ethiopian orphans. They didn’t know their journey would allow them to adopt a community and a cause from Sophia and Gabriel.

Haskell and Regimbal decided to adopt children internationally to expand their family and continue their commitment to social change. Haskell, a counselor, has worked with children in the mental, health and foster services for 20 years.

“My desire to become a mother wasn’t only driven by biology,” Haskell says. “Adoption just made sense.”

After attending a state adoption fair in 2003 and researching adoption agencies for months, Haskell and Regimbal decided to adopt through Adoption Advocates International, a nonprofit adoption agency based in Port Angeles. They began the extensive application process in April 2004 and fell in love with a brother and sister in Ethiopia. After months of waiting, they received a letter July 20, 2004, that stated, “You are now the parents of Sophia and Gabriel.”

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

On Sept. 11, 2004, Haskell made the 10,000-mile journey to Addis Ababa. Haskell landed in Ethiopia 36 hours before meeting Sophia and Gabriel. In an 8-by-12-foot yellow room, Haskell knelt down to the cribs of babies sleeping peacefully. She watched Gabriel, then 3, with his tiny hands cupped over his mouth. Sophia, then 5, a small girl with plaited hair, wore pants two sizes too small and a striped
T-shirt with holes. She approached Haskell wearily and sat on her lap, wrapping her frail brown arms around her new white mother.

After months of preparation, the agonizing wait was finally over. The children in the photographs were real. Gabriel woke from his slumber and looked to his sister for approval. Sophia scooted off her new mother’s lap. Haskell examined the texture of Haskell’s multicolored scarf, rubbing it against his cheek. There was a break in Gabriel’s smile and a break in the rain. It was time to leave. In 25 minutes they left the orphanage and they were a family.

Gabriel and Sophia knew four words of English: “hello,” “mama,” “yes” and “thank you.” Haskell only knew 10 words in Amharic. She used sign language to communicate everyday tasks. A few days later, Regimbal made the journey to Ethiopia. Haskell, Regimbal and the children spent 10 days immersing themselves in the Ethiopian culture before leaving Sept. 24, 2004, to make the journey back.

After the adoption was finalized, Haskell and Regimbal learned Sophia and Gabriel had an older sister, Meseret, 9, who also had been left behind in an Addis Ababa orphanage. Meseret’s grandmother and uncle could not afford to take care of her anymore.

“It was an act of compassion taking the children to the orphanage,” Haskell says. “The extended family could simply not afford to feed three mouths, and they feared the children would never be accepted.”

Haskell and Regimbal made the painstaking decision not to adopt Meseret because they did not believe it would be good for their biological son, Grant, who was the same age as Meseret.

THE SECOND JOURNEY

But they desperately wanted to reunite Meseret with Sophia and Gabriel. Haskell and Regimbal went on a journey to find Meseret a family. In January 2005, they got a phone call from a couple in Seattle interested in adopting Meseret. Haskell and Meseret’s new mother made the journey to Ethiopia.

In May 2005, Haskell arrived in the village of Arsi-Site, Ethiopia, to meet Sophia, Gabriel and Meseret’s grandmother and extended family. A small woman wrapped her arms around Haskell, kissing her and speaking rapidly in Amharic, “Thank you for loving my children. God bless you.”

Haskell hiked along the unpaved road to the graves of Tigist and Sisay, the children’s birth parents. She left tracings of Sophia and Gabriel’s hands, red crochet hearts to symbolize love and AIDS and a poem Haskell wrote for Tigist, their mother. “I had feelings of gratitude and profound sorrow,” Haskell says. “I was completely overcome.”

MAINTAINING THEIR CULTURE

Haskell and Regimbal say they want their children to hold on to their Ethiopian culture, and they have been open with the children about their parents’ past.

“We talk about AIDS with Sophia and Gabriel. This is the disease that took away their parents,” Haskell says. “It is not something they should be ashamed of. AIDS is only different from other diseases because of the politics and discrimination. We won’t legitimize the shame with silence.”

Haskell and Regimbal made an effort to communicate with Ethiopians living in Bellingham so they could ask questions and build relationships. “We have been embraced by other Ethiopian and Eritrean adults in Bellingham,” she says. “Takele Seda, a Western physics professor, and his wife, Mulu Belay, have been a huge support and resource for us.”

Gabriel and Meseret, who grieved for her parents and siblings. Meseret took the transition hard,” Abetew says. “She experienced her parents’ death, and then she lost Sophia and Gabriel. She also missed Ethiopian culture, and she had trouble connecting with her parents.”

Abetew has noticed that the more Meseret assimilates to American culture, the more she loses her Ethiopian culture.

“I can’t believe how much she has grown. She understands that her family is there to love and care for her,” Abetew says. “Her Amharic is fading and she is speaking more English. I made her promise me to hold on to her culture.”

THE GIFT

Haskell says she cannot describe the gift of Sophia and Gabriel.

“I kind of expected it to be a lot of work and sometime in the future I would feel the joy. But the joy and love happened instantly,” Haskell says.

Regimbal says the similarities between Gabriel and their biological son, Grant, at the same age are startling. Grant has learned through this journey that despite their differences they share a love that transcends cultures as a family.

“Even though they were born worlds apart, kids are kids,” Regimbal says.

—Mary Andom
The Sean Humphrey House helps six men with HIV/AIDS in Bellingham cope with everyday life. Nic Riley tells the story of how Thomas (above) and Keith are living with the world's most infamous illness — and of the people who help them through it. Photos by Nic Riley and Kathryn Brenize. Design by Elana Bean.

The people who live and work at the house on H and Dupont streets tell a story of a ghost who lives there. Ask them about it, and they'll probably provide accounts of inexplicably slammed doors, misplaced items and flipped light switches.

“Sometimes I can feel him tug at the back of my shirt,” says Keith, who wishes to remain anonymous because of privacy concerns. “He'll knock on people's doors sometimes.”

Their faces, however, tell a different ghost story, one that demands constant action and governs the routine of their daily lives. Sometimes pedestrians who pass by the house quicken their pace upon noticing the sign outside bearing the name Sean Humphrey House, recognizing the ghost who lives there.

Like most ghost stories, though, theirs isn't really scary. It's simply a matter of bringing the ghost to life.

From outside, the house certainly doesn't seem haunted. Behind the tall pines that line the fence adjacent to the traffic on Dupont Street lies an expansive yard that rivals any in the neighborhood. A wooden archway at the edge of the yard leads toward a small meditation garden, and the grass between the driveway and the edge of the house is always green, even in January.

Around the side of the house facing H Street, a winding stone walkway leads to the front door, where a sign above the doorbell reads, “You can ring my bell.” The caregiver on duty is always there to answer the door with a welcoming smile.

Inside, a piano and a fireplace make the vast space of the living room feel a bit cozier. The brightly lit kitchen appears spotless, even right after lunchtime.

In the hallway, a bulletin board displays an assortment of messages, phone numbers and reminders. “If you have a minute, take Sadie for a walk,” reads one. The center of the board, however, is reserved for the most poignant reminder. “When you first got the news, it enraged, shocked and frightened
“I take over 40 pills a day,” Thomas says.
problems. “I take over 40 pills a day,” he says, for causes that range from depression, sleep disorders, loss of appetite, constipation and asthma, to simply taking medicine to fight the side-effects of other medicine.

“When I first came here I was in a wheelchair. I fell off a porch and chipped a bone in my hip. Then one of my HIV meds started attacking the exposed bone.” Thomas says he waited more than two years before a Bellingham doctor took pity on him and volunteered to replace his hip. Other doctors, he says, declined to operate on him to avoid the risk of infection.

He still walks with a conspicuous limp, however, favoring his right foot, which he says he crushed in another incident. “I’ve got seven impact fractures in my spine right now,” he says, describing them as another result of the medications that harm in the process of helping. “At least I’ve still got all my teeth,” he says. “That’s pretty good. Most people with HIV after 20 years don’t have their teeth.”

Regarding his experience over the years, Thomas talks about his appreciation for society’s improved attitude about AIDS. “In the beginning, it was like a homosexual disease,” he says. “For the first 10 years, they told us we were all going to die. Over the years people have realized [differently] because of what’s happening to Africa and our own women and children. People’s attitudes have changed.”

Thomas, who worked as a pianist from 1982 until his health forced him to retire in 1988, spends his days playing his piano, watching television and tending to the plants in the backyard. “There’s a lot of people in the world who have it a lot worse than I do,” he says with a smile.

Despite their different backgrounds, the residents of the Sean Humphrey House share their daily experience with one another as a family. None of the residents are employed. “If you can work, you really don’t need to be here,” Thomas says.

They prepare most of their own meals, except for dinner, which the caregivers prepare. “There’s no difference between a Monday and a Saturday if you live here,” caregiver Jimmy Olson says. “It’s very routine based.”

House director Cassie Hernandez says that though each of the residents has a private room, about twice the size of an average dorm room, and a bathroom, the norm is social living. They often leave the house together to run errands, go on walks or attend church services, though Sadie, the resident border collie, usually sleeps in Keith’s room. “We certainly try to make it more of a home than an institution,” Hernandez says.

As of Jan. 31, 2006, 9,100 people in Washington are known to be living with AIDS/HIV. This statistic does not include those who are tested anonymously.

“Caregivers keep a close watch on all of the men’s medications to ensure they never forget to take their pills.” Thomas, who grew up in Florida, says he would not have access to the same quality of care if he were to move back there. “My stepmother calls me all the time and sometimes reminds me of how lucky I am to have this place,” he says. “The care, the love and support that I get here have saved my life.”

Ghost stories are usually most effective in the dimmest of light. Pouring light onto a subject, however, always allows for a greater appreciation.

“When you get to know people who have AIDS, it becomes totally secondary,” says Maggie Thompson, lead caretaker at the Sean Humphrey House. “It’s obviously very important, but just because a person has AIDS, that’s not the most important thing to know about that person.” She says that her thoughts have changed since she first started working at the house two and a half years ago. “It’s less scary, more real,” she says.

“I’ve thought about taking my own life,” Keith says. “If this house wasn’t here, I would have. And you can print that.”
Driving south on Interstate 5 in pounding rain, concentrating on the road through the enormous windshield wipers moving at a breakneck speed, passing semitrucks, monitoring cars in his mirror, acknowledging the stop-requested ding, recognizing his exit and all the while recalling his performance at last year’s bus rodeo, Jeff James has a lot to worry about.

For 15 years, James, 45, has driven a bus in Whatcom County, and he’s the best driver a rider could ask for—well, second best this year.

James took first place in the Whatcom Transportation Authority Bus Roadeo two years ago only to finish sixth at the state finals in Yakima. James took second in the Whatcom contest last year, but he plans to return to form this summer and return to the state championship.

The Roadeo calls on any WTA driver to compete and culminates in a state championship of drivers held in a different location every year.

James believes his performance will be better this year now that he is without the burden of trying to win in back-to-back years. “It’s tough being the champion. There’s a lot of pressure to repeat,” James says. “I like my chances this year.”

The Roadeo is exactly what it sounds like: a contest for drivers with timed challenges. The challenges include pulling up to a curb, negotiating S-curves through cones and executing 90-degree turns. James says the contests in the Roadeo are realistic enough that they help him in his bus driving, and driving prepares him for the Roadeo.

Missing, however, are late-night practices or training programs that would be reminiscent of a “Rocky” montage.

Dave Clardy, 35, drives the Western shuttle, which Bel-Air Charters owns.

Clardy wears sunglasses although it is cloudy out, he has tattoos on both hands, and he lacks the traditional ratio of silver teeth to enamel. He does not bring to mind the guy depicted in the song “Hail to the Bus Driver.”

Unlike James, Clardy has driven for only three months. His expertise comes from driving 18-wheelers.

Jeff Fox drove a WTA bus for 33 years before retiring. During those years, one passenger sticks out more than the rest to him.

Other drivers told Fox to beware of an elderly woman named Ruth. She had no friends and the other old ladies gossiped about her relentlessly.

Fox picked her up one day on his route downtown.

“She had these two giant shopping bags. She says, ‘Honey, will you hold these while I grab the post?’” Fox says. “I looked in the shopping bags — it was napkins, all napkins.”

The former Pay and Save, at 400 Cornwall Ave., had a sale on napkins, and Ruth figured she would stock up for the millennium.

Besides collecting napkins, Fox says Ruth’s favorite pastimes were complaining about the food in the restaurant she ate at every day and cussing at then-President Richard Nixon.

“She is definitely in the top five characters I’ve ever met,” Fox says.

These three drivers agree that Western students make the best passengers. Fox says during his years driving for the WTA, Western students were always the most kind, courteous and likely to say thank you on their way out the door.

Driving the Western shuttle during school hours allows Clardy to avoid most of the drunken passengers and their vomiting, he says. Driving students is beneficial for Clardy for reasons beyond not cleaning up vomit.

“[Having professors and students for passengers] is real informative,” Clardy says. “Just the other day this guy was telling me about degree programs that I plan to get into.”

James doesn’t have a route along Indian Street packed with students. His two-hour route takes him on the freeway down to Mount Vernon and back. James says he doesn’t mind though. And besides, he’s got a Roadeo to worry about.

—Andrew Sleighter
College. The word conjures images of both debauchery and academia. As you mature, how will you grow as an individual and how will you note that progression?

How can you conserve the memories you have made — the 21 runs and the skinny-dipping in Lake Padden? It’s time to take all of the photos out of that old shoe box and put them in a place worthy of what they hold. With a scrapbook, you can maintain the experiences of college for a lifetime.

**Step 1: Decisions, decisions**

Gather all the pictures you have taken during your time at Western. Feel overwhelmed? Thanks to the swift click of the camera capture button and the ease of printing digital photos, the pile is probably large. To sift through the selection, Alisen Barlean, 34, a designer at Treasury of Memories in Bellingham, recommends selecting quality pictures.

“Usually you want to try to use your best shots and pictures that capture the moment really well,” Barlean says.

Also, dig for other memorabilia related to what you intend to scrapbook. For a layout of a trip to Mount Baker, look for old ski passes, avalanche safety pamphlets or trail maps.

**Step 2: Seek supplies**

To ensure you do not blow your bank account, buy only what you need first, and go back for flourishes later. Barlean recommends getting a trimmer, which is a ruled paper cutter with a sliding blade. Using a trimmer results in straight, evenly measured edges that leave a polished look. Steve Schwartz, 47, co-owner of Stampedoodle Art and Paper in Bellingham, recommends that adhesive materials be pH neutral. Schwartz says that if an adhesive is too acidic or too chemically basic, the photographs will warp in color due to the chemical content of the adhesive in a period of several years.

**Step 3: Remember when . . . ?**

Take some time to pore over the selected photographs in front of you and relive the moments captured in each. Now, transform these into words. Writing about the experiences captured on scrapbook pages is just as important as including pictures because, over time, you may not remember everything that took place. Western junior Sarah Burlingame, 21, who began scrapbooking in the eighth grade, says she does not write in her scrapbook as much as she should, but does make sure to record something about what took place in each photograph.

**Step 4: Get it started**

At this point, you have your selected pictures, an idea of what you want to write and an armful of supplies. Burlingame says that how she begins each book depends on what kind she is making.

“If it’s a trip or something like that, I’ll do it chronologically and lay [the pictures] out and see what looks nice,” Burlingame says.

You have an entire album to work with, so do not try to cram everything together. Simplicity is better than going overboard and having a jumbled mess. Your scrapbook should look appealing, not as if a tornado put it together.

**Things to keep in mind**

If for some reason you are not satisfied with your work, do not worry. Your skills should improve as you learn what you like. Above all, every scrapbook is going to be different based on the subject and the artistic vision of the creator. One piece of advice: Keep it simple.

“If you get too involved, it’ll take longer, and you really won’t get anything done,” Barlean says.

—Taune Sweet
No, they are not llamas. But get used to their faces because alpacas are everywhere in the Northwest.

Originally from Peru and Chile, alpacas share the same knotted hairstyle and peaceful nature as many Western students.

Washington state has the second-largest alpaca population in the United States, with more than 6,578 alpacas registered with Alpaca Registry Inc., a nonprofit corporation in Colorado. (Ohio is the first with 8,565.)

Docile animals, they are great with children and have extremely soft fur. The cashmere-like quality of the fiber produces some of the softest scarves and sweaters a student or Bellingham resident can wear. The popularity of fiber is the major reason for alpaca farms in this area.

Skagit Valley Alpacas is in its 11th year as an alpaca farm. Owner Sue Henry began her farm with one female alpaca but now has 11 alpacas and five babies on the way. This year, Henry has the potential to produce a total income of $150,000 to $250,000 by breeding each of her five females with high-quality males in the industry.

Henry’s farm is part of a fiber co-op in which all the participating farms contribute their raw fiber to be made into clothing. Since Henry’s farm only breeds alpacas, this co-op gives Henry the opportunity to show customers interested in breeding alpacas the products made from the fiber without manufacturing products herself.

Henry’s animals are of a variety of colors and diverse genetics. Her farm breeds and sells only alpacas and sells a few alpaca clothing products such as sweaters, yarn and raw alpaca fiber.

—By Taylor Williams
Alpacas share ancestry with camels and spit to show annoyance. They rarely spit on humans, but alpaca owner Sue Henry says they will spit on each other. “It is their way of saying, ‘You’re pissing me off.’ It is very effective. If I was spit on, I would probably leave you alone too.”

Henry can help new breeders adjust to owning alpacas. Most customers keep in contact and tell Henry when a female is due to give birth. “[New breeders] want to share their excitement,” she says. “Most of our friends we meet through the alpaca business. It’s really enhanced [our] life in that way.”

Male alpacas, or studs, have a huge impact on the gene pool because they are bred with many females. “If they aren’t cutting the mustard, they can become pets for people who like to spin their own fiber or to 4H kids as projects,” Henry says. A male born to a high-quality female has potential to be valuable. Henry bred one of her females to a stud that sold for $580,000 at an auction last year.

Alpacas are perfect for small farms, Henry says. They walk lightly with padded feet and have only bottom teeth that don’t rip out the grass roots.

The implements in David Payne’s bag are not used for conventional surgical procedures. But Payne is not your average doctor. He never went to medical school, never performed an emergency appendectomy and never legally prescribed narcotics.

Sounding more and more like a medical slant on the newest splatterfest flick? Relax. It’s not what you think.

The Texas-born, California-raised rocker is a masterful medic when it comes to guitars, basses, mandolins and other stringed instruments. Known as “The Guitar Doctor,” Payne is as comfortable with the guts of a stringed instrument as a veteran surgeon with the innards of a human being.

The Who’s John Entwistle, Metallica’s Jason Newsted, The Taxi Gang’s Bo Diddley and an all-star set list of other prominent rock musicians hired Payne for a reason. He is one of the best practitioners of stringed-instrument service and repair in Bellingham, and nearly three decades of experience precede the physician. A faded Gibson SG whose headstock snapped off now hangs repaired on a rack, ready for its owner to claim. A broken headstock, where the strings attach to the guitar’s neck, is often a death sentence, but Payne brought this one back from the dead with some wood glue and pliers.

TOMORROW’S DREAM

The son of a prima ballerina and a physicist, Payne has spent the majority of his 44 years devoted to the art of music.

“I started playing music very, very early, and so my parents ended up adding on a family room that had a stage and lights, TV, pachinko machine, stuff like that,” Payne says, taking a slug

David Payne is a precise practitioner when it comes to all things stringed. Tom King listens to Payne’s songs of strumming dreams and picking reality as the guitar doc shares his life in the world of rock ’n’ roll. Photos by Kathryn Brenize. Design by Elana Bean.
from his grande espresso. It’s about 4 p.m.,
and the Sehome Village Starbucks is quickly
filling with college students and various other
patrons getting off work. Payne is focused
despite the raucous chatter.

Though he’s changed his appearance
considerably from older photos, he still main-
tains a trademark rocker look. Payne keeps his
chestnut-colored hair an inch or two longer
than most men his age, and a pair of bristling
sideburns frames his face.

After Payne bashed a toy drum set to
pieces at 3 years old, his parents decided to get
him something more heavy-duty.

“My dad bought me my first electric
guitar, a Harmony from Sears. I was 6 or 7,”
he says. Payne eventually took the guitar apart
and put it back together just to see how every-
thing worked.

Payne played in his first band, David
Payne and the Originals, when he was 8. It
was then he decided on the bass as his
weapon of choice.

“There was something missing from the
drums, the brass, the guitar,” Payne says of
the Originals. “I found that the bass, for me,
was perfect. It was right in between. It was
the glue, the foundation. It could be melodic
yet rhythmic.”

Most recently, Payne rocked the bass as
a special guest for the house band at the Wild
Buffalo’s Buffalo Blues Invitational Jan. 10.

The bassist speaks with the calm, self-
assured demeanor of an industry veteran and a
man who, as he says, creates his own reality.

MASTER OF REALITY

While listing his musical influences,
Payne segues the conversation into a dream
experience involving The Who’s Entwistle.

“When I was 11 years old or so, I used to
have these recurring dreams that I’d met John
Entwistle, and that him and I became close
friends, he gave me some lessons, and that I
was working for him,” Payne explains. “And I
kept having the same dream. We were stand-
ing in this room with crystal chandeliers and
all these rich-dressed people around.”

In 1979, when Payne was 18, his dream
came a reality.

He was working as a repair tech-
nician for the Santa Rosa-based Alembic Inc.,
whose instruments are widely accepted as
the Rolls-Royce of bass guitars. When the
company received an order from Entwistle,
the company sent Payne to make the delivery.
Entwistle gave him 15 backstage passes to The
Who’s next show.

“At that point, I had the biggest déjà vu
rush I’ve ever experienced and realized, yes, I
do create my own reality and I can make my
dreams come true.”

Payne credits his parents with encourag-
ing him and affording him the opportunities
he’s had in his life. They willingly signed him
over to a legal guardian at age 15 and shipped
him off to Hollywood at the end of 1976 to
pursue his recording career.

INTO THE VOID

Payne became a career musician a few
weeks before he even hit Los Angeles, where
he signed to Bearsville Records with his band,
Stark Raving Mad. He shared the label with
artists such as Meat Loaf, Foghat and Todd
Rundgren.

“The lifestyle, for most people, seems
like a dream, or surreal, which in lots of places
it is,” he says. “But if you’re going to create
your own reality, make sure it’s the reality
you want. I saw people go insane, become
addicted. A lot of my friends died.”

FOR ASPIRING TECHS:

- Make sure you have the correct tools.
- Be mentally functional for the job.
- Don’t try something you’re not qualified
to do.
- Read every book and article on instru-
ment service and repair you can get
your hands on. Specialty publications
on maintenance and repair exist —
read them all.
- Experiment without being too danger-
ous; you don’t want to destroy a $4,000
instrument just because you wanted to
see what the insides looked like.

In the near future, he plans to write an
autobiography on how the dream of living
and bleeding for music was handed to him on
a silver platter.

“Or a Golden platter, for that matter,”
Payne jokes, explaining that his manager
and guardian’s last name was Golden.

Upon his arrival in Los Angeles, Payne
moved into Golden’s house on Roxbury Drive
in Beverly Hills. A short time later, he and his
band moved into label-owned houses for band
members throughout the city.

“From that point on, everything’s sur-
real,” Payne says. “A lot of it is a blur. I mean,
I was down there for about two years. We
were working on our album, and it ended up
never panning out because our lead singer had
breached our management contract. So the
band got dropped from the label.”

Payne called his parents at that point,
asking them what he should do. His father,
ever the sagacious advice dispenser, simply
asked him if he had a place to stay and if
he was working. He told his father, yes, he
was staying with a good friend, Hernando
Courtright, and doing session work, demos
and commercials.

Courtright, whose father owned the
Beverly Wilshire and Hilton hotels in Beverly
Hills, took Payne under his wing as his young-
er brother. Through Courtright, he continued
to get work throughout Hollywood as a ses-
sion bassist, playing for various studio acts.

“So my dad said, ‘Stay down there and
make friends.’ He said, ‘Don’t worry about con-
tacts because contacts will forget you tomorrow.”
Friends are forever,” Payne says. “So I stayed and met some friends. Not a whole lot of friends because so many people in that type of lifestyle are so superficial. Greed, drugs, alcohol — that’s what L.A. was to me.”

It was about a year into his time in Los Angeles that Payne made the acquaintance of guitar pioneer and virtuoso Randy Rhoads, of Ozzy Osbourne and Quiet Riot fame. Payne remarked that in a sea of prima donnas such as Gene Simmons and Axl Rose, Rhoads stood as one of the most real rock stars in existence.

Years of playing a heavy bass had finally taken its toll, and Washington was the only state that would pay for the surgery.

But when he told people about his escapades in Hollywood, they’d just call him on being full of it.

“Honesty’s a big thing for me. Making up stories and being a name dropper is not my idea of someone who’s a respectable, decent person,” Payne says. “When I start telling people [about my life], they’re like, ‘In what lifetime was this?’ So for a long time, I shut up. Most people

At one of Courtright’s wild parties, Payne approached Rhoads and commented on the egotism and arrogance of Quiet Riot bassist Rudy Sarzo and lead singer Kevin DuBrow, who were also at the party.

Rhoads took Payne’s remark in stride and urged him to quit using drugs, saying he was far too young.

“I was heavily influenced by substances and so forth. It wasn’t that I wanted to do them, it’s that it was crammed down my throat,” Payne says. “It was part of the industry. It was actually the record labels who were filling our noses and our gullets with booze and drugs.”

Just before his 18th birthday, the pollution, grime and slime of Los Angeles and its music industry finally got to Payne, and he moved back to Santa Rosa to work for Alembic Inc. After 12 years working for the company, Payne moved to Bellingham in 1994 to undergo a $73,000 back surgery. Payne says, polishing off his espresso.

He is a living example of this philosophy, evidenced in his twin businesses, Payne Formula Design and The Guitar Doctor. The former encompasses his instrument design and creation business, while the latter is his repair business.

“After living such an extreme lifestyle in the past, I wanted to try the other extreme of being basically completely clean and sober for a long period of time,” Payne says. “I’m finding that more exciting than ever. The last time I felt this good was before I left for L.A.”

Nov. 4, 2006, will mark Payne’s 10th drug-free year.

Now seeking natural highs as opposed to chemical ones, Payne works part time for Manna Music as an in-house, stringed-instrument repair expert in addition to running Payne Formula Design and The Guitar Doctor from a garage on Humboldt Street.

“Dave is definitely good for us,” Miller says. “Having a tech here that people can actually talk to is an asset. He’s a good repair person. He knows his stuff, and people like being able to talk to the person who’s working on their instrument.”

Westerfield also speaks of Payne’s expertise, particularly the quality of his custom-built basses.

“You can pretty much just plug them in and you’re ready to go,” Westerfield says. “David’s definitely a very good craftsman, and he’s been doing it a long time. I mean, he worked at Alembic when he was a teenager.”

Nowadays, Payne is preparing to drastically expand his business. Using the experience he gained in his 12 years at Alembic coupled with his lifetime as a musician, he plans to move out of his garage and acquire a 30,000-square-foot factory off of Interstate 5 in Bellingham. He will then sublet sections to other repair people like himself, creating a unique, gigantic service center.

Payne describes his idea as a sort of musicians’ co-op, with retail space as well as professional rehearsal rooms.

“Whatever’s not available, I’ll bring in from the outside if I have to,” Payne says reluctantly. “I’ll train people myself.”

The good doctor’s ambitious plan for the future involves a great deal of planning and cash, almost $700,000, he says. Raising the astronomical sum will take time and energy.

But Payne is a man who doesn’t believe in the word “impossible,” and anyone telling him he can’t pull it off would do well to remember what he has accomplished already.
The walls of Steve Ganz's Bellingham home cannot contain the sounds originating from within. Inside, Ganz, 55, and a friend sit at a small dining room table underneath a solitary light, strumming "Toy for Two Lutes." The 17th-century tune echoes through the home. A case holding Ganz's most recently built guitar sits on the floor nearby. As much as the walls cannot impede the sounds, Ganz cannot restrain the look of enchantment that crosses his face with each string he plucks.

In addition to teaching part time at Western's College of Business and Economics, Ganz builds classical guitars. He built his first guitar when he was about 20 years old while attending Arizona State University in Tempe. Ganz's friends told him a local man had recently returned with a variety of woods from Central America, and was allowing people to build guitars in his workshop free of charge.

"I tried to build one as quick as I could on the first one, and it took me a month," Ganz says. "I didn't know what I was doing, and I didn't care."

As Ganz followed other pursuits, building guitars got pushed aside. He did not build again for about 20 years.

Ganz left Arizona, but earned several degrees in the following decades, including a master's in business administration from Western. He also married and started a family. During this time, Ganz carried a piece of wood with him from his first guitar-building experience. With time, Ganz says guitars and guitar-building took hold of him.

"I suppose it's a passion that developed and started to consume my thoughts," Ganz says. "I wanted to spend every day devoted to guitars as much as possible. If not every day, most days."

Though he played many instruments as a child, when Ganz picked up the guitar at age 13, he was immediately drawn into its sound.

"It really gets me," Ganz says. "I have these songs stuck in my head from when I was a teen."

Ganz recalls hearing Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida play in a park when he was a teenager. Ganz compares Almeida's performance to watching a mother play with a baby, as the Grammy Award winner not only displayed happiness and his obvious love of music but was also generous in sharing that love with his audience through his performance, Ganz says.

Ganz shares his own love of guitars through his business, Ganz Guitars, run from his home. Ganz talks with his customers about the music and recordings they like, and uses that information to construct his guitars in a manner that will elicit the sounds they prefer.

Selecting which type of wood to use is just one step in building a guitar. Ganz says he can use most woods, but uses certain types more often than others. Ganz typically uses East Indian rosewood or maple for the body of the guitar and uses a softer wood such as spruce or cedar for the soundboard. He also includes various types of wood as decorative rosettes. Ceiling-high piles of wood sit on shelves in his workshop to become well-seasoned, meaning sap is evaporating or hardening, Ganz says.

"The big thing, when you hold up a piece of wood, is not how it looks but how it sounds," Ganz says. "There's quite a bit of tension and pressure on guitars, so you want them to be strong."

Ganz estimates he has built nearly 50 guitars during his career, mostly made to order. He says many customers see his business's Web site, see him at exhibits, or hear of his work via word-of-mouth from customers or dealers. Prices start at $3,000, but Ganz says they increase based on factors such as the type of wood used, the case he supplies and small parts on the instrument such as tuning knobs.

One individual Ganz credits with teaching him the craft is Bellingham guitar builder and friend Dake Traphagen, 54. Traphagen says he has built between 500 and 600 instruments, including guitars, harpsichords and harps, during the past 35 years.

"I've been building instruments for a long time. It's just a wonderful craft and a wonderful thing to bring to the world," Traphagen says. "It's a positive legacy to leave behind."

Just as the song he plays has lived on through the centuries, so too has Ganz's craft lived on through time. As he sits at his dining room table advancing through the chords of the song, the single light beating down upon the smooth wooden surface of his guitar, it is apparent that Ganz has not only advanced his skill in building guitars, he has also built, for himself, a life's philosophy.

—Taune Sweet
A steady lull fills the building as the crowd grows more anxious. Young girls squeal below the front of the stage and others meander about, drinking, chartering and waiting. Flashes of blue and violet light dance across the stage as people begin to scream and cheer.

“Acorn Project! Acorn Project!”

Clusters of young teenagers and college-age men and women excitedly anticipate Bellingham band Acorn Project to take the stage Jan. 6 at The Showbox in Seattle. The lights change from blue and purple to red and orange, and the crowd hushes as five laid-back-looking young guys wander onto the stage, provoking whistles and applause.

Within minutes, fans and people in the crowd hearing Acorn Project for the first time are rocking out to funky keyboard riffs, wild saxophone bellows and the lead singer’s soothing yet powerful voice. The singer’s curly brown hair, olive-toned skin and light eyes drive the girls wild. But the members of Acorn Project never dreamed they would be playing, much less headlining, The Showbox, where countless famous bands, such as Reel Big Fish and Pearl Jam, have played.

“It’s all pretty crazy how it’s fallen into place,” says bass player Kale McGuinness, 23. “I mean, our first show was an open mic at the Fairhaven in Bellingham, and we played two songs.”

Since then, the band has embarked on a musical journey that has brought them to this point and possibly will bring them to new places in the future.

“We started playing just for fun; we didn’t get serious for years,” says drummer Todd Benedict, 23.

McGuinness and Andy Pritiken, 23, the band’s guitar player and singer, were roommates in the Fairhaven residence halls at Western in 2002. They met Benedict and saxophone player Sam Lax, a Western senior, later that year through residence life as well. They found they all had a common interest: music. They decided to start playing together in 2003 and practiced in various locations, including the basement of the house where McGuinness and Pritiken lived. As their music and playing developed, they began practicing in Lax’s living room, where they still practice.

Acorn Project got its name in 2004. Lax says the name of the band has several underlying meanings, and as they continue to grow as musicians, the acorn acts as a symbol of progress.

“The seed symbolizes our ability to grow together as a unit, which includes our friends, fans and the all around family,” says Lax, 22. “I’d say we’ve got some roots tunneling now … We’d love it if it grew into a strong and mighty oak.”

Acorn Project has played shows in Bellingham since 2004, including gigs at the Wild Buffalo House of Music, the Nightlight Lounge, The Fairhaven Pub and Martini Bar, the Rogue Hero and the Pickford Dreamspace. The band has also played gigs in Seattle at The Rainbow Room and Chop Suey.

“Another band, Down North, introduced us to a promoter from Epidemic Entertainment last October,” McGuinness says. “He offered us an opening spot at The Showbox in October 2005, and they liked us, so we were invited back.”

Fan and friend Gwen Knight, 22, says she met the band members years ago, when they first started playing.

“I’ve heard them from the beginning,” she says. “They’ve grown so much musically; it makes me proud, like a mama.”

Lax says he doesn’t think of Acorn Project’s followers as fans but just as the band’s extended family.

“The fans are friends, and the friends are family,” Lax says. He laughs and breaks out a cigarette, shoving it behind his ear. “But wow, playing at The Showbox, the crowd reaction was excellent.”

Many of Acorn Project’s friends supported the band by going down to see them at The Showbox, but show-goers unfamiliar with Acorn Project reacted positively to the band too. The band members not only enjoyed the crowd’s reaction, but the overall experience of playing at such a venue.

“The sound system was amazing,” Benedict says. “Also, it was probably one of
outside, the sun shines. The grass blades near the base of the flag-pole glisten with dewdrops. Yellow school buses are lined up in front of the brick building. Their double doors part, and students make their way toward the school entrance.

Once inside, students gather in halls cluttered with posters announcing upcoming events. They gossip, share stories and plan for the weekend. The bell rings. Students, rushing to beat the end of the bell, say goodbye to one another and hurry toward their classrooms.

In one classroom, the students carelessly throw their backpacks onto the floor. The teacher walks to the front of the room to make an announcement. The students gaze quizzically at this teacher. Some of them stir in their seats; others smirk. This is not their usual teacher. This is a substitute teacher.

Full-time teachers are surrounded by a different environment than substitute and student teachers. Full-time teachers are granted more time to get to know the students, but they must be able to manage their own classroom. Substitutes and student teachers are exposed to a variety of classrooms and students, which helps them become better teachers. However, they have a limited amount of time to gain students’ trust and respect.

“The only thing that’s easy about teaching is, hmm, nothing,” Suzanne Tiger, a full-time, third-grade teacher, says with a chuckle and a warm smile.

Substitute teaching can be inconsistent and chaotic, 2004 Western graduate Amelia Strohmeyer says. She substituted for approximately one year before being hired in the Burlington-Edison School District as an instructional assistant.

Substitutes must have backup plans in case anything unexpected occurs or the students misbehave. Strohmeyer brings a book to read to the class as part of her backup plan.

Students know the substitute may not be familiar with the rules of the classroom and some students take advantage of this.

SchooL Daze

Happy Valley Elementary teacher Suzanne Tiger developed her own teaching style after being a substitute for about a year. PHOTO BY KATHRYN BRENNIZE

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McGuinness says he thinks the band’s popularity is not only due to the members’ musical talent, but also to the energy they exude on stage.

“People are always stoked to see us because we just have fun,” he says. “We know we’re just decent musicians who put on a good show.”

Acorn Project is unsure, however, of what the future holds. All of the members are Western graduates or students, with the exception of the new keyboard player, Oskar Kollen, 25, a University of Montana graduate who joined the band in fall 2005.

“We don’t have extremely long-term goals,” says Benedict, who works at the Sehome car wash. “We don’t know where we’ll be in a year, but we are putting together a spring tour.”

The band released its CD “Odd His Sleepy Soar” at the Mirabeau Room in Seattle Jan. 28 and at the Pickford Dreamspace in Bellingham Feb. 4.

Pritiken, a Western industrial design major, hopes the band will continue to grow and improve.

“If we can stay in the area, we’ll do it,” he says. “It would be a future regret if we didn’t.”

Lax hopes the band continues to play together as well.

“I’m not resting until we’re number one on Total Request Live,” he says. “Not really. But seriously, we’re just gonna keep on jammin’ and having a good time.”

According to Acorn Project’s family of fans, that’s what they are best at.

—Amanda Raphael
of her orange jacket, she recalls the day.

These third-graders in the Ferndale School District misbehaved, writing on their desks, hiding under chairs and challenging her authority, she says. They targeted one girl and continuously picked on her. The girl finally resorted to laying her head upon her desk and taping a sign on the hood of her sweatshirt instructing the other students to leave her alone.

“I never went back to that school again;” Strohmeyer says. “I didn’t want to show my face there.”

Quickly gaining the students’ trust and respect usually deters them from behaving badly, Strohmeyer says. To achieve a level of comfort and trust with the students, Strohmeyer talks about her dog and lets the students ask her questions.

“You have to be firm and have high expectations and boundaries,” Tiger says. “They can eat you for lunch if you just go in and try to be their friend.”

One benefit of being a substitute teacher is having the freedom to experiment with teaching techniques to see what works best. Substitutes also get to explore a variety of classroom setups, time-management tips and curricula. They can use what they have learned to create a perfect classroom if hired full time.

Having a classroom to call one’s own is rewarding. Tiger teaches at Happy Valley Elementary in Bellingham. The day’s schedule is written on one of the two whiteboards in her classroom. Taped to the board is a list of journal topics that include winter break and fantasy story.

Tiger chose to use tables rather than desks after discovering from her substituting experiences that tables allow for more interaction among students.

Her full-time presence in the classroom allows her to become familiar with her students and build a trusting relationship with them. She knows their personalities and they know hers. She works with each student daily to accomplish their goals.

With affection in her voice, Tiger describes one student she is immensely proud of. His goal is to become more organized. She says he excels in school but has a hard time staying focused. Three times a day he checks off tasks such as putting his backpack away and making sure he has his homework before leaving for home. He is making great progress. However, with a group of approximately 23 students, problems and trials are bound to arise.

Full-time teachers must return to face the challenges of a classroom day after day. Prior to her current job, Tiger substituted long-term in an elementary school in Bellingham. The position was challenging for her.

She once had a student with Tourette’s syndrome, a neurological disorder that results in involuntary vocalizations and body tics. He also had Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, a psychoneurotic disorder in which a person is beset with obsessions or compulsions.

One student she is immensely proud of.

Sehome High School teacher Steve Ruthford says he sees roughly 120 students each day.

PHOTO BY JACINDA HOWARD

1,973

Western students are enrolled in Woodring College of Education.
SOURCE: WOODRING COLLEGE

His disabilities prevented him from interacting with the other students, Tiger says. He would yell things and collect items in a box by his desk every day, she says. He did not understand emotions well. Tiger says it was necessary for her to exaggerate her emotions so that he knew when he was in trouble and when he was meeting expectations.

“It was hard,” Tiger says. “I cried a few days when I came home from school.”

A teacher needs to set limits because serving as a counselor for every student is impossible, says Steve Ruthford, a full-time, 10th grade biology teacher. He has taught for eight years, the last six of which he has spent at Sehome High School.

Ruthford has taught long enough to know he should give each student a chance to receive one-on-one guidance but he still needs to be aware of what is happening in the classroom around him. He sees approximately 120 students a day and estimates he is able to spend about eight minutes of personal time per day with each student.

Anyone watching Ruthford interact with his students can see he cares for them. Dressed in sleek, well-ironed dress slacks, a baby-blue collared shirt with the sleeves rolled to his elbows, a black sports vest and a tie, he wanders from table to table. At each table, Ruthford answers the students’ questions, leaning over or kneeling down at some tables to explain the cycle between photosynthesis and respiration.

He is patient with his students and speaks in a genuine voice. Ruthford has gained his students’ trust by respecting them. At one table, three boys playfully argue with one another whether they like Ruthford or his students better.

A student teacher experiences a mix of full-time and substitute teaching. Like a substitute, they have a hard time gaining the students’ trust at first, but like a full-time teacher, students teacher have time to build relationships with the students. One benefit of student teaching is having a support system.

“It’s not like you are just thrown in there like a substitute,” says Western senior Joey Russell, 24. “You have a lot of guidance, a lot of feedback.”

Russell’s education has taught her how to acknowledge the students’ good behavior, plan ahead and focus on the students’ needs. Being in the classroom allows her to utilize these skills. She student teaches at Alderwood Elementary in the Bellingham School District. Once a week she teaches the class by herself. Within the next two months, she will begin to create her own curricula for the class.

Teachers experience several classroom environments throughout their career. Each classroom will differ from the last and offer its own advantages and disadvantages. It makes no difference whether a teacher is working on receiving a teaching certificate, like Russell is, or has been in the profession for several years, like Ruthford has.

“Good teaching is good teaching if you have good management and you have some good strategies up your sleeve,” Tiger says.

—Jacinda Howard
“This is a way of life for now — not forever.”

A light within

Jamie Badilla confronts one of society’s largest problems firsthand as she explores the lives of Bellingham’s homeless. What she finds may not fit the stereotype many might think of. Photos by Jamie Badilla. Design by David Wray.

The clatter of dishes from behind a square counter and high-pitched squeaks of moving plastic chairs serve as a background for various conversations. A scent of macaroni and cheese wafts through the air as the cooking staff rushes to get the next plate ready. No more than 20 people occupy the six round tables, eating a meal provided out of charity. It is dinnertime at the Lighthouse Mission, a Christian ministry in Bellingham dedicated to saving Ashley Fuhrmann finds shelter under an overhang outside of the Old Town Christian Ministries on East Holly Street.
the lives of those who cannot help themselves.

Four women in rain-soaked clothing sit together and share stories about how they became homeless. Karen Baker, 38, and her daughter, Ashley Fuhrmann, 18, are in their third month of homelessness. After a car accident on Lakeway Drive, Baker and Fuhrmann lost almost everything they owned. Moving from their apartment in Iowa to Bellingham, Baker and Fuhrmann had not yet found a new apartment when they got into the accident. Unable to pay for a new apartment or car, which served as their temporary home prior to the accident, their only hope was to search for help from their new community. Eating meals at the Lighthouse Mission and taking shelter anywhere possible, the two women continue to search for a way to escape their homelessness.

“We had an apartment, leather furniture. We had everything,” Fuhrmann says. “Sometimes things happen so fast.”

Baker scooted her chair closer and began speaking in a loud, clear voice. She exclaimed that not all homeless people are alcoholics and drug users. “There are good people out here,” she says. “The community should chip in and help these people.”

A few nights ago a man from the Navy gave them blankets, which they covered up with inside of their self-made tents in the frigid winter air. “There are people with kids and way more elderly people than you would think on the streets,” Baker says. “People are dying.”

An elderly woman at the table nods her head in agreement but remains quiet. Instead, she sits huddled over her dessert.

The fourth woman at the table sits with her arms tucked near her chest and waits to speak. Reserved yet willing to take part in the conversation, she lets her kind, dark brown eyes do the talking for her. Rachael Brown is 21 years old, homeless and seven months pregnant. Brown and her husband, Jason, 23, moved to Bellingham when he started working for Bellingham Marine Industries in December 2005. Rachael Brown, who plans to study criminal justice, worked in construction in Everett until she became pregnant. Unable to do any heavy lifting, she found herself jobless. Her previous monthly income of $1,000 disappeared. Brown and her husband began to lose everything.

“It all happens so fast,” she says. A slight laugh comes from her mouth, and her eye contact grows stronger. “I have a nice car, but I don’t have a place to live,” she says.

During the past month Brown and her husband slept in the back of their 1996 Honda Passport, but they are currently living in the Villa Inn. Old Town Christian Ministries, a homeless outreach program, is paying for a week’s stay in the motel. Having a home for a week is giving Brown and her husband a chance to save money for an apartment.

“All we need is the first and second months’ rent so we can get an apartment,” Brown says.

Brown remains hopeful in her situation. “This is a way of life for now — not forever,” she says. She places her hand on her bulging stomach and looks down with fatigued eyes. “I want to provide for this baby,” she says.

Searching for a job is not easy for many homeless people, especially those who are only a few months away from giving birth. Brown says she finds it difficult to search for a job when employers find out she is expecting a child.

“I try not to tell people I’m pregnant,” Brown says. But she has no other option. “I don’t believe in abortion.”

According to the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1998, it is illegal for employers in the United States to not hire a woman because she is pregnant. However, it is not impossible for employers to come up with an excuse to avoid hiring pregnant women.

“People often tell me I’m overqualified or that I don’t have enough experience to work there,” she says. “But that’s what I’m trying to do. I want the experience.”

Brown fainted on the side of the street while walking around searching for a job a few nights ago.

“I’m hypoglycemic, and I just burned too much energy,” she says. “I was exhausted.” Sometimes Brown escapes the cold and lets her body rest by sitting in her car while her hus-
band is at work.

Some people find it difficult to find inspiration in their lives. Brown says she finds it in the Lord and what is in her belly. She says she is also inspired by her husband. “I don’t know what I’d do without him,” she says.

During her seven months of pregnancy, Brown has seen a doctor only once. “I have to go to the emergency room in order to be seen,” she says. “If you don’t have insurance, most doctors don’t want to see you.”

Brown volunteers to help other homeless people by sorting through clothing donations at the Old Town Christian Ministries and the Lighthouse Mission. Sometimes she brings extra food from the food bank for homeless people she meets at the Lighthouse Mission. Searching through the donations is tiring, but it helps her escape the cold weather.

“Sometimes I sort through stuff even homeless people don’t use,” Brown says.

Her passion for helping people is apparent in the way her eyes widen and her voice rises. “People need hats, gloves and especially shoes,” she says. “When you’re homeless, your feet are your transportation.” Shoes wear out quickly, and many kids don’t have them.

Across the street from the Lighthouse Mission a few hours later, a man wearing a poncho-like, plastic rain cover and a soaked cotton beanie rushes to take cover under a small wooden overhang. Patches of brown, stubby hair form a goatee and thin mustache on his face. The slight circles forming under his eyes make it difficult to pinpoint his young age at 27.

Justin Hoyum strips to his boxers and takes off his wet clothes at the side of East Holly Street. He has $35 from holding a Toys “R” Us advertisement in the rain for five hours. His girlfriend, Ashley Fuhrmann, who ate in the Lighthouse Mission dining area earlier, searches through two gym bags filled with Hoyum’s belongings to find a long-sleeved white shirt and a pair of green pants for him. “It’s really freezing out here,” he says.

Hoyum started sleeping on the streets in September, and he is recovering from a serious wrist injury. Originally from Los Angeles, Hoyum was born and raised in an area where violence was a way of life.

“I’ve been shot at, pistol-whipped, you name it,” Hoyum says. He displays his scar. A jagged pink line pulls two halves of skin together, sealing his flesh. “I got in a bar fight,” Hoyum says. His wrist was slit by a broken vodka bottle.

Hoyum lost his job working at an auto shop after temporarily losing feeling in his hand from the wound. In turn, he lost his apartment because he was unable to pay rent. He became homeless. Now Hoyum has almost completely recovered from his wrist injury. “I bless God because I work with my hands,” he says.

Hoyum spent six years in a foster home, starting at the age of 4, after living with his mother, who was a cocaine addict. Hoyum never finished high school, but he did receive his GED.

“It’s hard to be focused on school when you’re focused on living,” he says. “I was always in trouble.” Holding a cigarette in one hand, he uses his other hand to cover his ear with his cotton beanie. “I was so mad at my life,” Hoyum says.

Grabbing hold of Fuhrmann in a tight hug, he shivers from the cold, whistling wind. The sun has set, and puddles of water and gasoline fill the streets. It is time for Hoyum and Fuhrmann to search for a place to sleep.

Empty plastic chairs remain in the Lighthouse Mission dining area. The cling and clatter of dishes is done for the night, but the cooks do not rest for long. Neither can those who live on the streets, those who constantly look for places to call home.

“I’ll be so thankful when we get a place,” Brown says. “It’s not going to be this way.”

**Bond beyond circumstance**

With no homes of their own, Baker, Fuhrmann and Hoyum are among the estimated 800 homeless people living in Whatcom County in 2005. But they also share a bond that goes beyond living arrangements.

**SOURCE: CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WHATCOM COUNTY**

**KAREN BAKER, 38, and her daughter, Ashley Fuhrmann, moved from their apartment in Iowa and were in the process of looking for a new one in Bellingham. But a car accident changed everything.**

**JUSTIN HOYUM, 27, worked in an auto shop before sustaining a severe wrist injury in September that cost him his job. He began a relationship with girlfriend Ashley Fuhrmann shortly after.**
On a Thursday night in Bellingham, most 21-year-old females are getting ready to go to the bars, scouring their closets for something to wear. Claire Doody is also getting ready to go out, but she has no problem finding an outfit. She simply creates her own shirt by altering one she already has—adding trim, making it longer and perhaps adding color.

Western students and staff got a glimpse of Doody's style last spring with a surprise fashion show in Red Square. The fountain was her runway, and the cube-shaped “Skyviewing Sculpture,” draped with a curtain, was her dressing room. A Charlie Chaplin impersonator led off the event, pushing students off the edge of the fountain to make room for the six high-heeled models to take the runway.

“I wanted it to be sort of a performance art piece,” Doody says, likening the event to the Guerilla Girls’ shock art in New York in the 1980s.

The seventh model was a Chihuahua named Manolo wearing an outfit Doody designed. Doody, the last model, was wearing the same dress she wears now as she recalls the event.

Her dress, which she made, has a pattern of female silhouettes wearing dresses on a white background. Black trim cuts straight across the chest and lines the knee-length hem. She wears a cardigan sweater, tights and ballet-type shoes, all black.

Doody is a senior at Western and a Fairhaven major concentrating in costume design and fiber arts. She does not have an official title for her major but will next quarter, after she completes her required Fairhaven self-design major concentration seminar. Ultimately, Doody says she wants to create a name for herself in the fashion design world by having her own clothing line. She also is interested in doing gallery work with other designers.


In elementary school Doody designed clothes for her Barbies and stuffed animals. In middle school she began making her own clothes, mostly vintage re-creation and reconstruction. Re-creating is when she copies an item such as a skirt from a store but makes it in a different fabric and pattern. Reconstructing vintage things means making alterations or repairing damage.

Doody attended the Northwest School, a private middle school and high...
school for the arts in Seattle. Her sophomore year, she organized a fashion show with her friends and participated as one of the main costume designers. During the show, models sashayed down the school’s staircase and posed in the hall.

The next year, Doody and pals got more extravagant and put on two shows, one during the day and one at night. They made $1,700 from ticket sales.

“The show was called Fashion Bomb,” Doody says. “It was an idea of an explosion of fashion, colors and styles.”

Fashion Bomb took place in the school commons and included a runway of wooden platforms. Doody and her team projected pictures of grass and other earthly images onto a white backdrop suspended over lockers. The show was led by two masters of ceremonies dressed as scientists wearing lab coats, explaining fashion scientifically. The show made fun of fashion as the hosts read the dictionary definitions of the words “fashion” and “bomb” and explained how the two terms related, Doody says.

“The show was a play on science, the core of fashion and why we create it,” she says.

Doody Style

When Doody designs for women, she mainly designs dresses and skirts.

“I feel like a lot of women look at dresses and skirts as not very empowering and very frou-frou,” Doody says. “Because women can wear dresses and skirts, they have so many more possibilities than men do.”

Doody favors bold colors when designing and says her looks are vintage inspired. She likes classic cuts and styles but is really inspired by looks from the 1940s and 1950s. She also likes to modernize looks and add more flair, Doody says.

“I can take a ’70s ugly, hideous bridesmaid dress and make something cute out of it,” Doody says.

However, Doody describes her favorite piece of clothing as a knee-length, 1950s cocktail dress. It is a butter yellow and has thin silver lines running vertically that thicken as they reach the bottom.

Western senior Kelly Tanaka has known Doody for three years and says Doody has great fashion sense.

“She can find things at Wal-Mart and make them look amazing by accessorizing and pairing them with things that she already has or made to make them look fabulous,” Tanaka says.

“I view art as a muscle. You have to flex it every day to keep it up. If you don’t, after a while you will lose it,” Doody says.

Doody says everything in fashion goes in a cycle, and one must look at the past to predict where trends may go. What is going on in art and politics can predict where things are moving in the fashion industry. Now is a more conservative time for style because the president is a conservative, Doody says.

“We were stuck in a sort of ’80s slump and are now moving toward the ’70s and bolder prints, and soon maybe to the ’40s and ’60s,” she says.
Doody, who is a frequent shopper of the fashion boutiques in downtown Bellingham, was approached this past summer by store owner Ty McBride, of Paris Texas on Prospect Street. McBride and Doody agreed to sell her earrings in his store under her own brand name — Doody Style.

After establishing clientele, McBride recommended Doody’s work to the owner of Envy, on Commercial Avenue. Doody now has her hammered metal and chain-work earrings and accessories for sale at these downtown locations.

A Stitch in Time
Doody takes her designing seriously. She has her own studio in her home that was a bedroom before she converted it. The studio is a reflection of Doody’s eye for design with its bright yellow walls, some covered in 12-by-12-inch mirrors. In the studio, Doody has a long cupboard with rolls upon rolls of fabric, a closet with art supplies, a table for her sewing machines and a few dress forms.

“I really enjoy it. It’s like my little sanc-
tuary that I can just play my music in and lock the door,” Doody says.

The amount of time Doody spends in her studio depends on her school schedule. Ideally, it would be a couple of hours a day, she says.

“I view art as a muscle. You have to flex it every day to keep it up. If you don’t, after a while you will lose it,” Doody says.

Doody spends much of her time in Western’s costume room, located in the Performing Arts Center. Doody is taking an independent-study course this quarter that requires her to work nine hours a week in the costume room. Doody and the rest of the costume design crew are working on costumes for the musical “Evita” at Western.

Costume shop manager Rachel Anderson says she has worked with Doody for the past two years.

“I am excited to work with her more and have her develop her technical and creative skills,” Anderson says. “She is very interesting and creative.”

Doody also occupies much of her time just thinking about designing. She takes everything as inspiration. She spends a lot of time reading fashion magazines such as Nylon, Bust, Cosmopolitan and Elle, she says.

The Future is Clear
Doody is determined that within the next seven years she will own her own store or gallery space, ideally an art co-op re-
licating the style of a co-op called Impulse in Seattle. Impulse is a warehouse in which 12 artists have their own studios. To pay for their studio space, they work part time in the store that is attached to the studio space. Doody likes this idea because she would be around other artists, she says.

Although not directly sure which avenue to pursue, Doody definitely wants to design clothing. Before she settles down and becomes a serious businesswoman, she plans to travel and take inspiration from places such as Nepal, Tibet, India, Japan and Milan, Doody says.

With all the hard work and dedication she is putting in now, Doody says one day she will have her own fashion line, and she will do it her way — Doody style.  

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Claire’s Fashion Tips:

• Rule No. 1 of heels — don’t wear them if you can’t walk in them.
• Base your outfit off one clothing piece. Try your shoes, skirt or even necklace.
• Learn a thing or two from your grandmother — slips are a good thing because they keep you warmer in the winter.
• Mix up your styles. Try a modern tee with a ’20s inspired skirt.
Bellingham offers an amazing variety of cultural flavors, ranging from organic delicacies of chicken-fried tempeh with vegan gravy, to Italian aromas of tender veal scaloppini, bedded with mushrooms and sweet marsala sauce. Among the dynamic streets of quaint boutiques, small cafes, unique diners and laid-back bars, Bellingham also provides luxury dining for special occasions and romantic outings. Restaurants such as the Harborside Bistro, Nimbus and Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant present creative, articulate and cultural styles that are guaranteed to leave remarkable and memorable impressions.
Klipsun is a Lummi word meaning “beautiful sunset.”