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John Everson inspects the contents of his navel while attending nursery school at the St. Francis Extended Care Facility. Five days a week, 50 youngsters mingle with the elderly residents at St. Francis.

Photo essay by Matt Hulbert, page 16.

Cover photo of firefighter Kahni Shepherd by Dave Rubert.
Back cover illustration by Tom Shannon
Special Thanks to: Teari Brown, business manager; Tim Mitchell, desk top publishing adviser;
Bill, Margaret, Veronica & Dave at the print plant
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Down a Blind Alley

Vision-impaired bowlers challenge the sighted

Story by Deb Pitts
Photos by Matt Hulbert

Blinkers — a seven-member blind bowling team from Snohomish County — likes to pull the wool over their opponents’ eyes. Actually, it’s not wool, but a small, corduroy blindfold shaped like a miniature bra. And, when it is pulled over the eyes, the net effect is the same: Their opponents can’t see. The approach, the foul line, the alley, the pins, the other bowlers — the environment vanishes into darkness.

The three-man, four-woman team, all of whom are legally blind, regularly challenges sighted teams to tournament play, then blindfolds them to even the odds. The Blinkers listen and laugh as the temporarily blinded bowlers search for their bowling balls among all the others in the ball return, grope their way to the foul line and roll what more often than not quickly become gutter balls.

Bowling blind — and challenging sighted teams to bowl blind — has been a Blinkers tradition since 1957 when a man named Sam McGee organized a team that bowled on lanes above an Everett, Wash. tavern. The team currently bowls at Tyee Bowl in Everett or Strawberry Lanes in Marysville and is well-known enough to no longer be an enigma.

A desk clerk at Tyee said the team usually comes in, takes the two lanes at the end of the bowling alley and just has a good time.

The Blinkers team has challenged teams from churches, taverns, radio stations and other local businesses. Some businesses have made the Blinkers tournament an annual event.

A number of members have come and gone since the team first was organized; none of the original members bowl on the team now. McGee, now deceased, convinced Marysville resident Pete Zevenbergen to join the team in 1964 after Zevenbergen lost his sight due to a retina infection. Zevenbergen met Doris Long at a meeting of an association for the blind and talked her into becoming a Blinker in 1971.

Susan Davenport is the newest member of the Blinkers Bowling team.
Long is the newly elected team president.

"I had to learn how the pins were set up. I'd never been in a bowling alley before," said Long who lost her sight very suddenly 23 years ago due to a rare, hereditary disease.

Jim Vance, 64, and the newest team member, joined in November of last year, just a few weeks after losing his eyesight due to retina damage.

Vance said, "Everything got blurry doing paperwork" so he went to the eye doctor thinking he needed glasses. Within 28 days he was legally blind, with only about two feet of peripheral vision.

Vance called United Blind of Snohomish County and talked with Zevenbergen who invited him to join the Blinkers.

"He said, 'You ain't sittin' around Vance, you're bowling — next Sunday, you're bowling.'" Vance showed up and has proved to be a pretty good bowler in spite of his handicap. He recently scored 187 - 115 - 135 in a three-game series.

Butcher has been blind since she was a toddler, the victim of retina blastoma, a form of cancer. Maine was blind at birth.

Although each woman has a lifetime of experience of blindness, bowling still did not come easy. Maine said it was hard to get used to throwing the ball, trying to guess where it would go. Gutter balls still are plentiful.

Butcher said she first tried to bowl as a teenager, but quit because she was frustrated. "If the ball goes into the gutter down the lane, you don't know why. You can't adjust cause you don't know what you did wrong," she explained.

Zevenbergen, after nearly 30 years on the team, still has the same problem. Butcher is trying to overcome. "What's really frustrating is if you keep throwing gutter balls, and you don't know how to adjust. You don't know what to do after a while."

As frustrating as it is to roll gutter balls, the pain occasionally is offset by bowling a strike. Hearing all 10 pins fall after the first ball of a frame is sent down the alley makes for a thrilling moment for a Blinker, no matter how many strikes have been rolled before.

Learning to bowl blind is an arduous task made a little easier through the use of a guiderail and the help of a "spotter" who tells bowlers which pins are standing after the first ball of each two-ball frame is rolled.

"They have a rail; they told me to use the rail...you have to remember in your mind...you just figure in your mind where the pins are and roll the ball. If you're lucky, you get it," Long explained.

The stainless steel rail is 12-feet long and 32 inches high and can be dis-
mantled and carried from one place to another. It’s set up along the approach to be used as a guide by bowlers. A piece of tape wrapped around the rail about three inches from the end nearest the foul line, indicates the point at which a bowler should release the ball. The rail stands are weighted at the bottom, and two bowling balls are placed on the base at each end of the rail for additional stability.

Long, who has now learned to bowl without the rail, said the team generally sets up both right and left rails when sighted teams are bowling blindfolded. Otherwise, Blinkers uses only a rail on the right side of the approach as a guide during practice games.

Blind bowlers, like all bowlers, each have their own style, Long said. Little Henry, a former member, would get down on his knee to bowl. He was the best little bowler, she said. “When Beverly (a former member) first started, I got a trophy made for her for bowling between her legs. Then she started using a wheelchair and had a portable ramp she put on her lap and let the ball roll off,” Long said. Beverly’s ill health will prevent her from bowling on the team next season.

Anything a bowler needs to do to bowl is acceptable to other team members. “If you have to lay the ball down and give it a kick, that’s okay,” said Zevenbergen who has recently had to modify his own technique due to a problem with his legs.

“I have to stand at the foul line now. I just start at the foul line and throw the ball. It’s hurt my average some; it’s down from 95 to about 50.”

Bowlers don’t have to be good, they just have to want to bowl and have fun. Team members may bowl any way — use any form or style — they choose.

The only prerequisite for becoming a Blinker is being legally blind. Blinkers continues to actively recruit blind members and is trying to get younger people interested in carrying on the Blinkers team. “We’re always looking for blind people,” Zevenbergen said. “And it would be nice if we could get younger ones, cause we’re all getting old,” Long added.

The cost of getting involved with the team is minimal, Long said. If someone wants to bowl and can’t afford shoes or a ball, Blinkers will provide them from its treasury. A non-profit organization, Blinkers raises money through yard sales and coupon book sales. They also have a “gutter box” set up at each tournament; every gutter ball rolled costs the errant bowler five cents.

Blindfolded bowlers help Blinkers’ treasury grow, Long said. “They don’t do too well. We do pretty good on (their) gutters. The box gets a lot in it.”

Jim Vance, blind since last November, recently bowled 3 spares and 2 strikes in a tournament game.

When Blinkers challenged KWYZ Radio, an Everett station, to a bowling tournament at Majestic Lanes near Lynnwood a couple months ago, the radio team bowled the first game sighted. “We let them find out where they were at, but you don’t even want to be around them once they put blindfolds on,” Long said.

“John Lynch (a radio announcer) threw a ball that went across three different alleys. One went up on top of the ball return.”

A lot of sighted bowlers who bowl blindfolded are convinced losing their vision is the worst thing that could happen to them. Long and her team members disagree. They all said hearing loss would be harder to live with than being blind.

Long said she has learned to live without her sight, but can’t even imagine how it would be to live in a silent world. “I think (losing) hearing would be the worst. I love to hear music...to hear water running. I couldn’t hear birds or anything. I couldn’t hear the ball hit the gutter...”

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In the World of Art, All Bodies are Beautiful

Western student finds posing for art class rewarding

Story by Suzi Zobrist
Photos by Matt Hulbert

e. Rees remembers the first time he took all his clothes off in front of half a dozen people.
In the men’s room of Western’s art building, Rees slipped out of his clothes and changed into his robe and slippers. He thought it was strange to be taking his clothes off here instead of a gym locker room. His stomach started feeling queasy. He started feeling hot. His palms began to sweat.

Walking down the hallway in a brilliant yellow robe, black wool clog slippers and a backpack over his shoulder, Rees wondered how he must look in this public place. What must people think of him?

None of the students made eye contact with Rees when he entered the room. The instructor told him to lie down and pretend to be a corpse. At this point, Rees’ nerves overcame him as he slipped into automatic mode and slipped out of his robe. He stood there nude — sensing all eyes upon him.

Meet Rees. He likes to be called by his last name. He’s five-feet, 11-inches tall, 152 pounds with gray eyes and auburn hair. In a society where so much emphasis is placed on looks, these type of stats matter. But in the world of art, all bodies are beautiful.

Rees, an environmental education student at Western, is a nude model for the art department life drawing classes. He found out about the modeling posi-

e. Rees holds his pose while art student Andy Golub finishes up his sketch.

June 1992
Art student Karl Freske works on a drawing.

While Rees earns $8 an hour modeling, he said he doesn’t do it for the money. Instead, modeling reaffirms his own body image and keeps him feeling good about it.

Rees said it was difficult to take his robe off the first time he modeled. He said if he had really thought about it, he probably wouldn’t have done it. He felt vulnerable and nervous - everyone was staring at him.

“I became very intently aware of my body,” Rees said. “Part of me was saying, ‘Wow, they are staring intently at me,’ and this other part of me was saying, ‘Well, they’re just looking at this body form and they’re drawing different shapes and curves.’”

Professor Robert Urso, who is teaching the life drawing class this quarter, said live models are the next best thing to doing a dissection. With a live model to look at, the art students can see how a body curves and bends and how the light and shadows fall upon the human form.

Andy Golub, a sophomore graphic art student and cartoonist, said he also believes live models are important for the class. “Nude models give us an opportunity to work with the reality of the human body, to get all the lines, forms and contours down,” Golub said. He added that knowing and understanding how to draw the human body helps to make his cartoons more realistic. “I can still exaggerate body parts on the cartoons, but now I have the option to make them more realistic,” he said.

Golub, a student in Urso’s class, said “We are told to draw what we see, not what we know is there.”

Urso often tells his students, “Throw your eyes out of focus,” Golub said. This enables the students to see the general shading and details of the body. He also tells his students to look at the figure as if it were a robot in order to...
e. Rees poses for the art students during a class session of life drawing.

He said during long poses parts of his body fall asleep and numb up. He tries to get into a position he thinks will be comfortable, but about two-minutes into it, he can tell where he is resting all his weight. And about 10 minutes into the pose, body parts begin to numb.

Rees said he enjoys modeling because it gives him a lot of time to think. He focuses on one spot while modeling because it helps him to remain still. His most comfortable and easiest modeling position was during his first experience when he laid on the platform like a corpse.

Models are allowed to take breaks and stretch when they need to. During this time, the model can walk around and look at the student’s work.

“During the breaks, it's great to walk around and see how different people see you,” Rees said. “They all represent you, but some people will over exaggerate things or will leave things out or not notice certain parts of you. Maybe I think I have a really big nose, or something. Maybe to me I really focus on that when I look in the mirror, but you look around at the drawings and some people have drawn a smaller nose than I actually have. It's neat to see that whatever particular hang-ups you have about your body, that that may not be at all what is in somebody else's eyes.”

Rees said he believes for the art student, after the first initial experience of drawing a nude model, it’s like drawing anything else. Life drawing recognizes the commonalities between all body structures and helps people to separate the human body as a sexual object from the human body as a form.

“In a life-drawing class, you are drawing the outside, but you’re showing what’s happening on the inside,” Rees said. “It’s really a neat experience that I won’t be able to have in any other situation: to be naked in front of people who are drawing me intently, focusing on my body form and not my sexuality.”
Breaking into the 'boys club'

Bellingham's women firefighters

Story by Tina Prather
Photos by Dave Rubert

The 19-year-old male was incoherent, uncooperative and refused to give his real name. His nickname was Spider. Spider’s friends had drawn on his face with black and red markers after he passed out drunk. The same friends told the police and aid units they didn’t think much about his passing out — he does it all the time, they said.

Wendy Paton, 26, is an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) with the Bellingham Fire Department. Her aid unit responded to the call that night. Paton, three policemen, another medic, three firefighters and three kids were all squeezed into a fowl-smelling little apartment. Multi-colored paints covered the walls with profanity, and large holes were punched in the plaster.

Spider was refusing treatment and Paton, who was calling the shots that evening, decided to take him to the hospital. In the ambulance, Paton inspected the boy’s wallet hoping to find out his real name and address. All she could find was a bus pass. One of Spider’s two girl friends riding in the ambulance said the bus pass might not even be his. “He steals things,” she said.

In the ambulance, Spider admitted he was smoking marijuana that evening while playing drinking games. “Have you done any drugs tonight, Spider?” Paton persistently asked. “Nope, jus’ pot,” Spider told her, slurring his words.

Alcohol-related incidents such as Spider’s are common calls to Bellingham Fire Department aid units.

Women firefighters and medics — such as Wendy Paton — are not so common.

Currently only three women are in the department: Paton, Kahni Shepherd and Pam Turner. Their entry into the male-dominated fire department wasn’t easy. Many of the male firefighters had reservations about women in the department.
Pam Turner, a first-year fighter, practices maneuvering an engine during on-the-job training.

The men were concerned women wouldn’t have the physical strength. They were also worried about the locker room atmosphere offending women. And many said they felt their wives were concerned about women working so closely with their husbands.

Five years ago Kahni Shepherd, 35, joined the Bellingham Fire Department as its first female firefighter. She knew a few of the medics at the time she was hired, and they gave her pointers on how to survive at the station. They told her: “During your year of probation, you are only eyes and ears and no mouth. Just be a big sponge and soak up everything.”

It’s the best advice they could’ve given her, she said. “I don’t think it ever occurred to them (the male firefighters) that a woman could do the job,” Captain Larry Labree said. “Not all women can do it — but then, not all men can either. But Kahni was the perfect person to have break the ice.”

Labree said Shepherd was an excellent candidate as the first woman to join the department because of her personality and her physical strength. “The physicality of the job is probably the hardest part. Kahni was able to go out and do a lot of those things that the guys have concerns about.

“Kahni also has a real good sense of humor and a real outgoing personality,” he added.

A firefighter — man or woman — must be able to haul a 70-pound hose up a set of stairs while wearing a 40-pound vest. A firefighter will also deal with traumas worse than most people will ever see in their lifetime. So what is so appealing about it?

“It’s exciting, that’s what’s so wonderful about this job,” said Shepherd, who is also an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). “You come on for your 24-hour shift and you don’t know what’s going to happen that day.”
Shepherd remembers when she first started sleeping at the station with the guys. At that time the beds were all divided by partitions, instead of the single bedrooms the newer stations now have.

"I talked in my sleep. When you get here you're on call for 24 hours, and you're so anxious for the call... I was like a cat -- the minute the buzzer went—fling! I was up on the ceiling. You know-claws and all. The captain kept saying, 'Boy, we're gonna have to get you lead shoes and a bunch of downers to slow you down'. I was bouncing off the walls!"

Shepherd didn't want to make waves when she moved in, so she didn't insist the living arrangements be revamped. She felt the more changes the men would have to make because of her, the more it would cause problems.

So she'd often go to bed armed with rolls of toilet paper to throw at the men when they were snoring too loudly. At the time, the bathrooms were unisex.

"You'll go in and shut the door and there'd be guys walking in going, 'Oh geez-I'm sorry!'" she said, laughing.

Then there was the problem of what to wear to bed. Shepherd said she settled on a sweatshirt, shorts and wool socks. "You'd jump into bunker gear the minute you get out of bed. No one has time to look at what the other person is wearing -- you're too busy thinking about the call," Shepherd said.

"You have to have a sense of humor for this job. There's definitely pranks and fun stuff that goes on, and if you're a sourpuss you won't last long," she said. "It's like having a hundred brothers," Shepherd said smiling broadly.

Shepherd is married to an electrician. They just became parents in May. Following a maternity leave, she will return to work. As a new mother, Shepherd said quitting her job never entered her mind. With a working schedule of 24-hours on duty and 48-hours off, Shepherd and her husband will have to juggle their child care time schedules. She said her husband is fully supportive of her choice to return to work.

Shepherd said her unit sees some pretty graphic scenes at times. "At first I think you're affected -- you go home and you go, 'Wow, what I went through...'. You don't really get used to it, you just learn to deal with it better."

Wendy Paton was hired three years ago, and is now finishing her year of evaluations to become a paramedic. She was the second female firefighter hired by the department. Paton is 26 years old and was married last August to a fellow firefighter whom she had been dating for four years. She said it's great to be married to someone in the department because he can understand her stories and stresses.

Although most of the calls she gets are fairly routine, Paton said she worries most about a situation arising in which she wouldn't have had adequate training. Although the firefighters
regularly do drills to prepare for different emergencies, she said there’s nothing like the real thing.

As an EMT, Paton said her job is to keep a patient stable until he or she can be transported to a hospital. Usually the patients are cooperative, she said. But occasionally Paton will encounter a patient who resists assistance. In these cases, Paton must exercise a combination of persuasion and sensitivity.

Paton said she often has to ask patients if they have anyone — family, friends and even pets — they care about. “There are people that figure if they’re gonna die, they’d rather do it at home,” she said. “It’s frustrating.”

Paton said it’s all too common to come to the aid of elderly people who have been injured from falling or have heart problems. In these cases she said she just knows their next stop is often a nursing home. When this happens, pets sometimes get left behind with no one to care for them. Paton remembers helping a 97 year-old lady who had two beautiful cats. She still wonders what happened to the woman’s cats.

The department frequently gets calls from people suffering from low blood sugar -- hypoglycemia, Paton said. Often these patients will seem like they’re drunk. In one particular incident, her unit was called to a motel to check on a guest who had stayed past his check-out time. When they discovered the man, he was lying on his bed in what appeared to be a drunken stupor.

The man was belligerent and harassed Paton while she tried to administer treatment. “He kept pulling me on top of him in front of everyone,” she said laughing and shaking her head. “So I just pinched his ear until he let go. Five minutes later he was super nice, very polite and very embarrassed.”

Paton said being a woman on the department can cause problems when tending to injured people — particularly men. “Sometimes guys are embarrassed—they don’t want you to see their butt or whatever. But I just tell them that once they get to the hospital, after me, there’s going to be another woman. I’ve got my speech all prepared,” she said.

“But once you get into the ambulance and they see that everything is really professional they just accept it. By the time people call us, the situation is usually bad enough that they’re happy to see anyone that arrives,” Paton said.

“I’ve had calls that should have bothered me—I know they should have,” Paton said. “But I’ve yet to have the one that’ll set me off. I know that’s how it’ll happen. It’ll consolidate and I’ll probably lose it over something little.”

“I think Wendy has the proper sensitivity, she knows what to take seriously and what not to,” Capt. Labree said.

“There are a lot of dinosaurs out there that probably didn’t want to see women hired on,” Brian Caven, firefighter/paramedic, and Wendy’s instructor said, “But I think the women we have represent themselves well.”

“It’s great,” Paton said, throwing back her long hair. “It’s like being the only girl in the boys club.”
A Chapter from the Past

1907 labor riot drives East Indian mill-workers from Bellingham

Story & Illustration
By Art Hughes

Indar Singh heard a rumor when he arrived at work at the sawmill that Friday in 1907. The message must have chilled his spine: The white citizens of Bellingham were planning to gather that night and force Singh and more than 200 other East Indian immigrants out of town.

Fearing they would be the next victims of anti-Asian violence sweeping the West Coast, some immigrants immediately left town. Singh initially stayed, but within 48 hours he, too, was forced to leave Bellingham and never return.

Pressure Builds

The six sawmills along Bellingham’s waterfront in 1907 turned out lumber as fast as it could be loaded onto steam freighters and sailing ships bound for Pacific ports. The steady orders for lumber, however, were not enough to buffer the city from a nation-wide depression which continued to linger after the turn of the century.

Randall Downey, a labor historian in Bellingham, said the average white sawmill worker in 1907 took home 50 cents to 75 cents for a nine-hour day.

“If at the time, that added up to about 80 percent of the cost of living for the average family,” Downey said.

The Immigrants Arrive

East Indian immigrants — called “Hindus” in America even though a majority of them were Sikh — made their way into Bellingham by way of Vancouver, British Columbia in early 1907.

Primarily farming men from the Punjab province of India, the immigrants bought passage to Canada on steamships after agents for the steamship companies persuaded them jobs with good wages were plentiful in the United States.

When the immigrants finally secured jobs in the mills in Bellingham, they accepted considerably less money than their white counterparts to do the same jobs. White workers blamed immigrants for a decline in wages paid and for saturating the job market. Mill owners, on the other hand, were content to pay less money for longer hours.

“It seems to me that hiring the immigrants was self-serving on the part of the mill owners,” historian Downey said.

The bitter feelings about the Asians prevailed along the West Coast dividing cities along racial lines. Whites continually taunted and fought with immigrants. An organization called the Asian Exclusion League — or sometimes the Japanese-Korean Exclusion League — was busy stirring up resentment with chapters in the three Pacific states and Canada. The League was dedicated to ridding the U.S. of all Asians and enacting strict immigration laws to exclude Asians while still favoring European immigration.

The Exclusion League was dedicated to ridding the U.S. of all Asians and enacting strict immigration laws to exclude Asians while still favoring European immigration. At one time, it had nearly 150,000 members.

Hyung-Chan Kim, a professor of American Culture Studies at Western Washington University, said the League was formed around 1905 in San Francisco. “It was a continuation of anti-Asian sentiment as a result of U.S. response to the Chinese,” he said. “The resentment was redirected against the Japanese and then the Hindus.”

A Riot in Bellingham

After hearing the rumor of a possible race riot, many of the immigrant workers fled to safety, and the Morrison Mill Co., the L.K. Wood Co. and oth-
ers were forced to close for want of laborers. The threat of an uprising prompted some mills to operate with armed guards.

As darkness fell, a small group of men gathered on what is now West Holly Street and shouted taunts aimed at the East Indians. The group grew to a crowd of 500 or more and the taunting escalated. They began breaking windows, throwing rocks and raiding the tenements, flop-houses and camps where the immigrants lived.

Most accounts of the riot conclude that it was planned ahead of time, but the next day's Bellingham Herald said the outbreak may have been somewhat spontaneous.

The article said Bellingham Police Chief Lewis A. Thomas and another officer went to the scene but were outnumbered and unable to stop the mob.

The mob systematically marched to each of the mills where Indians worked the night shift and gained easy entry to the mills forcing the workers to flee.

Miraculously no one was killed, although several East Indians were hurt. Six were hospitalized with serious injuries. Many others were beaten or dragged through the streets.

The dawn of the next day saw more than 125 East Indians seeking protection in the basement of the city jail building. Many others left their homes and personal belongings behind and took the quickest route out of town. By nightfall — just 24 hours after the riot began — all but a handful of Bellingham's Indian population had left town, vowing to never come back.

Indar Singh, who took charge of a small group of the East Indians and was consequently called a "generalissimo" by the Herald, went to the mill the next day and tried unsuccessfully to collect wages owed him. Singh left that night for San Francisco.

The Aftermath

An investigation by the British Consulate in Seattle declared there was "no proof available the property of the Hindus was destroyed or that their belongings were stolen." The U.S. government said it had no jurisdiction in the matter. A press release from the State Department said the "United States courts are not clothed with the authority to enter the confines of a state to protect foreigners even in their treaty rights."

Another investigation by the Bellingham police department concluded with no arrests being made in connection with the riot; no one was ever brought to trial or held accountable for the violence.

The harshest criticism of the rioters came from several Bellingham ministers who denounced the riot and those who participated in it.

The Rev. Orr Wark, of the First Congregational Church, criticized Police Chief Thomas' ineffective attempts to stop the riot. Wark is quoted in the Bellingham Herald as saying Thomas and his officers were "a valuable collection of freaks" for the circus. He called for Thomas to resign.

"Must we . . close up our country and refuse these outsiders simply because they do not live according to our customs, do not ask the same wages we do, or are of a different race?" Wark asked his Sunday congregation.

On Monday, three days after the riot, Mayor Black said he considered the disturbance a "tumult" rather than a riot. He suggested the city appoint 50 special officers to protect the immigrants. By that time, however, only seven East Indians remained in the city, no special officers were ever appointed.

The Asian Exclusion League continued its practice of agitation in West Coast cities. In large part due to the League's intense lobbying, the United States enacted a restrictive quota immigration law in 1924.

The leader of the League in Bellingham, A.E. Fowler, said in a Bellingham Herald article that the League was partly responsible for the anti-Asian sentiment in Bellingham, but that the riot was not an intentional goal.

"While we do not attempt to disguise our satisfaction at seeing the Hindus leave Bellingham, we look upon the riot as a very regrettable thing," Fowler told the Herald.

There is little account of where the East Asians went when they left the city. Most probably made their way to British Columbia, into the jaws of another anti-Asian crisis. Some, like Indar Singh, went to San Francisco. Still others waited for the next steamer back to India.
It seems like such a simple idea, you wonder why no one thought it up long ago: take some pre-school kids needing day care and mix them with some elderly folks living in a nursing home. What do you get? A blend of youth and wisdom and energy and patience.

Jim and Jill Hall have done just that. Their St. Francis Extended Care Facility in Bellingham operates as a round-the-clock nursing home and part-time day care center. Patterned after a similar facility in Seattle, St. Francis opens its doors daily to 50 children ranging in age from 18-months to six-years old.

The children arrive at St. Francis around 6:30 each morning — in time for breakfast. Playtime follows breakfast until 9:00 a.m. when the serious academics start. Science, math, motor development and art are all part of the curriculum.
Throughout the day, structured learning and recreational activities are rotated at half-hour intervals, said Cheryl Lorimer, childcare director at St. Francis. Interspersed with all their serious play time and academic learning, the children get to spend ample time with the residents.

Facilities such as St. Francis give young people a chance to mingle with grandparent-age people. With the changing profile of the American family, single-income families are increasingly a phenomenon of the past. People are living longer and often families live great distances from their older members.

"A loving, caring environment is here for the elderly and the kids. An open, caring attitude is here because of the children being exposed to extended family life situations. The children react really naturally to the elderly," Lorimer said.

Alton Aase, a resident at St. Francis, said it’s dull and lonesome during the weekends when the children aren’t around. He says he enjoys watching the children play and burning off all that extra energy. "You wish you had some of what they have too much of. Wouldn’t it be nice to have a little of it stored up?"

Top: Jessica Kavenah (left), Stephen Hill and John Everson head back to the day care after visiting residents.

Middle: Kindergarteners Ward Everson (left) and Kyle Roe play in the recreation center as residents catch up on the news.

Lower: Residents Lena Sumner and Minnie Landaal watch Casey Russell perform a forward roll.
University Ministry Reaches Beyond Bellingham

Story by Brad Meyer
Photos by Matt Hulbert

It is an otherwise quiet Tuesday night just north of Western’s campus as a steady trickle of students winds its way down Garden Street. The day’s schedule of classes has long since passed, but these students don’t appear to be satisfied in their quest for answers.

As the destination draws closer, clusters of people socialize on the building’s worn steps, talking about typical student concerns such as classes and the opposite sex. But one particular topic takes precedence this night, and it is the subject that regularly draws this group together.

That subject is religion and the preferred medium for hundreds of Western students is the University Ministry, more commonly referred to as The Inn. With two Tuesday night services at Bellingham’s First Presbyterian Church, The Inn offers a non-denominational spiritual service for more than 700 students. The Inn’s services have become so popular in recent months that a second Tuesday night service has been added to accommodate the burgeoning number of followers. But socializing does not top the Tuesday night agenda as most Inn members are quick to point out the message of God takes top billing.

“People are looking for some answers,” said University Ministry Director Mike Woodruff. “And I think they are surprised at how relevant Jesus Christ is in addressing these issues.”
It is these curious onlookers who are jolted when the 300 bodies suddenly rise to their feet accompanied once again by the booming music. As the regular crowd sings and claps to the beat, the quicker newcomers soon join them. The slower ones simply stand and smile, some still looking for a white-haired organ player.

The Inn is less formal than a church setting and deals with topics that target the 18-25 year-old age bracket, Woodruff said. Woodruff, who leads the services, said the gathering meets on Tuesdays because of tradition and because the director doesn’t want to take students away from their own churches. Common themes Woodruff preaches about include sex, marriage and stress. He said he believes The Inn’s popularity is a result of the answers the Bible provides to deal with such issues.

“Mike is the only reason I go because he is such an incredible speaker. He’s got a real way of relating the Bible to everyday life,” said Western freshman Stephanie Fox.

Currently in his seventh year with The Inn, the 31-year-old Woodruff takes his messages straight from the Bible, without the traditions or practices of one particular denomination. The director says his main message is simply that Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be, and he holds a monopoly on truth. Inn members seem to have readily embraced this message, but in a somewhat non-traditional manner.

“The message is the same (as a church service) but the medium is adapted. We use electric guitars instead of an organ, and we wear jeans instead of robes,” said Woodruff. “We don’t try to be a church. We have a very contemporary and progressive structure that is user-friendly and provides a lot of humor.”

One could hardly disagree with that statement upon entering either of the Tuesday night services. Although the church’s stained glass and polished wooden pews suggest a formal setting, the mood is more like that of a high school pep assembly minus the cheerleaders and football team.

The customary church organ has been pushed aside to make way for two large speakers that blare guitar-laden Christian rock music. Gradually the music fades and the eager boisterous crowd file into their seats — but not for long.

On this particular night Woodruff will be speaking about sex, love and marriage. The director readily admits these topics draw large numbers of people because of the curiosity factor and because, Woodruff insists, students are looking for simple answers. He estimates The Inn draws an equal number of people who have no religious background as to those who have been involved with the church in the past. Woodruff says The Inn’s energetic and vibrant atmosphere helps to draw many first-timers back.

It is these curious onlookers who are jolted when the 300 bodies suddenly rise to their feet accompanied once again by the booming music. As the regular crowd sings and claps to the beat, the quicker newcomers soon join them. The slower ones simply stand and smile, some still looking for a white-haired organ player. The song is followed by speakers bearing a seemingly endless string of announcements regarding various Inn functions. Only after this playful initiation is completed does one learn just how diverse this restless group is.

Aside from Tuesday services, The Inn acts as a relief agency, dealing with community projects such as food banks, homeless shelters and soup kitchens. But the dedicated students and staff haven’t limited themselves to the surrounding community as missions to trouble spots around the nation have been popular among Inn members for several years.

These missions are usually headed by one of the three interns who are part of a small six-member administration staff. The Inn’s current interns are all Western graduates who were active with the organization while they attended Western. Many administrative duties fall into the hands of these interns, and the small group also works with student group leaders and individual Inn members. Woodruff said these interns come back to work for The Inn because they either want to give something back to the organization, or they are looking to start their own ministry career.

Mike Woodruff delivers his unconventional sermon at a Tuesday night Inn gathering.
During spring break 130 members of The Inn journeyed to five different areas of the country to spread the word of God and provide aid to hungry and homeless people. Such missions are common during school breaks, and the trips have been increasingly attracting more students, Danny Sobba, an intern, said.

Sobba co-directed this year’s largest spring break trek when 55 Inn members went to south-central Los Angeles to volunteer their energy in various homeless missions. The students worked on soup lines and packed containers destined for poverty stricken areas around the world. Nearly every student helped stock containers that were eventually loaded on a humanitarian aid ship headed to Russia.

Members paid for the trip out of their own pockets and sponsored various fundraisers to ease the burden of cost, which totalled nearly $300 per member. The trip was Sobba’s fourth in four years as the trip to California has become a regular spring break event. That still didn’t make it any easier for Sobba or his fellow members.

“The first time it’s really eye-opening, and the second or third time is really sobering. I saw some of the same faces I did last year at one particular mission,” said Sobba. “I think there is something to be said about going away and getting out of your comfort zone and being put in a situation that isn’t comfortable.”

Kyrie Nilson, an intern with the Inn, led 13 people to Coahoma, Miss., where they built housing for poverty-level families. The group also worked with the community’s large youth population in establishing a series of events intended to provide structured activities for children. The group established such a bond with the community that one-half of the group is planning to return within the next year.

“All of us saw the seriousness of the poverty, and we could see there was a tangible way of meeting the needs of these people,” Nilson said.

Closer to home, 11 members made the annual trip to Zeballos, British Columbia to help the children of the poverty and depression-ridden Vancouver Island town. Activities focused upon the children with arts and crafts and after-school bible classes constituting a majority of the events. This trip has become so popular among members that only 11 were chosen to go out of 30 applicants.

“We went for the kids, who were great,” said Western sophomore Colin Odell. “They attacked us with kindness as soon as we arrived, and the whole community was very receptive to our cause.”

The focus on community problems has by no means evaded Bellingham as The Inn has numerous programs addressing issues ranging from the disabled to the homeless in this community. Inn members have recently taken interest in a community program called “Leisure Companion” which teams members up with disabled people to participate in various recreational activities. The program is focused at helping both the young and older disabled take part in activities that would otherwise be difficult to accomplish.

Two Inn members also tackled the homeless problem in Bellingham by initiating a weekly soup kitchen at the church. Western students Carolyn Wight and Ronna Biggs operate the kitchen, which serves meals every Friday to 20-25 homeless people. The Inn provides the building and the manpower for the kitchen, and a local grocery store and bread company supply much of the food. Although the kitchen is in its second year of operation, Wight hopes donations from the community will keep the program running for years to come.

Along with the dynamic range of community service involvement comes a focus on individual attention to all who want to get involved. This is enhanced by 40 small group weekly bible sessions in which more than 300 students participate.

“The Inn seems like a popular religious thing to do,” said Western senior Eric Friesen who has been involved with the Inn since his freshman year. “But it really meets the needs of people when they start to get involved.”

On campus bible discussions are also commonly sponsored by The Inn, as are leadership training classes. A weekly Sunday school gathering also draws more than 100 interested students to the Garden Street church.

“The activities generate a lot of excitement, and there are many opportunities to get involved,” Nilson said.

It is the promise of such involvement that has helped to attract the great crowds of Tuesday night worshippers. Woodruff said The Inn following at Western has nearly exceeded that of a similar ministry at the University of Washington, a school with three times as many students. If this trend continues, more traditional church services may have to take heed, and Woodruff may have to look for another night to free up in his schedule.
For Moe and Gert Schneir, growing up in New York City gave them the opportunity to nurture a lifelong romance — and not just with each other. While the Schneirs display a familiarity with each other common to husbands and wives after more than two decades of marriage, they also have another romance in the works. Moe and Gert are involved with one of the world's oldest, finest, most beloved arts — opera.

Bellingham is a long way from New York and its Metropolitan Opera, so the Schneirs and a small group of "operaphiles" meet each week to enjoy a little East Coast culture in this West Coast town. They do this via an opera appreciation course offered through Fairhaven College.

David Mason — opera singer, biology professor and a founder of Fairhaven College — leads his class on a journey each week during which students discover history, plot lines, stars and tragedies of the operatic world.

Mason — with a beard and long pony tail and often clad in overalls — presents an unconventional picture of a former professional opera tenor. He brings his own history of performing in operas to class each week along with a desire to keep a centuries-old art alive.

The animated professor often breaks into song, demonstrating certain technical aspects of singing, or teaching students to listen for certain musical parts or sections of dialogue crucial to the plot line. He keeps the weekly classes lively, sometimes acting out operas with students, playing recordings or video tapes of performances and discussing the timeliness of 17th and 18th century plot lines in today's world.

Extensively researching each opera, combined with years of experience, has given Mason a deep understanding of his subject. He encourages students to consider opera taken out of its traditional context, with period costumes and grand staging, and see it in another place and time. During a single week of one quarter students watched three different video productions of the same opera and discussed how each director's work conveyed a different mood for the same story.

Mason performed in summerstock productions before making the choice to go into teaching. His decision followed a talk with another opera professional who asked him whether he wanted to spend the rest of his life auditioning.

"I said no, I really don't. That's not what I want to do. That's not my style of offering what I have to the world," he said. So Mason offers his own unique brand of teaching, coupled with his love of opera to his class each week.

The quarter-long class culminates in trips to the Seattle and Vancouver operas where students attend live performances. Class members board a chartered bus for an evening of dinner and opera among friends. For some students the nine-hour trip proves so exhilarating, they have trouble getting to sleep, even though they arrive home as late as 1 a.m.
The opera class originally formed as part of the Bridge Program that gave senior citizens a chance to live on Fairhaven's campus and attend classes with younger students. That program ended from a lack of funding, but the opera class continued. It has grown into one of Fairhaven College's standard curriculum offerings.

Some of the founding members of the class — including the Schneir's — still attend today, part of a close-knit group of 13 or so students who register for the class year round. Some of those who attend year after year have done so for over a decade. Many of the returning students range in age from their 50s through their 80s, but younger students also join the group.

Opera class students get more than just a chance to meet each week and talk opera. The twice-quarterly visits to see live performances is a main attraction for students.

"When we found out we could go to the opera, oh!, you didn’t have to ask us twice," Moe said.

Some students purchase season tickets to the opera and sometimes those who are unable to attend a particular performance give their tickets to newer students.

While some students are introduced to opera through this class, others join the Fairhaven class with a background of opera spanning decades.

Moe's first introduction to opera came as a child when his father brought home a hand-wound phonograph and a set of opera records.

"Especially in the summer months, windows were open, doors were never closed in our neighborhoods then, you could hear phonographs going all over the place," he said.

For Moe and Gert, Fairhaven’s opera class has helped to keep their love of opera alive through nearly 11 years of attendance.

"You know that we’re familiar with a lot of this stuff, but when I tell you that we sit enthralled at some of the classes, that’s the reason why we come back. It holds our interest and we are always learning," Gert said.

Mason explains the intricacies of opera in his popular Fairhaven class.

Mason likes to help students enjoy the opera he has come to appreciate over the years, and he likes to keep his class presentations fresh.

"It’s my duty somehow, to make the old things new, and so I try never to keep the notes that I make of a presentation because I know that I’m going to have to make them different each time. So I try to rediscover the operas afresh each time so that they are fresh for both myself and the students, and that’s especially true if you’ve been in the class for decades," Mason said.

Mason also brings his 96-year old father, Herbert Mason, to class each week. Mason Sr. developed a fondness for opera as a young soldier stationed in France during World War I. When the war ended he asked for a special furlough to see the Paris Opera; he found a front row ticket left inside his leave papers.

"I sat in the cheap seats on the first floor. I was way over next to the aisle and I looked up and there was Woodrow
Wilson and General Pershing, right across the aisle from me. I could hear everything they said. And that was my first experience with opera.

Of the class he said, "I enjoy the discussion. People just forget themselves and go right at the subject."

Why do students return to Mason's class year after year? Perhaps it's the timelessness of the plots or the beauty of the music. Each student seems to have his or her own favorite part of opera from plot lines and staging to the stars themselves.

"It's quite a deep subject, even though you know the opera - you think. Every time, you hear things you have not seen or heard before," Phoebe Hamilton said. Hamilton, who has attended the class regularly for nearly 11 years, was one of the first students ever to enroll in the class.

"We numbered about five in the class at the time. We all loved opera and that's why we came. And then, of course, the longer you go on with the class, the more you learn and that in turn makes going to the opera more interesting," she said.

Mason said students new to the class bring with them an innocence and sense of discovery with them that "rejuvenates them (the older students) and reminds them of when it was all new to them as well."

Hamilton said Mason's knowledge of the subject keeps even those students expert on opera learning new things.

"I find it's like everything. The more you put in and the better you read, the more it becomes," she said.

Students who take Mason's class for credit sometimes report to the class on items they've read about, or they break into small groups to present their own versions of plot lines. One group presented their own mini-opera using homemade sock puppets.

Students who repeat the class more than six times are not required to give reports but some choose to anyway. All students - old and new - enjoy the added information coming from newer students.

"I really have learned so much about opera. I love the comments of some of the other people and I love their knowledge," Virginia Weller, a third-year opera class member said.

"I used to have little naps during the opera and I don't do that anymore," Weller confessed. "The music is so beautiful and sometimes you can just kind of get carried off, but now that I've learned quite a bit about learning to appreciate the staging and costuming, that kind of keeps me alert."

This group of opera-goers experience the thrill of becoming part of an opera tragedy, yet at the same time, not part of the tragedy, twice each quarter.

As Moe said, "That's why we hope that the good Lord will spare us, because we could never think of stopping going to the opera."

For a small group of 13 students, the thrill of opera and the magical transport of the drama becomes theirs on Friday afternoons. But when they travel to live performances, the transport by bus still gets them home by 1 a.m.

Mason said he'll continue to teach this class as long as students continue to enroll.

"They just keep coming back. They're there every Friday and I just have to do it."

I think it's a measure of their insanity. (Opera) is popular because it is complex, because it does represent the best efforts of scores of people, and you can literally be carried away by any number of the art forms that you're presented with when you're watching an opera," Mason said.

"And transport is one of the reasons we have opera, that sense of going beyond who you are and what you are and allowing yourself to become something else and (be) somewhere else for a time." 

June 1992 23
Story by Toni Weyman

Lt. Don Miles sits in the City of Bellingham's computer training area tapping out a police report on the PC. The computer makes a blooming sound and Miles curses mildly at the machine and continues typing. Again, another blooming sound and Miles is beginning to get testier - his cursing becoming less mild. He's not having a good time.

He's also wearing a gun.

As the newly-hired secretary of the computer department, I feel somewhat protective of the equipment. I've heard Miles has his moments of temper, but I boldly ask if he'd please remove his gun. Miles, 6 feet tall and 265 pounds, laughs - thankfully he has a sense of humor - and reassures me he will not shoot the computer.

When I was a kid, the sound of a police siren could set off in me a kind of Pavlovian response of paranoia and dread. All thanks to an older brother whose sole purpose in life - I swear - was just to torment me. He was the one who kept telling me, everytime a police car would whizz down our street with sirens squealing, that the fuzz had finally found me and were going to take me back to where I really came from.

Through my job in the basement of City Hall, just down the hall from the detectives' offices, I've been exposed to police on a day-to-day basis. My former preconceptions about them have softened with familiarity. Maybe small town police are different, but thanks largely to my exposure to Lt. Don Miles, I've had a shift in attitude.

A big man physically, Miles presents a larger-than-life persona as well. Miles can come across on first meeting as a jokester. He's quick to laugh and likes the occasional off-color joke. A fellow city employee who's known Miles for many years said it was several years before she realized how intelligent he really is. And, indeed, it can seem at times that Miles' humor is a smoke screen concealing a very sharp mind.

At the age of 49 with 25 years on the force, Miles is almost eligible for retirement. But retirement is the last thing on his mind. Miles is now leading the dual life of fulltime policeman and part-time student. After completing his lower division requirements at Whatcom Community College fall quarter, Miles transferred to Western's Fairhaven College.

Miles never considered himself the scholastic type. In fact, Miles would have been the last person he'd expect to see on a University campus - let alone the campus of an alternative educational facility like Fairhaven.

But a heart attack five years ago made him reassess his life. Miles says he had to ask himself: If I had died, could I look back at my life and say it had been a happy one? Miles says he was unable to answer "yes."

It was his wife Lois who urged him to go to college. Miles, reluctant at first, told his wife, "I can't. I'm a dummy." But Lois persisted, and Miles succumbed. He enrolled at Whatcom Community College and was surprised to find himself doing well in his classes.

As a Fairhaven student, Miles may not be considered typical. (He's been known to confuse the word Birkenstock with Haagen-Dazs.) Connie Faulkner,

Miles, right, discusses his major with Fairhaven adviser John McClendon. Photo by Matt Hulbert
who teaches the Fairhaven transfer seminar class in which Miles was enrolled last quarter, says as far as she knows, this is the first time a policeman has been enrolled at Fairhaven College.

But Miles has grasped his role as Fairhaven student with the same kind of enthusiasm he brings to his job. "He's open to new ideas; he's a delight to have in class," Faulkner says.

Miles is designing a degree program combining human behavior and cross-cultural studies. His goals: to practice law or perhaps apply for the security director's position at Western. He's also interested in mediation and is considering a masters degree in personnel management.

Sitting in his windowless office in the basement of City Hall, Miles talks candidly about growing up in Hawaii in an abusive family environment. He credits his family background with his decision to become a policeman. "The only value an abused person feels is when they're doing something for someone else," he says.

Miles wanted to be a cop since he was a kid growing up on the island of Oahu. His father, who was almost pure Hawaiian, was on the Territorial Boxing Commission prior to Hawaii's statehood. Organized crime and fixed fights were par for the course. It was Miles' father's job to revoke licenses and suspend fighters. As a result, the Miles family was often threatened by those in the boxing underworld. Miles remembers growing up surrounded by large body guards. To him they were just big playmates.

Miles' high-ceilinged office is a small room, no bigger than 10 by 15 feet. Several uniforms and a bullet-proof vest hang on an exposed plumbing pipe that traverses his office. Sometimes he still wears his uniform -- for the 32 hours a year of required patrol duty or when he hasn't done his laundry in a while.

Miles misses street patrol and wearing that uniform on a daily basis. Two years ago a promotion brought him down to a desk job in the basement with a host of administrative responsibilities.

"My greatest love is the street. I like being somewhere you have a chance to make a difference now and then," Miles says. "As first responder to a crime scene, a patrol officer can make the most difference, depending on how he or she handles the situation."

Street patrol involves intervention, and Miles is particularly interested in assisting kids in abusive situations. Here he is able to call upon his own experience as an abused child to guide his judgement in dealing with families in trouble. "I understand where they're coming from," he says.

Miles says many police officers come from abusive upbringings. "It makes a good public servant out of a person," Miles says.

Now, as a detective performing mostly administrative work, Miles says most of his work is follow up, and it doesn't seem as if he's making much of an impact on peoples' lives.

Wistful as he may be about his bygone days as a patrol officer, Miles is anything but a whiner. Although his boss, Deputy Chief MacDonald says he sometimes complains about having too much work, Miles says he is, in fact, happiest when he's busy. "I've got a pretty full plate, which I don't mind. I'd rather be working."

Twenty-five years on the Bellingham Police Force has not dulled Miles' enthusiasm for his job. His heart attack may have been a turning point in his life, but as MacDonald says, "The quintessential Don Miles is there...sometimes we have to channel his enthusiasm.

Who is the quintessential Don Miles? MacDonald describes him as a very gregarious, outgoing, warm-hearted, emotional kind of guy who brings a lot of creativity to the job. "He's a-typical," MacDonald says. "They broke the mold when they made Don."

In class one day, a fellow classmate reveals Miles' secret desire to write a book. Upon further questioning, Miles admits he'd like to write an anecdotal collection of true tales from the Bellingham Police Department. He says the real-life incidents he's experienced are funnier than anything on television. Of course, he'll have to change the name of the town. The working title of his book: Podunk, P.D.

So what's in store for Miles as he stands on the threshold of 50, with retirement soon an option? You can bet it won't be a life of RV parks and fishing. Practicing law, overseeing campus security, writing a book -- all are much more preferable options to Miles.

Whatever Miles decides to do with his degree and his future, he will always be a cop at heart. "I still get excited catching crooks."

A promotion brought Miles down to the basement of City Hall. He misses the days on patrol.

Photo by Toni Weyman
Preserving wildlife has a special meaning for three Whatcom County men. Bruce Tadeyeske of Lynden and Carl Akers and his son Ralph of Bellingham make their living turning animals — anything from tiny, mouse-like shrews to polar bears and elephants — into memories through the process of taxidermy.

Tadeyeske, who owns Wildlife Art Taxidermy Studio in Lynden, said the public’s image of a taxidermist as a butcher isn’t correct. Taxidermy is an art form in which an animal is turned into an everlasting memory by fitting its skin over a mannequin and mounting or otherwise preparing it for display.

Carl Akers, a taxidermist in Bellingham since 1946, has a shop in a former schoolhouse on Astor and I streets. The three-story red building is teeming with animals, posed as if frozen in time. The walls of the showroom are decorated with deer trophies, elk antlers, a swordfish and a walrus skull with three-foot tusks.

A polar bear hangs on one wall—shot and killed by a Bellingham resident who left it to Akers after he died. The crowded first-floor display area is also home to a buffalo, an elk and a lion.

The lion had escaped from a fledgling game farm in Burlington, Wash. and was shot by game department officials in the 1970s. It was given to Akers to add to his collection.

Unlike Akers’ large showroom crowded with animals, Tadeyeske’s one room, 1,200-sq- ft. workshop has only a few deer heads drying, waiting to be claimed by the hunters who shot them.

Most of Tadeyeske’s work comes from hunters wanting to preserve the memory of their hunt with a rug made from a bear or a trophy made from an animal head. Transforming a recently killed animal into a piece of art worthy of display is somewhat complicated, Tadeyeske said.

Ralph Akers said the first step in taxidermy is to determine if an animal was legally killed. Customers will sometimes ask taxidermists to preserve dead animals they’ve found alongside the highway. The taxidermist needs to be careful -- without a permit, preserving road kill is illegal.

“If someone has a license and has gone through all the hoops, then I can take their work and do whatever it is they want,” Ralph Akers said.

Taxidermists preserve, but they do not “stuff” animals, as many people believe, Tadeyeske explained. Mannequins used for mounting animal heads and bodies usually are molded out of soft fiberglass, paper or polyurethane foam. While the Akers make many of their own mannequins, Tadeyeske orders his from a company in Oregon.

“In a one-man operation, to make a head form, you’re looking at one hour at least for me to make one. My time is
Skillful sewing on an animal hide can disguise unwanted markings such as gunshot wounds.

more valuable than that, and it’s not cost efficient for me to make them when I can get them for $26 a form,” Tadeyeske said.

Tadeyeske said hunters usually bring him an animal’s head and cape — the hide from the shoulders to the skull. He tells hunters to take the animal from behind the front legs and make the first incision from the shoulder blades up to the base of the skull and detach the skin up to the neck. He prefers the head to be left alone so he can skin it himself.

“If they try to take the skin off the head, most people don’t have enough experience to do it right. They usually mess it up,” Tadeyeske said.

The hide of an animal does not always fit the mannequin. Carl Akers currently is working with a cougar hide larger than the mannequin for it. Akers has to lengthen the neck of the mannequin so the skin will fit properly.

“Animals are just like people. They vary in body structure, so we adjust the mannequin to fit the animal,” he said.

Preparing the skin for mounting must be done carefully. Tadeyeske begins by skinning the head, making sure not to disturb the membranes in the nose and eyes which later will be needed to secure glass eyes and give the nose a more realistic look.

After skinning the head, the ears are prepared using one of two methods. For large ears, liners made of laminated paper are inserted after the ear cartilage is removed. The liner keeps ears stiff and natural looking. Smaller ears, such as those on the white-tail deer, require a molding process where the ear cartilage is left in place and a fiberglass resin is poured into the ear itself. As the resin is hardens, the ear is molded and shaped to look natural.

After skinning the head and separating the nostrils, eye membrane and the lips, all of the excess tissue is removed from the skin. Then before sending it to the tanner, the entire cape is salted using a fine salt that sticks to the skin and naturally preserves it. The salt also stops bacteria growth which can cause the hair follicles in the skin to loosen. If hair follicles loosen, hair will fall out making the cape useless.

Animal hides cure into a soft leather through a chemical tanning process. An animal skin must be tanned before it is molded onto an animal form — a mannequin — for mounting, or before it can be used as a rug. Skillful cutting and sewing can hide gunshot wounds and any other unwanted marking.

The fur side of a bear skin rug looks as if it is one piece, but if turned over it is easy to see where patches have been sewn into the fur and where cuts have been mended. Taxidermists have to be good tailors, Ralph Akers said.

Tadeyeske said it’s necessary to watch animals in their natural habitat to be able to recreate a realistic trophy, and he has spent hours hunting and taking pictures.

“I spent a lot of time looking for books with good illustrations. Outdoors I hunted a lot with a camera to see how a deer holds its head in a certain pose. It’s all part of learning,” Tadeyeske said.

Business is steady for Akers and Tadeyeske. Ralph Akers said a deer head and neck preserved and mounted would cost about $250 and could take about six months to complete.

“People wait in line to come here. They wait a year to get a piece done. It’s satisfying,” he said.

Becoming a good taxidermist takes years of practice. Carl Akers, who became interested in taxidermy at about the age of 14, bought books on the subject and taught himself the trade. His son learned from him.

“It’s the kind of thing where if you’re at all interested, you pick it up. You start sewing or start working with leather and it builds from there,” Ralph Akers said.
Ethnicity at Western
Minority students find a 'home' at the Ethnic Student Center

Story by Tara Perry
Photo by Tyler Anderson

It's Friday night at the Ethnic Student Center. Students from the Black Student Network sit and chat about songs, homework and their plans for the evening while another student works at a computer.

In the Native American Student Union office, a member slips a tape into a recorder, sits back and begins to write as music fills the air.

Another student talks with her mother on the phone while jamming to the tunes overhead from the Native American Student Union office. Two Black Student Network members dance around the center. Everyone seems to enjoy lounging around, being together and making themselves at home.

Students in the center strive to find, or maintain, their cultural identity — their ethnicity. Each has his or her own definition of ethnicity and how it relates to life at Western. For many of these students their strongest ties are with the various clubs in the Ethnic Student Center.

Liz Partolan-Fray, associate director for diversity at the Multicultural Services Center, keeps a running tab of the number of ethnic students enrolled at Western. Currently about nine-hundred of the nearly 10,000 students attending Western are ethnic minorities. Some of these students have trouble adapting to Western — and Bellingham — possibly due to lack of racial diversity, while others have no difficulty at all adapting to a campus life.

How do minority students cope with life on a largely white campus?

Partolan-Fray said some students end up feeling isolated, particularly those coming from family-oriented cultural communities. Some students don't cope with the shock at all. They go home every weekend, they deny they're experiencing it, and tell themselves everything is going to be just fine. But it will hit them at some point, she added.

Other students at Western become involved in ethnic student organizations and clubs, or they become peer mentors, Partolan-Fray said.

Partolan-Fray said students who come from a community made up mostly of members of their own race experience culture shock in differing degrees when settling in at Western.

Kim Williams, a sophomore student of Hispanic and Caucasian ancestry, remembers her first impressions at Western — when she realized the majority of students were white.

"I had a nervous case of culture shock. All of a sudden I looked different and held different values. However, Western's focus on ethnic diversity is at least expanding. Sympathy for ethnic groups such as African American, Native Americans and Asian Americans, is a lot higher than Texas, Florida and North Carolina, as I have seen."
Williams is from El Paso, Texas and attended a predominantly Spanish-speaking high school. Spanish also was the language heard most often in town, and Williams said she remembers hearing this familiar tongue in malls, at parties and among her family and friends. Williams says she's learned to appreciate her culture and customs as a Hispanic student.

Her feelings on the Ethnic Student Center are evident:
"It's like home for me, these people are like my brothers and sisters."

Meesha Martin

Involvement with various ethnic groups helped her adjust to Western, Williams said. "I can just go with the flow whether it's ethnic, environmental, or just being with my friends. Back home I have a clearer identity as to what my culture is about."

Meesha Martin, a Spanish major in her first year at Western, is one of 150 African-Americans attending the university. At home in urban Seattle, Martin was with people of a similar ethnic background so no need existed to identify herself ethnically.

"Living up here in a predominantly white area — where people haven't even lived a life close to mine — is difficult for me. My thoughts and feelings are different — lonely and depressed," she said.

But Martin said she's here now and she must take people for what they are. It's important to appreciate the differences and gain from them, Martin said. "I'm learning how to be strong."

Martin said she feels more at home when she's with ethnic friends. "As long as I have clubs like the Black Student Network and Women's Roundtable, I'm ok. I'm going to be fine. It's an outlet."

Ethnic organizations on campus provide a place for students like Martin to voice concerns on discrimination and racism in Bellingham and unjust treatment by people in this community. Her feelings on the Ethnic Student Center are evident: "It's like home for me, these people are like my brothers and sisters."

Hyon-Chu (H.C.) Yi is Korean-American, one of 427 Asian-American students at Western. Yi said culture shock was not severe coming from Puyallup where the ratio of ethnic to white students is similar to that at Western. Getting involved with campus activities has really helped her adjust to Western. Her experiences working with the Asian Pacific Student Union (APSU) and as a peer mentor have given her a chance to work with Asian students having problems adjusting to this university.

"As a peer mentor, one incident was brought to my attention that the student felt very uncomfortable on this campus because it was too white," Yi said. The student was not accustomed to this environment. The student went home every weekend.

Yi said she is comfortable with white people, but when she needs emotional support she usually can find it best within her own culture and with other ethnic minorities.

"Ethnicity to me is a culture or race you come from. The ethnicity makes who you are physically, it characterizes where you come from. Because I'm a Korean-American, I will never belong in the mainstream. I will always be judged by my physical appearance," Yi said.

The issue of diversity at Western is not new said Ramond Mustoe, a local gardener and long-time volunteer programmer with KUGS radio at Western. Mustoe graduated from Western in the 1960s when, like now, diversity was considered an important campus issue. He said he's seen the interest in diversity come and go over the years, and he hopes this time the awareness is here to stay.

Mustoe, a Caucasian, said his concept of ethnicity differs from much of the ideology he's seen at Western. Ethnicity can involve European-Americans, not just African-Americans, Native-Americans or Asian-Americans. People who are European-American also have an ethnicity to identify with, he explained.

Mustoe said he feels the Associated Students and other student organizations can make a difference by keeping faculty honest and making sure diversity becomes a reality.

"I want this to really happen...I'm behind the issue of diversity. I'm cynical to see if it's a buzz word: Is it just for the moment?"

Black Student Network Members gather outside the Viking Union before a meeting.
By George Tharalson

All aboard!!

Passengers could be boarding trains in Bellingham bound for Seattle or Vancouver in less than a year and a half from now.

For 11 years, passenger rail service along the Interstate 5 corridor between Seattle and Vancouver has been silent.

But last March, Congressman Al Swift announced proposed plans to have the run restored - ending two years work on a project to reinstate passenger rail service to the area.

"These efforts started based on feedback from people in the area who are concerned about regional growth and congestion on the highways and in the air," Swift said. "The work leading up to this announcement is based on the view that our region needs a balanced transportation system that will maximize consumer choice and preserve our regional quality of life."

And what a way to preserve the quality of the great Northwest. Amtrak has agreed to provide two trains, each with an engine and four passenger cars to allow commuters and shoppers to leave their automobiles at home and watch the scenery go by, all courtesy of the luxury of train travel, said Neal Ball, sales consultant for Amtrak.

If the runs are restored, Amtrak would provide two daily round trips from Seattle to Vancouver, with stops in Everett, Mount Vernon and Bellingham, said Andy Anderson, director of Swift's Bellingham office.

The train service could ease congestion on the area's roadways, and at border crossings, Anderson said. "There's a tremendous number of people crossing into the United States (daily, from Canada) by passenger auto," Many come down for gas, but many also visit to shop, he said.

Port of Bellingham spokeswoman, Bonnie McDade, said passenger rail service would allow more people to come in and out of the community without their cars. This could mean less auto pollution from stinky exhaust, less cars on the highway and less traffic jams at borders and in town.

Resuming the rail service would also benefit Amtrak through increased ridership. Seattle-Vancouver service would also allow Amtrak to connect more easily with the Canadian cross-country train service, VIA Rail of Canada, Ball said. "The bus does that now, but rail carries more people," he said.

Traveling by rail isn't new to the Northwest. But 12 years ago, Amtrak ended its five-and-a-half-hour Seattle to Vancouver run — the trip was too long. Federal subsidies for passenger rail service were cut as well, and the company was losing money.

All this could change as negotiations are expected to begin between Amtrak, Burlington Northern (owner of the railroad tracks) and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Bringing back the passenger rail service will continue a century-long history of train travel through the area.

Bellingham's first exposure to rail service began with freight trains when The Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad, established in 1883 began transporting coal and logs through the area, according to The Fourth Corner, by Lehla Edson.

In 1888 the Fairhaven and Southern Railway began its service, connecting
riders from Fairhaven to Seattle. By 1891, passenger rail was in full swing and events were staged to celebrate the beginning of a whole new method of transportation. One such event was the Great Water Fight of 1891.

According to Edson, on July 22, 1891, a celebration was planned to welcome the first overland Canadian Pacific passenger train to come through New Whatcom, as Bellingham was then called.

Firemen from two local fire stations stood on either side of the railroad tracks, prepared to create a giant water arch with spray from their fire hoses.

Edson wrote, "This misfired so badly, it almost became an international incident."

When the call finally came to turn on the water, members of one fire station accidentally drenched firemen from the other station. The end result was a water fight between the two companies with the train caught in the middle.

Edson wrote that the force of the water was enough to break windows on the train, thus drenching the unsuspecting passengers trapped inside.

Despite the occasional near calamity, freight train service to the area has continued throughout the years. But for today's newer, faster trains to safely carry passengers, some changes need to be made to upgrade the existing railways along the proposed route.

The proposed run has to be competitive with other modes of transportation, Anderson said. If trains can make the Seattle-Vancouver run in three and a half hours, the travel time would rival the time it takes to make the trip by car.

Anderson said the new goal is to have trains travel at speeds of 70 miles per hour after improvements are made to the tracks to handle faster trains.

As most cities have speed limits for trains traveling within city limits, the speed the train can travel will have to be negotiated for each stop along the way, Anderson added.

To pay for all these improvements, the Washington state legislature hopes to spend $5 million for track upgrades to provide improved railroad crossing warnings for motorists and pedestrians, Anderson said.

Train travel at faster speeds could mean fewer accidents because motorists won't try to play chicken with trains at crossings, Anderson said. "The slower the train, the more inclination there is for motorists to beat the train."

One of the bigger hurdles for the project is to find a way to speed up customs inspections for those passengers traveling into Canada, Anderson said. Fast clearance through customs is necessary to keep the run competitive.

Anderson said he expects the new rail system will be similar to airport customs inspections.

Meanwhile, back in Bellingham, the Port District and Amtrak are examining sites for a new depot. A possible site is in historic Fairhaven near the Alaska Ferry cruise terminal. This proposed location would not hamper traffic, and parking space will be plenty. Although the Fairhaven depot location is only in the conceptual stages, it's one step closer to making passenger rail service from Seattle to Vancouver a reality.

As negotiations get underway, potential train passengers will have to be satisfied with dreams of relaxing in a plush train seat looking at the scenery, while feeling the rails — and miles — roll by.

... on track?

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Are you ready

for this thing called

Life?