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Meet Douglas LeVeck, not your average working stiff

Loving London without losing pounds

What’s in a name? Find out inside

More than a woman

The Alaskan way — via bus!

Yeast Affection

Speak Phreakin’ English!
Letter from the editor

Thanks and congratulations for grabbing the November issue of KLIPSUN. If you’ve read this magazine in the past, you might notice fewer stories in this issue than usual. This is because we decided to focus on quality over quantity: stronger stories, larger photos, more dynamic layouts. We’re trying to break from the mold of a 32 page newspaper feature section and look more like a magazine. And since the holidays are near, we’ve inserted a special Holiday Fun Page to bring out the yuletide spirit in us all (whatever that is).

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DEATH BECOMES
Douglas LeVeck has been surrounded by death his whole life. As a young boy in Ohio, he spent his days sitting on the funeral home prep table listening to his father’s stories while watching him prepare bodies.

“The first time on the job for me was 5 years old wearing a little brown suit standing in back of the church singing, ‘Nearer my God to Thee,’” he joked.

After two tours in Vietnam with the naval air, four years of college in Cincinnati, two years of apprenticeship and the state board test, LeVeck moved to Bellingham in 1973 and established himself as a licensed funeral director.

LeVeck has not looked back since starting his career. The fringe benefits aren’t so great, but the personal satisfaction is. LeVeck is able to rest his head on his pillow at night fully knowing he helped someone that day.

A basket of red and white-striped candy sits on an end table next to the entrance of Jems & LeVeck Funeral Home & Crematorium. Palm-like plants surround the foyer and brush against the dark wood paneling. LeVeck waits patiently in his office for the family to arrive.

A mother and her four children walk through the door. LeVeck sticks out his slender hand and directs them to the funeral planning room located on the right. They sit around the large oval-shaped table and wait to hear the options for funeral arrangements.

“Most people do not want to think about death, let alone talk about it. So if there is one person in this community no one wants to see, it’s me,” LeVeck said. “Everyone who walks through my door has a chip on their shoulder, and I better be able to turn that situation around.”

He uses a device one may deem inappropriate in his line of work — humor.

“I can’t do anything for the person who has died. It’s the people walking around I can help,” LeVeck said.

Humor breaks the ice quite a bit, he’s learned. Jokes about his balding head helps put families a little more at ease.

“After I have spent two hours with a family, my secretary looks at me and says, ‘I don’t know how you do it, those people are laughing.’”
LeVeck isn't the long-faced, suit-and-tie, holding-your-hand-at-the-door type of funeral director. He has fun doing what he does because he enjoys the people. “My interests are varied enough that I can talk a little bit about everything and not know a lot about anything,” he said. “You have to learn to read people, and that is one of my positives. People are fun.”

“It slays me when people come in with a little clay pot they made in Pottery 101 class and say, ‘I want to put dad in here.’ They have no idea how much room dad really takes up,” he said.

The humor LeVeck finds in people is also captured in his photography as well as his memory. A photograph of an antique hot-rod car with red flames painted on the sides reminds him of the time when a family wanted to bury the car with their father inside it, until they found out how much the cemetery plots would cost.

“People are fun,” said LeVeck.

And the emotions haven’t always been someone else’s. When his father died in 1984, LeVeck was forced to play the role of the consoled rather than the consoling. “My father’s death was really the turning point of my life and this profession because it was then and only then did I know exactly what that person sitting across from me was feeling,” he said. “Until then, it had been from the books. Suddenly, you are in a situation of grief. Now I can put my arms around them and say, ‘Yes, I know what you’re feeling.’”

LeVeck recalled a time as a young funeral director when he was forced to deal with some awkward moments. It was in a small country cemetery where the cows watched your every move, he said. The minister was proceeding with the service, when the casket began to shake vehemently. Strange moans and groans emanated from the cemetery plot. LeVeck never forgot the faces of the funeral attendees as they took a large step back from the sight. He soon discovered that a cow had jumped the fence in the middle of the night and fallen into the grave.

“Old Bessy heard all the noise up above and was trying to get out,” he laughed. “We got the people from the cemetery to get a tractor, and we had to trench the grave out to get the cow out.”

Shadowed by humor is a great amount of stress. He deals with death’s effects virtually 24 hours a day. “In this line of work, you have to be callused, but you have to be the most caring individual people run across. There are a lot of emotions involved,” LeVeck said.

LeVeck’s motto is, “You better enjoy today because you don’t know what’s going to happen tonight.”

At night, LeVeck’s dreams are usually interrupted by a phone call indicating that it’s time to go to work. He does the majority of his work at night because most deaths occur between midnight and 4 a.m. People’s metabolism slows during the midnight hours and so they are more susceptible to heart and respiratory failure, LeVeck said. The evening hours are when teenagers and adults decide to drink and drive. Drugs are also prevalent in the many deaths in Whatcom County.

“The phone rings, and somebody has to go to work,” LeVeck said plainly and simply. “They (nurses and doctors) have not been able to either sustain life or cure a disease. There are nurses and doctors who refuse to be anywhere around someone who has died and these people are in the medical profession. A taboo of death haunts that area (of work).”

LeVeck’s funeral home shares assignments with the other funeral homes in Whatcom County on a rotation basis. He’s not the only one who must look through burned-down homes to find charred remains or trek up a mountain to recover a dead hiker.

After he transfers the remains to the
funeral home, he checks his files to see if the person had made pre-arrangements for a funeral and attempts contact the family.

If the person had made no arrangements, the decisions are left to the family. The family virtually has an endless amount of options — from a traditional funeral to a simple cremation. Sometimes the decision can take days, as families have trouble deciding what type of funeral they want.

According to Washington State law, a body must either be refrigerated or embalmed within 24 hours. If the body is to be embalmed, the sooner the better, LeVeck said, because of the physical makeup of the human anatomy. Gravity's effects take its toll as the blood tends to settle in one area of the body.

"If that family does not know what to do, and that body is refrigerated, and a day or two later they decide to have a funeral where embalming is involved, I've got a problem. I can't guarantee results because of the time frame, because of the physical changes that take place and because of refrigeration," he said.

The embalming room looks much like a hospital's prep room. The white walls and gray linoleum are a contrast to the colorful map that locates major arteries in the human anatomy. Below the map, is a metal table where the body is disinfected and prepared for embalming. A can of shaving cream and a toothbrush are among the surgical tools that lie on the counter next to the table. A cylinder-shaped glass with tubing running from it is used for the embalming process. A black knob with an arrow indicates the pressure. The blood is drained underneath the table in a white sink that leads to a storage facility.

The embalming process is simple, yet time consuming, LeVeck said. The process takes approximately one to two hours. A needle that is connected to the tubing is injected into an artery after a pressure point is found on the body. The blood is exchanged with the embalming fluid through the glass cylinder, replacing only one-fifth of the blood.

Jems & LeVeck has the only crematory in Whatcom County, LeVeck boasts. The light blue oven sits in a room in the back.

Iron hip points and other various artificial joints are all that remain after the two-hour and 2,000 degree cremation. The bones are ground into a powder and are put in a cremation urn or a box, depending on whether or not the family decides to take the loved one home.

LeVeck has a library of ashes that he is required by law to store for two years. If no one has claimed the remains in that time frame, LeVeck buries the ashes in an unmarked grave. The remains can always be exhumed, he said.

When a family decides to have a burial, it must select a casket.

The casket selection room, LeVeck said, is typically where the reality of death hits a family. Viewing the vast amounts of smooth, shiny caskets with satin interiors plays on people’s emotions.

There's a casket for all types — small ones for children, extra-long for tall people. Every color from brown to violet is arranged around the room in levels so the family must look up to see some of them.

LeVeck leaves the room for 15 minutes, allowing a family to make its decision. They usually only need a short time, he said.

"People buy according to color and price," LeVeck said. "If something is available in blue, they always want to know if they can get it in pink."

He recalled a time when he returned to the section room and the young man he was helping was missing.

As LeVeck walked around the room, he heard a voice say, "I'll take this one. My dad would be comfortable in here." The young man had crawled inside the casket and was lying in it with his eyes closed.

"It's just the people who keep you going," he said, again.
Story by Robyn Johnson  
Photo by Robyn Johnson  
Photo illustration by Chong Kim

"Where in the world could a tourist see a bloke raise a pint of bitters in thanks for a plate of grey bubble and squeak, a spicy banger, several greasy faggots, and a warm spotted dick? Why, in Great Britain, of course! The English people may speak English, but what a variety of colorful slang they use. For the record, the man was drinking ale, eating fried mashed potatoes and cabbage, a sausage, several meatballs and steamed sponge cake with fruit and raisins.

Since no actual language barrier exists, London is an excellent initial choice as a foreign destination. For the inexperienced American traveler, the user-friendly city of London is a bustling metropolis that immediately grabs and welcomes its visitors.

"Many who visit London for the first time consider it a huge, noisy and dirty city, but one with many sights to see," Linda Smeins, chair of Western's art department, said. "I would suggest to those with that estimation that there is much to enjoy in the energy of the noise. There are also many quiet areas of London to enjoy."

However, before boarding that Europe-bound jet, several items should be purchased that will save time, money and exasperation — a Visitor Travelcard for London’s transportation system, a Great British Heritage Pass for reduced entrance fees and traveler’s checks in British pound notes, rather than American dollars.

Western senior Dawn Rutherford recommends purchasing the International Student Identity Card for student discounts and identification. BritRail’s Standard Class Youth Pass was helpful for traveling at a discount rate in Great Britain, Rutherford said.

"With the ID, I could get a discounted theater ticket an hour before show time," Rutherford commented. "I even got a second row seat at ‘Kiss of the Spider Woman’ for about six pounds (approximately $12)."

First priority upon arriving in London is checking baggage. Having a hotel reservation will avoid the stress of locating a bed for the first night as jet lag is setting in. For the remaining nights, hostels are the cheapest housing, ranging from $5 to $15 per night for dormitory-style rooms. Hostels supply blankets, but visitors need their own sleepsacks (a folded sheet that is hemmed up the side). An alarm clock may be necessary as morning check-out can be as early as 9 a.m.

Hostel, budget hotel and guest house listings are also available at any of London’s Tourist Information Centers (TI). TI agents make housing reservations, arrange tours and offer helpful information.

To help you become familiar with the 600 square miles of urban jungle on the first day, the London Transit System offers the Red Bus Tour. The red double-decker bus leaves on the half-hour from Victoria Station, Marble Arch or Piccadilly Circus and loops by London’s principle sights.

By now jet lag is probably starting to hit. Experts recommend a light dinner, followed by a walk to stay awake until London’s night arrives. An interesting walk crosses Westminster Bridge, passes the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben and concludes near Westminster Abbey. The moving presence of a thousand years of English history can be sensed along this well-worn walking path on the Thames River. Another colorful, modern-
day walk runs through seedy Soho to Piccadilly Circus, where London’s unique characters promenade. The combination of exercise, the light meal and jet lag should guarantee sleep.

With numerous historical attractions to queue up at, priorities should be determined by location, crowds and personal endurance. The Tower of London would be a superb choice, complete with Beefeaters, Henry VIII’s suit of armor, the Crown Jewels and the White Tower built in 1097. Nearby, the 1894 Tower Bridge offers views from enclosed walkways high above the Thames River.

Westminster Abbey, the cathedral where monarchs have been crowned since 1066, the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben are all on the grounds of Westminster only a short walk away from Buckingham Palace and the Changing of the Guards.

Another impressive church is St. Paul’s Cathedral, where Prince Charles and Princess Diana were married. Sir Christopher Wren rebuilt the sanctuary after the Great Fire of 1666, capping it with an elaborate 365-foot dome. Visitors can climb the 259 steps to the Whispering Gallery in the dome and test the acoustics.

"St. Paul’s wasn’t as impressive age-wise, but the architecture was great," Rutherford said. "I climbed into the dome and the view was beautiful from above."

An excellent way to experience London is to take an organized walking tour with an English guide. The tours amble daily through neighborhoods of Charles Dickens, into the killing fields of Jack the Ripper and in and out of hidden alleys known only to locals. Pub crawls and eerie ‘ghost walks’ are a delightful way to see London at night.

Western senior Holly Haffner took a Shakespearean walking tour with her study group. A well-prepared guide, with many anecdotes, walked the group through numerous Shakespearean theaters.

"I didn’t realize how close things are in London," Rutherford, who enjoyed walking the city, said. "When you take the Tube (the subway), distances are deceiving. Many great buildings are within a mile."

"The heart of London is surprisingly small," Smeins said. "I would often walk from one end to the other, seldom taking the Tube."

Smeins recommended walking in outlying communities, such as Kew Gardens or Richmond Park. Kew Gardens was formerly a royal park, complete with royal palace, rose gardens and an unusual thistle garden. Millions of multi-
colored crocus announce spring each year, followed by daffodils and bluebells.

"Near Kew, a pleasant towpath runs through Chiswick, where my favorite 18th-century building is," Smeins said. "Chiswick House is a classic, revival country house that has had tourists paying for tours since the 18th century."

"Richmond Park, formerly a deer park for royalty, has beautiful towpaths along the Thames to walk," Smeins said. "On one side of the Thames, you will take a brief detour across a cow pasture right in the middle of the city and come upon a small church where Captain Vancouver is buried."

The unexpected or amusing can occur while exploring the neighborhoods of London.

"On my last night in London, I was walking by myself along the Thames, waiting for my final sunset," Western senior Julie Sarich said. "I had been alone for a week and was getting pretty sick of myself. A drunken, homeless man asked if he could join me and we talked for an interesting half-hour."

Museums and Galleries are almost required viewing in London. The British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery are some of the best.

"The National Gallery was incredible," Sarich said. "I traveled all summer in Europe and liked the National best. The admission was free, the explanations were good and the bathrooms were free!"

Additionally, the Museum of London, a smaller and less crowded exhibit, walks visitors chronologically through London's history with imaginative displays and exhibits.

London's theatres rival New York's Broadway in quality, but cost a lot less. Choices range from the Royal Shakespeare Company, musicals, comedies, mysteries and English farces. Popular plays, like Agatha Christie's "The Mouse Trap," have been running in the same theater for 41 years. The London Times lists the current plays and concerts, with cost, dates and telephone numbers. To reserve tickets from the United States, telephone the theatre directly, charge the tickets to a credit card and pick them up the day of the performance.

"The theatre was the best," Sarich said. "I wasn't interested in the theatre before I went to London, but I got hooked. We saw a play a week through my study program."

"London is the theatre capitol of the world," Haffner said. "Visitors can go to the theatre or find music every night. You could get stand-by tickets for little more than the price of a movie."

English sporting events are truly unique. For example, there is the confusing game of cricket. Two 11-man teams dress in crisp white or cream trousers, hit a red leather ball with a wooden oar-like bat and try to either score between the wooden wickets or bowl to dismiss the batsmen. Or two teams can play a game of shinty with a caman (club) and a ball. Games of soccer, rugby or snooker can be observed in London, as well as equestrian dressage events and horse racing.

Visiting a pub (public house) is almost a required British experience. The English people meet friends, listen to music and drink pints of ale, known as lager, stout or bitter. "The Slug and Lettuce", "The Royal Cock" and "Three Stags" are named such because the Romans required signs on each establishment that the illiterate masses could read through illustrations.

London's thousand pubs also serve traditional pub meals, such as Cornish pasties or the ploughman's lunch. The pastie is potato, beef and vegetables in a pastry case. The traditional ploughman is crusty bread, butter, a chunk of Cheddar cheese and a pickle, chased with a pint of English bitter.

London has many dance clubs such as the Hippodrome that have pricey drinks, current local music and appealing conversation.

"We had a great time at the Hippodrome," Western freshman Katie Keim said. "Non-stop music was played by a disc jockey while everyone either danced on the wooden dance floor or sat on the rows of surrounding seats, drinking and meeting people from around the world."

Camden is one of London's many sprawling markets where bargains can be found if you look hard
enough. Covent Garden, where Eliza Doolittle sold flow-
ers in Shaw’s “Pygmalion”, is also crowded with shops
and markets.

“If you want an extreme Fairhaven experience,
you shop in Camden Town (Camden Lock Market) for
funky, used clothing and hand-made jewelry,” Sarich said.

A Saturday trip to Portobello Market is an excel-
lent way to experience a variety of cultures.

“Portobello began as an antique market, de-
veloped into a flea market and now has a mile of outdoor
stalls, featuring pricey antiques, trendy clothing, funky
jewelry and junk,” Smeins said. “At the far end, where few
tourists go, the Caribbean population’s produce market
has unusual foods, interesting people and good music.”

In 1773 author Samuel Johnson said that by seeing
London, he had seen as much of life as the world could
show. Two hundred years later, London is still overflow-
ning with life. Cultures from around the world have added
spice to this huge, bustling metropolis that blends the
historical with the funky, the aristocratic with the Bohe-
mian, the spoiled with the preserved.

London awaits.
Katrina Slide and Java Jive strut their stuff at a local drag show.

'We parody queens are

Katrina Slide and Java Jive strut their stuff at a local drag show.
Emperor's new clothes

student reigns supreme in local drag scene

Story by Ric Brewer
Photo's by Ric Brewer, Steve Dunkelberger and Chong Kim

Tom's hands are big. Hands perfect for grasping a football or a basketball, fair-skinned and dotted lightly with freckles, just like those that dust his face, forehead and arms. But tonight Tom won't be able to catch a football or dribble a basketball because at the end of each fingertip, three-inch long press-on nails cling to his thick, sausage-like fingers.

Tonight there's a show and Tom is emceeing. Two hours into his transformation into Katrina Slide, the cosmetic application is not going well and she's getting cranky.

"Don't talk while I'm doing my eyes," she snaps, eyebrow pencil gripped firmly between an ample thumb and forefinger.

Despite the glitz and campy glamour of the drag world, Tom, (not his real name), a 22-year-old Western theater major has had to deal with many of the darker facts of life during his ten-month reign as Bellingham's first "female" emperor. There are the obvious inherent difficulties in living an "alternative lifestyle" in a time of increasing tensions between gays and straights. But Tom has the added burden of dealing with the stereotyping of drag queens, as well as discordance from those who are, supposedly, "his own." Tom's alter ego, Katrina, is not so concerned.

"Katrina doesn't take shit off anybody," Tom emphasizes with a flip of his cigarette and arched eyebrow, gestures one quickly discovers are pure Katrina.

Tom seems, on the surface, an unlikely candidate for the one-eighty his life has taken over the past year and a half. At six-foot-two-inches and 185-pounds he can honestly be classified as the proverbial "strapping young man." He physically resembles more a linebacker than he does a woman. The only giveaways are his movements: light, quick and expressive, the broad, dramatic gestures of a performer.

Prior to his 21st birthday, the prospect of being gay never entered his mind, he claims, despite a general indifference to either gender. But on that day, Tom made his first tentative foray into a new life and into Rumors, a typical Bellingham tavern complete with rustic, timbered walls tacked with familiar beverage posters and beer-stained pool tables. Typical, except for the fact it caters to Bellingham's gay community.

There he met a man who persuaded him into being "painted"—the term queens use for being made up. He still remembers his first few outings as "terrifying but exciting."

Tom befriended Celita Slide, the "matriarch" of a burgeoning drag family in Bellingham. Celita became Tom's "drag mother"—kind of like a Girl Scout leader with a mascara fetish. Less than a month later, Tom was rechristened as Katrina Slide, performed in her first drag show and was nominated Prince, a euphemistic title which entitled her to run for Emperor, both titles usually reserved for a "male."

Part sorority, part Vegas show and part Elk's Club, drag in Bellingham was formerly a loose federation of gender-bending gents who occasionally had a ladies night out. But in 1984, the Imperial Sovereignty of the Emerald Empire (ISCEE) was born, an offshoot of the court system originated in San Francisco in 1965, designed to organize and "provide a social outlet" for drag queens, according to an ISCEE promo pamphlet. Members are both female and male. Hundreds of active "chapters" are scattered throughout the U.S. and members raise thousands of dollars annually from shows, often donating the proceeds to AIDS charities, homeless shelters and other worthy causes.

men's image of women, not women themselves. Drag all of the stupid stereotypes that men have about women.'
Despite the negative cultural image of drag queens as perverts, pansies or pedophiles, Tom says most queens are men who, like himself, revel in the opportunity to perform. Drag provides the color, milieu and freedom which can’t be found in straight theater. The role of Katrina continues long after the curtain falls.

“It’s easy to think that Katrina could overtake me completely,” he admits. “It’s not like a play where you’re that character for a couple hours and then you go home. I’ve been Katrina for 36 hours at a stretch. What could be a better experience for a performer than to “become” the character?”

Katrina’s coronation broke a rigid string of unwritten, but closely followed traditions dating back to the court’s inception. Empresses were “girls” (drag queens), and Emperors were black-leathered, mustachioed macho men. Even for queens, “socially-appropriate” gender roles appear to die slowly. At heart, we all seem to want what Ward and June had.

“The Seattle queens were kind of pissed when I won Emperor,” Tom relates. The dissension among the ranks was not especially surprising considering her break with tradition, her tender age and short-time involvement in drag.

“There’s lots of old queens who’ve performed for years that never even made Prince,” Tom says. But along with the usual fat chewing and green-room gossip was a more insidious under- current of tension.

During a show in Tacoma while Katrina was campaigning and performing for the emperorship, she was kicked from behind by another queen. When Katrina whirled around, she was kicked again. It was no accident. The wrath of a queen for her future Emperor was duly noted.

Controversies do seem to swirl around Katrina. During a presentation to a sex and gender class at Western, some female audience members expressed concerns about the sexist “statement” Katrina was making about women as she strutted in heels and tight skirt.

“The only statement I could think of was that we parody men’s image of women, not women themselves,” says Tom. “Drag queens are all of the stupid stereotypes that men have about women. That’s why we get, while more student-like in its modesty, still keeps his make-up kit and wardrobe well-stocked. His closet is half-filled with his clothes and half hers: flowing, sequined gowns, tight miniskirts; all a peacock’s share of reds, purples and pinks. It looks like the closet of a man married to a hooker.

“I got my heels at Volume in Canada,” he says holding up an enormous pair of red leather heels. “They don’t have my size down here.” Tom wiggles the toes on his size 11 1/2 feet, size 13 in women’s.

Preparation for shows is as elaborate as the shows themselves. Tom shaves his face and body from the bottom of his pecs up: chest, armpits, back, neck and partially, his eyebrows.

“Just so they’re not so big,” he says. Next, he applies a putty to further de-emphasize his brows, puts on a powder, a foundation and begins to paint.

Each queen has a distinct character and look. Katrina is known, Tom says, for her highly arched eyebrows.

“I like traditional drag; I’ll never fool anyone that I’m actually a woman,” he says, shrugging his unwomanly broad shoulders. As a final touch, a pair of balloons with Mickey Mouse’s blandly smiling face, filled with silicone gel, are inserted into his bra or duct taped to his chest. It’s all topped off with a strawberry-blond wig that’s curled and piled into a beehive even Donna Reed would envy. Four hours after beginning the process, Katrina Slide has entered the room. But the
costume is only half of the show. Following the usual stares, one man tried to provoke a fight. The police were summoned and the altercation never took place. "I'm much more careful now," Tom

"I don't get off wearing women's clothes," he says, separating himself from transvestites and transexuals. His cool green eyes look out from under carefully shaved eyebrows, as crisp and straight as freshly painted lines on a road.

self at Rumors as the evening's emcee. Dressed in a short, bod-hugging red-ruffled dress and black waistcoat, the night took on a surreal aura as a host of he's, she's and in-between's lip-synched overly-bassed pop-tunes on the smoky dance floor. Katrina performed a leggy but regal version of Peggy Lee's bizarre, "Is That All There Is?"

"Are you in the Army?" Katrina gibed a GQ-ish young man, a jangle of dog tags hanging from his neck. "Oh, just pretending," she said dejectedly, the pawn of yet another fashionable paper doll.

Katrina proved her mettle with glib ad-libs and enough raunchy repartee to illustrate that despite her reticence for courtly protocol, she was justly voted Emperor.

Eric the bartender, says drag queens are an accepted and generally well-liked part of the bar scene, although bar regulars occasionally lament yet another drag show.

Tom's three roommates, all heterosexual men, react to his "hobby" with an indifference bordering on boredom. But how do unknowing visitors react to the decoupage of Tom in drag pasted to the fridge?

"If they're concerned then they're not really the kind of people I'd want around," says Tom's roommate Brian steadfastly. As if proof of that, Brian's friend Candy just had the gender discrepancy revealed to her minutes before.

"It's neat," Candy says shyly. It appears she passes Brian's test.

Others aren't so accepting of Tom's predilection. Violence is an ever-present spectre hanging over every homosexual, drag queen or not. Queens, however, are obviously more identifiable targets for the wrath of "fag-bashers."

Once, during a show at Rumors, one of Katrina's former roommates, a straight man, was struck over the head with a baseball bat while watching a performance.

Another incident occurred at a 24-hour restaurant where Tom and his friends went in full attire for a bite to eat after a show.
There he was.
The scheming, planning, hunting and waiting had paid off. I was going to meet Pete Rose.

It was August, 1987, in San Diego. Rose, one of the greatest baseball players of all time, was the manager of the Cincinnati Reds at the time. I had just graduated from high school and was on a trip to California to see the Reds, my lifelong favorite team, play in person.

Upon arriving in San Diego, the stated goal of my friend Eric and I could not have been much more clear: we would get Pete Rose’s autograph, or we would die in the attempt.

But how? By using attributes autograph seekers have been using for generations: cunning, savvy and our wits.

And by having him fall right into our laps. The WELCOME CINCINNATI REDS sign on one of the hotels we drove by didn’t hurt the process a bit.

So it was off to the Town and Country Inn at the crack of dawn the next morning, and let’s get one thing straight: you don’t really know what adrenaline is until you’ve been on an autograph stakeout.

I was in the lobby and Eric was in the parking lot. We simultaneously watched for Pete and kept an eye on each other, watching for the sign that he was coming.

You know those stories all parents have about the time their young child got hurt? The story that contains the phrase, “I turned away for just a split second when all of a sudden....”

I have sympathy for all those parents. In the hotel lobby that day, I turned away for just a split second when all of a
sudden I saw Eric getting his baseball glove signed by Pete
Rose.

There he was. I broke the 100-meter dash record out to the parking lot and extended my pen and paper to Pete, managing to form the sentence, "Will you sign this for me?"

His answer will live in infamy: "No." (Eric is kind enough to remind me of this often.)

Oh, OK. No problem, Pete, I just travelled across the continent hoping to meet you. Not a big deal. When my grandkids ask about the time their granddad met Pete Rose, I'll just tell them you said no. Don't give it a second thought.

Well, I didn't exactly say that, even though it did go through my mind. As I recall, what actually happened was that I stood pitifully, pen and paper in hand, with a lost-puppy-dog-in-the-rain look on my face.

It worked.

He finally signed for me, uttering words that resonate in my mind to this day:

"Dammit, kid, I got places to go."

Who cares if he was a jerk? He could’ve kicked my cat for all I cared. The memory of this brush with greatness was going to last a lifetime.

The autograph and the picture Eric snapped at that magic moment are framed in my room. But the emotion of that day — the excitement — was the best part. That's when I learned what some have known for a long time: autograph collecting may not be the most prevalent or glamorous of hobbies, but it can be as thrilling and rewarding as any.

For the die-hard collector, no rush is so great as receiving a celebrities autograph in person. There are few things more special than sharing a moment with somebody famous.
"It's like for that little while, they're yours," said collector Eric Moldver of Seattle. "I always think back to something great that the person did and think, 'Wow, the same person who did such-and-such is now standing next to me.' That makes it more exciting. Plus it's fun to have the stories to tell about who I've met. I always look forward to bragging about who I got."

Ah, yes. That's the common denominator. The story. There's a story behind every autographed ticket stub or 8 x 10 glossy. And collectors love telling 'em.

"I walked into Dairy Queen," recalled collector Michael James of Bellingham, "when I saw Don James (then the coach of the University of Washington football team). He was in town for some golf tournament. I hated to interrupt him while he was eating, but I did. All I had was a piece of scrap paper — he signed it. He asked how to spell my name and everything. I was afraid he'd be mad, but he seemed happy to be recognized."

Only in the autograph game could a random piece of scrap paper become a trophy that quickly. It's personal, it's unique and there's not another one exactly like it in the world.

And this autograph thing didn't turn out to be a fad. Two-thousand years later autographs are still being collected. Everybody signs. There's royalty, politicians, TV and movie stars, musicians, athletes and artists, to name but a few. And the throngs will gather everywhere: hotels, ballparks, stadiums, theaters — as long as there are famous people, there will be famous people signing autographs for an adoring public.

And an enterprising public. As with everything else in the modern era, the buying and selling of autographed memorabilia has become a multi-million dollar industry at which many dealers make a very good living.

A walk through an autograph store, even a glance at an order form, can be the proverbial eye-opening experience. Big-name stars can bring some impressive prices. The bigger the name and the higher the quality of item signed, the higher the price.

But the biggest single factor in the financial first autograph collector. Roman scholar Pliny the Elder, who died in 79 A.D., is the patriarch of the hobby. The prize of his collection was said to be a letter signed by Julius Caesar, who died 70 years before Pliny was born.
aspect of autograph dealing is the Big R — rarity. Bluntly stated, dead folks don’t sign no more. The older and more rare the signature, the higher the price.

By way of example, the most coveted of all American autographs is that of Button Gwinnett.

I said Button Gwinnett.

Gwinnett signed the Declaration of Independence and died shortly thereafter. His signature is incredibly rare and sold for $50,000 in the 1920s. A copy hasn’t come up for sale recently, but the next time one does, the price will set some sort of indoor record.

Just mention the name Button Gwinnett to veteran autograph dealers and watch them rear up as if they heard a dog whistle.

Autograph auctions are the major source of memorabilia to dealers. The auctions are guided by lists of appraisals of the items on hand, as well as any number of publications dedicated all, or in part, to autograph prices.

But to the wide-eyed kid staking out a hotel for his hero, that doesn’t really matter. It’s the thrill of the hunt, the excitement of the chase, and the satisfaction of a job well done.

That’s the important part.

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**Only the good die young**

Much like the artist who isn’t appreciated until after his death, the same formula holds for the price of autographs. Peruse an autograph price guide and the highest values are inevitably attached to those celebrities who died young.

Whereas an autographed 8 x 10 photo of Chevy Chase goes for about $6, his old Saturday Night Live running mate John Belushi, who died of a drug overdose in 1981, is listed at $250. James Dean, who starred in three movies before dying in a car crash at age 24 brings $325.


Even Sharon Tate, a less than spectacular actress who was murdered by members of the Manson family, is listed at $250.

Of course the level of fame also plays a role in prices. A very-much-alive Paul McCartney is listed at $300, whereas the long gone Humphrey Bogart has peaked out at $225.

The same “dying young” motif holds true for presidential autographs as well. An autographed photo of Abraham Lincoln is the most expensive at $8000. The second most costly president is not someone from the 19th century, but John Kennedy, the only other President in the “four-figure” club, listed at $1200.

-M.S.
Vinni D. Viking’s Politically Correct Christmas Holiday Adventure
(An unoffensive story for easy readers and other grad students)

'Twas the day after Thanksgiving, and while out biking, not a creature was smiling, except Vinni D. Viking. "'Tis the first day of shopping," Vinni exclaimed with glee, "Time to buy presents for all of my loved ones, and me."

Y'see, Vinni believed in self-love, the strongest love of all. Anne Landers said love yourself and you will never fall. So away to Bellis Fair, Vinni flew like a white buffalo rabbit, credit cards in hand, perpetuating a bad habit.

"I'll get a dolly for S--- Pat and a cap gun for D--- Bobbi, and some Depends for grandma, so she can hang out in the lobby."

But at the mall entrance, Vinni met Jerri, a poverty stricken Santa, who was anything but merry.

"They canned my ass," Jerri said with some burps.

"If I could stand up, I'd go kill those twerps."

"Well, I'm here to shop, for some gifts and a tree,"
said Vinni politely, "Now please don't hurt me."

Into the mall, Vinni went with a dash, but the credit cards were maxed, it was time for some cash. Vinni got some fur coats, and a belt made of leather.

"These sure do look nice, but suck in bad weather."

But then came the protesters, with red paint and signs.

"Animals have rights," they shouted and whined.

And so Vinni fled, to the local tree lot, owned by a guy named Ray "Chops-A-Lot."

"I like that one," said Vinni. "It sure does look pretty."

"Sure thing," said Ray. "That'll be two-fiddy."

Atop Vinni's Buick, Ray strapped the flocked tree.

"This car may blow smoke, but that's alright by me."

Vinni drove into night, with a thick cloud in tow.

"My headlights are out, but at least there's no snow."

At home Vinni pounded some eggnog with brandy, and grabbed some fresh condoms for his first date with Sandy.

"I sure love the holidays," said Vinni with a smile.

"I think I'll sit here and smoke for a while."
NORTHERN HEADLIGHTS

"...There's a land. Have you seen it? It's the cussedest land that I know. From the big, dizzy mountains that screen it. To the deep deathlike valleys below. Some say God was tired when He made it; some say it's a fine land to shun. Maybe; but there's some as would trade it for no land on earth — and I'm one . . .

"...There's a land where the mountains are nameless, and the rivers all run God knows where; there are lives that are erring and aimless, and deaths that just hang by a hair; there are hardships that nobody reckons; there are valleys unpeopled and still; there's a land — oh, it beckons and beckons, and I want to go back — and I will . . ."

"Spell of the Yukon"
by Robert W. Service
Holland America/Westours is one of the tour companies that recruits for drivers at Western. (above) One of the new motorcoaches that operates between Fairbanks and the Yukon Territory.

Story by Scott Tompkins

Robert W. Service's poem "Spell of the Yukon" tells the tale of a man captured by the spell of the north land. During the years many Western students have been lured away by that same spell.

Each spring, tour operators, such as Holland America/Westours and Princess Tours, recruit and train students to work as drivers in Alaska and the Yukon.

"It was great," said Scott Friesen, a senior studying graphic art. "There were times up there I couldn't believe I was getting paid. By far it was the best summer job I've ever had."

Jason Kehm, a senior majoring in English, and Friesen shared their summer experience working as drivers for Westours with much enthusiasm.

Kehm and Friesen requested and were given assignments in Anchorage. Both drove tours to Portage Glacier, Columbia Glacier, Valdez, Denali, Fairbanks and city-tours of Anchorage.

"I chose Anchorage because I had heard there was a good variety of different tours to do," Kehm said. "Anchorage, being a large city, there were lots of other things to do as well on our free time."

Friesen and Kehm rented a one-bedroom apartment with another driver, paying a combined $495 a month. Kehm said that as the summer progressed and the three drivers got to be out on the road more often, it was rare that they would all end up at the apartment at the same time.

Kehm and Friesen became good friends over the summer, but the two did not know each other at Western. Both said they missed their girlfriends while in Alaska.

"It was tough being apart," Kehm remarked about the long-distance relationship. "But we wrote a lot of letters and made a lot of phone calls."

"It sucked," Friesen said. "It was the hardest part of the job, being away from my family and girlfriend."

Kehm and Friesen were recruited by Westours through on-campus advertising. However, both said they had first heard about driving motorcoach in Alaska from friends who had talked about their driving experiences with a lot of excitement.

Kehm said previous bad summer-job experiences and the chance to get away from Washington also influenced his decision to apply for work in Alaska.

In past years, Princess Tours and Westours have recruited drivers from Western, University of Washington, Pacific Lutheran University and the University of Puget Sound to work from mid-May to mid-September.

Westours runs the land-tour operations in Alaska for Holland America Cruise lines.
Princess Tours is likewise the land operator for Princess Cruises (The Love Boat).

Westours placed an ad in The Western Front looking for driver applicants in January. Kehm and Friesen responded by attending an informational meeting, filling out an application and being interviewed.

"I knew before I even got an application that this is what I was going to do for the summer," Kehm said. "I like being around people, being able to make people laugh, and to talk about interesting things. I also wanted a job that had more meaning and some responsibility to it."

Friesen said the appeal of traveling in Alaska and the money were important factors for him in applying for the job.

Kehm said he brought home about $3,500 to help pay for school.

Friesen said he saved an estimated $4,000.

First-year drivers typically make $7 an hour plus overtime and tips. Long-time drivers say the real money to be made is in the tips. On some of the longer highway runs a driver can make $300 to $400 dollars in tips during a two- or three-day trip.

Kehm and Friesen had to learn how to handle the 40-foot-long motorcoaches. Training programs are typically six to 10 weeks long and require upward of 10 hours per week.

"I was really impressed with the training program we had," Friesen remarked. "Experienced drivers trained us. They trained us not only on driving skills, but also on how to handle the passengers. They were familiar with all aspects of the job."

Kehm and Friesen both expressed that their first time behind the wheel was nerve-racking.

"I was very nervous about it, which is funny now, looking back," Friesen laughed. "I remember looking into the (rear view) mirror the first time and seeing how far back the rear-end was."

"Driving those things, at first you think you'll never be able to do it, let alone talk to the passengers at the same time," Kehm said.

Kehm commented that a lot of people dropped out of the training early on because of the heavy time commitment, failed drug tests, poor driving records and other schedule conflicts.

Federal transportation laws require that all commercial drivers undergo drug testing. The tour companies perform tests on all new drivers and randomly test throughout the summer.

Kehm and Friesen said the drug testing didn't bother them. "When you look at the job, the first aspect is safety for your passengers and those driving around you," Friesen said. "Then you have to think about entertaining your people, and all the paperwork. It was a little overwhelming at first."

Nancy Vandergau, manager of motorcoach operations in Anchorage for Princess Tours, is responsible for training new drivers. Vandergau graduated from Western in 1990 with a degree in elementary education.

She said the training for drivers has been improved over the years, especially with the recent federal requirement that all drivers obtain a Commercial Drivers License.

"We really try to teach drivers how a motorcoach works," Vandergau said in a telephone interview. "Not only what Princess requires but also what they need to conform to the federal regulations. Basically we try to install in them a pride - a pride for working for Princess. They are not just driving a motorcoach, but also a billboard. What they do reflects on the whole company."

Vandergau said training new drivers follows right along with her education degree. She said a lot of the same principles apply.

"It was really hard being a first-year..."
Kehm and Friesen said it was difficult for them to talk about Alaska when they themselves were new to the state. Both are from Washington.

"The only thing training didn't prepare me for was knowing Anchorage, but you really can't prepare for that," Friesen said. "The first two weeks were the most nerve-racking of the whole summer, trying to learn everything you could."

"It was kind of hard having never been there before, especially when people started asking about what it's like to live there in the winter," Kehm expressed.

Kehm said it helped to talk to fellow drivers who were from Alaska. As the summer progressed, he learned more about what to talk about with his passengers.

"Sometimes, when I didn't know the answer to a question, I would tell them I didn't know, but as the season went on I would sometimes guess," Kehm laughed. "Sometimes the whole bus would know the right answer and tell me I was wrong."

The average visitors to Alaska is typically older. The drivers have to be prepared for the older passengers.

"I really haven't ever worked extensively with older people until this summer," Friesen confessed. "A lot of them just wanted you to listen to their stories. Sometimes what they had to tell you was a lot more interesting then what I had to tell them."

"Most of them were really fun and friendly," Kehm said. "It was kind of shocking coming back to campus and seeing all these young, good-looking people."

Friesen, 21, could easily pass for 17 because of his boyish features. He wears round tortoise-shell glasses and has short hair. He said his lack of stature brought up some interesting questions from the older towns are accessible only by air.

"The attitude is so different up there," Friesen said. "They are more laid back and appreciative of their surroundings. Above all, it's just flat out gorgeous."

"One thing that really hit me the first day I was there is the Alaskan people," Kehm said thoughtfully. "I think it was something in their eyes, that they could handle anything, maybe they had."

"Even though Anchorage is the biggest city there, there is still so many hard things about it," Kehm said. "It's isolation, its cold climate and the fact that there were street people there shocked me, that they could make it through the winter."

According to the book, "Facts About Alaska," Anchorage boasts a population of 250,000, more than half of the state's 450,000 residents. Less than 1 percent of the 375 million acres in Alaska is developed.

"I felt like I was in this really rugged place," Kehm said. "On the flight up there, there were these huge glaciers coming out to the water. It was a beautiful day, and we saw the second largest peak in North America (St. Elias). It was incredible."

The flight to Anchorage was Kehm's first time on an airplane. Between the flight, starting a new job and the scenery, he said he was pretty overwhelmed.

"The flight up there was very clear," Friesen remembered. "You could see all the glaciers and the water. Everything is so dramatic. You're flying over the mountains and glaciers, and boom, all the sudden you're over this plateau and there is Anchorage."

Kehm said there were other dramatic things about Alaska that took some getting used to.

"It took me a week to get used to the daylight," Kehm laughed. "It would be 2:00 a.m., but you wouldn't know it because it looked like it was 12 noon outside."

When asked about his most memorable moment of the summer, Friesen put some thought to his answer.

"The first time I was driving a dead-herd (empty coach) on the Seward Highway, there was a bull-moose standing in a pond, and right as I drove by he picked his head up and I saw his full rack," Friesen remembered. "It was the first moose I had seen in Alaska."

Both drivers learned something about

"I was surprised that Alaska was as desolate as it is," Kehm said. "If you want to go to another city, there is usually only one road you can choose. So, many of the little towns don't even have roads going to them."

Alaska is said to be the "flyingest state" in the union with one aircraft for every five people. Many of the villages and small
Jason Kehm stands in front of the Bird House, a famous roadhouse bar on the Seward Highway.

During the summer months, the Seward Highway is known as the most dangerous highway in Alaska because of its winding, twisting corners and the high number of tourists, especially recreational vehicles, on the road.

Vandergau said the Seward Highway reminds her of Chuckanut Drive.

"It's not a bad road," she said. "It's the people driving on the road."

The Seward Highway was the setting for an accident for Princess Tours.

"It obviously affected a lot of drivers," Vandergau said. "Those drivers had to drive that highway every day. It made a lot of them realize this was something that could be very dangerous. The drivers had to start thinking about what they would do. Many of them started to take risks to avoid more dangerous situations."

Vandergau said some drivers talked about having to drive on the shoulder of the road to avoid bad passing situations. She said it is company policy that motorcoaches should not purposely move to the shoulder to aid passing vehicles. This is because the shoulders on many roads in Alaska are soft and could put the motorcoaches in dangerous positions.

Despite the accidents, Kehm and Friesen said they will consider returning to Anchorage to drive a second summer. Their reasons were similar.

"I would do it again in a second," Friesen declared. "The reason is because of the working environment. The company treated us fairly, the opportunity to travel, the money, the camaraderie with other drivers, the incredible scenery and the fun of showing people new things makes it a great job."

"You're pretty much on your own. No one is looking over your shoulder," Kehm remarked. "The scenery is like nothing I had ever seen before. It was exciting in the sense that you might be dispatched to do something different with no advanced warning."

Kehm said the excitement of knowing that at any moment a moose could run across the road or you might spot beluga whales, combined with the responsibility of caring for 40 people were all important aspects of the job.

"It's hilarious, when you're in that uniform in front of a bus load of people and you clear your throat, they all look and listen to you," Friesen said. "Your bus is your kingdom."

"There is a very good chance I will go back next summer," Kehm said. "I made pretty good money, I had lots of fun and after two seasons, you get a free cruise."

A popular stop is under the Alaskan Pipeline. The motorcoach is stopped in the only place where vehicles can cross under the pipeline on the Dalton Highway.
Yeast of Eden: A tale of friends, beer and roadkill.

Story by Stephanie Lemmel

Much to my surprise, brewing beer is not as technical as I once thought it to be. My neighbors Chris and Eric make brewing beer sound as easy as cracking open a cold one after work.

My neighbors' house has taken on elements of their hobby. As I walked into their house the malodorous stench of beer overwhelmed me. The smell reminded me of a warm Reinlander left in the dry heat of the summer sun. Yeast, wheat and malt permeated every inch of the house.

Posters of Budweiser girls along with a Picasso or two covered the walls. They have converted a brown tweed couch into a bar. The couch is placed on its back with board across the lap as a counter. On each side of the board there is a hole, 3-inches in diameter, where they have placed tiki torches, almost creating a shrine. Behind the bar is a swivel bar stool that is surrounded by empty bottles. The bottles are placed in pyramid form displaying their collection off all the different types of beer they have tasted. The bottles ranged from Budweiser to Buzzard Breath Ale. It appears to be a trophy case of bottles.

Boxes of empty, unlabeled bottles lay scattered on the kitchen floor. A large bucket fills up the sink and the counters are covered with a seasoned patina of yeast, malt, and chocolate. Occupying a position of respect on the glass kitchen table lies "The New Complete Joy of Home Brewing Beer," also known as "the home brewer's bible", by Charles Papazian.

Not that they ever use any recipes. "We use whatever inspires us at the time," Chris said as he wipes the counter to clean a space to bottle the beer. They also purchased a bottle capper. The remainder of the money was spent on the ingredients and their brewers bible. They average 48 bottles beer per batch that costs about $20 for ingredients. There is no cost in beer bottles because they recycle them each batch. Eric and Chris like to think of themselves as environmentally conscious brewers.

"We used to soak the bottles in the bathtub to get the labels off until I ran into the problem of waking up late in the morning," Eric said. "I wanted to take a shower but all of the bottles were in the tub and I didn't have time to take them out. So there I was standing in the shower with beer bottles floating around my ankles and labels getting stuck between my toes."

They now have a sufficient quantity of unlabeled bottles, so sharing the shower is no longer an issue.

Chris places a large filter over the bucket and empties the carboy (a big, five-gallon glass bottle) of beer through the filter, removing the sediment. He then lifts the bucket on to the stove. Chris straddles a bar stool as he faces the stove. Eric stands to the side with his bottle capper. Chris fills the unlabeled beer bottles from the spigot of the bucket.

"You know, aim high. We strive to put a little red, white and blue in every batch."

-Chris

"Yeah, Eric chimes in as he stands watching Chris clean. "We will use anything from chocolate to roadkill. It seems the more shit you add to it the better it gets."

Chris and Eric spent $70 on equipment needed to brew their own beer. They bought a large plastic bucket with a spigot to bottle the beer. "Yeah, we will use anything from chocolate to roadkill. It seems the more shit you add, the better it gets."

-Eric

"It's like working in the military. It's a team effort. You know, aim high. We strive to put a little red, white and blue in every batch."

-Chris

"Chris, we're gonna have a problem with brewing our beer this winter," Eric said as he places a cap onto the beer bottle and clamps it down with the capper.

"We are?" Chris said as he stops to look at Eric.
“You know how we are supposed to keep the beer set 69 degrees during the fermentation stage for two weeks—well, how can we if the house is only 42 degrees?”

“I guess we’re gonna have to specialize in cold-filtered beer during the winter then,” Eric remarks, laughing as he continues to pour another bottle of beer.

As they reached the end of the five gallon bucket, Eric tilts it toward Chris to help pour the last bit of beer out.

“Eric you are gyrating to much, I can’t get it in,” Chris says with a frustrated look on his face as he sways the bottle back and forth to line up with the spigot as the precious fluid splashes on the floor.

“It’s like working in the military. It’s a team effort. You know, aim high. We strive to put a little red, white and blue in every batch we make,” Chris chuckles after pouring the last bottle.

Eric hands me an old Heineken bottle, sans label, that had a sample of their Iron Scrotum Porter. I find myself holding the bottle up towards the light to see what the hell was in it. I feel my forehead tighten as I squint my eyes to get a better look. As thoughts scattered through my mind, I think about the particles floating in my beer.

“Could those particles be residue from Eric’s shower?” I muse.

What ever is in the old bottle doesn’t look like beer to me. As a matter of fact it reminds me of the swamp water I had collected for my high school biology class, and as I slowly bring the vessel to my lips I want to regress to my childhood and plug my nose, as if I am about to eat liver.

Eric rests his hand on my shoulder and assures me that the particle floating in the beer is merely a naturally occurring sediment that didn’t get filtered out. I have stalled long enough; it is time for the taste test.

I lift the bottle to my lips. Chris and Eric look at me with wide, pensive eyes. I tilt the bottle back and imbibe my first sip of the frosty libation.

My taste buds explode as I bathe in the flavor. The beer was a full bodied phenomena with a life of its own. It had a slight hint of chocolate, just enough to keep my taste buds wet until the next sip. I was brave enough, my second sip, to swish the beer around in my mouth as I would a fine wine at a restaurant to make sure the year and bottle was good. The delicate blend of hops, yeast and barley sing through to accent the hint of chocolate.

Although I am not a connoisseur at heart, I have had my share of beers at the local taverns and I am a living witness that the Iron Scrotum Porter ranks with the best of them.

As long as Chris and Eric brew beer I will taste test. They said it best when they said “With beer comes friends.”

**Head Check: What are you drinking?**

* A few things to consider before you unceremoniously quaff your next beer.

**Wheat Beer:** There are two traditional styles of wheat beer; weissbier and weizenbier. The former is generally acidic and somewhat sour. Weizens are 30%-70% wheat malts and are thus more subtle and fruity. The most common weizen is the unfiltered, or hefeweizen, which is generally served with lemon.

**Pale Ale/Bitter:** This group includes the majority of microbrewed beer, and includes beer styles called gold, blond and amber. They are also classified as ordinary, best and strong bitter according to strength and hopiness. Color and bitterness are not usually related, but stronger varieties are generally darker and sweetness is offset by a liberal dose of hops.

**Stout:** Stouts are heavy with roasted barley, black and chocolate malts, which accounts for stout’s coffee color. Some consider stout more a food than a beer.

**Bock:** A strong beer that originated in Einbeck, Germany. "Bock" is German for "goat" and has been associated with the kick of this variety. Bock is traditionally strong and malty, and can vary in color from pale to dark.

**Malt Liquor:** Malt liquor is an inexpensive, liquor made predominantly from malts (hence the name "malt liquor") which give this drink an alcohol content as high as 6.8% in some domestic brands. This variety of beer is generally sold in 40-ounce bottles.

**Cheap beer:** Cheap beer is, by definition, beer that is cheap, generally acknowledged to be devoid of flavor, but what the hell—it’s only eight bucks a case!
Phreaking Havoc
Hacker Dabbles in Data Raping

Story by Danette Reeff
Illustrations by Jean Kimmich

Editor’s note: The subject’s name has been changed in order to protect his identity.

Dappled rays filter through the blinds revealing a single tendril of smoke. It snakes slowly from the long-forgotten cigarette resting in the ashtray among the clutter on the desk.

Heavy metal blasts from the stereo. Shoulders hunched, the hacker sits transfixed in front of the ancient Apple Ile computer as long, slim fingers work the keys with the speed and skill of a Jimi Hendrix guitar solo.

One final punch of a button and the monitor begins to seethe with glowing green characters speeding across the screen.

"I'm in!" he boasts with a faint southern drawl and a satisfied smirk. "That's what it's all about, doing something that everyone says you can't."

As the 26-year-old hacker “DataRapist” unfolds his slim, 6-foot-4-inch frame from behind the computer, he gives a self-satisfied stretch and runs a hand through long, sun-bleached, blond hair. Devilish-blue eyes dance with mischief as the smirk turns into a full-blown, little-kid, look-what-I-just-did smile.

His archaic Apple computer is a deception. On a bookshelf, subtly lying between hacker magazines, FCC frequency code catalogs and Southern Bell paraphernalia is the tool of the trade — a US Robotics 9600-baud modem. The modem takes DataRapist anywhere he has the skill to go.

"It’s like the old street rods — a 1930 Ford coupe with a Porsche engine," DataRapist said.

From the sun-kissed skin to the firm jaw and full lips, this is not your typical computer nerd. He looks more Seattle music scene than Texas good-old-boy.

In June 1993, DataRapist moved to

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the Northwest from his adopted home town, Arlington, Texas, changed his hacker handle and "retired" from the business after 16 years.

"The Northwest is really one of the most beautiful places in the U.S., but I'm not really keen on the people yet. Most of them are pretty nice, but like the weather, it takes a while for them to warm up to you," Data Rapist said.

After four months, he's still adjusting from a serious bout of culture shock — he laments the lack of good Tex-Mex food in the Northwest.

"I seem to judge a group people by their food. It seems like most of it (in the Northwest) is pretty bland and basic," Data Rapist said.

He is perplexed by oddities such as Seattle's obsession with espresso and physical fitness — understandable from a man whose favorite breakfast consists of a cup of joe, a smoke and six donuts, three jelly-filled, three glazed.

"Everyone's so healthy here," he said. "And what is it with the socks and sandals?"

***

It all began in September of 1977 in a small, rural Midwest farming community when his parents bought him a computer for his 10th birthday. He didn't know it yet, but he had just discovered a fantasy world — a world which would consume him for the next 16 years.

Eventually, computer networks became his main source of socialization and entertainment. He logged on to systems throughout the country where he spent most of his time "talking" and sharing information with others.

During the years, Data Rapist's favorite target has been telephone companies. Within the hacking realm, specialties exist. Data Rapist is a "phone phreak," those who specialize in manipulating telephone companies to achieve his or her own goals — goals as simple as free phone calls and services or as complex as shutting down service of an entire area code in New York City.

Hackers and phone phreaks think of information as a commodity. He who holds the most valuable information is the one in control.

"I guess in some way I'm into the power of it all," Data Rapist said. "Since I am not fortunate enough to be rich, it seems the only other way to have some type of clout in the world is to have information. Information is power, even more so than money."


The simplest kind of phone phreaking is to steal telephone access codes. The easiest way to steal a code is "shoulder surfing," which is simply looking over someone's shoulder at a pay phone.

As technology advanced, it became possible to program computers to try random code numbers over the telephone until one of them worked. This type of computerized code theft was commonly used until the late 1980s when improved security measures enabled authorities to trace suspicious dialing.

Another method of getting information is to manipulate people into telling what they know, or "social engineering."

"Hi, this is GTE maintenance ... and I need a connection to a ..." Data Rapist said in a confident, official voice into the phone. After rattling off a few lines of phone company jargon, the connection was made — free of charge.

The trick is to sound like an authority and manipulate people into giving confidential information. Sometimes it's necessary to be direct and demanding, other times, subtle and amiable, or maybe just one of the good old boys. People are afraid to look stupid so they pretend to know what's going on.

If this method of gathering information doesn't work, "Dumpster diving" is another option. Dumpster diving is sifting through corporate trash for passwords, account numbers, social security numbers, etc.

**PHONE PHREAK: A HACKER WHO MANIPULATES PHONE COMPANIES.**

**SHOULDER SURFING: STEALING A CALLING CARD NUMBER BY LOOKING OVER A PERSON'S SHOULD AT A PAY PHONE.**

**SOCIAL ENGINEERING: MANIPULATING PEOPLE INTO TELLING YOU WHAT THEY KNOW. PHONE PHREAKS USE THIS TECHNIQUE WHEN THEY MASQUERADE AS TELEPHONE COMPANY EMPLOYEES IN ORDER TO GAIN CONFIDENTIAL CODES OR INFORMATION.**

**DUMPSTER DIVING: SEARCHING THROUGH CORPORATE TRASH FOR PASSWORDS, ACCOUNT NUMBERS, SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS, ETC.**

**BLUE BOX: BEFORE THE MODEM, PHREAKS USED THIS TO TAMPER WITH TELEPHONE COMPANY SWITCHING SYSTEMS AND GAIN FREE ACCESS TO LONG-DISTANCE LINES.**

_DATA FROM "THE HACKER CRACKDOWN" BY BRUCE STERLING_
the living room.

Some of his favorite and funniest tapes are from conversations that took place as long ago as 1984. When the statute of limitations runs out in 1994, he and his cohorts plan to put the tapes together in CD form. Some are of 911 phone calls, others of private conversations, still others of simple juvenile harassment.

“One (911 tape) is about a guy who hits a deer in the road and thinks its dead so he puts it in his car. Then it wakes up and bites him in the back of the neck,” Data Rapist said. “Another is from a mother calling about her little boy who has his penis stuck in a plastic toy elephant.”

Another gadget he made allows him to make free phone calls from pay phones. The device is simply held to the mouth piece of the phone and simulates the sound of money being inserted.

Before the advent of the modem, phone phreaks used something called the “blue box” which was a telecommunications hardware gadget used to gain free access to long-distance lines by manipulating telephone company switching systems. Sterling describes the attitudes of the phreaks:

“For many, in the early days of phreaking, blue-boxing was scarcely perceived as ‘theft,’ but rather as a fun (if sneaky) way to use excess phone capacity harmlessly.”

“After all, the long-distance lines were just sitting there ... Whom did it hurt, really? If you’re not damaging the system, and you’re not using up any tangible resource, and if nobody finds out what you did, then what real harm have you done? What exactly have you ‘stolen,’ anyway? If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, how much is the noise worth?”

Blue boxing led to some serious questions about First Amendment rights. In June 1972, a radical California-based publication called Ramparts printed an article on how to build your own box. Authorities seized issues from newstands and the magazine went out of business. At the time, no serious objections were raised about free speech because the general public still considered the phone company sacred.

In 1990, Data Rapist worked as a writer for the electronic publication Phrack, an anti-establishment, hacker/phreak magazine that published views about technology, philosophy and politics.

An excerpt from “The Conscience of a Hacker” by “The Mentor” as published in Phrack, is perhaps the best way to understand the cynical attitudes of the publication:

“I know everyone here ... even if I’ve never met them, never

Hacker Yak

Hackers: The Acceptable Term for Computer Enthusiasts

Crackers: Bad hackers who invade other computers or the telephone system.

Virtual Reality: An Interactive Technology That Creates the Illusion of Being Immersed in an Artificial World. The user generally dons a computerized gloved and a head-mounted display equipped with a TV screen for each eye.

Virtual Communities: Collections of like-minded people who meet on-line and share ideas. The community is fragmented into groups from Deadheads to white supremacists.

Teledildonics: Sexual Virtual Reality.

Internet: The successor of an experimental network built by the U.S. Defense Department in the 1960s. The internet links at least 3 million computers, many of them university and research related. Users can connect to the system by phone to share information or tap into data banks.

Information-surfers: People who browse through computer data bases for fun.

Computer Virus: The Cybernetic Analog of AIDS. These self-replicating programs infect computers and can destroy data.

The Well: The Northern California-based Whole Earth "Lectronic Link has a small subscriber network of 7,000, but its members include artists, activists and journalists.

Flame: Sociologists note that without visual cues, communicators on-line tend to flame or state their views more heatedly than they would face-to-face.

Datacops: Any department or agency in charge of protecting data security. For example, The U.S. Secret Service 1990 Operation Sundevil launched constitutionally questionable raids on computer hackers and outraged many hackers.

Artificial Life: Inspired by computer viruses, scientists are wondering how sophisticated a computer program would have to be before it could be considered "alive." One computer company, Maxis, has marketed a line of simulated animals, ant colonies, and a plant-like organism.

Data from Time Magazine, Feb, 8, 1993
talked to them, may never hear from them again ... I know you all.

"This is our world now ... the world of the electron and the switch, the beauty of the baud. We make use of a service already existing without paying for what could be dirt-cheap if it wasn't run by profiteering gluttons, and you call us criminals.

"We explore ... and you call us criminals. We seek after knowledge ... and you call us criminals. We exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias ... and you call us criminals. You build atomic bombs, you wage wars, you murder, cheat and lie to us and try to make us believe that it's for our own good, yet we're the criminals. Yes I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of judging people by what they say and think, not what they look like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will never forgive me for."

In 1990, Phrack editor-in-chief, Craig Neidorf, was indicted for publishing a private telephone company document about emergency 911 services. Suddenly, the free flow of information that hackers and phreaks hold dear was threatened. Although charges were eventually dropped against Neidorf, he was left with legal bills well over $100,000. Lotus 1-2-3 developer Mitch Kapor came to his aid with a $50,000 check.

In the June 1990 issue of Newsweek, attorney Terry Gross warned of the case's threat to free speech and compared it to the Washington Post's printing of the Pentagon Papers: "It's very, very clear First Amendment implications should threaten all traditional media."

Phrack was temporarily silenced until Data Rapist re-established the publication in 1991. He acted as editor-in-chief until his recent move.

Although today condemned by authorities and much of the public for his actions, Data Rapist's views about free press echo those expressed in poet John Milton's "Areopagitica" in 1644. Milton basically said the only way to determine the truth is to test it against other ideas. If one is rational and has access to knowledge, one will find truth. Computer networks could be viewed as the 1990's version of access to information or truth.

"The more diverse sources of information we can all access, the better off society will become," Data Rapist said. "If we look at the past, we can see how accuracy in books was improved drastically by the creation of the printing press." Data Rapist said. "The scribes of kings and church figures were no longer relied upon as authorities of various subject matter. Information was made cheap and easily possessed by the common man. Therefore, if someone disagreed with some book that was printed, he and his guild could write their version of what they found to be true. This promoted truth, accuracy, a deluge of human interaction and free thought."

Cynicism and distrust of bureaucratic organizations motivate his focus on phone companies, big business and the government.

"What scares me are the kinds of people who have access to the most personal parts of our lives compiled into data bases (such as Information America) that are for sale to anyone who wants to pay the money or has the 'power' to access it." Data Rapist said. "I am motivated by mere curiosity," he said. "These days I hardly call myself a hacker. I just want to stay technologically literate."

A weary, pained expression settles across his face when asked about the future. His years in cyberspace have left him cynical and without plans for the future.

While he is happy with his "real" job, he's not quite sure what direction he is headed. He doesn't want to live to be old and has no plans to buy a home. A wife? Well, maybe, but an emphatic no to children.

"I'm fucked up so my kids would be f**ked up too." Data Rapist said. "I don't want to bring kids into this kind of world."

But most striking is Data Rapist's lack of remorse for his illegal activities.

"Guilty ... Ha! Never. F**k the phone company. I don't run up big phone bills on little old ladies' phone bills and stuff. I take it out on the system itself. Aside from that, I don't destroy anything. I just used the tools that are there to my advantage," Data Rapist said. "I remember when hacking wasn't even illegal. Laws are just intangible things that are imposed upon us, to keep the lazy-minded in line."