Life in the Slow Lane

Night Workers
Steve Alvord, post-NFL
Wicca

Inside Idaho's Aryan Nation

Up Close with Sea Life at the Vancouver Aquarium
Letter from the editor

Hello! Thanks for reading our magazine. We hope you like it.

I want to acknowledge all the hard-working writers whose work we couldn't include in this issue. Once again we just didn't have enough room for everyone.

I especially want to thank Scott Tompkins. He wrote a dynamite story on the future Amtrak line from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Portland, Ore., only to have it axed because a similar story ran in Klipsun a year ago.

The editors and I talked about it. We told him, "Well, we might run it. But ... we only have one page. Could you shorten it?" And he did — in fact, he cut over half of it. But in the end we decided running the shortened version, simply to fill space, would do both Scott and the story an injustice. Like the other writers we couldn't publish, Scott did a lot of work for little return, and we appreciate it. Anyway, you'll surely see his piece published elsewhere.

We have a lot of interesting articles for you in this issue. One of my favorites is Michele Thielke's piece on the Whatcom Hills Waldorf School. I believe educating a child is society's most important undertaking. I was lucky enough to attend a small, personal grade school. Sadly, many kids don't get the kind of caring attention available at schools like Waldorf. It makes one wonder how many other things our society has backwards.

Charity Proctor
Editor

Cover photo of Robert Ashworth by Steve Dunkelberger.
Back cover photo by Steve Dunkelberger.

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KLIPSUN MAGAZINE College Hall 137 WWU Bellingham, WA 98225
(206) 650-3737
4 Graveyard Shifts
   by Nicci Noteboom

7 Playin' Ball with the Big Boys
   by Mark Scholten

10 Shifting to a Lower Gear
   by Dieter Bohrmann

12 Klipsun's Evil List

13 Real World, Real Trouble: You've Got a Degree ... So What?
   by Chris Moore

16 The Long Road Home
   by Jennifer Tipps

18 Inside Aryan Nation
   by Matthew W. Campbell

20 Local Waldorf School Offers Different Approach to Teaching
   by Michele Thielke

23 Peter, Paul, and Larry: Multiple Personalities
   by Russ Kasselman

26 There's Something Awfully Fishy Going On
   by Chris von Seggern

29 Modern Wicca in Bellingham
   by Amy Wold
Is nighttime the right time for making money?

By Nicci Noteboom
Photographs by Matt Hulbert

When most of us think about night jobs, visions of prostitutes, cops, drug dealers and taxi drivers dance in our heads.

In reality, however, many students work the grueling hours between dusk and dawn to make ends meet.

The night owls who work into the wee hours of the morning have experiences as varied as the jobs they perform, ranging from hell to heaven and all of purgatory in between.

The Beatles "Little Help from My Friends" bounces off the walls as Rusty Crawford serves a foam-topped pounder of beer to a thirsty patron of Grandstand's Food and Beer Emporium.

Crawford has worked at Grandstand's (formerly Jimbo's) for more than two years and has nothing but positive things to say about working 5 p.m. to 2 or 4 a.m. Tuesday through Friday.

"I'm kind of a night owl anyway," says Crawford as he fills another glass of beer to a thirsty patron of Grandstand's Food and Beer Emporium.

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of passing cars. The lobby smells of cleaning solutions and chlorine coming from the nearby jacuzzi.

At work, Knight balances and closes out the books for the day, checks in new guests and tends to other miscellaneous tasks, such as keeping the coffee pot full. "It's a real lonely job, and sometimes it can be kind of creepy at night," Knight said.

Knight began this job only a few months ago. He intended to work and go to school. "The environment at night wasn't what I thought it would be," he said. "I had a really hard time adjusting. My whole body was thrown out of whack."

His plan backfired. He stopped going to school after winter quarter but plans to return in the fall.

"I think if I stay with it longer and get better adjusted I'll be able to go to school and work too," Knight said.

Along with academic life, Knight's social life also has fallen prey to his job. Knight only has Thursdays and Fridays off.

"My social life is completely gone. I haven't been able to do anything fun," he said. "I go out one night a week to keep from going insane."

During a typical day Knight will come home from work between 7:30 and 8 a.m. and go to sleep. He blocked out his windows with dark paper so the light of day won't keep him awake.

Knight gets up at 3 p.m. and does errands for the day. He said most of his friends are either working, in school or studying during his free time between sleep and work at 11 p.m. So, he pretty much spends his free time on his own.

He said the creepiest hours are between 2 and 4 a.m., when things are the quietest. Knight said these hours are when bizarre things tend to happen. The man who worked Knight's shift before he did was robbed once.

"You always have to keep your eyes peeled," he said.

Though Knight's never been robbed, at times he has had drunks and homeless people come in asking for money.

"Basically, I give them a warm cup of coffee, talk to them for a while and send them on their way," Knight said.

Knight also keeps himself occupied by watching TV. Unfortunately, he's found late night TV was kinda strange."

The work situations of Knight and Crawford show different poles of experience one can have when working odd hours. More often than not, slaving away bizarre hours falls somewhere in between the two extremes, as is the case with Elizabeth Harrison.

Harrison works for the Bellingham Police Department's campus branch. Harrison's voice takes on a depressed and frustrated lilt as she talks about what her job was like winter quarter when she worked the hours of 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. unlocking doors to campus academic buildings.

"When it snowed, it was hell," she said. "Oh ... my ... God ... I would have to get out of bed, and it would be so
warm in my room, and I would have to go out in the snow and work for four hours.”

When Harrison talks about the pride she takes in working for the police, though, her voice takes on a positive tone.

“I like the people I work with a lot, and the experience is really cool,” she said. “It’s the kind of job where you’re very secure. I could work there for all my four years at Western if I want to.”

Harrison was discouraged from taking the job by quite a few people because they thought the work situation and hours were inappropriate for a woman.

“My friends got in a huge argument one night about me, saying that I shouldn’t work there alone and that I shouldn’t have those hours by myself and that I wasn’t capable of doing the job,” Harrison said.

Harrison overcame the criticism, did the job without a single negative incident and managed to pull a 3.2 grade point average as well.

Nonetheless, Harrison switched to an early evening shift during spring quarter because she couldn’t take the fatigue and sleeping problems her job was causing.

She said she had no real sleep schedule and would sleep for short periods, three or four times a day. She would fall asleep in class or would lose concentration. Whenever she went out, she would become so tired she would have to go home within an hour, even if she was doing something as relaxing as walking around the mall.

“Winter quarter was kind of like a haze—I don’t really remember anything,” Harrison said. “The only people I ever did anything with were a friend and my boyfriend.”

Obviously each person’s experience is unique, but the one common denominator among these workers is money. Crawford, Knight and Harrison all took their jobs for financial reasons.

Knight took his job to pay off bills. Crawford took his for the same reason, but he also works because he’s not eligible for financial aid. The bartending job was perfect because he could get enough hours to pay for school and didn’t have to worry about work conflicting with classes.

Harrison works for campus police because she lives on campus and couldn’t work off campus.

“I don’t have a car, so I needed something on campus, and this is the best-paying job on campus,” Harrison said. “You get paid 30 cents more an hour to work these shifts.”

The other thing these night owls had in common was that they were cautious about recommending night shifts to other people. Words like “organized,” “loner,” “self-confident,” “nut” and “desperate” peppered the discussions of what made the model night worker. Harrison probably summarized it best.

“It really depends on the person and how bad they need the money,” Harrison said.

Working the night shift doesn’t always mean one is employed in the world’s oldest profession, but it may mean the person is under the spell of the world’s oldest motivation: money.
Bellingham's Steve Alvord is back in town after playing in the NFL

By Mark Scholten

When the leaves change in the fall, young boys everywhere dig out the ol' football, choose up sides, and get a little neighborhood game going.

The cries go up:
"I want to be Joe Montana!"
"I get to be John Elway!"

They all dream of playing in the pros.

Bellingham native Steve Alvord lived out that dream. He played in the National Football League.

Alvord, 28, is a graduate of Bellingham High School and the University of Washington. He played all the major sports while growing up and was varsity in three of them at Bellingham High. He was on the track and field team and was the starting center for the Red Raider basketball team that took fourth place at the state tournament. But it was football where Alvord really stood out.

He started for three years on the BHS football team as an offensive and defensive lineman, earning All-Northwest League honors every year. As a senior he was named Bellingham Herald Player of the Year and Washington State Defensive Player of the Year.

The colleges, of course, came a-runnin'.

And the litany of schools Alvord lists that wanted him makes for impressive reading:

"Miami, Florida, Florida State, Oklahoma, Nebraska, UCLA, USC, Notre Dame . . ."

"I took three recruiting trips," Alvord said. "I went to Oregon, the University of Washington, and Notre Dame. I pretty much knew I was going to the University of Washington — I took the trip to Notre Dame just to go. It was impressive."

Washington got him. And Alvord makes it sound like it was a pretty easy decision.

"They're a football powerhouse and Coach (Don) James runs a good clean program — he's got a great reputation. Another good reason was that it was really close to home, so my family could come and see the games."

So how did 18-year-old Steve Alvord feel upon arriving in Seattle?

"Really intimidated," he admitted. "Going into a program and playing against 22-year-old men when I considered myself a kid — I was getting beat up pretty good. All of a sudden I was at the bottom of the totem pole again. I was just another number."

Alvord appeared in five of the Huskies' 11 games as a freshman defensive lineman in 1983, a season that culminated with an appearance in the Aloha Bowl.

"A week in Hawaii wasn't too bad. That was a good way to start off," he laughs now.

Alvord cracked the starting lineup as a sophomore, and what a season it was. Washington lost just one regular-season game and headed to the Orange Bowl in Florida ranked No. 2 in the country (behind Brigham Young). Their opponent? The University of Oklahoma, led by All-American linebacker and future Seattle Seahawk Brian Bosworth.

"It was great; we knew we had a good chance to win the national championship," Alvord said. "It's such a big nationally televised game. They really took care of us down there."

The Huskies beat Oklahoma on New Year's Day, but they were still voted No. 2 in the final national poll. Despite just missing out on the national championship, Alvord still called the Orange Bowl his best memory from college football.

After being named to the honorable mention All-Pac-10 team as a sophomore, Alvord began his junior season with high hopes for both himself and the team. But his own words best summarize 1985:

"We kinda fell apart."

It was a down year for the Huskies, who ended up 7-4, which Alvord called "a good year for most any other team but a bad record for the University of Washington." Alvord himself missed a couple games because of injury, but the season ended on an up note with a victory in the Freedom Bowl over Colorado State.

Alvord was voted one of the team's six co-captains prior to his senior season. It turned out to be another down year for the team, but Steve Alvord started turning some heads.

He was named to the honorable mention All-Pac-10 team for the second time and was chosen by his teammates as the team's Most Inspirational Player.
He was at his best in two nationally-televised games, being selected the Chevrolet Player of the Game against UCLA and the Defensive Player of the Game in the final contest of his college career — a Sun Bowl loss to Alabama.

The National Football League had taken notice of our 6-foot-5, 280-pound boy from Bellingham. He received an invitation to the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis, where pro prospects worked out in front of NFL Scouts. He said it was a glorified meat market.

"The doctor from each of the 28 teams sees you. They check you over pretty well. They grab every joint: knees, elbows, shoulders — by the time the day's over, you're sore from everybody pulling on you in every direction. They really look you over and work you out to see what you've got," Alvord said.

The NFL Draft is 12 rounds, and from what he had heard, he could expect to be chosen anytime after the fifth round.

"It was a hectic day," he said of NFL Draft Day, 1987. "You're hoping to get drafted but you don't have any say over what team you go to."

After a long day of fielding phone calls from curious friends, The Big Call finally came.

"We were just about ready to sit down for dinner — it must've been 5:30 or 6:00 at night," Alvord recalls. "I was in the bathroom washing my hands when the phone rang again. I'd gotten used to hearing it. My mom answered and said it was for me. It was the general manager of the (St. Louis) Cardinals. He said, 'This is Larry Wilson with Cardinal football. We just took you in the eighth round.'"

The words every young hopeful wants to hear. With that, Steve Alvord was off to St. Louis, where he joined the rest of the draft picks and some of the Cardinal players for the team's mini-camp.

The full team convened in Illinois that summer for training camp. Alvord signed his first professional contract the first day.

"It was to get down to business in conditions that a guy from the Pacific Northwest isn't used to: 90 degrees, 95 percent humidity (Alvord's one-word description? "Hell.")"

And there was the little matter of some fierce competition for a spot on the team.

"I think we had 16 defensive linemen in camp and they were going to keep seven," Alvord said. "They drafted four of us — a second, fourth, and sixth-rounder. And I was an eighth-rounder. I was thinking to myself, ' Geez, it's gonna be awfully tough to make this team.' I didn't like my chances at all. I was really intimidated."

His chances were hindered by an injury that forced him to sit out a few days. Or so he thought.

"At the time I just figured this was my early exit. I got injured, and they're gonna tell me to get lost. But I came back feeling good and started playing better," Alvord said.

So much better that he survived the first couple roster cuts. An injury and a trade among his fellow defensive linemen improved Alvord's odds, but he was still nervous as final cut day approached.

"It came right down to the final couple days," he said. "Sunday was our last day and the coach was going to tell us (who got cut) Monday morning — so you don't want your phone to ring Monday morning."

Alvord's phone didn't ring. And he had advance notice that it wouldn't.

"I was watching the Sunday late news," he said. "The coach had given the media the list (of who had made the team) and told them not to air it until Monday morning. They aired it Sunday night. That's when I found out. I slept pretty good that night."

Years of blood, sweat, and tears, all those hours in the weight room, all the extra work had landed Steve Alvord in the NFL. Just in time for a players' strike.

Three games into Alvord's first season, the National Football League Players Association voted to go on strike in an attempt to get a collective bargaining agreement. And a certain St. Louis Cardinal rookie defensive lineman was right there walking the picket line.

"I just told myself, 'This is my rookie year, and I'm just going to stay out and go for the strike because I think it's for the best. The players are getting screwed. The owners have all the muscle — they're pulling all the strings, and I don't think it's right.' So I stood up for what I thought was right," Alvord said.

But the owners brought in non-union players to play in the now legendary "scab games." Player support of the strike eventually diminished and several crossed the picket line. Alvord didn't, but said he would if he had it to do over again.

"Nothing came out of it. They just signed the agreement last year," he said. "It was basically a waste of time on our part because we didn't prove anything. They (the owners) just proved how much more muscle they have."

When the season resumed, Alvord started to get some playing time. His highlights included tackling future Hall-of-Fame running backs Walter Payton of the Chicago Bears and Tony Dorsett of the Dallas Cowboys.

"Dallas was one of my favorite teams when I was growing up so Tony Dorsett was an idol of mine," Alvord said. "I was almost like, 'Sorry, didn't mean to tackle you.'"

So what were Alvord's impressions after his first time around the National Football League?

"It was an eye-opener," he said. "You go out there seeing all these big-name players on TV every year, and then all of a sudden you're on the field with them. You're in awe."

The Cardinals moved to Phoenix for the 1988 season. Alvord celebrated the move to Arizona by earning a spot in the team's starting lineup. He started the first 11 games, registering sacks of future All-Pro quarterbacks Mark Rypien and Jim Everett. He even got mentioned in Sports Illustrated.

But as the season wrapped up, Alvord tore cartilage in his shoulder. It was the beginning of the end of his NFL career.

After the season, Alvord received a lot of treatment on his ailing shoulder. The medication he received, a mixture of aspirin and an anti-inflammatory, burned a hole in the lining of his stomach. He was forced into the hospital for 10 days, seven of them in the intensive care unit.

"It was a real scary time in my life, sitting in that hospital bed whereas a week before I'd felt fine," Alvord said. "It was only a week before training camp."

He dropped about 20 pounds in the hospital. Meanwhile, the 1989 season progressed with Alvord on the "Physically Unable to Perform" list. He came back in November and practiced a little bit, but he was down to about 255 pounds and weak from not lifting weights. That's when he heard that the general manager wanted to see him.

"He called me in and said, 'Well Steve, we feel you're not in a position to help the team anymore, and we're going to have to let you go,'" Alvord recalled.

Alvord sounds a little bit stunned to this
day over his release.

"I had no idea it was coming. That blew
my mind — I couldn't believe they did it," he said. "Legally they can't release you
while you're still injured."

Alvord sued the Cardinals for the bal­
ance of his pay from the 1989 season. The
case was settled out of court in 1991.

He returned to the University of
Washington to finish up his degree in
political science and get healthy. While
he was there some U-Dub coaches talked
t heir Seattle Seahawks counterparts into
giving him a tryout for the 1990 season.

Alvord played well and made the
final roster. He accompanied the team to
Chicago for the season-opener. It was
there he heard that Seattle's first-round
draft choice, Cortez Kennedy, had finally
signed a contract and was set to join the
team. Kennedy's position? Defensive line.
Somebody had to go. Guess who.

"I got released Saturday night before
the game," Alvord said. "I stayed with the
team, but I couldn't be on the sidelines.
They gave me a ticket, and I went up and
watched the game in the stands. I ended
up flying home with the team I just got cut
from. It was like, 'Gee, thanks, guys.'"

The story may sound a little cruel,
but Alvord harbors no ill will toward
Seattle.

"The Seahawks are a first-class or­
ganization. I have nothing bad to say
about them. They treated me really well
and they gave me a fair shot when no
other team at the time was willing to give
me a shot."

Alvord got calls from the San Fran­
cisco 49ers and the Detroit Lions. He
worked out for both teams, but neither
signed him.

A little while later his agent called
and asked if he wanted to play in some­
th ing called the World League of American
Football.

The what league of who?

"I hadn't even heard of it," Alvord said
of the fledgling league. It would play in the
spring and consisted of teams all over the
world.

"I thought it over for a few months and
thought it sounded like a great opportunity
to see the world. I told (his agent) maybe I'll
go try it."

So it was off to Orlando, Florida, for
physicals, workouts, and a player draft.
Alvord had a definite idea where he wanted
really excited.

Alvord played two seasons with the
Barcelona Dragons. The Dragons lost in the
WLAF's championship game the first year
and were eliminated in the first round of the
playoffs the next.

"The traveling was hectic compared to
college and the NFL, but it was a great
experience," Alvord said of the World
League.

And with that, Steve Alvord is hanging
up his shoulder pads. His playing days are
done.

And he's doing fine, thank you. He will
be working construction with his dad for a
couple more months before heading to school
this summer to become a stockbroker with
Dain-Bosworth. He's marrying Marci
Hosfield of Auburn in September.

"Football was fun, but it delayed my
real life. I've basically been living out of a
suitcase for the last 10 years," Alvord said.

Of course, not many get to play in the NFL.

"It's real glamorous, but it's real cut­
throat too," Alvord said. "It's a business —
the owners have so much control. You pro­
duce, you stay on the team. If you get injured
or don't produce, you're off the team. And of
course every year there are bigger, better,
stronger college kids coming up to take your
job. It was a good experience overall, al­
though I still have a little sour taste in my
mouth from the way I got released.

"But I wouldn't trade it for anything."
He wears bell-bottom jeans and a red sweatshirt which hangs loosely off his thin frame. This soft spoken, fragile-looking man with a short crop of unruly dark hair and a thick graying beard relates how he spread his life philosophies across the United States — on a bicycle.

Western graduate Robert Ashworth has never owned a car. The 38-year-old doesn't even know how to drive. Yet he's logged thousands of miles on his vehicle.

"My bike is my main means of transportation," Ashworth said. "I just never wanted to drive. I never wanted to join that rat race. Around town, all the practical stuff I do I can do walking. And to me the value of living close and having things handy is important.

"Like other people have the concept of a Sunday drive, I'll go out for a Sunday drive, but I don't feel guilty about wasting gas. I'm just out dillying around. I go down to Skagit County and look at the daffodil fields. It's a whole day. It's about my most enjoyable way to spend the day."

Ashworth said he grew up riding a bike in his hometown of Pullman, Wash. When he came to Bellingham in 1973 to attend Western he continued to bike everywhere he went, never feeling the need for an automobile.

"I figured one of the best ways to stay in shape is to never own a car," he said. "Exercise is just a byproduct of my lifestyle."

Most bikers ride for fun, but Ashworth bikes with a purpose. Two years ago he rode from coast to coast, an endeavor he said happened naturally.

"I started going on long-distance trips around here, like out to Baker and down to Mount Vernon," Ashworth said. "Then I decided to go camping one time, and I went over to eastern Washington."

Ashworth began extending these trips and eventually rode down the coast of California to San Francisco. The idea of a cross-country venture was turning into a possible reality.

"It's always been a dream of mine to see how far east I could get, and see if I could possibly get across the country or at least get well into the Midwest," he said.

Finally, in the summer of 1991, Ashworth arranged to take two months off from his custodial job at the YMCA and begin a journey that would take nine and a half weeks and cover 4,350 miles.

"Other people will go to the East Coast, and a lot of times they'll fly," Ashworth said. "If you fly, the only thing you get to see is the in-flight movie. I wanted to see the country because I was a geography major at Western so I'm very interested in land and people and city planning and things like that. And I wanted to see things along the way."

Ashworth said he didn't put himself through any strenuous workouts to prepare for his trip. In fact, he fancies himself a fair-weather cyclist and seldom rides during the winter.

"People ask me what I do, if I have a fitness program. I actually don't have a fitness program," he said. "I go to The Fairhaven and disco dance because I enjoy dancing ... and then I'll travel by bike and I just stay in shape automatically."

Always in good shape, Ashworth took his Trek 750, a cross between a mountain bike and a touring bike, through the Northern U.S. travelling across Idaho and Western Montana to Yellowstone and then down to Northern Wyoming, over the Big Horn Mountains and into Pierre, S.D. where he got his first flat tire. After fixing the tire, Ashworth continued on to Minneapolis, Minn. This was one of his favorite cities and he spent two days exploring the intricate network of bike paths that connect various tourist sites.

From Minnesota he rode through Wisconsin, along the shores of Lake Superior and down across Michigan. During the last leg of the trip, Ashworth travelled through southern Ontario. While in Canada, he locked up his bike for a few days and took the bus into Toronto to tour the city. Once he reached the Big Apple he realized he wasn't going to make it back in time for work. No problem. He called his boss and arranged to take another week off.

"We try to accommodate our employees," said YMCA Building Supervisor Jim Lockheed. "Robert's a good worker and I'm personally supportive of what he
does. We have a lot of respect for him."

With his employment status secure, Ashworth rode through Syracuse, N.Y., Vermont, and finally ended the ride in Salisbury Beach, Mass. Boxing up his bike, he hopped on the Amtrak and headed west.

Since he had no deadlines set for the trip, Ashworth rode his bike the way he lives his life — in the slow lane. Most of the time a day’s ride began about 8 a.m. and ended whenever he reached the day’s chosen destination.

Ashworth spent most of his nights in campgrounds, resting for the next day and talking with people he met along the way. "I got a lot of good political discussions going with a whole bunch of people. I talked about the environment, my lifestyle in Bellingham and my different philosophies on life."

Ashworth made the ride solo because he was not interested in waiting for someone to free up time to go with him.

"I like to (travel) alone because I meet people along the way," he said. "(But) the main thing is I'm not going to wait until I find somebody. I'm just going to do it. To hell with it... most people are imprisoned in their cars."

To fund the expedition, which cost close to $2,000, Ashworth pointed at the way he lives his life. "I'm pretty good about saving money," he said. "I live kind of an alternative lifestyle to most people since I don't have a car. So maybe you could say how I paid for my trip is that I don't have a car to eat up (my money). I'm not always shopping at the mall and stuff. I'm not a big consumer."

Much of the money went toward lodging, film and restaurants. Ashworth wanted to erase the stereotype of cyclists and chincleness.

"I tipped along the way to leave a good impression of bicycles wherever I went." Ashworth is not making a fortune, but said he chose his job because the YMCA promotes health and fitness, the stress level is tolerable and, of course, because his work is within biking distance.

"To have a job that will let me take two months off means more to me than (making lots of money). The quality of life is what's important to me, not how much money you make," he said. "We can have a higher quality of life in this country if we value things like time with friends. I would rather work at a lower stress job and make a little less money."

The size of Ashworth's one-room apartment is comparable to an average dorm room. Crammed into the little room is a computer, microwave, small refrigerator and a mattress with a sleeping bag on top. It's sparsely furnished, and reflects a lifestyle unconcerned with material possessions. Ashworth hopes to share with others the benefits of slowing down life’s harried pace.

"My lifestyle here in Bellingham and my different philosophies on life... I'm always kind of the slogan that's been around my life."

"I wanted to tell the story (of my trip), and I think it's an effective tool for social change," he said. "The thing that's probably the worst destruction of the environment is people's cars and also our own lifestyles. I think we need to change our own lifestyles and then the corporations... they respond to the market. I think a lot of people want a nicer environment, (but) too many people want their cake and eat it too."

Always ready for a new adventure, Ashworth is planning another cross-country venture for this summer. The trip will follow essentially the same course with a few variations. This time, Ashworth will be stopping in Pullman to visit some friends he has not seen for many years.

"It turns out my twentieth high school reunion is coming up. I wanted to go to my reunion in Pullman, but I wanted to bike there. I was hoping I could do that this summer. And then I was also hoping I could go across the country again, but I didn't know if the timing would be right.

"So what happened is that I got a notice from my reunion committee and by coincidence, it's a total coincidence, the reunion is planned for the very day that I arrived in Pullman the last time I went across the country."

When Ashworth attended Pullman High 20 years ago, he won the Tack Hammer award for being the most individualistic student. When he returns to visit his old classmates this summer, does he think they will be surprised at what he's accomplished in the last two decades?

"I think they'll probably say 'That's what we expected someone like Robert to do,'" he said. "Hearing a different drummer has always been kind of the slogan that's been around my life."

Ashworth wrote the book to tell people about his extensive journey, but also to spread his views and philosophies on the danger of cars and the preservation of the environment.

Upon returning to Bellingham, Ashworth published a small booklet filled with pictures, adventures and anecdotes from his trip. He collected addresses as he went and sent copies to those he had met.

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Klipsun's List
of
All That is Evil

Higher tuition
Budget cuts
Budgets
Credit card people who hound you outside the bookstore
Departmental politics
Rush Limbaugh
Geraldo
Oprah
Guests on Oprah
Hairstyles of guests on Oprah
Tabloids
Garbage
The Amy Fisher story
All the Amy Fisher stories
CD prices
"Joey" from Blossom
Billy Ray Cyrus
Beer in a can
Champagne in a can
Clear beer
Golden Draft sodium-free dry light beer
Beer company marketing departments
Bouncers with an attitude
The ladies' bathroom line at Speedy's
Bar bathroom floors
People groping and mashing on the dance floor
The Electric Slide
The Parking Police
The bells of Miller Hall
Mandatory attendance taken during 8 a.m. classes
People snapping gum during exams
Exams
Dangling modifiers
Being required to know what "gerund" means
Huge lines at Plaza Cashier
Huge lines
Profs who can't lecture
Profs who can't provide a logical answer
Profs who go off on tangents
Tangents
Taking the bus
Missing the bus
Dodging other people's umbrellas on rainy days
People who leave their dogs tied up on campus
Red Square during winter
That one loose brick that you always trip over
Roommates
Roommates' boyfriends who never leave
Roommates' girlfriends who never leave
Squeaky beds
Parties next door that you're not invited to
Corduroy jackets
REAL WORLD, REAL TROUBLE:
You've got a degree...

SO WHAT?

By Chris Moore

Future Western graduates who have put off exploring post-graduation work opportunities might be in for a rude awakening when they begin to research the job market.

A growing body of disturbing statistics is sure to make even the most accomplished students cringe: out of a million college graduates in 1992 — more than any other year in U.S. history — at least one in every five was forced to take a job that did not require a college degree. Over the last three years, the number of entry-level jobs open to graduating seniors has shrunk by one-third. The Labor Department estimates that 5.8 million Americans are “educationally underutilized.”

Along with the discouraging statistics come the horror stories: magna cum laudes working as waiters; elementary education majors becoming sales clerks in toy stores; engineering graduates taking jobs as maintenance engineers.

Most Western students hope, and perhaps get down on their knees and pray, that they will not encounter a similar fate. They tell themselves that after four or more years of toil, debt accumulation and 18-hour days, their sacrifice will pay off. And for many of them, it will. But anecdotal evidence from the 1992 crop of Western grads suggests that for others, the value of an undergrad diploma is dropping as fast as tuition rates rise.

Amy Kelley graduated from Western with an English degree spring quarter of 1992. Of course, she knew all along that as an English major she would probably have a difficult time putting her degree to work. On top of that, there was the poor economy; 1992 was a year widely considered to be the most unreceptive for college grads in modern U.S. history. Nonetheless, she was optimistic that some kind of promising work would turn up.

“I was kind of hoping that I would get a job with a publishing firm or something,” she said.

But today, after working as a clerk in a Bellingham Starbuck’s for nearly a year, she has given up her search for the perfect job and is instead making plans to attend graduate school.

“I thought that maybe graduate school was something I’d like to do eventually, but I thought that I would like to see what my job possibilities were out there first before I committed myself to two more years of school,” she said. “I’m not even sure that two more years is going to help, but from what I can tell, it’s going to be a lot better than what I have now,

HEY! WESTERN'S OUR SCHOOL! AND YOU KNOW WE'RE NO FOOLS! BUT WE'RE WORRIED AS HELL WE'LL GET DONE!!
which is a job that is basically not very challenging.”
Kelley said she doesn’t consider her situation unusual because many of her friends, also college graduates, are going through similar struggles.

“Everybody seems to have the same idea I do,” she said. “It’s halfheartedly looking for a job in their field while making plans to go to grad school because that seems to be the only way to get anywhere.”

Kelley is part of what appears to be a rapidly growing segment of the workforce: the underemployed bachelor degree holder. Her decision (to get more education) is an increasingly common solution for people who find themselves in similar predicaments.

The trend is due, at least in part, to the belief that a bachelor degree by itself is worth less and less every year. In fact, some educators have suggested that the value of an undergrad degree today is about equal to that of a high school diploma 30 or 40 years ago. The kind of job that a high school graduate took out of school then is the kind of job that many college graduates are taking today — after investing thousands of dollars towards their education.

As discouraging as this may sound, career counselors say it doesn’t necessarily have to be interpreted as bad news.

“The way I read that is to say that a college degree is becoming a minimum requirement,” said Tina Brinson, director of Western’s Career Services Center. “So you have to have it, more now than ever before. The base level of skills that the average worker in the U.S. needs has risen.”

Those undergrad degree holders who have no intention of going back to school, though, take little comfort in the knowledge that they are now minimally credentialed. Many of them feel angry and cheated. The system that promised them so much if only they put in their four years and pay their dues has itself been paid, but has yet to deliver.

For many of them, the choice seems to come down to either staying where they are and significantly lowering their expectations or, as Raymond Hovey is planning to do, taking their degree someplace where it will be appreciated.

Like Amy Kelley, Hovey also graduated from Western in 1992 with a degree in English and has since had trouble finding work outside the service sector.

“Even looking into just part-time jobs has been really discouraging,” he said. “The types of jobs that are available right now just don’t interest me.”

So instead of taking a short-term job with little appeal or going back to school, Hovey plans to move to Japan to teach English. There, he says, the only requirement for such a job is a bachelor’s degree — in anything.

But for those Western grads who elect to stay put, the competition may be fierce.

“It’s a tough job market out there right now,” Brinson concedes. “A lot of what we’re seeing going on is that the new grads are going out and they’re competing with people who are college grads and maybe have five or six years of experience. As long as these kind of severe dislocations (in the economy) are happening, new grads may be at some disadvantage.”

Not all the news is bad, though. Brinson points out that there are a couple of advantages that recent grads have over their more experienced competition. They can often fit more smoothly into systems that require on-the-job training, and they have lower salary expectations.

“If you’re on a tight budget, a new grad might seem like more of a bargain,” she said.

Brinson also notes that the recently-completed 1991/92 Western graduate survey showed increases in the employment percentages of graduates from every major in the university, a finding contrary her expectations.

“I would be surprised to see any other of the (Washington state schools) having increases in their percentages like we’ve had,” Brinson said. “I was surprised to see that we had them.”

One of those fortunate ‘92 grads was accounting major William Christopher, who found work at a good-sized accounting firm in Seattle almost immediately after graduation. He attributes his success largely to pragmatic planning.

“Looking back three or four years ago when I chose a major, I chose accounting because I would have a better chance of finding a job,” he said.
Still, in today's economy, Christopher considers himself fortunate to have landed the job he did.

"I got extremely lucky," he said, pointing out that a lot of his friends who graduated with accounting degrees have also found work, but had to significantly lower their standards to do so.

This raises an important shortcoming of the Western graduate survey: it did not distinguish between graduates who are simply employed and those who are employed in a job that requires a degree. So while a higher percentage of respondents may be working, they are not necessarily working in the job or field in which they were trained.

That's not to say that holding out for work that will utilize a degree is always the surest bet financially. The Western survey also showed that the average salaries for graduates rarely kept pace with inflation, and in many cases actually dropped below what degree holders were making only two years ago. For example, the average respondent to the 1989/1990 survey who graduated with a degree in political science made $24,600 per year. The average respondent to the 1991/92 survey with the same degree, however, made only $22,674 per year.

Consequently, many students saddled with college loan payments and other costs associated with school have found they can make more short-term money through lower status employment.

Christopher Kenyon, who graduated from Western last year with a business administration degree in production operations management, is working as a laborer for a construction company and liking it — or at least the money he is able to make.

"Right now the job market is really lame," he said. "I can make a lot more money doing what I'm doing now than actually using the degree."

Kenyon said he soon plans to look for a job in which he will use his degree, but expects it will mean a pay cut of about $7,000 per year.

"It is unfortunate that you spend all that money and time and then you get out of school and you have to take a pay cut," said Kenyon. "I don't know, I guess it's not just me. Everybody's got to go through it. It's unfortunate, but you've got to deal with it."

When they look at predicaments like Kenyon's, many students begin to question whether a college degree will be worth the investment. In Brinson's mind, there is little doubt that it will.

"The difference I see is in the short-term," she said. "I think of a college degree as definitely still worth it over a career. People with a degree are going to have more varied opportunities over the span of their work life. They're going to be more likely prospects for promotion. Eventually, a degree will pay off."

The question, however, is when. Not that long ago, for the majority of graduates a degree paid dividends almost immediately. In fact, it wasn't uncommon to read about B.A.'s in their mid-twenties making six-figure salaries. Today, the stories are more often about graduates moving back in with their parents and putting off car purchases, marriages, and families — the things their parents were able to afford after college — until they get some kind of indication as to when things are going to change. At the moment, all a lot of them see is a long tunnel with no light at the end.

"Societally, we're going through a real paradigm shift," Brinson said. "It's going to take a little longer (for college graduates) to get off the ground. We're in a different period of time, a different economy, a different era technologically speaking."

But there is one rule that still holds true, she added: It is essential to find work that will utilize your education, even if it's as a volunteer.

"The important thing is to use your degree. It's nice if it's paid, but even if it isn't, you're still building your resume."

And if you want to build your bank account too? Do like Hovey is planning to do: move to Japan.
By Jennifer Tipps

Although there might not be any visible scars, James Gillies' soul is covered with them. For the past 25 years he has been trying to forget. Now he is realizing that it might be better to remember.

As a young man, just halfway through his teens, James left his home in Saskatchewan, Canada, in search of adventure. It was 1964 and he found it under the stars and stripes of the American flag and in the green camos of an Army uniform.

James' first adventure after boot camp took him to Germany. Serving his newfound country overseas only lasted a year and a half.

"I got into trouble and was given the choice of military prison or Vietnam. I chose Vietnam because it was the unexpected."

His unfaltering expression and clear voice seemed to express that he was merely telling it as it was, with indifference to the situation. Not until a quiet, deep sigh escaped his lips was it obvious that the burden this man carried was much more than skin deep.

James served 11 months — almost a full tour — in the stiff constraints of Army-issued black leather boots. He didn't train back home with the men he fought beside. Squads were always composed of different units.

"We just went over as interchangeable pieces. We were transformed into animals and then set free."

Again, no bitterness or emotion accompanied these words. Just facts. Occasionally his voice just trailed off in mid-sentence and the words became inaudible. It was almost as if he didn't want to share too much. Maybe it was still too soon.

The first time I met James was in an English class two years ago. He had been invited as a guest speaker. He seemed determined to get through the ordeal, despite his obvious discomfort with the situation.

His voice was barely above a whisper, and his steel blue eyes would remain hidden behind his almost transparent eyelids for minutes at a time. Then, erratically they would pop open, almost as if something had jolted him back into the boundaries of the classroom.

"That was the first time I had ever spoken about my experiences in Vietnam to a group."

His fingers glided through his brown, tousled hair and revealed an ear with one earring. Made of brass, it hung just below the lobe.

He had a bit of a wild look to him. Nothing dangerous, just mysterious, a face with few wrinkles that didn't accurately portray a life at the half-century mark.

"I spent 15 years into drugs, alcohol and prison after the war. I wandered around the world and saw 67 countries. I participated in two other 'conflicts.' — one in Ireland and another in Nicaragua. Each one was a small, singular endeavor."

James' eyes focused on the floor as he hugged the back of the chair he had straddled. He recalled a recent meeting with U.S. Sen. John Kerrey, who visited Western's campus.

"When he finished his speech and opened the floor to questions my hand shot up in the air. I asked what the current state of veterans were on the Clinton/Gore ticket. After a long detailed answer outlining a plan, I found out that as a freshman senator he had implemented the Storefront Outreach Program. In 1980 this program saved my life."

James' eyes focused even more intently on the floor, almost as if the tight weave of the gray industrial carpet was giving him hints on what to say next. He took off his wire-rimmed glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose, his eyes squinted shut and his forehead forming a succession of wrinkled contortions. Finally he replaced his glasses and continued the story.

"I was suicidal and someone from the Outreach Program spent a couple of days with me and talked me out of it. I realized that indirectly, the man I faced had saved my life! I had to thank him. I waited patiently in line after the speech. Senator Kerry recog-
nized me as one of the questioners. I explained my connection to him and thanked him. We started to shake hands, but ended up hugging.

This time James' concentration was broken by a clear wave of emotion as he remembered the event. Although the indication was subtle, it was definitely a diversion from the stolid expression that had become standard to that point.

James recently went to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. He said it was a very debilitating experience “not because of the wall, but because of the group I went with. I was in charge of helping to care for a group of vets. Unfortunately they were still living the war.

“I was the only person I considered functional out of the group of 35 people. They were still complaining about Jane Fonda and still had Jane Fonda bumper stickers in their urinals. They talked of killing gooks and shared war stories.

“This scared me. I went to the memorial and became very unhealed. It was Memorial Day and the tenth-year anniversary. It was a circus-like environment with thousands of people. There were tents selling T-shirts and other trinkets. I went to the wall and saw the names of the seven men in my squad who were killed.”

James paused for a while and swallowed hard, possibly trying to dissolve an emotional lump.

“Oh yeah,’ I thought, ‘they’re dead.’ I knew they were dead because I saw them killed. I felt validated but it didn’t do much. It was a bad day for me. I ran off for two days to West Virginia with new friends. When I came back I kind of made peace with the group. It was scary. I expected to be healed. Instead I was thrown into a terrible tumultuous state.

“I returned to the wall at midnight when things had quieted down and was able to appreciate it more. It made me understand that I am not healed. I have a lot to deal with.”

Although James described his past as containing a “checkered personal life” in which he married several times, it was clear that his most recent wife of 16 years has been a new beginning for him. He labeled it as a time of “settling down.”

He now has two children, a daughter of 15 and a son of 10, who, he said, have taught him to love unconditionally.

“They are the hope of the world. As they grow, I grow.

Three years ago I moved to Bellingham from California to better my life. I hooked up with a Vietnam veteran on campus who got me a job in Media Services.”

James recalled it as a turning point in his life. “I have made my peace. I no longer concentrate on singular endeavors — I look outward toward the community. I am a hard worker.

“I have a lot of bags I carry around that become all the heavier.

“James moonlights harvesting oysters and gardening at a local nursery to support his children and wife. He works long hours and rarely sleeps more than two hours a night. Heavily involved with his community’s activities, such as his children’s education, James rarely has a free moment to just relax. He is also very involved with his local veterans chapter.

As he mentioned his chapter, a hint of pride spread across his face and he sat up a bit straighter in his chair. The posture and expression quickly dissolved as irritation clouded his face.

James said he is frustrated with the lack of support the university has shown toward veterans.

“One quarter of this staff are veterans. That makes us the largest minority on campus, yet when the Veterans Center was moved out of the Counseling Center last summer, the only space available was a closet in Miller Hall. How can they realistically serve 300 people that way?”

James looked up to the ceiling of his small box-like office and rubbed his forehead as if to iron out any existing wrinkles.

“It’s not what they (the administration) feel about us vets, it’s what they don’t know. Total ignorance. I sense it is a nationwide problem.

“A vet walks around with a heavy burden. When the burden is not relieved in some way by recognition or acknowledgement, it becomes all the heavier.

“A lot of questions are still unanswered from the Vietnam War. By discussing them, perhaps we’ll find an answer ... not by going to war again, but by putting the reality that actually occurred out on the table and processing it.”

A tired sigh signified James’ heartfelt dedication to the issue.

“The solution to this ‘problem’ of dealing with Vietnam vets our government is faced with will only be truly solved when we all die.”
Inside Aryan Nation

One reporter finds that children are children, wherever they happen to live

By Matthew W. Campbell

Lee Smith is not unlike many 12-year-olds. He is a sixth-grader at the local middle school. He loves sports, art and Garth Brooks. He collects baseball cards and enjoys building toy models. He recently moved to Idaho from California and loves to meet new people, although he is shy.

Flipping through a binder that contains much of Lee’s artwork, it is easy to see that he is a very talented young man. His pencil and charcoal drawings contain sketches of trucks, houses, his favorite athletes and Nazi swastikas.

Lee came to Hayden Lake, Idaho, home of the white-supremacy group Aryan Nation, with his father, Rod, eight months ago after his dad saw a man get shot to death while living in Bakersfield, CA. Lee’s father decided they needed to get away from heavily populated areas and violence. Prior to coming to Hayden Lake, Rod had no ties to any white-supremacist groups. He offers no explanation as to why he joined the group other than that he needed to get away from big cities. Lee’s parents divorced when he was two.

Lee lives in a small, isolated compound near Hayden Lake. Located in a remote wooded area, the Aryan Nation currently has 10 people who live full-time at the compound. An additional dozen or so members live in the outlying areas and attend regular functions such as church services at the compound.

The only woman who lives at the compound is Betty Butler, wife of Pastor Richard Butler, founder of the Hayden Lake Aryan Nation group. Butler founded the group more than 20 years ago.

The two of live in a spacious two-story house located on the edge of the 20-acre property. The house is off-limits to members unless they have special permission from Butler. Most of the others live in a very simple bunkhouse, heated only by a wood stove. The sleeping quarters have little more than bunks, footlockers and gun cabinets mounted on the walls. The floor is wooden and covered with dirt and mud. The only decorations on the walls are Nazi flags and a few of Lee’s sketches.

In the barracks, each man has a gun cabinet mounted at the head of their bed. Shotguns, rifles and pistols of all sorts are included in their arsenal, all kept under lock and key. For almost every waking moment, each man carries a gun on his hip. Some carry .44 Magnums, and others 22-caliber pistols. They joke freely about the weapons and about how much they like to use them for entertainment.

The Aryan Nation came to Hayden Lake in 1973. Butler chose this area because “It is Aryan country and the land is beautiful and unspoiled.”

Butler, who is in his early 70s, is a man of many experiences. He was an officer during World War II and fought in Africa, India and China. It was in large part these experiences, he says, that inspired him to begin his mission of white supremacy. During the war, Butler had an Indian servant named Asab. The two of them developed a close friendship. It was during one of their many conversations that Asab made Butler think about his actions of fighting the Germans.

“I understand why you fight the Japanese, but why are you fighting your German cousins and brothers?” Asab spoke in broken English. Butler credits Asab with opening his eyes to “the truth.”

Butler was ordained in 1971 through the Church of Jesus Christ Christian in California. He believes that he is on a mission from God and that he is doing God’s will. He preaches directly from the Bible and preaches love amongst the white race. He also preaches and prays for peace. Butler holds himself in very high regard by other members, so much so that he is rarely questioned on his actions.

Despite its seclusion, the Aryan Nation is tuned in to today’s world. When asked what he thinks of President Clinton, Butler says “Good things will happen with Clinton in office.”

The answer seems a little surprising until Butler finishes his thoughts.

“Under Bush, the nation was falling apart,” Butler says. “Clinton will speed things up and that will lead to the revolution. He will accelerate the downfall of our once-great nation. We look forward to the downfall, because that is when we will rise up and seize power.”

The grounds of the compound are easily visible from the window beside Butler’s desk. Two parked school buses are filled with such supplies as extra clothes, furniture and tools. The loaded vehicles insure that the supremacists are not caught unprepared in an emergency. Lee is leaning against one of the buses throwing pine cones at a tree.

Several other vehicles are scattered around the property, including a broken-down truck and a camper. The camper sits ready for use in case an important guest, such as a well-known journalist, comes calling.

Butler continues to talk about his beliefs and the message he preaches to his followers.

“We put women on a pedestal,” Butler says. “We hold them in the highest regard. They are not warriors. They are there to perpetuate the race, to raise children and to keep house.”

Men in this community are the providers. Lee is already being taught the roles of men and women in Aryan society. The men take care of their women, although at this time only Betty lives on the premises. Therefore the men are forced to do things that would normally be considered “women’s work.” Most of the people who live outside the compound are married.

Marriage is the ultimate form of support to an Aryan woman. According to Butler, God gave men the talent to provide for women. Women have no need to work outside the house, according to Butler’s teachings.
Things are not always simple at the compound. At times there are arguments and disagreements, Butler says. They can cause severe tension and concern. Much of this may be attributed to the fact that tensions are often high because there is little to do. They have a daily ritual that rarely varies. They are at the compound for almost every minute of every day, with nothing to do but wait.

Al is one member who often voices his opinion without fear or hesitation, especially when it differs from Butler's teachings. The differences between Butler and Al are mostly religious. Al believes that it is their job as Christians to tell the world the "truth." The only righteous thought that will pass through a liberal's brain, is the one fueled by the front entryway.

For preaching serves as a storage facility for the kitchen. It is the social hall, meeting room and TV room. Rags of nations that are draped by the front entryway. Wouldn't you rather be called a nigger than Spain, Ireland and South Africa are a few. A flyer on the front of the pulpit reads for preaching about: an educated, working American man has an individual holiday, yet Lucifer Coon (Martin Luther King, Jr.) does.

As the day draws to a close, Lee, his father and a few other men head to the cabin for the 10 p.m. light-off. The rest of the men watch TV. Two head off for night patrol. As the men prepare to sleep, many read with the help of overhead fluorescent lights that barely cast enough light. Van Halen and then Cat Stevens blare from the radio. The atmosphere is not unlike that of a summer camp.

Lee sits on his bed playing with a model car. One man polishes his boots while another reads a Bible. As the lights go off, Lee turns off the radio and inserts a tape. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is the last thing heard this Saturday evening.

Sunday is an informal day. It is the day to sleep in. It is also a day of fasting because it is the cook's day off and no one else will cook. Church at 11 is the only formal plan for the day. This is the only day that the men dress up.

The Aryan dress uniform consists of dark blue pants, a light blue shirt and a dark blue clip-on tie. Several of the members wear swastika pins and arm-bands. A big Aryan Nation symbol adorns the brass belt buckle. Twenty people, including four women, are in church as it begins.

Church starts with the singing of "Amazing Grace" and a prayer. As Butler prays, the men raise their arms in a Nazi salute. The women bow their heads. Butler explains that the salute is that of a warrior, and since women are not warriors they need not raise their arms.

Butler's sermon is the next order of business. Today's sermon is more a history lesson of the Aryan race than a religious enlightenment. Butler talks about each of the wars to plague the 20th century and how they will lead to the separation of the races. He also proclaims that college is a waste of time because there are no good institutions left in the U.S. His rationale for this is simple. Colleges promote multi-culturalism; they will lead to the downfall of society.

Butler says the U.S. is falling apart because of racial mixing.

"Any hot and to the steaming jungles of Africa can become a citizen," Butler says as his voice begins to strain. "No American man has an individual holiday, yet Lucifer Coon (Martin Luther King, Jr.) does."

As the recessional hymn is sung, four of the church members go to the back of the church and form an aisle to walk through, right arms raised, as if forming a tunnel. The song is about love and peace.

After church, the members sit around the dining hall snacking on coffee cake and tea. Butler answers questions thrown at him from three social-work students from Eastern Washington University who came to hear his sermon. They represent the exact opposite of what Butler just finished preaching about: an educated, working woman.

At another table, Lee's father, the cook and the head of security are joking about a program on TV. They refer to some of the actors on the program as "no-good niggers."

Slowly the members begin to drift off to enjoy their day of rest. Only the head of security, Wayne Jones, works today. The members of the Aryan Nation believe in being prepared. They believe Armageddon, the judgment day, will soon come. They talk about peace and love, yet they are prepared for, and almost seem to wish for, a war.

"The current rumor is that we have the entire place covered with land mines," Jones says with a smirk on his face. As he talks about the weapons, he sits on a bunk loading a 12-gauge shotgun, getting ready for patrol.

"We are not a violent people," Jones says. "We are just defending ourselves and responding to the threats people have made on us."

The incident that Jones is referring to is a 1986 bombing of the church that damaged part of the chapel.

Before long, the only people who can be seen are Lee and the cook, who sits on a bench smoking a cigarette. Butler has gone to a meeting with some "important officials." Jones is on patrol and Lee's father is watching a German propaganda movie on World War II that we are not permitted to watch.

Outside the barracks, Lee is playing with one of the three German shepherds, Hans. It seems that Lee can relate best to Hans. They are the closest in age and spend more time together than any of the other members. Lee can be himself around Hans.
Local Waldorf school teaches children to think for themselves

By Michele Thielke
Photographs by Steve Dunkelberger and Adam Leask

At the Whatcom Hills Waldorf School, typical worksheets, homework and tests are rarely given. Instead students paint, play flutes, knit, sculpt and sing every day. They even begin learning a foreign language in first grade.

Janelle Claybrook began looking for alternatives to public school when her oldest son Chris, 13, began having trouble at school. She attended a parent-teacher conference where Chris' teacher expressed concern he was being influenced by the wrong crowd. While in his school Claybrook saw four armed police officers walking down the hall. The school was "almost like a prison, really focusing on the negative things to children," Claybrook said.

At that point she decided to take action. Randy, 8, was the first to try out a private school. Claybrook said she noticed a difference in Randy the first day she picked him up after school. "He literally had stars in his eyes, 'Oh, Mom I like this school so much!'" she said. Her eyes twinkle as she talks about it.

Last fall, Chris, 12-year-old Teresa and Randy began attending Whatcom Hills Waldorf School. Claybrook's youngest daughter Tasha, 3, attends the preschool. Since then Claybrook said she has also seen a turnaround in her son Chris, who had started to become emotionally withdrawn. "It was a night-and-day difference when he started going to the Waldorf school. There was like a black energy that just — swoosh — was gone," she said.

The school was founded in 1986 by Kent Ratekin in South Bellingham. It had about 20 students, a preschool, kindergarten and first grade. In 1988, the school moved into the old Geneva School near Lake Whatcom. Now, the school includes grades one through five and seven (currently there are no children at the sixth grade level). The school has 125 students and plans to add an eighth grade next fall.

The most impressive structure on the school grounds is a hut-shaped log toy in the gravel playground at the back of the school. The main building is not exactly a one-room school house but looks more like a large home. The grounds also include a square of concrete with a basketball hoop, a small garden and a row of classrooms. A handwritten sign marks the door to the office, which is comprised of two tiny rooms filled mostly by full bookshelves and bulletin boards.

From its outward appearance it is hard to imagine that this school, without looming hallways, an intimidating office complex and an expansive concrete playground is part of an international education movement, but it is.

On the front of a brochure for the
What Rudolph Steiner said, "Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives."

Steiner founded a school for Waldorf-Astoria factory workers' children in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany. Today 500 schools in 23 countries bear the name Waldorf. They educate children by Steiner's principles.

Ratekin discovered Waldorf education when he became frustrated by the broken-up curriculum and artificial environment of the public school system where he taught. He attended a workshop on Waldorf education and then visited a Waldorf school in Vancouver.

"I was taken with it right away because there was a different atmosphere," he said.

At the school he saw children saying verses, practicing plays, singing and playing instruments.

"There was this feeling that a lot of skill building and enthusiastic participation was going on in many different areas, in the arts, humanities and academics," Ratekin said.

Ratekin said the belief that a child is unfolding in school, rather than being trained or filled with information, is what makes Waldorf schools different. Waldorf schooling is a holistic approach to education. It seeks to educate a child's heart, head and hands. In a Waldorf school most academic learning takes place in the early morning. Later in the morning, activities such as painting, speech and humanities educate the heart. The hands come into play in the afternoon when the children sculpt, garden or do gymnastics.

"If you try to teach a child just in the head forces all day long there's this kind of wiped out feeling that you get at the end of the day," Ratekin said.

Integration, interconnectedness and timing are also themes of Waldorf education.

Ratekin's class of fifth graders spent a month delving into Greek history. The children created Greek sculpture, painted Greek paintings and learned the Greek alphabet. They studied Pythagoras and looked into the importance of math to the Greeks. They studied Socrates and other historical figures.

In gym class they threw the discus and javelin. They had a pentathlon with another Waldorf school and wore tunics they sewed themselves in handwork class.

The decision to study Greek history in the fifth grade is not made arbitrarily.

"In fifth grade is the perfect time because the children are like little Greeks — they are in perfect control of their bodies. Their bodies are almost perfectly sculpted, like Greek sculpture," Ratekin said.

In some countries, such as Holland, Germany and Switzerland where the movement is widespread, Waldorf schools are publicly funded. The spiritual base to Waldorf schools would probably cross the line between church and state in the United States. Ratekin said it revolves more around a respect for the earth, other cultures and a power greater than this world rather than one specific religion.

Therefore, Waldorf schools are expensive. At the Whatcom Hills School, tuition is $3,876 a year for students in the first to seventh grade, which average only 10 to 15 students each, $2,928 for kindergarten and $1,980 for preschool. The price does not include additional fees for music lessons, but does include the cost of art materials. Waldorf students use high-quality watercolor paints. Claybrook, who works at the school a day and a half each week to help cover tuition costs, said the expense is worthwhile.

"What they learn at Waldorf is so valuable. And what they don't learn is so valuable too," she said. Claybrook mentioned gangs, drugs and drinking as problems she hoped her children could avoid.

"The Waldorf education allows children to be in tune with what they enjoy and like as opposed to what they're supposed to do," she said.

One of the main reasons Cathy and David Scarborough moved to Bellingham was to send their sons Nathan, 7, and Elias, 5, to the Waldorf school.

David thinks of himself as a "survivor of a casualty" called public school. He describes his schooling as divided into many different mutually-exclusive subjects. He said he felt as though physical and social development were ignored. He said he hopes that by trying something different his children will be able to see the connections between various subjects.

"I think that they're going to grow up with a much better idea of the world, fitting all the pieces together, than I did," David said.

Cathy said she intuitively knew the school was right for her children when she attended an open house. "It was walking into the room and seeing the artwork, the way the room was painted, their projects. I was just so impressed with their work," Cathy said.

The classrooms at the Waldorf school are distinctively bright and colorful. The walls are pastel pink, blue and green and adorned with the children's vivid paintings. The learning materials include piles of rocks, sticks of wood and woven baskets of pinecones. The children's handmade textbooks filled with poems and drawings lay on their desks.

Thea Stephens said she was also impressed with the Waldorf system when she and her husband Chris moved to Bellingham from Orange County, Calif.

She went to a Waldorf open house and something clicked. "It just fit. Something inside of me just said this is the way you
should educate children.

“We wanted to be in an area where people valued family, where kids wouldn’t grow up saying, ‘No! My tennis shoes have to have Reebok on the side of them!’” Stephens said.

The experiences her daughters, Sarah, 9, and Justine, 7, had in preschool made her wary of simply jumping into mainstream education.

Waldorf teachers undergo special training. Ratekin attended The Rudolph Steiner College in Detroit, Mich. During the two-year program teachers spend a lot of time learning to identify different temperaments and learning styles. They also train in art and music.

Ratekin said teaching in a Waldorf school is “like a journey.” The teacher travels with the same class through each grade level.

“There isn’t any backing away from the curriculum and there isn’t any backing away from the personality conflicts that take place,” Ratekin said.

The teachers are trained to see the uniqueness in every child. “It’s the antithesis of a military academy. Everyone is encouraged to be themselves,” Stephens said.

The teachers also ask parents about the birth and early life of their child.

“There’s a need for the teachers to really be adult. They can’t just say, ‘Gee, I don’t like that little boy!’ There’s no room for that,” Stephens said.

Staff members who specialize in gardening, sculpture, foreign language and eurythmy (movement to music and speech) work with the core teachers at each grade level. Teachers may discuss concerns about a child with the entire staff. The faculty then focuses on the child for one week. At the next meeting, faculty members share any insights or dreams they may have had about that child.

Nathan’s teacher brought a concern about him to the faculty at a staff meeting.

“Waldorf has children painting in light colors. Well, Nathan was only doing black tornadoes,” Cathy said. At the end of the week none of the faculty found any reason to be worried about Nathan. However, Cathy said she noticed he had a more peaceful attitude.

“His teacher said it was a common response because the child on some level feels the love and care of the community,” Cathy said.

The Scarboroughs, Claybrook and Stephens are all active in the school. However, one area that parents are not allowed to help with is the school’s curriculum. One worry for parents is that their children learn to read at a later age. Stephen’s daughter Justine and the Scarborough’s son Nathan both are not yet reading at age seven. The parents have to refute questions from anxious friends and family like “Aren’t they reading yet?”

Stephens said monthly meetings with the teachers and the parents of older Waldorf children calm parents’ worries.

“None of the parents with children in the upper grades have any concerns. I think the method is working,” she said.

Ratekin said although Waldorf starts out slower than public school in order to build up a child’s natural love of learning, the children eventually catch up and by sixth or seventh grade may even surpass public school children.

Ratekin said the school’s emphasis on arts does not hinder students’ academic progress.

“The arts are practical for every human being because they train the heart, the emotions,” — Kent Ratekin

Students start their day with a smile
Sinking back reflectively in his dark green leather armchair, Larry Sturhahn relates a tale of personalities. He packs tobacco into a pipe carefully chosen from the rack in his study and lights up.

"It was on the road, literally on the road, that suddenly it was as though there was a person in me looking, and there were two boy personalities," Sturhahn said. "I could feel them and they didn't relate to each other. One didn't know the other one existed, but I could see both of them. One was the happy creative person who had come to Bellingham, married and led a good life, and the other was a guy who had fallen apart and run away."

Sturhahn is tall and very thin, with a mop of gray hair streaked with black. He speaks in a low gravelly voice, slow and deliberate, which occasionally becomes more animated when he gets excited. His pipe is almost constantly lit and the smell of pipe tobacco fills the air of his small, neat living room. His skin is leathery, and his nose curves downward like the beak of a hawk.

Sturhahn strongly believes all humans have a kind of multiple personality capability. "Multiplicity is a common ordinary human faculty. Everybody's got multiple personalities," Sturhahn said. "When a child is born, it is a clean slate. If abuse is incurred, the child learns to block out those certain parts of their lives and they become, in effect, multiple personalities."

Those personalities are then hidden from the one that functions day to day. Once this happens, a person begins to develop a habit of blocking off certain stressful portions of their lives as a way to deal with abuse, Sturhahn said.

"People can develop a whole melange of personalities blocked off from the (core) personality, who is in effect growing as an adult," he said.

Native American jewelry and rugs adorn the walls of his home, along with a huge cardboard advertisement for the movie "Dances With Wolves." He claims to have a high Native American consciousness stemming from his Native heritage. He believes in the shamanistic tradition of healing by directing energy from the cosmos, through a shaman into the injured person.

"I am a shaman, which is a wounded healer," Sturhahn said with pride. "Being a shaman is a belief in the concept that you, by directing the energy that comes to you from the cosmos, can affect healing in people. You must believe that you can give people a sense of healing."

He uses what he calls his earth-based consciousness as a strength which helps him deal with abnormal stress in everyday life.

Sturhahn, a semi-retired writer and former producer/director in the movie business, has been diagnosed with an ego state disorder, which is a variety of what the American Psychiatric Association would term a dissociative disorder not otherwise specified. He was diagnosed at Pocket Ranch Institute in Ukiah, Calif., in April 1992. Pocket Ranch is a sanctuary hospital, specializing in the treatment of dissociative disorders.
As a dissociated person, he experiences ego states which are not complete personalities, but do influence his behavior and feelings and can cause great confusion. Sturhahn experiences a co-consciousness with these ego states which can create havoc among his feelings.

"An ego state is like a trance state," Sturhahn said. "I can feel myself looking, but I don't have complete control over my actions."

The ego states all have different characteristics and serve different functions in Sturhahn's life. Some are childlike and will remain that way forever. Sturhahn said his alter states were created either in times of extreme stress or as a reaction to positive encouragement.

"Now I recognize them (ego states) from feeling states," Sturhahn said quietly. "When I'm feeling out of sorts and something is bothering me, I know there is something going on, and it has to do with one of the alters."

An alter state will usually remain the age at which it was created, but Sturhahn said he has a writer state which started at age 7 and has now evolved into an adult writer state.

"It got me out of the present world, which was pretty horrendous to me, and into a fantasy world where I was controlling things... where I told a story that was full of knights and fair ladies and jousting."

When immersed in this alter state, it sometimes takes a few minutes to bring back "real world" consciousness, Sturhahn said.

Sturhahn recalls wistfully how he was not wanted as a child and was passed off by his mother to nurses and other caretakers who weren't so caring. He names Bunkie as his 1-year-old alter who was created because of a lack of attention and care as an infant.

"I was also sexually abused," Sturhahn said. "My mother's seduction of me and some overt sexuality... but basically it was the abandonment that was the hard thing for me to deal with. Not having a mother, in effect, can be just as detrimental as any other kind of abuse."

Pre-verbal, Bunkie only screams and cries in reaction to remembered abuse. Growing up in an alcoholic family system created a co-addictiveness, Sturhahn said. It placed him in many situations he was anxious to escape. His recent divorce is a good example.

He married a woman in Bellingham and felt she was the love of his life. They pledged to do what it took to maintain the relationship, despite the fact that both came from alcoholic family systems and were co-dependant, Sturhahn said.

But money problems threatened the relationship. Sturhahn had borrowed a lot of money on his house in California and the house was not selling. He began to withdraw from his wife.

He withdrew into the alter state he calls "Larry," who is 6 years old. Larry was created when his grandmother refused to let him grieve over the death of Hattie Pattie, a childhood playmate and girlfriend.

"I felt I must have done something wrong," Sturhahn remembers with moisture in his eyes. "In addition to this my grandmother, who had a survivalist attitude that came from being surrounded by a family of alcoholics... did not allow me to grieve. She told me to be strong and take it like a little man. That created a boy who couldn't deal with the emotional loss (of his friend)."

Larry's response to his stressful financial situation was to withdraw into himself and not feel any emotion, Sturhahn said. He did not feel for his wife, because he was in the alter state of a 6-year-old child. He began to experience confusion and was unable to perform even simple tasks.

"I had to carry a map to find my way around town, and I could not plan a meal even though I had been a single-parent father for eight or nine years," Sturhahn said.

Larry ran back to California seeking stability, and when Sturhahn said he regained control, he was in a state of mental disrepair. He was so disoriented that he did not even know why he had left Bellingham.

"I became a totally different person than the person she had fallen in love with," Sturhahn said. "I was acting like a child. Not exactly, of course. I was walking around in an adult body, but practically speaking I was a 6-year-old boy."

Sturhahn said he has alter states ranging from 1 to 48 years old. The names of his most influential child alters are Bunkie, Larry, Storyteller, who evolved into the adult writer, Lindy, Paul and Peter. His core or main ego state is that of Muchacho, who Sturhahn said is extremely creative, upbeat and outgoing, compensating for his usually low self esteem. In all he has discovered 21 ego states through hypnotherapy and kinesiology, but he is not done yet.

"I knew very early there was something wrong with my family situation," Sturhahn said. "That was not a secret to me or anybody else, so I started therapy in my early 30s."

At 65, Sturhahn has spent more than half of his life in therapy. He has tried therapies from the traditional to the holistic but never felt they were helping.

"I did a lot of research and learned a lot about various types of therapies," Sturhahn said. "Yet I never felt they did it. They just didn't seem to work."

Then in 1988, Fred Ford of Berkeley, Calif. helped him to bring out what Ford called at the time a lost child. This lost child later turned out to be Sturhahn's core state, Muchacho.

Ford used a therapy technique which explores family systems, Sturhahn said. Ford brought out Muchacho, who Sturhahn thought might be the answer to a lot of his problems. He did not realize until later that Muchacho was only one of a host of alter states existing in and around his consciousness.

Coming back from California in 1991 to try and save his marriage, he experienced his first instance of co-consciousness: the vision of the two boys, Larry and Bunkie. After going through numerous alternative therapies, he read a series of essays in a journal titled "Journey" which alerted him to the possibility that he was dissociated.

Through therapy at the Pocket Ranch hospital, various alter states and their characteristics were uncovered, Sturhahn said. He began to work on developing a consciousness of his alter states in order to come to terms with them.

Sturhahn is currently using a form of therapy called kinesiology, which is the study of muscles. The process involves measuring the resistance of a subject's muscles while they are questioned. If a muscle resists when a question is asked it means no, if it does not resist it means yes. Working with a therapist in this way, Sturhahn said he has uncovered many alter states and their names and common characteristics.

"A lot of traditional psychologists and psychiatrists will not agree that kinesiology is a legitimate form of treatment," Sturhahn said.
"But I feel it has accomplished more for me than traditional therapies. It has also brought out in a much shorter period more of my personalities."

As a writer, Sturhahn said he has two basic motifs: a family theme and a military theme. Sturhahn said his writer personality, which began as a 7-year-old alter state called Storyteller, would create stories at night to take himself to another world. This alter state evolved through high school and continued through his college years at the University of Iowa due to positive encouragement from English teachers and professors, Sturhahn said.

"I started wanting to be a writer when I was about 12," Sturhahn said. "This was my first conscious memory of deciding I wanted to be a writer."

Sturhahn started writing at the University of Iowa. He initially intended to pursue a career in journalism but eventually he changed his mind and began taking creative writing courses.

He started publishing in 1956 after finishing a stint as a military training officer. Sturhahn said he experienced a block for eight years in which he did not publish his stories. He attributes the block, in hindsight, to the actions of his alter states.

In 1970 he started writing non-fiction articles for magazines and published three fictional short stories until he went into what he calls a "fiction block." In the late 1980s he began publishing short stories again, and is currently working on stories that deal with dysfunctional family situations.

Writing short stories about soldiers comes from his experience as a soldier. Sturhahn said he has had many experiences in past lives as soldiers, and believes that his consciousness of these past soldiers has added to his writing. He believes everyone has lived past or "parallel" lives and they draw from the experiences of these lives.

Being a father and a single parent of two daughters, Sturhahn said his work reflects his thoughts, experiences and feelings of being a single parent. Sturhahn attributes his family theme to his own dysfunctional family life as a child.

"I have lots of stories about families with single parents," Sturhahn said. "It was a way for me to express the way that I felt about my family and then myself as a single parent."

Sturhahn knew that it was rare for even good writers to support themselves solely by writing, so he began looking for a job.

"I didn't want to write commercially at some copy editing job. I didn't want a job which would confuse the issue of writing," Sturhahn said. "In other words, I didn't want to have to deal with writing all day and then come home and try to write. I wanted to find something outside the writing field."

Sturhahn became involved in the motion picture business to support his career as a writer of prose fiction. He worked on such films as "THX-1138," directed by George Lucas; "You're A Big Boy Now," directed by Francis Ford Coppola; "Lilith," directed by Robert Rossen and "A Long Day's Journey Into Night," directed by Sidney Lumet.

Movie Man, the alter state Sturhahn said made him successful in the motion picture business, is both flamboyant and logistical.

"I was co-conscious," Sturhahn said. "I was aware that someone else was there doing the job. I was aware of the other personalities. I just thought of it as switching gears. But in fact I was switching to another personality. That I see now as a positive aspect of multiplicity."

Sturhahn worked as an assistant director, a position not highly revered among the union crews.

"I came on a job and I would introduce myself to everyone on the set, and that was a way of getting in touch with them," Sturhahn said, puffing on his pipe and speaking through a cloud of smoke. "It also gave me the confidence that I was not all alone."

This was Movie Man's way of dealing with the stress of arriving at work every day to a potentially hostile situation.

Now that Sturhahn is no longer in the motion picture business, the Movie Man alter is called to do the boring organizational work of paying bills and other tedious tasks.

Sturhahn said he meets nightly with his "circle" of alters and discusses problems any of them might have. If one alter state is upset about the way a situation was handled during the day, he will try to resolve the conflict. He also asks questions that a specific alter might want to mull over during the night. Only one alter state may be co-conscious with Sturhahn at a time but when he meditates, he said he is able to communicate with them simultaneously.

Sturhahn believes that the understanding of multiplicity is the key to a greater creative consciousness, and if people would define their alter egos, their lives would be less stressful.

"Multiplicity is an extremely creative characteristic, and I've used it all my life, but I never recognized it. Now I use it to my advantage."
It’s dark. The night outside seems to bleed into the gallery. It’s hard to suppress a slight feeling of intimidation at the thought that there’s something really big on the other side of the window — two somethings, in fact. The room echoes faintly with the sounds of them calling to each other through the water. A flash of white is fleetingly visible, a momentary ghost in the gloom. Slowly, silently, a massive form glides out of the darkness and stops just on the other side of the window. Anxiety slowly melts to wonder and awe at the grace and beauty of the 30-foot Orca whale literally inches away.

Most visitors to the Vancouver Aquarium in British Columbia spend some time in the whale galleries, looking at the two Orcas or the five Beluga whales in the other tank. For them, though, that’s all it is. A brief look, not nearly enough to convey a real appreciation for a creature almost as complex as ourselves. Day visitors get to see the animals in the exhibits, but there’s no time for any kind of personal introduction to the animals and their ecosystems.

That’s where the Night Lights program picks up. Instead of briefly passing through the myriad exhibits and galleries in a couple hours, visitors spend the night in the aquarium. Volunteers are on hand to teach about the creatures and how they are cared for, in far greater detail than is possible with the crowds that fill the aquarium during business hours.

Patricia Thomson is the aquarium’s public programming coordinator. She has overseen the growth of Night Lights from an eight-times-a-year event for children of aquarium members to a nationally-acclaimed program that draws people of all ages from as far away as New York. She says the program’s real strength is its ability to forge links between people and some of the animals we share our home with.

“It shows the very personal connections from one animal to another, from people to animals,” Thomson says. She also emphasizes that the program is designed to be fun; participants get a lot out of the program because they have a great time while they’re learning.

“Children (or adults) learn without realizing they’re learning,” she says.

The emphasis on fun is obvious. At 9:15 on a Saturday night, the aquarium’s wetlab is filled with excited, squirming bodies. A class of about 30 fifth- and sixth-graders from Cougar Canyon School in Delta, B.C., has invaded the educational facility and waits impatiently for the mysteries of the aquarium to reveal themselves. Eyes bright with expectation dart around the room, lingering on the tanks that line the walls, populated with anemones, starfish, sea urchins and other denizens of B.C.’s tidal habitats.

Fifteen minutes later, after a brief introductory talk by program coordinators and volunteers, the kids are separated into four different groups and follow volunteers to four of the aquarium’s feeding stations to feed the aquarium’s inhabitants. One volunteer keeps her group in the wetlab and produces a bowl containing a squid, krill and other courses for the tidal tank residents’ meal. An excited shout of “It looks like a brain!” rises above the clamor when the krill is produced.

Of course, the kids all want to dissect the squid first. Squeals of mock horror fill the room as the squid is cut open to reveal its inner workings. The volunteer, not much older than her charges, directs the dissection of the squid and explains the various body parts. Although the fare may be good enough for the animals in the tanks, the children express other opinions. An incredulous sixth-grader sums up what several of his classmates appear to be thinking too: “And you actually feed this stuff to animals?!”

In another part of the aquarium, another volunteer, assisted by his following of young chefs, prepares a “herring shake” to be fed to a tank of filter feeders (sea cucumbers, anemones, etc.). Herring, squid, krill and
night Lights and the involvement of the volunteers are what makes the program what it is.

"Very few people would actually take the time to sit down and cut up a herring... the program is really a neat thing," Hague says. “Actually getting their hands in the tank; that’s what’s going to stick. All the hands-on experiences are what’s going to stick. And that, to me, is what teaching science is all about.”

Hague points to his excited students as evidence of the program’s success.

“When you see kids excited but under control, you know that it’s worthwhile,” Hague says. Night Lights is administered by aquarium staff and uses aquarium facilities, but

Thomson

She also emphasizes the aquarium staff’s concern about the ethical aspects of holding whales in captivity.

Although serious concerns are often raised about the issue, Thomson explains the aquarium’s philosophy on the issue as a feeling that having one or two animals in captivity is often the most effective way to turn people on to the desirability of saving the creatures.

“You have to introduce people to cetaceans before they really become aware,” Thomson says.

The aquarium is one of the few facilities left with captive whales, and it abandoned all scheduled whale shows years ago, in an attempt to dispel the myth that the animals don’t do anything the rest of the time — what Thomson calls the “Yes, Johnny, we’re going to see the whales, but they aren’t doing anything until 3:30” attitude.

“Night Lights lets people see for themselves and make their own conclusions about what the animals do,” Thomson says.
Welcome to Bellingham, My Pretty!

Local Wicca coven leaders redefine role of modern witchcraft

By Amy Wold
Photographs by Steve Dunkelberger and Adam Leask

In the middle of a dark and gloomy forest, three old, dirty hags crouch around a boiling caldron. They chant mysterious words while throwing eye of newt and tongue of frog into their mysterious, bubbling brew.

This image of witches has been handed down through European and American literature for generations. However, Wicca, a new generation of witchcraft, has emerged in the past 30 years, and none of the witches profess to riding around on broomsticks.

“It’s (Wicca) really about honing your mental skills to accomplish the things you set your mind to,” said Betsy Daulph Fox, high priestess of a Bellingham English-tradition coven.

These new witches have no set system of belief or doctrine. There are many types of Wicca and they can be interpreted differently.

It might be easiest to compare Wicca to Christianity. Christianity is an overall term that includes Protestants, Lutherans and Presbyterians, as well as many other denominations. In the same way, Wicca is an overall term that includes English-tradition and feminist Wicca, among many others.

Although the rituals and beliefs of each coven can differ widely from each other, the winter and summer solstice and the midpoints of these solstices are thought of as standard Wicca celebrations.

On the eve of May 1, a holiday called Beltain celebrates spring and the marriage of the god and goddess in many Wiccan practices. Flowers and May poles have been part of May Day in America for many years and are still part of the Wicca holiday of Beltain.

“My fondest memory was when I was little ... leaving flowers on neighbors’ doorsteps, ringing the doorbell and running away,” Fox said. “We didn’t know it, but we were little baby pagans.”

During the time in Europe when agriculture was almost everyone’s occupation, before the Romans even knew England existed, Beltain was a time of ensuring fertility for the crops in the coming year. Everyone went out to the fields, lit a large fire and danced around the phallic symbol of the May pole.

At a certain point in the evening, couples would jump over the fire and go into the field and have sex. Jumping over the fire was a tradition that lasted into the 18th century according to “The Golden Bough” by James George Frazer. This would ensure the fertility of the fields for the coming year.

There are covens today that celebrate the fertility nature of Beltain in the same way. Many covens, however, only symbolically celebrate the sexual part of Beltain. One of the reasons given for this symbolic celebration is the relatively recent
awareness of sexually transmitted diseases.

"It's mainly a spring celebration," Fox said. "We celebrate it as a special holiday, which it is, and take the original fertility meaning and translate it into the modern context of our lives."

This modern context can include anything from success in a career to having a happy family.

Celebrations of Beltain for Fox's coven normally include a bonfire, a casting of the circle ritual, dancing and prayers. Decorations of flowers and a May pole are also part of the celebration.

The casting of the circle is a ceremony where the priestess evokes the gods and goddess of the coven and asks them to protect and watch over the ceremony. This circle is a way to create a sacred place separate from the secular world in which the ceremony can be performed. It is also a ritual aimed at uniting the coven members in the ceremony and focusing the group.

Symbolic tools such as candles, incense, water and pentagrams are used in rituals to put the participant into another frame of mind. Much of Wicca is symbolic and these symbols represent reality. For example, in the Christian religion, the wine and bread of communion are symbolic tools that also represent a reality of the blood and body of Christ. In a similar way the candles, incense and pentagrams of Wicca are the embodiment of the elements like fire, air and earth.

After the casting of the circle there are a variety of rituals that can be performed. Endora Morre, a feminist Wicca and the editor of Temples, a pagan magazine, says she celebrates by herself in a secluded spot and has her own ritual for Beltain. For Fox and her coven, there are dances around the May pole, a drawing down of the moon (symbolic of the goddess), jumping over the fire to make wishes and a cake and wine ceremony.

A lot of the rituals and ceremonies in Fox's coven are conducted in the nude. This is also a symbolic act of Wicca.

"The nudeness is not a sexual thing for our group," Fox said. "It is intimate, but not sexual."

"My fondest memory was when I was little ... leaving flowers on neighbors' doorsteps, ringing the doorbell and running away," Fox said. "We didn't know it, but we were little baby pagans."

The nudity is a symbol of removing all the trappings of the material world. It is also a symbol of trust and openness to the other people.

After the celebration, the circle will be dissolved, the parting statement of "Merry meet, merry part" is said and the ceremony is over.

Another important part of Beltain is the passing of power from the priest to the priestess. Beltain is a celebration of the awakening of the goddess after her winter sleep. Once again the exact ceremony differs from coven to coven and from one Beltain to the next.

During the fertile time of the year — spring through fall — the priestess has the power in the coven because this is the time when the goddess is alive in the world. It was the farming and gathering time in ancient Europe.

"It is a time for cold to yield to warmth, and death yield to life," Fox said.

Fall through spring the priest has the power in the coven because this is the time of the hunter. Beltain is a celebration of the reuniting of the god and goddess and the transfer of power from one to another.

"The theory is that the goddess has the power all of the time because she creates life," Fox said. "The god helps create life by sheer force of energy."

Fox explained the sun is a symbol for the god and the earth is one of the many symbols for the goddess. The sun releases pure energy and the earth takes that energy and transforms it into life. Beltain is the time of year when the god is starting to release more energy and the goddess is awakening from her sleep and getting ready to produce life. It is this celebration of new life that surrounds Beltain.

Not all Wiccans celebrate the god and goddess. There are many different types of Wicca and all of them have different ways to celebrate the coming of spring.

"I don't involve the god much, like the English tradition would do," Morre said. "It (Beltain) really is just, to me, a celebration of women's mysteries."

These mysteries include the changes in a
woman's body from childhood to adulthood, menstruation and the ability to produce life.

However, Morre added, "I can't speak for all witches because we are so diverse."

A common denominator among practitioners of Wicca is that they were drawn to it, many without knowing that Wicca existed. Many were dissatisfied with mainstream religions as being too narrow-minded or confining and felt drawn toward a more nature-oriented spirituality.

"For me, it's kind of something I've always been in," Morre said. "I first came across it (Wicca) in a book in the Bellingham library."

Fox said people who call themselves witches but only celebrate the holidays are different from those who study and live wicca.

"Every witch is a priest or priestess, but you can't just call yourself a priestess. There is a big responsibility and burden."

"It takes about nine months from the first class to initiation, sometimes maybe more," Fox said.

She has been studying Wicca for four years and was a member of a Vancouver, British Columbia coven before starting the Bellingham coven. She has also taught Wicca classes in Bellingham and emphasizes that no payment is ever accepted for teaching Wicca.

"If anyone is asking for money for teaching, they are a fraud," Fox said.

She added that it is against the ethics of traditional English Wicca to take money for teaching the craft.

Morre doesn't belong to a coven, although she has been studying for eight years. She said there are two types of witches; those who belong to a coven and solitaires.

Fox started studying Wicca when she became attracted to the symbols that represented the goddess.

"I guess it really started when I began to study symbols and dreams in art and culture and relating them to Jungian theories," Fox said. "It all seemed to point to Wicca as the religion for me."

Feminine symbols attracted her the most. These included anything from symbols of the moon to curved lines.

She was further intrigued after going to a festival in Seattle and meeting a man who had been studying wicca for many years. Then she joined a coven in Vancouver, British Columbia, and eventually started one in Bellingham. A coven usually contains 13 members and if it grows larger, a second coven is started.

"You've got to find a balance. You can't have too few members or too many," Fox said.

If a coven has too many members it becomes difficult to manage the energy produced during the rituals, she said. This energy is the result of the focus of the group (or individual) on the natural world and their part in it.

Wicca allows people to develop their own balance within their daily lives and within nature. However, Wicca is a religion that is still misunderstood by many people, if they understand what it means at all. There are no hags throwing various reptile parts into a boiling cauldron, intent on putting curses on the neighbors' livestock. Instead, Wicca involves women and men who celebrate the beauty and mystery of nature that exists in all of us.