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Klipsun magazine is named after a Lummi word meaning beautiful sunset. Western’s Journalism Department publishes Klipsun twice per quarter.


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Mina Vedder is a public relations major with a concentration in East Asian studies. After graduation she wants to return to South Korea, brush up on the language and write a thoughtful piece on the country's hope for a peaceful unification with North Korea. She enjoys eating a combination of saltine crackers and Milk Duds, washed down with ginger ale. This is her second contribution to Klipsun.

Curt Woodward is a 22-year-old Gemini and fourth-year journalism student at Western who may, just possibly, graduate next year. He enjoys sports and feels at peace among the trees, a byproduct of his eastern Washington upbringing. He has previously been published in The Bellingham Herald, the Ferndale Record-Journal and The Western Front, where he once served as Editor-in-Chief. This is his first story for Klipsun.

Bill Bennion is a journalism major with a sociology concentration. He hopes to graduate before he hits 30 and do public relations for the state in Olympia. When not riding motorcycles, working or doing school work, he tries to spend time outdoors camping, hiking and canoeing. Bill has been published in The Western Front, and has written and edited for South Puget Sound Community College's Sounds Newspaper in Olympia. This is his second contribution to Klipsun.

Jan True is a journalism major and an Internet resource creation and management minor. This is her second contribution to Klipsun. When she is not working in the computer lab, Jan enjoys modern dance and other arts.

Sarah Crowley, journalism major, brings to life the realities of living with AIDS in her second Klipsun article. Sarah has been published in The Western Front and The Wilderness Journal. After graduating this spring, she hopes to write for a magazine or produce documentaries for PBS. She spends her spare time feeding stray cats, rescuing lost animals and watching "Unsolved Mysteries."

J.J. Jensen is a senior journalism major. He is the sports editor for the Ferndale Record-Journal and has had articles and photos published in the Record-Journal, Lynden Tribune and The Western Front. In his spare time he enjoys lying in bed and smoking while watching "Beverly Hills 90210" and "Newsradio" reruns. In the future, J.J. plans to practice shoddy journalism for a disreputable magazine or newspaper. If that falls through, he plans to wrestle for the Intercontinental Championship or become mayor of his hometown, Poulsbo.

Angela D. Smith is a senior in the journalism department in the fifth year of a five-year graduation plan. She has spent many quarters on The Western Front contributing as a writer, photographer and editor. Post-graduation Angela plans to begin a career in the newspaper industry, and will eventually go on a trip around the world beginning on the East Coast and ending with her relatives in Japan.

Linnea Westerlind, a junior public relations major, has previously been published in Klipsun and The Western Front. She dreams of one day living in a tree house on an island in the South Pacific and eating mangos.
Countries between Two Nations
In a world filled with multicultural ideals, Thu Le dealt with the reality of struggling to find her identity. **Mina Vedder** tells the story of this woman’s return to her homeland and her decision to embrace her life as an American. Photos courtesy of Thu Le.

Communism. A word associated with so much hostility — creating wars, lost lives, separated families and torn countries. Thu Le, a young Vietnamese girl innocent to the heavy hand of communism, was no exception to the rule. Years later, she would begin to understand its repercussions and how her life had changed in one night.

Four years after the American troops left Vietnam in 1975, Oanh and June Le had no plans of escaping to America in the middle of the night from their homeland with their 1-year-old daughter Thu. In the spur of the moment, the Le family got enough money together and bought a ticket — a ticket to a world of freedom, Thu would later discover.

On the night of the escape, the family was divided, and Oanh and June boarded separate boats scheduled to meet later that night on an island outside of Vietnam. The family waited in a secret place until a flashing light from a boat at sea signaled that the area was clear of communist soldiers patrolling the waters. When it was safe, they were led onto a boat with other refugees; the men stayed on top, and the women hid below. If the communist soldiers noticed the boat, they would assume it was a fishing vessel and let it continue to the sea.

The refugees were allowed to bring bare necessities and money. Pirates from Taiwan, Laos and China were aware of the Vietnamese refugees trying to escape and often robbed families of their money and jewels. Some refugees swallowed their jewels or stuck them in their mouths and hid any money they had from pirates.

Days later, the boat reached Thailand, and the Le family traveled to a refugee camp where they stayed until they left for America.

Twenty years later Thu returned to Vietnam, the land of her birth, for the first time since her family’s escape. She was no longer a baby, but a young woman in search of her identity.
Stepping off the plane in Vietnam, Thu was astonished. The city was dark and the airport barely lit; Thu suddenly realized how much poverty embraced the country. She no longer felt a sense of security, but felt frightened at the thought of entering a communist country — a country from which so many Vietnamese escape in search of freedom. A country in which the government displays its wealth, while the majority of the population still lives in poverty.

"The word communist made me scared," Thu said, a cold chill in her voice. "There is no sense of justice, it's all propaganda."

Thu's cousins compared the private education they received in Vietnam with the public education Thu received in America. Thu says she quickly noticed how competitive the younger generation was — it was full of pride and patriotism.

Thu's first morning in Vietnam began with the neighbor's rooster crowing and street vendors shouting, trying to sell fruits, vegetables and other foods in the open market. Motorcycles raced through the roads, the streets bore no signs of the night quickly disappeared.

Walking through the streets that day, Thu began to feel out of place. She felt like she was being watched. People stared at her because she looked different, even though her blood was as Vietnamese as theirs. Thu stood at a mere 5 feet 4 inches, but she was taller, bigger and paler than the other malnourished, dark-skinned Vietnamese she saw.

"I felt like a foreigner in my own country. Even though I was around my own people, I didn't feel Asian," Thu said. "When I was in Vietnam I felt like an American; I never felt that I was Vietnamese."

Growing up in America, Thu said she always felt like she was denying her culture. She never had an idea of what Vietnam was like and imagined it to be a terrible place. While studying the Vietnam War in school, she was ashamed to be Vietnamese...
because of the horrible stories she heard and the American protests of the war.

"I always avoided the fact that I was Vietnamese," Thu admitted, with sadness in her voice. "I felt that it wasn't OK to be Vietnamese. I felt torn between two countries.

"I always had to reiterate to my friends that my dad fought for the South and not the Communist North. I didn't want to admit who I was. But, I've always been proud that my father fought in the war."

After spending two weeks in the land of her birth, Thu looked at her life differently. She began to identify with who she is. She began to feel more comfortable in her American skin and realized she related more to the American way of life than the life she left behind so many years ago.

"Going to Vietnam has made me more complete as a person because I can better identify with myself," Thu said thoughtfully. "I would consider myself American-Vietnamese, not Vietnamese-American. I don't want to deny a part of myself, but at the same time I think there is more American in me."

Thu also realized America is full of possibilities, and she became secure with her ability to dream and the opportunity to do whatever she wants: there is no fear of communism dictating her way of life. To her parents, who grew up under communist rule, America meant a chance for freedom and a better future for their daughter. In Vietnam, they didn't have an opportunity to be dreamers — communism wouldn't allow it.

"My country is so different, so poor," said June Le, Thu's mother. "I did the right thing. Thu now has the chance to do whatever she wants and have a good life. Everything is better here. Vietnam is communist, and you can't believe them, they control a lot of freedom."

Thu confesses she sometimes believes her parents have a hard time understanding her, leading to countless arguments because they look at life so differently. Her parents expect her to accomplish more than they have. Her parents want her to be a doctor or an engineer — something more prestigious than their jobs as drafters.

"My parents had a hard time accepting that I want to be an artist, a graphic designer," Thu said, with sadness in her eyes. "To them, it's not a profession. It's not something you go to school and get educated about. To them it's not a real subject."

In high school Thu knew she wanted to be a graphic artist, but convinced herself that it wasn't a possibility so she studied to become a doctor. Soon after, Thu became unhappy with her life. She realized she had to tell her parents their pressure was the source of her discontent.

Telling her parents the truth was liberating, Thu said, adding that it was ironic it happened before her trip to Vietnam.

"It seemed like it was definitely the right decision to speak up and tell my parents how I felt," Thu said, pausing before her next words. "Going to Vietnam helped me appreciate what I have here more, and it helped assure me that I was doing the right thing."

Thu knows her family is lucky — lucky they made their escape in one try. Many refugees die attempting to escape. Others are caught and spend years in refugee camps or are placed in jail — their punishment for fleeing. Many attempt to escape even after being caught numerous times because the hope of freedom motivates them to keep trying.

Reflecting on her trip, Thu realizes the importance of freedom and often ponders the idea of how one night changed the course of her life.

"I had to deal with the consequences of communism," Thu said, hesitating. "Communism changed my life — if it wasn't for communism I wouldn't be here."
While thoughts of college, partying and relationships control the minds of many youths, Curt Woodward discovers a few who are preparing to sacrifice the mainstream experience in order to spread the word of God to those who will listen.

As the soft, dim rays of the sun's last light diffuse the encroaching darkness of an early spring evening, vast, ambitious preparations begin at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Institute of Religion. The next batch of Mormon missionaries from the Bellingham area is in training, set to join the more than 60,000 men and women, mostly 19 to 26 year olds, who have already left home in their prime years, embracing a commitment they believe will change their lives.

On this particular Wednesday night, 15 young people are attending missionary preparedness classes at the Institute. They are in different stages of preparation — some are looking at a mission in the next two to three years, others are preparing various applications and appointments, gearing up for a trip some-
Johnny Johnson enjoys spending time with his retriever Bo, one of many friends he'll leave behind when he begins his mission in July.

During classes, prospective missionaries study verses to sharpen their knowledge of the church's message.

Photos by Chris Fuller

same people who may either refuse them or welcome their message with open hearts and curious spirits.

"It is a radical life, and by radical I mean it will be totally different than what you have been doing for the rest of your life," Youngberg tells the class. "There is a specific path the church has asked you to follow."

They will be yelled at, cursed at and harassed, have doors slammed in their faces and live in accommodations that are, at best, fairly Spartan. Allowed two phone calls per year, usually on Mother's Day and Christmas, their remaining form of communication with the world they knew will be letters written on their one day of sabbatical, when they also wash clothes and tend to other mundane tasks.

Conformity to strict guidelines is a must. The missionary's dress is conservative — a suit, white shirt and tie for the men, dresses or modest skirt-and-top combos for the women. The guys sport short, neat haircuts. They wear badges identifying themselves as missionaries for the church. They even adopt a substitute title — men are called "elder," women "sister" — and, in many ways, a spiritually superior alter ego.

Additionally, prospective missionaries must follow the church's moral standards for one to three years before their mission, abstaining from alcohol, drugs and premarital sex. They study texts and attend classes to sharpen their knowledge of the church's message and meet with church officials to discuss their spiritual progress. They are not allowed to date while in the field. Sightseeing and frivolous activity are kept to a minimum, usually near the end of their tour of duty.

Prospective missionaries wrestle with the implications of this lifestyle, but realize these rigid expectations are necessary to maintain what may be the most important virtue a missionary must possess — intense physical, mental and spiritual focus.

Cliff Meeks, 20, works for a telecommunications company in Bellingham. He has been offered chances to move up through the ranks in the past year, but there are larger commitments in his immediate future.

Meeks has been focused for the past four months on fulfilling his mission, interviewing with his bishop and attending classes. He has wandered down this path twice before, at 17 and 19 years of age, but never reached the destination. The last time he backed away from a mission, Meeks believed he was leaving the possibility behind for good.

"I was about a month away," he says, looking at the ceiling, searching for the right words to explain his thoughts and feelings. "Some other things in life came along and kinda — I want to almost say shook my faith. Not my faith, but I kind of gave up on going on a mission."

Work was in full swing, and Meeks was a few months away from buying his girlfriend a ring. He saw school in the future as well. None of these plans fit within a two-year hiatus.

When Meeks confided this to his local bishop, the reply was a simple query — how did he feel about that decision?
The combination of finals week and missionary training drives Brice Maldrum to the couch for a quick nap.

Elder Boekweg enjoys a rare moment of free time in Lisbon, Portugal.

"It stopped me in my tracks. I hadn't really thought about it."

At that moment, an intense instinct washed over him. Meeks says he felt the presence of God inside him — a warm buzzing that spread from the pit of his stomach and coated his body in a peaceful haze. He knew at that moment that he had to become a missionary.

"I still remember, when I felt that, my jaw dropped. I remember the look on my face — my mouth open, my eyes all wide. Right from that point in time I started making decisions in my life in order to go."

This feeling, the same one described by many missionaries in Meeks' position, is recognized among Latter-day Saints as the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is believed that the spirit's presence both protects and guides the missionaries in the field, and much of their time before leaving is filled with cultivating that presence and honing their awareness of it.

For a month-and-a-half, Meeks sailed on a spiritual high unlike any other in his life. No temptation fazed him and nothing could get his mind off his calling.

"You say to people, 'To be quite honest, I'm 19, 20 years old. I could be out partying. I could have girls. I could have a new car. But I am out here, and I want to share this with you, and this is how it's changed my life.'"

Meeks will end up leaving for his mission sometime next year, although he doesn't yet have any idea where he will go. All Meeks can do is prepare himself and await the call, the moment when those who hope to become missionaries confront, for the first time, the particulars of when and where they will be distributed to serve the church.

Western student Johnny Johnson, 20, found out on May 12 while digging through his mail.

"It was a long, white envelope," Johnson said. "You know what it is when you get it."

Johnson was so awestruck that he immediately called just about every friend he could think of to relay the message. He was so rapt, in fact, that it took him nearly seven hours to work up the courage to read what was inside.

The mailing contained a packet of paperwork, the most important piece was a letter from the church president telling him his mission would be in Seoul, South Korea. The letter remains framed on Johnson's wall, a treasured momento and a bit of inspiration — not that Johnson needs much encouragement. He walks around clothed in the spirit.

"There's no doubt," Johnson says emphatically. "I'm getting chills right now just thinking about it."

Just one year ago, Johnson was not so overcome. He had, by his own admission, strayed. He was caught up in living the college life, concerning himself with practices he might now consider quite hedonistic.

"I hadn't gone to church in about a year," Johnson says. "I was really into the party scene, drinking and stuff."

Then, much like Meeks', Johnson's life changed course after an unexpected moment of intense spirituality intervened in his life. Johnson was addressing the congregation at a friend's baptism when an inexplicable force seized him.

"Suddenly, the words just came out of my mouth, 'I'm going on a mission,'" Johnson says. "Everyone in church just stopped. I started crying right there."

Almost immediately, Johnson began a dedicated journey that will culminate when he ships out to Seoul for a two-year stay. Johnson has not wasted any of his time leading up to the mission, taking a mere seven credits spring quarter and tailoring his daily routine to reflect his goal.

"Every day it gets easier," he says. "I pray when I wake up, and when I go to bed. I go to classes, and read my scriptures and books for an hour, and play hymns on the piano for an hour,
every day. At first, becoming more Christ-like is like taking small steps. Now I'm taking big ones."

Johnson has made huge strides in his personal life since accepting the responsibility of a mission. Sharing the ways his spirituality has changed him is a fundamental need that many missionaries feel—an obligation to spread the message that has given them so much peace and joy.

"I was kind of a jock and into partying. I treated people poorly," Johnson says, reflecting on his high school days. "People who knew me then, or knew me last year, see me now and say, 'Wow, you've really changed.' That keeps me going—I feel like, 'Yeah, it's working!'

"I'm a lot more receptive to people, more loving. I have so much more to be happy about."

Johnson has received a chance to flex his missionary muscle—he claims to have gone “more than just about anyone” on what are called missionary splits, when males over the age of 16 accompany a working missionary in the field, helping cover more area and learning vital lessons as well. Seeing the process first-hand gave Johnson a new perspective.

"You get some door slams. It's something that really changed the way I thought about missionary work," he says, adding that effective missionary work is based on relating personal anecdotes to those they testify to.

"You say to people, 'To be quite honest, I'm 19, 20 years old. I could be out partying. I could have girls. I could have a new car. But, I am out here, and I want to share this with you, and this is how it's changed my life.'"

Johnson will travel to Provo, Utah, to attend a Missionary Training Center, or MTC, the centerpiece of 16 such centers worldwide. There Johnson will undergo a stepped-up version of training, up to 16 hours per day, with time split between learning Korean and mastering the scriptures he will preach when he hits the field.

"MTC is like church boot camp almost," Johnson says. "I'll be up at 6:30 and study for an hour. Then I'll study Korean. At about eight, I'll eat breakfast."

Typically, Johnson is not the least bit daunted by this prescribed course of work. He no longer gets hung up on what he is missing out on. As with many missionaries in his position, Johnson can only see what he believes are the great benefits of his mission. The prospect of becoming more enlightened, moving closer to God and getting more attuned to the spirit breeds a hunger that is not easily abated.

Looking past such a commitment is understandably difficult, but Johnson has tentative plans, at least at this point. His experience abroad, particularly with a foreign language, figures well into his plan of majoring in international business. He considers this happy confluence just one of the myriad blessings missionaries receive as parcel to their work of bringing souls to Christ.

"Right now, priority number one [when I return] is getting back in school and graduating. Then I want to get married in a temple," Johnson says. "But I would be happy working full-time at McDonald's for the rest of my life knowing what I know now."

Words such as these seem a bit too serious to be coming from a 20-something student, but in less philosophical moments, the sentiment holds firm. Ask Johnson off the cuff what emotion he's feeling when he thinks about his impending mission, and the carefree college kid returns, "Right now, I'm floating on air."
Tony Welch stands in a parking lot behind his car. Reaching into the trunk, he grabs a brown duffel bag and unzips it. He begins removing metal and plastic pieces and assembling a small, blue and black gun.

"This is my baby," he says. "I've got easily three grand into this thing."

The 19 year old stands about 5 foot 10 inches, with a muscular build and bleached-blond hair. He wears a tight, white tank top, showing off his nipple ring and the Superman tattoo on his right arm. While assembling his gun, he often folds his tongue between his teeth, revealing his other piercing — a bead made to look like an eyeball.

After leaving the safety of the parking lot behind, Tony stands in mud, surrounded by trees and bushes. He wears a short-sleeved black and gray T-shirt, faded black cargo pants and athletic shoes that have seen better days. A piece of orange ribbon tied around his right arm signifies his team affiliation. Wearing a pair of goggles with a plastic shield to protect his nose and mouth, he holds the gun in his hand, fully assembled, loaded and ready to fire.

Above the trees, the sky is overcast and warm, and moisture from recent rain fills the air. Tony hides on a narrow, overgrown trail in the woods east of Lynden. The sound of muted gunfire echoes through the trees: thwack, thwack, thwack. The bushes shake around him; he is being fired upon. Crouching down, he bolts along the trail attempting to avoid the stinging pain that brings defeat. The wet bushes saturate his clothes and puddles of water soak through his shoes. He nearly trips in the thick, soupy mud as he crashes through a bush and into a patch of nettles, stinging his bare arms. He spins around and returns fire.

Tony is not in the military, nor is he involved in a war. The bullets erupting from concealed barrels throughout the battle zone are small, plastic balls filled with non-toxic paint.

"I like paintball because it's an aggressive sport and one of the only sports where size doesn't distinguish your talent," Tony says.

Tony describes paintball as a sport in which two teams play against each other in a variety of ways. If shot, players are out and can't play again until the next game. In order to be considered out, the ball must not only hit, but also break and leave a spot bigger than a dime. If shot, players can also yell "hit" to be removed without checking for paint. This assures other players will stop firing.

Players consist of different age groups and skill levels. Some are parents with their kids, while many players are in their late teens to early 20s. Some carry cheap guns or rentals, while others carry expensive, high-performance guns.

Each tournament is organized by a host and includes different teams, as well as at least one referee.

Mark Santos, a 20-year-old junior at Western, volunteers as a referee for the owner of the playing field, Semper Fi Paintball. He gained experience as a referee in Kent and volunteers in order to learn the tools of the trade.

Driving to the field, players pass a metal gate and bump their way down a gravel road filled with potholes. After a short distance, players see the supply trailer, target range and the small, closet-like chemical toilet. They make a right turn and park in the lot by an old Marine helicopter.

As people show up, they wander in small groups to a trailer where they must sign a waiver. Then they venture into the supply trailer to purchase paintballs, compressed air or carbon dioxide.
dioxide and head to the firing range. The firing range serves as the center of activity, where everyone meets to have their guns checked.

On a wooden workbench of sorts sit two red, metal boxes connected to batteries that allow players to measure muzzle velocity. Players hold their guns above a sensor and fire toward the firing range. Guns used in play cannot fire more than 300 feet-per-second. If a gun is firing significantly less than 300 fps, however, the balls will not break when they hit their target. Mark places his muzzle a little too close to one sensor, fires and inadvertently coats it with green paint. He smiles sheepishly, apologizes and wipes the paint off with his shirt.

Guns are adjusted and readjusted until proper velocity is achieved. Tanks are filled and weapons fine-tuned until all meet requirements. Players whose guns are ready wait impatiently, testing the accuracy of their guns by shooting at targets on the firing range.

Tony hides on a narrow, overgrown trail in the woods east of Lynden. The sound of muted gunfire echoes through the trees: thhack, thhack, thhack.

Once the checks are complete, Mark tells players the rules and has them select a colored chip from a plastic bucket to determine their team. Then he sends them off to the playing field. Tony and Mark are playing for a group that heads down a path past the firing range and over some slick wood paneling covering a particularly swampy area. There is a general sense of disorganization. One team is ahead of the other, and no one can seem to find the corners of the field for the capture-the-flag game they are playing. Finally, they find their corners and the referee yells, "Ready ... Get set ... Go!"

Players dart in all directions. Strategy is a bit lacking. One player says, "You guys go that way," and another says, "Let's try to flank them." For the most part, people just start running in different directions. They scramble down trails, slog through mud and dive into bushes. Many find the nettles. The muffled whooshing of paintball guns firing is everywhere. The feel of being hunted and shot at is very real.

Players wearing camouflage clothing sprint down narrow trails, guns poised to fire at anything that moves. Some players find a hiding spot and wait for the other team to come to them, while others boldly dash to find their opponents' flag.

The referee wears the same type of eye protection as the players, but also wears an orange vest. He wanders around the field, checking players for paint spots and making sure they leave the game when they are out.

After 10 to 15 minutes pass, the referee yells that the game is over. The white team has captured the orange team's flag. Players head back to the firing range to be given the location and objective of the next game. They have a few minutes to buy anything they may need or to refill their air or carbon dioxide.

While waiting for the next game, many players walk around the parking lot animatedly discussing the last battle and showing off bruises from where they were hit.

Then, when their team is called again, they eagerly head back out into the field. They are wet and muddy, bruised by paintballs and nettle-stung, but no one hesitates to get in on the next game. This time they'll do better, they say.

The warriors scramble back into their hiding places within the soggy forest. Players can be heard crashing through bushes, pounding across the dirt or squishing through the mud. Yells of "hit" and "paintcheck" echo through the air. The sounds of warfare fill the forest once more.
A long-time Mecca for performances of all kinds, Mount Baker Theatre also harbors rumors of supernatural activity. Jen True investigates this local haunt and reveals some spirited findings. Photos by Chris Fuller.

Supernatural Stage presence

Upon entering Mount Baker Theatre, visitors travel back to the '20s when movie palaces were all the rage. Ornate plaster ceilings, chandeliers and dark wood furniture like one would find at Grandma's house adorn the lobby and theater. Images of knights and ships painted on the lobby ceiling display maroon, gold and sea-green colors. Intricate plaster depicting the face of a woman covers grates and organ grills.

However, according to employees, after Pearl Jam has left the building or the Winnipeg Ballet has tiptoed out the door and the Mount Baker Theatre empties, more than history hovers in the vacant building.

Walking through the theater like a museum tour guide, lead technician Leighton Verkist, 38, has a story for every nook and cranny. He talks as though divulging treasured secrets.

Heading upstairs, he stops in a carpeted hallway opening into the balcony.

"The famous picture is right here," Verkist says, referring to a photograph taken by painter Garner Davies in September of 1995. The photo was supposed to capture Davies' recent redecoration work, however, it captured more than expected. It reveals a misty haze lingering in the hallway. Some believe the picture confirms that the theater is haunted.

"I have had an incident with a ghost," Verkist says.

Unlocking a door behind the balcony seats, he continues through a concrete hallway. At the top of a short staircase on the left sits a dark projection booth. Straight ahead lies the generator room, a narrow concrete box of space.

"Now this is a pretty creepy place," Verkist admits, venturing into the generator room with a flashlight. The room is empty save for a pile of used equipment and three generator units located in the concrete cave extending under the projection booth.

"I was closing up the booth one night in 1984," Verkist says, zigzagging in and out of the rooms as he gives a detailed account of the closing routine.

"This door right here ..." he says, grabbing the inside handle of the generator room door, "does this ..." Without warning, he slams the door three times, briskly jerking the doorknob from side to side.

"There is no air in here that can do that, OK?" Verkist insists as the speed of his speech escalates. "... and there was nobody in here. Believe me. Because I was sitting right up there, and if anybody had regressed in here, I would have known it.

"Well, it scared me. I can tell you," Verkist continues. "... and I thought I heard a voice say 'Get out,' but I am not sure about that part of it, because that is what I wanted to do — was get out. So, I almost ran all the way to my car. I approached my car... I walked up to it. I got within five feet of it, and the dome light turned on."

Eerie incidents, including a mysterious voice calling out names, a female spirit walking across the balcony, rustling skirts and gusts of cold air have been reported since the theater's opening on April 29, 1927.

"Of course, see, the reason it scared me so bad is I didn't believe any of it," Verkist says. "I thought they were full of it. It was my thorough opinion that it was just junk."

Michael Fromong, former house manager, says the theater is ripe for the imagination. He admits it is difficult to avoid thinking about the possibility of paranormal activity when internal drafts, a noisy heater and an archive of stories begin to feed the imagination.

Fromong suggests sitting in the middle section of the seats in the empty house to get the full effect.

"You will start to hear the building, and you can hear the cars outside or a horn, or you can hear the heat pipes clanking. You can hear yourself," he says. "You become really aware of yourself."

Fromong wagers jokingly it would only take a person three minutes before the urge to turn around overpowers him or her.

"It is impossible not to turn around and see what's behind you," he says.

Despite all the reasonable explanations, Fromong says some things can't be easily explained.

"I was coming out of the manager's office on the mezzanine, and I heard my name really clearly," he says. "It sounded more like a statement rather than someone calling to see if I was there. I stopped, and I couldn't tell which direction it was coming from, so I went up to the balcony to see if there was a stage-
hand or a janitor or someone. There was no one in the balcony and there was no one else in the mezzanine or the lobby. I was, as far as I could tell, really alone.

Like Verkist, Fromong attributes his unsolved experiences to the paranormal.

"It is sort of a friendly — maybe a little mischievous — energy," Fromong says, chuckling through his nose. "I think it is the energy of all the people who have given so much of their time and heart."

Fromong's explanation parallels a psychic reading conducted in 1995, which found three ghosts in the theater — two performers and a stagehand.

The psychic was brought from Everett when the KING 5 television show "Evening Magazine" featured the Mount Baker Theatre in a series on haunted places in the Northwest, says Amy Lee Brewster, Mount Baker Theatre technical director.

According to some employees, however, the ghost they refer to as Judy is the spirit of a woman who once lived in a house that was demolished for the theater's construction.

Verkist says projectionists and technicians in the early '80s reported seeing the spirit of a woman walk across the balcony. Whoever the ghost once was, her original name was not Judy.

"She is actually named after Judy Garland," Fromong says, laughing. "We had to refer to her as somebody."

According to the legend Fromong shares, Judy was the daughter of the man who built the theater's decorative medallions. Her father brought her to see the building during construction, and she fell from the scaffolding and died. In memory, the child's face had supposedly been fashioned into radiators, furniture, organ grills, pillars and the ceiling in the mezzanine.

"This is totally made-up," Fromong assures, explaining that the face is probably a reference to the mermaid on the front of ships, due to the building's interior being fashioned after Spanish galleons. He says that combined with other folklore, the story made a good package.

"All old theaters are supposed to have ghosts. It is tradition," says Ruth Shaw, former Mount Baker Theatre general manager, bowing her head and closing her eyes as she speaks. "It is theater lore."

Shaw says she has been through the theater at night and insists that there is no ghost.

"Never once did I feel threatened in the house," Shaw says. "If there is a ghost in the theater," she adds in a stern, motherly tone, "it is not going to hurt anyone."

Despite the availability of simple explanations, the tantalizing atmosphere of the historic theater feeds the idea of phantom activity. Haunted tales keep the possibility lingering in the minds of everyone whose imagination helps create and preserve the legend of Mount Baker Theatre.

Distancing himself from the switchboard to avoid an electrical shock, Verkist throws the switch that controls the theater's electricity.

It is impossible not to turn around and see what's behind you.
Sarah Crowley ventures through the doors of a local AIDS hospice, exploring the day-to-day lives of the residents and volunteers. Photos by Chris Goodenow.
Surrounded by lush greenery and burgeoning rhododendrons, two women talk quietly at a backyard picnic table. Nearby, a miniature fountain gurgles softly from its mossy bed. A well-used barbecue stands firmly against the pale blue wall of the house.

Inside lives a family of six, and although none of its members are related, they do have something in common — they are all HIV positive.

This picturesque dwelling is the Sean Humphrey House, located west of downtown Bellingham. The SHH houses six adults and is operated by more than 25 staff members and volunteers. Since its opening in 1996, the SHH has primarily cared for AIDS patients with mental problems and/or drug addictions. Case managers or the Department of Health and Social Services refer residents to the SHH. To qualify, prospective residents must need personal care services.

"Most people here have full-blown AIDS," SHH intern Cassie Biehl says. "They do not want to come here, but they get better when they do."

Despite the dreary weather, Biehl sits outside on the patio talking with Marilyn Mora, a three-month SHH resident.

Mora, a mother of three, was diagnosed with HIV in 1988 after allegedly being raped by a relative. Soon after, Mora says she began drinking to block out the painful emotions.

Before coming to the SHH, she had been gravely ill, rarely taking her medication and drinking heavily. When her weight dropped to 82 pounds, Mora says the doctor told her she would die if she did not stop drinking.

"It's hard to remember to take 40 pills a day," she says, brushing back a strand of shiny black hair.

Since her move to the SHH, Mora has gained 13 pounds, and with volunteers such as Biehl to remind her, she now takes her medication regularly. Mora sits outside bundled in a fur-collared jacket; her red polished fingers hold a smoldering cigarette. Smoking, she says, is her last vice.

Sitting next to Mora, Biehl doesn't seem to mind the smoke. She's seen worse.

"Before I came here I had never seen people coming down off of heroin or cocaine," she says.

Patients sometimes relapse and go on a drug or alcohol binge, only to return days or weeks later, Biehl says.
"The SHH recognizes that an addict does not quit when they move in," she says. "So we encourage them to use clean needles and attend (Alcoholics Anonymous) or (Narcotics Anonymous)."

Since September, Biehl, a human services major at Western, has interned three days per week at the SHH. She spends much of her time talking and visiting with the residents. On days when they don't feel like talking, Biehl rents a video, cooks dinner or helps them clean their rooms.

Today Biehl offers to help Mora clean her room. Littered with partially unpacked boxes and mountainous piles of clothing, Mora's bed is barely visible. She accepts the offer.

"I think about how I can help someone each day," Biehl says. She says insatiable curiosity drove her to intern at the SHH. "I wanted to learn more about AIDS," she says, walking back into the house. "I wanted to know about these people's lives."

Biehl, 23, says some of the residents treat her more like a daughter than a caretaker. Faded Levi's, sun-bleached hair and a white T-shirt accentuate her youthful look.

"I think because I'm young, they see me as their daughter," she says relaxing her freckled face into a smile, "which is fine with me."

After nine months of interning at the SHH, Biehl says she has grown attached to the residents. Smiling jubilantly as Biehl approaches him in the hallway, resident Myer Loftin says he feels the same way about Biehl.

"I finally remembered the name of the pattern on my shirt," Loftin exclaims to Biehl. "It's paisley."

"Oh Myer," Biehl says, hugging him impulsively.

Loftin, a one-year resident of the SHH, says the staff has helped him get his life back on track.

Loftin was not surprised to learn he was HIV positive 15 years ago. In dire need of an amphetamine fix, he says he knowingly shared an AIDS-infected needle.

"There was only one needle," Loftin says, "and the guy told me he had AIDS, but at the time the drugs were more important."

Thinking back on those years brings up horrible memories, Loftin says.

"Back then I was just going to party until I died," he says.
AIDS. Many residents have drug addictions. Anti-viral drug combinations played a key role in the decrease of AIDS patients. In a 1995-1997 study, the National Center for Health Statistics recorded a 62-percent decline in AIDS deaths. New drug combinations, if taken regularly, have increased the life expectancies of patients. If a resident arrives near death, due to lack of self-care, drugs and alcohol are forbidden in the house, but residents are free to come and go as they wish. Drug use may be tolerated, but violence inside the house is unacceptable. Dinge says violent residents get kicked out. Residents use other residents as a support system, Dinge says, but in such close quarters they do not always get along.

"One time a pair of residents decided they had to duke it out," she says. "They went over to the park, had a quick fight and came back." Residents can decorate their rooms as they wish. Loftin’s room explodes with color. A huge glass butterfly hangs from his ceiling, and abstract pieces of blown glass adorn his crowded shelves. Handmade jewelry crafted from turquoise, wood, glass and plastic beads jangle on racks. A threadbare sofa sits in front of the Television.

Loftin appears comfortable in his room filled with beloved objects. "I'm subjected to a positive environment," he says thoughtfully, "and I get positive reinforcement here." Loftin feels strongly about AIDS education. He regularly speaks to schoolchildren about AIDS at the Whatcom County Health Department.

Loftin spends the remainder of his time collecting antiques and beading necklaces and bracelets. He accessorizes his bright green shirt with black-and-green-beaded necklaces. His coal black eyes gleam excitedly at the mention of his creations. "This one is hematite," he says pointing to the black beads. "It's a blood stone — it's supposed to purify your blood." Although Loftin says his condition has improved since his arrival, he still suffers from leg cramps, joint pain, anxiety and insomnia.

Despite the chronic problems, Loftin says he feels more alive than ever. It’s this type of attitude Biehl says she and the SHH staff hope to cultivate in residents.

As an unpaid intern, Biehl says she is definitely not in human services for the money. Helping the residents maintain a higher quality of life is payment enough. "I just want people to know that the people here are normal, living normal lives," she says. The residents here may have AIDS, but that doesn’t mean they should live a lower quality of life, she adds. "They aren’t different than anyone else," she says, settling cozily onto the couch for an evening video with the residents.

For Biehl and Dinge, residents such as Loftin motivate them to return to work each day. "I just want to give them a sense of hope that they might have lost in their lives," Dinge says. With Loftin she has succeeded.

"The Sean Humphrey House has gotten me my mental, physical and spiritual stability back," he says. "Instead of waking up and wondering if there's another beer in the refrigerator or where I'm going to get my next fix, I wonder what I'm going to have for breakfast."
native redemption
Phillip Narte has battled alcoholism since he was 13 years old. **JJ Jensen** uncovers the realizations this Nooksack Tribe member made during his journey to sobriety. Photos by Chris Fuller.

William Woolsey, alcohol and drug treatment director for the Nooksack Indian Tribe, estimates that of the two million Native Americans living in the continental United States, 65 percent of the adults are alcoholics, and 85 percent of the adolescents are predisposed to alcoholism and will come in contact with alcohol before they turn 18.

Phillip Narte was part of these statistics. He was an alcoholic who came from a family ravaged by alcoholism. To this day, everyone on his mother's side of the family who has died has died of an alcohol-related disease.

The fourth of nine children, Phillip grew up in a dysfunctional family on Bainbridge Island. Being lower class and of Native American and Filipino ancestry in a community of predominately upper-class whites, he faced racism.

"My family life was really bad. My folks scheduled their life around partying, so as children we were never taught that alcohol was a bad thing," he said.

"Also, on Bainbridge everyone was expected to know their place. People would call us 'brown pigs.' One time people threw beer bottles at us and another time people threw garbage at us," Phillip recalled bitterly as he spoke of childhood memories.

Phillip's high school girlfriend's parents even told her that if she didn't stop seeing him, they were going to disown her.

Growing up in the free love movement of the '60s and '70s shaped Phillip's philosophies on life.

"I was 13-years-old and I saw 'Woodstock' at the movie house and I changed my way of thinking — I wanted to be a hippie," he said, laughing. "The philosophies the hippies had were that everybody was one. No one was different. They didn't practice racism and they were into peace and love — it sounded like a good idea."

His new-found philosophies also led him to alcohol by the age of 13, and LSD, marijuana, mescaline and cocaine by the time he finished high school.
"If I had to do it over, I never would've done those things, but it was the '70s, you know, everybody was doing it... everybody I knew anyway."

Now, 42 years old, Phillip is able to look back at the quarter century of his life he spent as an alcoholic and drug-user and realize the mistakes he made.

"Phillip would definitely drink more than the other guys," admitted one of his younger brothers, Mario Narte, 37, a local fisherman. "He'd always drink until he blacked out, but almost every Native American I know drinks until they black out.

"One time we were at a bar shooting pool, and the next thing I knew, he was on stage and wrestled the microphone from the singer," Mario continued. "He was pretty good though, he got the crowd rockin'."

Phillip, sitting in his dimly-lit office at the Nooksack Tribal Center, gazed out the window at the soggy leaves of the young trees in the courtyard, the gray sky and the misty, constant drizzle of rain as he recounted his battle with alcoholism. His eyes became glassy.

"My alcoholism was from day one," he said. "The first time I drank, I blacked out."

When Phillip drank, it was three or four times a week and usually 12 beers minimum each time.

"Beer was my preference, but once I got drunk, anything was fair game. I've drank everything from cheap-ass, screw-top wine to the finest whiskey. I drank anything as long as it had the juice in it."

In 1975, Phillip began attending the University of Washington. He attended UW for six quarters before he decided to work at the fish processing canneries in Alaska. By age 22, he had moved back to Seattle and got a decent job for the Seattle Water Department, and by 24 he had married.

His life seemed to be looking up, but all the while he was drinking and using drugs.

At age 29, Phillip sought alcohol treatment at the Schick Shadel Hospital in Seattle, but his sobriety didn't last long.

By age 31, the drugs and alcohol had again taken their toll on Phillip. His marriage had ended. Too painful for Phillip to talk about why his marriage failed, he simply said "alcohol had a lot to do with the downfall."

Phillip then convinced himself to leave his stable job with the Water Department and try his luck as a commercial fisherman.

"[Phillip] got married and it looked like he was doing real well," said Mario. "He wanted to be a fisherman like his brothers and experience the rush and the big money we were making, but it didn't pan out for him. He lost his wife because of it. After that he didn't know where he was going. He met some shady-looking women."

At one point after his marriage had ended, Phillip managed to curb his addictions. He became Chief of the Sto:lo Nation, a band of 27 tribes around Chilliwack, British Columbia, but a coup had him kicked out of the position, leaving him feeling more alone and jaded, driving him to use drugs and alcohol even more heavily.

After his divorce, Phillip went from one bad relationship to another and was in a real rut. He later found out he was co-dependent as a result of his dysfunctional upbringing.

"The reason why I drank was to cover up things. When things were going wrong I'd drink. After a while I got in a pattern. I drank because I felt good. I drank because I felt shitty. I drank because it was Friday. I drank because it was Monday. Alcohol was my security blanket," he said. "In hindsight, I thought I was having a good time, but in the end I was miserable. I drank to hide my shame and the reality of where I was in life."

Woolsey said that before an alcoholic can seriously seek treatment, they have to accept the fact that due to alcohol everything is totally out of control. This usually doesn't happen until they get a DWI, their spouse leaves, they lose their job or they can't pay the bills, he said.

For Phillip, one of these was the turning point in his life.

One night, just over six years ago, Phillip received a DWI on the Mount Baker Highway after an evening of drinking at the Nooksack River Casino. He refers to this incident as his "nudge from the judge."

"If it wasn't for that DWI, I don't know if I would've quit drinking," he said. "After my DWI, I said 'Fuck, look where you're at, what do you have? I didn't have anything but the clothes on my back and a car. I was living hand-to-mouth and all my money was going toward staying alive and my drug and alcohol habits."

"I said 'Well, fuck Phillip, you have to make a choice about what you want to do with your life here. You can still do this and be a nowhere/nothing, or you can try to stay sober and see if it's going to make any changes.'"

Usually 13 is an unlucky number, but after his DWI, Phillip attempted his 13th try at sobriety.

"I would be watching TV and see a beer commercial and I wanted a beer so bad, I could taste the alcohol on my lips," he said shaking his head in disgust.

After staying sober for one year, Phillip went back to school.
Since the age of 31, Phillip had continued his college education off-and-on. In all, he had attended UW, North Seattle Community College, Seattle Central Community College, South Seattle Community College and Central Washington University.

Now after two quarters attending Northwest Indian College, he received his Associate's degree and graduated in the spring of 1996. He transferred to Western in the fall of 1996 and entered the College of Business and Economics. Phillip graduated in the spring of 1998 and had amassed 32 more credits than the required 180. Phillip holds the distinction of being the first Nooksack Indian to graduate from Western's College of Business and Economics and only the second in his family to complete college.

Going on five years of sobriety, Phillip's life has changed for the better. Out of college, he was hired as the human resource director for the Nooksack Indian Tribal Council. He bought a home in Glacier and lives with Sherry Lutsch, a teacher at the NWIC.

Woolsey said that anytime a Native American can defeat alcoholism, the entire community gets excited because Native Americans are so susceptible to alcoholism.

"Five hundred years ago, Europeans brought alcohol to this country. Prior to that, alcohol was not part of Native American consumption," he said. "Because of that, there is no immunity in the Native American communities for the disease of alcoholism. Anyone who is afflicted by the disease and has been able to get it under control and lead a program of recovery has performed a self-miracle."

Although Phillip has turned his life around, he now feels distant from his family and community.

"I just try to do the best job I can with what I have to work with," he explained. "I try to be the best role model I can for the community and anyone who sees me. It's a tough burden I have on my shoulders. Many people think that when a Native American goes to the white man's world and learns the white man's ways and gets a university degree that they aren't Indian anymore."

Mario has a hard time understanding Phillip's new lifestyle, but also respects what his brother has done.

"They say if you want to quit drinking, you have to change your circle of friends, but he forgets the fact that he has family. Part of the reason he distances himself from us is that we're still abusing. He's doing the correct thing staying away from parties, but he still comes around for the important ones, like holidays."

"I've been havin' a battle with [alcohol] myself, and looking at him, I want to quit myself," he said, with a note of respect for his older brother.
INTERNED, INCARCERATED, INNOCENT
During World War II, American sentiment toward those of Japanese decent grew hostile, and many Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps. Angela D. Smith reveals the racism behind the propaganda by sharing a former internee's story. Photos courtesy of Seattle Post-Intelligencer collection, Museum of History and Industry.

At 5 years old, she was considered a criminal. Her mother, father and she are American citizens — but were treated as foreign spies.

In May 1942, Elsie Nobuko Taniguchi, a third-generation Japanese-American, and her family were forced to hurriedly stow what belongings they could from their Fife home into suitcases and boxes. Her mother carefully packed away ohina-sama and koi no bori dolls, which are displayed to celebrate traditional Japanese festivals such as Girl's Day and Boy's Day, respectively. She put the dolls into a storage area where her neighbor could watch over them while they were gone.

Days later, Taniguchi and her family were on a train to their new, temporary home in Puyallup. "Life was great, and I was a 5-year-old child attending kindergarten at Fife Elementary School," Taniguchi said. "Unfortunately, when World War II broke out and the Executive Order 9066 ordered all Americans of Japanese descent and Japanese born to be evacuated to relocation camps, really concentration camps, life became very difficult and challenging for my parents and grandparents."

"I believe that the visual image that shows up in Life magazine of the FBI sort of leading a Japanese gentleman by the arm and taking him into custody for questioning had a profound impact on a lot of Americans of the dominant culture to think 'Well they must have done something wrong because the FBI doesn't pick up people randomly,'" Takagi said.

After arrests such as that of Taniguchi's grandfather, the Wartime Civil Control Administration organized the West Coast relocation of Japanese and Japanese-Americans. German-Americans and Italian-Americans were also interned, but not to the extent of Japanese-Americans. Many people were relocated to temporary assembly centers until internment camps could be built to house them for their years of incarceration.

"In all the confusion, it was better just to follow orders," Taniguchi said. "In this day and age, it wouldn't work; people would fight for their civil liberties."

Some people, however, did fight for their civil liberties.

There's the belief that no matter how many generations of Asian-Americans there's been, that we somehow have this umbilical cord leading back to Asia.

Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942, called for the relocation of people of Japanese descent living on the West Coast. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, the U.S. government moved quickly to quell the threat of invasion through anti-Japanese propaganda — and through stripping certain American citizens of their rights.

"The saddest memory for me was watching my dear grandmother crying uncontrollably for days because the FBI came to take my grandfather away without explaining clearly to any of our family the reasons for this unjust action," Taniguchi said. "I could feel all the frustration and bewilderment, really," she added.

Part of that bewilderment came because Taniguchi's grandfather was a leader of the Tacoma Buddhist Church, not a person one would usually suspect of being an enemy of the state. But, when World War II broke out, law enforcement made arrests of Japanese-American community leaders nationwide. Taniguchi's grandfather was later sent to a men's detention center in Montana, which was run by Immigration and Naturalization Services.

These types of arrests helped create an anti-Japanese sentiment, said Midori Takagi, history professor at Western and daughter of a former internee.

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Some people, however, did fight for their civil liberties.

Former internee Gordon Hibayashi questioned a curfew imposed on Japanese-Americans before they were relocated. In Hibayashi v. United States, 1943, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the curfew was legal for military purposes, but evaded ruling on the wider implications of relocation.

When Fred Korematsu defied relocation orders, his case also went to the Supreme Court. In Korematsu v. United States, however, the court was forced to rule on the constitutionality of placing U.S. citizens into detention camps based upon their race. Although a majority ruled it was legal for military reasons, three members of the Court, Frank Murphy, Owen J. Roberts and Robert H. Jackson, dissented from what Justice Murphy called a "legalization of racism."

"Such exclusion goes over the very brink of constitutional power and falls into the ugly abyss of racism," Murphy stated in the court opinion.

More than 7,000 Japanese-Americans and Japanese from Western Washington settled into Camp Harmony, an assembly center on a 25-acre area surrounding the Puyallup fairgrounds. Three hundred eighty hastily constructed barracks made of green, knotty wood were built in rows along the muddy ground of the main parking lot. The Army Corp of Engineers and Japanese-Americans from the area helped build the assembly..."
Interned wait in line for a meal at the Camp Harmony food hall.

center in less than a month. Each barrack was 17 feet by 20 feet and made to hold seven families.

Taniguchi said she remembered the blankets and sheets hung in order to separate families for some privacy. The building, she recalled, was like a “horse stall.”

The Wartime Civil Control Administration ran Camp Harmony in true military style. An 8-foot, barbed-wire fence surrounded the center and quartered the barracks to prevent the internees from gathering together. Guards stationed on six watchtowers looked over the compound.

Taniguchi had a friend who was interned at the age of 21. She had just opened a beauty shop, only to give it up upon her relocation to Minidoka. Her friend says she developed asthma problems from the dust.

Minidoka was considered one of the “best” camps. Security was more lax because it was outside the heavily restricted West Coast Defense area, which covered most of Washington, Oregon and California.

The camp was mostly self-sufficient. The ground was fertile and residents grew crops of potatoes, onions, beans, alfalfa, clover barley and oats. Many residents also worked at a garment factory on-site and produced clothes for the internees. Those who did not work, such as Taniguchi’s grandmother, bided their time with hobbies. Her grandmother made dolls with carefully styled coiffures and hand-sewn kimonos. One, covered in plastic, stands on the far end of Taniguchi’s mantle in her suburban Seattle home. Next to the doll is a row of pictures spanning five generations of family.

Taniguchi stayed in the camps for three years. Her family then returned to Fife and she began the third grade at Fife Elementary School. She continued her education in the state and graduated from the University of Washington.

More than 120,000 people, two-thirds of who were U.S. citizens, were sent first to assembly centers such as Camp Harmony and then to internment camps such as Minidoka in Idaho, Tule Lake in Northern California and Manzanar in the southern deserts of California. All people in the camps registered their names and histories to obtain beds, blankets and rooms. Among other questions, they had to answer if they were loyal to the United States and whether or not they would serve in the armed forces.

After two months at Camp Harmony, Taniguchi’s family, and many Japanese-Americans from Pierce and King Counties, were moved to Minidoka.

“We lived in Barrack 12-6-D ... one room to house my father, mother, baby brother and me. My mother worked hard to keep my baby brother from crying and disturbing the neighbors since the walls were paper thin,” she said.

Minidoka was another hastily built camp about 150 miles southeast of Boise. The camp sat at an elevation of 3,800 feet; temperatures there ranged from 30 degrees below zero to 104 degrees. In the hot and humid summer, the air ran thick with mosquitoes. Dust storms plagued the area.

“If windstorms came up, there was no getting away from the dust. It crept into the barracks,” Taniguchi said.

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During the time they were interned, Japanese-Americans lost the opportunity to reclaim their jobs, businesses and culture. Years of propaganda convinced many Americans that those of Japanese descent were not trustworthy.

Because of beliefs such as this, Taniguchi was told to be “American” and to stop speaking Japanese even though she spoke nothing but Japanese until she was 4 and a half. She didn’t re-learn

the language until she was a senior at the UW.

“Well, the propagation certainly does lend a lot of credibility and credence to those kind of racist views,” Takagi said. “Terms such as sly and treacherous and cunning are still used to describe Japanese-Americans.”

During the internment, anti-Japanese sentiments were splashed across the headlines of daily papers using the dehumanizing term “Jap.”

“It’s just a terrible racial term,” Takagi said. “To take their racial grouping, ethnic grouping, and to shorten it in a way is like saying ‘I dismiss any importance or appropriateness of the term of your ethnicity.’”

When Japanese-Americans were forced off Bainbridge Island, a March 30, 1942 Seattle Times headline read: “Tears, Smiles Mingle as Japs Bid Bainbridge Farewell.” When the evacuees arrived at Camp Harmony, a May 11 headline read: “Jap Invasion of Puyallup Under Way.”

cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," and "I'm for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska, and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps ... Damn them. Let's get rid of them now." Senators from West Virginia, Arkansas, Texas and Virginia all agreed with Rankin.

Attitudes stemming from anti-war propaganda from World War II, the Vietnam War and the economic crisis of the '80s have become anti-Asian in general, Takagi said. These attitudes have made it difficult for many people of Asian descent to be considered part of American society.

"There's the belief that no matter how many generations of Asian-Americans there's been, that we somehow have this umbilical cord leading back to Asia," Takagi said.

She said this is most evident in the press. She believes the media has a tendency to look at the birthplace of elected officials who are Asian-American and often question their loyalties and status as citizens.

"I feel the internment camps propagated anti-Asian sentiments, and it still exists today in the hearts of some Caucasians. Unfortunately, there are still many cases of hate letters and name-calling today," Taniguchi said, who is now the president of the Puyallup Valley Japanese-American Citizens League. The JACL was established to "fight discrimination of people of Japanese ancestry," according to its mission statement.

Although the U.S. government admitted it had done a horrid deed to its own citizens, Japanese-Americans who lost everything they owned did not gain any type of apology or financial reparation until years later. The JACL was a major force requesting apologies and financial reparations for former internees.

In 1976, 34 years after Executive Order 9066 took effect, President Gerald Ford declared the evacuation a "national mistake."

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act. The legislation offered a $20,000 redress check to all former internees, but the check could not possibly replace internees' lost property and businesses.

"I don't think that the compensation was meant to address the thousands and thousands of dollars that were lost because of the evacuation," Takagi said. "It just seems like in this country, for an apology to seem genuine, it has to come out of the pocket as well."

The government has also put money into preserving some of the camp areas, though many were plowed under as soon as evacuees left the camps. Vice President Al Gore put forth a proposal to Congress last February to spend $4.8 million to preserve the internment sites.

Takagi and Taniguchi both believe such measures are absolutely necessary to educate the public about the internment camps to stave off residual racism.

"I support the recently proposed initiative by Vice President Gore to preserve the site of the internment camps ... so that it will never happen again," Taniguchi said.

"There's still a lot of people who do not know about the internment camps who have gone through high school and early college who are just now learning about the internment camps," Takagi said.

She said she believes the lack of knowledge concerning Japanese internment camps stems from the extensive coverage of Nazi concentration camp horrors.

"There was a point where people were calling the internment camps concentration camps," Takagi said. "However, when information came out about the concentration camps ... people had a hesitancy to call the American camps where the Japanese were concentration camps because you don't want to in any way reduce the level of horror and shock of what happened in the concentration camps in Germany. That should stay as an example of the worst of humanity."

But, the internment camps are not something people should forget, Taniguchi said.

"We would all like to think that it would be a thing of the past — but it isn't," she said. "We don't want history to repeat itself."
Tandem hang gliding offers the realization of childhood dreams of flight. Linnea Westerlind shares her first experience hanging below a glider's colorful canvas. Photos courtesy of Marci Martin.

When I was little I used to have dreams I could fly. I would soar weightlessly, like an invincible bird. The dreams were so vivid that for years I half-believed I really could fly.

Luckily, I never tried to test my ability to fly, but I did develop an interest in hang gliding. I saw an ad for Whatcom Wings, a company run by a local hang gliding instructor. James Fieser sounded enthusiastic and upbeat on the phone. I would fly the next day.

I arrive with my friend, Marci Martin, at the landing spot just off Chuckanut Drive. I pull into a gravel driveway, surrounded by big fields, as James drops from the sky with another Western student. A huge grin crosses her face when she realizes she is safe on the ground. Her friends run up yelling congratulations and begin unhooking her harness. My expression must show my nervousness because they quickly assure me that it's not scary.

"The only word to describe it is surreal," Brecken Donelson says. She and the other four girls decided to try hang gliding for a group project as part of their human services major. The girls, all in their early 20s, acting young and playful, tease and joke with James as he steps out from under the wings.

James works as a hang gliding pilot and instructor and is certified by the U.S. Hang Gliding Association. He is about 5 feet 4 inches tall, with dark curly hair that he pushes out of his eyes. His jeans are ripped at the knees. He shakes my hand and then pulls off his T-shirt — white with a faded hang gliding emblem.

His enthusiasm for the sport is contagious, and his eyes light up as he describes the last flight. Despite his casual, youthful attitude, James acts professional, pulling paperwork from a well-worn briefcase for me to read and sign.
The only word to describe it is surreal

"It is the simplest, slowest and safest form of aviation," he says. James began his career as a hang gliding flight instructor 10 years ago. He averages 100 to 200 passengers per year. Anyone hang gliding alone must be trained in the Pilot Proficiency Program, or risk violating federal aviation regulation. To certify students, James charges $175 per day and the certification training usually takes six to eight full days. He offers tandem rides for $100 and cuts the price in half for college students.

My turn is coming up, but I have to wait. One more girl from the group gets ready to take her flight. Each ride takes about an hour and a half and involves a complicated and time-consuming process. James must load the glider, drive everyone up the hill, unload and set up. After launching, a third person must drive back down to meet James and his passenger at the bottom.

I sit in the grass and wait. I barely notice when Marci gets an allergy attack and goes into the car to take a nap. It is hot, at least 75 degrees, with a light breeze blowing the dandelions. My stomach is starting to do flips. I gulp and stare up at the tree-covered hill, 1,300 feet high, where I will launch.

Finally, James arrives again from above with the last girl, and my turn has come. The girls fill me with encouragement. After all their flights, the girls appear to be experts with the equipment set-up, and they stay to help with my flight.

James loads the glider onto the top of the dirty brown Suburban he bought for $800. He laughs as it takes him three tries to get the door shut securely. The girls, who have been driving it down the hill all day, tease him about their safety. Despite bad gas mileage, it seems to be the perfect vehicle for the job.

We begin the windy drive to the top, blasting top 40 music, which eases my nerves. The gravel road riddled with potholes makes me feel a little queasy. I ask James about ideal conditions. The best flying days, he tells me, involve a southwesterly wind of about 10 mph and a rising barometer. This combination results in the longest flight. He says some conditions are absolutely not suitable for flying, such as rain or winds higher than 30 mph, although some pilots choose to ignore the weather.

"It's much better being on the ground, wishing you were in the air, than in the air, wishing you were on the ground," he says.

When we arrive at the top 20 minutes later, two gliders sit prepared for flight. The owners stand near the edge, analyzing the wind. Their faces look wrinkled from the sun and their shoulder-length hair flaps in the breeze. The men say they have been waiting for more than three hours for the perfect wind. I
realize then that I would not have the patience to be deeply committed to this sport.

They complain to James about the wind, using lingo I don’t understand. Crossdrafts, up-wind ... All three seem to understand weather patterns as well as a meteorologist. James stands on the edge and whistles loudly. He turns to me and explains that loud noises can create the friction needed to let warm air rise from the ground. I had no idea so much science was involved in hang gliding.

I ask James if he ever worries about landing safely. He explains that when he flies solo with a good wind he can make it as far north as Western. But he never cuts himself off from an open area to land in an emergency. Once, he says, he was forced to land in someone’s yard near Taylor stairs at the end of Bill McDonald Parkway.

“I just walked down the street to my house with the glider,” he says grinning.

James starts unloading the big, colorful glider.

“This is my rainbow dream,” he says, laughing as he unfolds the wings and untangles the harnesses. Metal rods support the canvas material, which makes up the wings. James and the girls thread the rods into each slot, like poles that support a tent. He explains that this gives the glider stability in the air.

I put on a neon green helmet and a harness that feels suspiciously loose. I wonder how I will stay in it for the ride. James coaches me through a hang check. I hang from the glider, inches from the ground, fully suspended in my harness. Now I see that when I am lying down the harness becomes tight and I feel secure. James hangs below me and a little to the right.

The equipment appears much simpler than I imagined. The harnesses attach to several ropes, faded in color from the sun. I stand behind James. He instructs me to hold onto the sides of his harness, not the glider. A passenger who grabs the glider during take-off or landing can put them both in danger, he says.

“All you do is run, run, run, run, run,” he says. He tells me to keep running as fast as I can all the way down the hill past bright pink property markers. I stare down the hill.

“Are you ready?” he asks, more as a statement than a question.

“Yeah,” I say timidly.

“What?”

“YES!”
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winging it
war games