Kiko is a junior majoring in public relations. She would like to thank Bill Lynch for being an excellent storyteller, and her family, friends and the boy for always supporting her. Also special thanks to the Iron Street girls for putting up with her crankiness through the production of this story. Last, but not least, she would also like to recognize Robin Morris as the catalyst to unlocking the reporter within, and thank her for being an amazing friend, teacher and woman.

Quoc is a senior news-editorial major who believes anyone can be profiled, for everyone can offer a glimpse into the human experience, which might promote common understanding. To that end, he hopes you will enjoy reading about Lars Strohmeier, a writer more fun than playing video games.

Dian decided to profile artist Vince Labonde after she saw him wearing his 11-foot puppet at a Bellingham peace rally. This is her first Klipsun story. She has also written for The Western Front, The Every Other Week, and Whatcom Watch. She thanks Vince for hours of interviews, and her family for being patient.

Josh is an almost journalism major and seventh year senior. In the past he has worked in public relations for the Irish political party Sinn Fein. After graduating winter quarter (and he will) he plans to pursue a career with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Margo is a senior journalism major. This is her first contribution to Klipsun. After graduating in spring quarter, she plans to become a reporter at some big, prestigious paper somewhere.

Tarin is a public relations major who plans to graduate spring quarter. This is her first story in Klipsun. Tarin enjoys creating art herself, so writing about an artist in Whatcom County was an exciting task for her. She hopes this story will draw attention to the many different forms of art a person can create. Whether it's on paper, canvas or 35-mm film, art is found in the beauty of the subject.

Taber, a public relations major in his last quarter, researched for hours in order to find the perfect subject. His research led him to Kathy Bastow, an artist who creates one of a kind lamps, clocks and fixtures for home décor. Taber lived by a quote that he once read: "The only problem with avoiding temptation is that you may never get another chance." Taber hopes that his article will inspire artists who may have a passion to create art for a living, but are skeptical of whether they can do it or not.

Leanne explores how Steve Moore creates his gowns with a delicate hand and an eye for detail. Designing and sewing dresses since he was 17 years old, Moore is no typical college senior.

Margo is a senior journalism major. This is her first Klipsun story. After graduating in spring quarter, she plans to become a reporter at some big, prestigious paper somewhere.
Inner Exposure
Each eye behind the camera is in search of something different. Tarin Erickson explores the unique process of finding power with a local photographer.

Elements of Illumination
From open signs to custom pieces, Bill Lynch's neon designs provide a finishing touch to businesses and homes alike. Kiko Sola meets the man who has perfected fusion of the elements to produce glowing artwork.

Molding a Moment
Although casts are traditionally thought of as a remedy for broken bones, Kenya Casas uses the same materials to cast pregnant bellies and other body parts as keepsakes for her customers. Margo Horner talks to Casas about the art of body casting.

Reality Bytes
Quoc Tran delves into the world of amoeba-like creatures, mad cows and atomic dogs when he interviews Lars Simkins and finds out what it's like to have the power to escape through art.

Capturing the Image
When photographer Phil Schofield started out, he worked as the only photographer at a small Idaho newspaper. Today, he has a successful career in free-lance photography. Leanne Josephson focuses on the adventures, struggles and accomplishments that have led this Bellingham native to the top.

Cause & Affect
Some art can be on exhibit in a museum, while some is displayed on the sidewalk, amidst protesting chants and cries. Dian McClurg meets the man inside an 11-foot-tall protest puppet and uncovers the artist's efforts to combine his artistic talent with advocacy.

Passion for Perfection
To some, it is one of the most important days of their lives. Amber Hurley spends time with Western student Steve Moore behind the scenes as he creates wedding dresses and cakes for this timeless event.

Colliding Impressions
Jim Ward Morris already knows what it's like to make it. He's designed album covers for well-known musicians, his work is owned by companies and celebrities and his art has been displayed in galleries in Los Angeles and New York. Josh Haupt finds out how a high-profile collage artist continues his success while living in a small town.

Industrial Re-creation
While some artists buy their supplies at an art store, Kathy Bastow visits rummage sales and flea markets to find what she needs. Taber Streur discovers how this industrial artist creates lamps and other home décor from reusable goods.

Special thanks to Laurie Rossman and Bill O'Neill.

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Each eye behind the camera is in search of something different. Tarin Erickson explores the unique process of finding power with a local photographer.

Photos by Alaina Dunn, and courtesy of Cathy Angell.

Bellingham photographer Cathy Angell never dreamed of flying thousands of feet in the air while doing loops in a small aerobatic plane; she never dreamed of rock climbing on the side of a mountain; and she certainly never dreamed of seeing a 61-year-old woman break wooden boards in a Tae Kwon Do competition. But she's done all these things, and lived all these dreams, through the eyes of the people she photographs. For Angell, that is her dream come true.

"The eyes are the key to a portraiture of someone in their power — it's that certain look that you're waiting to get," Angell said, her own eyes lighting up as she thumbed through a stack of portraits she has taken over the years.

There's the portrait of the man sitting by the water, his long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants showing his youthfulness, as his hiking boots rest on river-polished rocks. The older woman sitting on her couch with book in hand — a woman who loves language and words so much she once worked for the game show "Jeopardy" as the person who came up with the words and themes for all the shows. Another woman is in her garden alone, surrounded by nothing but dirt, leaves and flowers.

These are people in their power. Angell said power is hard to define, but easy to see. She said true power is seen when people are expressing who they really are, either through their gifts, strengths...
Our true power comes when we're doing what we love, when we're doing what makes us feel joyful, lit up, present and grounded—all those things that make us feel totally like ourselves, with no compromise," she said.

Few others have attempted Angell's concept of capturing power on film. Over the years, she has developed her own process for finding this power within people, and this is what sets Angell apart from the many other photographers today. The real secret to Angell's success is not entirely in the photograph; it's in the process leading up to it. While she has no educational background in psychiatry or psychology, her photography process focuses more on the mind, the passion and the power each person has within them, than the lighting, angles or background of the photo shoot.

Angell, now 42, began photographing when she was 24. She remembers borrowing a friend's 35-mm camera at the time and walking around the town of Urbana, Ill., taking pictures. From that day on, she said, she was hooked. She liked seeing the world through the lens of a camera, and has taken several classes and workshops to learn photography techniques and sharpen her skills.

Angell first thought of her concept of capturing people's inner essence in 1992, when she had the idea to photograph women in their power. She noticed that photographs of women usually didn't portray them with strength or passion, nor did society encourage women to think of themselves as powerful. She wanted to change that.

"The idea felt very powerful to me, of capturing women on film in black and white, and I was really interested in sharing those images with the world so that they would inspire other people—men and women—to see the power they have within themselves," Angell said.

After working through some initial fears of her own about the project, Angell began searching for women to include in her book in 1995. The idea looked good on paper, but she wondered if it could actually be done. Would anyone want to participate? What if she couldn't capture their look on film? Can power really be seen in a picture? Questions flooded her mind, but surprisingly, willing participants weren't far away. Her only requirements were to include a diverse range of ages and ethnic backgrounds.

"It was really easy, partly because I realized that I didn't have to travel far and wide," Angell said. "Every single woman is unique and has her own personal sense of power, and it doesn't matter what her credentials are, how far away she lives or what she's done."

Of the 32 women photographed for the project, eight were local and 15 were from the Seattle area. Debra Salazar, a political science professor at Western, was among those photographed. Angell's mother, Dorothy Butter Angell, was also featured in the book, photographed in her power as a volunteer.

Angell's project eventually turned into the book, "My Spirit Flies: Portraits and Prose of Women in Their Power." Last year the book, which has now been published, developed into a traveling exhibit.

By the end of the project, Angell had developed a polished and impressive process of evaluating people and capturing their joys and passions on
Fairhaven professor Marie Eaton saw Angell’s book more than a year ago and was impressed with her photography style and the quality of her pictures. At the time, Eaton, a musician, was designing the case for her first solo musical album and needed a picture of herself to adorn the cover. As she sat at her desk describing these events, she leaned over past her guitar case and pulled one of her compact discs from a box in the corner. On the back cover is a picture of her, playing her acoustic guitar and talking about her music, completely unaware of the camera. For Eaton, who "absolutely hates" having her photograph taken, this was a proud moment.

"The photography process has always intimidated me," Eaton said, "but [Angell] made the whole photo shoot comfortable by putting me back in the moment of making my music and doing what I love to do."

The process of finding and capturing people’s strength involves two steps, Angell said. During the first step of the process, Angell meets with her subjects and helps them explore the moments when they feel they are in their power. Angell doesn’t even bring her camera to this meeting; the focus is internal.

"What I noticed right away when I started meeting with people, however, was that it was very difficult for them to say, 'I am in my power when ...' without first going through a reflective process about that," she said. "People don’t usually define themselves as being powerful and they often think that their talents, their gifts, the things they do, are insignificant and not very important."

Angell works them through this. She tells them to talk in a full stream of consciousness about when they feel joyful, passionate, good about themselves and confident, without screening anything out. She asks them to think about what lights them up, what gets them excited and what makes time go by quickly.

In a session with candle-maker Tracie Blood, 32, step one took place in Blood’s living room. The sun was just starting its descent for the day, but it was still bright enough that no lights were needed in the room. As Angell took a seat directly across from Blood, yellow legal pad and pen in hand, she asked her about the things she loves, the things that make her "Tracie." As Blood began talking, Angell recorded every word she said. Angell wore blue jeans and a black blazer. Her short hair flipped just before it met her collar. During the session, moments of silence were followed by bursts of
energy, and the process continued like this until no more could be said.

When Blood finished speaking, Angell read her words back to her, rephrasing them.

"You are powerful when ... you're in your power when ..." Blood smiled warmly and drummed her fingers on her coffee mug as Angell told her she is in her power when she is with animals, listening to music and making candles.

"It's just amazing to see the look of wonder on people's faces when I'm reading their words back to them, and it's one of my favorite parts of it," Angell said.

At the end of step one, a photographic concept emerges, Angell said. For Eaton, the musician, it was obvious that she would play her guitar during her photo shoot, taking pictures outside on her deck at home, a safe and nurturing place for her. For Blood, she'd be at home in her studio, soft music playing in the background, pouring wax and making the candles that give her joy in life. And for Heather McKendry, another of Angell's clients, she would be photographed behind an easel in her living room, while painting with acrylics for the first time; being creative is her power.

Step one easily leads into step two of the process: the actual photo shoot. This takes place at any site, anywhere the person wishes to go. Angell's commitment: "I'll do anything - my goal is to do anything that someone wants me to do."

Of course, people finance their own excursions, but Angell is always along for the ride. That is what has led Angell to the top of Mt. Constitution in the San Juan Islands. She'll go anywhere to get that picture and to get that look in someone's eyes.

"If I can get people in their environment and doing the things they love, they always drop into that grounded place, and make it easy to do my job," Angell said.

As for McKendry, who has framed her "power" photograph and has it hanging on the wall in her office, she said she will always be grateful for the job Angell did for her. McKendry also has the painting hanging in her living room, as another reminder of that power she's come to cherish.

"It taught me that I am a creative being," McKendry said. "I have really begun to embrace that since my process with [Angell]. I've been a person all of my life who has created, but never thought my artwork was good. Since my experience with [Angell], I have found it easier to call myself a creative person."

Angell has taken her skill a step further to do the "power process" and take photographs for corporations wanting to honor top employees or managers.

Joanne Kotjan, the independent distributor for Usana Health Sciences, a network marketing company that manufactures nutritional supplements, hired Angell last summer to acknowledge members of her team who had reached a certain level of achievement.

"It's easy to say that people are a business' most valuable resource, but many organizations don't back that with action," Kotjan said. "I thought that spending time with [Angell] in the power process would be an experience that would stay with them and the end results would be something tangible they could keep to remind them of the importance of being in their power."

Her goal isn't to take a million perfect pictures; it's to get that one where the person loses self-consciousness of the camera and gets totally immersed in whatever it is they're doing. Angell's photography style is designed to let people's real personality show. She doesn't pose people; that would make the process less authentic, less meaningful for subject and photographer alike. Her photographs are black and white, and the intentional lack of color is what makes them so dramatic.

"Black and white shows the character in someone's face more than color," Angell said. "When you shoot in color, there are lots of things to be distracted by, lots of colors competing with each other. In black and white, you see people's eyes, you see textures more and you don't have a lot of things competing in the background."

After all, she said, the secret to all her great photographs are in the eyes. Her goal isn't to take a million perfect pictures; it's to get that one where the person loses self-consciousness of the camera and gets totally immersed in whatever it is they're doing. Only then does she find that look of power.

When she's photographing someone, she takes up to two rolls of film sometimes, but said she only gets one or two good shots. That's what happens, she said, when people aren't being posed. She merely watches and waits for that look in their eyes, when they finally connect with what they're doing or where they are.

Angell knows that look well because she gets the same one in her eyes every time she goes to take a picture.

"I mean, look at her, look at her, that's what I'm talking about - and here, where she just drops into that place..." Angell trails off while looking through her photographs, her book, her life, her power.
Elements of
ILLUMINATION

klipsun 08
From open signs to custom pieces, Bill Lynch's neon designs provide a finishing touch to businesses and homes alike. Kiko Sola meets the man who has perfected fusion of the elements to produce glowing artwork. Photos by Kiko Sola and Heather Trimm.

Steading his hand over the 2,200-degree flame, Bill Lynch gently turned the glass rod until it started to bend. Patience is a characteristic he has acquired through many years of experience, and it showed on his face as a single bead of sweat dripped from his forehead to his chin.

"This is where it gets difficult," he said, biting his lip and squinting as he carefully shaped the hot glass. "You gotta get it just right or you have to start it all over again."

He quickly moved the glass to the drafting table to bend it accurately to the sketch of the sign. The glass cooled in less than five seconds while Lynch casually whistled along with the blues playing on the radio.

"I think that'll be OK," he said in his soft-spoken voice, wiping his hands on his faded jeans.

Scars from carpentry cuts and burn marks from working with high temperatures are medals of honor on his hands, giving testimony to his experience as an artist.

"It's a dangerous business," he said with a laugh. "But it's what I love to do, and that's worth it."

Lynch became interested in neon signs in 1987. The interesting contrast of electricity and light to normal painted signs lured him into taking an introductory neon course at Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood.

"I liked the neon signs because they were nicely done, but it was all straight lettering," he said. "I was disappointed with the jobs other people had done and I..."
What began as a hobby of learning about neon art quickly became a facet of Lynch's already well-established sign business. Lynch was so fascinated by the bright colors that he began painting his signs and murals to look like neon.

In addition to his complete woodshop, Lynch built his own glass-bending equipment, neon gas bombarding table and drafting tables. Among the businesses Lynch has made neon signs for are the Bellingham Ferry Terminal and the Pepper Sisters' Restaurant. Little Cheerful Café also has one of Lynch's neon signs in its window that was custom designed for the restaurant.

In addition to making the traditional neon "open" and various business signs, Lynch also produces neon art pieces. At first glance several teapots around Lynch's workshop look ordinary, but a closer look reveals neon squiggles of steam glowing green, red or blue from the spouts.

Lynch's teapot art can cost more than $250, and a normal open sign can cost about $200 or more, depending on what the customer wants. Other intricate residential projects can be as expensive as $2,000.

Rob and Cheryl McGregor of Bellingham are two of Lynch's many customers pleased with their neon artwork. Lynch made a custom art project for the couple using a piece of driftwood they had found and wanted to integrate into the art.

"It's just an amazing piece," Cheryl said. "The whole thing is about 3 and one-half feet high."

The McGregors are art collectors and said they felt a piece from Lynch would help to complete their collection. Lynch created a neon flower that looks like a lily blossoming from the driftwood.

"The flower is a really pretty azure blue with a hint of pink and orange and it's neat how the driftwood just wraps around it," Rob said. "We found the wood and just told him what we wanted, and he did an incredible job."

The project was costly, but the McGregors believe it was worth the price.

"It's definitely one of a kind and unique," Rob said. But creating neon art takes more than just artistic talent. There is a bit of chemistry involved as well.

"Making neon signs is a physics thing," Lynch said. "When I started, I didn't know that much about vacuums or electricity or using elements."

However, Lynch took the basic knowledge he had learned at Pilchuck Glass School and relied on books to help him develop his skill.

Neon and argon are the two main gases in neon lights. Neon produces a red light, while argon produces blue. The gas comes in flasks that resemble oversize light bulbs and can fill about 500 signs each. Lynch buys his supplies from a science supplier in Seattle.

"The gas is probably the cheapest part of the whole process," Lynch said. "One container costs about $12, but the glass rods can run about $20 for the glass I'm bending now."

To make a sign, Lynch must perform several tasks. He has to bend the glass to the proper form, whether it is squiggles or letters or shapes, and vacuum all the natural air and moisture out using his neon gas bombarding table to prepare the tubes for the gases.

"The vacuum on the table sucks everything out, and then another fills the glass rods with the gases," he explained.

The glass tube, made of lead, must be completely void of normal oxygen and moisture for the neon lights to function correctly.

"I use lead glass as opposed to lime glass, which is what glass blowers use," he said. "Lead is a lot more clear."

Then he welds an electrode on one end of the sign, which allows electric current to light up the gases. When the sign is completely filled and finished, he welds another electrode on the other end, sending the current through the sign.

"I was disappointed with the jobs other people had done and I knew I could do it better, so I did."

—Bill Lynch

"This is where the dangerous part comes in," he said with a grin. Moving the glass just a little bit closer to the 2,200-degree flame, Lynch, relying on years of practice, started on the sign.

"Am I making this look easy?" he asked, laughing. "It takes about three years of over 40 hours a week to perfect glass bending."

As the glass he bends slowly takes the shape of an "e," Lynch recounts the "Traveling Light" art show, an international celebration of neon art. He had a piece that was chosen for the tour displayed in Korea, Japan, Australia, New York, Atlanta and Brooklyn.

Lynch showcased an unorthodox piece of clothing.

"It was really cool," he said. "I set a real Hawaiian shirt in a leather suitcase and outlined it with neon rods."

Lynch wired the shirt so the neon colors would change when the rods ran into different colored flowers.

Lynch casually mentions that the Hawaiian shirt art is featured in the Museum of Neon Art, in Los Angeles.

"It's pretty neat to have a piece there," he said.

His proudest accomplishment was working on a totem pole for Pilchuck Glass School. He designed the neon light for the totem pole built by students while working with well-known glass blower Dale Chihuly who designed glass faces for the totem pole.
Lynch has only recently taken residential projects to work on because he doesn't want to be swamped. He takes independent ideas from buyers, and also sells his original art.

Lynch attended the Barney School of Professional Art (now known as the Art Institute of Seattle) in the early 1970s and graduated with a degree in art. His original plan was to be an art teacher. But when he was reprimanded for fraternizing with the students as a student teacher, Lynch decided teaching was not for him.

"I was caught smoking with some students," he said, shaking his head. "I just liked hanging out with the kids, and the whole teaching thing was just too structured for me."

He also had a brief stint working for Boeing as a commercial artist. There he learned more art concepts, such as drafting and production illustration.

"It was good stuff to know, but I knew I didn't want to work at Boeing for the rest of my life, because I wouldn't be happy there," he said.

It was his stepfather, who had been a sign painter for 60 years, who recommended sign painting as a career. Lynch thought it sounded good and decided to give it a try.

"I liked the idea of not being stuck behind a desk all day, and especially of being my own boss," he said with a chuckle.

With help from his stepfather and a lot of books, Lynch taught himself the art of painting signs.

Bruce Hale, a well-known logo designer from Seattle, and then commercial painter, also taught Lynch valuable skills to help develop his talent.

"Bruce taught me stuff you can't learn from books," Lynch said. "He taught me how to use a mail stick, lettering tape and important stuff like how to thin paint just right."

Lynch opened his own sign shop in 1972, in downtown Fairhaven. His shop offered a wide range of painting services including signs, murals, windows, vans and boats.

"I found I was enjoying it, so I decided to make it my life," he said. "I rented a shop downtown for two years. But when the landlord tried raising the rent from $75 to $100 I said 'No way!' and split."

Lynch then bought a building on Elm Street for $14,000 and credits the investment as the reason for his success.

"That was probably the reason why I've been able to maintain my business," Lynch said. "If I had to pay $1,000 in rent every month, there is no way I would have survived. I don't look for customers; they usually hear of me by word-of-mouth or the Yellow Pages. Lynch has had numerous customers around
Sunlight streamed through the kitchen windows and onto the topless woman reclining at Kenya Casas’ dining table in Bellingham.

Casas showed the woman, Ann Tive, how to smooth the cool jelly across her pregnant belly and breasts. She spent extra time on her navel, which jutted out and stretched the skin like an unexpected growth.

Casas said plenty of Vaseline is important to protect Tive’s skin from the plaster. That way, when the dried plaster is pulled off a few minutes later, it won’t hurt or pull hair. Later the mom-to-be will be presented with a belly cast—a huge, white $65 reminder of pregnancy.

Casas’ face was serious when it came time for the plaster. But her hands were those of an eager child slathered in the sticky, white muck.

The plaster isn’t cold. Its texture is like warm mud.

Casas worked quickly and precisely.

Gooey layers of gauze dipped in plaster were piled a quarter-inch high on Tive’s belly and breasts. The whole process is similar to making papier-mâché.

“It was really kind of a nurturing, loving thing,” Tive recalls of that day nearly two years ago. “I just focused on my belly while she did it and it was really kind of fun.”

The cast was ready to be removed immediately after all the layers were applied. Then it was slowly peeled off and left to dry overnight.

In the morning, the project was complete.

“Everybody can see ‘Hey my body looks like everybody else’s,’” Casas says. “Tive’s body has returned to normal since she had her child, but she’ll always remember what she looked like then. She has an exact plaster replica of her body from that day at Casas’ house. She chose not to paint it, so it remains white. It looks almost like the kind of cast you would get for a broken arm, but more delicate.

“My basic cast is $65, but I do other kinds,” Casas says. “If mama wants her hand or hands I charge up to $75 for that because it’s much more labor intensive.”

Most of her casting is done in her own home though, so travel costs don’t apply.

“The whole process takes about a half hour to 45 minutes,” Casas says. “There is not really any waiting time to let it dry. Once the body is covered I can pretty much pull it off.”

Casas is one of only two professional belly casters in Washington who advertise on http://www.bellycast.com.

Although few professionals offer a belly casting service, kits are readily available in baby or pregnancy stores and online. Prices range from $30-$60. “I still surprise myself with the stuff I make. I think ‘Man, this is awesome. I am creative.’”

Tive, who now has her belly cast hanging on her bedroom wall, agrees.

“It was nice to have someone who’d done them before,” she says. It seems like it’s sort of a social thing.”

Casas began working with plaster as a child and first applied the skill to belly casts about four years ago.

“I grew up in Seabeck, Washington,” Casas says. “We are talking backwoods. We had no neighbors. I think it inspired me to see beauty in everything. It also forced me to be creative out of boredom.”

“Growing up, my mom and I would experiment with casting various parts of the body,” Casas says. “We had face plaster casts of our friends and family hanging in the main hallway of our home.”

Casas has offered her services publicly for five years, and business is picking up.

“Oh God, it’s been so busy,” Casas says. “I do maybe five a month. I have appointments in January already.”

Soon she will have her own Web site, designed by a friend.

The demand for body casts, Casas observes, isn’t yet big enough for her to make a living. She works at the Community Food Co-Op to pay her bills, but she recently used money saved from casting to attend school to become a doula. As a doula she will offer pregnant women education and care in addition to the services offered by midwives.

Doulas work with the entire family on a physical as well as emotional level.

“I can see that my mind works on a creative wave,” Casas says. “I still surprise myself with the stuff I make. I think ‘Man, this is awesome. I am creative.’”

Casas began working with plaster as a child and first applied the skill to belly casts about four years ago.
Belly casting for her, began as a hobby and later became a small business.

"Once I got to an age where my friends and relatives began having children, I wanted to give them a gift that they could cherish forever and began doing pregnant belly casts," she says.

"After having my own child I came in contact with local midwives and doulas that began referring their clients to me and a hobby turned into a great business opportunity."

Now she creates casts of bellies and other various body parts. These types of casts are called lifecasts. Her gallery includes casts of breasts, buttocks, faces, hands and legs among other body parts.

Casas’ husband Eli, who allowed Casas to practice by casting his butt, describes the experience a bit differently.

"The butt one was painful," Eli says, laughing at the memory. "Not enough Vaseline. It's kind of fun to look back on it. I've never seen my butt before at that angle."

Casas has had some unusual requests.

"I have not done any penises," Casas says. "The man that wants his done is waiting until his belly is flatter."

Recently, she had a man from Anacortes, Wash, call her and request a mask of his face. She's not sure how he heard about her, but she said she figures it was the Internet.

Her current challenge is creating a full body cast of a friend. She's about halfway done now, working on one body part at a time.

"It's actually a little bit more complicated than I thought," she says.

Another friend of hers, Carlin Coulter, had a cast of her breasts made and it is now hanging outside her bedroom door.

"I have nude pictures in my house also, so I guess I'm just comfortable with nudity," Coulter said. "You automatically feel beautiful just seeing it. It’s like an art."

Casas captures every detail in her casts, even, at times, blemishes.

"I've had women who you can see the stretch marks on the breast," Casas says. "I did my husband's face and you can see all the pores and everything."

Now that Casas is publicly offering her services, she's become accustomed to dealing with common concerns. All of the materials used are non-toxic, she says. There is no risk of harm to mother or baby from casting.

The only real risk comes from the possibility of the pregnant mother fainting. But Casas performs her casting with the subject in a comfortably seated position, minimizing the risk of fainting.

"I have had no fainters, but sometimes the women get lightheaded," Casas says. "It happens about one in 10 women. I make it very clear that sometimes this happens and what to do so it doesn't happen."

The ideal time for a belly cast is 36 or 37 weeks into pregnancy, when the woman’s form is full and she is comfortable enough for the procedure.

Most women hang the casts in their bedrooms or in the baby's nursery. Other times, body casts are hung on living room or bedroom walls, or given as gifts.

"I love creating these pieces for people to treasure forever," Casas says.
Barren walls and empty seats make the classroom feel devoid of all life, except for one student who has taken time on a Saturday afternoon to work on his latest animation project.

The 20-year-old Western junior, casually dressed in beige carpenter jeans, a T-shirt and work boots, appears to be in his own world. His eyes are intent and focused on the tip of a black fine-point Sharpie pen, with which he dots and shades on sheets of paper, drawing lines where needed. He handles each sheet of frame with care, flipping back and forth to previous frames to check for content and contrast. One by one, he finishes each frame at an easy pace. When he completes 12 frames, he will have finished one second of the 3 minute and 52 second animation.

Lars Simkins, president of Western's Computer Game Design Group (CGDG), has been an artist for as long as he can remember.

"I was doing art in preschool, drawing fellow preschoolers and plants mostly," the Bellevue native said. "I liked fish for some reason."

As he matured, his interests evolved from drawing fish to creating characters, graphics and animations for video games.

"I've got lots of worlds in my head, or at least potential for them," Simkins said.

In one such world, amoeba-like Zeeble bugs evolve in a pool of primordial soup. The Zeeble bugs live, grow smarter and/or die, depending on user input of food amounts. The game's primary function is to simulate the evolutionary process.

Nathan Kepp, vice president of CGDG, said Simkins was attempting to create "a scientific and investigative Tamagotchi and Pokemon rolled into one."

"His idea harnessed the fun of those hit kids' games, and enables you a greater level of control and lets you test it in a more complex setting," Kepp said.

Before designing a video game character, programmers and artists first decide on the character's function. For example, if a game needs a creature that spits acid, the artist designs the character based on that premise, works with the animation, then gives it to the programmers.

T.J. Martin, CGDG's contract programmer, said although Simkins is an artist, he has knowledge of coding and is good at talking to coders on their level.

"It's important to have ideas of the programming process so you don't overstep limitations," Simkins said.

Simkins said inspiration for his artwork can be found anywhere from a pile of dust to doodling in an anthropology class, which was the case for his personal mascot: Atomic Age Dog (AAD).

"I had been thinking of the effects of post-nuclear-war radiation on people and animals, and decided that the dog breeds that had been so delicately maintained by generations of elite collectors probably wouldn't be allowed to die out," Simkins said. "I found the idea of a dog radiation suit so oddly amusing that I decided to expand on it, and I immediately began work on a full-scale blueprint."

Simkins declared the oxygen-tank-equipped dog as his person-
Atomic Age dog was his first large-scale attempt at precision and detail.

He admitted he was lying to himself and that the business major was initially a leisure activity.

"I'm getting away from work, or school, or the fact that my girlfriend just dumped me, or whatever," he said. "It's an activity that balances me out."

Simkins' turning point came winter quarter of his sophomore year when he introduced himself to an economics class.

"Hi, I'm Lars," he said, "and I'm pretending to be a business major."

When the confused professor asked what he meant, Simkins admitted he was lying to himself and that the business major was just temporary.

"He told me that I should seek counseling because my mindset wasn't very healthy," Simkins said. "I agreed with the second part."

After failing several classes that quarter, Simkins knew what he had to do: create art.

"Cows are Evil," Simkins' latest endeavor for artistic improvement, involves original music and first-time experience in computer animation.

The animation's visual journey begins with an angry cow, then zooms in close to its twitching eye, enters the red iris and travels via optic nerve into the cow's brain, bouncing from neuron to neuron. Meanwhile the rhythmic beat is hard-hitting but steady, as if marching to repetitious sounds of industrial machinery.

The song "Cows are Evil" had already been written, so Simkins thought it would be a good idea to make a music video as a means to improve his perspective hand drawings.

Koepp, fellow artist and programmer, said he was amazed when he first saw the animation because it was something Simkins had done in about two weeks while learning the animation software from scratch.

"It was far better than most people can produce in years," Koepp said. "He shrugged off my praise at that point. I knew for sure that Simkins will definitely go places in whatever industry he chooses."

Simkins said the primary advantage in using software such as Maya or Photoshop to create art is the undo button, which allows worry-free mistakes and the ability to try new things.

"When you're drawing something by hand, there are a thousand different directions you could go," he said, "but 99 percent of them will end up with a failed picture."

If that's the case, you're probably going to go with the one percent you know works, which means you don't often try new things," he said. "[With computers], you end up with more interesting content."

Simkins said in a few years, computers will help bring about real forms of escapism, the type that would act as a substitute for real life. His ideal video game to create would be a game where the world is dynamically generated, with no rhyme, reason or purpose, aside from exploration.

"I like the idea of people getting to walk through and play around with the ideas that people have instead of just staring at them," he said. "Video games let you do that."

Simkins said he wants to work in the video game industry because it facilitates artistic creativity.

"The video game industry is still a new industry and hasn't succumbed to the men-in-suit syndrome," he said. "You can still show up in casual clothing and joke around with your coworkers."

But the idea of creating art for money doesn't feel right, he said, comparing that concept to playing a video game.

"What if someone was telling you that you had to get to level 10 by 5 p.m.?" he asked. "Throw responsibility into the mix and suddenly it's not a pleasure — it's a chore."

"Part of that is just my spoiled white-boy attitude, but I think that most good art is escapism," he said.
CAPTURING THE IMAGE
THE JOURNEY OF A FREE-LANCE PHOTOGRAPHER

B.L.M. Wranglers
wild horses off the
as part of the wild
Geographic assign

Klipsun 16
Nearly 35 years ago, Phil Schofield was waiting tables at the El Torito in Sun Valley, Idaho. A college graduate turned ski bum, Schofield served tortilla chips at night so he could ski runs like Limelight and Christmas Ridge during the day.

Then one evening, a fellow waiter invited Schofield and his wife Susan over to visit. The man pulled out a pile of slides and pictures, showing them proudly to the attentive couple. On the way home Schofield turned to Susan and said, "He's a nice guy, but I can take better pictures than that."

A new single-lens reflex camera and countless rolls of film later, Schofield launched a photography career that would lead him to Russia, through the snows of Alaska and into the deserts and wheat lands of the western United States. Today, Schofield's work appears in prestigious magazines such as National Geographic and the Smithsonian. However, the road from amateur picture taker to successful free-lance photographer was neither short, nor easy.

Schofield got his initiation into photojournalism from the University of Idaho. Schofield and his wife moved to Moscow, Idaho, so Susan could pursue an education degree. While Susan learned about lesson plans, Schofield, who had already earned his degree from United States International University in 1969, absorbed himself in photography and art classes and shot pictures for the college paper.

In 1972, Schofield took a job at the Daily Idahoon, a Moscow newspaper with a circulation of about 8,000. Schofield said he often worked 60 hours per week to make $120. He was the only photographer and the newspaper didn't subscribe to any picture services.

"The greatest way in the world to learn is to work at a small newspaper where you learn to do the whole thing," he said, separating his hands to show the "whole thing" encompassed a lot of work. Schofield said he had a front page picture almost every day, and pictures on the sports and features pages too.

"Toward the end of my time, the pictures became a local institution," he said modestly. "When I'd go out on assignments and meet people they'd say 'Oh, I just love that picture of the pig riding the motorcycle!'"

Many of the photographs captured local people doing everyday activities — getting their hair trimmed at the barbershop, riding on farm machinery and checking the wheat in the fields.

Schofield's work was popular enough that he was able to convince the newspaper's publisher to compile his best photos in a black and white photo book. "Portrait of the Palouse" was published in 1976. The book would later help Schofield earn his first assignment at National Geographic.

"It was the linchpin in my career move from newspaper to magazine work," Schofield said.

In 1978, Schofield attended the University of Missouri Photojournalism workshop, a rallying point for the most creative and recognized photojournalists in the country. Only 80-100 select students are invited to attend each year. Schofield was one of them.

"(At this workshop) you have to find a story and sell it to a board of editors," Schofield said. "I hit a home run. I found an old woman whose husband had died. She still ran the farm."

Schofield showed the editors an impressive collection of pictures. He captured the woman's farmhouse — paint chipping, porch sagging and weeds flourishing. He snapped a picture of the coffee cup and saucer she set out for her dead husband every morning. In another photo the woman was asleep in her rocking chair, her wrinkled cheek resting against a stooped shoulder. One picture showed her leathery hands holding a tattered family Bible.

After the workshop was over, Schofield received a call from Bob Gilka, the director of photography at National Geographic, who was legendary for developing young talent. Gilka had seen Schofield's book, as well as his workshop pictures. He gave Schofield his first assignment: shooting Hell's Canyon in the Northwest.

"Taking pictures for National Geographic is one of the most prestigious jobs in photojournalism; it's the Broadway of the magazine business. National Geographic gives photographers the time and the resources to tell a story in a way no one else can," Schofield said.

However, working for an important photographic publication wasn't everything Schofield had hoped for.
Phil Schofield photographs wild horses in the Black Rock Desert of northern Nevada.

"You miss big chunks of your kids growing up," Schofield said. Besides missing time with his two children, Schofield also had financial concerns.

"You might get three or four assignments from them, but then money gets tight because the work isn't regular," Schofield said. At that time, National Geographic paid photographers $1,000 per week.

"After a month, eight weeks without a new assignment, you start to get scared," he said.

Susan remembers the unpredictability of those starting-out years.

"Of course there were times when it was like 'Jeez, why can't he just get a regular job?'" Susan said. "But those times are not the ones that stand out in my mind. Everyone comments that Phil probably has the best job they've ever heard of'."

In 1980, when Schofield was close to searching under couch cushions for spare change, the Spokesman Review, a newspaper in Spokane, Wash., called. The director of photography promised Schofield $500 per week, full benefits, a car, two weeks vacation and a $3,000 allowance for camera equipment. Schofield couldn't resist the stability of working for a daily newspaper, so he took the job.

Schofield worked for the newspaper for seven years, climbing his way to photo editor and director of photography. He started a legacy of strong photojournalism at The Spokesman Review, which continues to this day. But every once in awhile, National Geographic and other publications would call to tempt him with photo assignments.

In 1987, National Geographic offered Schofield a contract to shoot the Sagebrush Country in the Great Basin region of the West. With the promise of work for a year, Schofield decided to leave the newspaper July 4 to free-lance.

"It was a real independence day for me," he said, grinning at his pun.

That year, Schofield and his family moved to Bellingham. Since Schofield's work forced him to travel much of the year, he said he figured he could live just about anywhere.

"We thought this was the greatest place in the world," Schofield said, pointing at the sailboats on Bellingham Bay from his home in Fairhaven. He wore an old, black T-shirt with a white blob of paint on the front, having just been pulled away from working on his most recent "reclamation project" -- a small cruising boat. An avid sailor, Schofield spends much of his free time restoring sailboats.

From the excitement on Schofield's face when he mentioned an upcoming visit from his grown daughter, it's clear his family is important to him. Susan said Schofield was able to spend more time with his children by working from home.

"Free-lancing has helped keep our family closer," she said. "Of course, we always got to be in magazines and all our family vacations were stock photography."

The experience and expertise gained from constant picture taking paid off for Schofield. He has won several awards for his work, including "Magazine Picture Story of the Year" for the National Geographic story "Sagebrush Country: America's Outback." More than 19,000 photographers entered the contest. In his younger years, he won an award for the "Best New Face in Magazine Photojournalism" from American Photographer Magazine.

Mike Schmeltzer is an editor at The Spokesman Review and a former coworker. Schmeltzer and Schofield collaborated on a number of magazine articles and worked on a book together.

"He's a terrific photographer and has a wonderful eye," Schmeltzer said. "Beyond that, he is a master technician. He understands his equipment."

Chris Peck was a writer at The Spokesman Review while Schofield was a photographer. He said Schofield's genuine affection for people is what sets him apart from other photographers.

"He has a wonderful sense of humor," Peck said. "He knows how to engage people in either a conversation or activity in such a way that he can kind of capture their essence."

Peck said Schofield's best work is documenting the lives of real people and real events.

"In photography, the greatest photojournalists are artists, and that's where Phil really shines," he said. "The quality of images, light and the emotion he captures on film is truly a thing of beauty."

Though Schofield has shown his photographs in Moscow galleries and even at Grand Central Station in New York, he says his most important exhibits are in newspapers and magazines.

"In journalism your work isn't hanging on a wall in the gallery," he said. "A more important aspect is a lot more people see my picture and react to them."

Some pictures take more work to get than one might think. Schofield

"The real bottom line about documentary photography: You want to become the fly on the wall. Make pictures the way they would happen if you weren't there."

— Phil Schofield

Phil Schofield poses with his son Russ during an assignment in Alaska for the National Geographic book "Travel Guide to the Pacific Northwest."

Klipsun 18
once spent five days in a commune while he was photographing the Hutterites, a religious sect much like the Amish. Initially, the Hutterites didn’t trust Schofield because they were afraid he would portray them as communists. Schofield had to sort and pile potatoes for an entire day before he gained their confidence and was allowed to use his camera.

The hours of labor were worth it when Schofield saw what he had captured on film: an elderly couple with a basket of red apples tipped over in front of them, children standing next to potato piles and a boy peeking out from the bars he was playing on. Looking at the pictures is like stepping back in time 100 years.

Although Schofield willingly piled potatoes for a story, there have been times when all the potato piling in the world couldn’t get him a photo. Like when National Geographic sent him to photograph the Finnish people of Longvalley, Idaho.

“The proposal made it sound like Finns were out there in Lapland outfits milking reindeer on the streets” he said. In reality, Schofield said, the Finns were so assimilated to American culture there wasn’t a story. He went home without completing the assignment — an uncommon occurrence.

“The thing about doing it for a living is editors don’t want to hear excuses,” he said. “I haven’t had many situations where I wasn’t able to produce photos.”

Schofield has stories of survival too, like a backpacking trip in North Cascades National Park that nearly cost him his life. Determined to finish a photo assignment, Schofield opted to hike on a trail before it was open. Schofield said he crossed a snow bridge on the way up the trail. On the way back, the bridge collapsed, dropping him 10 feet into the icy water below. Schofield landed on his back and rolled over to see a churning waterfall pulling him close to the 30-foot drop only two feet away. By the time he got out of the water, Schofield was shivering with fear.

“It was one of those mistakes someone who spends as much time in the backcountry as I shouldn’t make,” he said.

Pick any picture and Schofield can tell you an adventure about how he got it, or who the people were and what their lives were like. He can also tell you the secrets to taking award-winning photos. The key, Schofield said, is to become part of the background.

“(Individuals normally) get three people together with arms around each other, a beer in one hand, all looking at the camera,” he said, demonstrating the pose by flopping his arms on the back of the couch. “The real bottom line about documentary photography: You want to become the fly on the wall. Make pictures the way they would happen if you weren’t there.”

Schofield said few people are born great photographers. Instead, he said, “There are people who are selective, stubborn and work hard to find great subject matter.”

After years of being selective and stubborn, Schofield said he has gotten critical of the system. He said it’s a fight for young photographers to break into the free-lance field, and hard for experienced photographers to keep work coming.

Over the years, when editors and publishers move around, Schofield said it’s easy for a photographer’s name to be dropped from the Rolodex — his name included.

“You find yourself starting over again (making contacts) when you don’t have as much energy as you did at 27,” the 55-year-old Schofield said.

Today, Schofield said he generates much of his income from stock photography sales, selling pictures he has already taken. Small photos can cost as little as $200, he said, while photo prices for advertising campaigns can reach $5,000. He continues to do contract work such as a recent advertising shoot on the Salmon River in Idaho. Schofield said he is also working on a project on the island of Molokai, where he is photographing the local Hawaiian population.

“The greatest benefit of my career is not making great pictures or winning awards, but the people I’ve met,” Schofield said. “Which to me is the greatest gift of all, something you might never have a chance to see if you weren’t a journalist.”

1. An animal keeper for a small traveling circus hugs one of her elephants during a visit to Moscow, Idaho.
2. A bear licks this man after they wrestled at a county fair in the early 1980s.
3. This photo is from a photo essay about Bellingham’s St. Francis Care Center that provides both elder care and pre-school day care.

"Everyone comments that Phil probably has the best job they’ve ever heard of."
— Susan Schofield, photographer’s wife
Some art is displayed in a museum. Other art is displayed on the sidewalk, amidst protesting chants and cries. Dian McClurg meets the man inside an 11-foot-tall protest puppet and uncovers the artist’s efforts to combine his artistic talent with advocacy. Photos by Dian McClurg.

Every Friday at 4 p.m. the ordinary intersection of Cornwall Avenue and Magnolia Street in downtown Bellingham transforms into a honking, waving peace rally. Grandmothers and grandfathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, students and business owners stand along the streets in the shadow of the Federal Building. They hold signs that say "Oil is Not Worth Two Million Lives," "Citizens Have No Say in Foreign Policy" or simply "No War."

Artist Vince Lalonde watches the intersection from inside an 11-foot-tall puppet. People stop at the crosswalk and stare up at the weeping face of the Iraqi woman puppet and the bloody baby she holds in her arms. Lalonde grins out of a slit in the shrouded stomach.

"It is something like performing on stage except that nobody really sees you," Lalonde says. "People who support the Bush administration seem to be a bit disarmed by the spectacle of the thing. It’s hard to look at it and say, ’I’m for bombing poor women and children.’"

Late last summer, two larger-than-life puppets joined the Whatcom County Peace Vigil at the Federal Building — new tools of a local peace movement that started in the 1960s. Lalonde, with Bellingham resident Polly Knox and others from the peace community, spent several weeks creating the Iraqi mother and her baby. The second puppet, George W. Bush, was made complete with cowboy hat and gas pumps for hands. Knox says they spent about 60 hours fashioning papier-mâché, PVC piping, cloth and wood into puppets. Now picketers carry the 35-pound weight of the puppets in old backpack frames. Lalonde always wears the Iraqi woman, but he says he’s ready to give someone else a turn. He wants to focus on making more puppets — perhaps a whole lending library of protest puppets.

Lalonde is a 38-year-old artist and musician who moved to Bellingham in 1997 to care for his dying grandfather. He is an Evergreen State College graduate, a painter, a world traveler, an alternative-school teacher, a soccer player, an environmental advocate, a guitar player, a singer, a band member, a puppet maker, a nanny, a business owner and a philosopher.

A person who didn’t know Lalonde might look at his life’s résumé and conclude the man lacks direction or focus, but Lalonde says he knows right where he’s going.

"I think that all the things that I have been are all great things to be, and if I could keep doing a little of all of them for the rest
of my life, I would consider that a life well lived," Lalonde says. "I think that specialization is overrated in our culture, and that the details of what you do are not nearly as important as the principles that inform and determine what those details are."

The heart of Lalonde's character lies in his role as a caregiver. For Lalonde, taking care of society means engaging in advocacy art. All artists have a vision, but Lalonde has a vision with a political and social agenda. Caring for his grandfather and making puppets for the peace community account for only a small part of what Lalonde gives to the community.

Bill and Laurie Snow have known Lalonde for four years. The couple met Lalonde at a studio in downtown Bellingham. Bill and Lalonde created art together at the studio before Lalonde's involvement in advocacy and music occupied so much of his time. The three are now close friends as well as colleagues.

"Vince is the sweetheart of the world," Laurie says. "When his grandfather was in the senior home, Vince would take his guitar over and sing to all the elderly there all of the time. And when a dear friend of ours was dying from cancer last year, Vince moved in with him and helped him until the end."

Lalonde pasted photographs of his departed friend, Sonny, along with pictures of his grandfather, who died in 1999, on the walls of his 700-square-foot home on Roland Avenue. The photos are nearly lost in a kaleidoscope of canvases, sketches, postcards and newspaper clippings that cover the walls, wooden cupboard doors and refrigerator. Most of the artwork is not his own, but he has carefully preserved the work of friends and family in the home where five generations of Lalondes have lived and died.

"I'm a bit sentimental," Lalonde says sheepishly as he moves his lanky 6-foot body around tables stacked with worn journals.

In the kitchen, which is clean despite the clutter of memorabilia, he has to move a cracked drum-set cymbal to exhibit two photographs of a panting dog. This is Lalonde's inspiration, an Australian Shepherd and Blue Healer mix named Bach. Lalonde exhibits a row of his own paintings along the wall. They contain color bursts of oil paint in both abstract and vaguely familiar shapes.

"See that kind of funny streak with those four short little legs on it that I put by my signature on all of them?" he asks. "That's Bach; he died a while ago, but he was a great dog."

Lalonde's father, Mike Lalonde, lives in Seattle. Mike says his son has always been concerned about other people.

"That's just the way he is," Mike says. "He still has all of his old friends from back in the third grade. For those people who get it, they make life into something special. Vincent gets it."

Outside the house is a garden shed. Inside the shed the cold, damp air smells of musty paint and turpentine. A four-paned window near the roof lets in some of the fading daylight. Nails poke down from the mucky ceiling like stalactites dripping with cobwebs. Layers of paintings lean against the walls.

Lalonde shuffles through the stacks, yanking and groaning. He finally uncovers a six-foot canvas with shorter side panels attached with brass hinges. He turns the piece around. He says it's a triptych he painted after the Whatcom Falls local advocacy artist Vince Lalonde plays his guitar and sings silly songs and old rock 'n' roll ballads to customers at the Mount Bakery in Bellingham. Lalonde often sings for a meal at the Mount Bakery and The Old Town Café.
Iraqi mother with baby and George W. Bush protest puppets.

pipeline explosion in Bellingham. Each panel is meant to represent a different phase in the catastrophe.

Lalonde points to the first panel. The greens, browns and blues represent Whatcom Falls Park before the pipeline explosion in June 1999. Lines of swimmers wait their turn to jump into the popular swimming hole on Whatcom Creek.

Reds and orange in the larger, middle panel show trees bursting into flames and smoke along the creek where natural gas leaked from a pipeline and was accidently ignited. Several residents were killed in the explosion. As the inferno raced down Whatcom Creek toward downtown Bellingham, it set a house on fire. Lalonde captured it all in his painting.

In the final panel, yellow police tape and cleanup crews in yellow protective suits contrast with the black of death and the red of angry citizens. Lalonde's great grandfather was the caretaker of Whatcom Falls Park until the 1960s, and Lalonde's house is located across Lakeway Avenue from the park. He used his painting to show his disappointment with the consumer ethics that allowed Bellingham to install natural gas pipelines in a major city park. Lalonde says this painting is the most powerful piece of advocacy art he has created, but it was not his earliest.

Lalonde says his art has been politically active since he drew cartoons and made other graphics for the Green Pages, a monthly, environmental journal in Olympia.

But for Lalonde, taking care of the world does not just mean painting and selling political artwork. He also taught civics for one year at Wellspring, an alternative school located in Bellingham and owned by his friends the Snows.

The couple says Lalonde's uplifting spirit and personal dedication to the children made him a special teacher. Bill says Lalonde also used his talent as a musician to keep the children and the school field trips in a state of peace and productivity.

"The first time I met him, I couldn't believe how intelligent and perceptive he was," Bill says. "After my first conversation with him, I knew I wanted him on staff with us."

Lalonde says he loved teaching at Wellspring, but he feels called to give more time right now to his music and to activism. He says he wants to keep working on his own identity before he tries to help kids learn who they are. And he wants to take care of himself in the process of caring for the rest of the world.

Lalonde says his job in this life is to lead others in creating a culture that uses healthy models for living, eating, moving over the earth and celebrating. He says he believes humans should attach themselves to a place, take responsibility for it and be healthy members of the community.

Lalonde has certainly attached himself to Bellingham.

He gets up each morning at 7 and listens to Democracy Now! on Western's radio station KUGS 89.3-FM while he stretches and feeds his cat, Simba. Then he gets on his bike and rides downtown. Lalonde parked his car a year ago and now rides his bike or walks wherever he goes.

When Lalonde reaches downtown Bellingham, he locks up his bike and grabs a hot cup of coffee at Café Avalino on Railroad Avenue. He sips the bitter drink, sweetened sometimes with cream, on his way to wherever he's going that day.

On the weekends, he usually heads to The Old Town Café.

"Did you know that Vince sings for his meals down at The Old Town Café?" Bill asks, proud to talk about
and plays his guitar for a meal. I don’t know anyone who lives his own philosophy to the extent that Vince does."

Lalonde plays at the café for about an hour, collects any tips the customers have left him and then eats his free meal. He says he usually gets enough money in tips to buy groceries for the next week.

"I don’t know anyone who lives his own philosophy to the extent that Vince does."
– Bill Snow, artist’s friend

Old Town Café owner Diane Brainard says musicians have played for meals there since 1989. She says her customers like Lalonde.

"He fits in well here," Brainard says. "With his guitar and his older rock music, it’s good music for the breakfast crowd."

If a musician arrives even earlier than Lalonde, he takes his guitar up the street to the Mount Bakery. The owner extends him the same offer as Brainard — except that a free meal at the bakery means a steaming espresso and warm pastry wrapped around sweet fruit.

Lalonde fits right in at the Mount Bakery as well. His own artwork is tucked into various corners of the small bakery. He gets the whole kitchen crew to laugh by singing a silly ode to the shop’s owner, his good friend. Gray light from the storefront window barely highlights the stray silver hairs in his otherwise thick and curly brown hair. He laughs, and the crow’s feet around his eyes are a surprise in his young face.

During the week, Lalonde goes to practice daily with his band, The Alamo Social Club. Sometimes he’s off to prepare the puppets for the weekly peace vigil. Every once in a while he mails a package to a customer.

Lalonde co-owns a small business, Northwest Pitch Works. He says the 25-year-old business supplies the best pine pitch for metal chasing in the country. The pitch is used by metalsmiths for doing a special type of metalworking. But it’s not a steady business. He says between playing for his meals, playing in the band, selling pitch to metal workers and doing various odd jobs he manages to pay the bills. Lalonde lives simply though, he doesn’t make much money, but he doesn’t need much money to live.

Occasionally, Lalonde takes the bus home if it’s raining and he has his guitar. On the bus, Lalonde writes in his journal. Whatever he’s doing, he thinks about his artwork and how to reach people that still need reaching.

Lalonde has been active in the Whatcom County Peace Community for about a year. His first real project for the group was making the two puppets. He has plenty of other projects in mind and in progress, but for now, Lalonde is content to wear the Iraqi puppet each week. He carries the creature on his back as the line of picketers parade down Cornwall Avenue and turn left to march up Holly Street. He has to bend his knees to duck the head of the mourning woman under signs and awnings.

At the front of the marching line, Lalonde calls out loudly, "What do we want?"
"Peace," the hundred or so voices cry out behind him.
"When do we want it?"
"Now!"
To some, it is one of the most important days of their lives. **Amber Hurley** spends time with Western student Steve Moore behind the scenes as he creates wedding dresses and cakes for this timeless event.
A woman stands, like a mannequin, in the middle of the room. Steve Moore slowly circles her. His eyes scrutinize every detail of the full, white dress, from the tightly fitted bodice to the flowing train. Then he kneels at her side and fumbles with the hem of her dress. He works quickly, making small talk as he goes.

This is part of the ritual for Moore, a 23-year-old Western student, who makes wedding dresses. He also designs cakes, arranges flowers and plays piano and viola for wedding music.

When a bride-to-be comes over to have her dress altered, or to choose a cake for her wedding day, he wants to make the experience fun and memorable.

"Getting ready for the wedding is most of the fun," Moore said.

Sitting at the piano facing a picture window he softly stroked the keys as he spoke. His fingers moved as if part of the instrument, with a mind of their own, dancing over the keys and coaxing music effortlessly.

Behind him along the opposite wall stood a dark wood table with a white tablecloth. On top of the table were seven cakes, each in a different shape. Thirteen hours of baking and frosting all done just so the bride could take a small bite of each and choose one for her special day. Each cake was decorated with pure white frosting, and each had its own special design. Rose petals were sprinkled around them, candles and bouquets of roses filled what space was left on the table, all of them in the bride's wedding color, red.

"Which one would you like to try first?" Moore asked the bride-to-be.

He smiled as the bride looked over the cakes as if she could not believe all this work was just for her.

Each cake had a small card beside it that explained the type of cake and filling. The bride paused and then chose yellow cake with cherry filling and slowly cut into it. One by one each cake was sliced and a small portion was taken out for tasting.

After the bride has chosen her cake type and design, Moore will put into practice what years of cake decorating and baking have taught him. Moore’s talent for crafting these beautiful cakes started in his childhood.

As a boy, Moore didn’t spend his after school hours roaming the neighborhood with playmates. Teased by his siblings and others for being an overweight child, Moore dedicated his time to staying inside, where his mother encouraged him to explore his artistic talents.

"I have the most amazing mother ever," Moore said.

"Her passion for cake decorating started with us. I remember in first grade I had these Big Birds (cakes), and every kid in my class had a Big Bird cake that she spent hours and hours and hours making."

Moore said his mother was the greatest influence on his life because she encouraged him to follow his dreams.

"I stayed inside with her when I got off of school, so I just picked up on her talent," Moore said.

Moore’s mother, Sandy Stevenson, said he was always a naturally artistic child and it was very common for him to start an art project.

"At about the age of 6, Steven would watch an art show after we had taken his siblings to school," Stevenson said. "This program was designed for fifth and sixth grade students. He would try to keep up, but became frustrated when he could not. I encouraged him to watch it carefully, and then work on the project after the program was over. I would watch the program while working on things around the house, pointing out techniques the instructor was doing. Following the program, Steven would shut the TV off, and then create the project from memory."

Stevenson said doing projects this way helped Moore learn how to focus and really practice important techniques.

"This ability is reflected in the detailed work in the gowns or cakes he designs and creates, as well as the performance of his music," she said.

Music has been a passion for Moore since he was a small child, Stevenson said. He started playing piano when he was 10 years old.

"Many parents struggle with getting their kids to practice," Stevenson said. "Steven would practice for hours. I would tell him he’d practiced long enough, and must go out to play. He would grudgingly comply, only to return 10 to 15 minutes later."

She said when he returned, he was anxious to prac-
He averaged five or more hours of practice per day. Stevenson said the perseverance and excitement that Moore put into his piano playing is the same as the effort he puts into all areas of his life. It is his perseverance along with his talent for design that makes him so good at sewing, she said.

"Steve has the ability to envision the completed project while it is still in its conceptual stage," Stevenson said. "He can look at a piece of fabric and know how the gown he's designing will look."

In the eighth grade, Moore started to take after his mother's talent of making cakes. As he grew older he wanted to try new things, he said.

As Moore explained the story, it all started when his 17-year-old creative mind was sparked by a problem his sister told him she was having.

"My sister needed a wedding dress and I told her I'd make it for her," Moore said. "She kind of laughed at me because I had never sewn anything in my life. But I don't like people telling me what I can and can't do, so I wanted to prove her wrong. I set out to make one."

So, at age 17, Moore learned to sew from a few pointers given by his mother and by reading books. Four months later Moore completed the hand-beaded gown. It was the first of many Steve Moore original gowns.

After finishing the dress, Moore continued to design and sew dresses for weddings, proms, beauty pageants and special events. He has made about 15 to 20 dresses so far, he said.

"I usually end up doing it for my friends, so I don't make a ton of money," Moore said.

Moore's current project is a wedding dress for one of his closest friends, Heidi Maher.

"He's always been like, 'When you get married I want to make your dress,'" Maher said. "He said it before I was even engaged."

After looking around at dress boutiques in every price range from inexpensive to designer, Maher said she just couldn't find exactly what she wanted. Moore explained to her how he could make a dress for her and save her quite a bit of money.

"It's going to be really simple — plain, strapless, double pleat-ed in the front, full in the back and French bustled," Maher said.

Maher confidently explained how she knows Moore will do a good job on her dress.

"He's anal in a good way," she said. "Little things that I would never notice drive him crazy. He wants it to be absolutely perfect, so I know it will probably be done better than if I went to any of the boutiques here."

Moore said what he likes best about dressmaking is the reaction he gets when a woman tries on the dress for the first time. "It's kind of cool watching the girl just walk out and she looks amazing," Moore said. "It's the look on their face when they try it on and zip it up and their hair is all done. It's a cool feeling watching the bride walk down the aisle and being able to say, 'I did that,'" Moore said.

The process of making a wedding dress can take months, Moore said. First, he meets with the woman whose dress he is making to discuss ideas. Then, he goes out shopping with her to get a better idea of what she is looking for.

"Usually, I like to meet with the girl at least three or four
times before they commit to what they really want," Moore said. "I tell them to think about it. It's the most important dress they'll ever wear. It will be in all of the pictures they will show for the rest of their lives, and they don't just want to rush into an impulsive decision."

After the woman decides what she wants, Moore said he discusses the design with her and tells her what will work realistically with her body type and skin color.

"He actually came in with me and saw some of the dresses on me and saw problems I had with those dresses," Maher said. "By having him make it, it will already be made for me rather than having to buy a dress, alter it, and totally change everything."

Moore said he would always tell a woman if a dress wasn't right for her, or if she needs a different style for her body type. He thinks of the garments he makes as a reflection of himself.

"I'm a perfectionist, so I don't let anything go out the door that doesn't look good on them or doesn't fit them," Moore said. "I allow myself enough time to make sure I get it right."

Next, Moore draws up some sketches of different designs so the woman can mix and match what aspects of each she likes best. Then, he said, he makes a test garment out of an inexpensive muslin fabric that costs about a dollar per yard.

The woman tries on the test garment to see what she likes and what she wants changed.

"I make all those changes on the fabric that costs a dollar a yard before I cut into the fabric that cost $20 or $30 per yard," Moore said.

Despite his keen artistic talent and perfectionism, Moore recalled one catastrophe he had with a dress.

"I had one dress that, the day before she was supposed to wear it, someone else used my iron and turned it up and I melted the skirt," he said.

To fix the skirt, Moore stayed up all night and made another one.

"The thing with sewing is that you can make mistakes, it's just a matter of taking a seam ripper and redoing it," he said.

Someday Moore would like to try to sell his garments to a boutique. But before he can do that portfolio.

"My style has changed a lot since I first started," he said. "I used to be really into the beadwork and the tiny intricate things, but now I think dresses with nothing on them are far more beautiful."

Moore's passion for dressmaking takes third place in his life; his relationship with Christ and school come first, he said. Moore is in his senior year of Western's communication program. As worship group leader at The Inn, Moore gets to spend time working on what he says is the most important thing in his life -- his relationship with God.

"One thing that people think is that I wake up in the morning and I think, 'What's my next project?'" Moore said. "It's not like that, I am involved in so many different things. It's just one more thing I do. I don't fall asleep thinking about it, but it's definitely something I love."

Moore said he worries about going into the dressmaking business and not making enough money to survive.

"I have a fear of not making enough money and being a starving artist, and that kind of makes me hesitant, but it's a good way to help out friends and save them some money," he said.

In the past there was one reason Moore said he was turned off by the idea of making dresses for a living in the future. The reason is the perceptions people have of a male dressmaker.

"This is the world we live in and if you do something like this, people think, 'Oh you must be gay,' and I'm not," Moore said. "It's just a matter of the older I've gotten, I don't care what people think of me. I'm secure enough in myself to know who I am as a person."

Stevenson said her son's eye for design didn't come as a surprise to her.

"Encountering those who doubt his talent has, at times, been an obstacle for Steven; that is, until they see his work. All doubt is removed."

— Sandy Stevenson, Moore's mother
Jim Ward Morris already knows what it's like to make it. He's designed album covers for well-known musicians, his work is owned by companies and celebrities and his art has been displayed in galleries in Los Angeles and New York. Josh Haupt finds out how a high-profile collage artist continues his success while living in a small town. Photos by Josh Haupt.

On the front porch of his two-story house stands artist Jim Ward Morris, a day and a half of beard stubble on his face, a hand-rolled cigarette in one hand and his 4-year-old daughter Pearl hanging off the other.

Wearing a white pearl-buttoned western shirt, horned rimmed glasses, and a hat from the band Son Volt, Morris is straightforward when explaining his art. He is quick to mention what is a factor in it and what definitely is not. Bellingham and Whatcom County apparently fall into the latter category.

"I've never really been the type of person who was influenced by the environment," Morris says. "I've probably been influenced by the music in Bellingham since I've been here more than anything really."

Not exactly the response one expects from an artist, especially in Bellingham, a town all too full of artists influenced by mountains and the outdoors; all too willing to talk about it as well. But Morris isn't exactly your archetypal artist, not in any conventional way.

His work is owned by well-known collectors such as Eli Broad, the IBM Corporation and celebrities such as author Michael Crichton. He's been reviewed in numerous publications including: Art in America, The LA Weekly, The Los Angeles Times, LA Reader and Artforum. So did a high profile artist like Morris end up in Bellingham?

Originally from Fullerton, Calif., Morris moved here six years ago from Los Angeles to see if he could continue working without having to network all the time," Morris says.

Morris now works mainly via the Internet using his Web page http://www.jimwardmorris.com to conduct business.

Morris also put out a compact disc two years ago called "Weathered Backgrounds", a compilation of bulk graphic design he had done, for which he receives royalties.

"You buy the CD, then you have the rights to use these images however you want," Morris says. He says he finds his designs from "Weathered Backgrounds" in magazines and on CD covers all the time, the most recent example being a Fender guitar catalog that used the art as backgrounds for their guitars. It's the alternative for people who don't have a lot of money to work with. This can factor in significantly since Morris has charged up to $5,000 for a piece.

"That was for the Ziggy Marley album cover, but it really depends on what the project is," Morris says. "It really varies depending on the project and the budget they're working with."

Morris pulls out a couple of recent pieces he's done in the form of postcards he's mailing out to try and drum up business. The newest is on top. Meanwhile, Pearl buzzes around the front yard attempting to play a game of Frisbee with an unwilling and feeble golden retriever named Doris.

Woodland scenes in bluish sepia-toned layers are combined with vintage style alphabet letters; a picture of a shotgun appropriated from an old advertisement completes the work. Another has columns of orange, green and yellow LifeSavers running parallel to an ambiguous looking vintage electronic control panel. Blocky dark-green textures stand in the background while the words "Seventeen Seconds," the name of a music project/band that Morris is currently working on, run across the work.

 Appropriation is a term and technique Morris
learned while studying at the California Art Institute where he earned a master of fine arts degree, studying with prominent artist John Baldessari, one of the most important artists of the Post Modern era in the late 1960s. Baldessari, who was Morris’s mentor, pieced together images and text in a conceptual appropriation approach. Baldesarri was also one of the founding faculty members of California Art Institute or CalArts.

"I started using images from magazines or photographs that I found and started putting them together and collaging them," Morris says. "Pop art was a big influence for me."

Pop artists like Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist and Robert Rauschenberg had an impact on the development of his art, Morris says. Morris actually worked as a painter for a time before he came to the commercial aspect he is now involved with in the form of album covers.

"I think most people would associate my art with Rosenquist’s even though mine isn’t done painterly," Morris says.

Morris was painting mainly in art school, in the experimental style that would eventually develop into his current collage/graphic design approach. He was picked up by a gallery and was showing his paintings in Los Angeles and New York for a while.

Morris had shows at numerous galleries including Jan Kesner gallery and Ace Gallery, both in Los Angeles. He also showed his work at the well-known Amy Lipton and Artist Space galleries in New York City. Morris was selling paintings for as much as $10,000 until the early 1990s, when the art world in both New York and Los Angeles suffered a collapse, Morris says. He also taught briefly at Fairfield University in Connecticut while he was living in New York City for two years.

It was after he moved back to Los Angeles that he was approached by an art director at Warner Music Group about designing the cover for the band Cracker’s album, "Kerosene Hat."

"So through just a series of accidents I got this commercial job, and since the fine arts world wasn’t really there for me I’ve been doing this stuff ever since," Morris says. "But it doesn’t seem like that much of a change in that I’ve always done my artwork but now it just happens to be used commercially."

A string of album covers followed Cracker, including Gillian Welch, Son Volt, Jay Farrar, Willie Nelson and Dwight Yokam. Morris has also done a fair amount of illustration work for magazines such as Harper’s and Western Living, which he still does work for every month.

Morris has also occupied his time working on album covers for local musicians.

Oliver Herrin, owner of local label Outright Records and former drummer for the band the Elvi’s took advantage of Morris being locally based. Morris did the album art for the Elvi’s record "Train Set."

"He captured the idea that we were trying to do perfectly," Herrin says. "We just gave him the vintage train visual idea and he came back with three album covers for us to choose from."

But Morris’ fans aren’t limited only to musicians and exclusive collectors. Bellingham recording studio Bayside Recording owns several pieces of Morris’, which are displayed throughout the studio. Bayside partner Chip Westerfield said he thinks it’s a great asset.

"We sat down with Jim and discussed at length the modern retro feel that we were looking for," Westerfield says. "And we haven’t had a client yet that hasn’t commented positively on it."

The economic downturn has affected Morris as well and has forced him to start thinking about doing different things with his art.

"I’m finding that work is slowing down, slow down," Morris says. "I’m slowly thinking about talking to galleries again."

Morris says he also is thinking about teaching art again at the university level.

"But now I have a 4-year-old, and it’s a lot of work being a single parent as well," he says.

Pearl makes another appearance, bearing on-loan gifts of green Mardi-Gras beads and a yellow paper birthday hat.

"I’m an artist," she says, "cause I draw pictures." And she’s gone again just as soon as she came, only to return 30 seconds later with a puzzle piece book.

At first Morris says being a single parent hasn’t influenced his art. He then pauses while looking at the cards he had brought out.

"That’s not completely true," he said. "Funny little things I’ll notice, like I used the images of the LifeSavers and that’s definitely from Pearl, so maybe she does influence me more than I think." ☺
INDUSTRIAL RE-CREATION

While some artists buy their supplies at an art store, Kathy Bastow visits rummage sales and flea markets to find what she needs. Taber Streur discovers how this industrial artist creates lamps and other home décor from reusable goods. Photos by Alaina Dunn.

In a small studio near Lake Whatcom, bent pieces of aluminum and small beads litter the floor. Twisted metal shavings lie near a drill press in the center of the room. Above all of this sit nearly 25 pieces of work, all one of a kind, and all with an element of chance to them. The scrapped pieces of metal and forgotten machine parts make the transformation from expired and obsolete into inspired and refreshed in the capable hands of artist Kathy Bastow.

Bastow's contemporary artwork is only 2-and-one-half years old, yet her mechanical and lighting talents, along with her intuition to fit unrelated pieces together, make her work inimitable.

Sitting in the studio with a cloth measuring tape draped around her neck, the 45-year-old is able to visualize organization and construction to her pieces. A dented sheet of oxidized copper, the color of the Statue of Liberty, is mounted to the wall in front of her with a wooden pear glued to it.

Bastow has attempted, for the past two years, to make a living out of creating lamps, clocks and finials for home décor. Her work is an exquisite display of recycled parts from salvaged materials that she visualizes into fully functional pieces of art by bolting and fastening them together.

Bastow's creations start as scrapped metal, fabrics and items that she has collected from rummage sales, recycling stores, flea markets and surplus stores. Colanders, old salt and pepper shakers, cogs, rusted steel flrets, and retired brass door knobs are just some of the objects Bastow integrates into her art.

"You used to not be able to find things at Target like you can now," Bastow said. "The only way to find the cool things was to go to craft shows."

Acquaintances of Bastow describe her work as an eclectic compilation of ordinary objects and materials that she turns into beautiful designs and textures. Each lamp is unique, with its own personality.

Bastow fastens a shiny steel plate, a rusty old cog and a tarnished brass doorknob together with bolts, and adds a glass vase for a body. Along with a hand crafted maroon lampshade, the piece is near completion. With a wire added and a light bulb socket fixed to the top, the lamp is ready to shine.

Arunas Oslapas, program coordinator of industrial design at Western, met Bastow at the Whatcom Artist's Studio Tour a few years ago. Oslapas teaches his students to make use of discarded objects the way Bastow does in her work.

"I became attracted to the fact that she uses found objects and makes them more valuable than they were previously," Oslapas said. "People can connect and relate to her work because of the everyday objects in her pieces."

Bastow's artistic talents started at age 14 when she began taking her first art classes in high school. Her teachers inspired her because they didn't just teach, they lived through their art, she said. One was a weaver and potter who moved south to Santa Fe, N.M. where she planned to build an adobe home.

"It was a large art project for her," Bastow said. During high school, Bastow focused on basketry and clothing design. In her early lamp creations, she incorporated her basketry interest. The only problem Bastow didn't foresee was that basket materials are typically flammable. Luckily, no lamps caught fire and she was able to change her artwork and incorporate more hardy materials such as aluminum and steel.

Her interest in lighting began when she made a Japanese paper to be used with an armature that she had made out of Klipsun 30
sticks. While drying the paper, she saw sunlight come through it and the infatuation with light has been her main artistic focus ever since.

With an impending graduation from high school, Bastow wanted to attend the California School of Arts and Crafts in Berkeley, Calif. She ended up going to Western where she attained a bachelor's degree in business administration.

"I had to realize that it was my life, and in my 20s I was concerned about my parents' approval, and I wanted their approval," Bastow said. "My parents never encouraged me to do art, and I wanted them to be proud of what I did."

She said from their perspective they thought becoming an artist would create a difficult life for her. She said she would have liked more encouragement from them for her passion and her love — making art.

"I am a very visual person," Bastow said. "I love to go to Seattle and just look around at shapes, textures and other people's work."

Her favorite challenge is to integrate things that don't typically fit and make them work well and have structural integrity.

Having been a bike mechanic for seven years, Bastow gained many mechanical skills. She was a partner in the ownership of Kulshan Cycles in downtown Bellingham, where she worked on bikes, and learned to appreciate metals and how things fit together.

"That gave me my mechanical aptitude, that is where I learned to use tools," Bastow said.

After seven years she decided to leave the bicycle industry and begin the transition to becoming an artist.

"I left because I really needed to see what else I could do," Bastow said. "I realized it wasn't really my passion, so I decided to leave."

For years Bastow had not produced art, nor did she believe she could make a living creating art. So, her 'hobby' remained dormant for several more years.

After leaving Kulshan Cycles she got a job at Adobe where she managed the Macintosh side of technical support. Still not satisfied with her career, she moved to Olympic Health Management in Bellingham to help make the transition from a full-time employee to a full-time artist. She says it was something she had to do.

"I would really regret dying without having done this and least tried to make a living doing what I love," she said. "My transition was to do my art. It was a psychological transformation that I had to make. Having a prestigious job, I couldn't just move to the other side. I needed to slowly make the transition to creating art full time. I'm still not completely there."

Bastow sells between 10 and 25 pieces at each show she attends and has been to eight or 10 shows in the past few years. Bastow now works as an accountant from home, devoting as much time as possible to her art. Currently she is only able to give about 10 percent to her art, but ideally she would like to devote 50 percent to both art and work.

Bastow's design art is sold in art galleries across the United States. One in particular is called Soho Art Gallery, located in historic Salida, Colo. The general manager of the gallery, Sherri Steele, praised Bastow for making "eclectic and fun artwork." The Soho Gallery displays 15 pieces of Bastow's work, priced from $38 to $400.

"When people fall in love with her work they usually aren't afraid to spend the money on it," Steele said. "Her work, especially her clocks, make people smile. There is a lot of positive energy in her work."

Bastow's clocks, like her lamps, are a mix of salvaged materials. One such piece in her home consists of antique cherry furniture legs for the sides, a piece of khaki green titanium with holes in it for the face, a brass dish from an antique scale for character and a new pendulum for functionality. The vintage style artwork is elegant yet playful.

Currently, her lamps sell for $95 to $600 and clocks sell for between $38 and $185.

"Part of my struggle with marketing one-of-a-kind work is to keep the price low," Bastow said.

"I felt that I would be very happy if I could carve out time to actually do my art on a regular basis and make a living. That would be something that I would really enjoy."

—I Kathy Bastow

Amid the piles of colorful beads, brass doorknobs, shoe horns and ball bearings in her workshop, Kathy Bastow assembles quirky lamps and clocks with a hint of the fantastic.