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“What is the feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? — it's the too huge world vaulting us, and it's good-by.”
— Sal Paradise, “On the Road” by Jack Kerouac

Saying goodbye? Not always.
Sometimes it's hard to bid farewell when we depart from a person, an era or ideology, but people find comfort in the possibility of returning again and recapturing what once was.

Because this notion is so prevalent in modern lifestyles, the Klipsun staff decided to make a tribute to all things old and explore symptoms of nostalgia that surround us today.

In Bellingham, the Ladies of the Evening Society members honor the history of Fairhaven bordello owners and madams in the 1890s by dressing and acting the part of historical legends. Upon returning to her hometown of Leavenworth, a student finds her Bavarian roots invaluable to her as the town risks losing its old world charm to modern day commerce. Today, putting vinyl on a turntable is an event in itself, and a family of dairy farmers recalls a time before computer-monitored milking.

These are the symptoms. This is nostalgia.

Thanks for reading! We appreciate your feedback. If you have any questions or comments, please call us at 360.650.3737 or e-mail us at klipsunwwu@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

Christina Twu
editor in chief
Jesse Smith is a business management student only taking six credits spring quarter. He would like to thank everyone involved in the article for their willingness to go "on the record." He also wishes he were taller: just another two inches would do it. Everything else is pretty much OK.

Mari Bergstrom is a senior English major with an emphasis in literature and journalism minor. She would like to thank the Ladies of the Evening Society, as well as Eric, JB and her family for their love and support. Upon graduating this spring, she plans to take a year off before attending law school.

Guillermo Ventura would like to say, "Bye."

Shannon Barney is a junior journalism major in the public relations sequence and a minor in business administration. She appreciates those who took the time to share their story and passions with her. She would also like to thank Todd Matthews for giving her the foundation to do what she loves to do.

Tanya Rozeboom is a senior journalism major in the public relations sequence. She would like to thank her sources for their cooperation, her journalism mentors (you know who you are!) for their helpful tips and her family and friends for making her laugh. This story would not be possible without her roots tying her to the small town of Lynden and the farming community of Whatcom County.

Jessica Evans is a junior journalism major in the public relations sequence looking forward to playing hard in Spain next year. She would like to thank everyone who contributed to this story, namely the hometown friends and family who instilled within her a strong work ethic and passion for people.

Cheryl Julian is a senior journalism major in the public relations sequence. She would like to thank all of the sources who gave of their time and cooperation, and even humored her by answering all of her questions long after the interviews had ended. She would also like to thank her family and friends for their support of her endeavor to change the world — one written word at a time.
Back to the 'Ham

Gordon Epperson's book, "The Guru of Malad," states that you can never go home again. I find this idea to be ludicrous, because the best decision I ever made was to come back home to Bellingham. I was born in St. Joseph's Hospital and spent 10 years and nine months as a blissful Bellingham resident.

During the summer, I would play at one of the Approximately 14 parks with my friends and family. Throughout the winter months, I was engrossed in Bellingham Parks and Recreation basketball teams and watching the Bellingham Ice Hawks play hockey.

The one thing that sticks out the most in my memory is that I always felt comfortable, no matter where I was or whom I was with in Bellingham.

Then my family and I moved to a suburb of Seattle. Even though I only lived one hour away from Bellingham, the solace disappeared. Gone were the pale lavender-colored houses and children's toys in the yards. The train whistle of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe no longer comforted me at night. I found myself in a school where clothes and dating were what really mattered, as opposed to one's character and imagination. I loathed almost everything about the suburb: the fact that the adults gossiped about each other as often as their offspring did, the level of importance my peers placed on appearances, and even the laws that stated how long the grass in one's yard could grow.

This is not to say that life in the suburb did not have its perks. After all, Seattle was only 20 minutes away, I became friends with some amazing individuals, and the fact that my family was living in a suburb convinced my parents to bring home a kitten after five years of begging. Despite these things, I always felt like an outsider, like I never truly belonged there. That is why in October of my senior year of high school I only applied to one university: Western Washington University.

As my father drove his 1998 emerald green Honda Accord onto the Samish Way exit that fateful September Sunday of my freshman year, I knew that I was returning home. The shyness which had engulfted me throughout suburban life melted away as I walked into the freshly scrubbed dorm room. Indeed, throughout the past four years in Bellingham, I have regained the confidence that left me in the suburb.

I do not plan on living in Bellingham my entire life. After all, there is so much of this world I have yet to see, and I am not currently opposed to working outside the state, or even the country. I do know, however, that no matter where I live, even if I have to go through the agony of living in a suburb again, I will eventually end up back in Bellingham, my home.

Cellular Dependency

If I try really hard, I might be able to remember the days before everyone had a cellular phone. It seems like everywhere you go these days the peace and solitude is broken up by the sounds of obnoxious ring tones.

And although I find myself wistful for the days when you could go on a car ride with someone without having to sit and listen to their 10-minute argument with whoever is on the other line, or study in the library without hearing someone talk about whatever they did the night before, I realize that I'm no better than anyone else.

Yes, I have been that annoying person — the one who filled the two seconds of silence in a crowded gym before the national anthem with my obnoxious "Sex and the City" ring tone. In today's fast-paced world, it seems cell phones are a must.

I guess you could say it all started with Zack Morris. Remember the cute blond from the TV show "Saved by the Bell" who always had his enormous tan cell phone with the foot-long antenna in his back pocket? It seemed so cool and high-tech at the time, back when everyone thought colored pagers were the latest rage. For our cell phone-crazed generation, pay phones and calling collect are nothing but vague memories. According to a Feb. 12 MSNBC.com article, nearly nine out of 10 college students have a cell phone. And if you find that statistic disturbing, the next one is worse.

According to Network World Fusion, an online publication, 38 percent of Americans say leaving home without their cell phone is like leaving home without brushing their teeth. I left home last week without mine and returned home to get it even though it made me late to class — and I am not someone who would say they relied on technology. I can recall four years ago when, as a senior in high school, cell phones were the popular Christmas present among many of my friends — and I'm talking those immense, unwieldy Nokia phones that everyone had. Now those would be considered far too enormous compared to the itty bitty ringers everyone carries around these days.

Although it would be nice to regress back to the days when answering the phone didn't occur in a public bathroom, dressing room or in a restaurant, cell phones are a sign of the times. And with any trend — or cell phone for that matter — you always have the choice to take it or leave it.
School's Out Forever

“DR. OATMAN: Why don’t you want to go to your high school reunion?
MARTIN: It’s in Michigan. Honestly, what do I have in common with those people? Or with anyone?”
—Grosse Point Blank

On June 15, 2001, 437 of my classmates and I graduated from the confines of the cement-gray brick walls of Woodinville High School and inaugurated the beginning of our post-adolescent years.

The moment after I left the undersized town of Woodinville four years ago, I began a zealous movement to elude about 95 percent of the people with whom I was once acquainted.

Utterly exhausted with the cliques and back-stabbing gossip that embodied me every day, I aspired to become “that one girl who just disappeared after high school.”

When I was invited to a bridal shower for a girl with whom I wasn’t friends with, I briskly declined on account of the rapidly approaching Superbowl party, which I said I had to plan and host.

And when I was mass-e-mailed with hometown tidbits like, “Hey, I don’t normally do these surveys but this one is really fun,” “Happy Birthday! I know we haven’t talked in a while, but I just wanted to let you know that I’m engaged to the most wonderful man in the whole world,” and, “Sorry I didn’t come home this year like I promised, but I was in Italy for Christmas. But don’t feel bad, Italy isn’t really that great,” I promptly extracted them from cluttering my inbox.

And then, roughly two months ago, I abruptly smacked into my past.

It all began when I ran into one of my best friends from high school at the Safeway near my parent’s house. Ignoring the minute detail that I hadn’t seen or talked to him since graduation, I ecstatically ran up to give him a hug. Much to my devastation, this potentially joyous reunion turned out to be one of the most uncomfortable situations I have ever been in.

I received an awkward one-arm side hug that people give when they feel obligated to make human contact with one another and a leering stare while I listed my major, past-times and future career choice.

To each and every one of my questions, he curtly replied with a “yes,” a “no,” or an indifferent guttural noise which, as far as I could tell, translated to “m-hmm.”

We held up a conversation for two-and-a-half agonizing minutes before I made some lame excuse and left, brokenhearted, to wander past the chocolate in aisle eight. Out of all the people from home, he was the one person whom I would have wanted to see.

I guess after our encounter, he e-mailed everyone to let them know what he had been doing since fleeing from the parental nest. Eight or nine of our comrades responded, divulging me—as well as the other 35 people categorized in the mailing group titled “WHS”—with all the sorted details of their new lives.

I was never particularly tempted to buy a last-minute overpriced dress and give the “How have you been?” speech 100-plus times in one night, but I will not now, more than ever, be making an appearance at the Woodinville High School class reunion in 2011.
Forty years after the simultaneous births of 8-tracks and cassette tapes, vinyl records endure. They are in thrift shops, local music stores and your parents' attics.

The following three vinyl aficionados outline how these "records" not only provided an important document of the past, but also explain why the vinyl format is seeing a renaissance and is still the preferred format for many music connoisseurs.

**Needlin'**

Richy Boyer, owner of Viva La Vinyl on Railroad Avenue, sits perched atop a stool in the comfy confines of his two-room store, located in the back of Smash Your Guitar, as he recounts his first experience with a vinyl record.

A giant blue silk-screened portrait of Mao Zedong highlights the wall behind Boyer, 34, whose love of records is equally expressed in how his store is decorated. Posters of punk rockers like the Dead Kennedys and The Clash cover the record room's walls, while a P.O.W. Prisoner of War arcade game is stationed across from Boyer in the room where the cash register and record player are.

Boyer says his first experience with a record was when his brother brought home Led Zeppelin "IV" from the corner drug store.

"The only music I had at that point was stuff that my mom had bought me," Boyer says dismissively. "A tape by Heart, a tape by this guy named Robbie Dupree — stuff I'd never listen to now."

Boyer says the Led Zeppelin album was enchanting, including the record's jacket and overall look. The record's art is famous for containing the lyrics to only one of the album's songs, "Stairway to Heaven."

"It was this cool, all-encompassing experience where, for the first time, something seemed mysterious in association with music," Boyer explains. "It was like listening to this music and being really mystified by this cover that didn't have any writing on it. You open it up and there's a strange illustration, the lyrics to this long song and then symbols instead of names for members of the band."

Though Boyer says his vinyl interests now align more with punk — which, along with hip-hop, he insists will keep the vinyl format alive — he acknowledges that vinyl records put out a warmer sound than compact discs. He adds that the physical effort of putting a record on a turntable enhances the overall experience.

"You interact more with records than you do with a CD," Boyer says. "You lower the needle — you see it spin. You see the needle running through the grooves."

The curly-haired Boyer exuberantly explains what aesthetic values vinyl has for consumers, especially from a rock 'n' roll perspective.

"For some it's just a bigger document — the artwork is bigger," Boyer says. "It's limited. You own something unique, rather than mass-produced CDs."

According to www.vinyl-record-collectors.net, records have a shelf life of more than a hundred years, while the lifespan of a compact disc is closer to 10 years. Boyer says that a vinyl record's long life span is misleading based on the ease at which records can be damaged.

"You can't back up a record like you can a CD," Boyer says. "It's a Catch-22 — it will last a lot longer, but it's a lot more fragile. One scuff or scratch can ruin a record. You can't fix it."
Snap, crackle, vinyl

It is hard not to notice how much stuff is in Western math professor Jerry Johnson's office. His walls are lined with fully stocked bookshelves. Adding to the claustrophobic feel is the odd menagerie of kooky collectibles — various geometric shapes, a bottle of blowing bubbles, a giant plastic mouth with cherry-red lips — that line the shelves and seemingly guard his abundant library of books.

Johnson says that his office is relatively spacious compared to his vinyl record room at home.

"My office at home is even more crunched — if you can imagine a wall that has 2,200 records on it and about 1,000 tapes," Johnson says as if he can hardly believe it himself.

Johnson, 56, describes his record collection at home as being slightly more organized, though, as all the country records he owns are documented by artist, title and location in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. He says auctions and discount stores are a must for the serious collector.

"The most euphoric I've ever been was when I was at an auction back in the Midwest visiting my dad — this little storefront auction — and in a box I found an unopened Clint Eastwood record of 'Rawhide,' " Johnson says, chuckling as he relives his discovery of "Rawhide's Clint Eastwood Sings Cowboy Favorites," found in a box of records that cost $15. "I could hardly wait to fly it back here; it was a big find, except it's never been on a turntable. I've never played it — I probably never will play it."

Johnson says he listens to most of his records because he finds either personal or historical value in them. He says he tried to hunt down a record from the Depression era that was owned by one of his grandmother's hired hands who lived in her barn.

"She said he had a record player, and he always played the same record over and over again," Johnson says. "Then, one day, it was early in the morning and she heard this record, and she knew something was wrong. She went to the barn, and it turned out he had committed suicide."

Though Johnson says he relishes the historical and personal connections he has with vinyl records, he concedes they also provide the perfect medium in which to play his 1950s and 1960s country western albums.

"I was raised with the turntables where you'd have five records stacked up and they played and got scratched and marred," Johnson says. "There was this hiss sound that came out of it, and that's the way I think fits country western."

Two turntables and a microphone

The walls of Sonic Index on State Street imply a certain gravity with which its proprietor approaches music. The glass case in the front contains state-of-the-art record players, while the back of the store is filled with some 10,000 hip-hop, house, dance, rap, rock and breakbeat records that line the wall and fill the cases. On one wall rests the Beastie Boys' "Anthology" while a few records down lies the Fat Boys' "Crushin.' "

Owner Dave Richards, 29, says vinyl records have endured longer and more successfully than 8-tracks or cassette tapes for two reasons.

"It's one-part nostalgic because it's an event taking a record out and putting it on the turntable," Richards says. "The other part is its new uses. Twenty-five years ago, DJs discovered a new medium, a new face for it."

Richards, who also works as a disc jockey under the name Disco-philie, says the biggest threat to vinyl records is advancing technology.

"I don't know how attached people are to getting a physical item," Richards says in regard to records, tapes and CDs. "A kid will go out and spend $300 on an iPod, but they won't go out and buy 20 CDs — and they are still filling it up with music. It's good that people have access to more and more music, but artists have to get paid somehow."

Richards says that it all comes down to personal preference when deciding between CD and vinyl. Richards thinks the difference is minimal, but in the minds of some consumers, vinyl has a clear advantage.

"You get people who say, 'I can hear the highs,' or, 'I can hear the mids,' or, 'I can hear the lows,' " Richards says doubtfully. "You're like, 'Dude, get an equalizer,' — but you can't tell them that."

Off the record

Nonetheless, Richards says that vinyl, like music in general, just comes down to personal preference.

"Music is all sorts of different things to different people," Richards says. "For some people, it's sonic wallpaper. For some people it's a product, like a coaster. Some people, it's their life."

Regardless of whether or not the vinyl format continues to see a resurgence among connoisseurs, vinyl records have left an indelible mark on the music world. Consider its terminology — LP, EP, single, B-side, album — even the term "record," which is loosely bandied about to describe an artist's latest release. We now must differentiate between the present and the past by designating the original as "vinyl" records.

Viva La Vinyl located inside Smash Your Guitar on Railroad Avenue, owns approximately 1,500 vinyl records.
The Ladies of the Evening Society rekindle the old spirit of Fairhaven's first 19th-century businesswomen: Bordello owners. Mari Bergstrom recaptures the essence of these historical legends in local ladies today as they reenact the gaudy appeal of 19th-century madams. Photos by Mari Bergstrom and courtesy of Diane Phillips. Design by Samuel Dawson.

Parading the streets of modern-day Fairhaven with big hats and feather boas, the Ladies of the Evening Society represent the area's first women business owners of the 1890s. Although some may wish to dismiss this part of history, the bordellos of Fairhaven played an important role both socially and economically.

Today, when the members of the Society attend local events, they replicate the fashions and attitudes of real bordello owners, as a way to pay respect to the first businesswomen who helped build Fairhaven.

When strutting the streets of Fairhaven, the Ladies of the Evening Society add to the old-time feel the brick buildings still possess. Although Fairhaven is now home to modern bookstores and coffeehouses instead of bordellos, seeing the women of the Society dressed in lace and feathers is a reminder of the businesses that started Fairhaven.

Standing outside the Barbershop at Fairhaven, marked by an authentic red, white and blue barber pole, someone might think they have stepped back in time. Customers sit on old barbershop chairs where they can get their hair trimmed and an authentic close shave with a straight-edge razor.

Miss Dora Reno

Barbershop owner Diane Phillips carefully trims the hair around a young man's ear while scheduling an appointment over the phone on her headset with another customer.

A black smock covers her leopard-print shirt, matching her sociable personality.

The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, as waiting customers sit reading the newspaper. This laid-back mood adds to the traditional feel of the barbershop. However, it is the lone, purple boa hanging on the back wall of the barbershop that represents how far back in time one will go when talking to Phillips.

As a member of the Ladies of the Evening Society, Phillips often wears the flashy feather boa when taking on the personae of real a bordello owner of the 1890s, Dora Reno.

Phillips, who opened the Barbershop in 2000, answers questions as if she were back in the 1890s when the bordellos of Fairhaven thrived.

“I have the largest boarding house in town, and the rumor was that if you came to my house, you better be careful because you could have such a good time you could pass out on the railroad tracks,” Phillips laughs. “There was many men who were run over by the train from having a good old time at my place.”

Phillips, who used to dress up in an old-fashioned costume to promote her barbershop, has been with the Society since it began three years ago. The same red and gold dress and purple boa she wore then, she wears now when taking on the personae of bordello owner Reno.

When in costume, her short, curled blond hair is topped with a large, black hat with red lace trim.

“Really, my job as a madam was to keep the girls healthy and happy and fed,” Phillips says. “I was more like a mother to them than a work horse or slave driver. It was kind of a community of women that took care of each other, and today's prostitution, I think, is much different.”

Reno's two-story building consisted of several parlors and a music room with a full staff of boarders to choose from, according to the 2004 book, “The Brothels of Bellingham,” by Curtis E. Smith.
"The funnest part about our job is reenacting a kind of a presence of what Fairhaven was about," Phillips says. "However, one thing to really point out is that, back in those days, there was no welfare, so if you were a woman and weren't married and didn't have a job ... this was another viable profession."

Most of the women, often referred to as "soiled doves," "shady ladies" and "sporting girls," were lured into prostitution for economic reasons, according to Smith's book. The limited job opportunities that did exist were for cooks, seamstresses or maids, but prostitutes could make 10 times as much as the low-income jobs.

Reno's house, which was located on Ninth Avenue, was just outside Devil's Row, which was the block known for fights and drunks, Phillips continues as she says goodbye to one customer and moves to the next.

Not only is Phillips keeping the traditional barbershop alive, but she is also keeping Fairhaven's history alive through her portrayal of Reno.

Miss Lillie Hill and Kitty of the Purrfect Palace

"Lillie Hill worked at the Jewell, which was on the corner of 9th and McKenzie," says Taimi Dunn Gorman, founder of the Ladies of the Evening Society.

Gorman, who was inspired to form the Society after reading about the brothels in the Fairhaven Gazette, chose to represent bordello owner Lillie Hill.

In between bites of breakfast at the Colophon Cafe, Gorman reads from a winter 1987 article in the Fairhaven Gazette: "The house is new and elegantly furnished from cellar to garret. Two hostesses, a magnificent blonde and the other a handsome brunette, entertain their guest in a manner that at once places a visitor at ease, while the boarders view with each other in making the guests enjoy the evening. It is needless to say that everything is first-class and gentility reigns supreme."

The Society started out being strictly Fairhaven business owners, but eventually it opened up to anyone who wanted to get a costume and show up to events, says Gorman, who has spent approximately $500 putting together her costumes.

"I've got several for different seasons, and most of us do, because you can't really go out in a winter one when you are out playing bocce ball in the sun," she laughs. "When we played in the bocce ball tournament last summer we did really well and we were finalists, out there barefoot hurling bocce balls. The guys just loved it."
Most recently, the women gathered as the Ladies of the Evening Society during the 2005 Rain Festival in Fairhaven. A maroon and gold shawl and large black hat kept Gorman warm during the festival.

Gorman, who moved to Bellingham in 1973, attended Western Washington University, where she received a degree in speech pathology. She started and owned the Colophon Café for 18 years, until she sold it to her younger partners, she says.

When she started the Colophon Café, there were a lot of vacant buildings, gravel roads and people living in their vans in Fairhaven, Gorman reminisces.

"I started promoting Fairhaven like crazy saying it was a pretty hip place to come," she says enthusiastically. "We became a designated historical district so no one could build anything crappy, and everything has to look like it is 100 years old."

Today, Gorman does marketing and publicity for many Fairhaven business owners, and likes not having employees.

As a business owner, she says she can relate to the women who owned bordellos in the 1890s.

"A lot of times having employees is like running a big daycare, and I can imagine they had all the same kinds of problems with employees that you have when you run a restaurant," she says as she waves to Kitty Todd, also a member of the Society, who comes to join her for breakfast. "Some of these houses were quite the business. They hired a fair number of women and had nice houses. They were businesswomen, there's no doubt about it, and they treated it like a business."

Todd, owner of the Fairhaven Bed and Breakfast, sits next to Gorman and orders a decaffeinated latte. After complimenting Todd on her tan suede coat followed by brief small talk, Gorman, who now runs Gorman Publicity out of her home, continues.

"Basically we want to honor that part of the history and not pretend like it didn't exist, and to recognize these women were truly the first women business owners in Fairhaven," Gorman says. "We are just carrying on the tradition in our own special way."

Todd, who shakes her head in agreement, says she joined the Ladies of the Evening Society to simply have a good time while paying respect to the history of Fairhaven.

"History really bit into me, and I thought, 'Hey, I like dressin' up, struttin' around, and old lady here can have a good time, too,'" she says.

For the Rain Festival, Todd wore a hot pink sleeveless dress and long, black boa. A tall, black feather topped her blond hair.

Although Todd picked the fictitious name of Miss Kitty from the Purrfect Palace, she says she would not be surprised if someone of that name did in fact exist.

As a child, Todd says she attended many events at the elegant Fairhaven Hotel, which lasted until 1956. She acknowledges that bordello owners would not have attended Fairhaven Hotel events because they did not cross-socialize with wealthier women and men.

"Whenever I put my outfit on, I just feel like, here's part of the history that has never happened in my life, but I'm making it real for other people," says Todd, a Bellingham native who has been with the group since the beginning.

Overall, the members of the Society want to maintain that part of Fairhaven's history while having fun, Gorman explains.

"We flirt and talk to each other like the madams might have if they were competitive," she says.

"And we show out legs,
but it is all in fun,” laughs Todd, who quickly adds that she is happily married.

As commercial industry shifted to what is now downtown Bellingham, so did the prostitution industry, and by 1910, the bordellos had disappeared from Fairhaven, according to Smith’s book.

The end of an era

“In our history, there was a brothel up until 1948, and as long as the girls paid their taxes, the city overlooked,” Phillips says.

Therefore, as Smith writes, “It’s finally time to acknowledge this colorful, immoral, fascinating and shameless part of our history. Like it or no, the secret’s out.”

The next event the Society will grace, as reminders of our past, are Dirty Dan Days, starting April 30, which celebrates the founder of Fairhaven. This event will include historical reenactments, along with a Dirty Dan in costume.

So if wanting to meet Dora Reno, Lillie Hill, or Kitty of the Purrfect Palace, attend any of the local events in Fairhaven. For it is here the ghosts from the past will walk the streets once again to serve as a reminder of the history of Fairhaven.
What little did I know? That the culmination of journeys in the spiritual and physical planes, through the rebirth and decay of flesh I once occupied and through lives as both a woman gifted with crafts and as an unsure Brazilian tribesman, would eventually climax into this astonishing, life-altering moment.

"Hi, you must be Gil," says Dave Andrews, a man whose comfortable wool sweater, spectacles and reserved sensibilities were more reminiscent of a public librarian than psychic. I shook his hand.

It is Feb. 19, 2005 and I'm at the Bellingham Church of Divine Man Psychic Fair, Andrews knows my name not because of his incredible clairvoyant powers, rather because of a note I left at both entrances of the CDM two days earlier requesting his assistance on a story about reincarnation or past lives.

Andrews, a teacher and former lead minister at the CDM, warmly welcomes me and I make my way toward a folding chair. Previous to entering, I was unsure if I should intrude.

Beyond a semi-closed door was a young woman with long flowing golden locks adorned in peasant attire facing another woman sitting on a chair. The upright woman was wildly flailing her arms about the sitting woman, alternating between the woman's head and down onto her feet, all the while circling her. You could imagine why there was a hitch in my stride upon ambling toward the doorway.

While waiting in the room, Andrews and I chat for a while, and he mentions that she was performing an aura healing and asks if I would like one as well. I agreed, reluctantly, and waited for "Gary" who would perform the healing.

The CDM itself is more office space than church. It is tucked away in a basement of a mall complex at the corner of West Holly Street. At night, when no one is around, you can hear the clamor of fluorescent light bulbs.

Today the CDM is markedly different and humanity and movement fill its doorways. The room is illuminated by a faint yellow hue, and in the background, canned therapeutic music emanates from a boom box atop a folding table filled with tea packets and cookies. The floors are lined with dingy gray rugs, and today, aura healings are performed in a 10 by 50 foot enclosed area adjacent to the CDM office.

From the rear, a balding older man, donning a gray sweater with a red oxford underneath, glasses and jeans appears. Gary Oaksford, a CDM aura healer, says that he always had an interest in psychics and that the interest was spurred when a friend past away in the '70s. He turned to the CDM in the hopes of possibly contacting his deceased friend, which proved unsuccessful, but found the CDM useful in healing his spiritual loss.

Oaksford, a self-professed "Star Trek" fan, says he often draws upon a certain analogy when explaining to people the importance of spirituality.

"They say that space is the final frontier, but it isn't," Oaksford says. "Inner space is. Meditation and the spiritual realms are the final frontiers."

And with that, the aura healing began. Later in the day, I was handed Mary Ellen Floras book, "Clairvoyance, Key to Spiritual Perspective," and while flipping through its pages found that an aura is "an energy field which indicates the present state of being, such as health or illness, anger or joy, oneness or separation and so forth."

Aura healings, Oaksford says, are misleading in the sense that they aren't true healings but rather "spiritual energy tune-ups."

While sitting down, Oaksford faces me and begins the process of cleansing the chakras out. Crouching on one knee, Oaksford shuts his eyes and concentrates. With sudden flutters of his wrist and fingers, Oaksford braces his aged hands parallel to my knees and begins to rush out spiritual energy from thin air. A quick exhale from Oaksford and he repeats this movement moving vertically from my knees to my head.

To clarify, in Floras's book, chakras are defined as energy centers that contain specific spiritual information. The body contains seven major chakras, and are arranged along the spine in an up-down vertical axis.

An important aspect of aura healings is grounding and Gary says that it is a technique to connect the spirit to Earth energy. As Oaksford's hands motion parallel to my back onto the floor, he says that he can feel a warm feeling in his hands. At this point, Oaksford asks if I can feel anything, but all that is apparent to me are my nervously bouncing knees and the gust of wind that sweeps across my legs.

I must have you know that I came into this church as a skeptic but with an open mind.

It was necessary to implement my objective journalistic sensibilities for this story, but as a born and raised Catholic, I was also told not to believe this stuff.

As I sat on that cold, metallic chair waiting for my rose reading to examine my past lives, my mind began to race about the terminology I was being fed. The concepts of chakras and aura healing made little sense to me. While at the CDM, I was always polite and respectful but amid maniacal flailing arms, excessive wrist-flicking and the cleansing of "chakras" my comfort levels were being tested.

I needed to remind myself of why I did this story in the first place to discover something new about me that perhaps I was unaware of and to experience a different side of spirituality.
The mystic

Then, a mysterious and exotic beauty appeared before me. Dave escorted me into the actual CDM office and there, sitting as tranquil as could be, was CDM psychic Courtney Calhoun. Courtney was no ordinary beauty. Her glowing porcelain complexion, black-dyed hair with flush-cut bangs and pierced lips defied those standards.

When Courtney does rose readings, she clairvoyantly conjures a rose in her head and a series of events occur. She examines the rose’s bud and its color at specific locations, the color of the rose’s stem and two rings on the rose’s stem. Courtney says the rose itself represents a symbol of the “god of your heart,” or the means by which you relate to your own spirituality. She also told me the bud itself represents the longevity of the soul. For instance, if the bud is primarily closed, it signifies that the soul is just beginning.

For CDM psychics, rose readings are the way they look at past lives because for every rose reading, two rings appears on the rose’s stem, which indicates two lives, Courtney says. Oftentimes, issues from past lives reverberate into the present life because the soul is trying to learn lessons for spiritual enlightenment, she added. Before every rose reading, Courtney runs her spiritual energy for half an hour to cleanse her aura and become attuned to the person she will read.

Days after the reading, I asked her about her training. Courtney said her training began at the Everett CDM with basic meditation and healing classes and she endured an intensive two-year clairvoyance program in which she practiced 100 spiritual readings each year. “It always blows me that it’s real, that there is a spiritual world out there,” Courtney says. “There’s so much more going on than meets the eye.”

My reading

I was cold, mildly shaking and slightly nervous as I sat before a woman whose mind was probably in some distant place and for some reason, I felt somewhat vulnerable. What if this woman were to divulge something terrible about me that I didn’t know?

Immediately, Courtney began the rose reading. One deep inhale and Courtney shut her eyes and I could see glimpses of white as her eyelids rolled into her sockets. Her head swayed from side to side and now, by adjusting her chakras to communicate with my spirit, she was in a light trance.

Moments passed and she uttered her first words. Courtney says she saw a light-blue rose with darker energy on the left-hand side of the bud. This means that I am searching for God like it is a detective game and that other people’s concepts of God are getting in my way of trusting Him.

For Courtney, the darker energy signifies that a main issue for me is self-understanding. She said she saw an image of me pumping an old-fashioned water pump and that it symbolized that negative self-concepts were affecting me adversely.

Next, Courtney began looking at my rose’s stem and she saw that it was long and green with an extensive root system. This means that I am an old soul, one of the original spirits who began life on the planet.

Now Courtney was ready to look at my past lives. She saw the first gold ring and says that it was one-fourth of the way down from the rose’s hip. Suddenly, she sees an image of a brook of rushing water.

There I am as a man in a past life. I am in Brazil in a tribal group and she can see that I am good with different crafts. I am also an excellent observer of people and of the nature surrounding me; however, I am uncertain of what purpose I must serve in life. From this past life, Courtney says what I am learning in the present is a strong desire to find spiritual stability.

The next ring Courtney examines was an inch below the first ring, and upon investigation, an image of a dragonfly materializes. There I am in a female body, and Courtney says I am creative, versatile and good with my hands, especially with clay. She has no sense of time or geography, but she knows it’s me.

She also says that it’s completely expected that I take on a female form because, hypothetically, we can live an infinite amount of past lives, and our spirits frequently switch between male and female bodies.

Apparently, everyone in the community I live with is impressed with me, but they know I am different. Courtney says among these people, I am a strange bird.” As a result of this past life, Courtney says it is obvious that I am capable of doing many things and that I seek an occupation that I truly love. Because of my talent of working with clay in my past life, I now feel separate from others and am searching for connection and camaraderie.

My thoughts

Today, I am no more a believer in past lives than I was before experiencing my rose reading. For many of the things Courtney said to me, I felt that she spoke in generalities mixed with probable circumstances that, in reality, could be applied to anyone.

This, however, is no depreciation of the people at the CDM. What binds these people together is their faith that we all have psychic abilities. In order to have any kind of faith, we must take leaps into the unknown that may draw ridicule, and for that, the psychics of the CDM have my utmost respect.
Lunchboxes are a staple commodity to most 12-year-olds, but what happens when they grow up? Shannon Barney talks with lunchbox collectors and antique store owners to discover why lunchboxes are priceless and how they evoke nostalgic feelings in adults. Photos by Shannon Barney. Design by Anna Tahl.

The metal lunchbox is a classic: E.T., Star Wars, Superman, Dukes of Hazzard, Yogi Bear, Batman and Mickey Mouse have all had their faces plastered upon its metal panels. It accompanied school-aged children to class each day, and it smelled of a bologna sandwich, slightly cooked within the metal encasement.

Sitting on the shelves in the middle of Aladdin's Antiques in downtown Bellingham, collecting more and more dust, reside these collectible lunchboxes. Most are rusty, scratched and showing serious signs of age but still carry a hefty price tag, anywhere from $5 to $50. Many collectors are willing to pay these prices for the nostalgic feeling the boxes invoke.

A freshly painted blue fence opens in the center on West Holly Street. Above the gap is Aladdin's Antiques' mosaic sign made of tile and glass. Down two flights of wooden steps and to the right is the entrance to the store. Upon entering the shop, the dimly lit room reveals a dog curled beside the front desk, old jazz playing in the background and collectibles all around. A hint of dust, dirt and wood combine to make a scent that engulfs the room. Large clusters of collectibles line the shelves, hang from the ceiling and clutter the floor. Walter Robinson, the owner of Aladdin's Antiques, has long salt-and-pepper hair pulled back. He walks with his hands behind his back, slowly swaying side to side.

"Even the newer ones sell because everyone, all different ages come in, and everybody sees something they remember," Robinson says.

Aladdin's Antiques currently has approximately 30 lunchboxes in stock. The lunchboxes do not stay on the shelf long, Robinson says. Lunchbox collectors wanting to sell collections or those who clean out their homes bring in the best types of lunchboxes. Robinson once sold a lunchbox for more than $400.

Former collector Larry Shelly had almost 130 lunchboxes before he stopped collecting.

"I got married and my son was born," Shelly says. "I decided to change directions — instead of spending time looking for..."
Shelly collected from the mid-1980s until the mid-1990s. He liked the old metal lunchboxes the best. The newer plastic boxes just did not hold the same kind of sentiment for him.

One man has taken his passion to a new level. Allen Woodall opened The Lunchbox Museum, the largest museum of its kind, in Columbus, Ga. in 2001. Now retired, he calls the museum a hobby.

"The reason I did this is because we need to preserve this part of American history and pop art," Woodall says with a thick southern accent.

Woodall says his museum is interactive. Visitors are allowed to touch and pick up the lunchboxes. People sometimes find a small piece of their childhood tied to the metal boxes, and Woodall is willing to sell any lunchbox he has a duplicate of.

"People will walk down — stroll down the museum and all of a sudden they seem to spot a lunchbox they used to carry," Woodall says between chuckles. "They get a great big smile on their face and walk right over to that box and pick it up and give it a hug, 'Ah, that's my box.'"

Woodall feels it is important to preserve this part of American history because it brings memories to so many people throughout the country.

The Smithsonian Institution also has recognized the tie that so many people have with their old lunchboxes. It currently has two exhibits dedicated to lunchboxes. One is a traveling exhibit that features 75 metal lunchboxes called "Lunch Box Memories." The other exhibit, an immobile one located in front of the entrance to the cafeteria in the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., is called, "Taking America to Lunch," and features 102 metal lunchboxes.

David Shayt, curator of the exhibits, is a museum specialist at the National Museum of American History's Cultural History Division.

These exhibits do not feature new, sparkly metal lunchboxes, but those that have seen the likes of playgrounds, buses and plummets to the hard dirt ground, Shayt says. Many have scratches, dents, dings, rust, food stains and broken thermoses.

"The metal lunchbox is a durable good. It is one of the first (things) children are allowed to choose for themselves and of course carry it in a public way, all very important processes."

— David Shayt, museum curator

Shayt believes these imperfections tell the story of someone's childhood.

Serious collectors, sometimes called "boxers" and "pail-entontologists," are willing to pay high prices for the hard-to-find metal boxes. Woodall recalled a rectangular 1954 Superman lunchbox selling for $11,000. Prices are determined by the collectors themselves. The rarity, beauty and appeal of the lunchbox determine the price, Shayt says.

"It is that wistful longing for one's lost lunchbox, which perhaps motivates me and motivates many adults who have come to see our exhibits," Shayt explains, admitting he, too, was drawn to metal lunchboxes because of his childhood.

Like Woodall, Shayt occasionally sees people find their childhood lunchbox.

"I watch them sometimes, secretly off to the side, and I see how furiously they are looking for their lunchbox," Shayt explained. "And when they see something that might be it, they point, their eyes widen, their brows go up and they get a little sweaty."

A child's first lunchbox holds so many different feelings: mom, comforts of home, early childhood troubles, favorite foods, TV shows and the notion of ownership, Shayt says.

"The metal lunchbox is a durable good. It is one of the first children are allowed to choose for themselves and of course carry it in a public way, all very important processes," Shayt acknowledges.

Lunchboxes did not always feature the fancy cartoon characters, television heroes and motion picture pop art. The primary reason for carrying a lunchbox was to protect someone's food while it was being transported to work or school, Shayt explains. As America became more industrialized, people could not always make it home for lunch.

The metal lunchboxes slowly began tapering off in the mid-1980s. The lunchboxes' golden years ran from 1950 to 1985, Shayt says. He acknowledges there could have been many different factors contributing to the decline in metal lunchboxes.

Economic issues and hygiene are two common reasons. Plastic was both cheaper to make and cleaner. Some say that Florida outlawed metal lunchboxes because they were being used as weapons in schoolyard brawls, but Shayt challenges anyone to find that in the books.

These lunchboxes have become collectibles for a reason, Shayt says. The classic metal lunchbox encases more than just a lunch. Many vividly see a part of a childhood encased within the scratched, dented, dinged and slightly rusted rectangular metal box.
Even the quaint, small-town farming industry is adapting to technological advances and corporate competition. Tanya Rozeboom explores the changing world of a third-generation farming family living the simple life in Lynden. Photos by Amanda Woolley and Tanya Rozeboom. Design by Samuel Dawson.
The faint odor of cow manure and silage waft through the crisp winter air and the mooing of cows echoes off the metal roof of the barn in the background. His weathered hands, etched from years of manual labor on his dairy farm, push into the pockets of his dirty, worn jeans as he squints into the bright sun and recalls what farming life was like years ago in Whatcom County.

John Steensma, 46, is no stranger to farming; his family has been farming here for three generations.

"(When I was young) I was always out here in the barn," he says. "You either have (the passion for farming) or you don't."

John says the farm he and his family live on now was farmed by his grandparents, then his parents, and now him.

"My grandparents lived here for 14 years, my parents lived here for 17 years and I've lived here for 23 years now," he says.

The way it was...

John's grandparents moved with his newly married parents, Fred and Rena Steensma, to Lynden, Wash. in 1946. His grandparents bought the farm he lives on now, and his parents bought a farm of their own several miles away.

Fred Steensma says he remembers when he started farming.

"I even had a team of horses, but just for a little while ... there were tractors around," he says. "When you had a 25 horsepower tractor – man! You had a tractor, you were with it!"

Rena Steensma says when they first started farming, they had approximately 24 milk cows, but they profited mainly from the 900 chickens they farmed.

Both Fred and Rena say farming back then was a bit more work.

"They milk a lot more (now), but they have it easier," says Fred. "I'd have to go out and clean the barn by hand using the wheelbarrow and scoop shovel."

Rena says she remembers before she was married and no milk machines existed, when her family farmed in Minnesota.

"There was a lot more hand work," she says. "I carried all the milk to the milk house in buckets."

Fred says John's interest in farming was apparent at a young age.

"He was always in the barn feeding or something," he says.

In December 1969 Fred and Rena suffered a big loss when their barn burned, including 52 cows, some machinery and approximately 100 tons of hay.

Rena says friends and neighbors in the area donated time and money to help them get on their feet again.

"We were able to build back with the help of a lot of good friends and neighbors," Rena says. "We were back milking again in May with the help of everyone."

Rena says she thinks if the fire were to happen again right now, people would still take time and money to help out someone.

"There is still a lot of good people in the world," she says.

Fred says they eventually quit farming the chickens because of a lack of profit and focused mainly on dairy farming, increasing the amount of cows they milked. By the time they quit farming in 1982, they were milking approximately 100 cows, he says.

You couldn’t live off 24 cows anymore," he says. "You couldn’t afford to feed your family off that."

The reason farmers need to increasingly milk more cows is that the milk price farmers receive for their milk does not keep up with inflation of the rest of the economy, Fred says. Approximately 20 years ago, he was getting $10 to $12 per hundred pounds of milk, which is only a few dollars less than what farmers get today, he says.

"If (the price of) milk went up like cars, (farmers) would be getting $50 or $100 (per hundred pounds of milk) right now," he says.

The way it is now...

Today, John, his wife Karen and their four children: Kate, 16, Ben, 11, and Zach and Ellie, 8-year-old twins, live on the farm.

When his father retired in 1982, John says he and Karen bought the family farm and moved into the farmhouse that was built in 1907.

The farmhouse has since been remodeled but they have tried to keep the design of the house reminiscent of the early 1900s, he says.

"I did some research and found that I'm the seventh John living in the house, and my twins are the fifth set to live in this house," John says.

He says the way farming is done now is drastically different than when his parents and grandparents first farmed. Everyone had about 40 cows on 40 to 60 acres back then, he says.

"There used to be 10 or 12 dairies on this road and now there are only three," John says, looking parallel to the country road his farm resides near.
According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Whatcom County had 475 dairy farms in 1987 compared to 248 in 2002, and the average size of a farm has increased 47 percent — from 68 acres in 1997 compared to 100 acres in 2002.

John says his dairy has approximately 250 cows with 200 being milked every day, twice a day. The cows produce roughly 14,000 pounds of milk a day, he says, which works out to be approximately 70 pounds of milk per cow each day.

"Every time a cow walks in (to be milked), she drops about $5 worth of milk and then she goes out and eats $3 worth of food," he says.

According to the NASS, Whatcom County produced the second-highest amount of milk and dairy products out of all the counties in the state in 2002.

John says his day begins seven days a week at 3 a.m., when he and his milker, Peter Kroon, begin milking the first set of 24 cows.

"When my dad started, he milked 35 cows an hour and he thought he was really sailing," John says with a throaty chuckle. "Now we're milking 70 (an hour) and that's nothing to brag about."

A constant parade of cows move in and out of the milk parlor in a systematic fashion as John bustles about from cow to cow, checking on their milking progress while attaching and detaching the milk pumps from the either full or deflated udders of the cows.

John says computers attached to each milking machine measure the flow rate produced from each cow being milked and the amount of milk produced when each cow is finished being milked. He says it also lets him know when a cow is producing too little milk and needs a break.

After feeding, milking and gathering cows, John says he heads back into the house for breakfast around 6:30 or 7 a.m. After breakfast, he says, he helps the children get off to school and then he takes a nap.

"From 9 'til 11, I get to nap," he says. "That works, except on Sunday mornings when I have to go to church."

The several hours after his nap are spent doing odds and ends around the farm. He says there is always something new that needs fixing, plus he usually artificially inseminates about two heifers each day as well.

He says it was nice back when farms were smaller because there was more time for other things. John says while farming practices have become more efficient since his father's time, the growth of the farm keeps him
busy. His father always had time to go into town once a day for coffee with his friends when he was farming, he says.

"I'm too busy to do that," John says. "I get into town about once a week."

He says they start the second cycle of milking at 3 p.m. and finish around 6 in time for dinner. He comes out once more before he goes bed to check on everything.

"I walk around to see who's having a baby and who's sick or dying," John says. He says he is a pretty light sleeper and can hear most that is happening in the barn throughout the night.

He says he noticed a big change in farming when people with big money came to the area in the mid-'80s and started bigger farms, milking more cows than people had before.

"You had to get big or get out," he says.

The average herd in the county today, he says, is approximately 350 cows, compared to his herd of nearly 250.

One of the reasons farming is so competitive is that the milk prices are always low, John says.

"My dad didn't really make any money until the (President) Carter years," he says.

John says one of the ways they stay old-fashioned in their farming practices is they still pasteurize their cows in the summer, which means the cows are put into the field and allowed to pick their own grass to eat instead of keeping them in the barn and feeding them grain. John says many farmers do not allow their cows to do this because the cows trample the grass, reducing the amount of overall grass that can be used for food.

John Steensma at his Axlimg Road farm in Lynden.

John says he noticed the large amount of grazing cows do in New Zealand when he and his wife Karen vacationed there in 1987.

"New Zealand is a pretty progressive place for dairies," John says.

He says in New Zealand rotational grazing is practiced by most farmers. Rotational grazing is when the fields are sectioned off into blocks of acres and the cows are grazed on only certain blocks at a time so the grass has time to grow again, he says.

What lies in the future

Karen Steensma, John's wife and an environmental science professor at Trinity Western University, says something she and John are considering doing in the future is bringing back the old glass milk bottles by marketing them in grocery stores.

"It's a nostalgic thing, but it's also environmental," she says.

Karen says using the glass bottles is better for the environment because each bottle could get about 70 to 80 wash cycles. The milk also wouldn't have that plastic taste, she says.

"It tastes a lot better when it's not in a glass bottle," she says. "John said, 'I wouldn't drink my beer out of a plastic container, why milk?'"

John says another new farming practice he has thought about is organic dairy farming because the price of organic milk is much higher than regular milk. Organic dairy farming is difficult, however, because no cows can be given any kind of antibiotic or medicine, which means the total number of cows lost due to sickness is much higher than in normal dairy farming, he says.

John says he's not sure what will happen to the family farm after he retires. He says he has looked into some governmental programs that give development rights to farmers so their land can never be developed or used for anything but farming.

"That would be my lifelong dream, but I don't know if any of my kids would want to take over," he says. "I have one kid that's moderately interested, but he's only 8 years old."
The Charm of a Bavarian mountain town.

The small town of Leavenworth, Wash. is known for its tourism and Bavarian atmosphere. Lederhosens, alpenhorns and friendly people keep it alive. Jessica Evans reminisces with local residents about their love for the town and discusses how it is slowly changing. Photos by Jessica Evans. Design by Anna Tahl.

"Goosebumps prickle up my back, not because I’m freezing in a turquoise dirndl on a snowy balcony above my dad’s Christmas shop, but because I can see the breath and feel the prayers of 3,000 people, crowded shoulder-to-shoulder in a dark town below humbling mountains and a starry sky. My ears fill with the powerful sound of voices singing “Silent Night,” before alpenhorns and trumpets call into the crisp, fresh air. The thunderous boom of canons and whispered “oohs” and “ahs” echo as millions of individual Christmas lights flick on throughout the glowing, three-block downtown. I feel these goosebumps accompanied by hope and nostalgia every year at the Christmas Lighting Festival in my hometown: Leavenworth."
Nostalgic return to hometown

Home is on my mind on Friday evening of President's Day weekend. I heft my laundry basket full of dirty clothes into my brother Gavin's Tahoe. Merging into light traffic on Interstate 5 heading south from Bellingham, I silently berate myself for choosing to wear comfy, Reef flip-flops. Leavenworth probably still has snow and my tootsies are likely to freeze.

My atypical town remains small in size — I can name everyone in my high school yearbook. But growing up in a Bavarian tourist town, Leavenworth, Wash., is like licking a humongous jawbreaker; they're both filled with an abundance of flavors. I never realized the peculiar quaintness of some flavors until I began coming home from college. I knew I had grown up among oddities such as schnitzel, alpenhorns, dirndls and the chicken dance, but I had little appreciation for the tremendous dedication of Leavenworth's residents to keep the old-world charm while changing with modern times.

Loose dress code signals loss of theme

On Saturday morning, I call my neighbor and former dance teacher, Arlene Wagner, and she invites me downtown to the Tannenbaum shop and Nutcracker Museum, which she owns with her husband, George Wagner.

Looking for a lifestyle change, the Wagners, now both 80, moved from Renton in 1985 and bought the Tannenbaum Building on the corner of Front and Eighth Street in downtown Leavenworth.

"Being in Leavenworth," Wagner pauses and then continues, "it's like show time, all the time."

I can relate to Wagner's statement. Despite Leavenworth's nostalgic feeling of a slower time, year-round tourists and hard-working townspeople ensure something is always happening.

But Wagner says she's worried Leavenworth may be losing its Bavarianization, something that's allowed the small town to remain uniquely successful for more than 40 years.

"In 1985, people volunteered to do jobs for the community; practically everyone wore Bavarian clothes — now it's few and far between. It's just too bad," Wagner says, raising her pointer finger. "Put people in trachten. People come to town for it."

Trachten, traditional Bavarian clothing, includes the leather lederhosen shorts and suspenders my dad usually wears to work. I prefer the casual, cotton dirndl over the traditional, beautifully hand-embroidered polyester dresses because the latter treat a lady's body like an hourglass: zipping up the waist corset-style to overflow the low-cut blouse. At Mai Fest, some women give a blossoming bosom new meaning by stuffing flowers in their cleavage. Most shopkeepers endorse tracht, the Bavarian dress code, only on weekends or festival weeks, but the Wagners usually wear it both in and out of downtown Leavenworth.

Waiving the $2.50 museum fee, Wagner gives me a personal tour of her Nutcracker Museum. I hear the familiar classical music, "The Nutcracker Ballet," as my eyes take a panoramic view of floor-to-ceiling shelves full of every kind of nutcracker. The sight is nearly dizzying. Her love of the ballet sparked the collection of more than 5,000 nutcrackers.

"It's a good little town," Wagner says, preparing to open the upstairs museum. "How could you live in Leavenworth and not be happy?"

Tourism, recreation ... and science?

I'm an hour late visiting the home of Leavenworth City Councilman Tibor Lak, 46, but the welcoming expressions of him and his family lack any trace of impatience.

Sitting in a large armchair, wearing a Krispy Kreme sweat shirt, baggy sweat pants and brown slippers, Lak says he's remained in Leavenworth for two reasons: the quality of life and to make money with two family-owned shops, Lak's Gallery and Young's Clothesline.

"Leavenworth is more than just downtown," Lak says. "The recreation side is growing faster than the Bavarian side. With a
population of 2,200, we offer Icicle Junction (a family fun center and movie theater), three golf courses, a skate park, a ski area in our backyard, rivers to fish...recreation!

A key component of Leavenworth’s ability to change throughout history is taking the old and making it new. Lak says recent examples include the eight new wine-tasting establishments downtown.

“The wineries were a big change in a small amount of time (two years),” Lak says, laughing. “People like to drink, and you can get sloshed from one end of town to the next.”

I momentarily leave the conversation to imagine the fun of being 21, but snap back to reality when Lak says the heart of the people is one thing that hasn’t changed.

“Nostalgia is the Old World charm and the heart and soul of the people who want to keep it,” Lak says. “The city of Leavenworth adopted the theme … that’s why Safeway and McDonald’s look like they do; so you can step out of your world and into ours and still have all the conveniences, just a little slower and with very good architecture that some say is better than Germany.”

Like worker ants for the queen bee of tourism, Lak says people share a common bond.

“I can walk from my store to your mom’s store (a block away) and say ‘hi’ to 20 people I know,” Lak says. “It’s amazing.”

More is on Leavenworth’s colorful palette than great people. In October 2003, University of Washington scientists identified Cashmere Mountain (eight miles west of Leavenworth) as the best known place in the nation for the study of neutrinos, similar to electrons. Sometime in the next six months, the National Science Foundation may approve the construction of an underground science laboratory, science campus and visitor’s center at the 8,501-foot mountain, now a popular hiking destination.

The proposed Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory-Cascades (DUSEL) is a hot topic resounding through town like the alpenhorns blown every morning from The Enzian Inn. Smiling with his eyes framed behind dark, square glasses, Newell says he is exquisitely nostalgic about Leavenworth, the place of his birth, childhood and livelihood.

“We go out and explore life but we return to that which formed us and gave us our identity,” Newell says. “This is the center of the universe.”

Contrary to Wagner’s remarks, Newell says Leavenworth’s tourism industry will inevitably die just as the town’s former industries dwindled away. He believes DUSEL could be Leavenworth’s next ticket.

As a self-proclaimed supporter of scientific research, Newell welcomes DUSEL’s objectives, but worries about its threat to the town’s identity. He emphasizes that townspeople have always been the movers and shakers, not a multimillion-dollar outside entity like DUSEL.

“We’re not the dog wagging its tail,” Newell says. “We’re...
Two generations of local ambassadors

Before loading up the Tahoe with a laundry basket full of freshly cleaned, distinctly folded clothes, I meet two local dignitaries for breakfast at the Renaissance Café.

“Leavenworth is beautiful with everything anyone could want, but it’s the people who make it different,” 2004 Royal Lady Margaret Marson says, over a shared bowl of oatmeal with her son, Nick Marson, 24.

Wholeheartedly agreeing with her daughter-in-law, 1988 Royal Lady Marydell Marson calls the town “a heavenly playground.”

The two women also speak in accord about DUSEL.

“Sometimes money and research shouldn’t be speaking so loudly,” Margaret says. “It’s a wonderful project with needed research, but it would interfere with our sense of place.”

Margaret says her husband worked on a committee researching the project and initially favored it; however, he no longer thinks it’s advantageous to the community.

“Leavenworth is poised with a strong cultural sense, art center, tourist industry and recreational and environmental pieces that fit together like a fine puzzle,” Margaret says. “DUSEL workers will come and go, and put out of balance all those elements that make us so special.

Leaving home

My feet crunch the frozen path under the canopy of birches as my mind reruns the busy weekend and forecasts Leavenworth’s future.

In 2008, after the NSF, Congress and the President approve funding, maybe DUSEL will bring a throng of highly skilled and educated people excited to maintain Leavenworth’s Old World flavor while simultaneously investing in opportunities outside the downtown corridor. And maybe it won’t. Undoubtedly in either scenario, Leavenworth’s residents will fiercely persevere and sustain the hope and nostalgia evident in the miraculous town.

Slowing my pace down Front Street, I realize this hope and nostalgia are the source of my goosebumps every year at the Christmas Lighting Festival and may be the secret ingredient to my hometown’s success.

the tail being wagged by the dog.”

Flicking through his slideshow projected on the textured, creamy wall of his living room, Newell stands, both hands on hips, explaining a favorite slide.

“This 1960, colored slide of downtown Leavenworth is how I remember Leavenworth before any Bavarian dream came along,” Newell says, pointing out the ski tavern he sneaked into when he was underage.

I notice the brightly lit signs — now illegal — along Front Street before Newell wistfully says, “Ours is just another time in a sea of change.”

Mayor melts with emotion for town

Leavenworth Mayor and Post Office Tavern owner Mel Wyles, 59, tells me why he’s a lifetime lover of Leavenworth.

“You may take me out of Leavenworth, but you can never take Leavenworth out of me. And that’s the truth,” Wyles says.

Leavenworth is a business, family and service all in one. Something it has yet to be is a science laboratory, nine miles up Icicle Road.

“400 voted against (DUSEL),” Wyles says, stating the facts, not his opinion. “The people opposed don’t want the Icicle torn up.”

Hitting a soft spot, I realize the people and place of Leavenworth are interconnected to Wyles.

“I’ve seen it good, bad, horrible and great, but I’m most proud of what my mother had,” Wyles says through a voice strained with emotion.

Wyles’s mother, Laverne Peterson, was one of the first five people to transform Leavenworth into a Bavarian village.

A choked-up mayor calls me Ms. Evans and emphasizes Leavenworth’s need to unite as residents and about controversial changes like the DUSEL project.

Most of all, Wyles says, we need to remember where we’ve come from.

“Leavenworth went from almost a ruin to the most astronomical small city in the whole world,” Wyles says. “People broke their backs to get here. Don’t sell out and let it go.”
Greg O'Connell's Shelby Mustang turned the heads of police officers in the '70s and attracts the eyes of car show judges today. Cheryl Julian talks with O'Connell about his Shelby Mustang, from purchase to prize. Photos by Cheryl Julian. Design by Cam Campman.
Peering under the shiny black hood of his classic 1966 Shelby Mustang, Greg O'Connell finishes adjusting engine parts and wipes his soiled hands on his blue jeans. "I'd go back to the '60s in a minute. That was a good decade," O'Connell recounts, a smile slowly crossing his face. "The Beatles came out, and the Rolling Stones ... My parents would say, 'What kind of stuff are you listening to?' Back then it was long hair and hippies.

For O'Connell, as well as many other baby boomers, thinking of the 1960s provokes images of vintage clothing, music and soda fountains from an era long past. In addition to these things, the decade was characterized by fast, sleek muscle cars like the Ford Mustang.

Formally introduced on April 17, 1964, the Mustang has remained a household name since its creation more than 40 years ago. O'Connell, a mechanic for the Bellingham Police Department, has owned five Mustangs, most notably a rare, black and gold 1966 Shelby GT35H. This is the only Mustang still in his possession. O'Connell affectionately nicknamed the Shelby Mustang "Pamela" after Pamela Anderson, a favorite celebrity of his. O'Connell and his wife, Cathi, have possessed the automobile since 1971.

"I've always liked the car," O'Connell says, casually adjusting his black and gold "Cobra" hat. "Black is my favorite color. Besides, I bought it right out of high school and so it brings back memories to me."

Chris Bonesteel, customer consultant for Diehl Ford Dealership in Bellingham, says the Mustang has been a consistently popular seller, noting that it has been ranked as the best-selling car in its class for the past 18 years, according to the 2003 Cypress Semiconductor Corp. sales.

Bonesteele says one of the biggest reasons for the undying popularity of the car is the nostalgic image Americans associate with it.

"It's the American classic muscle car," Bonesteel says, shading his eyes from the searing sun.

Bonesteele predicts an increase in sales this year, saying the new design is popular with customers.

"In '05 they redesigned it. It looks more like an old Mustang," he comments, nodding his head slowly. "It's in limited production, with only thousands being made."

O'Connell rummages through his belongings, producing the original bill of sale for his Shelby. The factory price of the automobile was $3,947.50.

"I was fortunate enough to buy it when it was priced reasonably," O'Connell says, stroking his sandy-pepper colored mustache. "After the late 1980s, the price just skyrocketed."

O'Connell says he purchased the car from a friend of his wife's, who had put it up for sale. While he was test-driving it with the owner, the engine blew out, so he bought it "as is" — for a discount — and took the motor apart to rebuild it.

O'Connell said his Shelby was one of the original Hertz "rent-a-racers" Ford produced in 1966 on behalf of Carroll Shelby, a man who achieved renown as a car racer, owner, team manager, care manufacturer and consultant. O'Connell quoted a book, "Ultimate Muscle Car Price Guide," as stating that approximately 1,000 of these black and gold cars were produced that year.
O'Connell said people would rent them on Friday, and because of their high performance power, would race them all weekend only to return the cars on Monday.

According to “Ultimate Muscle Car Price Guide,” the rate Hertz charged in 1966 was $17 per day or $70 per week, in addition to a 17-cent charge per mile driven.

O'Connell says he and his wife took the Shelby up to Mission Raceway in Canada and Boundary Bay Raceway for approximately three years.

In 1976, they had their first son, so the Shelby went up on jacks in the garage. It stayed there for the better part of two decades.

“My dad would say of the Shelby, 'Sell that black thing out there,'” O'Connell says, smiling pleasantly at the memory.

O'Connell refused and chose to restore it instead.

"After the boys moved out, I took the motor out and rebuilt it — had it all stripped down and had it totally restored,” O'Connell says.

O'Connell says he began the restoration in 1995, and worked on the Shelby for 15 minutes a day, or an hour on the weekend, to fix it up. The majority of the restoration, however, took place this past year.

“My wife got on me: ‘When’s the car going to be fixed?’ It took me quite a few years of working slowly but surely,” O'Connell says, with his head resting lightly against his hand and a smile playing around the corners of his eyes. “Less stuff on the shelves meant we were closer to completing the project.”

A friend encouraged O'Connell to finish the car in time to enter it in the 14th Annual Boulevard Park Antique Auto Show on May 30, 2004. He worked late nights to finish it.

Finally, on May 15, 2004, he completed the restoration.

He called his wife on his cellular phone and let her listen to it. “The Shelby is reborn!” he exclaimed.

O'Connell entered the Mustang in the Boulevard Park car show and won an award titled, “Salute to Mustang,” in honor of the 40th anniversary of the classic car.

He entered 11 auto exhibitions total last year.

"After Boulevard, I just got hooked on car shows," O'Connell says. “I stopped mowing my lawn twice a week and watching TV shows.”

He won several other car awards for the Shelby last year.
"We'd try to keep it quiet so cops wouldn't find out, although it looked like a convoy of muscle cars going through town. It wouldn't take an Einstein to figure out what was going on."

— Greg O'Connell, Mustang owner

including one titled, "Fall Classic Hot Rod & Car Show – Manager's Choice" award, from Haggen Food and Pharmacy. The Shelby also earned second place in its division in the 24th Annual Mustang Northwest Roundup car show in Bellevue, Wash.

The true value of O'Connell's car, however, lies in the good times he associates with it.

Long ago, O'Connell says he would frequent Herfy's Drive-in Restaurant, another Bellingham eatery, which was a popular place for young men to take their girlfriends for entertainment in the '60s and '70s. He recalls buying 19-cent burgers and 25-cent fries.

O'Connell says that after eating, they would all drive out to race.

"We'd try to keep it quiet so cops wouldn't find out, although it looked like a convoy of muscle cars going through town, O'Connell says. "It wouldn't take an Einstein to figure out what was going on."

O'Connell's association with the police began long before his current career of repairing and maintaining their vehicles.

He remarked that quite often he has been pulled over by police officers who have just wanted to look at his car.

He told a story about how he and a friend drove the Shelby out at 10 p.m. one night when he was in his early 20s. While racing down the road at approximately 125 miles per hour, they passed a sheriff's car, who chased the speeding vehicle.

Ultimately chased by a band of police, sheriff's vehicles and the state patrol, O'Connell eventually pulled the car over. The sheriff then approached the vehicle. All he wanted, O'Connell stated humorously, was to look under the hood.

O'Connell summed up his story, saying with sly grin, "Ever since then, I've been halfway good."

How long will he keep the Shelby? O'Connell replies, "Forever, I hope!"
KLIPSUN IS A LUMMI WORD MEANING BEAUTIFUL SUNSET.