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Baker: A love story
The Nooksacks knew the icy mountain summit as Kweq’ Smáñit long before Capt. George Vancouver named it for his third-lieutenant Joseph Baker in 1792.

“Koma Kulshan,” which is sometimes cited as the mountain’s Native American name, may come from kwomá kwelshán, possibly a Nooksack phrase referring to going up high into the mountains to shoot, according to “Nooksack Place Names” by Allan Richardson and Brent Galloway. But the anglicized term is likely the result of an early 20th century misunderstanding, Richardson says, and its use by Native Americans appears to be very limited.

Kwelshán, meaning ‘shooting place’ in the Nooksack language, is likely the source for the mountain’s names in neighboring languages, including Lummi, Richardson and Galloway write.

WWU visual journalist Rhys Logan captured this image of the mountain’s north side from Bear Paw Mountain near Church Lake.
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*On the cover:* Mount Baker is just 31 miles away, as the raven flies, or about 56 miles as the Suburu drives. The mountain has been an unofficial part of Western’s campus for more than a century. Photo by Rhys Logan (‘11, Visual Journalism).
Mount Baker reminds us of the interconnectedness of our world

When Uzma and I arrived in Bellingham at the end of last summer, the most common advice we received for settling in to our new home was to take a trip to Artist Point with our daughter, Tanya.

Before long, I realized Mount Baker with its breathtaking views is much more than a place to impress tourists and new residents. Western's very identity is intimately connected to its sense of place, and there is no more recognizable environmental feature of our identity than Mount Baker.

It is no accident that Mount Baker figures so prominently in Western's logo, or that the university's alma mater we sing at every commencement proudly identifies Western as “crowned by Baker’s dome.” Since Western was founded as New Whatcom Normal School in 1893, Mount Baker has represented and shaped the uniquely engaging and adventurous nature of a Western education. Generations of Vikings who have left footprints in the snow and hiking trails of Mount Baker are also responsible for so many of the things that continue to draw people to Western:

• World class environmental science research on climate change, ecology and resource management
• Commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship
• Opportunities for students to work closely with faculty on substantive research projects
• And of course, transformative outdoor experiences that instill confidence, creativity and a lifelong love of nature.

Even for those who are not as avid about the outdoors, Mount Baker's presence reminds us of the interconnectedness of our world, as the glacial melt from the mountain's flanks feeds the waters of Bellingham Bay and in turn the next cycle of snow. The first time I caught a glimpse of the mountain from Bellingham I also appreciated the way it feeds the soul, its formidable presence reaching out across space and up from the depths of time to overwhelm the limitations of human perspective. In every sense, this would be a very different place without the mountain.

Nearing the end of our first year at Western, Uzma and I are continuing to learn and experience the many things that make this such a distinctively wonderful place to learn, work and live. We feel especially privileged to be a part of this community and look forward to continuing our Western education this summer, leaving our own footprints on the trails around Mount Baker.

Sincerely,

Sabah Randhawa
President
More to tell in ‘fish story’

James Doud Jr., a longtime friend of Western and a Red Haskell director emeritus of the WWU Foundation board, writes that “An improbable fish story” (fall/winter 2016) brought back fond memories of Arch Talbot, whose son Jim was the force behind an improbable Cold War partnership between Bellingham Cold Storage and the state-controlled Soviet fishing industry:

“We moved to Bellingham in 1970 to operate a fast-growing marine manufacturing company, Uniflite. One of my first visitors to the office was Arch Talbot, who had owned and operated the Bellingham Ship Yard business that manufactured ‘all wood’ mine sweepers for the U.S. Navy. He was a highly intelligent man with many interests and overwhelming energy. His first topic with me, the young person with no background in the Northwest and not too much more in boat building was, ‘Young man, you already have too much inventory.’ After that he would stop by to talk, encourage and grade my executive skills. I got to know Jim a bit later in the fishing business. Through involvement with the Western Foundation, we served for many years as board members. Our friendship was strong and enduring, mostly focused on what we could do together to help Western. While some recall the Soviet fishing business when Jim is remembered, it was also his hard work, spirit and ‘always a thoughtful friend’ that I valued so much.”

Not so fast on genetic engineering

Nancy Kroening ('87, B.S., environmental studies) writes that she was glad to see “important questions” addressed in Window magazine, citing “Editor of the species,” (fall/winter 2016) about the promise—and peril—of gene drive technology:

“Please convey to President Randhawa that one graduate of Huxley College respectfully believes that we are going entirely too rapidly on the genetic engineering path. The secondary effects are not being studied very much and we are changing all the species we rely on. We are changing the world, including the organisms in our stomach! There are so many more questions to be answered that do not rely on GE technology. The easy way is not always the long-term success way.”
WWU scientist joins Gulf of Alaska climate study

Senior Marine Scientist Suzanne Strom of Shannon Point Marine Center is part of a group of scientists recently awarded $5.6 million by the National Science Foundation to conduct research over the next five years in the Northern Gulf of Alaska.

The grant funding supports NSF’s formation of the Northern Gulf of Alaska Long-Term Ecological Research site, one of 28 such “LTER” sites in mountains, plains, rivers, forests and oceans.

"Each LTER site is a unique ecosystem," says Strom, who has been conducting research in Alaska for almost 20 years. “And what the LTER program does is give scientists the ability to study these ecosystems not for days or for months, but for decades. This will allow us to see long-term trends in the gulf and to compare those to other ecosystems, where scientists are using a consistent observational framework.”

Two decades of research along Alaska’s Seward Line—a series of ocean sampling stations extending from Resurrection Bay near Seward out to the continental slope 150 miles offshore—are the foundation of this new coastal observatory.

The new LTER site will allow researchers to make observations across a larger geographic region, which supports abundant and economically important varieties of fish, crabs, seabirds and marine mammals.

LTER scientists will research everything from physical and chemical oceanography to the biology of single-celled algae and zooplankton in an effort to understand the patterns affecting some of the world’s most important commercial fisheries.

“The new LTER includes a few of us who have been working on the Seward Line for years, as well as some newer folks. We are excited to broaden our scope to include more sampling seasons as well as new areas east and west of Seward, including the region where the Copper River enters the ocean,” says Strom, who is one of five principle investigators on the project.

Strom joins peers from University of Alaska Fairbanks and University of California at Santa Cruz to work on the grant. The scientists will also work with NOAA’s Alaska Fisheries Science Center.

Strom says the research group will continue to focus on how changes to the global and regional environment affect the gulf.

“How big an environmental shove does it take to significantly alter this ecosystem? That’s one question we are hoping to find answers for," she says. “The system is very good at dealing with natural variability but understanding its resilience in the face of more extreme change is very important.”
Moving toward cross-border cooperation with the Columbia River Treaty

Half a century ago, the governments of the United States and Canada worked out how to harness the power of the Columbia River to generate electricity and control flooding in the river basin.

The vast network of dams and hydroelectric plants throughout the Pacific Northwest has created enormous economic benefits in both the U.S. and Canada. But longstanding concerns persist over the dams’ effect on the environment and local communities and tribes, issues that weren’t addressed in the original treaty.

But as the U.S. and Canada negotiate to “modernize” the 1964 treaty, they’ll address more than flood prevention and maintenance of the region’s electrical supply. They’ll consider how the dams influence the ecosystem—even more so as climate change progresses. They’ll also address the cultural and financial losses to communities that were drowned out when the rivers rose.

In February, Western collaborated with Northwest Indian College to host a two-day symposium on the Columbia River Treaty, designed to include equal representation from tribes, First Nations, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations on both sides of the border.

"The symposium marked a meaningful and concerted effort to include the voice of indigenous people," says Laurie Trautman, director of Western's Border Policy Research Institute.

"The lead negotiator from the Department of State, who will be responsible for incorporating the voices of those left behind during the initial negotiations, was at the table to hear these voices," Trautman says. "Western and NWIC provided a neutral ground for this incredibly important dialogue, which advances multiple ways of knowing, and will likely affect generations to come."
No argument here: Western’s debate team is among the best

For a dozen years, Western’s debate team has ranked among the top 20 nationwide among teams from schools of varying sizes all over the U.S.

The students recently returned from the National Parliamentary Debate Championship in Colorado, where they ended their season in 13th place and kept the streak alive — no small feat for a young team in a rebuilding year, says Korry Harvey, assistant director of Forensics.

The year before, team members Ashley Tippins from Lynden and Kinny Torre (’16, law, diversity and justice) from Mount Vernon placed first and second in the national tournament’s individual rankings.

The awards are gratifying, Harvey says, but he’s proudest when the team becomes a supportive, inclusive community. Parliamentary debaters must be prepared to articulate well-formed opinions on just about anything—sometimes with only a few minutes’ notice—and the pressure can be off-putting to newcomers.

But the real payoff for debaters is in learning to think on their feet and about critical thinking, advocacy, and building confidence, Harvey says. He also wants the students to learn about community-building: Everyone is welcome no matter how much time they’re able to spend in preparation, he says.

“Our attitude is, debate is for the masses and should be available to anyone who wants to participate,” Harvey says.
Manufacturing and Supply Chain Management students get noticed

Western's Manufacturing and Supply Chain Management students immerse themselves in an interdisciplinary blend of business and operations, manufacturing engineering and leadership—a skillset that's so valued by employers that the program boasts a 98-percent career placement rate.

The program is also getting noticed in global rankings. SCM World, an online community devoted to the supply chain industry, recently asked industry insiders to name their top-three universities as "markers of supply chain talent." Western's program came in at number 6, receiving more top-1 votes than such big-name schools as Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Penn State.

Respondents liked that WWU supply chain grads had some real-world experience, including at least two internships, before graduation. Students complete six months' worth of internship experience—and work alongside alumni—at companies like Amazon, Boeing, Fluke, Microsoft, PACCAR, Starbucks and more.

Students put their skills to work for Edmonds

In April, five students from Huxley's Environmental Science program traveled to Edmonds to test water for contaminants in Edmonds Marsh and document vegetation cover in the area.

The students gathering the data will present their work later this spring to city officials, who are weighing whether to buy land there. It's all part of the Sustainable Communities Partnership, in which Western students and faculty partner with one community each academic year on projects related to the city's sustainability efforts.

Eleven classes tackled service-learning projects for Edmonds during the 16-17 academic year. Student groups have studied walkability in downtown, designed recreation programs, and even produced a digital map of the Edmonds Cemetery.

In June, students and faculty will travel to Edmonds once more for a final celebration event hosted by the partnership. Meanwhile, the process is under way to select the next Sustainable Communities Partner.

Learn more at www.wwu.edu/scp

—Trisha Patterson
BAKER: A LOVE STORY

Western’s relationship with Mount Baker is intense, educational and sometimes risky

By Ron C. Judd ('85)

Photo by Rhys Logan ('11)

If you’ve driven to the end of the Mount Baker Highway, you’ve probably seen views like this sunset scene captured by Rhys Logan ('11, Visual Journalism) after a day of split boarding at the Mt. Baker Ski Area.
Unless you have a hot air balloon or helicopter at your disposal, it’s not even visible from campus. But the icy crown of Mount Baker occupies an unusually warm spot in the heart of Western Washington University.

Always has.

This is a love affair with serious staying power: Almost from the day it opened in 1899, many of the students, staff and faculty composing the Western community have kept one eye on the business at hand—education—and another longingly on the snow-crested, 10,781-foot landmark looming about 60 miles to the east, on the windward edge of the North Cascades mountain range.

The Mount Baker Wilderness, its biggest campus boosters say, is more than just a subject of research and a frequent recreational getaway for hikers, cyclists, backpackers, skiers and snowboarders, and budding mountaineers. It has become part of the very identity of the university—a rock-and-ice monument to the green-focused Northwest outdoor spirit that lures students and educators from around the globe to Washington’s “Fourth Corner.”

The mountain, even represented in the abstract in Western’s official logo, is central to the university’s rep as a top destination for students and faculty members who value outdoor recreation, Western admissions officials say.

But its impact extends beyond mere fun. The fitfully sleeping stratovolcano, coupled with the saltwater lying even closer to campus, also provides the university with a living-laboratory research spectrum that few universities can match, says John C. Miles, professor emeritus of Huxley College and the author of “Koma Kulshan: The Story of Mt. Baker.”

“We used to say that if you went to Western and you wanted to study different natural environments, you could do it all the way from the bottom of Puget Sound to the glaciers of Mount Baker,” explains Miles, dean of Huxley from 1985 to 1992. “We played that up, emphasizing all the opportunities.”

As part of a campaign to rebuild Huxley’s base of environmental studies majors after a downturn in the Reagan era of the mid-1980s, the college placed a stunning telephoto shot of the mountain on Huxley brochures and mailed them around the country.

“That use of Baker as the attraction ... it worked!” Miles recalls. “I think people just say: ‘Wow. We want to go out there!’”

**Classroom on the mountain**

Then, like now, Western’s faculty seized the opportunity to make use of the unique alpine environment of Mount Baker, the nearby 9,131-foot Mount Shuksan and surrounding North Cascades peaks as a living laboratory—a rugged, undeveloped wilderness providing rare opportunities for the study of geology, glaciology, forestry, biology and other disciplines. That trend
The call of the mountain: Tatsu Ota first climbed Mount Baker with friends in 2014 and "I had no idea what I was doing," he says. He immersed himself in mountaineering through the AS Outdoor Center and is now an assistant mountaineering instructor.

The Outdoor Center also gets students on the mountain through snowshoeing trips and other activities.
Height Matters: Mount Baker is the third-highest peak in Washington and is visible throughout British Columbia and, on clear days, as far south as Tacoma.

What’s most rewarding is seeing students exposed to the otherworldly views of the Baker area for the first time—and watching the confidence they build in the backcountry transfer into other areas of their lives.

has escalated in recent years, with many traditional fields of study sharing space in the alpine zone with newer, student-led interdisciplinary programs.

Even the mountain’s longstanding primal draw—the urge to get up on it and climb, hike or ski—has taken on an academic bent of late, with a new slate of “experiential education” programs. These programs provide an outdoor education to new students as well as leadership training for their older peers—while simultaneously building the sense of extracurricular “community” proven to increase university student retention rates, and even help students succeed academically.

That’s the next big step in Western’s long-term love affair with its natural surroundings, says Stephen Magnuson (‘13, B.A., recreation), program coordinator of WWU’s Outdoor Center, which offers equipment rental, training and guided excursions to students.

Western’s Outdoor Orientation Training (WOOT) trips for incoming students were launched in 2010 as a graduate student experiment and now are gaining a reputation as a don’t-miss experience for the outdoors-inclined student—or even those who just want to dip a tentative toe into those mountain streams. Students who embark on the week-long backpacking or sea kayaking treks immediately before starting classes at Western say the program plants a seed that blooms throughout their entire college career and beyond.

The program has grown to offer almost two-dozen annual trips, now accommodating more than 200 students a year.

It’s simply taking advantage of what lies immediately next to Western’s Bellingham campus. Students embarking on similar adventures at many universities spend much of their time off-campus commuting to and from the wilderness, Magnuson says. “Ours get to do it in their own backyard.”

Data compiled by Western’s program and others show WOOT participants, much like students in other WWU “first-year experience” programs, tend to fare better academically while building peer-group communities—all factors in a sense of “belonging” that contributes to student retention.

The week-long trips, of course, are also just great fun, even for the inexperienced.

“Students want it,” Magnuson notes. “There’s incredible demand for it now.”

Fortunately for Western, the Baker region and the surrounding alpine environment are proven magnets for the students who wind up leading those excursions. Students seeking careers in outdoor leadership often arrive on campus with an unusually high degree of mountaineering skill.

“Some of our students come here with a high level of technical ability,” Magnuson says. “They’re coming here because they want to ski or climb.”

What’s most rewarding for Outdoor Center trip leaders, he adds, is seeing that spark of passion among students exposed to
the otherworldly views and natural environments of the Baker area for the first time—and watching the confidence they build in the backcountry transfer into success in other areas.

These days students aren't waiting to share their love for the mountain with their same-age peers. Students in Western's Outdoor Recreation degree program now lead half-day “Snow School” sessions for younger students.

The idea grew from similar fifth-grade Mountain School sessions offered at Diablo Lake by the Western-affiliated North Cascades Institute. Snow School, offered in a partnership with Mt. Baker Ski Area, aims to instill a sense of respect for the local alpine world at a young age. Students are bused to the mountain, equipped with snowshoes for a hike, and take an avalanche course conducted by the Northwest Avalanche Center.

“We’re kind of teaching the students about general weather observations, temperature, what’s going on in the sky,” says Boulder, Colorado, native Alex Martin, a 2017 Western graduate in recreation and Snow School instructor. “The whole focus of the activities is to demonstrate where the Mount Baker watershed begins—where all that water starts, and the importance of it all to the environment.”

The Baker Bug
The truth, of course, is that student leaders also love leading treks onto the sturdy shoulders of Mount Baker because they long ago caught the Baker Bug themselves and are looking for any excuse to get back to the sweet-smelling alpine air looming above the Nooksack River drainage.

For some, it becomes an obsession.

Consider the recent exploits of Tatsu Ota, a native of Japan who grew up on Seattle’s Eastside and arrived at Western having no idea he was about to fall in love with a glaciated peak.

His first trip to the mountain, in 2014, was a climb with friends. They made it to the summit, but it wasn’t smooth sailing for Ota, who admits, “I had no idea what I was doing.”

He immersed himself in Western’s mountaineering offerings and honed new skills for his next encounters. Ota was a swift study. He hooked up with friends to climb the mountain again, making several ski descents.

As a sophomore, he helped guide a summit trip for the Outdoor Center, working as an assistant instructor for the program’s spring mountaineering course.

“By that time, I had climbed Baker three times, skiing off of it each time. One time I skied off of it naked. Well, I was wearing a Washington flag as a cape, but nothing more.”

Just to satisfy the curious: Ota did so because, well, it feels “surprisingly good,” with the wind blowing through your ... hair, he says. Just don’t fall.

The Environmental Science major spent many more months skiing the Baker/Shuksan backcountry, gaining skills and confidence in a rugged, avalanche-prone alpine world. Before long, he and a couple friends began dreaming of their own human-powered, bay-to-summit expedition, inspired somewhat by accounts of early “Mount Baker Marathon” adventurers who beginning in 1911 raced from Bellingham to the summit and back, using trains, automobiles and any means available. (The mountain marathon, the inspiration for the modern Ski to Sea race, was short-lived, canceled in 1914 after too many near-death experiences.)

Ota and two friends devised a plan to bicycle from Bellingham Bay to a trailhead above Glacier, climb to the summit, ski back down, then cycle back to the bay. In May 2016, they pulled it off on their first attempt, heading out of Bellingham at midnight on bikes with skis attached.

“We biked all the way up to the trailhead, hiked up to snow, and started skiing up,” Ota says. “It was very exhausting.
So exhausting that we started falling asleep as we’re walking, having weird hallucinations. By some luck, we made it to the summit and skied down.”

The trip, culminated by dipping of bike tires back in Bellingham Bay, took 30 hours.

“We slept for two hours, then went to work,” he recalls. “I guess Mount Baker does hold a close spot in my heart.”

**Love turned cold**

That intense addiction to the thin air of Baker and its craggy neighbors has been a bug at Western for nearly a century. And at various times throughout the institution’s history, the mountain’s rugged, potentially dangerous nature has been driven home in heart-rending ways. Baker has provided generations of thrills for Western’s family members, but also has claimed a number of lives in the process.

The most tragic events unfolded in the early summer of 1939—by coincidence, during the final weeks on campus of longstanding university President Charles H. Fisher, who had already been formally relieved of his job, effective at the end of the summer session, by the college board of trustees after being falsely accused of communist leanings.

Fisher, an East Coast native, had his own longstanding love affair with Mount Baker. Given that, he was personally devastated when a freak avalanche below the “Roman Wall” on Baker’s Coleman Glacier summit route on July 22, 1939, swept a large group of climbers—mostly Western students, faculty and acquaintances—off the mountain, some into a gaping crevasse. Six died and four were never recovered. It was the worst mountaineering disaster in U.S. history.

The tragedy didn’t stop the annual summit climbs by Western students and faculty, however. Some of those involved in the 1939 incident returned to the summit in subsequent years. The avalanche is memorialized to this day by a little-known campus monument at the north end of Old Main.

While the ’39 accident remains a notably dark mark on Western’s history, it was not the only fatal encounter between students and the alpine area around Baker’s slopes. Most recently, a trio of Western students setting out to celebrate the end of winter quarter with a snowshoe trek to Artist Point were buried in an avalanche below Table Mountain in December 2003. One of the students, J.P. Eckstrom of Shoreline, died in the accident. The other two miraculously survived after being buried in the snow overnight.

One family with a connection to the dangers of Mount Baker is also intimately familiar with the glories it offers. **Duncan Howat (’63)**, general manager of Mount Baker Ski Area since 1968, thinks about this dichotomy often.

Howat’s uncle, Maynard, and his fiancée, Hope Weitman of Chewelah, both 23, died in the 1939 avalanche and remain entombed in Coleman Glacier. Howat’s father helped build the campus memorial to the fallen.

But Duncan Howat also is intimately familiar with the spirit of inspiration the mountain brought—and continues to bring—to the community of Western and other mountain-loving constituencies far beyond. In a decidedly wild location with no commercial signs nor electricity, except what’s produced by generators to power lifts and lodges, Howat’s ski haunt was one of the first in North America to allow snowboarders to ride chairlifts, just like “regular” skiers.

The ski area, located mostly on the shoulders of Mount Shuksan, not Mount Baker itself, quickly became globally famous as a slice of snowboarding and backcountry skiing heaven. It remains so, drawing dozens of the world’s top riders each winter to a celebrated race, the Mount Baker Legendary Banked Slalom, in a natural creek bed on the mountainside. Racers enter beneath a gate in front of a hand-carved sign with the admonition: “Say your prayers.” The winner is awarded a grand trophy fashioned from a roll of duct tape.

That’s the sort of raw, human-and-nature connection the mountain has always fostered—and the same one appreciated and revered by generations of Western’s extended family.

It is why a long running joke about some Western students—“She went to Bellingham to study accounting, but wound up majoring in snowboarding”—really isn’t a joke at all, in some cases. And why the lessons learned from those fresh-air days in the sweeping North Cascades alpine make that a worthy life goal in its own right.

If a century of exploration on Mount Baker has taught anything to the university that has embraced the icy peak, it is that lessons learned on the high alpine vistas of the North Cascades have lifelong value that transcends classroom-style learning.

“The outdoors is the biggest metaphor for life,” says the Outdoor Center’s Magnuson. “It’s all transferable.”

Even as he speaks, students are signing up for open slots—and a waiting list—for the 2017 student-led Memorial Day trek to the summit.

“The mountains are calling,” the trip description reads, “and we must go!”

**Tatsu Ota arrived at Western having no idea he was about to fall in love with a glaciated peak.**

Ron C. Judd (’85, journalism, history) is a writer and columnist for the Seattle Times and teaches journalism and First-Year Interest Group courses at Western. A frequent Baker visitor himself, he struggles to hold it against students who happen to miss class during epic powder days.

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**Ron C. Judd (’85, journalism, history) is a writer and columnist for the Seattle Times and teaches journalism and First-Year Interest Group courses at Western. A frequent Baker visitor himself, he struggles to hold it against students who happen to miss class during epic powder days.**
MOUNT BAKER: A BACKYARD ALPINE WONDERLAND

"Wild" in every sense: The Heather Meadows area is surely one of the wildest spots one can reach in the Northwest via a paved road. (It is the sort of alpine destination one might hike for a solid day to reach in other parts of the Cascade Range.) The area is so wild that people can get in trouble here in winter a few dozen feet from their car. An early movie version of the Jack London classic "The Call of the Wild" was filmed here in 1934, largely because the terrain was seen as a passable stand-in for remote Alaska.

Where's the summit? It's not a simple question. Mount Baker has two summit cones – Sherman and Carmelo craters, buried below its icy crown. Carmelo, the oldest, hosts the high point. Hundreds of fumaroles continue to frequently vent gases from around the summit; lahars created by heat from Sherman crater flowed down the mountain in the 1840s.

Once A Volcano, Always... In technical terms, Mount Baker is a "glaciated andesitic stratovolcano." That means that yes, it likely will erupt again sometime. Baker, which sits atop a much-older volcanic cone known as Black Buttes, is the second most-active volcano (behind only Mount St. Helens) in the Cascade Range. It is second only to Mount Rainier in terms of glaciation, although like other Cascade Peaks, Baker's glaciers have been shrinking in recent years due to warming temperatures. The last lava flow from the summit was about 10,000 years ago, but an eruption of ash occurred about 6,600 years ago. The most-recent volcanic activity of concern from the peak—a venting of steam and some sliding—occurred in 1975.

— Ron C. Judd

Does it snow a lot? Uh, yeah. Mount Baker Ski Area averages more than 650 inches of accumulated snowfall annually. In the winter of 1998-99, the ski area obliterated Mount Rainier's single-season record for snowfall, amassing 1,140 inches, or 95 feet—a world record for a one-season snowfall.

Peak bagging: The first recorded successful climb of Mount Baker was made on a third attempt by Edmund Thomas Coleman, an Englishman living in Victoria, B.C. in August 1868, via the Middle Fork Nooksack, Marmot Ridge, Coleman Glacier, and the northern Roman Wall.
John All, during a fateful expedition to Nepal in 2014, recorded data at more than 16,000 feet in Cho La, a summit pass in the Himalaya, while hiking to Everest Base Camp.

Photo courtesy of John All
The Heights of Climate Science

John All won’t stop studying mountain environments—even though he nearly died on one

By John Thompson

He was stuck at the bottom of a 70-foot crevasse in the Himalaya, his ribs crushed, six vertebrae cracked, a broken arm hanging uselessly at his side, watching the sliver of light above him slowly deepening from bright blue as daylight gave way to night. John All could do two things: curl up, accept the pain and die, giving in to his circumstances and the numbness threatening to take over his body—or begin to fight and climb out of the overhanging ice.

All, the founding director of Western’s new Mountain Environments Research Institute and a faculty member in the Environmental Science Department, chose the latter. Somehow, hours later, he eventually wedged himself inch by inch out of that cold, cobalt-blue crack in the ice that had almost swallowed him whole.

“I knew I had to get going—that if I paused to think about it, I would shut down and never get out,” All says. “I just kept thinking about my mom, and how devastated she would be, and how I had so many things in my life that I still wanted to accomplish.”

All’s narrow escape from that glacier in 2014 went viral on social media, thanks to the short videos he sent out to Facebook and YouTube after the ordeal. The BBC News feature on All’s battle to survive has more than 2 million hits on YouTube; his first-person account is riveting.

It was around this time that an NPR reporter gave him the “badass for science” title. The key component: All wasn’t on the glacier on the flank of Nepal’s Mount Himlung for thrill-seeking—he was there for science, collecting samples to determine regional air pollution and glacial melt rates. A few weeks before his accident, All and his team were on Everest when a section of the Khumbu Icefall—a treacherous latticework of interwoven crevasses and gorges that climbers cross on fragile aluminum ladders—collapsed, killing 16 Nepalese climbers, including a member of All’s team. Narrowly avoiding that disaster, he relocated to Himlung on the northern edge of Nepal only to experience the freak accident that almost took his life.

All recovered in Kathmandu before coming home, battered and bruised but with his mission intact: to deliver to the masses his message about anthropogenic (man-made) climate change and what we can all do to understand what’s happening and adapt to it.

Not long after returning home, All began work on a book of his experiences, “Icefall: Adventures at the Wild Edges of our Dangerous, Changing Planet,” published in March by Public Affairs, in which All recounts his global exploits in the search for data, data, and more data—from the plains of Africa to the jungles of Panama and the slopes of Everest.

Son of a scientist

All grew up in the south, the son of an agricultural entomologist—a bug scientist—at the University of Georgia. The baked red clay of South Georgia’s fields was where All, working alongside his father, first became fascinated by science and research and how it can be used to make the world a better place. It also taught him his first basic lessons in how to endure tough conditions while doing that research.

“When I was 10, I had three real goals in life—to climb Everest, and compete in the Ironman and the Iditarod. One down, two to go.”
highest places.

“When I was a kid, reading adventures about heroes, mountains always stuck with me and climbing trees, rocks, and cliffs just felt natural. When I was 10, I had three real goals in life—to climb Everest, and compete in the Ironman and the Iditarod. One down, two to go,” he says.

His interest continued through college, picking up his doctorate at the University of Arizona and a law degree from the University of Georgia.

When he was in grad school in Arizona, All began working with the American Alpine Club learning about conserving mountain environments and how to climb. Fellow Arizona grad student Michael Medler, now an associate professor of Environmental Studies at Western, was the person who taught him to climb—as he has taught dozens of others—and gaining this technical skill allowed All to follow his research passion.

“I’ve been studying mountains ever since.”

Western: All’s New Base Camp

All first came to Western in 2012, two years before his accident in Nepal, to give a guest lecture as part of the Huxley College of the Environment Speaker Series, and he was smitten. It wasn’t lost on him that being so close to the Olympics and the Cascades—dubbed “America’s Alps” for a good reason—would be a fabulous place to do more of his alpine research.

As founding director for the Mountain Environments Research Institute (meri.wwu.edu) All has created an interdisciplinary research group made of faculty from Huxley, the College of Science and Engineering, the Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

“The faculty who are part of the MERI experience at Western are just incredible,” All says. “They are going to be able to offer students such a wealth of expertise and opportunities to work in cutting-edge research around the globe.”

All says the areas of faculty expertise cover everything from how black carbon molecules and snow algae help melt glaciers in the Andes to how land use exacerbates climate change in the Himalaya.

“We’re going to take Western students into alpine research environments across Washington and the world,” All says, “which is important, because mountain environments are changing quickly and are among the first to be impacted by climate change.”

This summer, MERI will host a study abroad program in Peru’s Cordillera Blanca in the Andes, featuring five weeks of backpacking and research.

All, who is also the executive director of the nonprofit American Climber Science Program, has also begun laying the groundwork for a Mountain Research Skills Certificate Program through MERI. After multiple surveys revealed a strong student interest in mountain research courses, MERI faculty are creating this certificate to provide the skills to conduct research in mountain environments as well as foster stewardship within the region’s communities.

“In the end, that’s what it all really comes down to—getting our students into these places to see for themselves how the Earth’s climate is changing so very quickly; then allowing their data and their experiences to help tell the story,” he says. “Taking it to the next level—that’s going to be their job.”

All of which sounds, dare we say it, pretty badass.

John Thompson is the assistant director of Western’s Office of Communications and Marketing. He knows the closest he will ever get to the slopes of Everest is a stroll through Schreiber’s Meadows on the flanks of Mount Baker—and he’s OK with that.
JOHN ALL'S SHORT LIST OF AMAZING PLACES

MERI founding Director John All has been around the globe on his quests to gather ever more data to document global climate change. And not all of his adventures end up in a crevasse—some find their trailheads in quiet meadows of flowers as far as the eye can see, dark jungles or alpine moonscapes lit by fading alpenglow. Here are some out-of-the-way locations that, for him, rank among the most spectacular in the world.

Bhutan: “The nicest people on earth.”

Tuolumne Meadows, Yosemite National Park: “This one isn’t rare or out of the way, actually. But for me, it’s the single most tranquil place on the planet.”

Sossusvlei, Namibia: “It’s like being on Mars. There’s just no place else like it.”

Alpamayo Col, Peru: “The best campsite with the most incredible sunsets.”
Uncovering the Secrets of the Mountain

WWU scientists ski, trek and climb to learn more about the volcano next door

By Jemma Everyhope-Roser

The mountain in our backyard has been extremely reluctant to give up its secrets.

"When I arrived here in 1998, we knew more about volcanoes in Papua New Guinea than we did about Mount Baker," says Susan DeBari, professor in geology and expert in magmas and volcanology.

"We knew nothing: nothing about their ages, very little about eruptive history," DeBari remembers. "And that was true for all Cascade volcanoes. They weren't studied. Even Glacier Peak, the next volcano south from Mount Baker, had no hazards map—and we still don't have a sense of exactly when eruptions happened at Glacier Peak, or how frequently."

DeBari's former student Dave Tucker ('74, B.S., environmental science; M.S., geology) is now a research associate at Western and wrote "Geology Underfoot in Western Washington." Tucker also collaborated on a research report for the U.S. Geological Survey, "Eruptive History and Hazards of Mount Baker Volcano," now under final review by the USGS.

"It's difficult terrain to get around on," Tucker says, explaining why Mount Baker wasn't studied until the '90s. "Below the tree line everything is covered in our famous Northwestern jungle and so it's really hard to find deposits. It takes years of dedicated fieldwork."

The faculty performing research on Mount Baker's slopes must not only be world-class scientists; they must be adventurers and mountain climbers as well.

"I'm an avid back country skier and alpine climber," says Robin Kodner, assistant professor in biology, "so it's fun to go collect samples in places that are hard to get to."

And some locations are very inaccessible. Mid-April, Kodner and graduate student Rachael Mallon skied out to Herman Saddle, an area between Mount Herman and Mt. Baker Ski Area, to test snow for the famous but mysterious watermelon snow algae. They dug a 13-foot snow pit and probed down 9 feet more but never hit ground.

Any students and faculty performing research on Mount Baker's most remote peaks have to be certified for glacier travel and, ideally, crevasse rescue.

"We don't send students up on the ice without training," says Doug Clark, associate professor in geology and a glacier expert. "Despite the fact these volcanoes look huge and impressive, they're big piles of remarkably weak rock for the most part. They're made up of a few strong layers of lava flows but in between those there's pyroclastic material that's just loose cinder. It's not a strong system."

In other words, even though Mount Baker, Mount Rainier, and the other Cascade volcanoes look beautiful from afar, up close they're hard to navigate and prone to rock falls, which makes research treacherous for even the most intrepid scientist-adventurers.

'When is it going to blow?'

Because so little research has been done in the North Cascades, Western's faculty has decades of hearsay to debunk.

Mostly, when people think about these slumbering, snow-laden giants exploding, they imagine rivers of lava. So it's understandable that Tucker, who is the director of the all-volunteer Mount Baker Volcano Research Center, frequently gets the worried question: "When is Mount Baker going blow? We're all toast when it does, right?"

But Mount Baker isn't prone to Hawaii-like eruptions. It's a volcano on a convergent margin, where two tectonic plates
Doug Clark, associate professor of geology, takes students up to Baker's glaciers to take core samples to monitor the glaciers' health.

“\textit{It’s fun to go collect samples in places that are hard to get to.}”
Crystals in the lava rocks have growth rings similar to a tree.
collide to form the continental crust we live on.

"Mount Baker is a very interesting example of Cascadia magmatism," DeBari says. Her students search for lava flows that are "primitive," or that come from deep within the mantle.

"We go to (an old, congealed) lava flow," DeBari says, "and see the characteristics of the uppermost point, the lowermost point, bottom and top, doing some detailed sampling."

The crystals in the rocks, DeBari says, have growth rings, similar to a tree's rings, which can tell her how the magma changed as it moved from deep within the Earth's mantle up to the Earth's crust. Back at the lab, they slice the rock and examine slivers, first under a regular microscope and then a Scanning Electron Microscope, to learn what each rock's journey means for the mountain.

Mount Baker, whose oldest lava flows are only 40,000 years old, is the youngest volcano in the Cascades—by comparison, Mount Rainier has been around for hundreds of thousands of years—but Baker stands in the footprint of other volcanoes that have long eroded away. Geologists have access to about 11,000 years of Mount Baker's eruption history in the form of ash deposits and more in the millennia worth of lava eruptions that remain as rock.

And that can tell us about what would happen if Baker did erupt.

Mount Baker's biggest known eruption happened over 6,500 years ago. If Mount Baker were to erupt again, it would mostly deposit ash on its own flanks, though Bellingham might get a dusting and a thin film might land as far south as Seattle. But since winds often blow northward, the ash would most likely fall in the North Cascades.

The largest danger from Mount Baker is actually lahars. A cement-like slurry of mud and debris, a lahar can flow downstream as quickly as 20 mph, devastating all in its path. Deming sits on top of a 6,600-year-old, 30-foot lahar deposit, and a lahar of that size today would most likely kill many people in Whatcom County.

"That's the main, practical purpose for studying an active volcano like Mount Baker, so that we can understand what the hazards are," Tucker says.

Tracking glaciers
But Tucker isn't the only scientist using the past to predict the future. Doug Clark has both the research and the photos to prove that Mount Baker's glaciers have been retreating since the Little Ice Age in the 1800s.

Every fall, Clark and his geology students scramble up the loose rocks of a glacial trough to the terminus of Mount Baker's Easton glacier, which covers its southwest slope, so that his students can track the glacier's edge over successive years. "Since I first started taking this field trip in the early 2000s," Clark
"It's not too much of a stretch to say Mount Baker is the heart of what goes on in our community in terms of human water needs and the fisheries."

after a really good snow year, a glacier won’t advance from that. It takes at least five to 10 years of above-average snow."

Students, both undergraduate and graduate, have been hiking regularly up remote locations to do GPS measurements or take core samples in order to monitor the glaciers' long-term health. Clark, who says that anthropogenic climate change will continue to diminish Mount Baker’s glaciers, predicts that ice melt to the rivers may temporarily increase and then eventually decline as the supply dwindles. The glaciers themselves won’t entirely disappear—Mount Baker is high enough that there will be snow every year—but they’ll be substantially reduced as more snow falls as rain.

"Glaciers are the key source to really cold water to the Nooksack in summertime," Clark says, "and once they start shrinking or disappearing the amount of cold water that salmon rely on is going to decrease. The temperature of the water is important."

Additionally, when glaciers retreat, they leave behind loose rubble and debris that can wash downstream and choke up rivers. Western Geology Professor Bob Mitchell and two of his graduate students, Stephanie Truitt and Kevin Knapp, are exploring the Nooksack River’s response to climate change and the potential effects on fish habitat. Truitt is modeling how stream flow and water temperature will change as climate warming melts snowpack and glaciers upstream. And Knapp is looking at how much of the newly exposed glacial deposits may end up downstream as sediment that harms salmon habitat.

Meanwhile, Mitchell says, warmer temperatures mean less snow altogether, exposing more landscape to erosion of sediment.

"It's not too much of a stretch to say Mount Baker is the heart of what goes on in our community in terms of human water needs and the fisheries," Clark says. "The glaciers on Baker are a really critical element of water supply in Whatcom County. As these glaciers change in large part due to anthropogenic climate change, it’s going to affect us, our water supply, our agriculture, and our fisheries. These glaciers are changing fairly rapidly; they aren’t getting bigger."

But salmon and the fisheries aren’t the only ones that will be affected by this change.

Watermelon snow

"As soon as the snow pack starts to melt," Kodner says, "the snow algae start to bloom and that melting water is delivered through the Nooksack River to Bellingham Bay. Nutrients delivered by the river also cause algal blooms in the bay."

Kodner studies algae communities, both in snow and in seawater, and is currently developing algae population models about the phenomenon known as watermelon snow. For Kodner, watermelon snow algae offers a great opportunity to learn more about how organisms evolve in changing environments.

"I don't think people often realize that watermelon snow is alive," Kodner says. "They know that the snow turns red but they're not recognizing it as a bloom of algae."

Watermelon snow, contrary to belief, neither tastes nor smells like watermelon. It’s not poisonous, either, though Kodner is quick to say that watermelon snow often exists alongside other fungi, amoebas, and bacteria that could make humans ill.

In fact, the watermelon snow algae is closely related to the algae used in dietary supplements and smoothies. Yet its life cycle, how it repopulates the snow every year, is all but unknown. Most of this is due to how, again, watermelon snow is located in areas that are relatively inaccessible.

"Studying snow algae has a lot of benefits because they don't move," she says. "Microbes are constantly moving, especially in a place like Bellingham Bay which is very dynamic. The ocean is much, much more diverse environment."

Snow algae's relative simplicity allows Kodner to refine her
Crowd-Sourced Science

Kodner Lab is partnering with guide services and citizens to collect samples of watermelon snow around Washington. Hikers and climbers interested in science will be given a test tube with a non-toxic DNA preservative in which to collect samples.

The Kodner Lab hopes to track watermelon snow communities and understand watermelon snow diversity across the North Cascades. "It's easier to study evolution in algae, because they have large populations and reproduce quickly," Kodner says. "This will help us develop a good model for understanding how organisms respond and evolve in changing environments."

Learn more about the project at: kodnerlab.wordpress.com/citizen-science/

Population models. "We're interested in biodiversity and biogeographic patterns, but we're also interested in looking at the population levels in these communities. It will help us understand how they are adapting to changing environments. Of course snowy alpine ecosystems are dramatically affected by changing climate."

All of these scientists—Tucker, DeBari, Clark, Mitchell, Kodner—are explorers, learning about undiscovered wonders that exist in Western's backyard, trying to understand the North Cascades' past in order to predict its future, so the rest of us can better prepare for it.

Or, as Tucker sums it up: "We like to say the past is the key to the future."

Jemma Everyhope-Roser is a program assistant in the Office of Communications and Marketing and a freelance writer and editor. Her most recent story for Window magazine was "Giving new life to the words," about alumni helping to preserve and revitalize indigenous languages.

Associate Geology Professor Doug Clark uses ablation stakes to measure the glaciers on Mount Baker, which have been retreating since the 1800s, Clark says.
Get Out Here

We asked WWU visual journalist Rhys Logan about his favorite Mount Baker places
MOUNT BAKER HAS THIS POWER. IT'S THE ULTIMATE FOCAL POINT AT THE VERY EDGE OF OUR COUNTRY. YOU CAN'T NOT NOTICE IT—AND IT'S THAT WAY FROM TWO COUNTRIES. YOU CAN SEE BAKER ALMOST BETTER FROM CANADA THAN YOU CAN FROM BELLINGHAM.

In human cultures, volcanoes can be thought of as spiritual because they're super-powerful. You don't do anything to a mountain, except look at it and climb on it. It's like, here is this giant obstacle—we have to go interact with it. It's human nature.

Baker was that, to me. That giant obstacle. This new place. It was a scary thing I had never done and it shaped the course of my life. And I found I wasn't alone in that.

When you're on the mountain, surrounded by mountains, you can probably see 10 other peaks. You get this sense of individuality and collectivity at the same time: This place is ours. It's funny to exhibit ownership but in the same sense, that's what facilitates deeper love. When you take ownership of something, you take care of it.

It's really cool how we now have 90,000 people who have taken ownership of Mount Baker. We look at it every day. It's timeless, it's constant.

Baker is like a playground for people from the northwest who like the outdoors. You don't even have to have a destination, you can just head up that highway and you'll find someplace where you can get out of the car and head out on the trail system.

Here are a few places I loved to visit when I was a student at Western—and still do. One of the best things about living in Bellingham is that some of these are after-work trips.
You’d be surprised at how well a mountain that size can hide.

Mount Herman
Standing on Mount Herman, between Shuksan and Baker, gives you a sense of the sheer magnitude of your surroundings. Human lives are such a blip on the story of geology—we get a blink of an eye. You’re in a place that potentially millions of people have seen but never have stood on.

Three friends and I summited Mount Herman right around graduation in 2011. The snowfall had been amazing that particular winter. But in the mountains, beauty and terror are equal. You perceive the world to be so beautiful but you’re also so small and insignificant—because it can kill you. You are insignificant to its own existence.

We parked at the Heather Meadows top parking lot and summited with our snowboards, plodding along. It took us two or three hours to summit maybe 6,000 feet. Standing on the summit, it was just howling. Baker was massive. I had never seen it so unfiltered. It is right in your face.

We had decided on our routes and went down the hill one at a time. After my buddy Jake went, I took a heel-side turn and stopped. A slab broke and everything below me slid in a huge, wide sheet of dry snow. Probably about 10 inches deep, but that’s enough to really sweep you away. We watched it rumble down and Jake was down there. We were yelling for him to look back up. He saw it, and took two big strokes to get out of the way. It ran by him and fizzled.

I had been having so much fun, totally lost in this moment, and boom, we could have killed Jake. Just because you’re having a good time, doesn’t mean it’s safe. Help is not close. You or your friends are going to be your best chance of survival if something goes wrong. You have to take it seriously.

Racehorse Falls
It’s probably one of my favorite places. It’s on a tributary of the Nooksack, a succession of five waterfalls, each of different sizes. There are a bunch of mountain bike trails and some really nice camp spots out there, too.

I went out once doing a bunch of photos with some pro kayakers. They had heard that waterfall had been run once, but it’s kind of janky, not a clean run. You have to have a crazy amount of technical ability—they analyzed every droplet of water. One guy still tumbled all the way down and landed upside down in the pool.

Canyon Lake Community Forest
Canyon Lake is surrounded by snow-capped peaks and there’s fishing, little hikes, a couple of little camp sites. If the gate off of Canyon Lake Road is closed, it’s a 5.7 mile hike in.

We were up there once and these dudes were paragliding and one crashed into a tree. He climbed down and he was like,
“Yeah, lost my wind,” all in his Kevlar jumpsuit.

Out there you meet all these interesting, eccentric people who interact with the landscape in a way that fits them, on their own terms. You have to be strong. If you’re waiting for the weather, you can’t do anything. You’re bringing your own good time with you.

**North Twin**
The North Twin of the Twin Sisters is kind of an intense hike in the Sisters Range. You’ll need crampons if you want to summit. You don’t need ropes, but it’s steep and a really true scramble. I was tired. And if you fell, it would be bad. We rode our bikes past the gate one summer night after work, about two or three miles uphill. I was dehydrated, cramping up so bad, looking for snow to fill our water bottles. We had already ridden our bikes two or three hours before trying to summit this stupid mountain.

But when you’re on top of that peak, it’s real. It’s a mountain. You look at these places from the city and they look so impossible to do. How could anybody stand up there? Every time I see it now, I think about that trip. You realize it takes two feet. It takes plodding along until you’re there.

When we hauled out of there that night, Baker was huge and glowing. The stars were out and we were riding bikes by headlamp. But the road was full of these huge, hockey puck-sized toads. The road was still really warm and there were hundreds of them. We never would have seen any of that if we hadn’t gone out there.

**Middle Fork of the Nooksack River**
On the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River is the diversion dam, where the city of Bellingham diverts water into Lake Whatcom for the city’s water supply. It’s a nice walk down from the gate, on a graded road. Down there, you can see where the river goes into a narrow canyon.

**Canyon Creek**
Canyon Creek is really pretty, five minutes past Glacier. Every time we’ve been there, we’ve had plenty of space. You can swim in the pools and just wade or fish, have a good campfire and get home in a little over an hour.

**Baker River and Baker Lake**
I think the Baker Lake dam is rad. You can drive over it and there’s a little spillway. Every once in a while, when that thing is going, it’s like a cannon of water shooting straight out.

And there’s great views of the mountain around there. You don’t realize how close it is until it’s right there. You’d be surprised at how well a mountain that size can hide.

The Baker River area has prime camping. Right at the mouth, it’s all sand later in the summer. The river braids through, all turquoise. It’s this brilliant, milky blue, glacial till. That river is ice cold—you can’t even stand in it. And Baker Lake is so warm—it’s one of the warmest I’ve ever swum in.
Downhill, Fast

Breezy Johnson’s goals include winning an Olympic medal—and deciding on a major at Western

By John Thompson

Western’s Breezy Johnson is in many ways a typical college student. She talks about her course load with an occasional roll of her eyes to indicate the amount of work that is shortly needing to be delivered to her professors; her battered iPhone is never far from her hand. She contemplates, like all students, how her career path after college will turn out.

But Johnson’s path is different than most of ours; it is marked by gates, covered in snow, and always begins at the top of a very, very tall mountain.

Johnson, a native of Victor, Idaho, just finished her third season as a member of the U.S. Ski Team, specializing in the World Cup alpine speed events such as the Downhill and the Super G.

Downhill is her specialty: fewer gates, more speed.

Despite the fact that she is currently on crutches due to a scary fall in the last race of the World Cup season in Aspen, Johnson’s easy smile and bright eyes exude a level of confidence that comes with knowing you are one of the few people in the world who can do what you do—fly down a snow-covered mountain at speeds reaching 80 mph, faster than almost anyone alive.

We sat down with Johnson to talk about the ski season, her hopes for the 2018 Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea, and how she juggles all her responsibilities while focused on one thing: being fast.

First, your injury. Are you going to be OK?

I fractured my tibial plateau. That sounds bad, but really, it could have been way, way worse. I’ll be off the crutches soon and can begin training again this summer, so I should be fine for the upcoming season.

What brought you to Western?

I love the Pacific Northwest, so I knew that I wanted to go to school out here. I visited Western and loved it, and the university was super accommodating about my schedule and the fact that I’m overseas so much of the year. I was also admitted to the Honors Program, which was great because I didn’t know anyone on campus when I got here but immediately was part of a fabulous community through that program and met lots of great people. I haven’t picked a major yet, but I’m leaning towards English. I can’t get enough Shakespeare.

What is your schedule like?

I train in the spring and summer, off my skis and working on fitness. That happens year-round, really. Then in the fall the team begins training together as a group, and winter is all about the World Cup season from November through March. There’s a break for the holidays, but other than that, it’s a different
"You can’t do what we do and never fall. So when it happens, all you can do is go back up the hill and try harder.”

Photo by Sarah Brunson
On the mountain, only one person can ever win any race. But in class, at least theoretically, everybody can get an A.”

BREEZY JOHNSON'S THREE FAVORITE COURSES ON THE WORLD CUP ALPINE CIRCUIT

1. Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy: "I remember watching an event at Cortina on TV when I was really little, and being fascinated. Now I ski it every year and had my first top 10 finish there."

2. Jeongseon, South Korea: "This is the Olympic course and it fits me perfectly. I crashed there in March, but that happens... before my crash, the race was going perfectly. I was in fifth place at the split."

3. Garmisch Partenkirchen, Germany: "I scored my first World Cup points there, so it's special."
mountain each week until the season is over. Then I'm back at Western for spring quarter, and the cycle starts over again.

Have you ever skied Mount Baker?
No. When I finally get to Western each spring, it's so nice to leave all my skis at home and just come to school, and focus on my studies.

How hard is it to make that transition, from an ultra-competitive international ski season to classes and Shakespeare?
I love it. It's so different. On the mountain, only one person can ever win any race. But in class, at least theoretically, everybody can get an A. In the ski season, you don't really get to methodically check off boxes and be finished with things; it always just continues to the next thing to do. In class, I finish a paper and turn it in; it's done. I work hard on it and hopefully do well. And unlike a downhill race, you don't have to be perfect to succeed.

What were the highlights of this past season?
It was an amazing year, full of ups and downs - I had my first top 10 finish, in the downhill at Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy, and an 11th-place finish at Lake Louise in Canada. So that was great. I was second on the U.S. team in the downhill, behind only Lindsay (Vonn) heading into the final two races, which were on the Olympic course in Jeongseon in Korea and at Aspen. Two courses I really like. Then I had falls in both of those last two races, dropped from second to fifth on the team, and fell to 18th overall in the World Cup downhill standings.

So that wasn't the way I wanted to finish at all, and finishing fifth is important because the Olympic team is only made up of the top four in each event. So I know it's right there for me, I just have to produce the results I'm capable of.

How do you put those two races out of your mind as you prepare for the upcoming season?
For the most part, they are already gone. You learn and you move on. You can't do what we do and never fall, it's impossible. We've all been there, and we're all going to be there again. So when it happens, all you can do is go back up the hill and try harder.

What's it like, to fly down that hill that fast, on the edge, the way you do?
There's nothing like it. Your mind and your body are absolutely, 100 percent firing as one. For those two minutes, you are engaged in a way that is unlike anything else I have ever done.

What is going through your mind in the starting gate up at the top?
You're mentally going through what you need to do, thinking about your training runs and what the coaches have told you. You prepare to execute your plan. And, of course, the minute you leave that gate, without fail, your plan goes completely by the board. And you just let your training take over.

Do you have a ritual in the starting gate?
Most of us do our own thing. I stomp my feet, make a lot of noise, and jump around a lot to keep my body warm. The noise tends to freak people out.

What's something about the World Cup season, or downhill racing in general, that most people who casually watch the sport from their couches don't know?
Oh, there's tons of stuff. Like, most folks in the U.S. have no idea how popular skiing is as a spectator sport in Europe. The courses are PACKED with people—like 50,000 people coming to watch a race and line the course! It's crazy!

Another thing is that most people don't realize how much work it is to get us ready to race—and how vital ski technicians are to our success. My tech, Ales Sopotnik, is like my Yoda. I couldn't do it without him. Getting the skis' edges ready and perfect for each athlete is an art—and then you factor in the boots and the rest of the gear... it's incredibly difficult. And these guys get basically zero sleep during the season because they are working all night to get our stuff ready for the next day.

What's it like being a part of the circuit? Are there rivalries with other countries?
Not other countries as much. Sometimes, like any competition, folks will have personalities that clash, but for the most part, everyone really supports everyone else, regardless of nationality. For example, the U.S. team is generally really good friends with the girls from the Scandinavian countries like Norway and Sweden. They are all ultra-friendly and speak perfect English, so that is great. And some of the Italians don't speak a word of English, but they are just crazy and super fun girls and a blast to be around.

Between the World Cup and, hopefully, the Olympics next winter, it's shaping up to be another busy year. But you'll have 126,000 Western alums and 15,000 current students cheering you on.

It's going to be an amazing year, I truly believe that. So much to look forward to and prepare for. And to my professors, don't worry, I'll have my Shakespeare with me—and I can't wait to come back to Western next spring after the Olympics—hopefully with many stories and a medal to share.

John Thompson is the assistant director of the Office of Communications and Marketing at Western. A leisurely cross-country ski jaunt across the flat, open expanse of Bridge Lake in B.C. is about as fast as he's willing to go.
Huxley College of the Environment Distinguished Alumni: Denise Attwood and Ric Conner

Throwing their hearts into business

For Ganesh Himal’s owners, livable wages and community development are part of the bottom line

By Frances Badgett

Denise Attwood (’83) and Ric Conner (’85) were on a trek in Nepal 30 years ago when they bought two sweaters that changed their lives: The family who made them, Tibetan refugees, asked Attwood and Conner to help them sell sweaters in the U.S.

“Ric is a great entrepreneur and I’m a social justice nut,” says Attwood, who met Conner at a Huxley College potluck. Those two sweaters opened up a whole world of talented, hard-working craftspeople in one of the poorest regions in the world.

A few thousand sweaters later, they started Ganesh Himal Trading, LLC, to sell goods from Nepal in stores across the U.S. and Canada. Ganesh Himal Trading has since expanded into paper goods, baskets and other products.

Respect for people and the planet

When Attwood and Conner started, very few people were versed in the practice of fair trade, which encompasses respect for the environment, long-term relationships and livable wages for the producers, and financial support of the region. Today, Ganesh Himal Trading employs hundreds of Nepali and Tibetan craft producers.

“It’s only been 30 years and look at how conscious consumers are today,” Attwood says. “And it makes a huge difference. We see the change in the producers’ lives. We’ve seen families send their daughters to get masters degrees.”

Building Ganesh Himal offered another opportunity to Attwood and Conner to make a difference—the Baseri Health Clinic. On their first trek to Nepal, Attwood and Conner had met a 14-year-old girl, Sita Gurung. Eight years later in the Bangkok airport, the couple reunited with Gurung in a chance encounter.

They rekindled their friendship and discovered that Gurung had moved to Seattle. They stayed in touch and when Gurung’s mother died, Attwood and Conner worked with her to establish a health clinic in 2010 in her home village of Baseri, a rural town spread across a terraced hillside overlooking a river valley in central Nepal.

The clinic was serving an average of 10 people per day when it was destroyed in the devastating 2015 Nepal earthquake. “Baseri is only 20 kilometers from the epicenter,” Attwood says.

Helping to rebuild

Attwood and Conner awoke to the news of the earthquake with a 3 a.m. phone call to their Spokane home. The couple’s 19-year-old son, Cameron Conner, took a year off from Whitman College to oversee the rebuilding of the Baseri clinic. “He did a phenomenal job,” Attwood says. Through Cameron’s efforts with local builders, the clinic was restored in a year.

As they continued to work in Nepal, Conner and Attwood noticed that families who struggled financially tended to keep their daughters home from school to save money. Disheartened, they started a fund to provide families with a stipend for education expenses. They also started a K-3 primary school in Baseri, with Cameron leading the fundraising for the project. And, after the 2015 earthquake, they began building earthquake-proof housing and providing earthquake relief in the community. Their nonprofit, the Conscious Connections Foundation, raises money for the Baseri Health Clinic, education funding, and earthquake relief.

For most non-governmental organizations, the long-term,
ongoing work is the biggest challenge. Attwood and Conner have turned Ganesh Himal Trading into a very successful model of marrying humanitarian work with good business practices—at times even taking over where other NGOs have abandoned projects. And it’s that sustained presence that makes them, and Ganesh Himal Trading, special.

Frances Badgett is assistant director of Marketing and Communications for University Advancement.

(Top) Huxley alums Denise Attwood and Ric Conner started Ganesh Himal Trading 30 years ago with sweaters made by craftspeople in Nepal.

(Right) Attwood, Conner and their son Cameron on a trip to Nepal. After the 2015 earthquake, Cameron took a year off school to help rebuild a rural health clinic that his family had helped build.

Attwood, right, chats with felters with Nepal’s Association for Craft Producers, which focuses on empowering women artisans, in 2007.
Vini Elizabeth Samuel  
Distinguished Alumna, College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Samuel ('94, English, history) realized that when she decided to run for mayor of Montesano, "I wanted to preserve the nature of my town and that I was the person at this moment to do it." She won by a landslide and is the first female Indian American mayor in the U.S. She continues to practice law while serving as mayor.

Samuel maintains her connection to Western. She met her husband, Guy Bergstrom ('94, journalism), at Western, and she served on the Alumni Board. "Some of my best friends ever are from those four years I spent at Western." She supports Western's liberal arts focus. "Western students and alumni are special because they constantly strive (and thrive) to be active and engaged in their community."

Debora Juarez  
Distinguished Alumna, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies  
Juarez ('83, Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration) has dedicated her career to legal advocacy and economic development. She is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Nation and the first person in her family to go to college. She spent five years as a public defender, worked as staff attorney for the Native American Project at Evergreen Legal Services, and served as a King County Superior Court Judge. She was elected in 2015 to represent District 5 on Seattle's City Council, making her the first Native American Councilmember in the city's 150-year history.

On the council, Juarez has advocated for capital projects and bike-pedestrian connections. She has worked with stakeholders like Northgate Mall and North Seattle College to make better transit connections. She walks the neighborhoods, knocking on doors and reaching out to her neighbors to find out what issues are of greatest concern to them. Whether working to divest the city of Seattle from Wells Fargo or advocating for strong neighborhood representation, Juarez works hard with her community in mind.
Jesse Dean Moore
Young Alumnus of the Year
Moore ('05) majored in political science at Western, launching a successful career in politics, from the White House to owning a consulting firm, Common Thread Strategies. "It became clear that everything I cared most about was dependent on functional, creative, and, at times, bold policy decisions made by the people we elect and appoint to lead us."

Moore was the Associate Director of Public Engagement and a speechwriter for the Obama White House. Recently, he was VP of Civic Engagement for Rock the Vote and is now communications lead at Pop Culture Collaborative, a project that aims to leverage popular culture to elevate the narratives of people of color, Muslims and refugees in the media.

Scot Studebaker
Larry "Go Vikings!" Taylor Alumni Service Award
"That's done. What can we do next?" said Studebaker ('90, accounting) about his latest fundraising effort for Western. Though he was talking about fundraising, one gets the idea that this is his general philosophical approach. Having started at EY 25 years ago, he has not stopped seeking new horizons.

"I believe we all have a responsibility to give back," Studebaker says. "Not just to give back, but to do so on a larger scale." EY has been part of Western's legacy of success in the financial world through their partnerships with the College of Business and Economics.

Studebaker is more than just a global financial whiz kid at the EY firm in Seattle, he has served as an adviser to Western's College of Business and Economics since 2001. What's more, Studebaker—along with partners at EY—donated generously to the CBE to establish the EY Global Mindset Immersion Program, an internationally-focused immersive summer program.
2017 Distinguished Alumni Awards

Todd J. Lindley
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Business and Economics
Lindley ('83, business administration) was the first in his family to earn a college degree. Two years after graduation he and his wife opened Lindley Financial Services. In 2016, Lindley Financial Services merged with Pillar Financial Group in Lacey. For more than a decade, Todd has supported the WWU Alumni Association Scholarship Fund, served on the Alumni Association board, and endowed a scholarship.

Marc A. Seales
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Fine and Performing Arts
A 1978 music graduate, pianist Seales' great passion is jazz. He has composed, performed, and won awards all over the world. He was Western's first prominent black jazz student, and now he is the longest-serving faculty member in the Jazz Studies department. He has served continuously since the department was established in 1990.

Jeffrey Stuart Wiggins
Distinguished Alumnus, College of Science and Engineering
Wiggins ('88, industrial technology) directs the School of Polymers at the University of Southern Mississippi, but his connection to Western is so strong he regularly recruits Western grads to his programs—and one of his former Ph.D. students, John Misasi, is now an assistant professor of engineering and design at Western.

Betty Jean Cobbs
Distinguished Alumna, Woodring College of Education
Cobbs' ('73, elementary education; '76, education administration; '77, principal's certificate) 44 years in public education includes 35 years as a principal, currently at Woodside Elementary in Everett. She has received numerous distinctions and awards for her leadership in education and received a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership from University of Washington, Seattle in 2008.

Gerald E. "Gerry" Henson
Community Volunteer Recognition Award
It's no secret that rugby is a prominent club at WWU and Henson ('73, business administration) is one reason why. The retired director of IT and corporate services for Puget Sound Freight Lines, Henson is a former player who loves the game, loves WWU, and supports the team by organizing golf tournaments and auctions to raise funds, producing the club newsletter and more.

Linda P. Beckman
Campus Volunteer Recognition Award
Beckman not only graduated from Western with an MBA in 1991, she serves as the division director of budget & administration for Enrollment and Student Services. She volunteers on several campus committees for the Western Foundation and the Alumni Association.

James L. Hildebrand
Campus School Recognition Award
Hildebrand got a great start at the Campus School for his career in international law and banking. He started the Campus School in third grade and graduated in 1956. The progressive education, based on John Dewey's pedagogy, has been a life-long influence on Hildebrand, he says.

The Hoffman-McLeod Family
Legacy Family of the Year Award
With a whopping 23 family members attending Western from 1923-2016, the McLeod Family is practically a Western institution. From the early days of the Campus School, to the founding of Fairhaven College with the help of Professor Don McLeod and into the future of Western, the McLeods have been with WWU every step of the way.
Change is in the air.

Change can be good. As John F. Kennedy said, "Change is the law of life." In volunteer organizations like our WWU Alumni Association, change is critical. As our alumni needs evolve, we must look at new ways of strengthening the bonds between students and alumni, delivering services to them, and creating programs of value where they live and work. In its 111th year as the voice of the 120,000 living alumni, the alumni board welcomes change and is deliberate about recruiting alumni with a wide range of perspectives with expertise from the regions where our alumni reside. This committed group of 26 serves as one of three key university volunteer leadership boards that provide input to the university president. Please help us welcome Vikings to this important role as WWU Alumni Association board members.

Chris Copacino ('03) of North Seattle was WWU's Department of Communication's Outstanding Graduate in 2003 for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). As a student, he was a member of Western's Communication Club, serving as its fundraising and promotions director. He continues to give back to Western's Communication Department since his graduation in 2003. He worked for seven years in Game Day Operations with the Seattle Mariners, and is an account supervisor at Copacino+Fujikado (C+F) in Seattle.

After 41 years with the Boeing company, Francis “Fritz” Johnston ('73), 2016 College of Fine and Performing Arts (CFPA) Distinguished Alumnus, retired from Boeing with distinction as the vice president of Brand Management, responsible for every piece of marketing and advertising representing the company around the world. Fritz splits his time between West Seattle and Bellingham.

Also, bringing his innovative ideas to the board is Shawn Kemp ('98). Shawn is a fourth-generation entrepreneur who has the passion for creativity and a drive for results baked into his DNA. With nearly 20 years spent developing online experiences he is perhaps best known for his work in launching the global xbox.com experience before moving on to manage a number of other strategic online projects at Microsoft.com. Shawn is the Chief Experience Officer and co-founder of ActionSprout. Shawn and his wife, Misty Rae Kemp ('96), live in Bellingham.

New board member Lynn Macdonald ('73), of University Place, recently retired from the Washington Education Association where she served as a spokeswoman for WEA's Tacoma chapter when it went on strike in 2011. Lynn, a Woodring grad and former high school teacher, also recently served as Governor Inslee’s interim education advisor, among many other duties.

Jody Mull ('84) has held leadership roles at every level of Parent-Teacher-Student Association and has served as President for the Issaquah Schools Foundation board of trustees as well as currently serving as their VP for Alumni Outreach. This College of Business and Economics grad also volunteers with the League of Education Voters and Stand for Children. Jody received a Smarter Government Washington Bright Light award from WA Attorney General Rob McKenna in 2016. She and her husband, Clifford ('85), live in Issaquah.

Each member brings a unique passion and love for Western and I look forward to sharing more about how these individuals will shape your future WWU Alumni Association. Please meet all of our board members by visiting wwwalumni.com.

Go Vikings!

Deborah DeWees
Class Notes

1968 – Jess del Bosque (BAE, Spanish - secondary ed), a retired Mount Vernon High School track and field coach and Spanish teacher, recently completed his longtime goal of finishing the Boston Marathon. He ran the New York Marathon in 2014.

1970 – George A. Dennis (BAE, English - secondary) retired in 2011 after 35 years at Lower Columbia College immersed in teaching, assessment, program management and curriculum development. He received the distinction of faculty emeritus in 2012 and now writes for Fish Alaska magazine and volunteers for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Gail Garcelon (B.A., English) is retired from teaching, serves as a lay leader for her church and is president of the Glenn Garcelon Foundation, named in memory of her late husband Glenn Garcelon (72, B.A., geography) and devoted to helping people with brain tumors and their families.

1971 – Pam Sinnett (BAE, special education - K-12 elementary, speech - secondary) and Jody Guenser (74, BAE, special education - K-12 elementary, English - secondary) will retire in June after more than 30 years of teaching and singing at the Samish School preschool and kindergarten they directed together in Bellingham. Ray Matlock Smythe (BAE, history - secondary) is retired after 39 years teaching in Washington, Oregon and California. His two books, "Tips to Improve your Retirement Experience" and "Creative Teaching: A Guide to Success in the Classroom," are available on amazon.com.

1973 – Michael Farris (B.A., history, political science) recently became CEO and general counsel of Alliance Defending Freedom, a socially conservative legal defense organization. Previously, Farris was the founding president of Patrick Henry College and the Home School Legal Defense Association.

1975 – Rick Bowers (BAE, history/social studies, political science/social studies) a 33-season wrestling coach for Warden High School, was recently inducted in to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. After 17 years with the Western music trio, the Horse Crazy Cowgirl Band, Lauralee Northcott (B.A., music) will now focus on solo singing, writing her book and working on her art. Northcott taught for 34 years, mostly for the Methow Valley School District, and was a wilderness guide and trail cook until 2014.

1978 – Jody Bento (B.A., journalism) is the manager of the Seattle Art Museum's retail gallery and shop.

1980 – Kevin Bryant (B.A., speech communication; '90, M.Ed., student personnel administration) recently became the athletic director of Redmond School District in Oregon. He is also working on his doctoral degree at the University of Idaho.

1981 – Ken Boynton (B.A., theatre) is a writer and musician who was recently interviewed on KUOW about his self-published book, "Blip," a fable about life on Earth inspired by his two near-death experiences, available on amazon.com. Laurie Clothier (B.A., theatre) recently became manager of Port Operations for Windstar Cruises in Seattle. She is also a nightclub, concert and musical theatre performer throughout the region. James L. Moore (B.A., recreation) owns Orion, a river rafting company based in Leavenworth, which he founded in 1978 while still a student at Western.

1982 – Joe Roubal (B.A., student-faculty designed major) has worked for 30 years in the geographic information sciences industry. He recently gave a presentation, "Globe Making: How STEM has Enabled the Ancient Art," for the Sequim Education Foundation’s Science Café. Rick Moore (BAE, physical education - secondary) recently retired from the Hoquiam School District, where he had been a football coach and physical education teacher. James A. Craig (B.A., business administration)...

Nancy Hall Anderson ('70)
Called by faith to a second career

What has being a chaplain taught you about the spiritual needs of those who are nearing the end of their lives?

What surprised me about the chaplaincy was the realization that I was not responsible for making sure all my residents made it to heaven. God spoke to my heart and reminded me that that was his job to draw people to himself. What he wanted me to do was show up and let him love the people through me. That was such a huge relief. I knew I could share his love with these precious older people, but now I could leave the results to God. The realization freed me to enjoy my work: I’ve seen doors open up for conversation and clarity emerge through dementia—things that I might not have noticed had I been pushing my own agenda.

I also discovered that people in their 80’s and 90’s are more apt to be considering what will happen after death. Not all, but many want to make sure they have made peace with God. I have been privileged to see many older people get right with God and enter their eternity prepared and ready.

Looking back, I can see how the 30 years in the church was my training period. I also naturally love older people and hearing their life stories. I had been praying to be used in a more direct way by God to help people find reconciliation with him.

After spending 30 years as a ministry assistant in Portland, Oregon, Nancy Anderson (BAE, elementary education, speech communication), felt called to a second career that channeled her faith in a more meaningful way. Last year, she completed her Master of Divinity degree and earned national board certification in chaplaincy. She now works at Hearthstone Assisted Living in Beaverton.
recently became executive vice president and chief commercial officer for USA Truck Inc. Previously, he was president of the company's USAT Logistics business.

1983 - Brian Wilson (BAE, English) works at the U.S. Department of State as the director of Entry Level, overseeing assignments and career development for new diplomatic officers and specialists during the first five years of their careers. Chuck Lennox, (B.S., environmental education) with his visitor experience consulting practice Lennox Insites, traveled to Russia's Lake Baikal in Siberia in 2015 and '16 to work with several groups of guides. He was also recently quoted in the New York Times about tour guides and the guiding profession.

1984 - Jeff Jewell (B.A., anthropology) is a research technician at the Whatcom Museum, responsible for the museum's collection of archival photographs. Rick Lipke (B.A., psychology) is the founder and CEO of Conterra, Inc., which specializes in first aid and rescue gear used by fire departments, ski patrols, law enforcement, the military and more. Mary Lamery (B.A., economics/mathematics) studied fine arts painting at Parsons School of Design in New York City; her work was recently included in a group painting show, "Northwest Nature," at the SAM Gallery at the Seattle Art Museum. Philip Rotter (BAE, art - elementary; '87, B.A., apparel design) is a design consultant in New York City specializing in interior design, photo styling and visual merchandising. He was the speaker at Western's winter commencement ceremony in March.

Wayne Stearns (B.S., manufacturing engineering technology) is a vice president of development and operations for Concordia Coffee Systems, which manufactures self-serve commercial espresso machines.

1985 - Arnie Gunderson (B.Mus., music history and literature) recently became vice president, relationship manager for Puget Sound Bank. Gunderson is also president of the South Kitsap Community Foundation and a member of the board of governors of the American Society of Association Executives at Juanita High School in Kirkland and was recently appointed to be the head football coach for Sehome High School in Bellingham.

1986 - Paul Lunley (B.S., mathematics) recently became the executive director of the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland. He was most recently executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, and just received the Billy Frank Jr. Natural Resource Protection Award from the Potlatch Fund. Gary Nevan (B.A., journalism) recently retired after 28 years as owner, publisher and editor of the Columbia Press, a weekly paper in Warrenton, Oregon. It's also the end of an era for Nevan's wife Trish (82, B.A., interdisciplinary arts) who did the paper's advertisements and layout. Aaron Burks (B.A., business administration) recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of his business, Atomic Ale Brewpub & Eatery in Richland.

1987 - Christian Faith Publishing recently published "Mixed Cookies" by Peggy Tait (B.A., English), which is the story of a U.S. family who sponsors a refugee family in 1959. Jennifer Katcher (B.A., business administration - finance), president and CEO of Whatcom Educational Credit Union, was the speaker for Western's Fall Commencement ceremony in December. Teri Sund (B.A., art) is the owner and director of the Imogen Gallery in Astoria, a member of ArtTable, which supports women in the arts, and on the board of directors of Astoria Visual Arts.

1988 - Timothy Berney (PE - exercise and sport science) is an orthopedic surgeon who recently joined Maui Medical Group in Hawaii. Jerry Goodwin (B.S., industrial technology) became president and CEO of Guerdon Modular Buildings Inc. Previously, he was CEO of Senior Aerospace. Lori Siebe (B.S., community health) is the Community Schools supervisor for the Kodiak Island Borough School District in Kodiak, Alaska.

1989 - Nancy Rodriguez (B.A., business administration) is an account manager for OSI Creative in Seattle, which creates point-of-purchase displays, consumer product packaging and branded merchandise programs. Kenneth Yeadon (B.A., accounting) became a partner in the Chicago office of the law firm Hinshaw & Culbertson. Previously, Yeadon was an assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois and a senior attorney with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's Division of Enforcement. Timothy Ashcraft (B.A., economics) is a branch manager for Hawai'i Community Federal Credit Union on the Big Island. Kevin Beason (B.A., sociology), a program support specialist at the Northwest Regional Learning Center, became the head football coach for Sehome High School in Bellingham.

1992 - A short story, "The Warning," by Louise Lencinian Wallace (B.A., human services) was included in 2016's "Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Joy of Christmas." Jennifer Lovchik (B.A., English) is the Teen Services librarian at Bellingham Public Library, where she coordinates teen programs and started the Bellingham Anime Convention, BA-CON, which has since moved on to a larger venue at Whatcom Community College.

1993 - Washington State Sen. Doug Ericksen (M.A., political science), who represents the 42nd district, joined the Environmental Protection Agency as spokesman for the Trump administration transition team at the agency. Elizabeth Frommgen (B.A., political science) became the vice president for Academic Affairs and dean of the college at Thiel College, a liberal arts college in northwest Pennsylvania. Gina Zutehenhorst (B.A., accounting) became the executive director of Financial Service for Arlington Public Schools. Previously, she was the accounting manager for Everett Public Schools. Blaine Rolstad (B.A., psychology) is a branch manager for the Advisors Mortgage Co. in Spokane. Jennifer Wilke (B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration) lives in Wisconsin, teaches a memoir-writing class at the Port Washington Senior Center and is working on a book about blacklisted screenwriters during the "Red Scare" of the late 1940s and 1950s.


1997 - Darin Detwiler (B.A., history) earned a doctoral degree in law and policy at Northeastern University in Boston, where he became assistant dean of the university's College of Professional Studies. Cathy Lucero (B.S., environmental policy and assessment) is the Clallam County Noxious Weed Control coordinator and recently presented "Weedy Gastronomy - What to Eat, What to Avoid" in Port Angeles. Mia Burris Benjamin (B.A., Spanish) was recently appointed to be principal of Edison Elementary School in Kennewick. Currently, she's the principal of Wahluke High School in Mattawa. Christy Smith (B.A., sport psychology) recently became CEO of United Way of Clallam County.

1998 - Jill Lamberton (M.A., English) recently received tenure at Wabash College in Indiana, where she is the Byron K. Trippet Assistant Professor of English. Ryan Koch (B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration) is the founder and director of Seedleaf, a nonprofit organization devoted to improving access to healthy food. The group manages 15 community gardens in Lexington, Kentucky.

1999 - Chris Gallagher (B.S., manufacturing engineering technology) recently became a technology teacher at Monomoy Regional High School on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Matthew Murray (B.A., theatre) is the managing editor of hardware for PC magazine and the chief theatre critic for TalkinBroadway.com. Dominique Lantagne (BAE, Special Education) is a special education teacher in Bellingham where she helps organize the community's Special Olympics activities, which now include more than 100 athletes and several sports.

2000 - Chad Sleight (B.A., political science) was sworn in as a Clark County District Court Judge and elected president of the Clark County Bar Association. The governor of Montana appointed John Lewis (B.A., political science) to be the director of the Department of Administration. Previously, Lewis served as Montana chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Max Baucus. Cedric Bolton (B.A., general studies) is coordinator of student engagement at Syracuse University's Office of Multicultural Affairs. Craig Welty (B.A., business administration - management) is the head golf pro at Skagit Golf and Country Club. Lindsey Myhre (B.A., business administration - finance) became chief financial officer of Spokane Teachers Credit Union. Previously, she was vice president of finance. Carol DeFeo (teacher certification) is a third-grade teacher at Sand Hill Elementary School in Belfair.
Class Notes

2001 – The Small Business Administration recently named Jason Motyka (B.A., business administration – marketing) as one of Alaska’s Small Business Persons of the Year. Motyka is co-owner of Denali Visions 3000 Corp, which owns several restaurants, cabins, campgrounds and other hospitality-related properties in the Denali area.

Brent Molsberry (B.S., Biology) created Kulshan Quest, an adventure race in Whatcom County that includes mountain biking, sea kayaking and trail running. Carla Carter (B.A., psychology) is the public information officer for the Thurston County Sheriff’s Department. She also created the Thurston County Deputy Sheriff’s Foundation in 2012 to support the department’s K9 program.

2002 – Jenny Keller (B.A., psychology) recently opened Jenny Cookies Bake Shop in Lake Stevens. Keller is a longtime blogger and “bak­er to the stars” whose cookbook, “Eat More Dessert” was published in 2014 by Page Street Publishing.

Nicole MacTavish (administrative certificate) was selected to be the assistant superintendent of the Richland School District; she’s current­ly the assistant superintendent of the Nampa School District in Idaho. Ann-Marie Osterback (R.S., biology – ecology) is a postdoctoral researcher at University of California, Santa Cruz, where she studies steelhead and coho salmon along the central California coast.

2003 – Scott (B.A., anthropology-archaeology) and Brittany Freeman (B.A., English literature) own and operate Freeman, which makes high-end rain jackets in Seattle which they sell — along with other goods made in the USA — online and at their store in the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

2004 – Don Flanigan (B.A., business administration – marketing) joined JLL, a financial and professional services firm specializing in commercial real estate services and investment management, as a vice president in Seattle. Martin Melville (B.A., business administration – marketing) recently became vice president, business development relationship manager for Columbia Bank in Tacoma.

2005 – After years of collaborating and touring with Macklemore and Ryan Lewis as well as a wide variety of other artists, violinist Andrew Joslyn (B.A., English literature) released his first solo album, “Awake at the Bottom of the Ocean.” Erica (Griffin) Lindsay (B.A., English writing) and her husband just opened Succession Wines in Mason, on the north side of Lake Chelan. She runs the tasting room while serving as executive director of the Lake Chelan Wine Valley and manager of the Lake Chelan Wine Alliance.

Jason Day (biology) is a Fish and Wildlife officer in western Okanogan County and was named Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Enforcement Officer of the Year. Jennifer Nakonieczny (B.A., business administration – management) became the assistant director of operations at the Walla Walla accounting firm TKCPA. Andrew Hageman (M.A., English) was recently granted tenure at Luther College in Iowa, where he has been an English professor since 2011. He teaches courses in American literature, film, ecocriticism and science fiction.

2006 – BreeAnn Gale (B.A., business administration – marketing) recently celebrated 10 years with her company, Pink Blossom Events, which she launched soon after graduation. Kyle Johnson (B.A., communication) is director of Sales and Marketing for GrinOn Industries, which produces Bottoms Up, a beer dispensing system that fills glasses from the bottom up.

2007 – Ijeoma Olou (B.A., political science) is editor at large of The Establishment, an online media platform run and funded by women. Her writing on social justice has appeared in The Guardian, The Stranger, the Washington Post, Time magazine and more, and her book, “So You Want to Talk About Race,” will be published by Seal Press in January. Olou recently spoke on campus about race, gender and social change, as well as writing about politics. Joseph Bryan Gibbons (B.S., chemistry) recently earned his doctorate in organic chemistry from the University of Utah and is a senior scientist at NutraNeutria Corp. in Park City, Utah.

Rachel Vasak (B.A., geology) is executive director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and recently spoke about local salmon recovery efforts as part of the WWU Huxley College of the Environment Speaker Series.

Silas Maddox (B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration) is a blacksmith who owns Forge & Nail in Sedro-Woolley.

2008 – Lilly Hendershot (B.A., art – painting) is one of three owners of The Branding Iron, a graphic design, marketing and printing company in Edmonds. Laura Daily Steffens (B.S., business administration – management) recently joined her doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Utah and is doing a residency at the University of Utah Hospital.


2009 – Kailin Clark (B.A., Spanish, psychology) is a clinical psychologist in Rhode Island.

2010 – Emily Grason (M.S., biology) is a project coordinator for the Washington Sea Grant Crab Team, which teaches “citizen scientists” to monitor for invasive European green crabs along the Washington coastline. Grason completed her doctoral degree in biology at the University of Washington and her research on invasive snails was recently published in the scientific journal American Naturalist.

Andy Karuza (B.A., history), who completed his Ph.D. at Harvard University, where he serves as the College Fellow in History and specializes in the history of capitalism, immigration and labor in the U.S. and the world. Junior Aumavae (B.A., general studies) is secretary of the NFL Players Association and a former player for the New York Jets and the Dallas Cowboys. He recently started his own non-profit, Elite Athletic Trend, and organized his first football skills camp for junior high and high school students in Indiana.

Beth Robinette (B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration) lives and works on her family farm, the Lazy R Ranch, in the Spokane area and helped launch LMK Foods, a cooperative that connects 49 local farmers and ranchers with commercial and institutional customers. Kipp Robertson (B.A., journalism) is associate editor of MyNorthwest.com at KIRO Radio.

2011 – After launching their first clothing company, Disidual, while they were students at Western, Brendan Pape (B.A., communication) and Christian Harmson (B.A., journalism) now lead the fast-growing Brist Manufacturing, which designs and produces custom clothing in small quantities for ski resorts, breweries and other customers. Katie Sauersbrey (B.A., recreation) is a firefighter for the Nature Conservancy and sometimes works with the Forest Service and the National Park Service.

Gabby Wade (B.A., general studies) recently became head girls basketball coach at her alma mater, Ridgeview High School in Olympia. Previously, she was an assistant coach at Pacific Lutheran University.

2012 – Chronicle Books recently published “The Art of Beatrix Potter” by Emily Zach (B.A., art history, anthropology), a collection of Potter’s work illustrating her artistic range.

Nick Marvik (B.A., business administration – marketing) is the founder of Northwest Tech, a Seattle-based clothing company that specializes in creating customizable jackets, pants and snow bibs for skiers, snowboarders and, now, mountain bikers. Christina Vernon (B.A., history/social studies) completed a Masters in Teaching degree with Everett State College in 2014 and now teaches at Nisqually Middle School in Lacey. Sarah Goodin (B.A., English – creative writing) became the social media manager for PR Consulting in Bellingham. Elizabeth DeGrenier (B.A., student/faculty designated major) is the community historian for the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana, where she manages collections, hosts walking tours and does public outreach. Travis Peters (B.S., mathematics, computer science) specializes in the history of capitalism, immigration and labor in the U.S. and the world. Junior Aumavae (B.A., general studies) is secretary of the NFL Players Association and a former player for the New York Jets and the Dallas Cowboys. He recently started his own non-profit, Elite Athletic Trend, and organized his first football skills camp for junior high and high school students in Indiana.
Daman Wandke (’12, ’13)
Helping travelers with
disabilities find their own way

Why did you start a new travel website?

While I was a student at Western I created Disability Awareness Week and helped launch the Associated Students Disability Outreach Center. I knew then that I wanted to build my own company that would advocate for people with disabilities.

Now as a national disability advocate, I travel a lot, most recently to San Francisco. Reflecting on my own experiences, a lot of hotels don’t typically have what they say they have in terms of disability accommodations. I always call the hotel to confirm that my needs will be met, but there have been multiple times when I arrive at a hotel and the room I booked was unavailable or did not even exist.

Actually, anyone can book travel arrangements through www.abilitrek.com—they don’t have to have a disability. But my hope is to make the process of traveling a lot easier, thanks in large part to the reviews from other travelers.

Daman Wandke (B.A., Business Administration – Management Information Systems; MBA), second from the left, is the CEO and founder of AbiliTrek, a travel booking website designed for people with disabilities—and featuring their reviews and feedback. Wandke and his team, WWU business senior Jeremy McLaughlin, Dean Verhey (’17, B.A., business administration) and computer science senior Travis Heller, recently made it to the Sweet 16 of the University of Washington’s 2017 Business Plan Competition. Their website, www.abilitrek.com, went live in April.

Tell us a good Viking love story
Share your wedding announcement in Window
Email your wedding news, including your names, class years, and the date and place of your marriage or union to mary.gallagher@wwu.edu.
Class Notes

Marriages

Suzanne Funston ('93, B.A., Spanish) and Doug Peltier ('93, B.A., math) on Aug. 13, 2016, in Olympia.

Matthew Hatting and Kristina MacCulley ('05, B.A., human services) on Nov. 12, 2016, in Seattle.

Joseph Bryan Gibbons, (’07, B.S., chemistry) and Laura Dally Steffens (’08, B.S., chemistry) on June 11, 2016, in Alta, Utah.

Allison Fisher and Dane Stanfield (’16, B.S., chemistry) on June 11, 2016, in Bellingham.

Obituaries

1934 – Elaine L. Zobrist Reldoffs, 102, a former community leader in the South Lake Whatcom area who was honored for her local history work by Gov. Dixie Lee Ray, on Jan. 30, 2017. Helen McNeir Sherman, 100, a retired teacher in Seattle and Richland, on March 8, 2017.

1944 – Bea Dearborn, 85, a retired administrative assistant, on March 14, 2017, in Bellingham.


1948 – Raymond Reigers, 93, on April 21, 2017.


1950 – Neal Alton Bartlett, 91, a retired teacher and coach who spent 28 years at Cascade High School in Everett, on Feb. 21, 2017.

1951 – Bruce Philbrick, 89, of Bellingham, on Feb. 12, 2017.


1952 – Delbert Llewellyn Bargewell, 86, a retired teacher in Bellingham who also worked in real estate, on March 10, 2017, in Bow.

1953 – Delmar Hesselgesser, 90, on March 5, 2017.


1955 – E. Armond Daws, 97, a retired teacher, football coach and vice principal at Cascade Junior High in South Seattle, on March 31, 2017, in Marysville. Maurice Halleck, 86, a retired high school teacher and coach in Santa Barbara, California, on Nov. 27, 2016.


1959 – Don Chrisman, 79, of Bothell, who worked many years in the electrical wholesale business, coached the Bellingham Bells baseball team and worked as a golf pro, on Nov. 18, 2016. Dennis Joseph McHugh, 83, a retired teacher and member of the American Legion Post No. 49, on Feb. 12, 2017, in Olympia. Milton Howard Towne, 86, a former principal of Western’s Campus School, Air Force veteran and commander in the Washington Air National Guard who retired with the rank of Brigadier General, U.S. Air Force, on March 1, 2017, in Montesano. Allan Wood, 64, a Spokane resident, on April 20, 2017.


1963 – Rena Browne, 72, a retired paraeducator in the Ferndale School District, on April 13, 2017, on Sandy Point in Whatcom County.

1964 – Marianne Skotdal, 75, a retired teacher and school librarian who with her husband owned a real estate development company in Everett, on Nov. 10, 2016.


1966 – Amy Higbee, 97, a retired teacher and technical illustrator, on March 10, 2017.

1967 – Joseph M. Kelly, a retired refinery operator at B.P. Cherry Point in Blaine and a former board member of the Wild Fish Conservancy, on March 20, 2017.


1970 – Margaret Marie Frank, 68, a fiber artist, on April 13, 2017, in Pensacola, Florida. Robert Daniel Leedy, 75, a retired city planner and community development director who had worked in Dallas, Richland, Port Townsend, Bonney Lake and West Richland, on Jan. 6, 2017, in Richland.


1975 – Eunice Lorraine Thorsen, 79, of Bothell, who taught in Michigan, New Zealand, Japan, Bolivia and Italy and Taiwan, on Dec. 16, 2016. Eva Clare Corcoran Pytel, 94, a retired teacher and technical illustrator, on March 10, 2017.

1976 – Anthony Elston, 70, who worked as a quality control manager and in warehousing but was passionate about writing poetry and making pottery, on Oct. 9, 2016, in Bellingham. John M. Geer, 77, a retired teacher who taught in the U.S., New Zealand and Canada and who served as an administrator at Western and Sam Houston State University, on Nov. 6, 2016, in Vancouver, Washington. Sally Ann Gilles, 87, a retired early education teacher at Everett Community College, on Feb. 27, 2017, in South Bend.


1978 – Joahn Johannesen, 82, on Jan. 21, 2017, a retired counselor for Domestic Abuse Women’s Network in Richland. Keith Kenji Nakayama, 60, a retired middle school band director in Hawaii, on June 1, 2016.


1984 – Jeffrey Keith Slater, 67, who had a long career in banking and was an avid car collector, on Nov. 15, 2016.
1985 - Leroy Howard Raymond, 70, a retired supply chain management analyst for Boeing and a former commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, on Jan. 15, 2017.


1988 - Marian Leese Boylan, 90, a retired journalist and manager at KVOS-TV in Bellingham and a former president of the Washington Commission for the Humanities who donated her family's 20th century art collection to the Western Gallery, on Feb. 26, 2017, in Bellingham. Henry Scott Zimmerman, 59, a special­ist for the King County Department of Public Defense who worked with people who had been involuntarily committed to psychiatric care, and a longtime volunteer with the Seattle Jewish Film Festival, on March 8, 2017, while on vacation in Belize.


1992 - Denise Marion Kotschevar-Smead, 49, who worked for Allied Telesis, Intermec and Honeywell, and spent a lot of time working and studying in Mexico, on March 14, 2017. Matt Magrath, 59, a long­time addiction counselor and youth sports volunteer in Whatcom County, on April 3, 2017.

1994 - Derrick Focht, 47, a Kent Police detective, on April 7, 2017.


2009 - Alexander Sandvik Hoeting, 31, a former commercial fisherman in Alaska and construction and landscape worker on Whidbey Island who was studying solar installation at Shoreline Community College, on Jan. 23, 2017.


2012 - Katherine Eve Beesley, 33, a teacher and performing artist, on Nov. 24, 2016. Jessica R. Brooks, 26, a veterinary student at Washington State University, on Dec. 27, 2016, near Colfax.

Faculty and Staff

Charles H. Antholt, 74, a senior instructor in Western's Department of Economics, on Nov. 12, 2016. He spent 30 years in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India working with SUAID and World Bank to help farmers before coming to Western in 1997 to teach with his wife, Sharron Antholt, who retired last year from the art faculty.

Robert H. Keller, whose classes at Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies covered topics ranging from Native American history, basic mountaineering, the Grand Canyon, Supreme Court history and death and dying, on Feb. 26, 2017, in Bellingham. He also taught at Huxley College of the Environment, in the History Department and, after his retirement, for Extended Education. A strong environmentalist, Dr. Keller rarely drove a car to campus during his 26 years of teaching and served 19 years on the Whatcom Land Trust board of directors.

Joyce Ramerman, 63, who worked many years for University Dining Services, most recently as a cashier in the market at Fairhaven Commons, on March 14, 2017, in Bellingham.
The **Mountain is Calling**
and we must go

Climbing Mount Baker has been rite of passage for mountain-minded Western students for more than a century.

Much like today, summit day 70 years ago began with an early morning breakfast for climbers to fuel up for the day.

But unlike 1947, today’s climbers have access to Gore-tex boots and high-tech climbing gear, thanks to the AS Outdoor Center, which leads annual climbing trips to Baker.

This year’s trip, scheduled for late May, had a waiting list of students who wanted to follow the call to the top of the mountain.
PAINT B’HAM BLUE for WWU

WESTERN’S BIGGEST DOWNTOWN PARTY FOR WWU STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

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Our favorite places on Mount Baker