Winter 2019

Window: The Magazine of Western Washington University, 2019, Volume 11, Issue 01

Mary Lane Gallagher
Western Washington University, Mary.Gallagher@wwu.edu

Office of University Communications and Marketing, Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/window_magazine

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://cedar.wwu.edu/window_magazine/21

This Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Publications at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Window Magazine by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.
A HISTORY OF WESTERN IN
125 objects
Underneath it all

A network of about three miles of walkable tunnels beneath campus provide a conduit for high-pressure steam pipes, high-voltage and fiber-optic cables, compressed air, and other crucial utilities to campus buildings.

The tunnel network has been part of campus infrastructure since the 1960s and has grown with the campus. Now, workers can walk from Old Main to nearly Buchanan Towers without breaking the surface, says John Kingsford-Smith, a safety officer with Western’s Environmental Health and Safety Office (pictured here). Some passages are as deep as 25 feet below ground, he adds.

While workers are in the tunnel every day, security is tight to discourage would-be tunnel tourists, with motion-detection, multiple locks and regular foot patrols.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington couldn’t wait</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new state was desperate for teachers, but it was a battle to just open the doors to Old Main.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six names in 125 years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western’s name changed with the name of its community and as its own purpose evolved. Plus, more milestones in Western’s history.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A life of learning</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For more than 125 years, students have loved, learned and spoken up for justice on Sehome Hill.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hints of WWU history</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Western’s own story is all around us.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things we leave behind</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We found items with stories about people we shouldn’t forget.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legends on and off the court</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some amazing stories behind WWU sports memorabilia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legends and surprises</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check out a few items highlighting the weirder tales from Western’s past.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen on campus</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWU AS Productions has hosted some great concerts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Message from the President: 4
- Class Notes: 38
- Stay Connected: 5

On the cover: A few items from WWU history include letters from the Women’s Athletic Association, Burn cabin, and an office chair with a story, and sketches of Fairhaven College faculty and staff in the early 1970s by fellow faculty member Tom Sherwood. Photography by Rhys Logan ('11, visual journalism), photo illustration by Chris Baker.
Message from the President

Items from our past provide a glimpse of our future

Recently, I met with dozens of elected officials and leaders in business, government and nonprofit organizations in Bellingham and Whatcom County at our inaugural State of the University address. We invited guests to join us at the Whatcom Museum Lightcatcher Building, where I shared the vision and goals of Western’s new 2025 strategic plan, including our focus on advancing inclusive success and preserving values that are core to Western. I hardly needed to remind the audience, which included many WWU alumni, about the power of education as a social equalizer and a mighty engine for upward mobility.

But we must continue to eliminate achievement gaps for students from under-represented backgrounds. College degree attainment rates for students from the bottom family-income quartile have lingered at about 9 percent for 40 years, and achievement gaps and lack of access to higher education create barriers for many members of some of our state’s fastest growing demographic populations.

Meanwhile, we must increase Western’s impact on Washington by helping more state residents earn degrees that will fuel the state’s economy, in which employers anticipate the majority of job opportunities in the next five years will go to workers with postsecondary education or training.

We’re also doubling down on academic excellence, focusing on innovative research and creative work that address critical issues like climate change, economic vitality, cultural diversity and human well-being.

It’s not a coincidence that our State of the University event took place in a museum that focuses on telling the story of our region’s past. After all, our future is a continuation of the story that begins in our past. And few things spark the beginning of a story like a glimpse of an artifact. There are many such items in this edition of Window, which includes 125 objects both in print and online, all telling a story of Western’s 125 years since its beginning.

For example, even our first information booklet, published before our doors opened in 1899, outlined courses of study for students who had their sights on higher education, but could only go as far as the eighth grade in their hometowns. Some of the objects tell stories of students striving to bring about change in racial and social justice and environmental sustainability. All of these items represent parts of our history, and even parts of our future.

Please enjoy reading this edition and learning about just a few of the interesting objects that illustrate the remarkable story of Western through the future.

Sincerely,

Sabah Randhawa
President

Stay CONNECTED

Let us know if something you read in Window sparks a memory, question, inspiration or critique. We’ll run a sampling of your feedback in each edition. Send your thoughts to window@wwu.edu. Or, find us online at window.wwu.edu. You may also send a note to Window Magazine, Office of University Communications and Marketing, 516 High St., MS 9011, Bellingham, WA 98225.

We don’t really have 125 objects in the magazine

But we’re pretty close.

As we go to press, there are more than 80 objects in the pages of the magazine, all telling bits of Western’s story from the past 125 years. The rest of the 125 objects are posted on our website, window.wwu.edu.

The collection honors the 125-plus years since the state Legislature established New Whatcom Normal School. We scoured our on-campus collections in Western Libraries Heritage Resources, with the help of Tamara Belts, ’76, in Special Collections and Tony Kurtz, ’88, ’96, in University Archives.

We found several more artifacts by asking for ideas from people who know and love Western, such as Steve Inge, ’66, Chris Goldsmith, ’74, Paul Madison, ’71, Karen Walker, ’31, Clarissa Mansfield, ’01, ’14, Frank Haulgren, Ellen Kuhlmann, ’94, Jeff Bates, ’89, Roger Gilman, ’73, Fred Ramage, David Saxton, Kathryn Patrick, ’01, John Kingsford-Smith, ’93, Frank Haulgren, Jeff Davis and many others.

And we really hit pay dirt when we asked alumni to send us mementos from their own histories at Western. More than 50 people sent us photos of items, and we’ve run many of them in the Class Notes section. You’ll see many more online at window.wwu.edu.

We won’t stop at 125

We’ll continue add to our ‘A History of Western in 125 Objects’ collection and post them on the Window magazine website. If you have an object to share, please send us a photo and the story at window@wwu.edu.
With that out of the way, the board voted to send their chairman Eli Wilkin on a fact-finding mission to the state’s other normal schools in Cheney and Ellensburg to learn more about how to build the school in Bellingham. In future meetings, they’d pick the site for Old Main at the suggestion of Seattle landscape architect M.J. Carkeek and would select a simple, functional building design by Skillings, Corner and Lee, rather than an ornate “gingerbread” theme that was more fashionable in the day.

But it would be another four years before the New Whatcom Normal School would welcome its first students in Old Main. State funding was very tight, and construction was further delayed by troubles with the contractor not paying his workers. But Washington couldn’t wait. By 1898, Washington was so starved for teachers that the state gave emergency teaching certificates to 499 people who either had less than an eighth grade education or were not considered “teacher material.”

The first Board of Trustees, met in 1895 in the store of R.C. Higginson, on Elk Street, which would later become State Street.
Western’s name has changed with the name of its community—and as its purpose has evolved

**SIX NAMES IN 125 YEARS**

1899-1901
*New Whatcom Normal School*: Some of the first students had only an eighth-grade education, while others were college graduates or experienced teachers. Language interpreters helped on opening day, as many students were children of immigrants and were English language learners.

1901-1903
*Whatcom Normal School*: Competition was fierce in women’s intramural basketball in the early 20th century. The top team won this silver Challenge Cup.

1903-1937
*Washington State Normal School at Bellingham*: As the surrounding community’s name changed, so did the name of the school. Informally, people knew it as Bellingham Normal School, or even Bellingham State Normal School, as seen on this 1906 class pin.

1937-1961
*Western Washington College of Education*: Western had good reason to celebrate with gold glitter and ballroom dancing for the 50th anniversary gala at the Leopold Hotel May 21, 1949. Enrollment had plummeted during World War II, but returning veterans were filling classrooms.

1961-1977
*Western Washington State College*: Alumna Karen Filer Dunsdon ’71, was part of Western’s tremendous growth as baby boomers attended college. She still has her WWSC t-shirt.

1977-Present
*Western Washington University*: Two former presidents drove with this first-edition WWU license plate from the 1990s, Karen Morse and Bruce Shepard.
Beginnings: On Feb. 24, 1893, Gov. John H. McGraw signed House Bill 66, which established a state normal school in Whatcom County. Then, he vetoed $35,000 in appropriations to help plan and build the school.

1939
Forever climbing upward (above): Less than a month before graduating, Maynard Howatt joined his fiancee Hope Weitman and about two-dozen other students, faculty and friends on the college’s annual summit of Mount Baker. Part of an advance party, Howatt and Weitman hiked from Glacier to Kulshan Cabin in the early morning of July 20, 1939. “What-a-Gal” Weitman setting the pace. “Breezing along with Howatt’s pack, she claimed to be in fine fettle,” Howatt wrote. Howatt and Weitman signed the register side-by-side. Two days later they were among six students and alumni who died in a massive avalanche near the Roman Wall in what was then the worst mountaineering disaster in the Pacific Northwest. Today, a ring of rocks hauled from Mount Baker sits on the north side of Old Main as a memorial, along with a plaque: “You will be forever climbing upward now.”

1969
A note from Sir Julian Huxley (right): President Jerry Flora wrote to Julian Huxley in 1969 to invite him to the 1972 dedication of the college named for his grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley. Julian Huxley, then 82 and living in London, politely declined, but said he had visited Washington, “a beautiful state, full of interesting and enterprising people, and it is good that T.H.H. will have a permanent memorial there.” His handwritten note is framed on the wall in the Huxley College dean’s office.

Western Milestones
Viet Cong flag flown (briefly) on campus: Student protests on campus were a hallmark of the late '60s and early '70s, including a march on Interstate 5 protesting the killings at Kent State University in 1970. Violence was rare, but two students were injured in March 1969 when a fight broke out over this Viet Cong flag as it was flown by members of Students for a Democratic Society in front of the Viking Union. Worried about the potential for more violence, the Board of Trustees banned that flag and any “flag or materials … found by the president to endanger the peace of the campus.” The order was later withdrawn.

1971
Early sketches of Fairhaven faculty: Artist Tom Sherwood came to Western in 1970 and was one of the first faculty members at Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies. He made these sketches of colleagues during meetings in 1971 and 1972 as faculty and students discussed the logistics and realities of developing and running the innovative college.

Battling a measles outbreak on campus: When a WWU student contracted measles in February 1995, public health officials feared an epidemic of the highly contagious, deadly disease. Suddenly, all students, faculty and staff had to prove they had been vaccinated against measles in order to attend class or campus events—and those born in 1957 or later had to be vaccinated twice in order to have full immunity. Over three days, more than 8,000 students and staff got measles shots on campus, and after eight days 96 percent of Western students were cleared to attend class. The quick action helped contain the outbreak to 11 confirmed cases of measles. Dr. Emily Gibson, director of the Student Health Center, still has her t-shirt from those days.

President Ross’ chair: A small plane crash in Whatcom County on Nov. 4, 1987, killed WWU President G. Robert Ross and vice presidents Don Cole and Jeanene DeLille, as well as pilot Ty Hardan. Acting Provost Al Froderberg, who was almost on the plane himself, became interim president, literally sitting in his friend’s chair as he helped guide the university through grieving and healing. Froderberg kept the chair as he continued to work for Western in legislative and external affairs, and philanthropy. Today, Ross’ chair is used and valued by Joe Timmons, ’07, B.A., political science, Western’s assistant director of Government Relations.

More online:
Early payroll records: How much did faculty make in 1903?
1927 trowels from the Wilson Library cornerstone ceremony: They’re still shiny.

From the collection of Roger Gilman, ’73

Kiss Me....I'm IMMUNIZED
From the collection of Roger Gilman, ’73

1995
Kiss Me....I'm IMMUNIZED
1914 Boarding House
Approved for “Normal School girls”: Campus School alumnus Winton Smith shared this family photo of Christmastime at Tarte Hall, a boarding house on High Street run by his great grandparents Whitfield and Eleanor Tarte. While there was no student housing on campus, students could only stay in residences approved by school administrators. Smith’s late grandfather, George W. Smith, is the little boy standing against the wall on the left.

A life of learning
For more than 100 years, students have loved, learned and spoken up for justice on Sehome Hill

1907 Postcards
A new life: In October 1907, Bellingham Normal School student “F.A.C.” wrote two postcards sharing her new address on High Street and a glimpse of her new life. “I am learning to play basketball and I am quite enthusiastic over it,” she wrote to a loved one in Virginia. “The largest red cedar shingle mill in the world is located here,” she wrote to another in North Dakota. “We have such beautiful sunsets on the Bay, as good as ocean sunsets, some say.” The two postcards, mailed a day apart to two different states, ended up in the same collection of Robert Clark, Western’s manager of video services and an avid collector of Bellingham ephemera.
Typewriter room
Long before laptop computers were ubiquitous, students might spend some time in Wilson Library’s tiny typewriter room to plonk out their research papers. The last late-model electric typewriter was recently removed for repairs. Today, students can check out laptops at several locations on campus.

1968, We loved Edens Hall
When students had to move out of Edens Hall to make room for the new Fairhaven College in 1968, a few left behind a love note to their former home. Workers found this piece of wall trim during renovations in 1994.

Campus School Project
The toy lamb illustrates the kinds of hands-on learning that was a hallmark of the Campus School, Western’s model grade school from 1899 to 1967.
1968, Letter from the Black Student Union to President Flora

In a powerful letter, students presented six demands to address institutional racism at Western: involve the BSU in plans and decisions affecting black students; provide more financial and academic support for students of color and increase recruitment of students of color; create a BSU Black Studies Committee to bring more diversity to the curriculum; bring more black administrators and faculty to campus, particularly in the music and P.E. departments; and investigate racism in the community, especially in housing.

1979, Vine Deloria speaks at the Symposium on Tribal Sovereignty & Jurisdiction

Deloria Jr. was already a well-known historian, author and activist in Native American issues when he spoke at 1979’s “Nations within a Nation” symposium. He spoke on legal issues, possibly drawing on his experience working on the case that led to the Boldt decision that validated Native American fishing rights. He also drew upon his theological background in “The Metaphysics of Modern Existence.” Deloria, author of the groundbreaking “Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto” in 1969, taught at Western’s College of Ethnic Studies in the early 1970s.

Women’s Recreation Association Letters

From the 20s through the 60s, the Women’s Athletic Association, later Women’s Recreation Association, was an important part of life for thousands of students who earned letters for activities ranging from field hockey and basketball to hiking and swimming. They hosted regional college sports tournaments and “Play Days” for area high school girls. Today, Western still enjoys the association’s most enduring contribution: Viqueen Lodge, which members raised money to purchase in the 1920s.

1979, Vine Deloria speaks at the Symposium on Tribal Sovereignty & Jurisdiction

Deloria Jr. was already a well-known historian, author and activist in Native American issues when he spoke at 1979’s “Nations within a Nation” symposium. He spoke on legal issues, possibly drawing on his experience working on the case that led to the Boldt decision that validated Native American fishing rights. He also drew upon his theological background in “The Metaphysics of Modern Existence.” Deloria, author of the groundbreaking “Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto” in 1969, taught at Western’s College of Ethnic Studies in the early 1970s.

Women’s Recreation Association Letters

From the 20s through the 60s, the Women’s Athletic Association, later Women’s Recreation Association, was an important part of life for thousands of students who earned letters for activities ranging from field hockey and basketball to hiking and swimming. They hosted regional college sports tournaments and “Play Days” for area high school girls. Today, Western still enjoys the association’s most enduring contribution: Viqueen Lodge, which members raised money to purchase in the 1920s.

Work gloves posted at the Associate Student Recycle Center

When student workers graduate, some post their work gloves on the wall at the center’s shop. The center was started in 1972 by students in Huxley College of the Environment.
Hints of WWU History

Evidence of Western’s own story is all around us

1921, ‘Home of Color and Light’
The line from Ella Higginson’s 1906 poem, “The Normal-by-the-Sea,” is carved into marble over the main entrance, which is right across High Street from the former location of Higginson’s house.

1921, Bird Sanctuary
A plaque among the trees is a memorial to one of Western’s first faculty members, Ida Agnes Baker, a natural history and forestry teacher who died following a traffic accident.

1970s, Bond Hall ceiling bolts
Bond Hall was built in 1967 with a central atrium and was originally the home of the Math and Physics departments. The atrium has mostly been filled in, but the eyebolts in the ceiling of the fourth floor were originally used to lift the departments’ mainframe computer up and out of the way when it wasn’t in use.
World War II memorial plaque
Western’s Performing Arts Center
Mainstage used to include a pipe organ
as a memorial to the students and alumni
who died serving in World War II. The or-
gan is gone, but the plaque remains with
37 names, including Clinta Campbell,
who graduated in 1942 and soon
joined the U.S. Naval Reserves’ Women
Accepted for Volunteer Emergency
Service, popularly known as the WAVES.
She died in a plane crash at Olathe Naval
Air Station in Kansas in 1944.

1920s, Burn Cabin
Writers June and Farrar Burn
were homesteaders near what
was to become Fairhaven
College. Their work, including
June’s classic “Living High,”
and their cabin have captured
the imagination of many
Western students, including
a few who lived in the cabin
for “experimental living” in the
Outback Farm.

1970s, Sundquist Lab at Shannon Point Marine Center
When Leona Sundquist was growing up on a dairy farm in the
Skagit Valley in the early 1900s, it was unusual for a farm girl to
even finish high school. But she completed a master’s in botany
and in 1923 became a science instructor at Bellingham Normal
School, beginning a 40-year career shaping Western’s science
curriculum with an emphasis on field research. Her favorite
places to take students: Mount Baker and the San Juan Islands.
The laboratory building named in her honor, steps away from
the Salish Sea, has been a second home to hundreds of students
and researchers.

More stories about places online:
• Why is there a sign warning you not to park your bike in
  the library?
• What does a bench in the Performing Arts Center have
to do with the former Home Economics Department?
The Things We Leave Behind

We found items with stories about people we shouldn’t forget

1942, James K. Okubo’s newspaper and yearbook clippings

In the fall of 1941, James Okubo’s dream of becoming a dentist was starting to take shape. Over the next two quarters, he would receive the best grades in his career at Western Washington College of Education. But in spring of 1942, Okubo left Western: Executive Order 9066 led to the incarceration of 120,000 residents of Japanese ancestry along the West Coast, including the Anacortes-born Okubo and his Bellingham family. At the Tule Lake prison camp, Okubo worked in the hospital and enlisted in the Army in 1943. He joined relatives and hundreds of other Japanese Americans in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which would become one of the most decorated units in U.S. military history for their grueling combat experience in Europe. Okubo was known as a tough, resilient medic who in bravest grenades and machine gun fire in France to treat the wounded, even pulling a soldier from a burning tank and saving his life. He went home with a Silver Star, joined his family in Michigan and finished his bachelor’s degree at Wayne State University. He also completed his dental degree at the University of Detroit, and later served on the dental school faculty. Sadly, Okubo died in a car accident on an icy road outside of Flint in 1967. Years later, in 2000, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest military honor.

1905-1940s, Alkisiah Literary Society

As soon as Western opened its doors in 1899, students were required to belong to a literary society, creating a vibrant network of student organizations almost from the start. One of the largest and enduring clubs was Alkisiah, from 1905 to the 1940s, bringing students together to appreciate literature and art, hone their public speaking skills and collaborate on community service. Signatures of members and advisers were embroidered on this commemorative quilt, including the names of the first adviser, Ida Agnes Baker (pictured far left), as well as the school’s first full-time librarian, Mabel Zoe Wilson (left).

Life after Western: James Okubo was a member of the ski club, as seen in this 1942 Klipsun yearbook photo, above right. The WWUCollegian newspaper, right, also published items about Okubo after he left Western, including his update from a prison camp and announcement of his Silver Star military honor.
1939, Book of thanks for Charles Fisher

Bellingham State Normal School became Western Washington College of Education under the eye of President Charles Fisher, Western’s popular and charismatic president from 1923 to 1939. But after years of hounding by the local newspaper publisher and a group that included the grand dragon of the local Ku Klux Klan, who alleged Fisher to be a communist sympathizer, the governor ordered the school’s trustees to fire Fisher. It was a lengthy, heartbreaking controversy for Fisher, as well as the university itself. When the years of hot-headed pontificating were over, and all that was left was the impending departure of a beloved colleague, faculty and staff presented Fisher with a book of photos of campus with a kind, handwritten note of appreciation.

1920s, Believed self-portrait of Elizabeth Rider Montgomery (right)

Before she went on to write one of the best-known series of children’s books in the English language, Elizabeth Rider Montgomery dreamed of being an artist. She earned a teaching certificate at Western in 1925. While teaching first grade in California in the 1930s, Montgomery found herself overwhelmed by the dreary books used to teach children to read. She went on to write many of the “Dick and Jane” readers that introduced millions of American children to the printed word in the mid-20th century. Dick, Jane, their all-white suburban surroundings, strict gender roles and cheerfully staccato “Go, Jane, go” sentence structure, were so ubiquitous they became a cultural touchstone—and the subject of much social commentary and criticism. Montgomery, who also wrote dozens of other children’s books, is often incorrectly cited as the creator of Dick and Jane, but that credit goes to Montgomery’s editor, Zerna Sharp. Montgomery’s papers, including her artwork, now reside in Wilson Library’s Special Collections.

Tom Horn portrait

The late Tom Horn joined Western’s History Department in 1969, one of the first Asian American professors on campus, and taught until his death in 2000. An accomplished scholar of early modern European history, Horn was also known as a warm, welcoming presence to new colleagues across campus who gradually brought more diversity to Western’s faculty in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, his portrait hangs in the History Department faculty lounge, which some of his former colleagues call the Thomas C. Horn Memorial Lounge in his memory.
1975, Mark di Suvero’s “For Handel” and Virginia Wright

When Virginia Wright attended the 1969 dedication of Noguchi’s “Skyviewing Sculpture” in Red Square, she was smitten by the “magic” beauty of the campus and intrigued by Western’s interest in embracing works of art in its public spaces. The soaring red steelwork of “For Handel” was the first of several campus art installations made possible by the Virginia Wright Fund over the next few decades.

1969, Isamu Noguchi’s “Skyviewing Sculpture” and public arts funding with Barney Goltz

Since the 1950s, Western has made it a point to incorporate public art—and funding for it—into campus expansion plans. As campus planner in the 1960s, H.A. “Barney” Goltz helped make homes for several sculptures at Western, including the iconic “Skyviewing Sculpture,” the first in Western’s sculpture collection by an internationally acclaimed artist. Later, Goltz, right, was a Washington State Senator who advocated for the 1974 Art in Public Places Act, which creates a fund for public art with one-half of 1 percent of the state’s share of construction costs for public projects.

1939-1959, William Wade Haggard’s eyeglasses

Haggard was Western’s longest-serving president, seeing Western Washington College of Education through World War II as enrollment dropped to 418 and then on to a post-war campus expansion. Throughout those 20 years, he was proud of the campus—and earned a reputation for telling people to stay off the grass. He may have glared through these glasses at students walking on the lawn in front of Old Main. After his retirement, Haggard Hall was named in his honor.
Some amazing stories behind WWU sports memorabilia

1938, Undefeated football team
Led by legendary Coach Charles “Chuck” Lappenbusch, the 1938 Viking football team accomplished something no other WWU gridiron team had done—or has done since: With a record of 7-0-0, the Vikings finished the season with no losses or ties.

2016, Scarf and ball from NCAA Women’s Soccer Championships
The Vikings streaked through their 2016 season with a 24-0-1 record and beat three-time defending champ Grand Valley State for the program’s first national title.

1992, A heartbroken campus rallies for Duke
Two days after having a decisive three-point play in the final minute of a 64-63 win over arch-rival Central Washington University, beloved star player Duke Wallenborn died in his sleep due to a congenital heart problem. At the blessing of Wallenborn’s family, his devastated teammates went on to play a district semifinal just two days later, some with “Duke” shaved into their heads. The Vikings lost that game, but many of Wallenborn’s teammates came together in their grief and forged an enduring friendship.
1981, Jo Metzger-Levin’s basketball jersey

Metzger-Levin was twice a finalist for the Wade Trophy, an annual award for the best collegiate women’s basketball player in the nation in all divisions. Her legacy is much more resilient than her age-worn jersey: Thirty-seven years later, she still holds nine school records, including her 1,990 career point total.

1972, The Big Blue

Western’s best men’s basketball team of the 20th century reached the quarterfinals at the NAIA National Tournament in Kansas City, Missouri. But their biggest accomplishment may have been packing the stands of Carver Gymnasium during their championship run and —perhaps—helping to bring together a community facing its own share of campus unrest in the late ’60s and early ’70s.

2005, First national rowing championship

After a heartbreaking “crab” mishap in the last 600 yards of the previous year’s nationals, the Vikings came back in 2005 to win their first championship. Then they won six more for a then-NC-CAA-record seven consecutive national titles. More recently, they brought home an eighth title in 2017.

2009, Signed golf glove from Bill Wright

In 1959, Western student Bill Wright won the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship, becoming the first African American to win a USGA title. The following year, he won Western’s first individual national championship in any sport, with the men’s NAIA golf title. Wright was also there in 2009 when WWU hosted the national NCAA golf championships, where he signed this glove.

2012, NCAA Division II Men’s Basketball Championship ring

When the confetti rained down on the Vikings in Louisville, Kentucky, March 24, 2012, Western was only the second men’s basketball team from the state of Washington to win a championship. Not bad for a team that had been ranked third in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference in a pre-season coaches poll.
Almost unbelievable

Check out a few items from the weirder tales from Western’s past

1971, Buchanan Towers “Rock Room”

Instead of excavating a huge boulder on the site of Buchanan Towers, workers built the residence hall around it. Now, a seldom-used room on the first floor is known as the “Rock Room” for the impressive rockface inside. Here, Mike McKenzie, a gardener at WWU, gets a closer look.

2000, “Hooray, hooray for the 8th of May”

Formerly held each year on what would be the 69th day of March, National Outdoor Intercourse Day probably inspired more giggles and outrage than nookie in the woods. It was also an opportunity for the Associated Students Sexual Awareness Center to offer free condoms and frank discussions about sexual health and consensual pleasure.

1928, Whale skin doors in Wilson Library

The ornate doors to the Wilson Library Reading Room, also known as the Harry Potter Room, are likely covered with leather made from whale skin. A 1933 story in the student newspaper, the Northwest Viking, described the doors as “made of whale skin with metal joints.” Sadly, it’s not out of the question: Whales were hunted nearly to extinction in the early 20th century as they were used for a wide variety of commercial purposes, and a Pacific Northwest tannery specializing in “aquatic leather” was featured in the February 1921 edition of Popular Mechanics.

Probably not 1941, giant sequoia:

The Sequoiadendron giganteum next to Edens Hall is the largest tree on campus by volume, at about 26 feet around the trunk and about 120 feet high. A plaque next to the tree indicates it was planted in 1941 by Irving Miller, longtime chair of Western’s Department of Education and Psychology and the namesake of Miller Hall. But University Archivist Tony Hunt discovered that the tree got its start as a sapling in the early 1900s in the backyard of a nearby house and was transplanted to campus in 1926. Regardless of its origins, the tree can be seen for miles around when it’s adorned with lights for the winter holiday season.

Photo by Hannah Wong, ’19

Photo by Hannah Wong, ’19
SEEN ON CAMPUS

WWU AS Productions has hosted some great concerts
1952 – Eloise Stendal

1962 – Dale Philman, B.A., M.Ed., remembers, a handful of classmates walked when they heard they’d need to get six picks and crampons for a class trip to Grouse Peak on Mount Baker. Philman went on to teach biology in Forks as well as in Wrangell, Alaska, and was a tour and charter operator in Southeast Alaska.

1983 – Frederick Yue, M.S., geography, had just moved from Hong Kong a year before when he first arrived at Western in 1951 at age 18. In the photo above, in the sweater on the left, he was one of just a few Asian students on campus. The photo on the right is more recent. “Time does change people’s appearance, if not the inner being,” he writes. He earned his graduate degree at Western and spent 30 years with the U.S. government in health and human services planning and administration.

The right graduation dress

1975 – Cynthia Mejia-Guidetti, B.A., East Asian studies, has been a teacher in Seattle, Japanese, and Washington, D.C., and served a trustee of the Filipino American National Historical Society. She shares a powerful story about identity and community from her time at Western.

“The 1970’s was a time when the ethnic student unions were strong, young and proud. The Black Student Union, the Native American Student Union, the Asian American Student Union. La Raza were all housed in separate offices on the second floor of the Viking Commons.

I was a Fairhaven College student, and took classes at Western Washington State College in order to earn a degree in East Asian Studies. I also took important and unique classes at the College of Ethnic Studies where I met a motley mix of students in their quest for self identity. CES offered classes such as Asian American literature and African American dance. Sadly, CES folded in the 1970’s, its contribution and importance to Western’s educational mission unrecognized and unappreciated. However, that institution was key in helping me and other students of color identify with our Asian American background.

I returned in August, 1972 to Seattle. For three months, I worked at Uwajimaya in the Chinatown International District as the first Filipino cashier who also happened to speak Japanese. I returned to Fairhaven (Spring, 1973, with a big ego, thinking I was a unique ‘gaijin’ [foreigner] I preferred to eat Japanese food, wore Japanese clothes and ‘thought’ like a Japanese – all to the irritation of my Asian American ‘brothers’, one who was Filipino American, the other Japanese American. They took me aside one day and reprimanded me. ‘Hey girl,’ they said, ‘why don’t you just be yourself? You’re not Japanese, you’re a Filipina.’

These guys challenged me to be me! The truth is, even though my parents told me to never forget that I was a Filipina, I was never taught how to be proud of that heritage. My parents were first-generation immigrants who spoke with an accent, and worked hard to provide for their three American-born children. We were Catholic. We were a middle-class family. Our neighbors were white, and overall, we did not experience discrimination. Our diet was eclectic: We ate pigskin, octopus, tripe, and Cholocate meat – it was the main staple, unless my dad changed the routine to mac and cheese or scalloped potatoes, crispy on the outside.

But those two years, they saved me. They were an American-born woman whose parents were from the Philippines. The Filipinos had a unique relationship with the U.S., with Span. Did not know my own history? Back then, I didn’t. Not until Professor HC Kim came into my life. I took classes from him and learned firsthand about discrimination on campus. Most memorable were some cruel discriminatory comments aimed directly at him, right outside our classroom door!

One day, Prof Kim stormed into class, trying to suppress his anger. He was splitting his words, along with a face-look. Finally he was coherent enough to explain the reason for his anger. He had been walking to cross High Street, Western’s main thoroughfare. Viking Commons, when two students in their convertible stopped and yelled, ‘Gook, go back to your country!’

‘Boy’ Dr Kim was fit to be tied. But his anger, his story, shocked us. I was sorry for him, angry for him, and for him. I noticed that several other Asian students were alarmed. A well-known professor labelled a ‘gook.’ It never occurred to me that the same remark could be made to me.

Walking with my class at graduation almost didn’t happen. I received a letter from the Office of the Vice-President which informed me that if I did not wear a graduation cap and gown like everyone else, I would not be permitted to walk.

What? A letter from the VICE, not THE president of the school? I thought. If this was such a big deal, then why would No 2 send me this letter? My reaction was fear. I turn to the student newspaper, The Viking, to find the back-up plan. Damn, what would my family say if I could not attend my own graduation from WWSC? I mentioned the letter to my friends in the Asian Student Union, and word spread to the other ethnic student unions to support me. I remember that there was a lot of commotion. I vaguely recall some of them saying that they would protest. Unfortunately, I don’t recall what happened except that in the end I was permitted to walk at graduation. My white Philippine dress stood out in sharp contrast to the sea of black graduation gowns, black mortarboards. To top off my attire, I draped my hand-earned gold cord around my neck, another sign of accomplishment.

I recall strolling very proudly, but bellowing on the customary walk in front of Old Main. ‘I remember guys bananas their mortarboards on their well-groomed Afro, wishing me ‘Good Luck! Right on! How pretty!’ I screamed. My mother and sister also in their Philippine gowns, and I standing near the campus fountain for several photos. It was a triumphant day. It was a proud day, a memorable day.

After 1975, I returned to Japan and taught there for another three years after doing a four-month ‘roots’ trip in the Philippines. In the U.S., I have done research on the history of Filipino Americans and written for historylink.org. I have published in several Asian community newspapers, and my oral interviews have appeared or been mentioned in several books. I spearheaded an exhibit at the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, called ‘I AM FILIPINO’ I am a past trustee of the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS). I also earned an M.A. from Gallaudet University in the Education of the Deaf. I became a teacher in Washington, D.C., and Seattle.

I hope these two guys, Rick and Kyle (both WWSC grad), are proud that I finally discovered and honored my Filipino American/Philippine roots!

We asked WWU Alumni to share some items that tell “a history of Western in 125 objects.”

We’ll return to our regular Class Notes, filled with alumni news, in the next edition of Window magazine.
1975 – Matt Cleary, B.A., industrial/organizational psychology, bought a tiny schefflera plant in 1974 while living in “Bucky Towers,” and has kept it alive ever since. “It’s grown through a few pots, and now has a curving, 6-foot trunk, with leaves at the top,” Clery writes. “My wife, Debbie, and daughter Lauren, ’11, threaten to set it free in Hawaii, and I remind them that my plant has been in my life longer than either of them.”

1972 – Teresa Matchette, B.A., geography, still keeps a strip of torn bedsheet in her family archives from her time at Western: “This is an armband from the strike at Western in the spring of 1970, after the Kent State and Jackson State student massacres,” she writes. “We ripped the dorm bed sheets into strips and silk screened this logo on them. That fresh, man year at Western Washington State College, we marched, sat-in, and were generally loud in our civil disobedience. I remember one big march from campus to downtown, a sea of denim and flannel shirts. We had eloquent speakers at some gatherings, and we did boycott classes for a couple days. The legacy I carry from those times was a desire to make society better and to question authority.”

1971 – Karen (Filer) Dunsdon, BAE, special education, speech, still has the crepe-paper pom-poms from her sophomore year as a cheerleader. She’s the second cheerleader from the right in the photo, right, which was taken at homecoming 1968. “Sailors were in town and may have been a part of the parade,” she writes. “Of course, all of this was happening during the Vietnam War era and there were protests, and sit-ins, on campus and off. Still we were maintaining some sort of normalcy in the midst of the counter-culture.”

1974 – Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville, B.A., speech-language pathology and audiology; ’81, M.A., a self-described “thrift store enthusiast,” found this ceramic tile commemorating Western’s 50th anniversary. “I keep it in my office in Bellingham City Hall to remind me of the great history of Western. I will always be a proud Viking!”

1979 – Martin Brown, B.A., sociology, sent us a photo of his track sweatshirt “that warmed my person and my Viking spirit in the late ’70s.” Brown qualified for nationals at a 1979 meet in Seaside, Oregon, but what he remembers most is what came after the finish: “I had lost all body heat and was shivering like a leaf for fifteen minutes until my coach, the great Ralph Vernacchia, found and put this, my favorite sweatshirt, on me.” Brown went on to finish seventh at nationals later that year.

1971 – Karen (Filer) Dunsdon, BAE, special education, speech, still has the crepe-paper pom-poms from her sophomore year as a cheerleader. She’s the second cheerleader from the right in the photo, right, which was taken at homecoming 1968. “Sailors were in town and may have been a part of the parade,” she writes. “Of course, all of this was happening during the Vietnam War era and there were protests, and sit-ins, on campus and off. Still we were maintaining some sort of normalcy in the midst of the counter-culture.”

1974 – During his time at Western from 1971 to ’76 Les Young, B.A., general studies, was Western’s first athlete to train and compete in the hammer throw event; he keeps framed mementos from “the early years of Coach V’ (Vernacchia).” Young also served as an R.A. in Higginson Hall and a manager in Birnam Wood — where his son Jason Young, ’04, B.A., psychology, lived in the same apartment 30 years later. Les Young is retired from a 30-year career in the Washington State Patrol, as well as 36 years as a chief warrant officer in the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command. He returned to Western in 2014 to complete his degree.
1994 – Twenty years after she graduated, Shelly McElroy Houle, B.A., human services, gave her WWU sweatshirt to her daughter as she began her freshman year. “She started her Western adventure exactly 20 years after I graduated,” Houle writes. Daughter Kaylee McElroy, ’17, B.A., linguistics, communication sciences and disorders, pictured here, is now a grad student at Western.

1999 – Every time she goes camping, Dana Smith, BAE, English - secondary, is reminded of her days at Western. She and her husband Micah, ’98, B.A., Spanish, keep their “recycle mugs” in their camping gear.

1993 – Marke Greene, B.A., accounting, writes that he found this “executive quarters” drinking game in the WWU A1 Bookstore during his time at Western. “It got tons of use during my years there,” he writes. “It still sits prominently on my shelf in my home office.”

1977 – Jay Harris, B.S., industrial technology, still uses a key fob he made in the plastics technology program with Claude Hill from 1975 to 1977. “One of the previous years’ students made an injection mold featuring this Viking key fob,” Harris remembers. “This has been a favorite of mine since then. Always reminds me of what started my career in plastics materials and processes.” Harris is now retired after a career in materials and process engineering for Boeing, Motorola, Hessol Composites and Medtronic. “I use it for the key on my old Porsche. We’re all old—the car, the key fob and me!”

1993 – Sarah Gerspacher, B.S., kinesiology – pre-physical therapy, white bearet kept her ears warm on windy days on campus. It was a gift from her mom, Elaine Gerspacher, ’83, B.A., speech language pathology; ’88, M.A., speech pathology/audiology, who had purchased it during her own time at Western and knew from experience her daughter would need a warm hat.

1999 – Amy (Christiansen) Morgan, B.A., journalism, still uses the keychain the team captain made the year the WWU Flames rugby team went to regionals for the first time. “We beat rival Reed for a higher seed and flew to the regional tournament at Stanford University,” Morgan writes. “The book contains all the stories, goals, advice, memories from my peers who also graduated with me. It’s a constant reminder, too, that I always have a home away from home at Western.”

2017 – Gabriel Ibanez, B.A., business administration – management information systems, cherishes his diploma, but he may cherish the booklet from the Ethnic Student Center’s 2017 commencement ceremony even more. “I planned and organized the ESC commencement that year; it was my final event that I put together on that campus and I couldn’t have been happier. The book contains all the stories, goals, advice, memories from my peers who also graduated with me. It’s a constant reminder, too, that I always have a home away from home at Western.”

2014 – Sarah Gerspacher, B.S., kinesiology – pre-physical therapy, white bearet kept her ears warm on windy days on campus. It was a gift from her mom, Elaine Gerspacher, ’83, B.A., speech language pathology; ’88, M.A., speech pathology/audiology, who had purchased it during her own time at Western and knew from experience her daughter would need a warm hat.

1977 – Jay Harris, B.S., industrial technology, still uses a key fob he made in the plastics technology program with Claude Hill from 1975 to 1977. “One of the previous years’ students made an injection mold featuring this Viking key fob,” Harris remembers. “This has been a favorite of mine since then. Always reminds me of what started my career in plastics materials and processes.” Harris is now retired after a career in materials and process engineering for Boeing, Motorola, Hessol Composites and Medtronic. “I use it for the key on my old Porsche. We’re all old—the car, the key fob and me!”

1999 – Amy (Christiansen) Morgan, B.A., journalism, still uses the keychain the team captain made the year the WWU Flames rugby team went to regionals for the first time. “We beat rival Reed for a higher seed and flew to the regional tournament at Stanford University,” Morgan writes. “The book contains all the stories, goals, advice, memories from my peers who also graduated with me. It’s a constant reminder, too, that I always have a home away from home at Western.”

2017 – Gabriel Ibanez, B.A., business administration – management information systems, cherishes his diploma, but he may cherish the booklet from the Ethnic Student Center’s 2017 commencement ceremony even more. “I planned and organized the ESC commencement that year; it was my final event that I put together on that campus and I couldn’t have been happier. The book contains all the stories, goals, advice, memories from my peers who also graduated with me. It’s a constant reminder, too, that I always have a home away from home at Western.”

1999 – Amy (Christiansen) Morgan, B.A., journalism, still uses the keychain the team captain made the year the WWU Flames rugby team went to regionals for the first time. “We beat rival Reed for a higher seed and flew to the regional tournament at Stanford University,” Morgan writes. “The book contains all the stories, goals, advice, memories from my peers who also graduated with me. It’s a constant reminder, too, that I always have a home away from home at Western.”
Class Notes


2010 – Jordan Barr, B.A., psychology, says his WWU sweatshirt has seen a lot of love since he received it as a gift from his girlfriend during his first year at Western. “Ten years later, she was (and still is) the sweetest, most caring woman I’ve ever met, which is why I married her,” Jordan writes. “We were married in Bellingham, made lifelong friends who are still there, and now get to travel back with our kiddos at least once a year. I’m forever grateful I made the decision to go to Western because it changed my life for the better. And this little sweatshirt is still chugging along, making sure I forever remember Nicole’s generosity for me.”

1973 – Mike Compton, BAE, PE – exercise & sport science, can still remember what it felt like to stand on the wrestling mat in the middle of Carver Gymnasium with a referee holding his hand up at the 1970 Evergreen Conference Wrestling Championships. “We had five champions that day and Central had five. It was quite a day for the Western wrestling program, which sadly does not exist today. Still, I think of that moment and some of my friends and certainly some kids I probably didn’t even know, cheering wildly and when I see them in my mind, it still kind of plays in slow motion. It’s a moment in time!” Compton joined the Peace Corps after graduation and taught physical education in West Africa and then was a teacher and coach in the Skagit Valley for 30 years.

Get your 2019 off to a good start with a WWU Alumni Association membership! Your membership supports scholarships for our deserving students, develops innovative programming, and provides networking opportunities. In return, you receive discounts, access to Lakewood and Wilson Library, invitations to exclusive events, and the satisfaction of doing great things for students and WWU! 2019 will be a big year for our members, so join today!