



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

Klipsun Magazine

Western Student Publications

Spring 2018

Klipsun Magazine, 2018, Volume 48, Issue 03 - Spring

Rose H. Carr
Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wvu.edu/klipsun_magazine



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Carr, Rose H., "Klipsun Magazine, 2018, Volume 48, Issue 03 - Spring" (2018). *Klipsun Magazine*. 266.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/klipsun_magazine/266

This Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Student Publications at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Klipsun Magazine by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

KLIPSUN

ESSENCE
SPRING 2018



DELUSIONAL OPTIMISM

The world of a soap-making
CEO in Bellingham

FORGING PERFECTION

Constructing the world's
best kitchen knives

PROVIDING SAFE PASSAGE

Captain Deborah Dempsey
shares her story

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAREST READER,



Who are you? What qualities of your past have shaped you? What is your essence? Can you recognize the choices you are making now and what they will lead to?

By definition, essence is “the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, that determines its character.”

I like to think we make decisions based on what we know will happen indefinitely. When in reality, we are all trying to choose the best choice when life presents itself to us.

The accumulation of gut reactions, late-night turning and days of pensive thinking we’ve made along the timeline of our lives is what has put us where we are today.

Embrace and grow from past experiences to become the best version of yourself; they’re attributed to who you have become.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rose H. Carr'.

Rose H. Carr

Front and back cover photos by Lincoln Humphry
Editor photo by Katie Webber

This issue was set in the typefaces Affogato and HK Grotesk.

**KLIPSUN IS AN INDEPENDENT STUDENT PUBLICATION OF
WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

KLIPSUNMAGAZINE.COM



KlipsunMagazine



@klipsunmag



@klipsunmag

04

TRASHY RADICAL

How one student is making strides toward a zero-waste lifestyle

08

DELUSIONAL OPTIMISM

The world of a soap-making CEO in Bellingham

12

I HELD MY MOM'S HAND

Watching my mother lose her battle with cancer

14

FORGING PERFECTION

Constructing the world's best kitchen knives

18

OUT OF THE DARK

Pushing through depression while finding myself

20

LIFE UNDER THE GUARD TOWERS

A story of the survivors of Weih sien Prison Camp

24

PROVIDING SAFE PASSAGE

Captain Deborah Dempsey shares her story while guiding me home

29

ON THE EDGE OF DANGER

Skiers risk their lives to descend on untouched snow

32

LANDING SEATAC


The first memories of an international student at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

**HOW ONE STUDENT IS MAKING STRIDES TOWARD A
ZERO-WASTE LIFESTYLE**

story by **juan mendoza**

photos by **harrison amelang**

TRASHY RADICAL

A black trash bin with a corrugated lid is the central focus of the lower half of the page. The bin is set in a garden-like environment with trees and bushes in the background. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or late afternoon. The bin is positioned in the foreground, slightly to the right of the center.

Gwen Larned is no stranger to garbage. For the past four years she has been a leader at Western, pushing for a more eco-conscious campus.

"WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT ZERO WASTE?"

Her eyes light up.

Gwen Larned has grown accustomed to this question.

"By being intentional about each of our purchases," Larned said. "We can support more ethical companies, eat better, save time and money and support a world we want to live in."

Larned is not your typical zero-waste advocate. At 21 years old, she doesn't fit the mold of a zero-waste lifestyle, as she isn't a white upper-class woman; the identity often seen in the zero-waste community.

There is a certain "privilege" that many people believe you have to have in order to truly live zero waste, Larned said. For example, one has to be able to spend more money on better alternatives when shopping for products like food.

"A lot of people think that by being zero waste, you're being a better person," she said.

Larned is a strong force on Western's campus and a face of progress at the Western Sustainability office serving as the Zero Waste Coordinator which helps reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills on Western's campus.

"She's one of those born leaders people seem to talk about," said Carrin Romain-McErlane, Larned's roommate. The pair have lived together since September, but have known each other for three years. Romain-McErlane jokes that some might even describe Larned as an active mind, changing lives; the very definition of what Western promotes.

Growing up in Leavenworth, Washington resulted in Larned being no stranger to seeing trash. With thousands of tourists piling the town every year, the city has become a target for garbage overflow. During a work shift back home at The Tea Shop, Larned found the fuel for her passion.

Each day Larned would see customers come in and talk about all the tea they already had at home, but most would still continue to purchase more tea. Thinking about all the waste, the hypocrisy of it all eventually wore down on Larned. She knew she had



Western, where a future of business and sustainability laid ahead.

"I came to Western because I knew it would give me an opportunity to follow my passions," Larned said.

While the end of her time at Western will come at the end of fall, Larned is making sure that her impact will last. She helped create the Students for Zero Waste club, a club designed to help tackle the waste issues at Western, which currently spends more than a million dollars sending garbage to landfills, as well as providing information on how to live waste-free to community members.

The discussion-based club offers students a chance to take on larger questions referring to waste both within our local community and around the world. The club is committed to creating student driven change within not only students, but throughout all of Western.

Larned points out that engaging in sustainability on Western's campus is not always the easiest thing to do. For the majority of the time students are in college, real life can easily become overwhelming.

"Everyone is busy but it's about finding small steps to better the world," Larned said.

With juggling classes, jobs and a social life most 18-to-23-year-olds already have so much on their hands that adding another component to the mix could be overwhelming, Larned said.

However, Larned welcomes this added stress. Her time is focused on spreading the knowledge she has gained and learned throughout her time at Western, especially to those who don't believe they could live zero waste.

Take Western student Angela Wissmar for example, who was inspired to try zero waste after working with Larned in a class.

"Gwen introduced me to the culture and community of the zero-waste world. She educated me and our group on why and how to move toward the zero-waste lifestyle," Wissmar said.

Whether in a club meeting or out in the community, Larned is constantly looking for ways to spread the word.

"A goal is to reach people who don't see themselves as environmentalists," said Larned.

Wissmar didn't consider herself an environmentalist before meeting Larned. However, after meeting with Larned, Wissmar felt empowered to make a change in her own personal life. She is now working toward a zero-waste life.

"It is a journey and it doesn't happen overnight," Wissmar said. "Working toward zero waste has really opened my eyes to the systematic way our culture consumes daily disposables, how consumerism encourages us to consume more and waste more rather than reusing, and how people simply are not aware of the consequences of their trash in the big picture."

Larned's dedication to storytelling will take even greater shape this summer when she plans to hit the road with her roommate Carrin Romain-McErlane for the Zero Waste Roadtrip. Through her innovation minor, Larned was able to become an Idea Fellow for Western's Idea Institute. The fellowship has given her a greater opportunity to work with other students and professors.

Tattoos are always meaningful. Larned's reminds her of her passions.





Larned speaks to the Students for Zero Waste club, a club she created in fall 2017.

The Zero Waste Roadtrip will travel along the western end of the United States, where Larned and Romain-McErlane are planning to meet various vloggers. One who they are especially excited about the possibility to meet is Zero Waste Chica, a lifestyle blogger from the Bay Area.

Untraditional in her own way, Heidi Violet is an inspiring Latina voice in a traditionally white community. For over two years, Larned has looked up to Violet because of her progressive and creative way of living. The passion Larned saw in Violet helped her create Trashy Radical, Larned's blog.

"Living a zero-waste lifestyle was the radical shift in perspective I needed," Larned said on her blog. On the blog, Larned also acknowledges that due to her own privilege from living in a progressive community where the resources she needs are actually available, she has been able to make these changes.

Her blog, along with their Zero Waste Roadtrip Facebook page will be the main hub for information about the trip. Being able to share these stories are what excites Larned and Romain-McErlane for the summer.

Although there is plenty of time, the question still arises, what comes after graduation for Larned? Having already interned at one of the biggest lifestyle companies in the country, Vanity Fair, the sky's the limit. During her summer there, she was able to identify and solve a waste problem that helped save the company \$18,000 in waste. This creativity and desire to bring zero-waste solutions with others, are the reasons why she is thinking bigger picture. Her mind is not just at Western or even Washington, but everywhere.

"There's so much to do everywhere," she said. "I'm not trying to stay in one place." ■



Standing strong: Larned has created a name for herself in the zero-waste community.



THE WORLD OF A SOAP-MAKING CEO IN BELLINGHAM

story by haley ausbun
photos by lincoln humphry

"I BARELY REMEMBER BAD THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED," ANNE-MARIE Faiola said. "Literally I gloss over them. I also have this unflinching belief that the world is good and that if I work hard enough I'll land someplace in the positive."

Faiola, 40, describes these personality traits as delusional optimism. She is the founder and CEO of Bramble Berry, a multimillion-dollar soap supplies hand craft or DIY hand craft provisions company from Bellingham with over 85 employees.

Faiola is a big deal in the soap-making world. She has won both Business Person

of the Year and Business Woman of the Year for Washington state. When she attends the Handcrafted Soap and Cosmetics Guild, Faiola is like a celebrity. People watch her and ask her to sign books.

A daily 20-minute meditation helps her maintain a constant happy composure, but she has always had a habit-based routine that regiments around 95 percent of her day. A former college professor once compared her to a boring automaton.



OPTIMISM

"What he didn't understand is when your life is that regimented and you're so focused all the time, you know exactly when you can be spontaneous without losing anything," Faiola said. "Consistency is one of the keys in moving forward with any of your goals, in business or personal life."

FAIOLA'S BRANDS

"The delusional optimism can get super annoying for team members," Faiola said. "I'll be like 'It's gonna be fine,' and they'll be like 'No, it's definitely not gonna be fine.' That's why I'm so lucky to be surrounded by pragmatic people."

Amber Strawn, chief marketing officer and Bramble Berry employee for 12 years, said they often joke that Strawn is the dream killer, the one to turn down some of Faiola's creative ideas. Their dynamic creates a balance of Faiola wanting to try new things, and Strawn looking for a practical way to execute those plans.

"Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't, but it always keeps us on our toes and trying new things, which keeps it interesting and fun," Strawn said. "We call her the one up in the crow's nest, telling us where the land is, and we are scurrying around the ship."

The company's needs sometimes supersede happiness, Strawn said.

A variety of made-from-scratch soaps at Anne-Marie Faiola's multimillion-dollar soap supply company in Bellingham, Wash.

"We kinda tape it down a little bit, just to stay on track. We are a business and need to hit our goals and keep everything moving along. We can't just always do the things that make us happy," Strawn said. "But that is infused in Bramble Berry from the ground up."

Faiola thanks her team for the company's success, and said it wouldn't be where it is today without them. They make her job easy and fun.

Bramble Berry consumed Faiola's creativity, until a few years ago when she realized her customers' creative journeys didn't start and end with bath and body products and so she expanded.

"All I know is that right now, exploring creativity in all these different areas is giving me a new life and new love for what I'm already an expert in— bath and body products. It's a beautiful, virtuous cycle of creativity spiraling upward to more creativity," Faiola said.

Faiola's office is perfectly designed. Carefully placed crystals and minimalist pastel decor sit on the waiting area table. It's almost like a Pinterest board sprung to life. Strong notes of soap waft in from another room. In her office is a desk, a large meeting table and a couch set. The bookshelf holds wine bottles and notebooks that read "Best Day Ever."

Handmade calligraphy photos stick to the whiteboard wall. A quarterly meeting just took place where a team of 20 people decided on Faiola's creative projects for the quarter, such as pasta or cheese making. She said this helps her inspire the company.

On the whiteboard, there are five profiles. They are customer personas, a summarization of Bramble Berry's audience; who is buying and what they want to buy. Their names are Lauren, Jennifer, Brooklyn, Garrett and Carol.

"You make more money as you get older, usually," Faiola said when asked if Bramble Berry's customer personas differ in economic range.

Faiola's initials are displayed throughout her office. The letters are arranged like a company-crafted logo.

Faiola is herself many brands. Come Make With Me, "Soap Queen TV" and her Soap Queen blog are all sub-brands of Bramble Berry, where Faiola showcases her creative endeavors. Best Day Ever is her lifestyle brand, which started after she wrote a book of tips for leading a happy lifestyle.

Faiola said inspiration for this lifestyle brand was reading 52 books a year. She realized 10 years ago



Faiola pulls her handmade soap from a mold in the studio for her YouTube channel "Soap Queen TV".

a pattern of daily habits to be successful and happy that was being expressed in these books. In Faiola's Soap Queen blog she began to write out these thoughts and, eventually, turned them into the book "Live Your Best Day Ever: Thirty-Five Strategies for Daily Success."

When the book came out, she felt panic, insecurity and doubt.

"I realized 'Oh my god, who am I to write a book?'" Faiola said.

Reaction to the book reassured her. She now sells the Best Day Ever bottles of wine and notebooks that display in her office.

FAIOLA'S PHILOSOPHIES

As an entrepreneur, Faiola said, you have to do what others won't do to get what others won't have.

"No one loves your baby like you do," she said.

Faiola also believes that happiness is a choice. She said there are little things you can do each day, such as getting a good night's rest, eating right and exercising will allow you to feel joy every day.

"When you have this habit-based lifestyle, it's easier to have room for happiness. It helps keep all the other needs met," Faiola said.

Everyone has bad days but the lows are what make the highs approachable, she said. You need to figure out what made that day disappointing, turn inwards and ask yourself, what happened? For Faiola, just acknowledging why she's upset takes the sting out of the emotion.

A lot of bad days are about someone else reacting to you, Faiola said. You need to figure out it's not about you, it's them.

"For example, someone took offense to something I said. They were so angry they cried about it. But the thing I said wasn't that interesting or bad," Faiola said. "I had to dig deep, 'Tell me why this offended you? What's your history with that word?' It turns out this was old stuff I just triggered. It wasn't about me, it was about them."

Faiola said it's also hard in these instances to not hold other people's drama.

"I want everybody to like me," Faiola said.

FAIOLA'S FRIENDS

Faiola's friends outside work credit her with bringing fun and positivity to their lives.

"She has a tight schedule, but she packs it in with friends around all the corners of her life. I've never felt overlooked," said Lisa McShane, a political consultant and Faiola's friend of 13 years.

Faiola is a force of nature, McShane said. Along with her high energy, intelligence and devotion to her loved ones' well-being, Faiola is relentlessly curious.

Lydia Bennett, commercial real estate consultant, broker, and another longtime friend of Faiola's, said she's never said anything negative about anyone or anything.

Both Bennett and McShane talk to Faiola about local and national politics, exercise and hang out over glasses of wine.

Typically, when Faiola wants to spend time with friends, she suggests a hike or run, hardly ever a lunch. In one of Faiola's Soap Queen blog posts, she recalled deciding to let go of a friendship where they often sat around and ate Doritos and Oreos while watching "90210."

"If you don't want to be turned into the habit, quit hanging out with the person who enables the habit," Faiola's post reads. "Go outside, take the sweatpants off and make some new friends."

And Faiola did just that. Her friends are generally financially successful, empowered women who engage in active hangouts and well-informed discussions. "We like to be around other people like us," Bennett said.

FAIOLA'S FAMILY

Faiola grew up in Chehalis, Washington, her first home in the suburbs with a community-pool. They moved to an 18-acre lot on the outskirts of town when she was 13 years old. Her father, Richard Faiola, describes a home surrounded by woods and deer, the vast-acre land they owned decorated by her mother's landscaping projects. Friends often came over for pizza and she took lessons and practiced on their baby grand piano.

"Anne-Marie didn't struggle economically as a kid, but she might like to paint herself that way," Richard Faiola said. "She wasn't spoiled, we didn't hand her anything. We gave her a car, but not much else."

Anne-Marie Faiola began making soap at 14, and as a teenager without internet, Faiola's first five batches of soap were failures. She would get tallow, or animal fat, from the butchers in Lewis County, to make soap.

"What's really funny is I'm vegetarian," Faiola said.

After high school graduation, Anne-Marie Faiola planned to pursue a career in criminal justice, not

soap. Contact lenses prevented her from the dream of being an FBI agent, but that didn't stop her from studying psychology with an emphasis in criminal justice at Saint Martin's University. She sold soap on the side.

Anne-Marie Faiola then worked as a correctional officer at a medium-security men's prison. She co-taught anger management and victim awareness classes. She cried in front of prisoners during the victim awareness class, and remembers they responded with compassion.

But transferring to a minimum-security prison is where she struggled. Inmates often broke her heart, she said, returning to the 90-day facility after release. Her father said Anne-Marie Faiola was too fair-natured, at one point alone in a kitchen full of knives with an inmate. At least two people snuck out on her, Richard Faiola said.

"I came home one day and realized the tidal wave of hopelessness and despair in the prison system wasn't going to be solved by me," Anne-Marie Faiola said.

So she quit her job and sold \$1000 of soap her first weekend at the Mount Vernon Tulip Festival. Anne-Marie Faiola said she wanted to inspire and give a viable option for others to leave jobs that made them unhappy.

"She took a \$60,000 BA in criminal justice and announced, 'Daddy, I'm going to make soap,'" Richard Faiola said.

About six weeks after quitting her job, Anne-Marie Faiola decided to sell soap supplies, and Bramble Berry began.

"The bigger calling was to be a partner with people on their creative journeys," Faiola said.

Anne-Marie Faiola largely brushes off setbacks, her father said. But some setbacks have changed her.

Faiola divorced at 27, and she said this very public failure was a pivotal moment for her. Because Washington state has community property laws, Faiola said she had to fight to keep her business— all she had once her ex-husband got their house.

"I was homeless. I had to put [my 20 employees] needs above my need to collapse into a little hole and be so embarrassed I would never come out. I realized this business was bigger than me now," Faiola said.

As she couch-surfed between friends, Faiola never missed a day of work.

"I didn't feel happy. The world was gray dammit. That felt like a failure," Faiola said. "I just continued plodding along."

Today, Faiola has a home she is delighted to be in, somewhere she doesn't need to escape from. She has craft stations throughout the house, which sometimes drives her husband insane.

Faiola's husband, Chris Renoud, is an engineer with his own firm, traveling often for work. Their children, ages 4 and 6, are fun and energetic.

"They're genuinely fun. I was really scared about having kids because I love my career so much, but now I realize that was a silly worry," Faiola said.

Faiola said their children take after her entrepreneurial spirit.

"My son sells bath fizzies at the farmers market, and he made \$500 in 2017. He did some private orders too. He's 6 years old and pays his sister to work in the stand for him," Faiola said.

Faiola's creativity, endurance, happiness and structured lifestyle shape every facet of her life. Her philosophy to choose happiness is the kind of targeted idealism that allowed her to create the company, family and social life she has today.

"I think in order to be an entrepreneur, you have to have this sheer sense that the world is conspiring to do good for you. Period," she said. ■



Anne-Marie Faiola in her lavish office with her "A/M" monogram. Faiola is CEO of Bramble Berry, a Bellingham, Wash. soap supply company.



I HELD MY MOM'S HAND

WATCHING MY MOTHER LOSE HER BATTLE WITH CANCER

by kathryn meier

photo provided by kathryn meier

I HELD MY MOM'S HAND WHEN SHE DIED.

My large hand encompassed her smaller boney one as we laid on her bed. Her other hand wrapped around a small white plastic cup containing three pills, a cocktail of barbiturates and morphine.

The three pills would end her life in four short hours.

The warm July sun streamed down through the French doors and into the tightly packed room, filled with family members and doctors all there to support my mom. There were balloons and flowers. It looked almost like a celebration, except for the tears streaming down the faces of those inside.

It has many names, death with dignity, aid in dying and physician-assisted death. We were lucky to live in California, one of the few states where it's legal.

"I'm ready," she said bravely. Her shaking hand raised the cup to her lips and swallowed the pills quickly.

The moment we had been fighting against for eight months had finally arrived, ever since her diagnosis of stage IV small cell lung cancer in November 2017.

I found out through a phone call. Lying in bed, two states away, my phone vibrated quietly and when I answered, I could immediately tell something was wrong.

"Katie, are you busy? We need to talk," Dad's voice was soothing over the static background noise of a badly connected cellphone call.

"Your mom has cancer."

No, no, no, no, no, no.

Over and over again, the thought repeated in my mind.

No, no, no, no, no, no.

My mom was fine, she had to be fine.

Except she wasn't.

A pit the size of the Grand Canyon opened in my stomach and I could barely hear anything over the sound of my own sobs.

I wanted so badly to be in California, wrapped in Mom's arms, listening to her whisper everything was going to be fine in my ear.

It was painful to go home the first time, to see her in a hospital bed. I wanted to be able to fix everything and felt helpless when I couldn't.

As the cancer got worse, the trips home became harder and harder.

My first trip home, she had lost her graying brown hair.

My second trip home, she had lost weight, reduced to skin and bones.

My third trip home, she had lost her ability to walk,



confined to a wheelchair or bed.

Mom never lost her spirit though, the one thing the cancer could not take.

She laughed loudly and without fear. She still smiled her infectious smile, the one that would brighten any room.

She was fierce, strong and a sight to see, looking cancer in the eye and flipping it the bird.

Sure, she was sick, but she wasn't going to let it stop her from living.

For eight months there was nothing we couldn't do.

We saw the Nutcracker, hung out with Mickey at Disneyland and went to the Rose Bowl cheering on her alma mater, Penn State — so loudly we lost our voices.

The little things became the most important. We played Scrabble in the park, ate ice cream by the beach, sang ABBA so loud we were sure the neighbors could hear and laughed until our stomachs hurt in between the aisles of Target.

Every day Mom fought for more time, one more chance to make one more memory.

Eventually, Mom couldn't fight anymore. The cancer had spread to her lymph nodes, brain and stomach and was no longer responding to treatments. It was her time to go and she was ready. She had made her decision.

For Mom it was an obvious choice but for me it was much harder to deal with, maybe it was because we were having so much fun or maybe because I was in denial.

The days leading up to July 13 were filled with emotional turmoil.

Why would she want to leave? Why would she want to die?

It wasn't until the night before, twisting and turning in bed, unable to sleep that I was finally able to wrap my mind around it.

Mom wasn't choosing to leave me. It wasn't even about me in the first place. It was about taking charge of her life one last time, an act of dignity, a show of defiance in the face of a disease that had taken any promise of a future from her. By the time the sun started to rise, I had reached an uneasy acceptance.

"I love you, Mom." The words were a whisper out of my mouth. My body shook but Mom was sturdy beside me.

"I love you too," she replied. Her words hung heavy in the air around us.

I held her hand tightly unwilling to let go.

I held her hand to say goodbye, after eight arduous months of battling cancer.

I held her hand to show her I would be there for her, to support her and love her even if it meant her leaving.

I held her hand to make her more comfortable in the face of a scary and unfathomable situation.

But, I also held her hand because even if she was ready, I wasn't.

I wasn't ready to let go.

I wasn't ready for a life without her.

Eight months later, I am still not ready.

I still find myself reaching for my phone to call her whenever something great happens. I go through old photos and cry over them, I listen to old voicemails just to hear her say "I love you" one more time. I would do anything to see her smile.

There are good days and there are bad days.

But every day gets a little easier.

I held my mom's hand when she died.

I am so glad I did. ■



FORGING

PERFECTION

CONSTRUCTING THE WORLD'S BEST KITCHEN KNIVES

story by joshua dejong

photos by harrison amelang



Bob Kramer heats metal for a knife in a 2,450 degree Fahrenheit forge.

TO TOP-TIER CHEFS, A KNIFE IS AN EXTENSION of the soul. It crafts and aids in creating the most beautiful plates of food imaginable. What if there were a knife so exquisite it put the finest five-star dish to shame?

This is the quality of knife Bob Kramer forges.

Kramer's knives are held in such high regard, chef, author and TV personality Anthony Bourdain said they are the finest chef's knives in the world.

"It would be inappropriate to say these are the Rolls Royce of chef's knives or the Ferrari of chef's knives because really the car has not been invented that reflects the kind of quality, time, attention and difficulty of the Bob Kramer knife," Bourdain said in an interview with *The Daily Meal*.

The knives Kramer makes are so spectacular you must outbid others in an auction or enter into a lottery system for a chance to buy a blade. Many of Kramer's blades sell for \$400 an inch, with an aver-

age chef's knife being eight inches. With the addition of a hand-carved handle and custom engraving, you are easily looking at a knife worth thousands of dollars.

Kramer, a modest, literally blue-collared, round-spectacled man forges his knives from scratch and reaches a level of detail many other smiths don't.

Every knife begins by mixing a specific blend of iron, chromium, manganese and carbon powders. An induction coil then heats the metal powder to almost 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit until ready to be cooled into a cupcake-sized ingot.

The ingot will be heated until it resembles the sun in a 2,450-degree Fahrenheit forge. Then it is hammered and stretched into a bar. Kramer cuts the steel and layers it with another bar making a 'steel sandwich.' Heat, hammer, stretch, cut and repeat. This process is done until there are about 400 layers of steel.



Kramer hammers metal into the rough shape of a knife. This knife consists of 400 layers of metal.

Kramer then heat treats his blades, a two-and-a-half-day process. The blade is ground down, acid-treated and fit with a handmade handle. The result is a Damascus-style blade with a distinct marble pattern. Japanese Kobe beef would be jealous.

Kramer's small shop resides in Bellingham's Sunnysland neighborhood, within view of Homeskillet. There, Kramer and fellow Master Smith Tom Ferry, are continually striving toward perfection with every knife they make.

"Like the horizon, you're never going to get there," Kramer said. "It's something you keep driving towards; there is always room for improvement, there is always room for stuff to learn."

To become a Master Smith with the American Bladesmith Society, Kramer and Ferry put their blades through rigorous testing. Each bladesmith makes five knives and any imperfection disqualifies them. Only one knife is chosen to be tested.

The blade must cut a one-inch-thick rope, chop into a two-by-four and still be able to shave the hair off an arm. The knife is then put into a vise, which clamps down on where the blade is bent to a 90-degree angle. The blade can't break. If the blade survives, the creator can be counted among the select few renowned as Master Smiths. Currently, there are just over 115 who have made it through the testing.

Kramer got his start in the knife world while he attended North Seattle Community College in the early '90s as part of the science program. He was a cook at the Four Seasons in Seattle. The rooms, service, quality, presentation and food construction were all performed with rigorous perfection, Kramer said.

Kramer would go on to learn the basics of knife sharpening in the back of Toshiro's Hardware in Seattle, because none of his peers knew how to make their knives razor sharp.

Traditional sharpening methods using a whetstone were too time consuming to pursue as a business endeavor for Kramer. He looked for a more reliable mechanical method using power tools.

Knife sharpening was a trade commonly passed down a family line, which led Kramer on a search. The Seattle cutlery store he visited wouldn't teach him how to sharpen knives, so he traveled across the U.S. Each time Kramer arrived in a new city such as Boston, New York and Chicago, he would crack open the Yellow Pages and find every sharpening shop and cutlery store he could find.

"It wasn't really great craftsmanship until I got to San Francisco. In San Francisco I went to three cutlery stores which were outstanding old-world craftsmanship," Kramer said.

On North Beach, he went to a tiny shop named Columbus Cutlery. There, Peter Malattia showed Kramer how to sharpen using a variety of sharpening wheels. Kramer noted the way Malattia sharpened was the same method he had found in a 200-year-old cutlery book.

"I was back with Peter maybe 10 or 15 minutes but it was sort of burned into my head that I need to repeat everything that I saw, I need to figure this out," Kramer said.

Kramer bought an old 20-foot-long Langendorf bread truck where he would drive to restaurants to sharpen their knives.

"I immersed myself in knife sharpening for about five years, and then eventually thought 'I wonder how you make a knife? How does that work?'" Kramer said.

Kramer saw an ad in a specialty knife magazine for a class in Arkansas, where he would first learn how to make a knife. After participating in the workshop, he took the knowledge he had gained and opened a small shop in Seattle where he made and sold knives.

A 1998 article in March with lifestyle magazine *Saveur* ignited a huge demand for Kramer's knives creating a four-year backlog. Demand for his knives has hardly died down since.

Kramer doesn't recall it himself, but while in his Seattle shop, this is when he first met Tom Ferry, the Master Smith he works with today.

"Bob was the first knife maker I actually met," Ferry said.

Ferry grew up in the Seattle area. He has been involved in both the art and construction world most of his life.

"I did a lot of painting and drawing. My grandmother would actually hire artists to give me weekend classes," Ferry said.

Ferry worked for Manson Construction in the '90s building ferry terminals and completing waterfront construction. He quit in 2000 because he was too often working away from home.

Ferry and his wife looked at their finances, paid down their bills and he dove into knife making.

"I would work in the evenings, work on the weekends, but basically until [my daughter] went into kindergarten I was a stay-at-home dad," Ferry said.

Ferry's focus was primarily around making art knives, which led him down a path to learning engraving. Ferry hovers over steel with a pneumatic engraver rapidly pressing a pin into steel.

If he had been taught engraving at 18, Ferry said he would have become an engraver without a doubt.



Kramer holds a completed Damascus knife. Each inch of the blade is worth \$400.

"That has become my love and my passion," Ferry said. "Whether it's because it's such a small scale or it is such detailed work, it doesn't matter. It's my thing."

Kramer hired Ferry to come work under his brand when he moved his shop from Olympia to Bellingham last summer. The pair got together and talked extensively about where each of them were coming from and where they wanted to go moving forward, Kramer said.

"It seemed like a good fit, so we gave it a go and the projects were really successful on every level," Kramer said. "It was easy to communicate. The work was right on the money. It was exactly what we talked about."

Ferry pointed out it was uncommon for two Master Smiths to work out of the same shop. He said one Master Smith may hand off a blade to another for them to do the handle, but they don't work continuously with one another.

"Nobody's been as tight as we've got right now," Ferry said. "I think it is going to be interesting to see what comes out of this shop, I am excited to see what comes out of this shop. I think the possibilities are endless." ■



OUT OF THE DARK

PUSHING THROUGH DEPRESSION WHILE FINDING MYSELF

by **juan manuel mendoza-tovar**

photo by **lincoln humphry**

THROUGHOUT MY ENTIRE LIFE I'VE BEEN SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE;

I was born into a family of nine (now 10). I was never alone, yet I always felt alone. For 22 years, I've struggled with finding myself and that confusion led me down a path I never wanted.

I don't remember when it first started, but it just did. Day after day, week after week, I hid the way I was feeling from others. My siblings, my friends, my teachers... no one knew that on the inside I was slowly falling apart.

I became depressed, but I didn't know it.

I shrugged off any visible signs of this side of me. I didn't want to become a stereotype; another kid in the closet who hated hiding. That wasn't me, I couldn't be that cliché.

Or was it?

I was living a life that wasn't mine. Maybe it was because of fear or maybe it was because I was still trying to understand myself, but nothing clicked.

I always made sure that those around me knew that I was there for them and that I genuinely cared about them; this was key. This, made me appear like I had my life under control. This, took off the attention from me and put it on others. This, was key to hiding my sexuality.

■

I remember my first crush. I remember the way he dressed, the way he acted and the way he spoke. I also remember that he was a he.

Why did I have a crush on a guy? Just the thought upset me. I hated it. I didn't want to feel how I did toward him, yet no matter how much I tried to blank my mind or distract myself, nothing worked.

I cried a lot because of it. Usually at home, after everyone had gone to bed. I just wept, and I remember asking myself why I was even born. I didn't have a lifeline. There was no one to reach out to because no one could ever see my tears; they were just another weakness to my fragile personality. Often times, I'd have random unexpected breakdowns. Because of them I was called dramatic, which led to many people around me caring less about my feelings.

As much love as I have for those around me, they didn't make it easier. They couldn't, because neither them nor myself really understood what I was going through.

■

"It gets better."

They say that once you come out, everything changes and you can finally be happy. For a few months after I did, I was. All the sad thoughts, lonely moods and self-doubting moments were gone—or at least hibernating.

That excitement lasted a summer. Once I began college, I lost myself again. I had worked so hard to get to the moment where I finally accepted myself, but in the process became so interested in what others thought of me.

I started comparing myself to those around me and on social media. This is where I again started believing that I wasn't good enough. No matter what progress I had made I couldn't move forward.

College is said to be the best years of your life. You see all the parties and people, but what you don't see are the struggles.

Classes weren't going well. I wasn't making many friends and I felt as though I wasn't fitting in. I almost gave up after my first quarter and again at the end of my freshman year.

I gave it one more chance.

That year, I found a closer support group and life looked on the up. That is, until heartbreak struck.

For the first time in my life, I had been in a relationship where I had been my honest self. When that didn't work out it broke me. I was unstable, something depression feeds off.

■

Then, there was the breakthrough.

It wasn't overnight; nothing ever is but sometimes things align and have a way of changing.

I met him for the first time twice, once over Tinder and once in person. Neither time did I know how much I would find out about myself through him. After weeks of talking, things became more evident. He had bad days and sometimes didn't feel like talking, like me.

Eventually, I understood that he too deals with depression and that he had his own way of accepting it.

It is him who helped me realize I am not wrong. It is him who told me that I am no less of a person for feeling how I do.

It is him, the reason that I finally realize I'm much stronger than I think.

It is him who helped me realize that depression doesn't define me.

It is me who I will fight for. ■

LIFE UNDER THE GUARD TOWERS

A STORY OF THE SURVIVORS OF WEIHSIEN PRISON CAMP

story by **laura ann poehner**

photo provided by **mary previte**

illustration by **keara mulvihill**

IN MARCH 1943, WEIHSIEN (PRONOUNCED WAY-SHEN) WAS A SLEEPY LITTLE town in northern China, on the eastern coast, north of Shanghai and directly across the Yellow Sea from Seoul, Korea. The outside world called the 150-by-200-yard compound just outside the city limits Weihsien Civilian Assembly Center. The Japanese told the 2,000 foreigners trucked through the gates it was the Weihsien Internment Camp. Internees called it the Weihsien Prison Camp.

A dilapidated archway greeted them as the gates opened. The sign above read, "Courtyard of the Happy Way."

Weihsien was on the eastern coast, north of Shanghai and directly across the Yellow Sea from Seoul, Korea. Internees came from as far north as Chinwangtao, just below the Great Wall and as far south as Tsingtao, 98 miles south on the coast of the Yellow Sea.

Most internees were British or American, internees' nationalities, before denoting affluence and neutrality, were embroidered on red and black armbands. The Japanese marked internees as enemies.

This foreign population had lived peaceably with the Chinese in treaty ports—land concessions granted their home countries in the mid-19th century for trade purposes. They remained neutral when the Japanese invaded in December 1937. It was not our war, they said.

The Sino-Japanese War, as it was later named, was at a stalemate in 1939 as Hitler's Third Reich conquered most of the European continent. Though the Japanese controlled most of Western China, they had not gained territory since 1938. Weihsien belonged to them.



Mary Preville, far left, stands with her family after being released from the camp in Sept. 1945.

Most of the foreign nationals hated the Japanese for invading, but many had lived in China for generations and called it their home. The foreign nationals had witnessed the brutality of the Japanese army. As hostilities increased in China and war broke out in Europe, many opted to return to their countries of origin. Others felt it was safer to stay in China as their homelands were consumed with anti-Semitism and war. The British were not given an option to leave. The British government ordered subjects to remain in China to maintain British interests.

On Dec. 8, 1941, Japan entered World War II as Pearl Harbor burned. The Day of Infamy would be remembered by Americans as Dec. 7, 1941. Because of the international date line, foreign nationals in China would remember Dec. 8, 1941, as their Day of Infamy, or the Fatal Eighth as one survivor put it. In one day, the foreign merchants and missionaries of Allied nations became enemy aliens in the eyes of Japan.

On Dec. 8, heavily armed Japanese soldiers surrounded Chefoo School, a boarding school established by China Inland Mission under James Hudson Taylor in the late 19th century. The Japanese declared the school a naval base. Its roughly 300 occupants were under house arrest. Mary Preville was 9 years old when she watched Japanese bayonet drills on the school's ball field.

"We were just young children," Preville said. "Watching...how you killed someone."

The Japanese took immediate control of the Western concessions and economic operations. Exultant triumph and begrudging submission replaced the feigned cooperation between the Japanese and their white neighbors. Between December 1941 and March 1943, Japanese forced the enemy foreigners to continue their jobs for the benefit of Japan.

"We didn't do anything to them," Pamela Masters said of the Japanese. Masters was 13 years old at the time. Her British grandfather helped build the Chinese railroad under Japanese control. After the Fatal Eighth, Masters' father, George Simmons, was forced to work as the port accountant for the Japanese in Chinwangtao. The Japanese said they'd kill his wife and three daughters if he did not cooperate.

These enemy foreigners were heavily supervised by the Japanese authorities, who learned as much as they could about operations of the ports. When the Japanese no longer needed their expertise, they were sent to internment camps.

Survivor Langdon Gilkey was a 24-year-old American English teacher in Peking. In his book, "Shantung Compound," he recalls the Japanese memo ordering all enemy foreigners report for transportation to Weihsien:

"In stilted English sentences, the official letter announced that 'for your safety and comfort' all enemy nationals would be sent by train to a 'Civilian Internment Center' near Weihsien...The letter went on to say that 'there every comfort of Western culture will be yours.'"

Of the roughly 125,000 civilian prisoners the Japanese held during World War II, about 10 percent were in China and Hong Kong. Those 13,000 prisoners were scattered across 25 Japanese-run internment camps in China, according to author and survivor Greg Leck. Weihsien became one of the largest.

Previously, it was an American Presbyterian mission school. It held between 1,400 internees and 2,000 internees.

Internees included merchant families like Masters', teachers like Gilkey and hundreds of school children like Preville. Others included missionaries of every sect, priests and nuns, athletes, tourists, musicians, prostitutes and drug addicts.

There were rows and rows of 9-by-12-foot cells. Three or four people slept in one cell, with about 18 inches between them and the next bed. Classrooms in larger buildings became dorms for upward of 20 individuals per room. There were three kitchens, a bakery, hospital and church. Previously occupied by Chinese and Japanese militaries, buildings were stripped of furnishings. What remained was found in piles of metal shards and broken furniture. None of the 24 toilets flushed. Water for showers had to be pumped by hand.

"This existence was of the greatest conceivable contrast to all that had gone before in my life, and the same was true for almost everyone there," Gilkey said.

Weihsien was surrounded by barbed and electric wires. Guard towers in the corners of the camp were armed with machine guns and searchlights. The guards patrolled with fierce German Shepherds. Each internee was assigned a number and forced to stand for roll call in the camp's ball field every morning.

As survivor John Hoyte said, within the confines of a totalitarian regime a democratic society was born.

Almost immediately a governing committee of internees was established. Members were chosen to manage housing, employment, schools, discipline and cooking. The daily operation and maintenance of the camp was left to these individuals. Dependence on the Japanese was restricted only to food rations, coal dust for heat, electricity and waste removal, according to Hoyte.

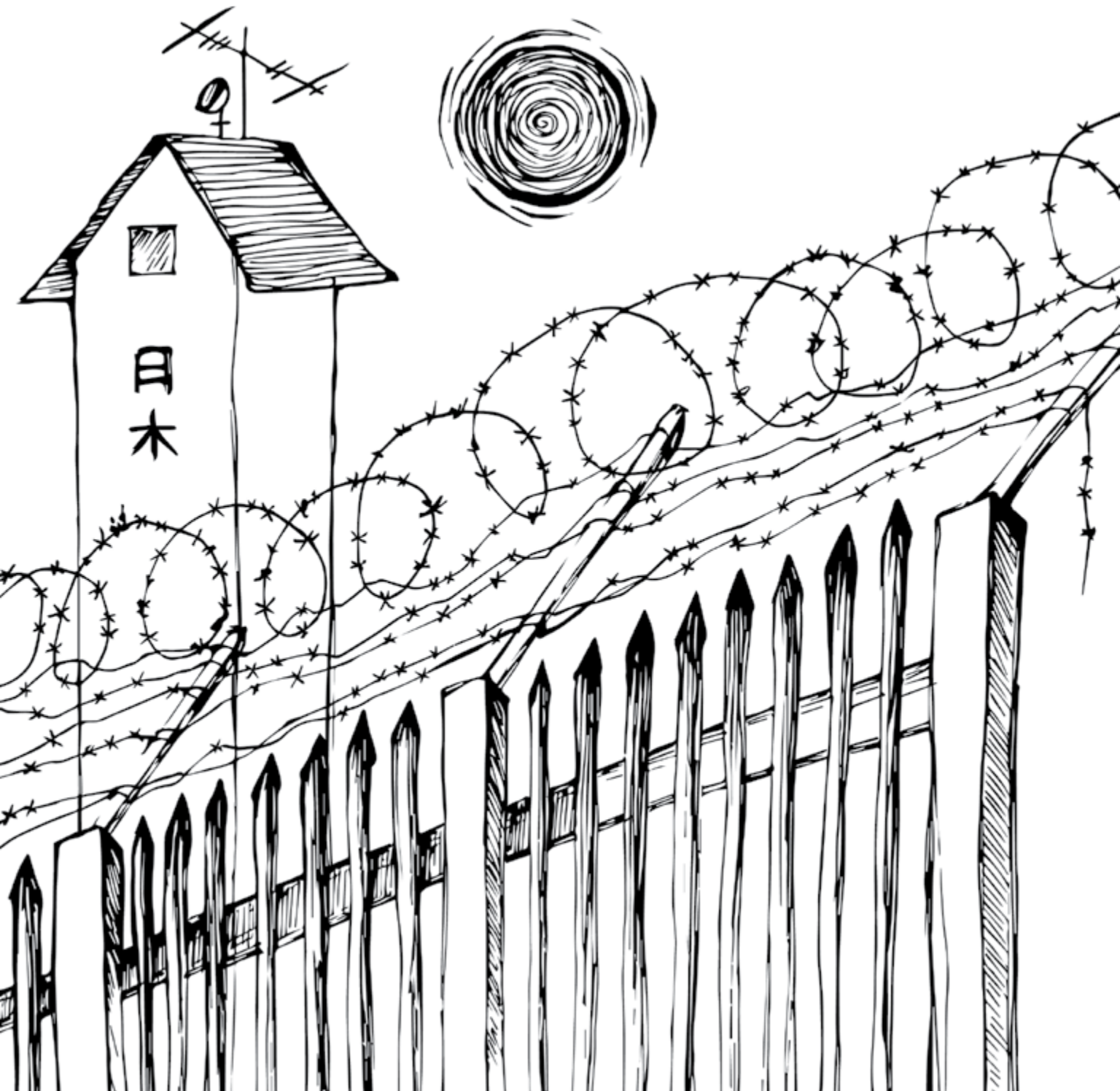
"This was a life almost normal, and yet intensely difficult," Gilkey said. "Very near to our usual cries

and problems, and yet precarious in the extreme."

Food was scarce. Thin leek soup, bread and gaoling, a peasant grain, were staples. Every now and then the Japanese would provide 10 pounds of mule or horse meat, according to Hoyte. Sometimes a rotting mystery meat would also appear which creative cooks disguised in stew.

Previte's teachers decided school must go on. Classes were held every day. The writing materials they brought with them were used, erased and used again.

While the children ate gruel out of soap dishes, their teachers insisted the quality of manners used in Wehsien was not to differ from those used in Buckingham Palace, Previte said. They made their beds with hospital corners.



Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts continued. They earned badges for collecting bedbugs and swatting flies. They made a game out of making coal out of coal dust.

"I and Marjorie Harrison won the recognition for setting the pot belly stove red-hot in the morning," Previte said.

Hoyte was Previte's classmate. His job was to pump water into the 30-foot water towers for hour long increments. When he wasn't in class or pumping water, he was sketching or wandering the camp with his friend Theo. His memoir reads:

"My first experience of the discipline committee was when my friend Theo and I were reported to the committee for throwing stones at the insulators on top of the outside walls...If the Japanese guards had caught us we might have been severely punished. Luckily, our punishment was relatively benign, writing out several hundred times 'I must not throw stones at the wall-top insulators.' As we were desperately short of paper, I cannot recall how we found the means to do this."

The rat infestation had reached such levels that the Japanese announced a price for whoever caught the three largest rats. Hoyte and his friend modified an old trap and caught an 18-inch rodent. They received second prize and a can of beans to share.

While in Weihsien, Hoyte and his five siblings received word their mother had died of typhus. The Hoytes were a close-knit family. The hope of reunification after an almost five-year separation was what got them through the camp. They hoped the news was false.

Masters recalls the hardship of the camp with less childlike innocence and less deep-seeded grief. She was 16 years old when she took a job at the hospital to avoid the humiliation of the daily roll calls. She lived with her parents and two older sisters.

She recalls the numbing wind that blew through the single-pane windows of cells in winter and the sound of Japanese guns when two Chinese farmers were executed for smuggling eggs into camp. Masters' friend died after the Japanese ordered him to remove a branch from some electrical wires.

Her memoir recounts the trials of a typical teenager. Masters finished high school her first year in Weihsien. She made some friends and experienced the joy and jealousies of dating and riveting Bridge games and Saturday night dances in the mess hall. An introvert and surrounded by hundreds of people, she found solace in painting and eventually created the sets for various plays put on by the entertainment committee.

Shows were allowed by the Japanese on one condition—they were given front row seats, Masters said. The Japanese guards couldn't speak or understand English. One night the internees dedicated a song to a guard they called "Gold Tooth." They proudly sang

"We'll be glad when you're dead" to an even prouder Gold Tooth who jumped up on the stage to dance before the audience.

This was Weihsien. Survival made possible by a group of people unwilling to give up, but entirely willing to make the most out of every situation. Perhaps the best example of this was the songs they sang.

Songs seemed as natural a response to their trials as breathing. School children sang songs to memorize scripture. Previte's grandfather, an old man who barely resembled a man, sang hymns every morning for the camp to hear. If you ask his great granddaughter, she'll sing his favorite for you.

"Courage, brother, do not stumble
Though thy path be dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble:
Trust in God and do the right.
Let the road be rough and dreary,
And its end far out of sight,
Foot it bravely; strong or weary,
Trust in God, trust in God,
Trust in God and do the right."

Weihsien Prison Camp was liberated by seven American paratroopers Aug. 17, 1945.

There is a wealth of information about the deprivation and torture experienced by American and British prisoners of war under the Japanese during World War II. Those stories are frequently told. The story of Weihsien, a democratic society surviving virtually independent of and yet completely subjected to the totalitarian Japanese regime, is not often told. Google searches will pull up a few stories written by the BBC or The New York Times, all centered around Previte and only written after she completed her mission to find and thank the American soldiers who liberated the camp. Today there is only one book, "Shantung Compound," that is still in print. There is one other, Masters' "The Mushroom Years." It is out of print.

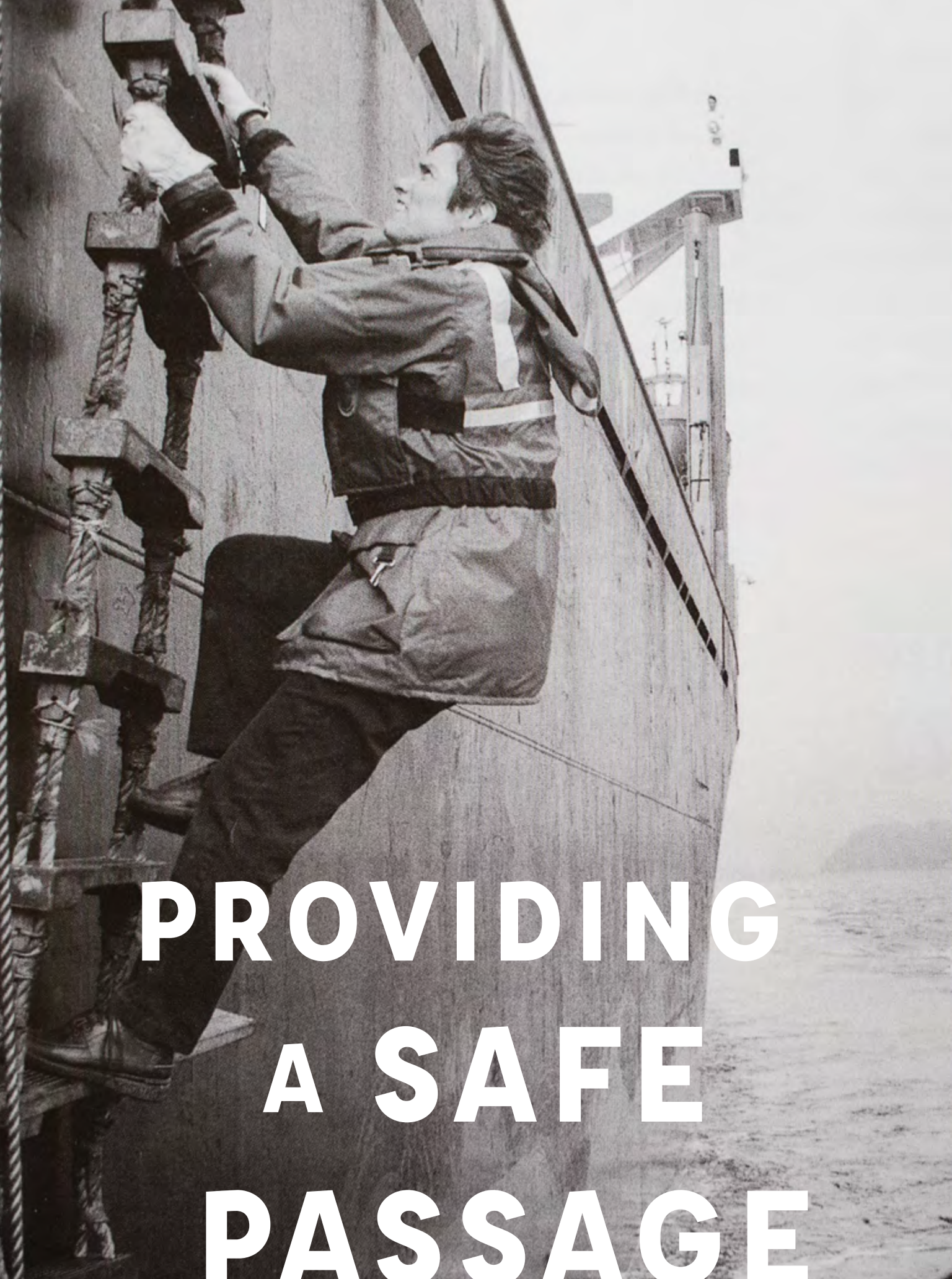
The best online resource is a website hard-coded by a Belgian survivor. It contains 3,500 pages of scanned pictures, sketches, paintings, memoirs and a hodgepodge of news coverage, all written and submitted by Weihsien survivors.

"It strengthened all of us," Masters said.

Previte became the administrator of the Camden County Youth Center and a member of the New Jersey General Assembly. Hoyte became an engineer with a taste for adventure. He led the British Alpine Hannibal Expedition which led an elephant across the Alps and organized the High Sierra Centennial Climb which saw 20 climbing parties lighting flares from Mount Whitney to Half Dome in Yosemite National Park. Masters worked as a technical illustrator in the space race. Gilkey's book, "Shantung Compound," is used to teach sociology at the university level.

If you ask the remaining survivors of the camp about their experience, you might hear stories of death or the threat thereof. But what you're more likely to hear are stories of life. ■





**PROVIDING
A SAFE
PASSAGE**



Captain Deborah Dempsey embarks on a ship she will be piloting up the Columbia River. The river is known for the harshest conditions in the world besides at sea, so navigating it requires a local pilot.

CAPTAIN DEBORAH DEMPSEY SHARES HER STORY WHILE GUIDING ME HOME

story by mckenna cardwell

photos by harrison amelang, john wubben & jill johnson

HER ARMS WRAPPED AROUND ME AS I BURIED

my head into her neck. She hugged me close, a protective shield from the panic taking over. I hiccupped and gulped for air as tears flowed from my eyes, dampening her shoulder. There in the woods, I held on to a stranger.

"Hey," she murmured, her voice deep and comforting. "I'm going to get you out of here."

The late afternoon sun crept toward the horizon, casting long, blue shadows across the forest floor. When she let go of me, she introduced herself with smiling blue eyes, a worn beanie covering her short silver hair.

"My name is Debbie and this here is Barkley," she said, pointing to her bounding poodle. "We hike around here nearly every day and it's easy to get lost. Have you had lunch? Do you need any water?"

Once I could breathe steadily again, I tried to talk, but my words stumbled out of my mouth. Yes, I had water. N...no I hadn't eaten. I stammered out my story of making the decision to hike alone and straying away from the main trail. Embarrassment burned on my cheeks.

Her strong fingers grasped my hand and she insisted she lead me back down to the trailhead, immediately silencing the voice lurking in the back of my head repeating, "stranger danger." I would



Captain Dempsey embarks on a ship.



soon discover this woman had a knack for helping people find their way home, a talent she turned into a long and successful profession.

Captain Deborah Dempsey, the trailblazing female mariner, was going to help me find my way home.

We set off and I followed her small frame, stepping in the footprints her boots left as she nimbly headed down the trail. We hiked through the forest, the trees creaking in the wind reminding us of the lack of human voices. Before the silence had a chance to marinate, Dempsey broke it by launching into her story.

The middle of five children, Dempsey was born into an active boating community in Essex, Connecticut, near the mouth of the river. In 1952, her parents formed Pettipaugh Jr. Sailing Academy and when she was old enough, she took the boats out on weekends. Captaining the vessels her family hand-crafted themselves sparked for her love of steering ships.

"I grew up so much on the water, that's just where I'd rather be," she said, her breath making little clouds in the winter air. "It's safe to say water has always been a part of my life."

At the University of Vermont, Dempsey majored in chemistry, although by her senior year she wasn't in love with the idea of making it a career. She divided her time between teaching skiing lessons during the winter and transporting yachts in the warmer months. This continued until a friend of her dad's proposed an idea, forever altering the course of her life.

The Maine Maritime Academy, one of only five state maritime academies, was accepting applications. Unfazed by the lack of female students or the fact no woman had even graduated from a maritime or military academy, Dempsey jumped at the chance and applied.

"I sent the application in, but I changed the male gender pronouns to female," she said. "I changed 'he' to 'she,' 'baseball' to 'softball,' you know, wherever it was appropriate."

She was accepted and began taking classes fall quarter of 1974. Dempsey credits Title IX, the law passed two years prior, requiring equal funds to be provided to both male and female athletics, as an influencing factor to their decision to admit a female student.

Not that this made it easy for her.

The beginning of her time at Maine Maritime Academy included having rocks thrown at her dorm room window, tacks left on her chair and bags of unmentionables left at her door. She was spat on during morning formation and some professors wouldn't look her in the eye for six months.

The school also published false articles about how she started a cheerleading squad, which didn't help her situation.

"Don't ever write bogus articles," she joked, wagging her finger in my direction while stepping over some tree roots on the trail.

I followed behind her, nearly tripping on the same root, and promised I wouldn't. I wondered how, so far from home and so alone, she continued to find the strength to carry on with her lessons.

"It was just proving yourself every step of the way," she said. "What made it doable was that I was learning what I really wanted to know, I had found my niche."

Dempsey graduated in 1976 as valedictorian. At 26 years old, she was the first female to ever graduate from a maritime academy.



Captain Dempsey was the first female graduate of Main Maritime Academy in 1976. After years at sea, she was recruited as a Columbia River Bar pilot in 1994.

"I don't think you can stop anyone once they've found their niche," she said. "I was like a sponge soaking it all up, I couldn't learn enough and was enjoying the hell out of it."

Captain Sandy Bendixen also found her niche seafaring and graduated from Maine Maritime Academy in 2005. She recognizes courageous women like Dempsey for paving the way and mentoring those who follow her.

"As a sea captain, you have to make more decisions in one afternoon than most do in their entire lifetime," Bendixen said. "And often those decisions have extreme consequences."

You can be the best in the business she said, but unless you're able to pass your skills and knowledge onto the next generation, how much have you contributed to the future of the profession?

"Dempsey is incredibly professional and serious, but it's her true love of the job that really resonates," Bendixen said. "It's a nice balance."

At this point, Dempsey and I were stopped for a water break, both of us breathing hard. It began to rain and the remaining daylight disappeared behind clouds that loomed above the treetops, leaving a gray haze.

"Shipping comes in waves, literally," she said, wiping cold sweat off her brow. "It was a down period when I graduated, so there weren't too many opportunities available, but I went straight to work for Exxon."

After graduation, Dempsey continued to face pushback for her gender. She recounts a conversation with her captain aboard a carrier for Exxon, who

she said begrudgingly accepted her presence aboard his ship.

"I thought I'd never see the day," he grunted at her. "Women on the bridge, and I can't do a damn thing about it."

She only worked with Exxon for a year before she left to work for Lykes Bros. Steamship Co. There she spent 18 years transporting cargo around the world, spending months at a time at sea.

In 1993, one of the ships she captained, the *Lyra*, had been sold and was in the process of being transported without a crew. A heavy storm broke it from its tow, leaving the dead ship rocking in the waves and drifting closer to shore with thousands of gallons of oil on board. Dempsey received a call from Lykes management asking her how soon she could get there.

After being helicoptered onto the deck, Dempsey, along with a few others, succeeded in making their way through the mess on board and anchoring the vessel. This rescue mission earned her and her team a thank you letter from then-President Bill Clinton, which she keeps framed.

After working for Lykes, Dempsey was actively recruited to work as a Columbia River Bar pilot in 1994.

To be considered for this job, applicants must hold an unlimited master's license with at least two years sea time. Altogether, applicants are required to spend a total of 15 to 18 years at sea to accrue the necessary amount of experience.

Dempsey hit all the requirements.

Welcoming the new challenge, she admitted the career change would allow her to live at home as opposed to spending months at sea. Becoming a pilot would also mean she would be spending most of her time doing what she loved—steering ships.



"What made it doable was that I was learning what I really wanted to know, I had found my niche."

—Deborah Dempsey

Following her training, Dempsey began her work on the Columbia River Bar, an area known as "the Graveyard of the Pacific" due to the number of collisions that occur there.

"It was a rude awakening working in extreme weather like that," Dempsey said. "It's some of the worst weather you've ever seen. I mean 28-foot sea waves breaking over the back of the ship. It's scary."

Amidst the severe weather conditions, a pilot must be able to navigate ships through the area without looking at any charts. All of the maps are in your head, Dempsey said, pointing to her temple.

Captain Curt Nehring worked with Dempsey as a Columbia River Bar pilot for nearly eight years after Dempsey trained him. Even with 23 years of experience on the sea prior to becoming a pilot, Nehring said this job in particular is so challenging he witnessed captains work only a few weeks before walking away.

"[Dempsey] is one of the best training pilots I've ever had," Nehring said. "She was always under control and knew just how far to push you before she stepped in."

Among the treacherous duties of the job, a bar pilot must be able to transfer between the ship they are assigned to navigate and the pilot boat. This is

achieved by scaling up and down a ladder which hangs off of the side of each ship, while both vessels are rocking in the waves. When pilots are disembarking, they have to climb down from the ship, push off of the ladder, release their hold and fall onto the pilot boat which is floating alongside the ship.

This was a particular talent of Dempsey's, who, according to Nehring, was one of the top two people he ever saw work the ladder. However, after 22 years working as a pilot, she took a plunge into open water that would push her into retirement.

It was just before 2 a.m. in the pitch black air of the Columbia River Bar. Dempsey was gripping onto the ladder hanging off the side of a Greek carrier ship, the Navios Ionian. She had finished directing it through the bar and was attempting to disembark onto the pilot vessel to take her to land, all while wearing a knee brace. A split second before she released her white-knuckled hold, the position of the pilot boat shifted and she let go, free-falling into the turbulent water.

Amidst 10-foot waves, Dempsey attempted to make her way to the pilot boat, bobbing above the water's surface due to the float coat she was wearing. The rope designed to pull her aboard the pilot boat had caught in the propeller and shredded, leaving Dempsey clinging to the side.

Her head dipped below the water's surface as her feet rubbed against the bottom of the pilot boat, leaving remnants of the blue paint on her tightly-laced boots.

Eventually, the crew used a safety basket made for rescuing unconscious pilots to haul her out of the water. She spent a total of 11 minutes in the Columbia River Bar before she was finally lifted out shaken and cold, but otherwise unhurt.

The fall highlighted a personal vulnerability she had been become increasingly aware of—her age was beginning to work against her. It wasn't long after that Dempsey made the decision to retire from piloting.

Dangerous and challenging, the water is still home to Dempsey, even after she made the tough decision to stop working.

"The phrase 'can-do attitude' epitomizes her life," Nehring said. "She is always looking for the next challenge and there is always one more adventure down the road."

It didn't take Dempsey long before she found a new project. In 2007, Dempsey helped found the Community Boating Center in Bellingham, a nonprofit organization teaching community members the skills needed to recreate safely on local waters.

"Water means everything to me," Dempsey said. "It means challenge. It means peace, solitude, fun. It means learning things beyond what you ever thought you could learn."

The rain poured down on us, washing away any evidence of tears that rolled down my cheeks an hour ago. We reached the trailhead and the trees opened up, revealing a small parking lot alongside the highway.

Barkley jumped into my car, his dirty paws leaving little prints on the backseat as I drove to where Dempsey parked her red pick-up. The car hummed and rain pattered the roof as we found our breath.

Once again, quiet filled the air between us, but this time it is comfortable. We were no longer strangers but friends and the route home is clear. The master mariner guided me through the panic, revealing the path to safety—a skill she continues to carry on both land and sea. ■



North Cascades National Park is a popular area for backcountry skiing and camping.

ON THE EDGE OF DANGER

SKIERS RISK THEIR LIVES TO DESCEND ON UNTOUCHED SNOW

story by **elitsa yaneva**

photos by **sophia rouches, gabe vogel & grant gunderson**

AS THEY STRAP ON THEIR TOURING SKIS AND duck below the red rope with an "Avalanche Warning" sign informing them of the risks ahead, skiers push the boundaries of Mother Nature in pursuit of untouched snow.

The Mount Baker wilderness provides a playground for daring backcountry skiers as they spend their winters avoiding lift lines and creating white lines behind them.

A winter wonderland of fresh white flakes layering the mountains, asks to be sprayed by the fast turns of a downhill skier.

Backcountry skiing consists of anything outside of a designated ski area and is away from quick medical help. Unlike inbounds skiing, backcountry provides the solitude and satisfaction of knowing you will be the first to ride down the face of a mountain with fresh snow received the night before.

Lee Lazzara has backcountry skied for 24 years. For the last four years, he has led people on wilderness adventures through the North Cascades as a backcountry guide for Baker Mountain Guides.

Backcountry guides are individuals whose jobs are to lead people safely up and down the mountain. Introduction to backcountry courses are offered in the Mount Baker wilderness to safely bring people into the sport with an emphasis on risk education.

"When you are going into the backcountry, you are just going into the mountain in the winter. The resort is the anomaly," said Lazzara.

When backcountry skiing, it's crucial to be prepared. Essential equipment typically consists of a shovel, beacon for location purposes, and a skiing partner. Skiers attach strips of microfiber fabric along the bottom of the ski, called skins, essential to ensure they can hike without sliding down the mountain.

"The whole concept of ski touring is a really cool dynamic you are able to bring into backcountry skiing," said Sophia Rouches, a 21-year-old backcountry skier. "When you are walking uphill, you are able to look at what you are going to ski down. It gives you an interesting perspective to be like 'I want to hit that cliff' or 'I want to ski this line.'"

The night before, skiers huddle around a map of the Mount Baker wilderness, determine an objective and calculate how long traveling will take up the mountain. Timing is an important aspect because changing weather conditions can alter the stability of the snow throughout the day.

Parked next to a 10-foot-tall snow bank, an all-wheel drive SUV resembles a clown car as skiers, snowboarders and mounds of equipment suddenly eject from the vehicle. The group rushes to dress in light layers and goggles, sliding into gear.

The group hikes uphill for four hours, before reaching their destination point, where they remove their skins before making the much-desired ride down.

"I think that the really cool part about skinning is that you can get in this really meditative state because you're going uphill for hours on end, it doesn't feel like it," Rouches said. "It flies by and all of a sudden you're on the top of your line."

While backcountry skiing safety is of utmost concern. Having a reliable partner and both people must be confident in their ability to assess risks and make good decisions is paramount.

"Essentially when you're backcountry skiing, your life is in somebody else's hands and that is something that gets overlooked a lot in the sport," Rouches said. "When you're transitioning to skiing from inbounds to outbounds, it's really easy to not make those connections and not think about that. When you're in the backcountry, ski patrol is not out there to help you. No one else is really there to save you."

Groups of backcountry skiers need to eliminate anticipated human factor issues by making sure everyone has similar goals, compatible fitness levels and communicate effectively as a team. Skiers also need to be confident in their abilities to assess the terrain and avoid any area with avalanche risk.

Mitigating hazards is done through analyzing terrain, Lazzara said. Avalanches are triggered by either a natural or human cause, steep terrain and unstable snow.

"It doesn't take a patch of snow bigger than 6-by-6-feet to sweep you off your feet and take you down the mountain," Lazzara said.

In the case of an avalanche, injury or lost skier, a call is made to 911, where dispatch determines the direction of the call. The search and rescue deputy is contacted to assess the type of emergency further. The call goes to Bellingham Mountain Rescue Council, one of the Whatcom County's nine search and rescue groups that specializes in mountain rescue. A text message is then sent out to all 45 volunteer members describing the case and within the half-hour, a group leaves town on a mission to bring the skiers home.

Eric Beamer, 60, has volunteered in mountain rescue for 10 years. Beamer utilizes experience he gained as a Mountain Search and Rescue Council board member and 20 years of backcountry skiing experience as tools to help him save lives.

"The worst combination for backcountry safety is somebody who is really skilled at downhill skiing or snowboarding in the ski area—they are just very athletic and super confident with good skiing—but they don't understand mountain terrain and avalanches," Beamer said. "Everything that looks fun when you are a really good skier is dangerous. If it doesn't look fun, it's not dangerous. Avalanche terrain is the fun terrain so it is super easy to stumble into trouble when you are a good skier."

Dean Collins and Sophia Rouches traverse for a backcountry ski session in North Cascades National Park.





Sophia Rouches skis in North Cascades National Park with Mount Baker (Koma Kulshan) as a backdrop.

In the occurrence of an avalanche, a buried victim has 15 minutes until suffocation. Thus, for avalanche accidents in the backcountry, individuals and their team must be self-reliant. When Mountain Rescue gets involved, it is usually for body recovery.

A friend of Beamer's unfortunately died on Mount Baker, which served as the inspiration for him to get involved in search and rescue.

"We met the Mountain Rescue people that responded later and that's when I found out I have the same skills that they did, if not more than some of them in that area. That's when I knew I could help," Beamer said.

One of the best resources that search and rescue has is the use of a helicopter to bring the reported individual out of the mountains and for medical help. Unfortunately, Whatcom County does not have a helicopter, so one must be used from another location. Helicopters are only permitted for a mission if a life or limb is threatened, otherwise the rescue team must reach victims by foot.

Rouches talks about a time search and rescue had to send a helicopter to bring home her injured friend from the backcountry during one of their long ski trips. Her group had been skiing around the Washington pass area during a sunny spring day when her friend jumped off a feature that had a rocky landing and tumbled down, resulting in a compound fracture in his elbow. Rouches was right behind him and quick to action, using her wilderness first aid training to help the injury and regulate his body temperature while two people from their group of eight skinned back to an area with cell phone reception. They waited four to five hours before the helicopter came.

"I think that was a big moment for me when I realized the importance of training and preparation on how to respond to those situations," Rouches said. "You have to be more cautious in your skiing and understanding the points of when you are committed to a line and don't have cell service, what the process is when shit goes wrong." ■

Beamer finds satisfaction in his volunteer work, knowing that he is able to save lives and help those in need of assistance in the mountains he loves.

When search and rescue make contact with a reporting party, they ask questions to find out what the lost or injured person was doing, when they were supposed to be back, what equipment they had and other information that may help.

"There is that emotional pull of 'I want to find that person' or 'I think that they are right over here but I know I shouldn't do it because it is unsafe but I think I can do it,'" Beamer said. "You have to rein those in and be safe."

Whatcom County Search and Rescue receives a dozen to 30 or more calls a year. So far this year, there haven't been many missions in the winter but the missions that have occurred have lasted multiple days, Beamer said.

Beamer recommends skiers take at least one formal avalanche class and recognize all the hazards in an area including deep snow emersion, moats, crevasses, walking off a cornice and hypothermia. The more educated one is on nature's mountain features, wilderness first aid and navigation the more likely you will be to make it home safe.

"It's amazing what the body can endure when you set your mind to not quitting on surviving," Beamer said. "We've found people alive when the textbooks say they in all probability would be dead after many nights in the backcountry simply because they refused to give in."



LANDING SEATAC

**THE FIRST MEMORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
AT SEATTLE-TACOMA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

by linh nguyen
photo provided by linh nguyen

FINALLY, THE BOEING AIRCRAFT SLOWS TO A STOP AS IT INCHES TOWARD

the gates that open to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. It is around 8 p.m., Dec. 23, 2012. The pitch-black sky surrounds the plane as passengers stand up one by one, impatiently reaching for their carry-on suitcases in the overhead bins.

A young family sitting two rows behind her fails to hide their impatience as they lean farther forward. The wife holds her 5-year-old son's hand, while the husband tries to soothe their little crying baby. During the flight, passengers tried to rest but the baby wouldn't stop crying. A 17-year-old girl contemplates to herself who is more tired and annoyed between the passengers and the baby's parents.

The four-engine airplane cabin is a tight three-four-three configuration. Every passenger has an in-flight entertainment touch screen attached on the back of the seat. The entertainment systems fail to keep the passengers entertained as they wait to exit the plane. The combination of multiple bouts of turbulence and narrow seating that made it hard for rest have left the passengers fatigued after their 9,739-kilometer-long flight from Taipei, Taiwan.

She watches a man, about 55 years old standing near the exit door is yawning and rubbing his tousled hair, which has been styled by several hours of leaning on the red foam u-shape travel pillow. Her last 20 hours on the airplane were full of mixed thoughts, but not nerves or excitement.

Before leaving Taiwan, she went on the internet to learn the number of foreign students in the U.S. the search helped her learn she will become one of 2,600 international students who come to Seattle to study each year. She is proud of herself, knowing her trip to pursue a new academic program strengthens her independence.

But the strange feeling of sitting on this 232-foot-long wide-body jet airliner with 400 other passengers flying to a whole new place leaves her emotionless as she finds it difficult to find her place in new surroundings. The trip marks her first time coming to the U.S., everything is coming too fast, as her time studying abroad will wrap up in three months.

"How come the plane took off on Sunday afternoon but will be landing on still Sunday evening, the same day?" she mumbles to herself.

Everything becomes nonsense and fuzzy to her as if she is waking up from a long nap. A few other airplanes are parked to the right. Finally, she walks off the plane. She walks up to the train station, which transports passengers from international gates to the center of the airport.

"The B-gate is next. Please hold on!" The train's automatic notification system, a female voice, gets her attention. The 17-year-old ties her hair to the top of her head, while slowly leaning on one side of the train. Her eyes are concentrating on the map above the left exit door. Her confusion is obvious as she figures out where to go next in the unfamiliar airport.

Her 10-pound gray-orange backpack sounds heavy when she drops it on the carriage's floor. A thick red winter jacket covers her upper body and touches her hips. She is in her favorite skinny blue jeans, with a matching blue pair of Converse. She knows she has prepared well for whatever the weather will be. Just a few more minutes and she will see how foreign the streets look. She keeps worrying if she caught the right train.

Getting off from the airport train, in front of her are four escalators rolling up but she cannot see what is at the top. She regrets packing so many novels and comic books in her carry-on as she lugs her bag forward.

She steps onto the black escalator. She can't wait to see the city she has been imagining the past few months. Unfamiliar faces appear closer as she rises higher, toward the upper platform.

She quivers as the freezing air spreads to her face when the airport doors open. She remembers her dad telling her to Google Seattle weather to make sure she dresses warm enough.

"How can people breathe in that cold weather?" her mother asked in worry while they were checking all two of her suitcases one last time before driving to the airport, Sunday. The daughter was instead excitedly wishing the degrees would even drop lower so she could see snow.

Snowflakes are hovering in front of her as she makes it to Seattle. Snow is just tiny white dots looking like bubbly bits of foam falling from the sky.

Sparkles are in her eyes and she can feel butterflies in her stomach.

"This is it. This is it."

I've arrived.
Tôi đây. ■



STAFF

ROSE CARR editor-in-chief

TRISHA PATTERSON managing editor

KATHRYN MEIER copy editor

LINCOLN HUMPHRY photo editor

JUAN MANUEL MENDOZA-TOVAR online editor

JONATHAN PENDLETON multimedia editor

JOAN CONNELL advisor

ANNA SCHNEIDER lead designer

JOYCE VORAPHONGPHIBUL designer

HANNA SPERBER designer

HARRISON AMELANG photographer

LINCOLN HUMPHRY photographer

ALYSSA EVANS lead story editor

JOSHUA DEJONG story editor

WRITERS

scott blumenfeld | mckenna cardwell | naomi gish | james goulding | sascha guenter-schlesinger | paul kelly | lorin lindell | laura ann poehner | zachery slagle haley ausbun | natalie breymeyer | megan campbell | brooke carlson | jordan carlson | layne carter | elizabeth cutler | joshua dejong | anna edlund | james egaran | jakob gregg | andrew hislop | kathryn meier | juan manuel mendoza-tovar sophia miller | linh nguyen | kirstyn nyswonger | jonathan pendleton | zachery schmidt | madalyn stewart | katie webber | elitsa yaneva

stories & videos at

KLIPSUNMAGAZINE.COM

ONLINE EXCLUSIVES

MELTING METAL



Greg Heath talks about why building steel frames is his passion

THE FINAL STAGES OF YOUR LIFE

Why having an advanced directive is important

WOMEN IN COMBAT

Talor Kebel's experience as a mixed martial artist

LUNAR NEW YEAR



A glimpse of traditional celebrations for Chinese New Year

THE MEMORIES THAT MADE WWU

A look into what made Western the school it is today

KILLING THE COUNTRYSIDE

The harmful effects of consumerism



KLIPSUN IS A CHINUK WAWA WORD FOR SUNSET

VOLUME 48 | ISSUE 3