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*Western Washington University*

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# KLIPSUN

ROOTS

FALL 2018



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear reader,

Our roots define who we are.

Of course, that definition is loose. Some think of it as our core values, our history or our home. Others interpret it as an unseen network that grounds us and helps us grow.

Undeniably, roots shape the stories we must tell.

I invite you to explore your definition of roots as you dig into the pages of this magazine. In this collection of stories, you'll find a struggle for preservation, unlikely friendships, and reflections on our innermost convictions.

Each story expresses the countless ways to define roots. We all face trials and tribulations, but like a tree that weathered a storm, we grow stronger and our roots grow deeper.

Truly,  
Samantha Frost, Editor-in-Chief

## ON THE COVER

*Kelly Hall, language  
program specialist for the  
Samish Indian Nation.  
// Photo by Mathew  
Roland.*

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## KLIPSUN

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# LAYING TRACKS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

*Frank Culp dedicates his life to  
railway education and preservation*

story by **HANNAH WONG**

Frank Culp was 6 years old when he wrote his first letter to the U.S. government. His request: a 300-foot-long freight ship. And while he never got his ship, he didn't let it stifle his passion for all things transportation.

"As a little kid, I always wanted to have my own transportation company, with ships and [trains] going all around the world," Frank says with a chuckle. "When I was a little older, I wanted to own a railroad that ran from Alaska to Argentina. I had all of these dreams."

Frank's love of trains began in his early childhood. He fondly remembers the nights when his mother would take him and his younger brother, Bob, down to the train station near their home in Olympia to greet their father as he returned from work. There, he would watch in wonderment as letters and packages were loaded into mail cars and sent off to their final destinations. Those small moments at that train station sparked a love of locomotives that would last a lifetime.

*Frank looks out onto the railway from the cab of  
the 1070.*

*// Photo courtesy of Frank Culp.*





*One of two passenger cars, still decorated for Mother's Day.*

*// Photo by Hannah Wong.*

Young Frank's passion for trains was anything but a passing phase. At 18 years old, Frank began to seriously research the logistics of owning a railroad. The first step was to acquire a train. During his sophomore year at University of Washington, Frank and a friend embarked on a journey to find old steam engines. They stumbled upon the 1070 steam locomotive built in 1912,

just outside of Olympia. The railroad company agreed to sell it to him for \$2,500, which would be approximately \$18,400 today. After receiving a hefty loan and a three-month payment plan, Frank bought his first train.

Not long after, Frank purchased two passenger cars, a small handcar and several miles of rail in the tiny town of Wickersham. It was in 1972 with his trains and stretch of land that Frank founded the Lake Whatcom Railway.

The Lake Whatcom Railway is a tourist train located about 25 miles outside of Bellingham. The company's mission is to preserve and celebrate the history of America's railroads, while giving its passengers a fun and hands-on experience. Customers are invited to climb aboard the century-old passenger cars and take a quick trip back to a simpler time. Ride themes change throughout the year to celebrate holidays like Christmas, Halloween, Easter and Mother's Day. On each ride, passengers are invited to chat with the engineers, ring the bell or simply enjoy the beautiful views of Mirror Lake.

***"Those small moments at that train station sparked a love of locomotives that would last a lifetime."***

Forty-six years later, the railway is still in operation. When asked the key to his success, Frank's advice is twofold: strive for authenticity and prioritize fun. Authenticity and historical conservation are of great importance to Frank, both in the operation of his company and in his daily life.

"I've always liked authentic things," Frank says. "If you look at our trains, you'll see that nothing is make-believe. Our cars were built in 1910 and 1912 ... and basically nothing has been changed."

Frank prides himself in keeping his steam engine and passenger cars as historically accurate as possible. In the four decades that he has owned the trains, no major renovating or



*(right) Frank Culp looks out the window of his 1070 steam locomotive.  
// Photo courtesy of Frank Culp.*

*(left) Frank Culp sits in the driver's seat of the handcar he has owned since the late 1960's on July 6, at the Lake Whatcom Railway.  
// Photo by Hannah Wong.*

updating has been done. He says, while modern trains need constant maintenance and repair, early-20th century engines were built with quality and longevity in mind; almost anything on his trains can be fixed with a simple screwdriver or wrench.

Frank has conducted a great deal of research on locomotive history throughout his life. Perhaps the only thing Frank loves more than trains is educating others. Since receiving his degrees in civil engineering and business administration from University of Washington in 1962, Frank has dedicated much of his time to teaching volunteers of all ages about the way trains work.

One of Frank's youngest pupils started at just 3 years old. Waylon Hanks, now 7, has always had a fascination with trains, his mother, Erica Hanks, says. When their family started volunteering at the Lake Whatcom Railway back in 2014, it became clear that Frank and Waylon had a special bond.

"We started by painting signs," Erica says. "[It] was then that the relationship [between] Frank and Waylon really blossomed."

Not only do Waylon and Frank share a passion for

trains, but they have similar, unique minds, Erica says. Over the last four years, the unlikely pair have established an intergenerational friendship that is still going strong. Frank even attended Waylon's seventh birthday party at Chuck E. Cheese last year, where he gave Waylon a framed photo of his favorite train, the 1070 steam engine.

***"As a little kid, I always wanted to have my own transportation company, with ships and [trains] going all around the world."***

According to Erica, giving time to Frank is a valuable experience for everyone involved.

"I think that Frank has taught our entire family about trains and the way that they work," Erica said. "And though we help him, I think [Frank] gives us just as much as we give him. We really do care about him a lot."



Waylon is not the first young train enthusiast that Frank has mentored. Curtiss Melder of Sedro-Woolley started volunteering with Frank at 12 years old. Today, Curtiss is an electrical engineer for Janicki Industries, designing parts and tooling for companies like Boeing. Though many years have passed, he and Frank are still in touch. Curtiss will never forget his first experience with the railroad, he says.

“One summer, I spent a week with my uncle, each day doing something fun with him and my cousins,” Curtiss says. “One of those days we rode the Lake Whatcom Railway. I rode in the cab of the steam locomotive the whole way and was hooked. I asked Frank if I could volunteer... and the rest is history.”

Curtiss’ first job was to heat the steam locomotive the day before guests arrived. While he enjoyed this task, it wasn’t long before he was promoted to switchman, where he was responsible for operating switch points along the track. The following

year, Curtiss began doing track work. This required heavy labor, clearing dirt from the tracks and installing support ties. Several years after that, he became the fireman of the 1070 steam engine. He did this job for three years, before eventually leaving for college.

Curtiss developed a number of valuable skills during his time with the railroad. Discipline, hard work and quality craftsmanship are of chief importance to Frank, and he encourages his volunteers to follow his example. If Curtiss did work that did not meet Frank’s standards, he would be asked to do it again. Shortcuts and laziness were out of the question, regardless of the job.

“If my work was not high quality, despite maybe being functional, Frank would have me do it over again,” Curtiss says. “If we wanted [a task] to get done, we had to work hard.”

While today his career focuses on the aerospace industry, Curtiss’ experiences with Frank and the railway are a large part of what led him to pursue his career in engineering.

“[My] experience of working on the train at a young age is a great piece of the foundation that I have built on as I have pursued my career,” Curtiss adds.

Curtiss and Waylon are just two of the many volunteers whose lives have been touched by Frank’s mentorship and friendship. For 46 years, Frank has done more than just own and operate a railway: he has dedicated his life to sharing his vast knowledge of trains with others, while preserving the rich history of America’s railroads.

Today, Frank can be found tinkering with his trains, or spending time with his family at the railway. He watches, with a smile, as his young grandchildren discover the wonder of trains, just as he did many years ago. And while Frank never quite fulfilled his childhood dream of building a railway from Alaska to Argentina, he built something much greater: a legacy.





# FIRST CHAIR

## *Booted from resorts around the world, snowboarders land a home at Mount Baker*

story by EYTHAN FROST

Skiers and snowboarders clinking beer glasses in the lodge after a long day on the slopes is a typical sight at almost any ski resort nowadays, but the relationship hasn't always been so amicable. Not long ago, skiers were hurling beer cans off the chairlift – aimed at the rebellious snowboarders who were invading their pristine ski resorts.

When snowboarders first tried to make their way onto the slopes in the 1970s, they were met with harsh opposition. Skiing was known as an elitist activity, expensive and targeted at the wealthy. The newly-invented sport of snowboarding, inspired by skateboarding and surfing, attracted a rambunctious crowd. In an effort to keep the larger customer base of skiers happy, snowboarding was banned from almost every resort around the globe.

This wasn't the case at Mount Baker Ski Area. They never implemented a ban on snowboarding and were among the first resorts to openly encourage snowboarding on their slopes.

The 1985 season at the ski area is arguably the most important season in history: it signaled the management's acceptance of snowboarding and enabled the birth of the die-hard snowboard culture that Baker is known for. Duncan Howat, general manager of the ski area for the last 50 seasons, had been on the job for 17 years after taking over in 1968 at the age of 24. Bob

Barci, a Lynnwood bike shop owner, and up-and-coming snowboarder Tom Sims approached Duncan in 1985 about hosting an event on the mountain. Duncan agreed, and the two organized an event that would later become "The Legendary Banked Slalom."

Amy Trowbridge, marketing director at Mount Baker Ski Area and Duncan's daughter, witnessed the Banked Slalom transform into one of the most renowned events in the snowboarding world. After the first event, Amy and her dad started snowboarding regularly.

Even though they already allowed snowboarders on the mountain, Amy says Duncan saw the potential in the sport during the 1986 season they spent snowboarding together. She remembers her dad saying, "This is it. This is the future."

The Northwest was ideal for snowboarding. The limited technology in skis made it difficult to ride the heavy snow typical of the area, but the wider base of snowboards made it possible to float on top of the saturated powder with ease.

"I don't know where ski gear would be today if it weren't for snowboarding," Amy says. "I think snowboarding has had a huge influence on the design and the evolution of fat skis that have made it so much easier to ski the conditions we have here in the Northwest. So in many ways I think snowboarding really saved skiing."

She described days in the 1990s where 70 percent of the customers at the ski area were snowboarders. She said management has always been cognizant of that.

"There was this attitude at Mount Baker, when the management is doing it and saying how cool it is themselves, it's encouraging. It's as simple as that," Amy recalls.

Management's position on snowboarding allowed a unique scene to emerge and thrive around the mountain. Brad Andrew, a local photographer who contracts with the ski area to curate content for marketing purposes, has been riding Baker since 1993 and has seen the snowboard culture develop in the area.

Brad explains, that since the early days of snowboarding, the challenging terrain and excessive amounts of snow at Baker have attracted some of the best riders in the world. When he first started riding at the ski area there was an unsupervised, free access policy for the backcountry. On a weekday, there would be “maybe 50 cars in the parking lot” with fresh runs easily found from open to close.

“Obviously the crowds have grown because the secret is out about our little slice of heaven,” Brad says.

Brad claims the management’s attitude towards snowboarding throughout the 1980s was integral to shaping the snowboard culture at the ski area. “It’s that rooted history that keeps our culture so refreshingly simple and grassroots,” Brad says, “No one at Baker looks outside for influence, they look inside themselves and do what they love.”

In addition to the snow and terrain, atmosphere and management set Mount Baker Ski Area apart. It is typical for resorts to charge triple-digit prices for daily lift tickets but a midweek lift ticket at Baker costs only \$58. “It’s a mountain that is not run by suits and ties, rather by people like you and I who live for the snow and the life in the mountains,” Brad says.

“I think that we really lucked out here in the Northwest, of course having the ski area be open and accepting and encouraging of snowboarding was a huge part of it, but also the guys and women who were here in those early days, starting out with the sport; it’s such a symbiotic relationship,” Amy says. “Their attitudes, their enthusiasm, the culture they created were such a huge part of us going, ‘Oh yeah, this is awesome, we need to encourage this and accept it and we want to be part of this.’”

The mountain continues to provide a bountiful reward for anyone willing to face the switchbacks of the Mount Baker Highway in the dead of winter; but the people – the people are what truly make Baker a place like nowhere else.



*“It’s a mountain that is not run by suits and ties, rather by people like you and I who live for the snow and the life in the mountains”*

*Cameron Hamilton drops off a cliff in the sun at Mount Baker Ski Area in 2017.*

*// Photo courtesy of Brad Andrew.*





*Fairhaven student  
Erin Ruark works  
in her flaxseed plot  
in the Outback  
Farm on the  
Fairhaven campus  
at Western.*

# FARM TO CLOSET

## *Sowing the seeds of home grown fashion*

story by **RACHAEL BUSELMEIER**  
photos by **KELLY PEARCE**

It's not easy and no one asked her to do it. It's not for credit, it's not for Etsy, it's for herself. Erin Ruark is going to spend most of the year producing a single piece of fabric.

It starts with a patch of flax. In mid-May, Erin worked with Fairhaven Professor John Tuxill to plant a patch of flax in Fairhaven's Outback Farm. The patch is about the size of two bathroom stalls. It's packed densely with bright green stalks that pop out from the sparse cabbage bed and berry patch next to it. Erin will harvest the flax before they're matured and weave them into cloth.

"I try to wear linen whenever I visit the flax," Erin says, motioning to the tan overalls she hopes to replicate her homegrown flax. She grabs the ends of each stalk tenderly, checking their progress. By mid-September, the plants will have grown over four feet and taken a golden brown color.

Once the plants have matured, Erin will cut the stocks and allow them to rot for a few weeks as part of a process called retting. By allowing plant to decay, Erin will be able to pull the strong bast fibers from the gooey insides of the plant. Using a wooden knife, she'll scutch it into a more pliable form.

“They start to look like old lady hair,” Erin says, pulling out what could be the remnants from her shower drain.

She twists the fibers with her fingers and works her way down the line to produce a thin yarn. While traditionally this is done by hand, Erin has her own spinning wheel that makes her look like she belongs in a pioneer day festival. From the wheel, the yarn goes to the loom and finally, Erin will have the fabric most crafters start with.

Erin wants to make a reusable bag but admits a dish towel is more realistic. She needs a lot more real estate to produce enough fiber for a whole outfit.

The local nonprofit diverts fabric waste from landfills and educates community members on more sustainable ways to produce and recycle clothing. The store serves as a hub for many of those involved in Bellingham’s textile community. The Ragfinery scene is less like a senior center and more like a moonrise yoga class taught in a food co-op. Many crafters make their own fabric and natural dyes with everything from wool to onion skins. The question no one seems to get tired of asking, “What are you working on?”

Erin began volunteering at the Ragfinery her freshman year. She became such a fixture in the store that when there was an open position, the staff handed her the job. In the fall, Erin will teach a class on processing flax at Ragfinery where she’s been working since April.

“She has a wealth of experience, especially with fiber and textile art, knitting, spinning yarn and felting and she brings a ton of creativity and enthusiasm to our organization,” Ragfinery Manager Shan Sparling says. “We are so glad to have her here.”

Textile seems less like a hobby and more like a tethering point for her seemingly limitless curiosity. It wasn’t until Erin graduated from high school and took a gap year that she realized many people were working in her area of interest.



*(left top to bottom)  
Erin Ruark waters flax  
in the Outback Farm on  
the Fairhaven campus  
in Western Washington  
University. She holds  
flaxseed seeds next to a  
plant that’s beginning  
to form a bud, pulls  
apart natural bast fiber,  
demonstrates how the  
bast fiber wraps around  
her wooden spinning tool  
and shows off the texture  
and design of a simple  
bag she plans to use for  
future sustainable fabric  
patterns.*



“I was able to meet a lot of textile artists and I was like, wow, I’m meeting all these people who share my passion, which didn’t happen so much in highschool. Not a lot of 15-year-olds knit,” Erin says.

Erin started raising silkworms last year using a peace silk technique to harvest the silk without killing the worms. The cocoons are a little smaller than a film canister and range in color from yellow to white depending on how much slobber the worm used to build its cocoon. She hopes to combine her silk and linen to make an outfit. Her current project is less about producing on a massive scale and more about her own education in sustainability.



*(bottom) Erin Ruark organizes fabric bundles at Ragfinery in downtown Bellingham. Donated fabric two yards or longer is color-coordinated and stacked on the large shelf at the entrance of Ragfinery.*







*(far left) A collection of quilting pieces sold at Ragfinery. These pieces are cut into quarter and fat quarter yards that quilters can choose from.*

*(left) Clothing made by local artists sold at Ragfinery. In order to be sold at Ragfinery, consignment clothes must be at least 80 percent reused materials.*



Americans throw away 70 pounds of clothing per person in the landfill every year, enough fabric to build a life size voodoo doll of a snotty kindergartner. That's up 40 percent from their 1999 results, according to a 2009 study by the EPA. Although thrift shopping has become more popular, the trend hasn't been able to offset stores like Forever 21 and H&M. Many fashion industries pollute the air, exploit laborers in developing countries and make huge profits from their methods. Fashion is about change, but now instead of changing at the pace of decade or eras, it's changing at the pace of an Instagram feed.

"By making more conscious decisions about the clothes they buy, how much they buy, where they buy it from, the quality of what they buy and what they do with it when they are done with it, consumers could come close to eliminating this problem," Shan says.

Erin plans to build a homestead that doubles as an education center and produces sustainable goods. The homestead will teach children about the biological and environmental factors surrounding the plants and fabric while examining the social and political connotations of sustainable production methods.

"When you read stuff about the garment industry it can get depressing, you feel like there's nothing you can do," Erin says. She anticipates

that experiments like her flax and worms will prove otherwise.

In a time when there are unlimited choices of what to wear, many people equate taste with self-expression. What you choose is who you are. Erin hopes to change this idea from something based completely on aesthetics into a more conscious decision about how and where the garment was made. Real self expression isn't choosing one shirt off the rack over another, it's weaving yourself into the actual fibers of what you wear.

Culture now is about borrowing from the past, from those around you and making it your own. Remixing. So why do we accept the most generic, cheaply produced pieces of clothing as fashion? Fighting existing power structures doesn't always require a banner, sometimes it's as unglamorous as choosing not to buy something new. "You don't have to sacrifice style to participate in slow fashion," Erin says, "I hope people start looking at the labels on their clothes and asking where was this made? What does nylon come from? What does polypropylene come from?"

The amount of work Erin will put into producing her flax garment seems tedious, maybe even masochistic, but that same labor goes into every piece of clothing. Her impact is more than a piece of cloth, it's an example of how to examine and improve.



# AT LEAST WE HAVE SUNDAYS

*An immigrant family learns English through  
America's favorite pastime: football*

story by KRISTINA RIVERA

My mom says, when she dies, she wants me to spread her ashes in three places: the mountains, the ocean and Mile High Stadium in Denver, Colorado, where the Broncos play. To her and the rest of my family, watching the Denver Broncos play football isn't a hobby or a casual affair. It's a way of life.

Football Sundays have always been devoted to family at my house. For the first Broncos game of the season, my grandmother makes a Korean-style beef soup with clear rice noodles, chunks of beef, chili peppers and whatever vegetables they have on hand. They call it Broncos soup. It's their way of bringing their Korean heritage to football. To them, football is more than just a reason to get together. It's how they learned English.

My mom, Jenny, and Aunt Susan moved to the U.S. at 9 and 6 years old. Their parents, Jung and Do Pak, brought them from rural Busan, South Korea with their older brother, Jung. They were among the 38,700 Koreans who immigrated to the United States in the 1970s.

They moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1976 to live with Do's sister, Linda Myung, and her first husband. Linda and her husband met in South Korea when he was stationed with the U.S.

Army in Korea. She moved back to the U.S. with him and petitioned for my family to become U.S. citizens. It worked.

When they moved to Colorado, no one in my family spoke English. Jung and Do worked tirelessly every day to try to support their family. They took whatever jobs they could get. Jung worked either in a sewing factory or serving food in airports during the day while Do watered cemeteries. At night, both worked as cleaners.

In school, my mom was relentlessly bullied for being Korean. In the 1970s in Colorado, only 0.5 percent of the population identified as Asian, which left her feeling alone and isolated. She didn't speak English at the time, but she didn't have to know what the kids were saying to know they were making fun of her. The kids pulled their eyes back with their fingers and laughed. On one of her first days of school, a group of kids led her into the boys bathroom because she couldn't read the signs.

All they wanted was to go back to Korea. But the U.S. was their home now. They knew they had to keep working because there was nothing back in Korea for them. So, my mom and her siblings promised each other they would lose their



*Jenny and Susan Rivera,  
amongst their collected  
Bronco's merchandise.  
// Illustration by Katie  
Robinson.*

accents. They tested each other daily on spelling and vocabulary and stopped speaking Korean altogether.

"We didn't want to be Korean," Jenny said. "We wanted to fit in."

In 1977 they moved to Aurora, Colorado. Linda got remarried to a man named Doo Myung, who started to teach them the rules of football. It was the perfect time to start. The Denver Broncos had won the Super Bowl for the very first time. There was something in the air in Colorado, and my family took it all in.

Every Sunday, Doo came over to watch the game, while Jung made Korean food in the kitchen.

"I learned the rules of football before I learned to speak English," Jenny said.

Watching football every Sunday helped my family assimilate into American culture. Football is as American as it gets, and watching it made them feel like they were a part of something.

By the time my mom reached the fifth grade, her and her siblings were fluent in English.

But learning English came with a price.

"Our lives changed after we lost our accent," Jenny said. She felt more accepted at school. "But we lost the ability to speak Korean."

Like many immigrants in the U.S., they had to give up a part of their culture to be accepted. Being Korean in a mostly white state made them resent their heritage.

Now, Jenny says forgetting Korean is something she regrets.

Jung and Do worked so much, they didn't know the bullying their children faced in school. Jenny, Susan and Jung could get rid of their accents, but it didn't change the way they looked.

But on Sundays, they could forget it all. On Sundays, they could laugh, yell and eat without fear or judgement. It was the one day of the week they knew they could be together. It still brings them together.

Now, Jenny and Susan live in Federal Way. They own thousands of dollars worth of Broncos merchandise and haven't missed a Broncos game, on TV or in person, in 42 years.

My mom says growing up as an immigrant was difficult. But she remembers feeling happy on Sundays. She's still happy on Sundays.



# xws7ámeshqen

## BREATHING LIFE BACK INTO THE SAMISH LANGUAGE

story by TAYLOR NICHOLS  
photos by MATHEW ROLAND



*Kelly Hall, language  
program specialist for the  
Samish Indian Nation.*

Hearing someone speak their native language is intimate. You can feel a way of life behind the words. When a language dies, a way of being dies with it.

Until the late 1800s, the Coast Salish people native to Anacortes, Deception Pass and the San Juan Islands areas spoke various Northern Straits Salish dialects. When white settlers laid claim to March's Point in Anacortes in the second half of the 19th century, they brought the English language with them.

More than 150 years later, Kelly Hall sits in a Moka Joe's on March's Point Road to talk about the indigenous Samish language.

Kelly is a 25-year-old language specialist for her tribe, the Samish Indian Nation. She's also the first person to earn college credit for studying Samish as a foreign language.

The language can be intimidating because of the unfamiliar characters, such as the number "7" in "Qweng7qwengila7," the Samish name for Guemes Island, Kelly says. The "7" stands for a glottal stop, a sort of pause in your vocal chords. She emphasizes the pauses in the word over the country music playing full-volume through the coffee shop.

Although it may look daunting, the glottal pause is not the most difficult part of learning the language.

"The hardest part is getting people to believe in themselves," Kelly says.

Hall is one of the few people working to preserve the Samish language, which, like most indigenous languages, was never originally written down. She works closely with the language program manager for the tribe, George Adams. George is one of only three people in the world who speak Samish fluently.

"I'm still learning, I really want to emphasize that," Kelly said. She is on track to become the next fluent speaker.

## COMING HOME

The Samish Indian Nation does not have a reservation and tribal members are spread out all over the country, Kelly says. Growing up in Puyallup, she didn't have a strong connection to her Samish roots but she spent summers on Guemes Island.

"I had always felt that place was significant somehow," Kelly says, but she could never put her finger on why.

***"Finding others who knew what it meant to honor each other, with the idea that to be wealthy is to give more, connected me to the culture. I found the answers I was looking for."***

Kelly remembers the moment she discovered the last Samish longhouse was located on the beach where she spent summers on the island. "It all made sense," she says. This place was significant to her ancestors, too.

Each person is pulled in by something different in tribal culture, something that makes them feel connected, Kelly says. For her, it was the canoe journey.

Every summer, Coast Salish tribes from British Columbia, Washington and Oregon embark on a canoe journey to celebrate and share tribal traditions. Different tribes host the canoe families each night as they move along the coast. Their numbers grow as they move towards their

destination, gaining more canoe families at each stop. On the last trip more than 100 canoes were registered.

The tribes share traditional songs, food and language. They live the culture of their ancestors, which white colonizers fought to eradicate throughout American history. Kelly says they use their time on the water to teach Samish phrases useful for the journey.

“Canoe culture really brought me home,” Kelly says.

Growing up, Kelly never felt like she fit in and had a hard time connecting with others. As she learned more about her Coast Salish ancestors, she felt the connection with her tribe grow.

Even the name Samish, “to stand up and give,” made Kelly feel like she was home. She says she never identified with the Western ideal of taking as much as you can.

“Finding others who knew what it meant to honor each other, with the idea that to be wealthy is to give more, connected me to the culture,” she says. “I found the answers I was looking for.”

### ERADICATING LANGUAGE

Those working to preserve indigenous languages face a unique challenge. Many indigenous languages have few fluent speakers left, as is the case with the Samish language, says anthropologist Allan Richardson. Allan co-authored a book



with Dr. Brent Galloway, a linguist known for his work with languages in the Coast Salish region of British Columbia and Washington. Their book “Nooksack Place Names: Geography, Culture and Language” details traditional Nooksack tribe culture through place names like Kulshan, or Kwelshán, an area on Mount Baker. The pair worked with George, who heads the Samish language program. George is a Nooksack tribal member who specializes in Coast Salish dialects and has worked with language for most of his life. They also worked with Nooksack elders to pair traditional names with their cultural meanings.

Indigenous languages are dying out because they were suppressed for so long, Allan says. White settlers laid claim to

Washington state much later than they did on the East Coast and began putting indigenous children in boarding schools around the 1880s, Allan says.

The U.S. and Canadian governments systematically oppressed indigenous culture, banning traditional ceremonies and potlatches. Indigenous people were punished for speaking their native languages, Allan says. The elders Allan worked with on the book recalled their traditional language, but they also were forced to attend boarding schools where language was tightly controlled.

“There’s been a long, long absence of honoring who we are,” George says. “Taking over peoples to eliminate their culture,



*Members of the Swinomish Tribe paddle into Fidalgo Bay during the Paddle Power to Puyallup on Sunday, August 22, 2018.*





*A flag for the Samish Indian Nation waves in the wind on the shore of Fidalgo Bay.*

language, heritage, and of course our heritage as also a euphemism for land.”

Indigenous languages experienced some revival as people like Dr. Galloway started preservation efforts, Allan says. Now tribes like the Lummi Nation and Samish Indian Nation have language programs, but getting funding for it can be difficult, George says.

## ***“There’s been a long, long absence of honoring who we are”***

### **LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The Samish language is an expression of the culture, and understanding one can help people learn the other. “The key to cultural revitalization is language,” Kelly says.

The language reflects the area in which it was created and it’s hard to grasp the meaning of the words without being there, Kelly says. The original name of Guemes Island, “Qweng7qwengila7,” can be loosely translated to “Lots of Dogs Island,” Kelly says. The island was home to many Salish wool dogs whose fur was used to make ceremonial blankets.

“The name of the island means nothing unless you understand why it was called that, what the significance of the dogs were and what they were used for,” Kelly says.

The Samish language is built with careful attention to detail and meaning. The words communicate what needs to be known about the resources. The cedar tree was one of the most important resources for Coast Salish people. It was used to make longhouses, canoes, paddles, baskets and even clothing. It was critical to be able to recognize the tree. “Xpáy7,” the word for cedar tree, refers to the stripey red bark that distinguishes it.

The language is the backbone of Samish culture, but traditional beliefs and values create a framework for the language, too. The Samish belief in interconnectedness is present in the word structures and their meanings.

The words for people (elhtálngexw), trees (sq’elálngexw) and medicine (st’álngexw) all have the same root, which comes from the word for life force. It communicates the idea that people, trees and medicine are all connected by the same life force.

Speaking the Samish language makes Kelly feel connected to her roots. “It really gives you the ability to see things the way our ancestors would,” she says.

## TEACHING LANGUAGE NOW

Reviving indigenous languages isn't something that can be done arbitrarily, George says. "The purpose is to bring back who we are, our identity and our beliefs," he says. A connecting factor in this is storytelling, a traditional way of passing down language and culture going back for generations. The stories explain identity and purpose, which is vital to promoting the tribe's teachings and language among the Samish people, George says.

Part of keeping the Samish language alive is creating new words for contemporary places and things, like airports and phones. If they don't adapt the language, it will die out when it's no longer relevant, Kelly says. George is tasked with building new words in the same mindset the rest of the language was created in.

To do so, George consults elders and neighboring tribes to see if there is an existing word. If not, he reverts to asking two questions: What does it do and what does it look like?

George's famous example is the word for glasses, *xwtele7óles*. It translates to "money eyes," for the way round shiny lenses look like coins.

When all else fails, George relies on transliteration, swapping out letters or sounds that don't appear in the language, like the "g"s in "Google," for a sound that does, like a "ch" noise.

Kelly is currently working on creating an online curriculum for those who want to learn the language but don't live in the area or aren't able to attend lessons. She also runs a Samish language Facebook page in her free time, posting vocabulary videos and other educational tools as a learning resource.

In order to teach, Kelly is constantly learning and building her Samish vocabulary and knowledge of the language. "It's difficult because the resources we have are the ones I'm helping make," she says.

Language and culture cannot be untangled, a concept not lost on white settlers when they set out to conquer the New World.

Preserving the language honors indigenous cultures and traditions. But to keep the culture truly alive, tribes must breathe new life into the language.



(above) *Eshás, a canoe for the Samish tribe rests on the shore of Fidalgo Bay.*

(below) *Paddles adorned with traditional Native American art.*



# YOU'D BE ANGRY TOO

story by **RAHWA HAILEMARIAM**

illustration by **KATIE ROBINSON**

Sassy. Aggressive. Ill tempered. Illogical. Loud. Hostile. Malicious.

Ignorant without provocation.

These are the stereotypes of the “angry black woman.”

I rarely came in contact with white people until I came to college four years ago and was shoved into a dorm where I was the only black girl in the building.

Yes, this is another race talk from another black person.

We can't help but feel the consequences of being black in Amerikkka when we are constantly reminded of it with glares and whispers in stores, stares in coffee shops, microaggressions, systemic police brutality and the fun new white people activity: calling the police on us.

We, especially black women, get to be angry. Wouldn't you be angry too?

I moved into Fairhaven complex with three clueless white girls. At first, they couldn't understand what I was saying because I had “black people slang.” I knew my south Seattle slang was not too difficult to understand; nonetheless, I put on my Caucasian tongue to get along with them.

Then it was questions about my hair: “Is it real? Why is it so crazy?”

Then it was, “Oh but, you're not really black because you're from Africa so don't be offended.”

“Do you know how to twerk?”

“Rahwa, you are too pretty for a black girl.”

One of the girls was persistent with her questions and microaggressions. When I called her out, she always ended up crying.

Suddenly, I was the “angry black woman” making the “poor white girl” cry. It was the inevitable story of black women looking like the villain when white women play victim in situations they created.

After a few more incidents, my Residential Advisor wanted to talk to me about my “anger issues.” I thought he would understand when he heard my side of the story, at least because he was half black.

He didn't.

He sat across from me, reciting her side of the story making excuses for her. He told me how she never means harm and it was hard for her because she's always had bad experiences with black people.

I was angrrry.

It is already difficult being a black person in Amerikkka. It is also difficult being a woman. When you're born black and a woman, you are the “mule of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Wouldn't you be angry if you had to deal with one form of oppression, only to turn around and get hit with another? Wouldn't you be angry if no one acknowledged that?

Wouldn't you be angry if you couldn't get to be angry like everyone else?

If your genuine emotion was always dismissed as “unnecessary rage?”

A lot of black women suppress their anger even when they have a legitimate reason to be angry because they don't want to be seen as the “angry black woman.”<sup>2</sup>

Wouldn't you be angry if laws were created to police and “tame” your hair? If people always asked to touch your hair for simply wearing it natural or being asked if it is real when wearing a different style?<sup>3</sup>

1. In the book “*Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937),” Zora Neale Hurston says “De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see.” The meaning is that “black women are the mules of the world,” that they “carry the load that white men, white women and black men refuse to carry; they do the work no one wants to do, without praise or thanks.”

Mule definition: the offspring of a donkey and a horse (strictly, a male donkey and a female horse), typically sterile and used as a beast of burden.

2. From the 1800s through the mid-1900s, black women were portrayed as “sassy Mammies.” The portrayal of Mammies were happily obedient to their masters: fat, pitch black, asexual and ugly compared to white women who were, fragile, beautiful and valuable to society. That caricature of black women served as a defense for slavery. The Jezebel stereotype depicted a lighter skinned black woman who is hypersexualized and portrayed as an irresistible temptress to justify the systemic rape of black women. The “angry black woman” aka the Sapphire emerged to marginalize black women's intelligence and respectability. The 1928 radio show “*Amos 'n' Andy*,” which became a TV



Wouldn't you be angry if you helped fight for equality and no one was there to support you when you needed them? From helping slaves escape through the Underground Railroad, to being the core of Black Panthers, to founding Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo movement, black women have been pivotal in leading the fight for equality. Yet we are alone when fighting for black women.

Wouldn't you be angry if society purposefully erased and forgot about you? When innocent black women are victims of police brutality, the media is oddly silent and there is usually no outrage from communities that scream "justice" for other victims. It takes a hashtag movement to #SayHerName.<sup>4</sup>

I am angry because we don't get to let our black girl magic shine without intimidating other women and being too "emasculating" for men.

I am angry because our intelligence is determined when we "talk white."

I am angry because the entertainment industry still hires non-black women to tell stories of black women.

I am angry because our hair, lips and hips were degraded but white women profited when imitating them.<sup>5</sup>

I am angry because everyone is a feminist until it is time to fight for black women.

I am angry because we have to work hard to prove our humanity. Yes, black women are humans with feelings and all.

I am angry because someone will ask, "Why are black women so angry?" knowing exactly the things we have to be angry about.

I am angry because I have too much to be angry about.

If you don't think you would be angry too, you're not paying attention because you would be furious.

*show in 1951 due to its popularity, set the tone for Sapphire. The show portrayed black women as aggressive, hot tempered and emasculating. The Sapphire is still present in almost every movie and TV shows like Cookie in "Empire," Angela in "Why Did I Get Married?" Pam on "Martin," Teri in "Barbershop" and Annalise Keating in "How to Get Away with Murder."*

*3. In 1786, when free black women wore their hair in elaborative styles, which drew the attention of white men and the jealousy of white women, black and Creole women in Louisiana were forced to wear head wraps, according to The Tignon Laws. Taming black women's hair is still present in schools and corporate policies. Dreadlocks, afros, braids and other forms of natural black hair are seen as unprofessional and "unkempt."*

*4. #AuraRosser #JanishaFonville #ShanteDavis #MyaHall #NizahMorris #IslanNettles #RosannMiller #SonjiTaylor #KyamLivingston #ShenequeProctor #FrankiePerkins #KathrynJohnson #TanishaAnderson #ShereeseFrancis #MichelleCusseau*

*5. See Kardashians.*





# CLEARING UP THE RUMORS

*The story behind Bellingham's  
most colorful bar*

story by **SUZANNA LEUNG**

The photo of a burly man with a white beard hangs on the wall of Rumors Cabaret's cocktail lounge. He's covered in leather, leaning on a motorcycle with a rainbow flag hanging from it. Rian Greer, the current owner of Rumors Cabaret, points to the photo. His eyes soften and a smile tugs at his lips. "That's Wayne," he says, staring at the picture of Rumors' founder.

Wayne Miller passed away on December 13, 2017, after a five-year battle with cancer. He owned Rumors for 34 years.



*(left) Previous owner Wayne Miller.  
// Photo courtesy of Rumors Cabaret.*

*(right) The rainbow flag decorates the outside of Rumors Cabaret in downtown Bellingham.  
// Photo by Mathew Roland.*

Rumors was just a small dive bar on North State Street when it was established in 1984. Before Rumors, it was a bar called the Toyon. Before that it was called The Hut. The Hut and Toyon existed in the '60s and '70s, and while they weren't officially gay bars, they served as a gathering space for the LGBTQ+ community. That's why Wayne thought it was the perfect spot for Rumors.

Rich Wilson, 48, assistant general manager, started going to Rumors when he was 19. He recalls smoke bombs being thrown into the bar and groups of men waiting to beat up exiting patrons. Many frequenting Rumors back then were still closeted and snuck in and out through the back door.

In November 2017, Rumors opened a cocktail lounge next to the current bar entrance, Miller's Back Door. It was created as an homage to Wayne and those early days.

"Rumors has definitely tracked along with the history of the gay community as well," said promotions and logistics manager Brian Spencer, "From hiding and being in the closet to where we are today, being out of the closet, being present."

Wayne saw an opportunity to expand Rumors in 1997. He saw more people coming out and sought to bridge Bellingham's LGBTQ+ and straight communities. Wayne moved Rumors to its current location at 1119 Railroad Ave. and almost lost his house due to the cost. Regardless, he believed that Bellingham would accept Rumors and the LGBTQ+ community.

### ***"Rumors has definitely tracked along with the history of the gay community"***

"[Being gay] was becoming more accepted in the community, and Wayne wanted to push for Rumors to be a bar for everyone," Rian said. "We will always be focused on the queer community, but we are a bar for everyone, and the best way to not be afraid of someone is to actually meet someone."

Wayne always focused on the LGBTQ+ community. Before others started sponsoring Bellingham Pride, he would cover half the expense using Rumors funds and his own money.



“[Wayne] just really was a stronghold and fixture in the Bellingham gay community for so many,” Brian said. “Kind of just a father figure for so many in the community as well, especially for the people that didn’t have their families.

*“[Wayne] just really was a stronghold and fixture in the Bellingham gay community for so many”*

Wayne remained the owner of Rumors for the last five years of his life, but stepped away from the business to focus on his health. Unfortunately, the general manager left in charge didn’t adhere to Wayne’s attentive management style and the bar suffered. Maintenance wasn’t getting done,

employee morale fell and the environment created unwelcoming experiences.

Kayden “Grey” Rinaldi, 23, who is trans, frequented Rumors in those years. They entered the bar one night to see a drink special on the wall named “grape rape.” Grey was offended by this name and confronted the bartender and manager at the time, who brushed off their concerns and half-heartedly changed the name to “grape crape.” Grey’s partner also received degrading comments about her body from the doorperson at the time, including comments about how revealing her clothes were.

Management now agrees those encounters were extremely offensive.

“My response to that experience would be of course how troubling and how sorry [we are],” Brian said. “Fortunately, Rumors as an institution has evolved its leadership to all new people with better sensibilities.”





*Historical photos courtesy of Rumors Cabaret.*

Management promises the drink is no longer at Rumors and will never be again. Kelly Pronold, 37, the new general manager, is setting the bar back on track as a safe and welcoming environment.

Another of Grey's concerns is the amount of straight-identifying individuals who are saturating the space.

"There's a need for the straight and cis communities to understand that, while they can come into queer bars and queer spaces, there's a need to respect the fact that we don't have space to gather all over," Grey said.

Brian also feels regret over the LGBTQ+ community not being its cadre of folks anymore. However, he says the integration of straight individuals into queer spaces will benefit the community in the long run. More interaction between the LGBTQ+ and straight communities will cultivate more understanding.

Grey wants to see more effort from Rumors to support the LGBTQ+ community, particularly through events highlighting the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals. Sebastian Bostwick, 23, who is trans, suggests that Rumors provide gender

neutral restrooms so gender-nonconforming individuals can feel comfortable.

Rian said Rumors will be incorporating more inclusive signage for the bathrooms by fall 2018. There is also a single occupancy gender-neutral restroom in Miller's Back Door.

Moving forward, Rian is seeking more partnerships with local charities and community organizations. Rumors is partnered with Bellingham Pride and recently donated proceeds to the Sean Humphrey House, a nonprofit providing aid for low-income individuals living with HIV or AIDS. He wants to see Rumors continue to grow, just like Wayne wanted.

"It's just home. It's home for all of us. I loved Wayne. He was like a dad to me," Kelly said. "Not having this place, I couldn't even imagine not having it. It's just a part of life. It's work. It's all work. But it's fun work."



# OLD ROOTS, NEW GROWTH



story by **JANE FOOTH**  
photos courtesy of **THE WASHINGTON BULB CO.**

Brent Roozen stands with his feet firmly apart, planted on the ground. He feels deeply rooted to the fertile soil of Skagit Valley, as one would expect from a third-generation farmer. His grandfather, William Roozen Sr., founder of Washington Bulb Company, came to Washington from Holland in 1947 in search of farmland to continue his passion of tulip bulb farming.

William found that place in Skagit Valley where the mild climate and rich topsoil make for excellent flower and bulb growing. What started as five acres of land he cultivated with his wife Helen Roozen has turned into 2,000 acres of tulips and daffodils and a long-lasting, family-run business.

Today, the Washington Bulb Company distributes 70 million fresh cut flowers and tens of millions of bulbs each year from the Skagit Valley.

Clad in blue jeans and a button-down shirt, Brent is more of a manager than farmer these days. He is in charge of the Roozengaarde, Washington Bulb Company's display garden, where hundreds of thousands of people from across the country and world travel to Skagit Valley to see the estimated 350,000 bulbs in orderly rows in the Dutch tradition.

The display beds often showcase whimsical patterns in heart shapes or blue rivers of tulips. A pastel green and white windmill stands as symbol of the Roozen's heritage amid the display garden.

Their family name, Roozen, means "roses" in Dutch. This family is deeply rooted in the bulb industry. Their history of raising tulips spans six generations, from the mid-1700s to today. They are now the biggest distributor of bulbs in the country.

"It makes you proud. Especially in the spring, when you have people traveling all across the country to come visit Roozengaarde," Brent said. "We can reach people who a lot of times need a smile or need flowers for whatever reason. We take pride in growing the best product possible."

When the fields of bulbs bloom, seeming to run forever to the foot of Mount Baker, they create an impressionist landscape of flowers.

"This is a one-of-a-kind business as far as spring tourism goes," Brent says. "It's really the only place outside of Holland and a few other places that you can go to see this."

Flower-loving tourists drive to Skagit Valley in cars and buses to admire the display garden. Tourists take photos, buy bouquets and bags of bulbs. Sightseers capture the moment when winter grays burst into spring color.

Washington Bulb Company is a vital part of the Skagit Valley community and helps boost the tourism economy.

"It's a huge influx of money. The tourists come and the hotels get full. We get between 300,000 and 400,000 people every year," says Marinus Rouw, former Tulip Festival president. "People come from all over."

Brent is amazed by the amount of people who come and how far they travel, he says. People come from Japan, China and across Europe to see his family's tulips. Having grown up in Skagit Valley, it was easy for him to take the magical quality of the area for granted.



# *The family behind 2,000 acres of tulips*



*(above) Rows upon rows of daffodils at the Roozengaarde Farm in Mount Vernon, Washington.*

*(left) Richard Roozen kneels amidst the bulbs of an older Roozengaarde Farm. Richard is one of four brothers that still co-own the farm today.*

*(bottom left) Budding tulips found at the Roozengaarde Farm in Mount Vernon, Washington on July 12, 2017.*

“Originally, growing up, I wanted to get out from here and go see other places. I had no intention of working here,” Brent says. “I worked here from a young age doing the worst jobs they could find. We always joke around that we did the stuff that no one else wanted to do or they couldn’t get anyone else to do.”

Brent graduated from college thinking he would avoid joining the family business. While job searching, he worked a three month spring season to help his family during their busiest time of the year.

When the three months were up, Brent still had a few projects he wanted to finish before resuming his job search. These projects bled into another season, then another, until Brent had stayed in the family business for over 10 years. He has no plans to go anywhere else anytime soon, he says with a smile.

Brent’s grandfather, William Roozen Sr., passed the company down to his five sons and one daughter in 1985. It is now run by his four sons: John, Leo, Richard and William Roozen.

As a family who cares deeply about flowers and bulb farming, the Roozen family and Washington Bulb Company strive to create happiness, console sorrow and brighten days. Brent says they hope to bring a smile to those who need it with beautiful flowers grown with care and dedication.





# PUSHING UP POSIES

*Breakout band from Bellingham  
looks back on 30 years*

story by KRISTINA RIVERA  
photos by KELLY PEARCE

*(below) Wild Buffalo  
House of Music's sign  
during the night The  
Posies performed their  
30th anniversary reunion  
tour on July 6th, 2018 in  
downtown Bellingham.*

Boats on Lake Whatcom jet by, and the smell of sun-baked grass and fresh water fills the afternoon air. Ken Stringfellow emerges from Lake Whatcom and wraps a towel around his waist. He walks over toward his parents' house to the patio overlooking the water. Ken is back home in Bellingham for The Posies' 30th anniversary tour, and he's itching to escape the heat.

After he changed, we sit on the patio of his mom and stepfather's house overlooking Lake Whatcom. A tan umbrella shades the metal table while Ken's mom, Janet Houston, brings out chicken salad, bread and fresh cherries for lunch. I felt welcome the moment I stepped into their house.

Janet says the first time Ken picked up a guitar was in this house. In middle school, Ken found his stepbrother's guitar laying on a bunk bed one summer and was an expert by the winter.

"One day, he came up from the downstairs basement and says, 'I know all The Beatles' songs, do you want to hear them?'" Janet says.

Ken's love of music only grew from there. At Sehome High School in the early 1980s, Ken met Jon Auer – the guitarist and founding member of The Posies. They became best friends and began writing and playing music together.

In Bellingham, the music scene during the 1980s was small but diverse. The handful of bands that did exist, from metal to folk, formed a community and often recorded music in Jon's dad's





studio. His father, David Auer, was a professor at Western's College of Business and Economics and is also a musician. He and Jon built an 8-track studio in the basement of their house near Lake Padden.

As a teenager, Jon worked at a record store called Budget Tapes and Records (now Avalon Records) where he met his mentor, Henry Szankiewicz. Henry showed Jon music from the Zombies' "Odessey and Oracle" to Elvis Costello.

"He was a unique kid," Henry says about Jon.

Henry describes Jon as well spoken and mature when they met in 1986.

"He was like a little brother to me," Henry remembers.

The two bonded over their love of music. Jon listened to more contemporary music, while Henry listened to earlier, more classic music.

Jon and Henry wanted to capture the burgeoning music scene in Bellingham. Together, they recorded and produced a compilation cassette of bands in Bellingham in 1987 called "The Bellingham Complication" in David's studio. The

8-track cassette featured The Madeleines, Karate Church, Roofdogs and more. It serves as a time capsule for the unique sound of local artists in Bellingham at the time.

The same year "The Bellingham Complication" came out, Ken moved to Seattle to go to school at University of Washington while Jon attended Western. Both continued to write music. On the weekends, Ken took the bus from Seattle to Bellingham to record music with Jon. And in 1987, The Posies released their first album, "Failure."

***"[The Posies] had the drive, they had the ambition, they had the vision and they were willing to put in the work it took to actually play"***

In the spring of 1988, Ken and Jon meticulously cut cassette covers of 1,000 copies of "Failure" and sold them at consignment shops in Seattle and Bellingham and handed their cassettes out to

*(above) Ken Stringfellow belts out a song during The Posie's 30th anniversary reunion concert.*



(left)  
*Ken Stringfellow  
performing onstage in  
middle school.*



(right)  
*The beginning of The  
Posies shown through  
scrapbooks from Ken  
Stringfellow's mother  
Janet Houston, following  
her son's musical career.*

## ***"The Posies hit the stage with the confidence of seasoned veterans, but brought the energy of a band just starting out in the industry"***

They recorded "Failure" as a demo with the intention of attracting other band members. Frantic, Ken asked a student in his biology class at UW, Arthur "Rick" Roberts, to be the bassist and Arthur's roommate, Mike Musburger, as drummer. They agreed, thinking it wouldn't last more than a couple weeks. But the couple weeks turned into a couple months and in 1989, The Posies had a record deal with Geffen Records. Eventually, Dave Fox replaced Arthur on bass.

"By pure dumb luck, total serendipity, things totally blew up from that point on," Ken says.

But if you asked anyone close to The Posies, they would say it was their hard work that got them there.

"The reason Jon and Ken made it was because they were willing to put in the time," David Auer says. "They had the drive, they had the ambition,

radio stations.

Two days after The Posies handed their album to the stations KCMU—now KEXP—and KJET, they heard their song on the radio. An hour later, they heard their song again. From there, The Posies started gaining more and more recognition. They were on full rotation on commercial radio stations.

Ken and Jon started getting offers to play shows around Seattle and Bellingham, but at this point, The Posies consisted of just Ken and Jon.

they had vision and they were willing to put in the work it took to actually play."

The Posies' effect on the music scene in Bellingham isn't lost on Brent Cole, editor of What's Up! Magazine. Brent grew up listening to The Posies' first album and has been in the Pacific Northwest music scene for 32 years.

"There was nothing really happening in Bellingham," Brent says about The Posies when they first started. "It was the very early beginnings of what's now the Bellingham music scene. And it kind of started in a large part because of The Posies."

Jon says living in Bellingham affected their music because they didn't have many outside influences when writing or creating. Unlike Seattle, they didn't have to compete with other local bands.

But what set The Posies apart from other bands wasn't just their sound or just their lyrics, it was their willingness to accept everyone, no matter their background.

"I was beaten to a bloody pulp daily after [middle] school," Ken says.

Because of this experience, he wanted to create music where people could feel like they belong. Ken says calling the band "The Posies" creates a safe space for people who don't quite fit in with everyone else. He says The Posies were able to get so popular because they were individuals, and their music celebrated individuality.

Before The Posies' 30th anniversary show at The Wild Buffalo, Ken walks into the venue with his guitar on his back and a box of Posies merchandise. Jon tunes his blue guitar on stage, while Mike Musburger sets up his drums and Dave Fox takes out his bass.



Jon says this early-'90s lineup of him, Ken, Mike and Dave may be his favorite. He likes their musicality and chemistry together.

"Something about this just seems to work the best live for me," Jon says. "Even though they're a bunch of jerks, and I hate them," Jon jokes as he smiled and glanced at his long-time friends.

Ken runs to the back of The Wild Buffalo to count and fold T-shirts at the merch table. Ken walks up to one of the Wild Buffalo employees to make sure they have enough seats reserved in the back for his mom and the parents of the rest of the band. Ken does everything he can when it comes to The Posies. He's the band's tour manager, spokesperson, manages their social media and writes the music.

At around 7:30 p.m., people slowly trickle in.

By 9:30 p.m., The Wild Buffalo is packed with hundreds of people in their 30s and 40s eagerly waiting for The Posies to come on.

"We've been following these guys since the early 90s," I overhear in the crowd.

"I have an original 'Failure' T-shirt," another chimes in.

The lights on stage change from blue to purple. One by one, Ken, Jon, Mike and Dave enter the stage to a crowd of screaming, drunk fans.

Ken steps up to the microphone in the middle of the front of the stage. He leans in, looks out at the densely-packed Wild Buffalo and smiles.

"Well I have to admit this has potential," Ken jokes to the packed crowd. The audience screams in response.

The Posies hit the stage with the confidence of seasoned veterans, but bring the energy of a band

just starting out in the industry. The first song they play in their two-hour set is their hit "Dream All Day." The crowd sings along with every word and never misses a beat.

As the night goes on, the energy from the crowd and the stage never wavers. Ken's shoulder-length black hair clings to his face as he jumps and strums on his maroon guitar. Jon's curly dark brown hair bounces as he dances around the stage. The crowd matches The Posies' high energy.

After playing "Solar Sister," The Posies exit the stage. The audience is antsy and chants for The

*"They create a kind of safe space for people who don't quite fit in with everyone else."*

Posies to come back. The roar of the crowd grows louder and louder until all four members strut back on stage for a six-song encore. For their second to last song "Flood of Sunshine," Jon asks his dad if he would join The Posies on stage.

"This is the man who made me a guitar player," Jon says with a grin. It's the first time Jon and his dad have performed on stage together. They couldn't stop smiling at each other as they played their guitars together.

As the show ends, the crowd stumbles onto the streets and into the night.

"That was the best show I've seen at The Wild Buffalo," I overhear in the rush of people.



*(left)  
The Posies watch as  
founding member Ken  
Stringfellow rocks out.*

*(right)  
Jon Auer (left) and  
his father David Auer  
(right) perform together  
during the final song  
of The Posies 30th  
anniversary reunion  
concert at Wild Buffalo  
House of Music in  
downtown Bellingham.*





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*Story by Roisin Cowan-Kuist*



## CORINA CHON: THE ROW BACK TO BELLINGHAM

*Story by Alaena Fletcher*



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