Tiffany White takes a closer look at school violence; the tragedies, the questions and the possible solutions.

Fairhaven Middle School
590 students
no security guards
no security cameras
DARE officer present
*"no weapons" signs

--- Three seventh-graders were expelled in March 1993 after they admitted having a Mac 10 pistol, a semi-automatic handgun.
--- One of the boys said he was going to use the gun in a gang shooting on the Lummi reservation.

Larrabee Elementary School
220 students
no security cameras
no security guards
--- In 1998, a student was expelled for bringing a knife to school.

Sehome High School
1700 students
one campus security guard
no security cameras
--- The Thursday after the April 20, 1999, Columbine shooting in Littleton, Colo., two male, non-students wearing skirts and leather jackets entered Sehome's campus.
--- One wore a Richard Nixon mask.
--- A butterfly knife was found.
--- Police removed the pair and they were cited for trespassing.
--- Two students wearing white makeup and black clothes were emergency expelled on the ground they were a danger to themselves and students.

On July 3, 1997, Raymond N. Hunter, 18, was shot and killed during a drive-by shooting on Alabama Street.
--- Hunter graduated from Bellingham High School a month earlier.

--- according to The Bellingham Herald, Apr. 14, 1993
--- according to The Bellingham Herald, Nov. 28, 1995
--- according to The Bellingham Herald, July 13, 1997

--- illustration by Kevin Furr
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What appeared to be a gang-related fight between two groups of youth escalated into gunfire on Nov. 25, 1995. One youth fired several gunshots outside the Bellis Fair mall, grazing another teen's leg.

"No serious weapon situations," said Principal Robert Jones.

**Whatcom Middle School**
630 students
no campus security guards
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Parkview Elementary School**
340 students
no security cameras
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Birchwood Elementary School**
313 students
no security cameras
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Shuksan Middle School**
478 students
DARE officer on campus
no campus security guards
no security cameras

**Columbia Elementary School**
228 students
no security cameras
no security guards
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Kulshan Middle School**
660 students
DARE officer on campus
no campus security guards
no security cameras

**Homeport Learning Center**
— An alternative school for adjudicated youth in Whatcom County.
— Up to 25 students plan, build and repair wooden boats learn the safe and proper use of hand and power tools.

**Carl Cozier Elementary School**
490 students
no security cameras
no security guards
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Squallicum High School**
1600 students
— one campus security guard
— no security cameras

**Roosevelt Elementary School**
340 students
no security cameras
no security guards
DARE officer present three months of the year

**Sunnyland Elementary School**
320 students
DARE officer present three months of the year
"I didn't have much respect for my life; I was real lazy," Nate Balcom, 17, stands near the helm of a wooden boat he built, recalling his attitudes about life from a couple of years ago. His hands trace along the grooves of the boat's smooth white planks that he cut himself. The steady buzzing of saws and occasional sound of crashing glass from the workshop prompt him to raise his calm voice. "People say you are what you make yourself," he said. However, Balcom views self-worth differently — the person creates one half and the other half is created by how others think of that person. Balcom attended the Homeport Learning Center, an alternative school located in downtown Bellingham. Homeport focuses on training youth who have not graduated from high school in real-life working skills, such as woodworking and maintaining estuaries, in addition to general required academic classes. If the youth completes the program, Homeport writes letters recommending re-admission to high school. Balcom arrived at Homeport about a year ago, after his expulsion from Meridian High School for violating the school's "zero tolerance" weapons policy. A teacher discovered a knife Balcom was carrying.

Homeport offers a completely different atmosphere than the mainstream high school that Balcom emerged from. Only four to six students work with one teacher at a time and the teachers get to know the students more as people. Balcom said, "You get treated more as a human being than in a public school," he said. The way public schools treat students and how students treat other students is a current topic of discussion among communities across the nation in response to the outbreak of high school violence. The largest school massacre erupted in Littleton, Colo. Two students brought a barrage of bullets, grenades and homemade bombs to Columbine High School in April. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris rampaged the school with their machine guns in a final angry cry to classmates. Balcom recalls the shooting and a conversation with a friend about the stupidity behind the students' killing motive. They agreed that several more people are likely to commit similar crimes. "If people feel mistreated, they're going to think it is a solution when it was not," he said. Immediately after the release of the Columbine story — twice — a high school shooting in Canada and another in Georgia left communities staring motionless at their television sets and asking the question: Why? "One could speculate a great deal on what motivates people to act and I don't know if
that can ever be known for sure," said Dr. Susanna Hayes, psychology pro-
fessor at Western. Hayes said she believes what and how students are
taught at an early age equips or fails them to cope with the challenges that
life presents. She strongly advocates counselors to begin working with ele-
mentary school students and intervene in aggressive behavior that could
result in acts of violence. Hayes teaches developmental psychology cours-
es, graduate courses and advanced seminars to train high school coun-
selors. She originally came to Western in 1977 to work with Native American
students and travel groups. She was a counselor for the Colville Indian
Reservation in Eastern Washington. Her experience in education and youth
violence, however, has deeper roots. She was principal at Houghton
Elementary School, a large, inner-city school in Saginaw, Mich. Hayes said
in the 1960s, she remembers children carrying knives and razor blades for
self-protection. "This isn't anything new," she said. It isn't anything unfa-
familiar to Western freshman Brooke Benson, either. Benson is a 1998 gradu-
ate of Pasco High School, in eastern Washington, labelled the "bad school"
of the town. "I remember being in the room and they pulled out this big
box of confiscated weapons they've picked up off kids," Benson recalled.
"And in there was a big, rusty meathook. The box of weapons was stored in
the 'time-out' room, a place where students were sent if they did not
wear their ID badge while walking in the camera-monitored hallways. The
badges, like an Associated Student Body card, were pinned to student's
shirts to assure the three to four full-time security guards, who patrolled the
school, that there were no intruders on campus, Benson said. The reasons
for violence between students vary, however, the main concern for students
is image — they don't want to look bad, she said. "Here I am so mellow,
laid back and nice, but at home [in Pasco] I feel like I have to put up a front
— just kind of confident and strong willed," she said. "I've been in a couple
of fights in my day," Benson said. She remembers different cliques dominat-
ing Pasco High. The general cliques were the jocks, hicks, preps and gang-
sters. Cliques also divided Balcom's school and provided an image for stu-
dents to maintain. "There's labels set for people and they've got to live up
to them or they're not accepted," she said. Benson said she believes that a
student at Pasco High needs to have common sense and try not to instigate
issues between students. Despite the problems, Benson said she was never
afraid at Pasco High School. "I am not afraid to walk down the halls," she
said. Most high school halls in Bellingham are slightly different than the halls Benson
roamed last year. At Sehome High School, students walk along campus paths
with no security cameras and only one security guard. Assistant Principal
Dr. Nancy Barga said she believes the tension between on-campus cliques
declined since the last academic year. "Students here are pretty diverse in
terms of ideology," she said. Last year, one counselor was brought to the
school to help resolve tension between two conflicting groups of students,
Barga said. The extra help eased the likelihood of a violent outbreak. How-
ever, students who were normally open-minded began to examine
other students more closely after the Colorado shooting, Barga said. In
the Thursday of the same week as the Columbine shooting, two non-
students walked onto Sehome's campus wearing long, flowing skirts and
leather jackets. One wore a Richard Nixon mask and held a butterfly
knife. Police removed both men immediately. Their intention was to scare
students, Barga said. The other incident, occurring about four days after
the Colorado shooting, involved two students who attempted to show up at
school wearing all black clothes and white make-up on their faces. The two
students reportedly frightened other students, Barga said. She noticed this
as she waited with other faculty to escort them from the bus. The school did
not call the police, but a person who allegedly saw the students enter the
bus did. Police interrupted and took the students into custody. Barga said
the students told her they dressed up because they want people to respect
them for who they are. "We said, 'That's great, but it's not going to happen
like this,'" Barga said. The students were emergency expelled on grounds they were
deramending themselves and others, Barga said. She said faculty would have
confronted the students about the way they dressed that day even if the
Columbine shootings had not occurred. Schools need to really listen to sig-
nals people are emitting and respond to them, Barga said. "I think what
really concerns me most, as an educator, is that in all of these shootings
across the country, the students who have done the assaulting have made
statements to someone," she said. More people are starting to take youth
statements very seriously. Whatcom County Juvenile Probation Officer
Christina Hermann said their offices have received an increase of calls from the
community. Hermann said she believes high schools are still very safe,
but tragedies prompt society to reexamine issues of violence. "As a society,
we are all desensitized," she said. Hermann is referring to the violence
depicted in movies, video games and on television. She said she believes that
talk shows, such as "Jerry Springer," have a negative effect on youth
because they see guests yelling, throwing chairs at each other and screaming.
"This is all kids see — this is how we solve our problems," Hermann
said. "That's the steady diet of what they see and that affects the way they
behave around other people." Hermann has been a probation officer in
Whatcom County for the past seven years. Recently, she worked as a case
manager for Early Intervention, a program that treats high-risk children on
a more individualized basis. "Those are the things that work," she
explained. "Those are the things that the county doesn't have money to
do." In the Early-Intervention program, she worked with some 25 juveniles.
The program is now being phased out because of lack of funding. During
the past years, Hermann said she concluded that the community needs to
start working with children when they are young. She said lots of "really
angry" boys who she works with are sad and hurt inside and use violence to
express it. Girls, on the other hand, are not as violent when they are
depressed, she said. With the Colorado shooting, she heard a cry to the
community. "The underlying message that we should be teaching our kids
is the need to be nice and respectful to everybody," Hermann said. Programs such as
those at Homeport attempt to provide youth with the skills they may not
necessarily acquire in a large public school. Balcom said he is learning not
only the art of woodworking, but things that were not emphasized in his
other school, such as self-esteem, team work, respect and responsibility. At
Homeport, Balcom said he found people who believe in him. He was
given professional woodworking tools and the responsibility of operating
them, which resulted in the building of something that will last a lifetime —
self-trust and self-worth. Balcom is building his future. Whatever happened
in his life a couple of years ago is filed away as history. "It's in the past. I'm
trying to get over it and move on," Balcom said. Balcom completed his GED at Whatcom
Community College and said he wants to attend a training course for com-
puter technicians. He graduated from Homeport in June. Overall, violence
between youth brings two thoughts to his mind; Treat others with respect
and take responsibility for one's actions. "You can teach an old dog new tricks," Balcom said. "People grow, people
change." Balcom has.
Kinetic Couriers

Bicycling can be demanding — particularly when it's your job. Heather Mills tags along with two Bellingham bike couriers who have made bicycling more than just a pastime.
Mad Dash bicycle courier Anne Heller stands curbside in front of Bellingham's downtown post office, one of her ritual mid-morning stops. She adjusts the shoulder strap of her weighty, black courier bag so the pack and its contents rest firmly against the small of her back.

"It's all loaded," she says, referring to the deluge of document-filled bags decorating her bike. "I have a delivery to make by ten."

It's 9:56 a.m.

Armed with little more than powerful legs and bicycle helmets, Mad Dash Bicycle Courier Service owner Laura Henkel, 36, and her employee Heller, 32, whisk with breakneck prowess between potholes, cars, trucks and buses, en route to deliver confidential and not-so-confidential items. In doing so, Henkel and Heller have made Bellingham's only bicycle courier service a valued commodity for area businesses.

"We have customers who have been with us for years," Heller says. "They depend on us."

"They've been coming in and out of here for five years now," says Copies Now employee Norman Green. "They're speedy, and with the routes they've figured out — 'Boom!' they have it delivered."

Mad Dash was conceived on April 22, 1992.

"It was Earth Day," Henkel adds. "I thought it was an appropriate day to open an environmentally aware business."

Henkel and her husband Steve were on a 16-month traveling jaunt around the world when they began throwing around entrepreneurial ideas. These brainstormed ideas failed to capitalize on the Community Health Education degree Henkel earned at Western, much less her knowledge of cycling.

The inspiration finally hit Henkel after a summer-long delivering stint with Bucky's, a bicycle courier service in Seattle. While piloting amidst the stench of car fumes and gridlock in the city, she believed Bellingham was the environment for a courier service of its own.

Henkel was ready, but a bit unsure about how a bicycle courier would fit amidst Bellingham's other businesses.

"Bellingham is not a concentrated area like downtown Seattle where, as far as time is concerned, it would make no sense to send a worker on an errand," Henkel says. "But businesses are realizing that it costs money to send their employees off to do errands."

Some people have the mentality that a motorized courier is the only way to get an item delivered safe, Henkel says.

"I think Mad Dash has proved itself," she says.

Not realizing the amount of marketing involved with starting a business, Henkel had to knock on many doors in search of delivery contracts.

As 1992 rolled into 1993, there were more than enough deliveries to fill her day.

"I rode five days a week, all day," she says. "I couldn't get sick, and my bike could not break down. I had to be there everyday and I wouldn't stop."

This is when Heller, the other "Mad Dash girl," enters the picture. Henkel hired Heller to help with the growing business and give Henkel a "much needed break."

The two women, who look more like Patagonia catalog models than typcast couriers, are still working together after six years.
"I don't think people plan to be bike couriers, but I really enjoy what I do," Heller says. "It keeps me moving, and I need that."

The aluminum, two-wheeled wonders may have been created for off-road play, but Henkel and Heller have transformed them into sturdy, streetwise delivery machines. The knobby tires, characteristic of mountain bikes, have been replaced with smooth road slicks. Courier bags filled with piles of paperwork dangle from racks fastened onto the front and tail of each bicycle frame. If something needs repair, the bikes hold a plethora of tools, spare tubes and tires for a quick fix. They have water-filled bottles, bomb-proof locks, lighting systems, and the "Mad Dash" plaques, which are fastened to their bike frames.

One of the most draining aspects of being a courier, Henkel says, is the weight involved. The bulk makes riding the bike appreciably exhausting with each knee-jarring crank of the pedals.

"Some days we are pushing 45 to 50 pounds."

"This isn't including the bike; this is what is in the bags," Heller adds. "I had two flats this morning."

On a given work day, Henkel and Heller spend roughly six and a half hours zigging between the constant snake-like trail of moving vehicles and zagging around pedestrians who pop out, unannounced, from

Laura Henkel (left) and Anne Heller map out their routes for the day.
hidden doorways and from behind parked cars. They use alleys and tree-lined trails around the city as shortcuts, which only offer temporary sanctuary between chaotic roadways.

The Mad Dashers pedal back and forth from downtown Bellingham to Fairhaven, Barkely Village, Meridian Street, Squalicum Harbor and "anywhere else within city limits."

"I would say that we put on about 30 miles per day," Heller says.

"Or more," Henkel adds. "On big days, it's more like 35 (miles)."

With courier bags serving as makeshift file cabinets, Henkel and Heller make deliveries to lawyers, realtors, doctors, harbor-side business owners and others who pay $3 to $8 for their inter-city paperwork shuffles.

At one point, Mad Dash had an account with the Bagelry on Railroad Avenue. The two women would deliver bags of bagels to various businesses around the city via crates attached to their bikes.

Deliveries also include such items as candy, flowers and "one time Laura delivered someone's knuckle," Heller says.

Henkel says taking the knuckle from the hospital to the airport is notably her oddest delivery.

"When I went to pick it up, they had it floating in solution, in a clear plastic bag," Henkel says. "I asked politely if they could wrap it up for me."

While few rules determine what they deliver, bicycle couriers share the same rules of the road as motorized vehicles.

Nonetheless, incompatibilities arise.

"I think some drivers get real flustered when they come across a cyclist on the road," Heller says. "People have pulled right in front of me because they didn't seem to know what else to do."

Heller says drivers tend to survey other vehicles -- not cyclists. In one case, the driver of a sports utility truck hit Heller while pulling out from a side road onto Meridian Street.

"I thought we made eye contact, but he was seeing right through me," she says.

Heller walked away uninjured, but the accident left her bike dead at the scene. She finished the day's deliveries despite the shock.

"I couldn't believe it," Henkel says. "I came home to a note on the door saying Laura, I've been hit by a car, so I borrowed your bike."

Heller's attitude toward the situation is nonchalant, as is Henkel's tone as she talks about working while pregnant.

"I was still riding seven months into the pregnancy," Henkel says. "I felt great."

Henkel says she used residential areas rather than busy thoroughfares to avoid threats posed by heavy traffic, when she was pregnant, she simply added height to her handlebars so she wouldn't have to slouch over as much on her bike.

It was only the contractions that stopped her from working for awhile.

"It was the doctor's orders," Henkel says.
Ben is two years old now.

Mad Dash Bicycle Courier Service operates during all types of weather.

"It's tough going when you're physically pushing your bike against winds that are going 40 to 60 miles per hour," Heller admits.

"And garbage can lids are flying in front of your bike," Henkel adds.

"People look at you like you're absolutely crazy."

Henkel's husband Steve says he gets concerned when he looks out his office window and sees pouring rain and 50 mph winds cruising at 50 mph.

"That's usually when I call, but she always sounds in good spirits," he says.

Still, weather can be trying.

"I always seem to get flats when it's wet and my fingers are too cold to change it," Henkel says. "I've cried a couple of times, I've thrown and cussed at my bike a couple of times too."

The flood of lobbies and reception areas Henkel and Heller frequent can add to the many displeasures wrought by adverse weather conditions.

"When your drenched, soaked to the bone, look like a drowned rat and have to go into a professional setting, you have no choice but to pull it all together," Henkel says.

Some customers relate with the Mad Dashers' ongoing battle with weather.

"The other day it was raining, just coming down like dogs," says Stewart Prentiss, a Mad Dash customer from Fairhaven Reality. "I wasn't having fun with my job and then I saw you chugging along and ..."

Heller finishes, "All of a sudden your job got better."
As a chef for the past seven years on the sets of movies, television shows and commercials, Roderick Strike is accustomed to getting special requests. Sometimes who is asking makes it all the more interesting.

Jean-Claude Van Damme, on the set of 1994's "Time Cop," wanted crunchy oatmeal every morning. "I just undercooked it," explains Strike, a slim, fit man in his early 40s with a white apron tied around his waist. As he talks, his chef's knife rhythmically reduces a huge pile of celery.

"MacGyver"'s Richard Dean Anderson, who now plays Colonel Jack O'Neill on the television series "Stargate-SG-1," had a standing request for teriyaki salmon or chicken, Strike recalls.

"Most of the time, they want to stay health-conscious — low fat, no butter," Strike says. "... Occasionally, we get stars who try to live forever with these weird diets — egg white with a side of bacon."

Strike and his assistant, chef Hilary Macdonald, are, as caterers, part of Vancouver, British Columbia's, thriving film industry. As on-location chefs, they feed the cast and crew on various sets. Sometimes, the sites may be remote and industry-makers challenges.

On location during the winter with "Gold Rush," a movie-of-the-week, several scenes were filmed on Grouse Mountain, a ski area just outside of Vancouver. Strike prepared all the food in the parking lot, transferred it to food warmers and sent it up the mountain in the ski gondola.

Strike says he wants to serve food at its peak of perfection. Difficulties arise when the shooting runs late, or the director needs to get the light while it's available.

"Sometimes they come to us and tell us they're going over by 10 to 15 minutes," he says. "Then you know that you are going to serve not-so-great food."

As for the glamour of the film business, Strike sets the record straight.

"Half the day is cleaning up," he explains.

"Two hours driving, four-to-five hours prep, two hours service and four hours of cleaning." 

Strike and Macdonald are currently on the site of a new television series, "Hope Island," filmed in Britannia Beach, about an hour north of Vancouver. They have set up the catering truck adjacent to the town's post office, plugged into the local water and electrical services so they can provide two meals daily to a cast and crew of nearly 100.

Britannia Beach rarely sees this type of activity. Many of its 400 residents live up the mountains that rise swiftly from sea level. The town, once the site of a booming copper mine, is now an eyeflak of a tourist stop — a diner, espresso stand and souvenir shops selling Native American art and postcards on a winding stretch of highway leading to Whistler and Blackcomb ski resorts."
Today's filming starts with a 10 a.m. breakfast call. As the cast, crew and extras begin to congregate near the catering truck, it's hard to tell just who does what. Clothing offers no clue as worn jeans, T-shirts and flannel shirts, hiking boots and polar fleece are the unspoken dress code.

"Whaddil it be for you this morning, Jonathan?" Macdonald asks, her voice a blur of accents from somewhere and everywhere in the British Commonwealth.

Recognizing and addressing the film's executive producer by name after just a week of shooting makes sense, but Macdonald had already chiseled both first names and food preferences for most of the cast and crew in her memory.

This morning, Jonathan Goodwill orders a veggie egg white burrito with no cheese.

At the grill, Strike's hands constantly move, deftly cracking eggs, flipping golden pancakes, stuffing quesadillas and burritos with various salsas, then adding sides of hash browns, crispy bacon and sausage to the plates.

"Hey, 'beer man,' these are for you." Macdonald shouts and gestures to four breakfast sandwiches. At her beckon, a long-haired man wearing a bright green "Victoria Bitter" T-shirt lopes over to the window.

Breakfast ends just after 11:00 a.m. Now Strike and Macdonald prepare for the main event of the day — serving 90 hot lunches at 4:30 p.m.

They work at separate areas in the specially rigged 22-foot truck. This mobile kitchen has everything needed to prepare food for up to 120 people: Two propane Wolf ovens, six gas burners and large grill, two stainless steel work areas over two under-the-counter refrigerators, sink, water heater, steam table for keeping food hot and full-sized cooler. Above every area and in every nook are storage space for spices, regularly used products, pots, pans and utensils. On site, it becomes a storeroom, with shelves on both walls holding bags of yellow bell peppers and white mushrooms, milk crates filled with porcelain bowls, and plates used at lunch.

The mobile kitchen will remain at this site for the duration of the eight-month contract.

Strike and Macdonald use another large truck to transport the dirty dishes to the catering company's warehouse and to bring back food supplies on a daily basis.

Because they drive the trucks, the chefs are classified as Teamsters and are paid scale by the film company. Strike earns $21.75 Canadian an hour — about $14.50 US — and Macdonald a bit less.

"It's excellent money, but very long hours. It's like having two jobs and working 14 hours a day," Strike says. The hours are longer than those he worked while a chef at such Vancouver area restaurants as Earl's and at the Pan Pacific Hotel. Strike says he prefers having nights and weekends off to spend with his wife, a corporate lawyer.

"Here, I get to do my own menu, meet interesting people and everyday is a totally new challenge."

Macdonald is single and has been cooking for almost 14 years. Cooking enabled her to pay for college and to travel around the world twice. She picked up cooking jobs in Australia and Greece, and worked in England as a private chef in the homes of wealthy clients. She has been working with Strike as his assistant chef since August 1998.
As co-workers, they understand the division of labor and perform their separate responsibilities with little intrusion. While they work, Strike maintains a steady stream of conversation, punctuated occasionally by a response from Macdonald. "You have to be very well organized to do the job because of the space limitations," Macdonald says. "And working with someone else, you have to know what they do and how they operate."

Breakfast ended two hours ago, and Macdonald has already completed seven salads. They are in decorative bowls, waiting in the cooler for salad dressing and final presentation.

Now, she is using a hand beater to blend the ingredients for today's dessert — white chocolate cheesecake.

"I have 30 desserts that I can make without repeating," she explains, then adds that four or five weeks is the usual length of a movie-of-the-week shooting schedule.

Meanwhile, Strike has prepared the meatloaf and garlic-mashed potatoes. He then sautés the leeks and celery for the cioppino, an Italian seafood stew. Warm, spicy aromas swirl inside the truck.

Strike plans the week's menu in advance and takes into account the different food interests of his clients. Although the menu varies, he includes a daily "meat-and-potatoes" dish, such as "My mother's meatloaf," something a bit more exotic, such as cioppino or "herb encrusted chicken breast," and a vegetarian main dish.

The overall task of making sure that the cast and crew are happy falls on the shoulders of production manager Liz Staniforth. Staniforth negotiates the contract with the catering company, usually $11 to $15 per person/per day. She also deals with the crew and oversees both the film budget and scheduling.

"I'm mom to about 200 people," she says with a laugh.

"A fabulous producer on one of my first jobs says that if you pay people correctly and you feed them well, they will just about do anything for you. I live by that motto."

Always aware of the mood on the set, she takes all complaints about the caterers seriously. On other sets, she says there have been occasions when the crew has refused to eat from the catering truck. She considers the quality of food important, and also the caterers' cleanliness and attitude toward the crew.

"Especially first thing in the morning, if you've got some grumpy people behind the window ... it just sends (cast and crew) off in this direction," she says, her hands gesturing downward.

Back at the catering truck, time races toward 4:30 p.m. The cheesecakes are ready, frosted with sour cream-and-chocolate swirls. Macdonald nestled the salads and dressings into the ice of the salad bar. The freshly baked bread spills out of a cane basket onto a blue-and-white-flowered tablecloth.

Almost on cue, the cast and crew arrive and start ordering from the menu board.

"Whose 'Mother's meatloaf' is it?" someone asks Strike.

"Do you have any macaroni-and-cheese?" a girl from makeup calls out. "My mom always served macaroni-and-cheese with meatloaf."

"Well, you send your mom down here to cook, so I can get a day off," Strike retorts.

Lunch is just a half-an-hour, so nobody lingers. Plates get piled with hot food, with separate plates for salad and dessert.

"The food is excellent," says Haig Sutherland, the actor playing Nub Flanders on the series. "It's better than what I get at home when I cook."

"Your cioppino was great, Rod. Was there a bit of orange in it?" asks Bob Barr, a white-haired, bearded actor dressed in a yellow oilskin overall for his role as a local fisherman. Strike smiles his appreciation.

In her office, eating her meatloaf and mashed potatoes, Staniforth beams and gives Strike and Macdonald her important endorsement — "fabulous."
Kelly Ferguson finesses the finer points of deep tissue.

photography by g. trevor phillips
After taking a deep breath, his body goes completely limp. His head rests tightly against the padded headrest; his eyes begin to droop as she slowly strokes and rubs his sore muscles. She slathers unscented lotion over his back while her fingers carefully search for any tense tissue. Her touch is firm as her elbows delicately sink into his skin, and her palms casually slide over his posterior. Her legs are bent at the knees, like a basketball player, and she leans heavily against the table to balance herself so her movements are controlled and steadied. Her hips sway back and forth as she washes his tense back with smooth strokes. Her leg and arm muscles bulge as she kneads and caresses his delicate muscles. She uses her whole body so he doesn’t have to think about his. He doesn’t move for the next hour. Wrinkles can’t even be found on the white, starched sheets. Fifty dollars later, K.C. King feels like a new man.
When Lisa Braaten, a state and nationally certified licensed mas­sage therapist, finally breaks contact with King, the massage is finished. King remains on the table as if all strength has been drained from his system. He looks as if he is awaiting an autopsy, he is so still and lifeless.

Fifteen minutes later, King sluggishly peels open his eyelids and attempts to focus. He suddenly remembers where he is, as he lifts his head out of the headrest and takes another deep breath.

"It feels like I just awoke from a coma," he says, still attempting to gather energy. "It's like being on a drug or in another dimen­sion."

Braaten, 29, has been a massage therapist since November, 1995. She graduated from Ashmead College, formerly known as Seattle School of Massage; she has performed more than five mas­sages a week since.

"This is the path that has been chosen for me," she says, while resting against the wooden table. "This is my calling in life."

Braaten, from Arlington, Wash., went to massage school at the request of a hospice patient she was caring for.

She didn't want to pursue a registered nurse’s degree, the next step for many hospice caregivers, but she knew that she still wanted to work, hands-on, with people.

"As soon as I looked into going to massage school, I knew right away that this was what I wanted to do in life," she says.

"The only thing I did know at that time was that I wanted to help people," she says, as she tucks her short brown hair under a black baseball cap. "My greatest desire would be to combine hos­pice work with massage therapy."

"What I won’t do is anything sexual, massage is most definitely a medical modality, therefore it has nothing to do with sexual advances."

— Lisa Braaten

Braaten chooses to be self-employed, establishing her clientele through word-of-mouth and networking, to achieve recognition through her own reputation. Lacking an office, she makes house-calls in the Everett and Seattle areas.

Braaten’s specialties are applying relaxation techniques, giving deep tissue massages, dealing with pain and stress relief, and working with joint movement.

"I work with a lot of people who do tough physical labor, like construction work, people who have had whiplash or people who have high stress jobs," she says, while fiddling with her sterling silver rings.

She adds that most of her clientele are in their middle-thirties, and she treats an equal amount of men and women.

Braaten says that because massage is such a subjective and personal thing, she leaves the procedure completely up to the client. As long as the patient’s requests are within appropriate boundaries she will do whatever they desire.

"What I won’t do is anything sexual," she says. "Massage is most definitely a medical modality, therefore it has nothing to do with sexual advances. There is still a small majority of people that think massage is about doing anything they want us to do, but that would be prostitution. We have worked very hard to earn our titles as LMP’s, and I’m certainly not about to let that be a part of our profession. We are just that — professionals."

While giving a massage, Braaten completely focuses on pleasing her client, she says.

"If I can’t concentrate on what my client’s needs are, then I shouldn’t be giving the massage," she says sternly.

"If I come to a massage angry, the patient will be able to sense that through my body movements."

Every stroke Braaten makes is done with her patient’s permission. She begins the massage by asking them if they are ready, and throughout the massage she respects their physical boundaries.

Since any area of the body could recall buried emotions, such as abuse or a painful injury, she must be careful where she places her hands and arms, and of how much pressure she applies.
“I have had people have emotional releases, and they have varied anywhere from crying to getting agitated and squirmish.” She then asks her client if he or she is all right and whether they would like to continue the massage.

“Massage is definitely educating people about their bodies so they can better understand why they respond to touch the way they do,” Braaten says. “Muscles can certainly store past wounds, and sometimes I have to end a massage because the individual is not ready to deal with their emotions.”

Massage is all about having the client be comfortable and relaxed, she says.

“I never break contact with my patients during a massage,” she says. “A part of my body is always touching them.”

This ensures that the client feels safe and relaxed at all times.

If a patient is tense, it makes it harder for Braaten to locate any possible scar tissue damage.

She describes scar tissue as feeling gravely and stringy, like guitar strings, while sore muscles feel lumpy and bumpy.

To begin a massage, she breathes with her patients to help them relax. Then, she gently rocks the patient back and forth by placing both of her hands on their back. She continues this motion until she feels the client is calm enough to begin a deep tissue massage.

When the tissues are warmed up, Braaten addresses every part of the body. She “says hello to the whole body,” by touching the head, neck, arms, back, torso, legs and finally, feet.

Braaten says she works out every day so she can be fully prepared for her patients. Staying in shape helps her keep up with the physical demands of massage.

“My touch is always strong and confident so the patient will fully relax and be completely comfortable in trusting me.”

Calling massage work “holistic,” Braaten uses her forearms, palms, fists and elbows to flush out any stiffness in the body. She always completes one side of the body before moving on to the next.

“I must keep in mind what my intention is at all times,” she says. “I’m always aware of what I am doing. I must be present and grounded with my client at all times.”

She says that because massage is such an intimate and personal experience, patients often feel vulnerable. That’s why it is so crucial to put patients at ease.

“I deal with human lives — not just the physical aspect, but especially with the spiritual part,” she says. “My hands must be of comfort because massage makes people become aware of their internal issues, and it helps them to deal with their past.”

She says educating her clients on the benefits of massage and seeing them become more aware of their bodies are two of the best things about being a massage therapist.

Getting a massage is a peaceful time for people because it offers them a chance to reflect and to become in-tune with their bodies, she says.

“A massage is so powerful that it may help to change lives. People get to know themselves more than they probably thought imaginable.”

This may be one of the reasons why massage and other new-age medicines are becoming so popular, she says.

Braaten says she has also grown emotionally since becoming a massage therapist.

“I am much more aware of my emotions, and I respect what my body tries to tell me,” she says. “Our society is so touch-deprived that massage allows me to express that I care about somebody.

“Feelings are transmitted through touch, and the power of touch is amazing.”
Fred Sheffield directs attention to the misleadingly mellow routines of Bellingham’s air traffic controllers.

Six stories above the surface of Bellingham International Airport, Terry Asp pours himself a cup of coffee, saunters over to his stool and looks toward the west. The 55-year-old Asp is wearing a blue polo shirt, blue jeans and tinted aviator glasses, the kind that allows one to see his eyes — but just barely.

Asp settles onto his stool, looks out at his tremendous view of the airfield and the San Juan Islands beyond, and lets go of a small sigh. Relaxing in his chair, enjoying the view and his cup of coffee, Asp’s demeanor is that of a man enjoying his first morning of retirement. It’s not that hard to imagine him in a robe and slippers. What is hard to imagine is that as an air traffic controller, Asp holds one of the most stressful jobs in the country.

Could this really be the same job documented in the March 24, 1996, New York Times article, “Something’s Got to Give,” that later inspired the movie “Pushing Tin?” The article featured anecdotes of air traffic controllers nearly losing their minds as outdated radar equipment flickered on and off, and 200-passenger jets streaked toward each other at 300 mph.

Asp, sitting comfortably on his stool now, is far from the embodiment of stress. Trying to imagine panic and tension inside Bellingham Tower is like trying to convince oneself that birds are the descendants of dinosaurs. Hard as it may be to believe by looking at this picture, Asp’s job is very much like the one so famous for its high stress levels. In fact, it is the same job — just done at a Bellingham pace.

The North Side of the Bellingham Tower, from whence Asp just sauntered with his cup of coffee, does not resemble the bridge of “The Starship Enterprise” from Star Trek. There are no blinking lights or computer readouts and the only beeping sound that can be heard is when the microwave signals that Asp’s breakfast muffin is properly warmed.

With a sink, microwave oven, coffee machine and even a small refrigerator tucked into the corner, the North Side of the tower could pass more easily for a kitchen than an air traffic control tower.

Asp’s stool is stationed at the West Side of the tower, facing the airfield. It’s only natural to find the majority of the air traffic controller’s tools here. Indeed, the West Side features a long panel of controls, radios and other communications instruments. Lacking on the West Side of the tower, or any side for that matter, is anything that resembles a radar grid — traditionally thought of as the classic tool of air traffic controllers.

No radar in an air traffic control tower?
It seems impossible, but with only 300 to 500 flights per day — compared to more than 1000 at Sea-Tac — Bellingham Tower does not need radar tools. Like many smaller towers, Bellingham relies on a system of pinpointing aircraft positions with flight progress strips. Each strip is basically an eight-inch slip of paper that contains pertinent information extracted from the pilot’s
flight plan.

"Radar is not usually used at a smaller airport like this one," Asp says. "The amount of aircraft within our sphere at any given time is usually pretty manageable using the strips."

Before the development of an effective radar system, all airports used the flight strip method. Despite technological advances, larger airports still use computer-printed strips. But at Bellingham Tower, keeping track of flight strips is the essence of the job.

"It's how everything up here is organized," Asp says. "Just by taking a glance at a strip you can basically get everything that's important about a flight: The type of airplane and who is flying it (airline, business, private or military pilot), aircraft number, flight number, route, speed, altitude, airway designation and the estimated time of arrival," says Asp, as he points to various fields of data on the strip.

As the pilot radios in his or her position and time from a predetermined location, the strips are removed from their slots in front of the air traffic controller and filed. Any change from the original flight plan is noted on the strips as the flight continues.

"Thus, from a quick study of the flight progress board, a controller can understand the overall traffic situation and can spot a potentially dangerous problem. These strips, along with a reliable pair of binoculars and a functional radio, are just about everything Asp and his peers need to keep traffic running smoothly.

"Asp's capability becomes evident as he fires off directions to several inbound planes without a second thought.

"Asp became a controller through the military.

"When I joined the Air Force, they gave me three choices: Become a cop, a medic or ... air traffic. I knew I didn't want to do the other two, so air traffic is what I did."

After working for years in Europe and Southeast Asia, Asp retired from the military and became one of eight members of the air traffic control team at Bellingham Airport. At least one of the eight is in the tower at all times, and usually two during the 16-hour day period.

"Asp says he wouldn't mind going to work for a bigger airport, like Sea-Tac, but says his age would probably prevent him from getting the job.

"Most people who start working in a major tower start young. Training for the job is extensive and demanding. The prospect must first attend a general training program for six to eight months. Throughout the instruction, classroom training in all aspects of air traffic control is given and augmented with simulated exercises.

"Once classroom training is completed, the prospective controller is placed in a probationary position for eight to 18 months, until completing his or her on-the-job training. He or she is then placed wherever their services may be required. After several years of experience, the controller usually moves into supervisory roles within the air traffic control operation.

"Of course, just because Bellingham Tower does not have more than 1,000 jets bearing down on it daily doesn't mean the job does not have its challenges. As Asp takes a sip of his coffee a voice crackles over the radio. "Bellingham Tower, this is Cessna 1152 requesting clearance for takeoff."

"What is your position?" Asp answers into the microphone.

"I'm right down here, behind the hanger," responds the voice.

The response doesn't satisfy Asp. He looks around with an annoyed look on his face before finally spotting a small plane moving toward the runway.

"One thing you do get here that you don't get at a larger airport is a lot of beginning pilots," Asp says, hinting at the reason for his annoyance. "Back in the military, you knew that every pilot you spoke to was going to be an experienced pro. Out here, you never know who you're going to be talking to. It could be the pilot's first time up. You've
just got to try and be patient and understand where they’re coming from, but at the same time it’s important to treat them the same way you’d treat any other pilot.”

Another aspect that complicates life in the tower is weather. In a region known for its cloud cover, like Bellingham, one might expect the tower to utilize some highly scientific tools to tell incoming planes where cloud cover ends and begins. A wind sock next to the runway and several gauges in the tower reveal important information about wind speed and pressure, but basically the only tool used to monitor weather is the human eye.

The panel on the south wall of the tower features a circular visibility chart mapping the 20 miles that surround Bellingham. The map includes major geographic features such as Mount Constitution and Sehome Hill, with the relative elevations prominently noted.

“If we can see Mount Constitution out there, then we know the clouds are higher than that. We just check the elevation and then report that it’s clear below that level.”

The tower also serves as a national weather service, meaning that approximately every 15 minutes, someone in the tower records a message over the phone detailing the current weather status at the airport.

Indeed, with its eight-person staff and 300 to 500 planes per day, Bellingham Tower does not have all the responsibilities of a larger airport, like Sea-Tac. No radar screen charts the movements of every inbound aircraft — then occasionally blanks out at the most inopportune moment. The inbound aircraft might be piloted by a fidgety guy during his first day of flight school — but it is not carrying 200 to 300 passengers.

As Asp lays out four strips of paper in front of him, he knows everything he has to about the four planes that will land on the runway in the next fifteen minutes. As long as the coffeepot keeps brewing and the microwave oven keeps humming, it seems Asp will handle the stress of his job just fine.
A Grave Undertaking

R. Andy Faubion digs up the grave and not-so-grave side of a Bellingham man who makes a living as a funeral director.
"When you lose a parent through death, you lose the past. When you lose a spouse or partner, you lose the present. When you lose a child, you lose the future, and that is the hardest one for people to deal with," Ed Wahl, funeral director at Westford Funeral Home in Bellingham, says very solemnly.

Wahl's profession is one of the most cliched bits in the movies. Before every showdown or gunfight the camera pans to the tall, thin man in dark clothing who is measuring the underdog for his coffin.

At first glance, Ed Wahl doesn't do much to dispel Hollywood's physical portrayal of an undertaker. Wahl is a tall, thin man with a robust voice. His stark white, shoulder length hair and large, wrinkled, hands reflect the years under his belt.

A thick pair of glasses magnify his eyes disproportionately against the rest of his face. He shows little emotion when he speaks, and every sentence he utters is calm and thoughtful.

Wahl is one of two funeral directors at Westford Funeral. He has been in the profession for more than 30 years.

In some ways, Wahl's mannerisms and vocal inflections mimic those of a golf commentator. It is possible to imagine him whispering something like, "This will be Tiger's third try for a birdie this round, Bob." If Wahl retires anytime soon, some might say he has a good chance for a spot in broadcasting.

Wahl says he is happy right now.
Modern coffins have evolved from simple pine boxes.

where he is, however.

"Undertaker, funeral director, mortician, they all mean the same thing," he says. "We use funeral director because it sounds nicer and it encompasses all aspects of the job."

His first exposure to the profession was when he was 12-years-old. His grandmother died and he helped his parents make arrangements for her funeral. He says he was very intrigued by how the funeral director handled everything.

No one ever says, "I wanna' work with dead people when I grow up," but Wahl did.

The job is more than just measuring people for coffins.

Today's caskets are a far cry from the pine boxes of yesteryear. They come in all makes and models, ranging from the pine box to heavy gauge steel, porcelain and bronze.

In the showroom at Westford Funeral Home, more than 15 caskets are displayed. Each casket has a little sticker price and a list of features on the tag. Caskets can be waterproof, air tight, corrosion resistant, pressure sealed, and a multitude of other options.

One can spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on a casket.

When asked why someone who is no longer living needs to be buried in an expensive air-tight, corrosion-resistant, casket, Wahl says, "The funeral service and the burial or cremation of the body is not for the deceased. The service is for the survivors, it gives them a chance for closure. It helps them in the grieving process. It is a chance for them to show respect for the deceased in a public or private way."

Wahl says his profession calls for him to act as a counselor — helping people take actions and make decisions.

Wahl says he often hears the question, "Doesn't that get you down, doesn't that depress you?"

"It takes a certain person," he says. "It takes exposure, and experience and adaptability. You don't ever get callused, but you get conditioned to where you empathize with people. You draw a line where empathy stops and sympathy begins.

There seems to be more to this man than he is willing to share. He is a father of three, and he has been married to his second wife, also a funeral director, for three years. His oldest children are 33 and 31-years old, a son and daughter, respectively. He says people often wonder how his children reacted to his profession.

Wahl says his children never had any adverse reactions and neither did their friends. When teachers or peers would ask his children what their father did, they would always be very forthright about it.

He quickly shifts the focus back to his professional life.

Wahl worked as a hospital administrator for two hospitals in Seattle, for 12 years, in between jobs as a funeral director. He retired from a job as a funeral director at a large funeral home in Seattle three years ago.

He says he realized that retirement wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Once again he found himself where he was most comfortable, in a funeral home.

Wahl has been working for Jack Westford, owner of Westford Funeral Home, for close to eight months. When Wahl moved back to Bellingham from Seattle, he called Westford and asked if he could use another director.

Westford speaks very highly of Wahl. "He's a perfectionist," he says. He gestures toward the pile of files and papers strewn across his own desk. Wahl's desk, however, is as organized and orderly as the funerals he directs.

Westford's personality seems to contradict the funeral director stereotype. He is animated and full of life. If there ever was a stigma about the adverse effects of working in the mortuary profession, he invalidates such claims completely.

He talks fast and uses a lot of hand gestures. It is obvious that he is very proud of his family as he reaches for a picture of them and sets it closer on the desk. He mentions more than once how he wants one of his sons to come to work for him.

The funeral business has historically been family oriented. The eldest son would often take the father's place in the business when the time came for the father to retire.

This is how Westford got started. His father was a funeral director and
he grew up knowing that, someday, he would be one too.

That is one thing that sets Wahl apart from many other funeral directors — he has no family ties to the profession.

His mother and father owned and operated Wahl's department store in downtown Bellingham. If anything, it was expected that someday Wahl would take his father's place in the department store.

Instead, he broke away from that tradition, and set out to pursue something he was much more interested in: working with the deceased.

His parents were not too pleased with this choice. "No one should ever think along those lines," they told him. They did hope, however, that he was choosing a career he would enjoy.

It is obvious that Wahl does enjoy his profession. He knows he is one of few people who have a door in their office leading to a room filled with caskets.

This door, awkwardly positioned on the side wall of his office, leads into the casket showroom. The placement of the door suggests that perhaps the adjoining room was an afterthought.

Few things in the funeral business, however, are after thoughts. In many cases, clients make arrangements for their funeral preparations years in advance.

Funeral homes handle finances not too differently than the department stores, for example.

Clients can make payments for their funerals in advance so that when the time comes, the survivors will know what is wanted and what they will be able to afford, Wahl said.

Other decisions, aside from financing, must also be worked out.

One is the decision to have an open or closed casket. Another is the choice of burial or cremation.

When a body is recovered by the funeral home it is immediately placed in a refrigeration unit, and kept there until decisions have been made.

Though much of the work Wahl does is counseling, another large part includes clinical work.

The operating room, toward the back of the building, is where Wahl prepares the body for burial or cremation. It is here where the embalming process takes place and also where necessary reconstruction and cosmetology is performed.

Though Wahl wouldn't call himself a make-up artist or plastic surgeon, he says his job occasionally calls him to add a bit of color to the cheeks of the deceased and in some cases, he uses wax for reconstructive purposes.

If the body is to be viewed, or if the funeral is delayed for more than a day, the body must be embalmed. It is rare that a body is not embalmed for burial purposes.

The embalming process consists of removing all the blood from the body and replacing it with Formalin—tinted with pink dye to resemble blood—which is a diluted mixture of water and formaldehyde. This preserves the body.

A needle is typically inserted into the jugular vein of the deceased and an electronic pump is hooked to it. While Formalin pumps into the body — five liters on average — blood drains out and is disposed of.

The introduction of formaldehyde into the blood cleans and sterilizes it so it is safe to be disposed of, says Wahl.

An embalmed body can last without refrigeration for up to two weeks.

The temperature in a crematorium must be at a minimum of 1,500 degrees. Teeth do not burn, and sometimes bone structures may remain in the ashes.

All of the ashes are placed in an urn, including the teeth and remaining bone structure.

The average amount of ashes left after the cremation is about 200 cubic inches—about enough to fill a large shoebox.

Wahl says the part of the job he enjoys most is the interaction with people.

"You don't ever get callused, but you get conditioned, to where you empathize with people. You draw a line where empathy stops and sympathy begins." — Ed Wahl

He looks forward to helping them make it through the difficult times of the funeral and the grieving process.

The part of Wahl's profession he says he likes the least is the hours.

Westford Funeral Home doesn't keep regular hours. In fact, it's open 24 hours.

People don't just die between nine and five on weekdays. A person can't really call ahead and schedule an appointment to die. Although the funeral home is usually open for business between nine and five, the hours that a funeral director must keep are fairly irregular.

Wahl knows he can be paged at 2 a.m. and end up working for 12 hours, even after working the whole day before.

He says this very tongue in cheek though, as he admits that it keeps his job so interesting.

Wahl remembers when he joined a local service club along the lines of the Rotary. After he was introduced, he said someone stood up and wondered aloud, "I didn't know we had room in this organization for a professional boxer."

Wahl knew exactly what was meant by the comment. His eyes flash a very quick smile and he smirks a little as he explains what he calls "undertaker humor."

A professional boxer, he says, places the deceased in caskets.

Wahl is unique. He has made a living dealing with the personal tragedies of others on a daily basis. Each one of his clients deals with one tragic loss, while he deals with an average of 170 a year.

Wahl isn't Hollywood's undertaker, he's Bellingham's.
Suicidal rock stars, deranged husbands and unusual cooking recipes are among the macabre Kari Benny is exposed to on former private eye Windsor Olson's tour of Seattle's underbelly.

Photography by Erin Fredrichs

mystery machine

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome aboard the 'Private Eye on Seattle Mystery and Murder Tour,'" the tour guide says over his hand-held, metallic microphone.

"My name is Windsor, and I have operated a private detective agency in Seattle for 40 years," the tour guide continued while tugging on the corner of his neatly pressed, blood-red polo shirt.

Windsor Olson has investigated more than 25,000 files and lectured at the University of Washington Law School. His latest venture — a murder and mystery tour that he incepted two years ago — has become a tourist attraction in Seattle. Olson's tour introduces his guests to the darker side of the Emerald City, bringing them to some of the city's most macabre crime scenes.

Olson, once a successful investigator, started his business in the early '70s.

"I didn't want to go to Palm Springs or Palm Desert, and retire my brain so I thought I would put together a mystery and murder tour."

Olson ransacked all his old files, searching for ones that interest a wide assortment of people. He found more than six cases, which provide the themes for his murder and mystery tours.

"Here's an interesting story for you," interjects Olson, as he slowly drives along the shore of Lake Washington, pointing out the houseboats and the scene of where "Sleepless in Seattle" was filmed.

Peering out from behind his large, dark rimmed glasses, Olson concentrates on his driving while maneuvering through the crowded, narrow streets.

The first stop on the tour is at the house of Raoul "Guy" Rockwell.

Rockwell, known for his extravagant dinner parties, was a fur buyer for one of Seattle's largest department stores and a well-known antique dealer.

A few days after Rockwell's wife and his daughter left their house near Lake Washington, because of what Rockwell described as a "little spat," he hosted one of his dinner parties.

Rockwell's family did eventually turn up — their remnants in the house's septic system and pipes, Olson explains to the visibly disgusted customers.

Olson says Rockwell served a very rare meat at his dinner party — his family.

Rockwell fled to Europe before the police could apprehend him. The FBI tracked him down working as a chef. He was booked into the King County Jail and was released after 15 months because of lack of solid evidence. The case came to a halt.

Olson's hands fumble around in the large black duffle bag that rests between the two front
seats. He pulls out what he claims is evidence from the Rockwell family murder — brightly colored kitchen utensils.

So where is Rockwell today?

“Nobody knows, but I believe he may own an antique shop somewhere in Europe today,” Olson says, while pushing a lock of silver hair from his forehead.

Beyond leading murder mystery tours, Olson is also an entrepreneur. He has launched several small businesses including an armored car business, a guard dog service business and Bucky’s messenger service in Seattle. He has also promoted women’s boxing tournaments, which was the benchmark for women’s boxing in the United States, and established the International Table Tennis League, which brought Seattle three world titles. In his earlier days, Olson even raced and promoted car and motorcycle racing in the Pacific Northwest.

Dorie, his wife of 52 years, says she never expected her husband would have such a wide range of interests when they first married.

“I thought he was going to be more of a homebody,” Dorie says.


“Having a steady career in the investigation business allowed me to do all the odd jobs I wanted to do on the side,” Olson says.

After selling the business, Olson continued to work on the occasional case, but now he spends most of his time working on his tour business. Olson says he finds the fun in the reactions and interactions of his guests — especially when they are exposed to cases dealing with high-profile celebrities whose deaths are suspect.

Some of Olson’s most surprising celebrity secrets surround who he calls “The Kid From Aberdeen.”

“This is his house where he was found dead — right here,” says Olson, pointing beyond a tattered picket fence at a large, shingled house in Seattle’s Madrona District where grunge rocker Kurt Cobain lived.

Cobain, who died in 1994 from apparent self-inflicted gunshot wounds, was frontman of the alternative rock band Nirvana.

Olson questions whether Cobain committed suicide or was murdered.

Olson encourages the participants on his tour to come to their own conclusions by providing them with the facts of the case, such as the murder scene.

So what do neighbors along Olson’s stops think of the Murder Mystery Tour? Some people gawk and stare at the van adorned with signs, but Olson nonchalantly continues feeding information to his guests.

In the Murder Mystery’s two year existence, Olson has never received any complaints, he says.

“We haven’t heard of any complaints about tours in our department,” says Carmen Best, Seattle Police spokesperson. “There is nothing wrong with tours going through neighborhoods as long as they are not trespassing,” says Doreen Smith of the Puyallup Police Department.

Olson points out the upscale, star-studded Madrona neighborhood as he weaves his way through the traffic. His guests take note of some of the historical sites in the area.

The tour unexpectedly evolves into a creative, guided scenic tour of Seattle.

He stops the mini-van in front of the largest redwood tree north of California and talks about the history of the Emerald City.

“Isn’t that something?” Olson says. “(This tree) really dates this area ... probably 120 years old.”

The history of the murders and Olson’s life growing up in Seattle intrigue his tour guests.

“I love my city and (the tour) made me feel like a mover and shaker of Seattle,” said Nancy Jean Dean of Seattle.

Even reporters from around the world, such as Georg Sutterlin of Switzerland, have been noted to hop on one of Olson’s tours.

“I have very fond memories of Seattle and equally fond memories of our tour,” Sutterlin wrote in a letter to Olson.

With an abundance of material from his more than 40 years of investigations, Olson had subject matter for more than one tour. With this in mind, he decided to make two tours — one concentrating on Seattle’s Capitol Hill District and the other focused on Downtown and the International District.

Recently, Olson added a third tour to his business, one that is less gruesome than his murder mystery tours.

“I remembered my days as an investigator ... when I would follow people around and they’d end up in church,” says Olson with his eyebrows raised.

“So I had the opportunity to go into a lot of these old churches and I started thinking about that not from a religious standpoint, but from a historical one.”

As his tour winds up, Olson asks his guests one last question — “Everybody still wants to be a private eye, don’t they?”

In response, the five guests whistle and holler.

“If you’re going to be in town for awhile and you have a little extra time, there’s a lot of reward money out there,” he says.

“You might want to try doing a little detective work of your own.”

klip'sun
Kari Benny, a senior in the public relations/journalism department, writes about her grandfather in her second story published in *Klipsun*. She has also been published in *The Western Front* and *The Planet*.

R. Andy Faubion is a journalism major who recently switched from the business department. This is his second story published in *Klipsun*. Faubion raises mules and horses on a farm south of Puyallup. He is also a firefighter with Marietta Fire Department in Whatcom County and Graham Fire and Rescue in Pierce County. During the summer, he works for the Department of Natural Resources as a wildland firefighter.

Kelly Ferguson, a senior, from Whidbey Island, minoring in journalism, aspires to write for *National Geographic* and pursue a career as a technical writer. This is Ferguson’s first publication in a magazine. Ferguson enjoys writing poetry, golf ball hunting, and she is John Mellencamp’s biggest fan.

Avid mountain cyclist Heather Mills chronicles the lives of two women who have parlayed their passion for cycling into a successful business. Mills is *Klipsun*’s online editor and was published in the magazine once before for the account of her ascent up Africa’s Mount Kilimanjaro.

Michelle Rennie returned to university to prepare for a second career in journalism and marketing communications. While at Western, Rennie has continued to run her own company marketing outdoor apparel. She graduates in Spring of 2000. Rennie dreams of moving to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and pursuing her interests in travel, photography and gourmet cooking. This is her first *Klipsun* article. Her work has been published in *The Western Front*.

This is Fred Sheffield’s fourth contribution to *Klipsun*. After graduating in the fall of 1999, he plans to work in web site development. The Seattle native has worked for *Seattle Opera Magazine*, and *KJR SportsRadio* and the Edmonds based *Enterprise Newspaper*. Sheffield served as media specialist for Western’s Associated Students for the 1998-99 school year.

Tiffany White, a senior, is completing a degree in Journalism with an English Writing concentration, and a minor in Internet Resource Management. This is her first *Klipsun* article published. White has written for *The Western Front*, and edited its features and news sections.
klipsun survey

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When did you discover Klipsun? _______________________
Where? _______________________

Is it difficult to find Klipsun off campus? _______________________

Have you visited the Klipsun web site at www.wcug.wwu.edu/~klipsun? _______________________

What do you believe is the mission or objective of Klipsun? _______________________

What are its strengths and weaknesses? _______________________

Do you pick Klipsun up for the stories, photographs, or overall design? _______________________

What are your thoughts on the photographs, graphics, layouts and overall design of Klipsun? _______________________

Does the cover of Klipsun draw you to read the magazine? Explain. _______________________

If you designed the Klipsun cover, what, if anything, would you do differently? Explain. _______________________

Do you recall specific issues or stories that stood out? _______________________

What type of stories or topics would you like to see covered in Klipsun? Explain. _______________________

What are your interests? _______________________

Do you have any suggestions on specific ways to improve Klipsun? _______________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey; your opinion is important to us. Please continue your comments on the back cover.

name _______________________
phone number _______________________

Surveys returned by October 31 will be entered in a drawing for spankin’ new Klipsun T-shirts.
C-1 reported hearing a male screaming profanity inside College Hall. The male, S-1, was contacted and a friend said about their behavior. S-1 and S-2 agreed to stop.