Embrace the Desire
Local entertainer welcomes all

Clearing the Air
Four common myths about hookah dispelled

Notorious Thor
Western professor connects with his students

Curds & Birds
A vegetarian carves away at holiday tradition
Editor's note

In the face of opposition, it is often hard for a person to stay true to his or herself. We've all faced personal challenges that make us question who we are or what we're doing. For me, that challenge was believing in myself. When I first started taking journalism courses Spring quarter 2005, I wasn't sure if I was cut out for the major – the workload seemed too much. But I stayed with it, knowing that writing is one of my greatest skills and passions. Now, only a quarter away from graduation, I'm seeing more and more each day how being honest with myself and with who I am has paid off.

In this issue of Klipsun, you'll meet others who have been just as honest with themselves and their values. In his interview with Justin Morrow, journalist and author Mark Fainaru-Wada exemplifies this value, despite potential criminal convictions. Local entertainer Betty Desire also shares her own story of staying true with writer Lauren Allain.

I hope these stories help you understand your own motivations, as well as those of others.

Thanks for reading,

Taune Sweet
Editor in chief

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**No Scrubs, No Drugs**  
Alternative medicine practices offer a different approach to health and healing.

**Taking Aim**  
A local shooting range offers participants a safe way to take out their aggression.

**Leading Two Lives**  
Western alumna G. Val Thomas juggles two careers as an actor and professor.

**Urban Canvas**  
A photo essay demonstrates the art of graffiti.
Taking a Bite Out of Bellingham's Best Burgers

Before hamburgers symbolized American obesity and gluttony, they were the real American heroes. But like most things in the United States, they've turned corporate and hide behind fluorescent signs shining on the overpass.

Don't let the McDonald's and Burger King highway pit stops fool you — the vintage burgers are out there, idealistic and true. We skipped the corporate chains and toured six Bellingham restaurants in search of the perfect patty, asking only for the restaurant's signature burger. Judging the burgers, we considered quality, flavor, originality, price and atmosphere. We found a sampling to satisfy any palate and budget, eating six burgers in six days for the sake of our American dream, and at the expense of our waistlines.

Thank God we're young and invincible.

Boomer's Drive-In

310 North Samish Way

Boomer Burger — single beef patty, with waffle fries, $4.75 with tax.

Mike: The only pieces missing from the 1950s-style drive-in are Studebakers and waitresses on roller skates. The burger even tastes like the 1950s — conservative and nondescript. The crispy, but potatoey, waffle fries are well worth the $1.39 if a little Lawry's Seasoned Salt, complimentary at every table, is sprinkled on top.

Ciara: Order a Boomer Burger to your seat by the fireplace or right to your car window for a classic, clean taste that skips the grease. The burger dows a thinner beef patty, fresh tomato and cheese in too much lettuce, but you won't leave hungry. Your biggest problem will be finding a seat, and sometimes, finding space to stand in the line that can snake around the room.

Win's Drive-In

1315 12th St.

Yummy Burger — Double cheeseburger on a toasted Kaiser roll, with fries and a small soda, $6.20 with tax.

Ciara: After driving down Old Fairhaven's streets lined with boutiques, Win's Drive-In looks like a dive — chipped brick, "antique" chandeliers and flies buzzing around the ceiling. But if you turn your nose at the underrated Win's, you're passing up the best burger in town. The ingredients are slopped into a messy burger dripping with juice and flavor. Win's embodies a classic hamburger joint with a small-town feel, and it's one of Bellingham's best-kept secrets.

Mike: While Boomer's goes to great lengths for a retro theme, Win's feels like it hasn't changed in 30 years. The character developed in the wood paneling and sea foam-green table tops makes you feel as if you're eating in Eric Forman's basement. This down-and-dirty Northwest take on a burger carries a homemade, hearty taste. Their grill acts like an old wok, giving off the flavors of countless other burgers made on it before yours. The fries, with a crisp, razor-thin outer layer, are the best we've found.

Burger Me

1220 Lakeway Dr.

Burger Me — single beef patty, with fresh-cut or krinkle-cut fries, $3.28 with tax.

Ciara: Eating at Burger Me is no better than eating at any other fast-food chain, excluding the fresh-cut French fries (potato skin still intact) that are its saving grace. Lightly cold Burger Me burger is void of personality as is the restaurant itself, boasting bay windows 15 feet away from the 35 mph traffic on Lakeway Drive. It might be cheap, but after you're done eating, you'll feel cheaper.

Mike: Burger Me has better burgers than McDonald's, but not Wendy's. It's nothing you couldn't get at 100 other places. The krinkle fries are nothing more than the Ore-Ida frozen French fries available at any grocery store. The fist-sized burgers stick with you as a greasy coating inside your mouth.

Horseshoe Cafe

113 East Holly St.

Giant Horseshoe Steakburger — half-pound of chuck steak on a toasted French roll, served with French fries, $8.65 with tax.

Mike: The king of late night food disappoints in the burg-
er category. The steakburger was so dry, I had to douse it in ketchup just to swallow it. With nearly-raw fries, the $8 price tag shatters the Horseshoe’s reputation for fast and cheap food. When a restaurant focuses on speed rather than quality, its consistency suffers.

Ciara: The Horseshoe Cafe added the word “steak” in front of its burger and overcharged for a hunk of overcooked beef slapped between two buns. It probably tastes good to a diner fresh from the downtown bars, but if you’re sober, you’re wasting your money.

**Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro**

1107 Railroad Ave.

Lamburger with cheddar cheese – one-third-pound of ground lamb charbroiled on a sesame seed bakery roll, with red potatoes, $8.94 with tax.

Ciara: Boundary Bay and its lamburger capture the essence of Bellingham. The charbroiled ground lamb is rich, and the most flavorful burger of the six restaurants we sampled. Its careful preparation is noticeable, and its quality far exceeds that of the other five.

Mike: The lamburger stands out among the endless blitz of ground beef with a sweeter, softer and kinder taste. The melted, gourmet-style cheddar cheese still has a tinge of white to it and dissolves on the tongue, though you’d wish it would stay. Unlike the Horseshoe, this was worth the step up in price.

**Bob’s Burgers & Brew**

2955 Newmarket St.

Bob’s Bonanza Burger – Two one-third-pound beef patties topped with sauteed mushrooms, Hormel Smokehouse bacon, melted Swiss and American cheese with fries, $11.34; with onion rings, $12.41.

Mike: Sandwiched between the patties is not just two slices, but a crisped-to-perfection layer of bacon. The one-third-pound, smoke-infused patties come crisped to the edge while preserving moisture in the middle. This burger will sap your energy like a horse tranquilizer. Airy and crisp onion rings are well worth the extra dollar, as they’ll be the best you’ve ever had.

Ciara: Bob’s feels the least local and more like the love child of Red Robin and The Cheesecake Factory, but the Bonanza Burger tastes like it came off a summer barbecue grill, with a few more frills. The restaurant menu guarantees that it will “satisfy the biggest appetite in town,” but it should guarantee that you’ll need to take a nap after you’ve finished your meal.

Six days and six burgers later, it was harder to walk up the stairs to our apartments, but we were triumphant. We accomplished our mildly disgusting goal and found the best burger Bellingham has to offer — the Yummy Burger at Win’s Drive-In. Once our cholesterol drops and we regain our appetites, we’ll head back for more.

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**Mike’s burger ranking, best to worst:** Win’s, Bob’s, Boundary Bay, Boomer’s, Horseshoe, Burger Me

**Ciara’s burger ranking, best to worst:** Win’s, Boundary Bay, Bob’s, Boomer’s, Horseshoe, Burger Me

— Ciara O’Rourke and Mike Lycklama

Design by Kyra Low

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Wind is a great thing, but unfortunately there isn't much today. The afternoon sun beats down through the clouds, scattering the sun's beams in every direction through the sky. A man stands on the edge of the mountain, shading his eyes from the sun, peering in the vast emptiness below him. In the distance loom the familiar images of the San Juan Islands, the refineries in Anacortes and the flats of Skagit County. Eleven hundred feet below his toes, the fingertips of the calm Pacific Ocean weave through the San Juan Islands to the shore.

"This has been my church for 19 years," says James Fieser, 43, owner of Whatcom Wings Hanggliding. "This is the most incredible hang gliding site in the Northwest."

The launch point Fieser refers to sits atop Blanchard Mountain, a crest for the Pacific Northwest Trail, which extends from Montana's Glacier National Park to Olympic National Park. Two separate launch sites lay across from one another, both with breathtaking views of Skagit and the San Juans.

On a good day, 10-20-mph winds are ideal and can keep a pilot in the air for hours, Fieser says. The average flight from Blanchard Mountain is 10 minutes, but depending on the conditions, anything can happen. The current record from Blanchard Mountain is a striking six-and-a-half hour flight to Canada, 63 miles away.

The gliders are massive, similar to paper airplanes on steroids. This particular glider, one of 12 Fieser owns, is decorated with neon green and red and demonstrates an enormous wingspan of 28 feet.

Fieser and pilot-in-training John Vanderwal, 37, of Sedro-Woolley, assemble the glider on the west launch site that faces the majestic San Juan Islands. They talk about thermals and lift and gravity, as well as how to control the glider. Fieser says the gliders are operated by a pilot's shift in body weight. As the pilot is suspended underneath the wings of the glider, the movement of the pilot's weight from side to side, or front to back will control which direction the glider will fly. Meanwhile, Fieser remains calm like a seasoned veteran, maintaining his concentration while he performs an inspection of the glider.

"If you're properly trained then excitement is what you get [before you jump], not anxiety," Fieser says. "Once you're in the air, it's easy."

Vanderwal explains his newfound love for the sport. The concept of running off the face of a cliff doesn't bother him much.

"Jumping off the mountain isn't the hard part," Vanderwal says. "Landing is the tricky part."

Vanderwal says his favorite place to jump is located at Iron Mountain, which towers at 4,600 feet, resulting in rides anywhere from 20 minutes to three hours.

"It's so weird, because the ground rushes past you so quick," Vanderwal says. "But once you're in the air, all you can hear is the wind."

Before long, Fieser's glider is set to go, and after another safety check, he begins taking baby steps down to the face of the cliff. In an instant, he starts running full bore down the hill to the edge, and in one motion he leaps out into the open. In a flash of neon, he soars out above the Pacific Ocean and the only sound echoing back is Fieser's yells of triumph. Within seconds, he is out of sight.

Although hang gliding might sound like a breeze, a certain amount of training and schooling is necessary to become a pilot. Nick Torset, 52, of Sedro-Woolley, started hang gliding in 1992 when one of his friends enrolled at a hang gliding school in Seattle. Torset put the camper on the back of his truck and embarked on a week-long instructional course where they learned safety precautions and inspections as well as how to assemble and fly the gliders.

Torset says the way he learned how to fly was by running alongside the instructor and mimicking his every move.

"It was amazing. It just clicked for me," he says. "I said, 'This is too easy. It's too simple.'"

Every flight is a deeply religious experience for Torset. Each time, he puts his knee to the ground and prays before the launch.

"There are three universal powers: wind, gravity and God," Torset says. "It's an experience so awesome, it's like being in the hand of God."

Fieser says hang gliding makes him feel alive. For him, it is a passion, and everyday he is not working, he is flying. He has been so close to an eagle in the air, he could hear the wind vibrating in its wings. Fieser says being up there and looking the eagle in the eye, he realized he was just a small part of the continuous sky.

- Lincoln Smith
Design by Liz McNeil
Home is Where the Flamboya Hangs

Clara Olink Kelly spent four years of her youth in a Japanese internment camp in Java during WWII. Sara Thompson sits with Clara in her Bellingham home as Clara reminisces about how she and her family survived those long years. Photos by Jared Yoakum. Design by Candace Cusano.

Clara Olink Kelly finds a moment to laugh while recalling her time spent interred in Java.

Clara Olink Kelly walks through her quaint, white walled house in Bellingham, past pictures of her children and grandchildren. Her feet tread rhythmically on the hard wood floors as she enters her living room where the painting of the flamboya tree humbly rests on her dining room table — the only tangible surviving memory of Clara and her family's time in a Japanese internment camp in Java.

Looking at the unframed painting with its brush strokes exposed and only a single string attached from the back, its presence aids Clara in recalling the horrific events she experienced during World War II for four years in an internment camp in Java and lends its name to the book she wrote about her experience titled "The Flamboya Tree."

"My husband kept saying; 'Write it down!'” Clara says. "So I did."

She began her story, recalling when it started in September 1942. Clara's mother did the best she could to prepare for when the Japanese troops came to take her family away from their home in Badung, Java. Troops already had invaded Java at this point, and it was only a matter of time. As a Dutch family, the Olinks were a target because Java was a colony of the Dutch government. Holland was a country victim to the invasion of Hitler's Nazis. The Japanese troops took her father away to a men's camp in Burma a few months prior to Clara's, her brothers' and mother's removal. Four-year-old Clara, her older brother Willem Olink, 6, and her younger brother Gijs Olink, just a few months old, were the responsibility solely of her mother.

"Most people just packed clothes," Clara says. "Well they wear out and children grow out of them, but she had packed all these sheets and table cloths and lots of sewing stuff so she could continue to make clothes for us."

Her mother also brought the painting of the tree with them, its reddish-orange leaves surrounding the center of the picture. Little
did she know how important the painting soon would become to all of them.

The day the troops came to take Clara and her family away still lives in her mind. The soldiers held a bayonet to Clara's mother's back as she locked the door to their house for the last time. They rode in a crowded truck with many other women and children to Kamp Tjideng, one of the worst documented camps due to Lieutenant Senei, the commander in charge.

"His intention was just to starve us all to death, because he couldn't just kill us by shooting us or chopping our heads off because of the rules and regulations for prisoners," Clara says.

One of the daily practices at the camp was tenko, a ritual in which the soldiers lined up all the women and children and made them stand in line and bow for hours on end under the hot tropical sun, while a pain began to resonate in their backs from remaining in a hunched position. Occasionally, the practice went on into the night. Clara says the first exercise was frightening and confusing.

"It was nighttime and it seemed like forever, cause nobody knew what to do," Clara says. "They were shoving us and pushing us and trying to make us understand that we had to stand in line and bow."

In cramped living conditions Clara, Willem, Gijs and her mother all shared a mattress on the floor. If Clara woke up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom, she could not make it to the bathroom without stepping on a sleeping prisoner. Home became any place the flamboya painting hung — a reminder of their life outside of camp and of a space they could call their own and hoped to have again.

Because her mother was forced to work in the camp sewers and make sure they didn't back up and overflow, Clara had to watch over her baby brother Gijs and collect their daily allotment of rice — if it was given at all. Willem traded cloth to local Indonesians through a small hole in the wall surrounding the fence. He ripped apart old mattresses and shoveled the cloth through for bananas or condensed milk, but the risk of guards beating him with their bayonets and kicking him with their boots always loomed over his head.

In addition to her assigned task, Clara's mother knitted a pair of tube socks almost every day to receive a bit more sugar or rice to eat in exchange. The yarn came on skeins, so Clara held it as her mother wound it in a ball as they walked back to their camp from the station where they obtained the yarn. By the time they reached their mattress, her mother already had begun knitting.

"She said she knitted all these bad thoughts into those socks, hateful thoughts," Clara says.

The Japanese guards also used terrible forms of torture to make the prisoners submissive to their commands, break their spirits and eventually kill them. One form of torture involved cinching a tube containing a rat around a woman's waist to punish her for misbehaving.

"This rat would just go berserk, and it would go round, and round, and round till eventually it gnawed its way out of the tube, but usually into the woman's body," Clara says.

Clara's mother tried to protect her children from these horrific scenes by occupying their attention. She began teaching Willem how to read and read out of the children's Bible that found its way into the items she had packed. The Bible contained pictures to go with the inspiring stories she read under the flamboya tree to give her children hope.

The Japanese guards slowly began to lessen their brutality as they began to lose the war. After the war officially ended and Japan surrendered, the battle wasn't over for Clara and her family — it was only taking another turn.

"It was almost a more frightening time, because now the Japanese were not really there surrounding the fences," Clara says. "The Indonesians were against us so badly as well because they wanted self-rule."

Java was a colony of Holland and World War II spurred an independence movement among the native Indonesians in the country. The colonized wanted the colonists out and acted in a hostile manner, attacking the former prisoners and forcing them into hiding while they waited for British troops to come and
take them back to Holland. Some days the Olinks summoned their strength, dragging the suitcase with all of their belongings and the painting, and wait for the Allies' trucks to come under the blistering and unforgiving sun as it rose to the highest point it could in the sky. Exhausted, and with their hope slowly extinguishing, they would drag the suitcase back to their mattress and eventually decided to forego the ritual altogether.

When British troops finally arrived, they had given up on waiting and almost missed the truck. Willem spotted the soldiers' truck and quickly ran to alert the rest of the family. Snatching the painting of the flamboya tree and their few belongings, they piled in the truck with the rest of the women and children.

From there, they were taken to Margriet Kamp in Bangkok, Thailand, for a temporary living situation until booking passage to Holland. The ocean liner, De Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, served as their transportation for the weeks it took to sail to their future home. The flamboya tree lived with them in the cargo hold of the ship, declaring that this was their floating home for the time being.

When the Olinks finally made it to their home country and took those steps down the steep gangplank into the harbor, they received a memorable greeting from their grandmother, who lived in Holland when the Nazi occupation began.

"We thought she was going to be so happy to see us, you know, and that's all she said to my mother: why didn't you try to escape?" — Clara Olink Kelly

"Our heads were so full of lice and sores, and our teeth were black, and our skin was yellow," Clara says. "We were so scared of everything and clung to my mother's side."

The road to recovery did not come easy for Clara. After spending four years in an internment camp, she lacked the health and social skills to fully function in society. With her cautious and skittish tendencies, she crept around her grandmother's house, scared and untrusting of her new situation. She attended an English boarding school, but she didn't know the language. When she tried to read in class, she felt even more out of place.

"I would stand up and the first word was already wrong," Clara says. "I'd sit down and it was so embarrassing; it was really hard."

Through time, and with the support of her family, Clara's demeanor transitioned from the frightened child who became spooked by footsteps moving through gravel at her grandmother's house, to the gracious welcoming individual she is today.

"She's so happy, as if nothing ever happened," says Skye French, Clara's 10-year-old granddaughter, who finished reading Clara's book this summer.

French says she was sad learning what her grandmother lived through, but is happy she survived. She says she is glad she wrote down her story to share with others.

"It's like opening a history or social studies textbook," French says. "It's so fascinating when your own grandma is telling you these things."

Clara adjusted back to society, married her husband Jerome Kelly and adopted his two children before having two of her own. She has eight grandchildren. Her home is never absent of food; her children even tease her that her house is its own mini-mart.

The cathartic experience of writing the book for Clara also served as one for her readers. She constantly receives e-mails and phone calls from other survivors, who tell her how much the book has meant to them because they know they didn't go through the experience alone. Clara happily responds and talks with survivors and serves as a support system for some.

"You have such a bond," Clara says referring to the last Kamp Tjideng survivor reunion. "You've shared this horrible, horrible experience and here you are all together, you all know what you're talking about."

While providing counsel to survivors through her book, Clara gives frequent readings, even some in Bellingham. She is active in all of her family's lives and feels quite at home here — after all, this is where she hangs the flamboya tree. 

From left: Willem, Clara, Gijs and Helena pose for a photo at a family reunion. PHOTO BY JARED YOAKUM, COURTESY OF CLARA OLINK KELLY.
As the chef cuts a thin slice of uncooked salmon and slaps it onto a carefully formed mound of sticky white rice, diners wait patiently wide-eyed and mouths watering. They're armed with chopsticks in hand for the chance to dip the tasty treat in a mixture of spicy green wasabi and soy sauce and gobble it all in one bite.

Bellingham and its surrounding areas are home to more than a dozen restaurants that serve sushi, and although some diners are wary of the raw fish, Blue Fin Sushi customers, and sushi lovers like Brian Fannin, 34, sit at the bar and reminisce about their first sushi experience. Fannin says he tried sushi when he was about 24 years old and now eats it three or four times per month.

"I was just interested in it, and the raw part really didn't bother me," Fannin says. "People wouldn't eat it if it was bad for you."

Fannin looks in the refrigerated sushi case at a pile of purple octopus pieces, tentacles intact, and points.

"I could just grab that limb right there and eat it," he says, closing his fist and bringing the imaginary tentacle to his mouth.

Blue Fin Sushi has been located on Samish Way since September 2005, says owner and sushi chef Song Kim. The restaurant has a relaxing ambiance. Smooth jazz music plays over the sound system, and Kim works diligently behind the sushi bar. The sleeves of her bright turquoise shirt are pushed up just far enough for her to work, and she looks past the frames of her black-rimmed glasses to the countertop, where she is skillfully rolling up rice and other ingredients for her next customer. The sushi case in front of her displays the different types of fresh seafood for the day. The choices range from standards like salmon and tuna to the more exotic like scallops and octopus.

Kim says she works at the restaurant most of the week and has made sushi for more than 10 years. She says no one taught her how to make sushi, but it was part of growing up in her Japanese family.

Western senior Andrew Simmons, 25, says he learned to make sushi from going to restaurants and watching chefs like Kim and their different techniques. Simmons says he tried sushi when he was 17 and became hooked. Now he says about one-third of his diet is composed of sushi.

"Ever since I first tried it, I wanted to eat it every day because I liked it, and it was nutritionally what I was looking for," Simmons says.

Sushi chefs prepare the fresh fish and other ingredients in
several different ways. Sashimi are slices of fish, such as salmon or tuna, Simmons says.

"Sashimi is just a straight raw fish, and that's just really a treat," Simmons says. "What you have to do is get it frozen, wash it off, and let it dry on some paper towels for a little bit. Then you squeeze the juice out and that will get a lot of the fishy taste out. A lot of people put lemon or lime on it, and that helps too."

A piece of sushi that has fish placed on top of a hand-molded lump of rice is called nigiri. Maki is a term for rolled sushi. A sushi chef puts down a sheet of dried seaweed called nori and rolls up rice, vegetables such as cucumbers or carrots, and long thin slices of fish or other goodies. The chef rolls the ingredients together using a small bamboo mat, then slices the roll into bite-sized pieces. Sometimes the chef dips the rolls in tobiko, or tiny flying-fish eggs that are red and crunchy. Temaki, or hand rolls, are something like a nori taco, and instead of using a sushi mat to roll the ingredients together, the chef rolls the nori into an open-ended cone.

Simmons says hand rolls are particularly simple to make.

"The cones are really easy because you don't have to get the [sushi mat] out," Simmons says. "So if you just have a piece of seaweed, you can just break it in half, put some rice on one part of it, put some ingredients in there and roll it up, and in about the time it takes to make a sandwich, you've made a really good hand roll."

As an appetizer at a sushi restaurant, the server will bring out miso soup, which is a broth of fermented soybean paste and sea salt with pieces of tofu and seaweed. When the sushi is ready it will come with wasabi paste. This condiment is the very spicy ground root of the Japanese wasabi plant. Because real wasabi is not readily available in America, most sushi restaurants substitute with horseradish paste dyed green. Sushi eaters mix wasabi with soy sauce in a small dish for dipping their sushi. Sometimes the sushi chef includes a side of pickled ginger, or gari, to eat between types of sushi to cleanse the palate. Traditionally, sushi eaters use chopsticks to dip their pieces into the wasabi and soy sauce mixture, then eat the piece in one bite. One exception is temaki. Kim says, which diners can eat with their hands.

To my friends, it's known as the tentacle monster," Simmons says about a random hand roll he ordered. "I don't remember what it was called because it happened after ordering from part of the menu we didn't understand. I got all of these tentacle things in this cone, and it was kind of frightening as they were going down, because it felt like they were going to crawl back out. I don't recommend it."

Even with the unpredictability of his sushi choices, Simmons says he'll keep eating sushi every day. Kim says she thinks sushi is popular with students because it is becoming a trendy way to eat, it is a delicacy, is affordable, and most restaurants cater to students' diverse tastes. He says it is especially popular with Western students because of their access to British Columbia.

"These sushi restaurants serve sushi, but a lot of times they serve other Japanese food as well," Simmons says. "So if people are interested in taking their friends, it's not like they have to eat sushi."

Sometimes Simmons says he'll order something at a restaurant he has never heard about, but the results are not always delicious.

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Even with the unpredictability of his sushi choices, Simmons says he'll keep eating sushi every day. Kim says she thinks sushi is popular with students because it is clean and affordable. Blue Fin has a $1 nigiri special from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

While the raw slabs of fish behind the foggy window of the refrigerated case at the sushi bar make some diners cringe, others like Fannin and Simmons will continue to feverishly prepare their wasabi and soy sauce mixture as chefs like Kim skillfully slice the fish and roll up the seaweed for an increasing crowd of Bellingham sushi lovers.

―Shawn Query
Design by Liz McNeil

**How to make sushi**

1. You will need dried seaweed (nori), a bamboo sushi mat, prepared sushi rice and thinly sliced pieces of fish or vegetables.

2. Lay the nori on the sushi mat and spread a layer of rice over the nori.

3. With your finger make a little trench for the fish or vegetables to sit in. Place the ingredients in the trench and tightly roll up the sushi mat.

4. You now have a basic maki roll. Cut with a wet knife into bite sized pieces and enjoy with soy sauce and wasabi.

That's why it's called a hand roll," Kim says.

Simmons goes to eat sushi in British Columbia every Saturday with a group of friends he calls the "B.C. Sushi Eaters." The group, usually averaging about a dozen people per week, ventures to Tomokazu Japanese Restaurant in Vancouver, British Columbia. For $11.60, Simmons says sushi is "all you can eat" after 9:30 p.m. He says sushi is popular with students because it is becoming a trendy way to eat, it is a delicacy, is affordable, and most restaurants cater to students' diverse tastes. He says it is especially popular with Western students because of their access to British Columbia.

"These sushi restaurants serve sushi, but a lot of times they serve other Japanese food as well," Simmons says. "So if people are interested in taking their friends, it's not like they have to eat sushi."

Sometimes Simmons says he'll order something at a restaurant he has never heard about, but the results are not always delicious.

"To my friends, it's known as the tentacle monster," Simmons says about a random hand roll he ordered. "I don't remember what it was called because it happened after ordering from part of the menu we didn't understand. I got all of these tentacle things in this cone, and it was kind of frightening as they were going down, because it felt like they were going to crawl back out. I don't recommend it."

Even with the unpredictability of his sushi choices, Simmons says he'll keep eating sushi every day. Kim says she thinks sushi is popular with students because it is clean and affordable. Blue Fin has a $1 nigiri special from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

While the raw slabs of fish behind the foggy window of the refrigerated case at the sushi bar make some diners cringe, others like Fannin and Simmons will continue to feverishly prepare their wasabi and soy sauce mixture as chefs like Kim skillfully slice the fish and roll up the seaweed for an increasing crowd of Bellingham sushi lovers.
Click. The tiny flame from a Bic lighter ignites the charcoal resting atop the wet tobacco, creating smoke. Inhale. The pressure draws the smoke down the stem, through the cooling water, out the hose and into the smoker's lungs. Hold. And slowly exhale.

Smoking shisha, the form of tobacco used in a hookah, has exploded on Western's campus. When I came to Western three years ago, I had never heard of such a thing. Now someone at nearly every party in Bellingham busts out a brightly colored hookah by the end of the night.

I reluctantly tried hookah at a friend's house for the first time a year ago. I had never smoked anything in my life, but the hookah seemed different. Throwing away years of D.A.R.E. training and lectures from my mother, I began to ask questions. My friends assured me it was nothing like cigarettes. It was much sweeter and easier on the lungs — great for a rookie such as myself — and the water filtered out all the "bad stuff," they said.

I realized the next day hookah smoking certainly wasn't easy on the lungs or throat. I felt like I had swallowed a sword.

But are the rumors true? Is hookah smoking a safer alternative to cigarettes?

While the research is limited compared to cigarette research — due to its only recent shift into mainstream culture — medical experts agree that hookah smoking is as dangerous, if not more dangerous than cigarette smoking. Throughout their research they dispelled four common myths of why hookah smoking is considered safer.

**Myth #1: The water in the pipe filters out tobacco's harmful toxins.**

The water doesn't filter out the harmful chemicals the smoke produces, says Karin Riggs, who provides research and analysis for Youth Smoking Studies at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

"There is no safe version of smoking when talking about the carcinogens in smoking," Riggs says.

The smoke from a hookah contains similar, if not higher, concentrations of carbon monoxide, nicotine, heavy metals — which include arsenic and lead — and tar than cigarette smoke, Riggs says.

"Bottom line: You're getting the same chemicals as cigarettes, sometimes more," Riggs says.

The burning charcoal creating the hookah smoke adds 143 grams of carbon monoxide per one gram of shisha, 11 times the amount found in one gram of cigarette tobacco — equal to a single cigarette — according to a study by Dr. Kamlesh Asotra, the biomedical science research administrator for the Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program at the University of California Office of the President.

"It's like hooking up to a barbecue and inhaling," says Alyssa Pavitt, Whatcom County Health Department Tobacco Prevention Coordinator.

Smoking from a hookah also leads to an increase in gum disease. Hookah users are five times more likely to contract gum disease than non-smokers, while cigarette users are 3.8 times more likely than non-smokers, according to a 2005 article in the Journal of Periodontology.

**Myth #2: Smoking tobacco from a hookah isn't addictive.**

While the water filters out some of the nicotine, which leads to claims that hookah smoking isn't habit forming, the level of metabolized nicotine is similar in someone who averages one hookah pipe a day to someone who averages 15 cigarettes a day, Riggs says.

A package of shisha may state that it contains "0.5% nicotine," but the Food and
Drug Administration has no jurisdiction over tobacco products, and packages can be misleading. Only cigarette and cigar packages are required to have a Surgeon General's warning in the United States, Riggs says. Chewing tobacco and shisha have health warnings, but not Surgeon General's warnings.

"Just like when you're buying cigarettes, you're taking a leap of faith as far as what's in it," Riggs says.

**Myth #3: Hookah smoking is less irritating, so it's less harmful to the lungs.**

It's not the nicotine that leads to heart disease and lung cancer, it's the chemicals from the smoke, Pavitt says.

Hookah smoke is less irritating to the lungs than cigarette smoke because the tobacco is burned at a lower temperature and the smoke is water-cooled, allowing the user to take bigger hits with more smoke. Users inhale hits from a hookah longer, bringing smoke deeper into the lungs, Riggs says.

A 2005 World Health Organization study on the effects of hookah smoking reports that a typical one-hour hookah session emits a considerable amount of smoke — as much as 100 times the amount of smoke as a single cigarette. Cigarette smokers usually take eight to 12 40- to 75-milliliter puffs for five to seven minutes, inhaling 0.5 or 0.6 liters of smoke. Hookah sessions normally last 20 to 80 minutes, during which a user may take 50 to 200 puffs of 0.15 liters to one liter of smoke.

"It's worse in that you're getting a high concentration of carbon monoxide, nicotine, heavy metals and tar over a longer period of time," Riggs says. "You're not getting 10 minutes of them from a cigarette. You're getting 45 minutes of them from a hookah."

**Myth #4: Fruit added to the tobacco makes it a healthy, more natural alternative.**

Pavitt says college students experiment with hookah smoking because they learn in elementary school how harmful cigarettes are for them. Hookah doesn't contain the stigma they've learned about cigarettes, and they see it as an all-natural alternative.

A shisha package may also state it contains "0% tar," but again, tobacco companies can put almost anything on their packaging, Riggs says. Tar technically isn't found in the tobacco, but it is produced during combustion.

"We could see a change in the future of lights and no-tar cigarettes (and shisha), because the science knows that the packaging is misleading," Riggs says.

The packaging may lure smokers into a false sense of security, but tobacco smoke already contains 60 chemicals known to cause cancer. Whether the smoke comes from a cigarette, a cigar or shisha, it contains cancer-causing agents, Riggs says.

"The tobacco itself contains harmful chemicals," Riggs says. "You don't need to add the chemicals. They're already there."

While experience has removed that swallowed-sword feeling, I have a whole new set of concerns to consider when someone passes me the hose. I can no longer trust the friend of a friend's cousin who brought the hookah. I bought a pack a shisha for "research" for this story, but it's safe to say I won't be smoking it any time soon.

—Mike Lycklama

*Design by Candace Casano and Jared Yoakum*
Betty Desire croons, wiggles and welcomes her way into the hearts of Rumors Cabaret patrons every Wednesday night. **Lauren Allain** goes inside the popular drag show and offers a glimpse of the person behind the wig and rhinestones. Photos by **Jared Yoakum**. Design by **Candace Cusano**.

The single light illuminates perfectly aligned rhinestones that sparkle with every blink. They sit atop a line of thick, black eyeliner — all above fake, curled eyelashes. As her fans arrive, she gets up from the table to give each patron a hug.

Soon she'll be singing Alannah Myles' "Black Velvet" and dropping candy necklaces in hopes of catching a glimpse of a cute butt when someone bends over to snatch one up.

This is Betty Desire — the star of Rumors Cabaret's Wednesday night entertainment.

Her performance at Rumors, the only alternative lifestyle bar in Bellingham, is just one day's work. On Sundays she performs a revival hour at the State Street Depot Bar and Grill at 11:30 p.m. and on Mondays she performs the Betty Desire Show at Althea's in Mount Vernon at 9 p.m.

As if that's not enough, she also publishes **The Betty Pages**, a monthly alternative lifestyle tabloid.

An hour of songs and games is the drag queen's forte, creating a variety show starring the audience. Games are the centerpiece of the show, including the recent favorite musical chairs (21-and-up style, which includes provocative dancing around and on the chairs to songs like Fatboy Slim's "Fucking in Heaven"). When it's down to three chairs, Betty yells, "We need to set those up a little straighter. I hate to say that in a gay bar."

During one game of musical chairs, Betty recognizes a contestant. He came in second place at the previous week's show, and the show before that, and the one before that, too. As Betty laughs at his eternal runner-up position, the runner-up announces in his defense while winking to the audience, "It's better to finish second."

Betty Desire is a drag queen. But underneath the makeup is a gay man, who is typically out of drag. For the purpose of this article, the name of the man who plays Betty will not be used.

Throughout the show's 10-year run, it has maintained the same purpose — to make everyone feel welcome.

"During my coming out process, I would come into a bar, and I felt isolated," she says.

Then she participated in a drag queen contest and her life changed. In 1994, Betty was crowned "Closet Queen" at an annual drag show at Rumors.

Her first drag show taught her she really could entertain and gave her the confidence to continue with it.

Her saunter revs up the crowd during the opening "Black Velvet." She sings the line, "A new religion that'll bring you to your knees," and she's on one bent knee in front of a man standing solo against the back wall. He slips a dollar bill into Betty's bra and after a seductive look, Betty slithers her way to another patron.

A simple game of high-low card also is on the agenda. But of course, it can't be that simple — or G-rated, for that matter. One lucky audience member, typically a birthday boy or girl, gets a front-row seat. Sitting in a lone chair on the Rumors' stage under the sparkling disco ball, the contestant gets to pick which article of clothing comes off of the person with the lowest card. A shirt flies, a man sensually slips off his belt and wraps it around the birthday boy, then whips it to the ground. Another

"I'm not the prettiest drag queen, and I don't intend to be." — Betty
low card and one man takes off his sweatshirt to reveal a Jagermeister tank top. He's been here before — the tank top is the prize for the person who ends up with the least amount of skin exposed.

When someone seems unreceptive to her show, Betty uses certain tactics to soften him or her up. At the State Street Depot, she buys birthday guys or gals a Blowjob — a shot of Irish cream and Kahlua topped with whipped cream.

Betty hasn't always been so open. The man who plays Betty did not come out as gay until he was 35 years old — when he had a wife and two children.

"I had known I was different since puberty," he says. He realized he was gay in sixth grade.

He was tired of trying to deal with his feeling alone, so he planned on telling his parents one night after play practice when he was 16.

But a close friend of his had recently been turned off of LSD and been turned on to God instead.

"I thought if God could get her off drugs, God could get me off men," he says.

But prayer didn't work to make him straight.

"I was the guinea pig of every prayer group and evangelist I could find," he says.

Despite his marriage, he couldn't continue living the way he had been, and he came out to his family in 1989.

"It got to the point where I realized it's easier for me to live the truth than to live a lie," he says.

Now the 52-year-old lives two honest lives — one as a drag queen and one as a father and new grandpa or "Grandpama" as Betty likes to sign letters. He's currently single and looking, but he keeps his family close and is still friends with his ex-wife.

His son, Brandon Endrizzi, has been going to Betty's shows since he turned 21.

"Some might see my dad as ridiculous, but it's fun," Endrizzi says.

Endrizzi also appears as a guest writer in some issues of The Betty Pages. In one article, he wrote on the topic of having a gay dad. His response to the question, "What's it like to have a gay dad?" was, "I don't know."

Endrizzi explains this by saying he has nothing to compare it to. He's never had a straight father, only a gay one, so that's all he knows.

After countless shows, it now takes Betty less than half an hour to go from man to woman. She shops for apparel at what she calls "Ross Cross-dress for Less."

"I'm not the prettiest drag queen, and I don't intend to be," Betty says.

Vacation is an idea found throughout the show — from patrons to Betty and even the disc jockey feels like it's a vacation.
"Game of Shadows" authors Mark Fainaru-Wada, 41, and Lance Williams face jail time for their refusal to reveal who gave them sealed grand jury testimony in their investigation of a steroid distribution scandal, which was published in an article in the San Francisco Chronicle. The March 2006 book rocked the sports world when it named top-tier athletes Jason Giambi, Barry Bonds and Tim Montgomery as users of undetectable steroids known as "the clear" and "the cream," which were allegedly obtained from BALCO, a sports nutrition center in Burlingame, California. Fainaru-Wada and Williams appeared in federal court in September 2006 on contempt of court charges. Mark called in from his home in the Bay Area to talk about his life and the case. An edited transcript of the interview follows.

Q What is it like to rise to the media spotlight? From someone who reports to the news to being the news?
A It's awful (laughs). I would much rather just be doing my job and continue to do the reporting we've done and continue to deal with our story. There are some nice benefits about the way the reporting has drawn attention and some of the awards, and being able to write a book and all of that ... ensurably nothing is better than having the work elicit some change, which is what I think any reporter would hope to have. But, if there was a way to do it without all the attention that comes along with it, that would be great.

Q I read that when you met President Bush he congratulated and praised you for your public service. Is this correct?
A We won an award that was presented by the White House Correspondents Association. So we went to dinner and we had the chance to go to a private reception, and the President was there, so we introduced ourselves to him. And he was familiar with the work, and he told us twice that we performed a service for the country and that we should be proud of ourselves. He was very complimentary and he was very aware of the subject. And that's the bitter irony here, is that he praised us and then his attorney general turned around and issued subpoenas to us.

Q Why do you think his administration is trying to throw the book at you and Lance?
A I know they've made their argument on why they need this information and why we're the only people to give it to them. As Lance said in court the other day, there is not real choice for us. The choice is the government's. We couldn't possibly give up on sources or betray the promises we made without betraying everything we believe as journalists and everything we believe as people – it's just not an option.

Q When the reporter faces more jail time than the criminal, does this deter from practicing investigative journalism?
A If the possibility exists that stories about government corruption or big business corruption or cheating in sports are not going to happen, there is no way that's in the public interest. That's the biggest concern we have about what's happening to us, beyond our own selfish concerns.

Q Will "Game of Shadows" have a long-term impact on the way sport leagues respond to drug-testing, or is this baseball making small changes to the testing policy in response to media pressure?
A We'll have to wait and see. It has been very flattering to know that baseball has changed its policy not once, but twice. Even though the policy still remains weak and riddled with loopholes, it's much more of a policy than existed. In that sense, I think positive change has happened. Let alone a national dialogue on steroids and a much greater awareness of (health) issues related to teenagers. I think it remains to be seen how long lasting this is with pro sports and how much more serious they get about drug testing.

Q Finally, is the risk of going to jail worth the reward of public service? And, would you do it again?
A Yeah, absolutely. I said in court the other day that I wouldn't change a thing about the way this all went down. We worked on a phenomenal story, and the best thing about working on this story is it has had the effect that every investigative reporter hopes will do, which is elicit some level of positive change. And that's ranging from baseball adopting new policy to kids talking about steroids, and being taught more in schools and their being tested at the high school level, all of these things that were not happening prior to BALCO. So, it's absolutely worth it.
Food: A Human Right

From broccoli to blueberries, tomatoes to avocados, every inch of potential counter space is covered in fresh, organic produce rapidly transforming into voluptuous, vegan fare. Fruit flies, allured by the pungent, earthy smells emanating from the crowded stove, hover over every pile and every dish, avoiding the sticky graves of the dangling fly strips that have already claimed many of their comrades.

Sammy, the 15-pound wonder cat, dances under the feet of the Bellingham Food Not Bombs crew as they slice, dice and stir to the raw punch of punk music playing on the beat-up stereo in the next room. As time passes, three cardboard produce boxes fill with discarded stems, veggies, fruit and bread donations they receive for their weekly food giveaway on the corner of East Holly Street and Railroad Avenue. The majority of donations come from local businesses such as the Community Food Co-op and the Great Harvest Bread Company.

This local anarchistic non-organization works to utilize food resources in the Bellingham community that would otherwise be thrown away. Each week the crew varies in numbers, and they always welcome extra help. Sometimes only one person shows, sometimes a dozen, but the kitchen embraces both old and young, children and parents, and especially college students.

As the time approaches 4 p.m., members load a brigade of bicycles and shopping carts with the steaming-hot meals and parade downtown to the street corner where they set up a community potluck free to anyone who saunters by.

“It’s such a simple act,” Western junior Kyle Crawford says. “We’re just cooking food and giving it to people. We’re not out here to hurt anybody. We’re not out here to get money. It just gives all of us an excuse to hang out together and help people at the same time.”

Food Not Bombs is not an organization; it is a revolution, a solidarity movement capturing the heart of downtown Bellingham, as well as other cities worldwide. This peaceful movement against war and poverty is rooted in the belief that food is an essential human right, not a privilege. The movement has no formal leaders or founders and rejects the hierarchal order that governs many aspects of Western culture.

Every chapter is autonomous and receives its food either through donations from local businesses, by gleaning produce from local farms or salvaging food from dumpsters.

Brad Sukolsky, 27, an original member of the Bellingham chapter that launched in 2003, says Food Not Bombs held roots in the 1980s Boston area and originally began as a street performance by anti-nuclear activists.

“Food Not Bombs is more like a dance than an organization,” Sukolsky says. “Everyone can learn the steps, and everyone does it a little different.”

Brandy Henry, 27, another member of the Bellingham chapter, says community members who encounter Food Not Bombs downtown for the first time often are taken aback by the realization that the group offers food without asking for anything in return and without pushing any particular political, social or religious views on passersby.

“Everyone just helps themselves,” Henry says. “A lot of times when you go to places that serve food down on the street, there’s that line between ‘us and them,’ between the people who cook the food and the people who eat the food.”

Crawford says the fact that people help themselves instead of someone serving them brings more humanity to the act of sharing food.

“We’re taught not to rely on people,” Crawford says. “We’re taught to make sure we can do it on our own, to suffer before asking somebody for some food. I say take whatever food you want. Take all the guacamole if you want, or all the mashed potatoes.”

Robert Lowe, 45, attends the weekly gathering downtown on Sundays, and has for the past three years that it’s been in existence, because of the friendly, community feel.

“If you saw any of these folks later on down the street, they would say ‘Hi! How ya doing?’” Lowe says as he munches on a veggie stir-fry. “It’s not the kind of thing where I’m only supposed to see you at four o’clock on Sundays.”

By 4:30 p.m. the food has vanished. People say goodbye, and the cart-and-bike brigade heads back to the Food Not Bombs house. No one knows what mouth-watering meals will be served up next week; donations change each week and so do the soups, stir-frys, dips and baked goodies that materialize. No one is thinking about the food though. Connections were made, and a community was strengthened. That is what it is all about.

— Willow Rudiger
Design by Liz McNeil
Paintballers from all over the Northwest trek to Semper Fi Paintball Supply in Bellingham to simulate battles with paint as their weapon. Jared Yoakum talks with Semper Fi’s founder Karl Campbell, a former Marine, and joins paintballers on the field to learn the inside scoop on the sport. Photos by Jared Yoakum. Design by Liz McNeil.

A light breeze springs up from the east, ruffling the treetops and swirling a few dead leaves on the forest floor. Three camouflaged figures cautiously emerge from behind a three-topped oak, guns swiveling next to their masked faces. The soldiers silently leapfrog toward a woodpile, the crunch of their boots on the dead leaves masked by the wind. Without warning, the staccato clatter of gunfire rises above the dense canopy, puffs of dirt exploding around the figure’s feet.

The soldiers scramble for cover behind the oak again, but not before one man is shot in the chest, a deep red stain spreading across his dark camouflage as he sinks to the ground. The other two regain the safety of the tree, returning fire at the unseen adversary, a desperate attempt to avenge their fallen comrade. In a matter of minutes, both troopers lay slumped against the base of the oak, assassinated by the invisible enemy.

After a moment, the three dead figures spring up from the ground, brushing the leaves and dirt off each other, laughing. Three other similarly dressed soldiers emerge from behind a woodpile, and cross the field of battle to shake hands with the enemy. One soldier wipes the red paint off his comrade, the evidence of a well-aimed shot. Guns are safetied, masks removed as the six figures duck under a safety net, discussing the finer points of what just happened on Semper Fi Paintball Supply’s outdoor practice field.

Karl Campbell started Semper Fi Paintball Supply in October of 1990 in a spare room of his house, but only had his business open for a month before his U.S. Marine Corps Reserve unit was called up for active duty during the first Gulf War. After his return, Campbell restarted his business, changing location several times until finally arriving in its current location at 5373 Guide Meridian, Suite E-3. Over the years of selling and renting paintball equipment, Campbell has built his business into one of the premier paintball suppliers of Whatcom County. With 20 acres of outdoor fields and a 3,500 square-foot indoor field that opened in
November, Semper Fi has the only practice field in Whatcom County, making it the destination for paintballers from all over the Northwest.

Western students also are taking time off from studying to join the battle. Western freshmen Jessie Rosanbalm and Sydney Wilmsot began playing this fall and now are looking to form a paintball club.

"We have kind of been planning on starting a club at Western. Maybe an all girls team. Or maybe just whoever we can get," Rosanbalm says.

"Every time we come back (to our residence halls) all dirty and covered in paint, people are always like ‘Wow, you guys paintball. I love paintballing. Where can we play?’” Wilmsot says.

Since its conception in the late 1970s, paintball has gained a steady following. In a survey in 2004, paintball ranked third among all extreme sports, beaten only by inline skating and skateboarding, Campbell says.

"Paintball has kind of gone through this evolution," Campbell says. "When it started, everyone played woodsball. Then, it moved on to speedball. And now everyone is going back to (military-simulation) woodsball."

A first-time paintballer can get everything needed for a full day of paintball at Semper Fi. For $27, a first-timer receives entry to the field, a rental gun, mask, unlimited carbon dioxide and 500 paintballs. Upgrades, extra paint pods, coveralls and other equipment also is available for rent. Following a half-hour safety lecture and making sure the rented gun is shooting at the proper pressure, a first-timer is ready to join the battle.

"First-timers can be a little intimidated, you know, but when they get out there swoopin' and poopin', that adrenaline just goes through the ceiling, and it just takes over," Campbell says. "They just have to realize the penalties for breaking the rules. That’s when five of your friends form a firing squad and unload on you. If you don’t have five best friends, well, yes, you do, you just don’t know them yet."

Semper Fi also will rent out any of their several fields. Campbell has had all types of people rent, from local paintball teams such as Kontrolled Khaos, to families celebrating birthdays, to corporations working on team-building exercises. With a little advance notice, Semper Fi can equip as many as 200 people, Campbell says.

In December Semper Fi holds an event for the Marine Corps Toys for Tots called "Barney Hunt." A toy donated to local families will gain a player access to the field, where a number of stuffed Barney the Dinosaur dolls will be hidden. If a player captures a Barney and keeps it for the whole game, they’ll receive a minimum of $25 in prize money. After the hunt, Barney is strung up and becomes target practice for the rest of the season.

"We’ve had a lot of people show up just to donate a toy and shoot up Barney," Campbell says.
The Mount Baker Theatre is a life force in the Bellingham entertainment scene. Eighty years after opening its doors, the theatre still is as lively as ever, and is one-of-a-kind in the area. Emily Krahn brings the history, happenings and lore of this local legend. Photos by Shannan Engel and courtesy of Mount Baker Theatre. Design by Kyra Low.

A dimly-lit entryway lined with full-length mirrors reflects the dancing glows of candelabra. Hundreds of faces frozen in time watch with wondering eyes all who enter the darkened theatre. Through a doorway, rows upon rows of deep red seats wait to be filled at the next performance that will echo in the elaborate dome above and illuminate its massive chandelier. The whisper of a ghostly protector hovering in dark corners of the auditorium may be heard by those who cross its threshold.

Most would say a theatre cannot come to life, but when one hears the softest sound begin to deeply resonate, or sees the hand-brushed beauty in the architecture at the Mount Baker Theatre, one begins to wonder if that is entirely true.
From its days of silent movies and talking pictures to rock concert performances, the theatre, which opened on April 29, 1927, has evolved throughout its 80 years, to fit each new era in entertainment. Whether instilling concern about transforming the theatre into a multiplex or piquing intrigue from a local ghost story, the Mount Baker Theatre is proof of how deeply a building can become rooted in a community.

Ruth Shaw, general manager of the theatre from 1984-1994, says it's the sense of life the theatre radiates that keeps it protected by the local community and makes it such a significant place.

"You can see the difference in people when they walk in," Shaw says. "You can see the awe in their faces. We were like an endangered species, and we still are. If this theatre were to go, there's no other. You can't bring it back."

20th Century Fox Studios built the theatre as part of its movie and vaudeville circuit. Brad Burdick, executive director of the Mount Baker Theatre Corp., says the decision to build the movie palace was a risky one.

"Fox took a big gamble," Burdick says. "They felt like movies were going to become the next big entertainment piece in America, and in order to make that happen, they had to have movie theatres around the country."

Building the theatre was a smart move, according to Shaw, who also says in the early days of the theatre, all 1,500 seats sold out almost every night.

The Mount Baker Theatre as it looks today.

"A movie palace is much different than a normal movie theatre. A movie palace is larger, more ornate and thematic."
- Ruth Shaw

"That's when movies were what you did," Shaw says. "There was no TV. Radio was just coming into fashion. So on Saturday night, you dressed up and you took your girl to the movies."

Shaw says this trend didn't last once TV and eventually, the popularity of multiplexes came into the picture. She says exhibitors discovered that showing multiple movies in one building could make them more money, and the reign of the single movie house was over.

In the early 1980s, the owners of the theatre decided to turn it into a multiplex. Shaw says a group of local citizens decided to form a nonprofit organization called the Mount Baker Theatre Committee to raise enough money to buy the theatre, saving it from becoming just another lackluster multi-screen theatre.

The city now owns the theatre, which is managed by the Mount Baker Theatre Corp. In 1978, the Mount Baker Theatre was placed on the National Historic Landmark Register. The national register contains the names of nationally significant historic places, designated by the Secretary of the Interior, that illustrate the heritage of the United States.

The theatre has never been "dark." Shaw says. That is, it's never been closed except for cleanings and for its restoration in the mid-1990s.

The theatre remains the only vaudeville movie palace between Seattle and Vancouver.

The theatre's stage hosted classic actors such as a young Judy Garland in its earlier days, and more recently, actor Gregory Peck, who made one of his last public appearances at the theatre.

In the last 10 years, musical talents ranging from Ray Charles to Pearl Jam have graced the stage. Musical shows such as the traveling productions of "Rent" and "Fiddler on the Roof" also have appeared at the theatre.

Burdick says the last 10 years saw a shift in the form of entertainment shown at the theatre. By the 1930s, vaudeville had died out, and the theatre stuck to showing mostly movies. In the last decade, the theatre has increased and expanded its live shows. Aside from traditional musical comedies, the theatre now books a variety of genres such as acrobats, magicians and symphonies.

"We're beginning to attract a more regional audience," Burdick says. "Because we've changed the mix, we're able to attract more people from Canada, Skagit County and south of Skagit County. We're trying to become a more regional presence than ever."

Burdick selects the shows with input from the program committee. The committee, made up of people from Whatcom County, gives feedback on what comes to the theatre.

Mark Kuniz, a professor of theatre arts at Western, is chair of the program committee.

"It's exciting to be able to bring cultural events to the community," Kuniz says. "We're trying hard to answer the needs of all the community members."
This season, the theatre's broad range of entertainment is demonstrated in shows ranging from country music, to acrobats, to the Broadway show "Hairspray."

Shaw says it is known as a transitional theatre, because it was a palace designed for both silent movies and vaudeville acts.

"A movie palace is much different than a normal movie theatre," Shaw says. "A movie palace is larger, more ornate and thematic."

The Mount Baker Theatre screams movie palace with its elaborate design and the Moorish-Spanish theme carried throughout the theatre.

The lobby, meant to resemble the captain's cabin on a Spanish galleon, is made of plaster hand brushed with feathers to lend it the appearance of wood. Spanish knights and sailing ships adorn the room, as do a couple hundred different faces that are placed throughout the architecture of the building.

"If you look around the room," Shaw says, "the design looks like something out of the old pirate movies, or even 'Pirates of the Caribbean.'"

The 110-foot tower on the top of the theatre was built to resemble a Moorish minaret, or prayer tower.

The theatre's auditorium is home to a 24-foot high by 48-foot wide screen, the largest movie screen in the Northwest.

An elaborate 80-foot dome in the center of the auditorium ceiling draws the eyes of many who enter. Below the dome is a 600-pound brass and stained glass chandelier, which takes 45 minutes to descend to the ground by a hand crank. It is an image straight out of "The Phantom of the Opera."

In the same spirit of that novel, the Mount Baker Theatre also is surrounded by rumors of a ghostly spirit haunting the theatre.

"The local legend," Burdick says, "tells the story of a young woman who lived in a boarding house on the property where the theatre was built. She loved to sing and dance and would spend her evenings down at the dance halls by the waterfront. The woman became ill and passed away right before the land was sold to build the theatre."

Throughout the years, theatre employees have reported hearing strange noises. A photo taken at the reopening of the theatre in 1996 captures a hazy figure thought to be the ghost, or Judy, as employees have taken to calling her.

"If this theatre has anything, it doesn't have a ghost, it has an angel."

-Ruth Shaw

Dressing rooms at the Mount Baker Theatre.
A group gathers in the lobby of the Mount Baker Theatre.

spotted sitting in the back row of the auditorium.

"It was me," Shaw says. "I didn't tell anyone. I let them have their fun."

Still, some employees believe there's more to it than fun and imagination.

Natalie Anderson, the theatre's house manager, has worked at the theatre since September. On one of her first nights in the building, she and her cousin, the only two in the theatre, were standing at the back of the stage. From somewhere in the pitch black auditorium, the two women heard a voice speak to them.

"It was definitely a female voice," Anderson says. "It was very airy or breathy and came from the back of the theatre. I felt like maybe it was her welcoming me."

Although Anderson couldn't make out what the voice actually said, both women heard it. Anderson says she finds it comforting, like the spirit is watching over the theatre.

Shaw shares Anderson's feeling about someone protecting the theatre.

"If this theatre has anything," Shaw says, "it doesn't have a ghost, it has an angel."

Shaw says the fact this theatre is one of the few of its kind to still be standing is a blessing to Whatcom County and credits the theatre's survival to those who fought to keep it open.

"You have to care about this building," Shaw says, "because if no one cares, it's going to die. You take an old building, and you shut it up, and it loses its soul. You have to have people in it doing things for it to live."

From the top of its lofty tower to the darkest corners of its stage, a strong life force radiates throughout the theatre. A ghost? An angel? Eighty years of intrigue? The theatre protector is a mystery that may never be solved, but as long as the soul of this theatre is alive, it will always draw those seeking to solve it. 

"You have to care about this building, because if no one cares, it's going to die. You take an old building, and you shut it up, and it loses its soul. You have to have people in it doing things for it to live."

-Ruth Shaw

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Western senior Chris Dutton lines up a shot at Kendrick's Billiards on a Thursday night during a 25-and-under tournament. PHOTOS BY JARED YOKUM

Another Thursday night rolls around, and you're sitting on the couch with your nose against the window, smudging the pane with your fingertips as you wave goodbye to your friends marching their way downtown. Maybe they smiled at you sympathetically, or maybe they just asked to borrow $2 for a pitcher of cheap beer at the World Famous Up & Up Tavern; either way, you're not invited. You don't make the cut. You're not 21.

Watching your friends celebrate their 21st birthdays, one after the other, is like having a summer birthday in elementary school. You took a break from your multiplication tables to sing happy birthday to your classmates during the school year, but on your birthday — forget it. No cupcakes for the class and no cardboard birthday crown.

So what do you do when your friends choose happy hour instead of your company? Join them downtown. Bellingham offers more of a nightlife than just the bars scattered down State Street.

Monday
If you drop by Fantasia Espresso & Tea during the day, you'll easily find space to spread your books across one of the big wooden tables and study, but if you show up at 8:30 p.m. on a Monday, good luck. You're standing. Fantasia's Poetry Night brings poets of all ages to the microphone, and attracts an equally diverse audience that peeks into the long coffeehouse for the 8 p.m. shows, sometimes for free, but never for more than $5, she says.

Tuesday
If poetry doesn't suit you, try your shot at pool. Kendrick's Billiards is open until midnight, and will stay open until you finish your last game, owner Cambria Rollo says.

"We're here for the 8- to 80-year-olds," she says. "We have elderly men who come in here because they don't want to go to the bars anymore, and they remember going to pool halls when they were younger."

Pool balls echo over music streaming from the speakers, and the smell of grilled panini sandwiches tempts customers. Rollo says the turkey, bacon and avocado panini is currently her favorite on the menu, which customers can buy for $6.50 or a half-portion for $5.50. She also recommends the all-fruit smoothies, which cost $3.75, for underage patrons who are looking for a drink.

Not to say that a more "mature" crowd couldn't order a drink; four men toast their beers, while two tables over, a young boy sets up a game with his dad.

"My 7-year-old's a better pool player than I am," Rollo says.

Monday through Thursday, you can play on a table for $5 per hour for one or two players and $6 for three or more players before 7 p.m. After 7 p.m., the rates raise to $8 per hour for one to two players and $10 for three or more players.

Wednesday
You're sure to score a line at 20th Century Bowl on North State Street, because Wednesday is the only night of the week the place isn't crawling with league bowlers, manager Jay Dennison says. 20th Century is cheap fun; shoes cost $1.50 and lanes cost $2 per game before 5 p.m., on Wednesdays and $3 per game any time after five.

"It's an activity that doesn't involve going out and getting hammered," Dennison says. "Going to the movies is fun, but this is a lot more entertaining than eating popcorn. Here you're moving instead of staring at a screen."

But if your friends insist (we get it, you can drink) it's also a pub. Coerce the 21-year-olds to join you for a game — you can hustle them out of money as their game worsens with every beer.

Thursday
The Upfront Theatre's new improvisation and sketch comedy show, "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly," is exclusive to Thursday nights at 7:30 p.m. On Friday and Saturday nights, the Upfront's shows are $10 for general tickets and $8 for students, but Thursday's acts cost $5, making it the cheapest entertainment you'll find.

Friday
A Friday night movie is a classic choice that transcends time (and age), and it's a luxury that's hard to fit in on a weekday. Bellingham's only independent movie theater, the Pickford Cinema, offers movies that you can't necessarily find at the other cinemas in town — a treat if you want to see something besides "Snakes on a Plane."

If you're looking for a more interactive environment to top off your week, Fantasia doubles as a concert venue most Friday nights, Conner says. Audience members fill the coffeehouse for the 8 p.m. shows, sometimes for free, but never for more than $5, she says.

Saturday
When Saturday finally comes, skip your microwave and eat out. Rudy's Pizzeria has more choices than your cupboard and will taste better than anything you can muster the energy to cook after a long week. It's not too expensive and is open until midnight Saturday; if you can't decide how to combine Rudy's 50-plus toppings, order a couple of pizzas and stay all night.

Be proud of your infancy and take advantage of your youth. You're better than some bitter bar-hop-wannabe. Pretty soon you'll be telling your friends that no, they had to be there, unlike them, you'll actually remember your evening.

— Ciara O'Rourke
Design by Kyra Low
From my perch in her kitchen I can see laundry, carefully strung along a clothesline, swaying above the backyard. My host, Maria, a rotund Italian woman with an obvious passion for food, bustles around me, wondering what is wrong with her strange American guest. As she paces from the simmering pots on the stove to her fully stocked refrigerator, I feel the gap between us widen.

Maria doesn't know what to do with me. I won't eat her meatballs.

Seventeen years earlier and 5,437 miles away from that visit to Genoa, Italy, I peered over the kitchen counter in disgust at the chicken nuggets my mom had prepared for dinner. I explained that I wouldn't be partaking in that portion of the meal that day or ever again because, as my older brother had just informed me, those things used to be alive.

I've grown slightly taller since I was 4 years old. My taste in music has evolved, and my opinion of what constitutes a wild Saturday night has changed. My stubborn refusal to eat meat, however, has stuck with me. Like a third eye, this choice has created countless awkward situations and has provoked looks of disgust and disbelief.

I didn't become a vegetarian because I am a compassionate animal lover. I wish I had — it would certainly make surviving the barrage of questions that follow revealing my food preferences easier to handle.

I think eating a hamburger is the equivalent of eating an earthworm — I would rather not digest anything that was once capable of independent movement because I think it's gross. I also avoid mayonnaise because it looks creepy when you shake the jar, but I've never been asked if my decision to abstain from the condiment was the result of my sympathy for lard.

My theory is that, in order to distract everyone from Thanksgiving's lack of meaning, a turkey farmer and marketing genius decided to make it a celebration of carnivores. Turkey was the perfect choice, he must have reasoned, because of its ability to send holiday bingers into a tryptophan-induced haze.

With glazed eyes and unbuckled belts, Turkey day revelers inevitably end their meat celebrations in a crumpled heap on the couch, often succumbing to their drooping eyelids during the football-viewing marathon portion of the event. Each year, I am the only one who is awake to eagerly anticipate the presentation of the pies.

At Christmas, I hardly give the glistening carcass of choice a sidelong glance before cruising toward meat's geeky, underappreciated sidekicks. After stuffing myself with anti-Arkins sandwiches — piles of mashed potatoes squished between hunks of bread — I let holiday chatter drift around me, wondering whether I'm missing out on the real celebration. Maybe the only thing that could be more magical than this commercially driven event would be my ability to partake in the ham-or-turkey-eating extravaganza.

Maybe then I'd believe in Santa. Maybe then I'd go to church.

My family, who used to own a restaurant that specialized in clam chowder and burgers, has had a difficult time grappling with my choice. Digging clams is a common family outing, and smoked salmon is an appetizer at every holiday dinner. Although my family members have, for the most part, accepted that my disgust with meat is more than a passing phase, my brother has never tired of taunting me with oyster shooters or shrimp cocktails.

Throughout the years, my family and close friends have replaced their failed attempts to persuade me to eat meat with well-timed sarcastic jabs at my lifestyle — a solution we have created to act as stand-ins for the real thing.

For me, eating fake meat is the equivalent of purchasing a fake Louis Vuitton purse. I can't afford one, so I'd rather not pretend.

I'll take my broccoli without a side of rubbery wheat gluten or authentic turkey gizzard, thanks.

"I know that my half-assed anti-meat policy is the result of a temper tantrum rather than a steady moral conviction."
On a brisk October morning, marine paleoecology students with buckets, shovels and nets in hand follow their professor, Thor Hansen, 55, down the trail to Bellingham’s Clayton Beach for a critter-catching field trip. The sun is warm for October, reflecting brightly off the water as Hansen gathers the students together and instructs everyone to raise their arms in the air.

“Thank you, god of the sun, for smiling on us today,” Hansen says, arms flailing. “And thank you god of wind for being somewhere else.”

The slim, 6-foot-5-inch, gray-haired professor towers over his students. Bare-legged, his feet in comfortable sandals, Hansen turns to the class and shouts a short field trip orientation, then immediately sits on a log to remove his shoes and shirt and sets the students loose in the water. Some wade in timidly until Hansen pipes up again, “Is that as deep as you guys can go? Come on.”

Hansen has been at Western for 21 years and teaches introduction to geology, physical geology, historical geology, marine paleoecology, dinosaurs and the popular “monsters” class. The monsters class is English 238: Society through its literature: the monstrous body and Geology 204: Geology and society.

Hansen’s students say his humor and teaching style attract increasing numbers of students to his various classes, including the marine paleoecology class.

Hansen and his students spend two hours on their field trip at Clayton sifting through the sand and mud, scooping up anything living or recently dead. He knows each student’s name, and bends down to get in close and see what they find with their nets and sifters. Any crab, worm, clam or fish apprehended goes into a bucket for later. This is just one of the ways Hansen says, he provides students with hands-on activities for their study.

“The idea is that instead of me just lecturing about it, they get to come out and see it for themselves,” Hansen says, wearing a pair of sunglasses he found on a beach log just minutes earlier.

He speaks seriously about his teaching goals, but then is at once silly again, smiling proudly as he shows off his new find.

“I like these yellow lenses because they make everything look bright.”

Hansen, who won Western’s Peter J. Elich Excellence in Teaching award in 2001, also teaches the monsters course with English professor Bruce Beasley. The two professors have known each other for about six years, Hansen says. He approached Beasley about doing a class about monsters and exploring them through scientific inquiry and literature. Beasley was equally as enthusiastic, and because they have the same sense of humor, they became best friends. They actually live down the street from each other and have dinner at each others’ homes several times a week, constantly talking about ways to make the monsters class better every Winter quarter, Hansen says.

Western junior Anthony Mason’s first experience with Hansen was the monsters class in winter 2006.

“Thor seems like a giant 7-year-old to me,” Mason says. “And he really is giant.”

Hansen says he describes himself more as a “giant 9-year-old” who is always picking up new hobbies like salvaging old stereo equipment and collecting used records. Hansen also collects skeletons, and says people will often go out of their way to find him rotting carcasses. He says a former student sent him two grizzly bear heads from Alaska, and his own daughter, Laura, 18, brought home a partially-hairless dead squirrel.
and left it on their back porch.

"That was very sweet of her," Hansen says.

Hansen previously had a cage in his back yard he called the "rot box," where he threw such dead squirrel carcasses to naturally decompose outside until he had a perfect skeleton as a result.

Laura's squirrel and the rot box are fun stories in Hansen's monsters class, Mason says, but the most popular lecture every winter quarter is on Valentine's Day. Mason says Hansen spends the hour-and-a-half period talking about "monstrous sex," including odd fetishes, dinosaur sex and sex in the animal world.

Mason says Hansen explored animal sex with the class by bringing in a life-size plastic replica of a blue whale penis.

"He had a little brief case and plugged in the self-inflating whale penis and then he said, 'Behold. The biggest penis in the world,'" Mason says.

Hansen says the replica is the climax of his most tongue-in-cheek lecture. He says he made the 11-foot-long, one-foot-diameter tube out of plastic sheeting and inflated it using an old vacuum cleaner motor.

"There's nothing like the look of academic wonder on students' faces when they see an 11-foot whale penis being inflated. Now that's teaching."

- Thor Hansen

"He's gonzo," Perttu says. "He has this really awesome enthusiasm for whatever he teaches. He just expects great things out of you and delivers these astounding lectures, and you can tell this is what he lives for."

Though Hansen knows his classes gain a reputation for their humor, he says he would rather be known for the content of his lectures than his stand-up comedy.

"I'm actually a little sensitive to the impression that I'm just doing it all to get a laugh," Hansen says. "I'm a very serious teacher, and I think very carefully about how to get points across and the most important concepts to teach."

After the marine paleoecology students emerge from the water and collect their buckets, Hansen spreads a net on the beach to take a biological inventory. The group caught 12 Dungeness crabs, a purple shore crab, two hermit crabs, algae, and a shrimp, among other species. The group counts and documents the living things, then throws them back in the water for Hansen's 6-year-old golden retriever, Worf, to chase down.

"Before we leave, I want a huge erection," Hansen announces to the group.

There is silence, then a "Not it!" echoes in the crowd. Hansen laughs and tells the students to take their shovels and dig a big hole in the beach. Then in an Iwo Jima-style effort, the group picks up a huge log to put in the hole. Remaining students fill in the hole with sand and reinforce the bottom with rocks. There stands their driftwood totem pole, an offering to the gods for the beautiful day, Hansen says.

"Why, what did you think I was talking about?" Hansen asks, smirking proudly.

—Shawn Query

Design by Liz McNeil

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