



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

Klipsun Magazine

Western Student Publications

1-2001

Klipsun Magazine, 2001, Volume 31, Issue 02 - January

Scott LaMont
Western Washington University

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



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

Recommended Citation

LaMont, Scott, "Klipsun Magazine, 2001, Volume 31, Issue 02 - January" (2001). *Klipsun Magazine*. 206.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/klipsun_magazine/206

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

KLIPSUN

Jan. 2001 volume 31 issue 2



Klipsun magazine is named after a Lummi word meaning beautiful sunset. Western's Journalism Department publishes *Klipsun* twice per quarter. <http://klipsun.wvu.edu/experience.html>

Editor-in-Chief

Scott LaMont

Managing Editor

Sören Velice

Story Editors

Sarah Crowley

Angela D. Smith

Photo Director

Daniel J. Peters

Design Director

Tyler Stout

Designers

Matthew Beechinor

Cameron Chaussee

Paul McCoy

Online Editor

Brendan Shriane

Adviser

Shearlean Duke

Writers

Sharon Armbruster

Monica Bell

Jessica Blair

Kelly Cudworth

Lisa Curdy

Bradey Day

Melissa Evavold

Marc Fenton

Kacee Gradl

Sara Hixson

Jacob Horn

Liam House-Doyle

Aaron Jacoby

Ken Jager

Craig Kanaya

Heather King

Jackie Mercurio

Siobhan Millhouse

Katy Mullen

James Neal

Travis Phelps

Christie Shepard

Heidi Thomsen

Shannon Ward

Cover Design

Matthew Beechinor

Cover photos

Sarah Hodge

Daniel J. Peters

Angela D. Smith

klipsun

Jan. 2001
Volume 31
Issue 2

4
boat on the rocks



Aaron Jacoby is a public relations major with a concentration in marketing. He hopes to graduate next fall and work in image advertising. If that falls through, he looks forward to beginning a career as a fact-checker with the *Weekly World News* or *National Enquirer*. In his free time, Aaron enjoys a big bowl of Lucky Charms and WWF wrestling. He has previously been published in *The Western Front*; this is his first contribution to *Klipsun*.

8
hitting the paydirt



Liam House-Doyle was born in a log cabin on Washington's Elwha River. He likes to sing old-time folk songs about rivers and how they symbolize life. Since he became a writer and a staunch salmon protector, his life-mission is to free the Elwha of its dams. Inspirations from his recent article about metal detecting have changed his post-college career plans from "undecided" to full-time treasure hunter. If that doesn't work, he plans to travel and write about heavenly sport-fishing destinations.

10
life in the fast lanes



Sara Hixson, SWF, LD/ND. Currently seeking journalism degree and non-HWP male who can appreciate a girl in green snakeskin pants. Along with being published in *Klipsun* and *The Western Front*, she is most proud of cooking her first Thanksgiving dinner and winning a Western bowling tournament. After graduation Sara looks forward to a career in public relations, marrying a "Chris Farley-ish" man and living in a van down by the river.

12
musical interlude



Heidi Thomsen is a senior political science and journalism double major who is trying desperately to get certified in Internet Resource Creation before she blows up the Western computer labs. Outside the lab she can often be found encrusted in dried mud from a previous bike ride or singing to The Posies' "I am the Cosmos." She loves hearing stories from her grandparent's generation and watching Tom Brokaw. When she left for college, her mother gave her a round, green stone with the word "live" painted in the middle. It is her most prized possession to this day.

16
beastmaster



Katy Mullen is a senior public relations major and political science minor. When she isn't writing she can be found perfecting the art of procrastination by engaging in a pub crawl, getting her groove on, or playing lacrosse for Western. Katy enjoys moonlit walks on the beach, hot cocoa in front of the fire, picnics in the park and tacky cliches. She has previously been published in *The Western Front*. This is her first contribution to *Klipsun*.

20
b.c. smackdown



Brendan Shriane is a news-editorial major working on an Internet Resource Creation minor. His work has appeared in Seattle Central Community College's *The Collegian*, *The Western Front* and *What's Up Magazine*, as well as many bathroom walls around Western Washington. If he was a pro wrestler, he'd often say "That's Mister Bingo The Flying Monkey to you, pal." Other dream wrestler names of his include Dr. Anachronism, Dr. Anabolic Steroid and Vesparado. Or how about Dr. Anemia?

24
recycled spirits



Born the daughter of a nuclear physicist and a computer programmer, **Heather King** was doomed to a life of nerdhood. Her favorite movie is *Clueless*; favorite song "Thug Passion" by Tupac Shakur; favorite food, grapes; favorite place Siena, Italy; favorite artist Gillian Hodge, her grandmother; favorite sport, running; favorite animal, poison dart frog; favorite basketball stars, Kelly Middlesworth and Lewis McCulloch and her favorite word, PORK! Her only lifetime goal is to be able to do a cartwheel forever. She thanks all the strange people that have come in and out of her life for whom without she might never have been weird.

28
making mittens out of kittens



Shannon Ward is a journalism major and psychology minor. This is her second contribution to *Klipsun*, and she has previously been published in *The Western Front*. After graduation, she will return to Portland, where she will brush her 20-pound cat Domino's fur on a daily basis and collect his fur until she has enough to one day knit a sweater from it.

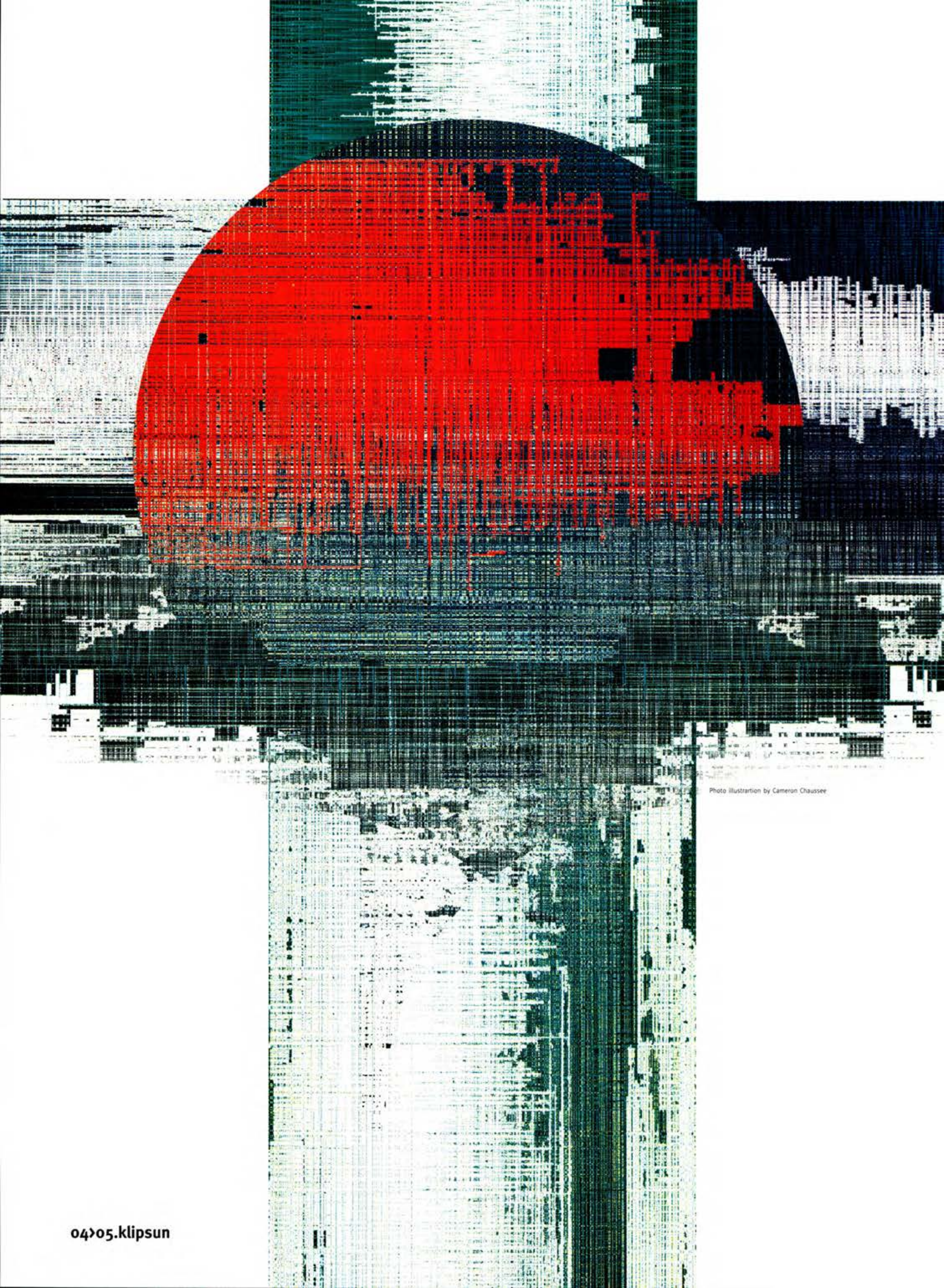
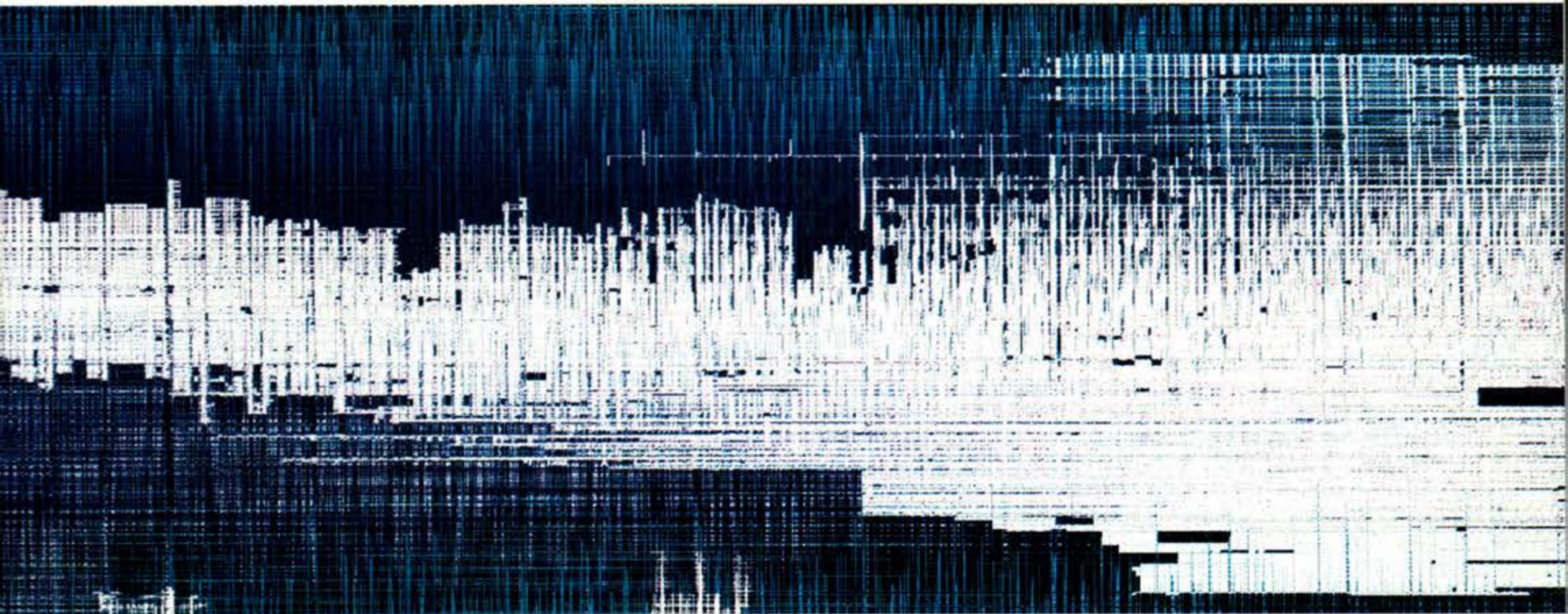


Photo illustration by Cameron Chaussee

Boat on the rocks



Two Seattle-area women experience the events leading to the deaths of more than 80 on the Aegean Sea. **Aaron Jacoby** gives their details of the Sept. 26 accident.

The sun shone on the deck of the 345 foot, 4,407-ton ferry Express Samina, which was waiting as passengers and cars boarded in Piraeus, the port of Athens, on Sept. 26, 2000. As the ferry sat alongside the dock, its crew prepared for a 17-hour journey through the Pelloponesian Islands. Heidi Hart, 27, a bookkeeper from Seattle, wandered the deck looking for safety equipment.

Upon inspection of the ship's wooden lifeboats, Hart turned to her friend, Christine Shannon, 32, and said, "Look at this little, dinky propeller. If we sink, we're screwed."

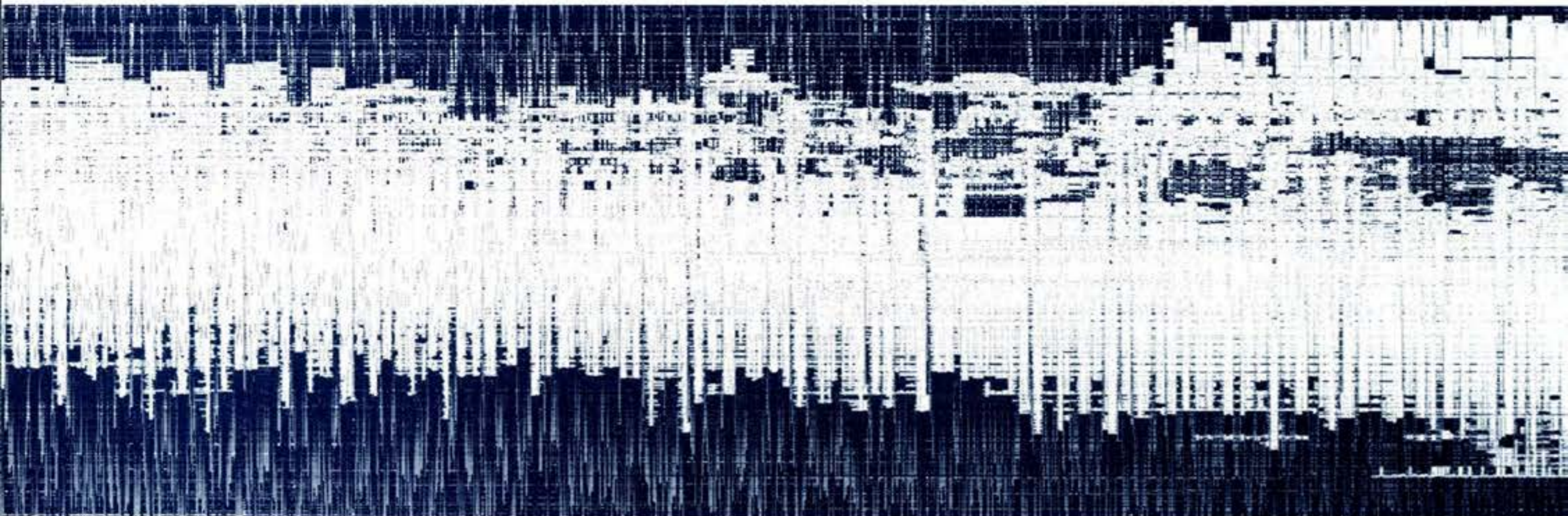
"It's a good thing there aren't any icebergs out here," replied Shannon, who works at the Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island.

Neither woman realized how prophetic their words were. Soon, the Express Samina would be at the bottom of the Aegean Sea and 80 people would be dead. In the aftermath of the accident, five men would be prosecuted for murder; the company that owned the ferry, Minoan Flying Dolphins, and several departments of the Greek government would come under criminal investigation.

When Hart and Shannon, who had met in a Seattle bar two years ago, began planning a trip through Israel, Egypt, Greece and The Netherlands, they never could have guessed what awaited them. Following the accident, the women would be thrust into a struggle involving physical danger, mental scars, litigation and media manipulation.

Hart and Shannon wanted to be on another ferry that day, heading to the island of Santorini. Unfortunately, the prospect of a long ferry trip late at night prompted them to change plans and head to the island of Paros, 100 miles southeast of Athens.

The sky was clear as the women boarded the ferry carrying a backpack containing clothes, their passports, visas and money. Hart said the temperature was pleasant and felt she would need no more than a pair of pants and a shirt to keep warm.



An hour into the trip, the wind began blowing. Soon, gusts left the women shivering.

"It was windy enough you had to stand behind something to stay comfortable," Hart said. "I put on all the clothes I had and wrapped my dress around my neck to keep warm."

In an effort to escape the wind chill, Hart and Shannon soon moved below decks and settled in for the remainder of the five-hour trip to Paros.

The women found a bench to relax on and Hart prepared to take a nap. On the next bench, she saw a man wearing a jacket holding a pink and yellow backpack and a green bag.

Reports in a Greek newspaper, Ta Nea, say the ship's captain, Vassilis Yannakis, testified in court that at some point after the ferry left port, he became ill and left the bridge to take a nap, leaving his first mate to guide the ship through the wind-tossed seas.

Passengers have reported that the first mate and some other crew members were with a large group of passengers, watching a European Champions League soccer match between Greece and England. Some passengers have also reported seeing the first mate flirting with a female passenger.

A German passenger, who was on vacation with her husband and 4-year-old son, later told reporters she jokingly asked her husband, "Who's driving the ship?"

Yannakis testified the first mate came to his room complaining of a change in course and requested he come to the bridge.

When Hart awoke from her nap she felt a shudder travel through the boat and watched as a large boulder passed by the window, accompanied by the sound of tearing metal.

"It was surreal; the rock was glowing," Hart said.

The ferry struck the Portes islets, two 80-foot rocks towering over the surface of the Aegean Sea two miles off the coast of Paros. Atop the boulders, a lighthouse holds a beacon that is visible seven miles away.

News reports stated that later investigation by divers showed a damaged propeller may have steered the ferry off course.

As the boat settled in the front and began listing to the starboard side, the lights flickered and went out. Hart and Shannon climbed to the top deck and into the stiff wind. Amid a flurry of frantic, screaming people, the women waited in desperation for

the crew to make an announcement. It never came.

"We knew they had an intercom," Hart said. "They had been using it to call us to the snack bar all day."

Frantic passengers searched for a means of escape as waves broke over the top deck and the boat slipped into the sea.

As people rushed to the rising stern of the boat, Hart said she realized those people would have to jump at least 50 feet into the churning 10- to 12-foot waves.

Hart and Shannon stared in astonishment as, in the confusion, a man ran to one of the swaying lifeboats and cut the ropes that held the boat, sending the lifeboat careening down the side of the ferry and landing upside-down in the water below.

As emergency flares shot into the sky, Hart and Shannon struggled to make it to the sinking bow. Once there, a man directed them down a flight of stairs. At the bottom, Hart said she saw four men calmly standing next to a lifeboat as it swayed on its safety lines.

As they sat on the aging lifeboat's benches, a passenger thrust a rope into Hart's hands and ordered her to hold it. Suddenly, the lifeboat dropped five feet and crashed into the side of the ferry.

"I remember thinking that the lifeboat was going to break apart," Hart said. "Each time we rammed into the side of the ferry, pieces of the boat would break off."

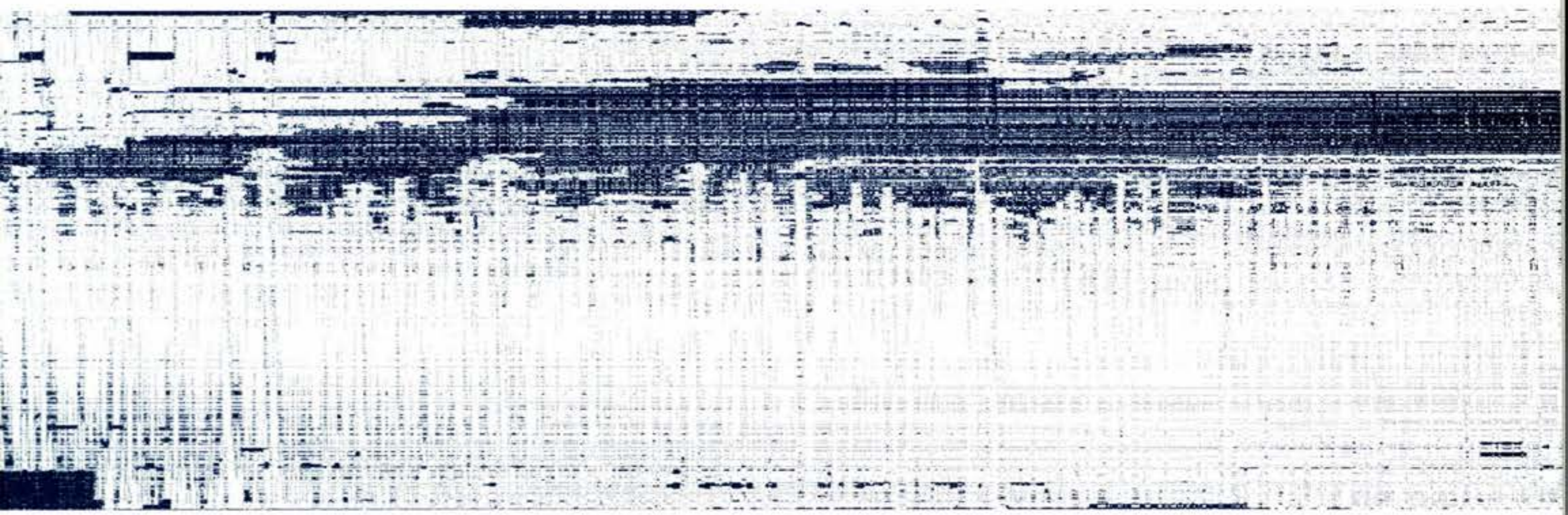
After a few more drops, the lifeboat fell into the sea, breaking the bench Hart was sitting on. Waves slammed the lifeboat into the bottom of the tilted ferry, terrifying the 15 passengers in the lifeboat.

Some men began pushing oars against the ferry to move it towards safety, but the soft, rotting wood of the oars snapped. Finally, some of the passengers used a metal gaff hook to move the crumbling lifeboat away from the sinking mothership.

Hart said she looked back at the ferry and, against the glare of emergency flares, saw silhouettes of passengers jumping into the sea.

As the lifeboat drifted further away from the ferry, the passengers watched as the Express Samina slipped lower in the water

"I just kept holding his hand and rubbed it to let him know that he was going to be all right."



until it disappeared beneath the waves — only 38 minutes had passed since the collision with the boulder.

Hart scanned the surface of the sea and realized people were still in the water.

From the darkness, a tuft of gray hair appeared above the bobbing nose of a man as he swam towards the boat. As he neared the boat, Hart grabbed one of his hands as his other hand slapped on the wet wood as he tried to hoist himself into the boat.

Shannon grabbed onto Hart to prevent her from going over the side of the boat as her friend stubbornly held the man's hand.

"I wasn't going to let go of him," Hart said. "I just kept holding his hand and rubbed it to let him know that he was going to be all right."

Finally, one of the men in the boat reached over the side and helped Hart and Shannon pull the old man into the boat. Wet and exhausted, he fell into the boat, clothed in nothing more than a pair of gray undershorts, and landed on top of Hart.

Shannon began singing "Don't Rock the Boat" to help soothe a 4-year-old boy sitting next to her. Hart went back to the side of the lifeboat looked for more survivors.

"I'm looking at this 4 year old thinking there's no way I'm not going to help someone else," Hart said.

Suddenly, bright searchlights shone on the faces of the survivors as two fishing boats from Paros came upon them and escorted the crumbling lifeboat to port.

As they pulled into the harbor, Hart said the vision of a small white chapel with a blue dome overpowered her and, losing control of her emotions, she began crying.

The next day, details of the accident began to emerge. Only one lifeboat made it to shore and 80 of the nearly 500 documented passengers died in the 65- to 70-degree water.

In the lobby of the hotel where the women stayed, Hart said she saw a sobbing man who feared the death of his wife. The next morning, she saw the man enter the room with a smile on his face. A few steps behind him was his wife. During the night, rescue workers had reunited the couple.

Throughout the town, the grieving process began as the full scope of the previous night's tragedy came to light. In front of the port authority building, an area was set aside for survivors to collect their belongings and, at the harbor, the grisly process of body identification began.

The full impact of the tragedy occurred to Hart when she noticed a pink and yellow backpack and a green bag set aside for claiming. A short time later, his jacket would wash up on the beach. The time before her nap on the ferry was the last time Hart ever saw him.

The media descended upon Paros in overwhelming numbers.

The reporters seemingly wanted to talk to just two people, Hart and Shannon.

Both women were forced to hide from the media when they left their hotel. They began to feel as if being on Paros affected the grieving process of too many people, so they looked for a way off the island.

When a reporter from a major news network offered a flight off the island in exchange for an interview, the women jumped at the opportunity. They requested the interview be done as far as possible from the harbor and the identification of bodies.

The reporter then told the women a flight was available at 6 p.m., arriving in Athens at 10:45.

Hart, who is terrified of flying at night, told the reporter that was unacceptable. When the reporter tried to argue, Hart abruptly ended the conversation, shouting profanities into the receiver before slamming it down.

They would soon find out a flight was never arranged.

Hart said she then turned to a nearby reporter from the BBC who requested to speak with the women. With tears welling in her eyes and exasperated with reporters, Hart said, "Go talk to the dead people."

A short time after, the women were at the island's airport and discovered flights departing hourly at no charge to the survivors of the tragedy.

A few days later, the women were in Amsterdam.

While in Amsterdam, the women agreed to a series of pictures for an article in People magazine.

When the women arrived home in Seattle, the press waited at the airport along with Hart's family. As Hart arrived at the gate, before she could see her family, a reporter from a Seattle television station began asking questions.

"When did you realize you were in trouble?" the reporter asked as she stepped between Hart and her family.

"You mean when the boat hit the big rock and sank?" Hart sarcastically answered.

When the report was broadcast on the evening news, Hart's answer played as the sound bite.

Since their ordeal, both women have continued talking with the press, taking great care to speak with reputable outlets. In her interviews, Hart said she chooses to center on the safety of the ferry and how a dilapidated ferry could be allowed to run with an under-trained crew, inadequate safety procedures, a sleeping captain and a broken propeller.

On Nov. 29, amid continuing investigations, a final victim of the tragedy on board the Express Samina would be claimed.

Pantelis Sfinias, vice president and managing director of Minoan Flying Dolphins, threw himself from the window of his sixth-floor office in Piraeus.





Hitting the Paydirt

Beep, beep, beep. The sounds through the headsets of metal detectors lead three modern-day treasure hunters to forgotten troves of wealth. **Liam House-Doyle** discovers the path to buried treasure. Photos by Angela D. Smith.

When Wayne Davis, 55, uses his metal detector to hunt for treasure on a 100-year-old homestead, he first discovers where the outhouse was located. He explains that once something falls in an outhouse, whether it's a quarter or a bandit's loot, no one will go down there and wade around to find it. But 100 years later, that quarter could be worth \$500.

When Joe Parker, 57, searches the ritzy beaches of Hawaii and Aruba with his waterproof metal detector, he usually pays for the vacation with the treasure he finds.

When Bob Cunningham, 57, known as RC by prospectors, goes metal detecting for gold nuggets in creek bottoms and tailing piles near old gold mines in Canada's Fraser River Valley, he said he remembers that natural nuggets are rare and that every lucky dog gets his day.

Extended from the arms of these three modern treasure

hunters are machines that scan the Earth's terrain and detect bits of metal lodged in its crust. When a metal object interrupts the electromagnetic field that radiates from the detector's coil — the circular plastic dish that sweeps over the ground — an audio signal emits from the treasure hunters' headphones. Detected objects are then excavated from the ground with a trowel, magnet or probe and then brought to the light of day to be appreciated, historically signified, valued and sold.

Metals such as copper, iron, steel, nickel, gold or silver sometimes turn out to be treasures such as a stash of pennies, ancient body armor, axe heads, coins, nuggets or jewelry.

Parker said he doesn't find treasure just for himself; he likes to search for other people's lost objects too.

Two years ago in Hawaii, Parker was metal detecting on a beach when two young women asked him to help them find their lost ring. He agreed and searched the area around their spot on the beach. Suddenly, a sunburned fat man yelled at him and said, "Hey! I lost an expensive ring out there. If you find it I'll give you \$1,000." The man said his ring was big and gold with 14 diamonds and his name engraved inside.

Two hours later, Parker had found six rings in the small section of beach, but none of them belonged to the girls or the fat man. Then Parker's metal detector beeped loudly when he swung the detector's ground coil over the sand. With a little digging, he plucked a large man's ring from the sand and lifted it to his eye.

After close examination, Parker added another ring to his pocket when he discovered the ring had only 12 diamonds and no engraving.

On another three-week treasure hunt and vacation to the coast of Venezuela, Parker and his wife returned home with \$23,000 in appraised treasure.

In Bellingham, Parker is the owner of the metal-detecting supply store, Gold Nugget Bucket. Despite the name, his favorite type of metal detecting is being neck deep in the waves at crowded, warm beaches where thousands of people lose jewelry every day, he said.

Like Parker, Davis hunts for treasure where people congregate. But Davis uncovers history and “plays detective” to locate places where people dropped pocket change or buried wealth 100 years ago.

He examines county plat maps to locate old home sites that are now empty fields or forests, and asks private landowners for permission to hunt on their property — usually with the agreement that found treasure will be split 50-50, he said.

From a photo collection of Bellingham 70 years ago, Davis discovered that people used to pay to car-camp in Cornwall Park during the Great Depression. He discovered where people pitched tents in the park, then used his metal detector to find Indian Head pennies in that area — worth anywhere from 20 cents to several hundred dollars.

Davis has worked at The Stamp and Coin Place in downtown Bellingham for 15 years, where he sells metal detectors. Davis borrowed a detector from the shelf and took it home to hunt his backyard where he found coins, he said.

“I was hooked,” he said. “It was free money!”

Then he bought a middle-of-the-road detector for \$300 and conducted a self-test. He put a two-pound empty coffee can in the corner of his closet, and he knew from working at the coin shop that when the can was full of quarters, dimes and nickels it would hold near \$500. He filled it in two months after hitting every bus stop and park in Bellingham.

One of Davis’ customers found three U.S. \$20 gold pieces and a handful of circa 1890 silver dollars in a vacant lot in Fairhaven. The customer told Davis that the coins were found in a small area mixed with lots of broken glass. Davis said it was someone’s secret cache. It was common for people, especially those who lived through the Great Depression and didn’t trust banks, to bury money in a jar under their house, he said.

“Where you go is the big thing,” RC said. “You can’t just run out and find treasure anywhere; you have to plan and research.”

RC figured out where people changed their clothes in the bushes before and after they went swimming at Teddy Bear Cove on Chuckanut Drive in Bellingham. He said he found enough 60-year-old silver coins to fill a pint-glass out of the sand where change fell from people’s pockets. He sold the treasure several years ago, when silver was selling for \$50 per ounce.

Although RC does have gold fever, his co-worker, Bob Ellis, who works at Bob’s Southside — a car service station in Fairhaven — said he is more than a crazed, bearded fellow in a bent-up hat with a pick and shovel; he is an “electronic prospector.” RC also maintains the Web site www.rcgold.com, where he sells metal detectors and gold prospecting supplies.

RC uses a metal detector specially designed for finding gold; it can detect a speck of gold about the size of a pinhead. But finding natural pieces of gold can be difficult and test a detector’s patience because of high mineralization in the soils — known as “hot rocks” — where gold is found, RC said. Metallic minerals

like magnetite and hematite can give a metal detector false signals and lead a detectorist to dig for a “ghost target.”

“Metal detectin’ is like fishing, you don’t have to catch fish to be fishin’; you don’t have to get gold to be prospectin’ and you don’t have to find coins to be metal detectin,’” RC said. “You do it because you enjoy it and if you find something, well, that’s just a plus. And every dog gets his day if you’re out there long enough.”

Technology has changed metal detectors, especially in the past 10 years. New detectors can be programmed by the user while in the field to cancel false targets like ground mineralization or iron trash-like cans pull tabs and bottle caps. It’s called “discrimination.” A microprocessor inside the detector’s control box can identify the kind of metal, its size and the depth of the target in the ground. The treasure hunter can then discriminate between targets by turning a knob on the control box to cancel signals from pull tabs but not from a gold ring. This is useful in areas where the ground contains trash.

But even new detectors are never entirely correct, warn these experienced detectorists. What the detector says is a 50-cent piece could be a melted beer can from a campfire, RC said.

Sometimes a pull tab sounds just like a fine gold ring through a metal detector’s headphones, Parker said. “A lot of those fine gold rings happen to be ladies’ rings with a pretty good-sized stone attached to them,” he said.

“When in doubt, dig.”



“when in doubt, dig”



Life in the fast lanes

Find out what a banshee, a kaiser, a minister and an ulcer have in common as **Sara Hixson** gives a look at a team on the fringe of Bellingham's bowling scene. Photo by Daniel J. Peters.

One by one they open the door, bringing in a freezing winter chill; first Nick, then Megan, next Matt and finally Brian. A Thursday night ritual is getting underway as the four crowd around a worn wooden table, stripping off layers of jackets and sweaters, deciding what to eat. This is more than just a dinner among friends; it's a celebrated weekly tradition between four very different people with one shared passion — bowling.

In about an hour it will be 7 p.m., and league night at 20th Century Bowl in downtown Bellingham will kick off.

Once on the lanes, the bowlers shed their everyday identities. Matt Heck, 21, becomes The Minister; Nick Barrett, 22, The Kaiser; Megan Leech, 21, The Banshee and Brian Pake, 22, The Ulcer. Collectively, the four make up the league's youngest team, The Hot Snakes. Pake named the team.

"It just sounded cool," he said.

After the official pre-game banquet, team Hot Snakes walks the two blocks from the restaurant to 20th Century Bowl.

In front of the bowling alley, Nick pulls open the door and immediately everything, even the air, changes. The odor doesn't assault your nose the way it can at a bar, although enough cigarettes burn to make non-smokers' eyes water and throats burn.

Forty-six leaguers occupy 12 of 16 lanes, and everyone is talking. The constant flow of competing conversations is never broken, though sporadic yelps and cheers interrupt frequently.

The Hot Snakes pick up their lane assignment at the counter and separate to collect shoes and balls.

At 6:45 p.m. it is announced that practice should wrap up and everyone should prepare to bowl.

The Hot Snakes are at their lane, a pitcher of Bud Light — bowling juice according to Leech — on the counter behind them. Team Hot Snakes stands out in this crowd. Men and women around them are mostly in their 40s wearing everything from a navy blue sweatshirt covered with bowling pins to a T-shirt that reads "dysfunctional by choice."

Barrett, The Kaiser, wears worn jeans and a T-shirt. From his head to his ankles he looks like a college student, which he is. One look at his feet, though, and you know you're looking at a bowling fanatic.

"I have kick-ass shoes," Barrett says. "I love my shoes." Originally soft white leather, they now shimmer with gold from Barrett's custom paint job.

As always, Barrett lights up a cigarette after bowling his first frame.

Watching Barrett strike down pins with a practiced left hand, it's hard to tell how he was nicknamed The Kaiser.

"Technically, I'm a gimp," he says. "My right leg is bigger than my left one. It's like the character in the movie 'The Usual Suspects' except he actually limped; there was also a German leader named Kaiser, and I'm a tyrant on the lanes."

With his fitted black leather jacket and soft matching black scarf, Pake, The Ulcer, is a cliché in this place. His polished look and calm demeanor suggest perfectionism, and he is known for demanding total concentration of himself while playing.

Pake gets his name from when he used to have stomach pains everyday and was tested for ulcers.

If Pake leaves three or four frames open and bowls no strikes or spares, he will crouch down under the counter behind the lane. Between the racks of bowling balls are open closets. The space is only about three feet tall and four feet long with a rod for hanging up coats. Pake nestles into the strangers' jackets; he is like a child hiding from his mom in a clothes rack.

"I close my eyes and picture myself throwing the perfect ball; it gets me focused and away from distractions," he says.

Next up is The Hot Snakes' only female member, Leech. She stands nearly six feet tall with fair freckled skin and long unruly dreadlocks of flaming red and orange.

She grabs her new dark imperial purple ball splattered with glitter and rests it on her head atop a tangled ponytail.

"I love it when she does that," Heck says.

When Leech, The Banshee, releases her ball onto the lane, it's with great power, but little direction. On her second turn, Leech gets a strike. Squealing and shrieking, she jumps around the lane getting high fives of support from her teammates.

"Megan gets in the old peoples' heads," Heck says.

"Yeah, she's our catalyst," adds Barrett.

A couple weeks ago a man from another team, looking to be in his 50s, yelled at Leech, "Hey sideshow, this ain't no carnival."

"The old-timers hate losing to us because we have a different style and attitude," Barrett says. "They've been doing this for so long and they see us as a bunch of loud, drunk kids."

One frame of the first game remains, and Leech is trying to pep up her team. They all huddle together and pile their hands one on top of the other. After some muffled conversation the four throw up their hands and yell, "Hot Snakes!"

"It's a team cheer, it brings us together," says Barrett.

Heck, The Minister, is up to bowl. No white collar graces his neck; no cross hangs at his chest. His surfer-blond hair jets from his head in heavily gelled spikes. Short, sandy scruff encircles his mouth in a goatee and sideburns frame his cheeks. As unlikely as it seems, he really is a minister.

"I was ordained over the Internet to legally marry people, and I have married one couple since then," Heck said.

Raised Catholic, he considers himself to be "very religious," although his ordainment is non-denominational.

"Bowling is my mission from God; he wants me to either bowl a 300 or be on the PBA (Professional Bowlers Association) tour," Heck says half joking.

In his ninth frame, Heck knocks down nine of the 10 pins. He walks back to the counter that stretches from lane one to 16 and sips on his beer.

"Slump's over, let's get down to business," he says.

The tenth frame passes and game one ends.

"What has happened here is we've gotten the shit kicked out of us," Barrett says.

By 8:30 p.m. they have won one of three games. League night has ended; of 12 teams, the Hot Snakes rank ninth.

Tomorrow Barrett and Leech will resume their lives as Western students; Heck will bake and Pake will wait tables at a Fairhaven café.

Next Thursday night, though, The Kaiser, The Banshee, The Minister and The Ulcer will reunite in their quest for a league championship, knocking down the competition one pin at a time. ♣

"Bowling is my mission from God; he wants me to either bowl a 300 or be on the PBA tour."



musical interlude

After a coin toss that landed him in Bellingham 24 years ago and after 18 years as a probation officer, one local man left it all behind to become a songwriter. **Heidi Thomsen** tells his story. Photos by Daniel J. Peters.

Tom Hodge ended up in Bellingham on a coin toss.

More than two and a half decades ago in South Carolina, Hodge flipped a coin and watched it spin, waiting to see if he would stay in the South or head out to the Northwest. The coin landed heads up and Hodge packed for a drive across the country. It was a stunning social change for him coming from the South, where the hills rang of Baptist gospel in the still, humid air. Upon arriving in Washington, he says he felt like Alice in Wonderland.

That was 24 years ago. He knew his niche then — it just took him more than two decades to make it a reality.

This year, Hodge, 47, quit his 18 year long job as a probation officer for the Whatcom County District Court to become a full-time guitar-playing musician. He just released a CD entitled *Shadows and Light*, a collection of songs he had rolling around in his head for the past 17 years. It was something he had to do, he says — to break out of his old routine and do the one thing he's always wanted. Life is meant for living, and not having enough time to do just that was frustrating.

"I think everyone should quit their job and just have fun for six months and see where it takes you," Hodge says. "Allow your head to go quiet. You can't grow as a person if you're always going."

Financially, Hodge knows he is taking a pretty big risk; emotionally, he feels it's the right decision.

Most Sundays, Hodge can be found at Tony's Coffee House, strumming his acoustic guitar for a silent, captive audience. Sitting alone on a wooden stool by the front door, Hodge lowers his head and swings it to the beat of his fingers caressing the strings. He says he tries to paint pictures with his music. Closing his eyes, he appears unaware of the risk of opening up to strangers, of inviting people into his thoughts.

The song Hodge says his audience reacts to the most is called *Loving Hands*. He wrote the music and chorus long before his friend, Jim Loth, 29, the person the song is about, died of complications from AIDS. Hodge wrote the lyrics the day he saw Loth stop breathing.

"I had an amazing affirmation then," Hodge says. "Life is pretty sweet; we should take the opportunity to interact with people. You never know when your last concert is."

Hodge says his inspiration comes from everyday life.

Flip Breskin, a local musician, describes Hodge's music as amazing. "His words are like clouds that float above the calm sea of music in the background," she said. Breskin, 50, has been Hodge's friend and musical acquaintance since 1982. She remembers the first time she heard "*Loving Hands*."



"He said, 'I've got a keeper here,'" she said. "He's relaxed and confident. You can hear the echo of generations of singers there. You can really tell how much Tom loves his home in the South.

"Most who've moved north, they assimilate. Tom's never let go of the accent. He keeps being himself," she says admiringly. Then she starts softly singing "Loving Hands."

" . . . If my heart fell silent like a bell, loving hands would pull the sound from deep within . . . If my heart touched bottom of the well, loving hands would take the time to raise it up again . . . "

Breskin closes her eyes and whispers the rest of the chorus. Hodge's music flows through her body as she sways her shoulders and her hair falls to the side. In his music, Hodge describes hues of brilliant color and pails of water gone empty. People relate to any music that is derived from passion, Breskin says. Hodge has that passion in his fingers, his eyes and his voice. Hodge's father sang in church — singing was and still is a musical tradition in the South.

Kicking back at home the afternoon before his CD release party at Bellingham's Roeder Home, Hodge, in stone-colored jeans dotted with white paint stains, slides comfortably onto the couch. Hodge stands 5-feet-10-inches tall, thin with sandy hair and a smile on his lips. His eyes sparkle as the lines around his eyes crinkle when he laughs. He is holding his arms up, shaking them into place as if he was about to play his guitar. Hodge loves the banjo and the ukulele, but says he held back on his new album and only used a guitar. Hodge wears tiny, wire-rimmed spectacles with round eye-pieces and a T-shirt with a large zebra on the front.

"I give myself permission to screw up," Hodge says. "I'm not going to fill everybody up, I know that."

The word "tunes" comes up in Hodge's conversations a lot — it's what Hodge loves to play, and now he finally has all the time in the world to do so. Hodge first picked up a guitar in his early teens and began writing the songs for *Shadows and Light*. He has written nearly 100 songs, although only 50 to 60 of those are what he calls "keepers." For every song he keeps, he says he throws out about a thousand.

"It's like any kind of thing — if you're panning for gold

or you're digging for some kind of gem, you're going to have to chip away a lot of rock or dig up a lot of dirt and get through it and do a lot of polishing and washing up to make it shine," Hodge says. "That's what songs are. There's no good writers, there's only good rewriters."

Hodge put money away for his decision to become a musical artist more than five years ago. It was his reward for his hard work, he says. Hodge's wife of 13 years, Barb, also got her wish: a few years ago Hodge started a birthday fund for her and in March 1999, sent her on a vacation to Africa.

"That was kind of my gift for her and her gift for me was to make sure this recording happened," Hodge says. "So financially, we supported each other in getting these two things done, and both of them happened."

Greg Scott, one of Hodge's old friends, produced *Shadows and Light*. On the back of the CD, Scott describes Hodge: "Tom Hodge is a poet and one heck of a nice guy."

Hodge takes the CDs with him to open mike nights and to his concerts. The CD is one of Hodge's proudest achievements. Barb co-wrote the lyrics with Hodge for the title song, *Shadows and Light*.

When Hodge was wandering around looking for the right words to come through his pen, he wasn't sure if twenty-somethings would relate to his musical poetry. He just sang and wrote the lyrics down on paper. Then he sang some more. Barb would put on the coffee maker as Hodge played his guitar into the early morning hours. Hodge says at one point he just about had a musical instrument warehouse in his basement.

This is the first time in his life he may run out of money, but he believes in the idea that a person doesn't need much to live.

"He should be terrified," Breskin says, although she understands why he quit his job to pursue his dream. "His job changed. Early on as a probation officer, he actually had the chance to get in there and turn people's lives around. As our society has jailed more and more people, his caseload increased to unbelievable propor-



tions and he didn't have a chance to make a difference in people's lives. And for Tom, that was why he did something in the first place. He's been wanting to get out. This is an old dream.

"Out in the middle of the rain and the wind, trust the tug-gin' in your heart to take you home to friends."

The walls in Breskin's home are filled with twisted wooden instruments. A 'twangoleum,' a large guitar with a piece of dark wood contorted around the base, over the top and back down the other side so that it looks like a lock of hair, is just one of the contraptions on her walls.

"(Music) is a constant and endless source of hope and inspiration for me. It's inextricable for the mending of the world." A small banjo in the corner was a gift from Tom, she says.

"He plays absolutely exquisitely beautiful tunes," she says. "He has wonderful methods of inspiration. His songs come from real people and real situations."

Western student and aspiring musician Tony Cook, 23, played improvisational guitar with Hodge when Cook first started going to open mike nights at the Wild Buffalo in downtown Bellingham.

"Tom's music is jazzy," Cook says. "He has an understanding of music — he can take three chords and make a song out of it." Cook bought the only copy of *Shadows and Light* Hodge had one Sunday night at Tony's. He says it's the kind of music that has soul and passion. "He said once, 'Let the melody take you through the chords.' Music should back up the melody. Melody comes first."

Laura Smith-Clawson, 52, used to play with Hodge when he did concerts at the Roeder Home about 15 years ago. She remembers the first time she heard that sweet Southern voice as director of the Roeder Home.

"He's a wonderful, genuine person who sings remarkable songs," she says. "At his first Roeder Home concert in 1983, he sang 'My Buddy,' a real old World War I love song. I was riveted to hear his Southern voice sing a swing-type song. He has a beautiful voice." Hodge took a song, sang up to that day only one way, and added his own stuff to the music. That's his way, Smith-Clawson says — he sings from the heart.

Hodge says growing up, he likened his tastes to that of

Simon and Garfunkle and John Denver. Their acoustic influence encouraged him to keep writing and singing. Today he listens to Tracy Chapman, Fiona Apple, Guy Clark and Alanis Morissette. Women have come a long way in music and Hodge says he now pays greater attention to their movement in music than he does to many others.

"I basically sing to make sure that my own thinking is put together and makes sense. It's a way of me organizing my own life and my own world views. If I put down a song then I must feel that way," he laughs.

"It's almost like a testament; what I see and believe is what I say in the song. It always amazes me if somebody else likes it. I'm always a little caught off guard if somebody else relates to it and it stuns me that people in their early 20s all the way to people in their late 80s are making comments about some of the stuff I write."

Hodge sings at Unity Church on Telegraph Road, where he says he can pretty much sing whatever he wants. He believes it is important for people to have some sort of spiritual quality in their lives. Hodge's songs try to convey his sense of the spirit. Calling himself a "recovering Baptist," he enjoys playing gigs where the proprietors allow a wide range of lyrics.

"Babyboomers are strange," Hodge says about himself and his experiences before sighing and leaning back in his favorite spot against the couch arm. "We're narcissistic — we think we're entitled to everything."


There are simple joys in life, he says, like baking bread. Too often, people forget what's important and they just don't take the time to be there for those who need them, he says. America is home to a society of addicts who are always trying to get ahead. It's why Bellingham needs people like Hodge who remind all who listen to stop and look around. Life moves pretty fast, and if no one pauses to catch those simple moments, everyone may miss something important. Hodge picks up his guitar and runs his hands along a hard wire.

"If I point myself in a direction I just enjoy the moment. Don't just do something for the sake of doing something. Just sit there," Hodge advises. "Take a break from whatever and simply walk away."





Beastmaster



Though her last name may not be Dolittle, pet psychic Mary Getten makes her living talking to the animals. **Katy Mullen** talks to Getten about breaking the communications barrier and speaking with dogs, cats and even rebellious deer. Photos by Angela D. Smith.

She makes property deals with the slugs in her garden; counsels euthanasia decisions for sick pets; talks scared captive bats off her ceiling; warns deer to look both ways before crossing the airport runway and speaks to whales about whale hunts and enlightenment. Mary Getten, 48, is a telepathic animal communicator.

Getten's phone rings at 2 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon. A desperate woman on the line relays her crisis. Getten's bright brown eyes narrow and her brow furrows as the woman tells her about Rooster, her dog.

As Getten listens, she pulls out a three-ring binder from the bookshelf beneath the telephone cradle. Rooster has been diagnosed with a tumor on his spine, and his owner wants to know how much pain he is in and what sort of treatment he would like to undergo.

Getten listens, offers sympathetic words, then asks a series of questions. She writes Rooster's name, sex, appearance and ailment on a form and sets up a phone appointment for the following day. Before hanging up, Getten asks the woman to prepare some questions she would like to ask Rooster.

Getten seeks out the true feelings and perspectives of animals and runs workshops to help pet owners and animal lovers do the same. She believes telepathic communication with animals is a skill everyone can learn, and that pets may offer some wisdom or insight about human lives.

Today, more than 200 animal communication consultants work in the United States. Recently, attention has been given to the subject in the media, and interest in consultations and communication workshops has increased. Getten doesn't worry about losing business by teaching animal communication skills to the public; she says there are plenty of people and animals out there and the market is booming.

She charges \$35 per 30-minute phone consultation. Appointments are made in advance so the client and Getten can prepare for the talk.

She says 98 percent of her consultations with pets and their owners are conducted over the phone and usually deal with behavioral problems, vacation, changes in home, health and death. Of the 450 clients on her mailing list, several clients are locals from Orcas Island, but small pockets live in New York, Alabama and wherever word-of-mouth has reached.

"With telepathy, time and space don't matter, so there is no reason to see the animal in person," she says. "Animals are more comfortable in their own environment."

Getten says she is able to have a conversation with a collie in New York from her home. She agrees that this may sound incredible to some, but insists it is the result of each living thing having connected energy and by tapping into that energy network. It is by no means, she says, a unique skill she possesses.

For the past five years Getten has operated an animal consultation practice from a red trailer house, about the size of a transit bus, on a corner of a her landlord's property.

Inside, freshly burned incense lingers in the air. She sits at the kitchen table with her hands folded, but they begin to gesture when she speaks or to act as a chin rest as she thinks. Neatly trimmed and straight shoulder-length blonde hair frames her round smiling face.

As she describes animal or insect communication, Getten often rises from her chair to grab various books



from the living room. To Getten's right is a large window. Outside, 13 chickens, her goddesses, wander around their fenced-in coop bobbing their heads and pecking at the trampled earth with their beaks.

"Telepathic communication is an ability we are all born with," she begins. "There is a universal language all animals communicate with, and we weren't left out of that loop."

Getten believes that as people become socialized they lose this ability, explaining that young children often talk to animals but adults usually discourage them by saying that animals cannot understand people.

To be able to communicate telepathically with her clients, Getten brings herself into a quiet, meditative state in which she mentally calls out to the animal. Early mornings are when her mind works best; this is when she closes her eyes and focuses.

"I let people ask questions and interview (their pet) through me — I'm like a telephone."

She says she then receives answers back through visions or emotions, which she conveys to the owner.

"It's direct, mind-to-mind communication done on a telepathic level," she says. "Sometimes I receive pictures, sometimes words and sometimes psychological or emotional feelings." An injured animal might "let me feel it or show me a picture of that part of his leg, but it varies from animal to animal and from words to pictures."

One recent instance involves Lynda Olnier, a Blaine resident who contacted Getten in September to ask difficult questions about her dying dog.

"I called two communicators and they told me basically the same thing, but I kinda clicked with her," Olnier says. "Her communication with me was extremely compassionate, extremely real. The others didn't seem to have the heart she does."

Olnier was still experiencing some guilt from her previous dog's death four years ago and says Getten helped her deal with some issues of death and dying she experienced throughout her life and minimized pain and guilt.

"She told me my dog wanted to die at home, and I believed her," she says. "My old dog had always done it his way, and it felt good that I could do this for him."

Getten says she is almost always able to connect with an animal, but a sharpei in Pennsylvania has eluded her. She has tried to talk to the dog for two years.

"He won't talk to me," she says, laughing, and adds that no communicator has been able to reach him because he doesn't like people.

Getten says that like people, animals do not always want to talk, especially about embarrassing subjects, and that animals can be stubborn and not respond to what they are told.

"You can't get a rat to do anything," Getten says matter-of-factly. Rats do not want to respond to communicators because "there have been centuries of people projecting hate toward them."

Getten says the same is true for spiders and other insects.

"Most animals are really willing, they're happy to talk and to help their owners understand," Getten says. Animals do not want to talk about some things, such as behavior problems like pooping in the house.

"Animal communication is not really about fixing problems, although there is that element ... it's about creating understanding and harmony," she says. "Generally, the proof of communication is being able to clear up behavioral problems."

To skeptics, Getten compares her ability to tap into an energy frequency to that of a satellite dish tuning in.

"We all accept it and take it as fact even if we can't explain it," Getten says.

Becky Stinson of Bow, Wash. first found out about Getten after the loss of her 18-year-old dog. Stinson attended a "Grieving the Loss of Your Pet" workshop Getten was co-teaching and soon began to do one-on-one consultations with her.

"I have to admit I was skeptical at first," Stinson says. "She told me my missing cat was dead, then four days later he showed up at my door."





Since then, however, Stinson says Getten has helped her improve her relationship with that cat and her goose.

"Both were acting out and I couldn't control their behaviors," she says. "The cat was terrified, scared and fearful and was urinating on the bed and the goose was really aggressive — always acting threatened and invaded ... biting and attacking."

Through the consultations with Getten, Stinson says she was able to find out the emotional component behind the outward behavior, which was all she could understand. Stinson says animal communication has helped her to understand her pets better.

"I think she does communicate and I think there is something to it," says Stinson. "She's not 100 percent, but she definitely has the ability."

Getten took her first class in animal communication in 1988 from Penelope Smith, who conducts "How to Communicate with Animals" workshops.

At the time Getten took the class, she was living in the Bay Area and working with seals and sea lions at the Marine Mammal Center hospital in Sausalito, Calif., but didn't feel like she was helping them enough.

"Animals were coming in and I couldn't tell what was wrong with them," Getten says. "I ran into Penelope and realized that if I learned how to communicate I could really help these animals."

Getten moved to the less-crowded Orcas Island so she could continue to work with seals and sea lions and to work with her favorite mammals — whales.

For 10 years, she worked as a guide on whale-watching trips, in the research department of a whale museum and as a coordinator for the Marine Mammal Stranding Network.

In 1993, Getten started taking several beginning and advanced classes in interspecies counseling.

"I really wanted to talk to these whales," she says. "Whales are so mysterious, they're only at the surface 5 percent of the time. I wanted to find out what they're up to, what's going on in their world."

For a few years she has been communicating with the local whales and asks them what they think of the world. She says whales are incredibly intelligent and know an amazing amount of information about humans.

When the Makah tribe announced they would be hunting gray whales, Getten decided to warn them about it. Instead of taking a political stance, however, Getten helped by telepathically communicating the danger to the pod.

Getten calls herself an armchair environmentalist and urges others to be the same.

"I sit in the living room and send love and energy telepathically to creatures," she says. "My job is to let the animals know. I don't know what's supposed to happen in the big picture. I just warn them."

Recently, Orcas Island Airport manager Duane Lunde has been dealing with a problem of deer wandering across the runway, causing deer deaths and expensive damage to planes. In desperation, he turned to Getten for help.

"I'm very open-minded about people's philosophies and beliefs," he says.

Lunde heard about Getten's communication from people on the island, and he decided to have her talk to the deer to convince them to leave the airport.

"They had a vigil and talked to the deer and she said 'what's in it for them to leave the airport?' I thought that was cute," he said.

Lunde said Getten suggested they should set up feeding stations on the east and west side of the runway but warned him that there are always rebel deer that will run across from station to station and that they should make a fence.

"Mary couldn't guarantee that the rebel deer would stay on either side," he said. "It was cute because it came from her beliefs, but it was the same solution as the scientists and biologists had."

When Getten wants to connect with a group of wild animals, rather than a domesticated pet, she calls out telepathically one-on-one to the "deva" or nature spirit, the being who looks after all the deer on Orcas Island.

Sometimes she deals directly with the wild animals without using the deva. She told slugs in her garden about three other places to go for food instead of her flowerbeds, and they moved.

She enjoys teaching communication because she likes to see people open up and start to hear things.


Stinson hosted a workshop in October at her studio that eight people attended. She says that learning to communicate with her animals better helps them to work more effectively together.

Olnier attended the workshop and described the difficulty involved in communicating with animals. "It takes a lot of self-discipline ... meditating, finding your center and really listening."

"Mary's obviously worked a lot on herself," says Olnier. "She's very attuned, trustworthy, accurate and clear, probably one of the best."

Skeptical people don't usually say too much, she says. "Sometimes when I work with a dog, people say 'Oh that's just a coincidence.' But there are almost 1,000 coincidences a year."

Getten's skeptical but supportive family remains surprised by her success.

"They finally accept it ... I've always been kind of different," Getten says giggling, then adds, "I think they are surprised that I can make a living doing this." 



B.C. Smackdown

So you wanna be a wrestler, eh? **Brendan Shriane** follows a group of potential wrestlers who are trying to do just that, by mastering the art of the body slam and sleeper hold at an elite Canadian wrestling school. Photos by Daniel J. Peters.

Mark Vellios is a large man, standing six feet tall and wearing a red baseball cap over his stringy blonde hair. He has a tennis ball-sized bruise on his forehead, the result of a wrestling event in Japan from which he recently returned. The protrusion, outlined by thin red scratches, runs from between his eyebrows up to his hairline and meets with the cap tilted on his head.

He is a fighter and a wrestler, but he is also a teacher, instructing young wrestling hopefuls the art of wrestling moves such as the Lock-it-up, Frankensteiner and the Power Bob.

He is the head trainer of a 3-year-old school known as the Extremely Canadian Championship Wrestling's House of Pain. The school was founded by Vellios and his partner, John Parlett, who wrestles by the name Terry Joe Silverspoon.

Originally from Redondo Beach, Calif., Vellios has been wrestling since 1987 by the name Gorgeous Michelle Starr, mostly with independent wrestling associations in Canada, the United States and Mexico as well as with the World Wrestling Federation. He has been training wrestlers since 1991.

"It started just in backyards, and then John and I decided to get a location to do this in," Vellios says.

The school is located in Langley, British Columbia, a Vancouver suburb, tucked in between car dealerships, meat markets and strip malls in a spartan light-industrial complex.

The plain concrete structure has all the intimacy of a car-repair shop or a meat locker. The building is covered in posters for wrestling and the Ultimate Fighting Championship. One row seems to be reserved exclusively for colorful Lucha Libre posters advertising Mexican wrestling events.

"A lot of people have a dream," Vellios says. "A vision to be a professional wrestler or see what it's like to be a professional wrestler."

"People who watch wrestling wonder what it's like to be in a ring, what it's like to do those moves. Not everybody wants to go to the big time, some people want to do it so they can play around. A lot of other guys have dreams and aspirations of making it to the big time."

Sean Heaslip, 20, from West Vancouver, has been training for only one month — 12 practices. He's the House of Pain's newest student. He says it's all he's ever wanted to do; he has always been a big wrestling fan.

Heaslip says he doesn't have to make it all the way. What he likes best about the school is simply being around wrestling.

In the audience is Twan Holliday, 27, of Surrey, British Columbia. Holliday decided to sign up for wrestling after a doctor suggested he wrestle under professional supervision, instead of in his backyard where he broke his clavicle and pulled some tendons.

Holliday, who is also the bassist in a heavy-metal band, says he is eager to begin training. He saw a segment about the House of Pain on a Canadian television program and decided to check it out for himself. After watching students wrestle at their scheduled Sunday show he was hooked, and decided to sign up.

"Wrestling is something I've always wanted to do," Holliday says. "When I get on stage, I'm just someone else."

The lanky Holliday is wearing tight black jeans and black cowboy boots. He has an ace of spades playing card tucked into the band of his worn black hat.

"I'm already a bit of a showman," he says.

Margaret Fyfe, 31, of Burnaby, British Columbia wrestles as Bam-Bam Bambi. She's been attending the school for five months. For most of the wrestlers, a persona and a name comes after months of practice. For Fyfe, the name was the inspiration.

"It actually came to me, and when it came to me I signed up for the school," Fyfe says. "I decided somebody had to wrestle under that name."

Another reason the athletically built Fyfe got into the wrestling game was to supplement her workouts. She also admits wrestling against and working with the young boys is one of her favorite aspects of class.

As of January 2001, tuition for the House of Pain is \$2,500 Canadian. Most schools run about \$3,000 in U.S. Fund. So for about the same cost as two quarters' tuition at Western, a prospective wrestler can learn the secrets of pro wrestling. For tuition, students get 40 two-hour sessions and, after that, the student pays \$25 per month to continue training.

Twelve students are currently enrolled, along with some older students continuing their training.

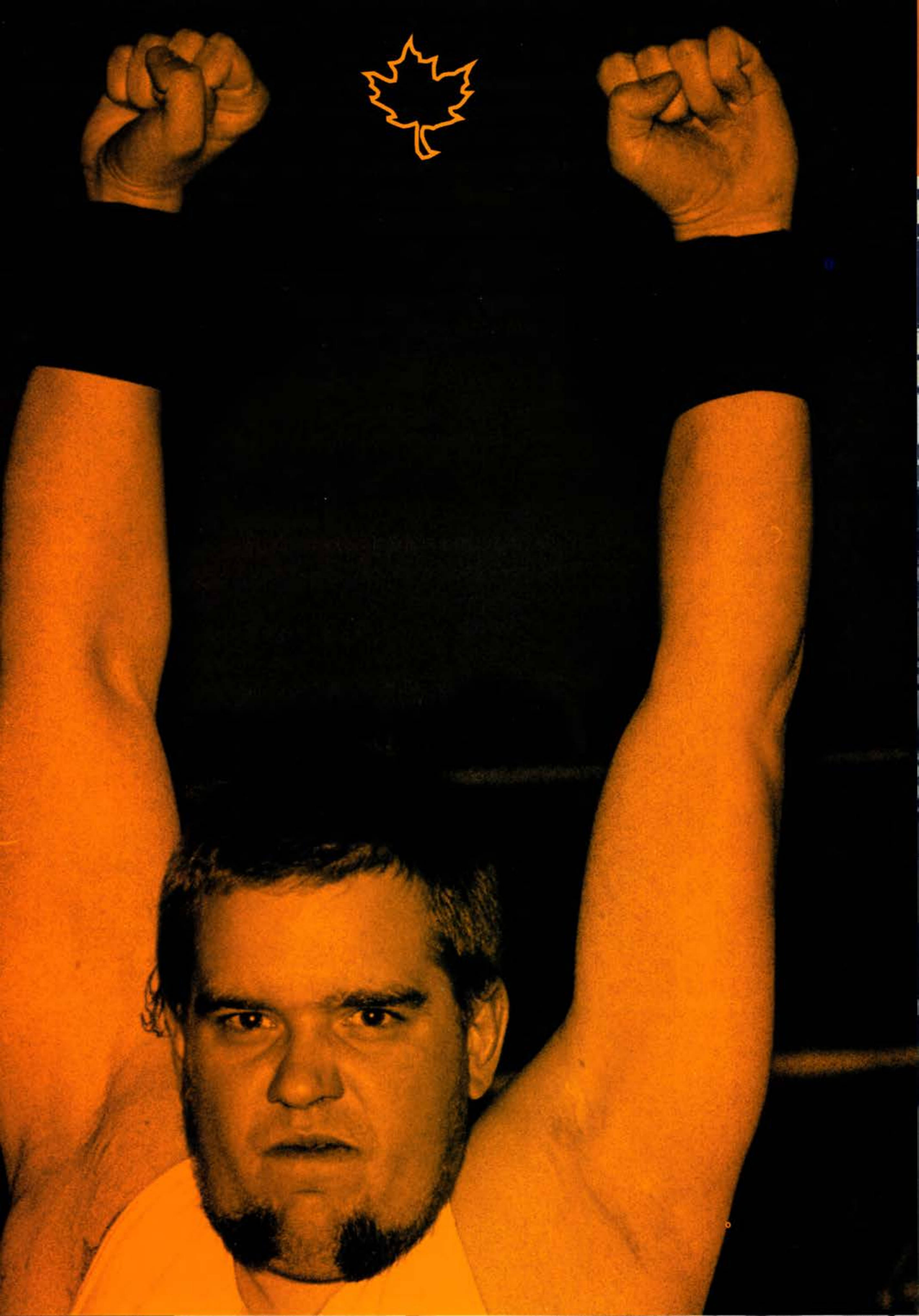
"In the last year, year and a half, we've probably trained about 30 people. About 30 or 40 go through the school, but not everybody stays with it, not everybody completes it," Vellios says. "Some people only stick around a month, some people, two months. Some people completely don't have what it takes and realize they don't have what it takes and kind of fade off."

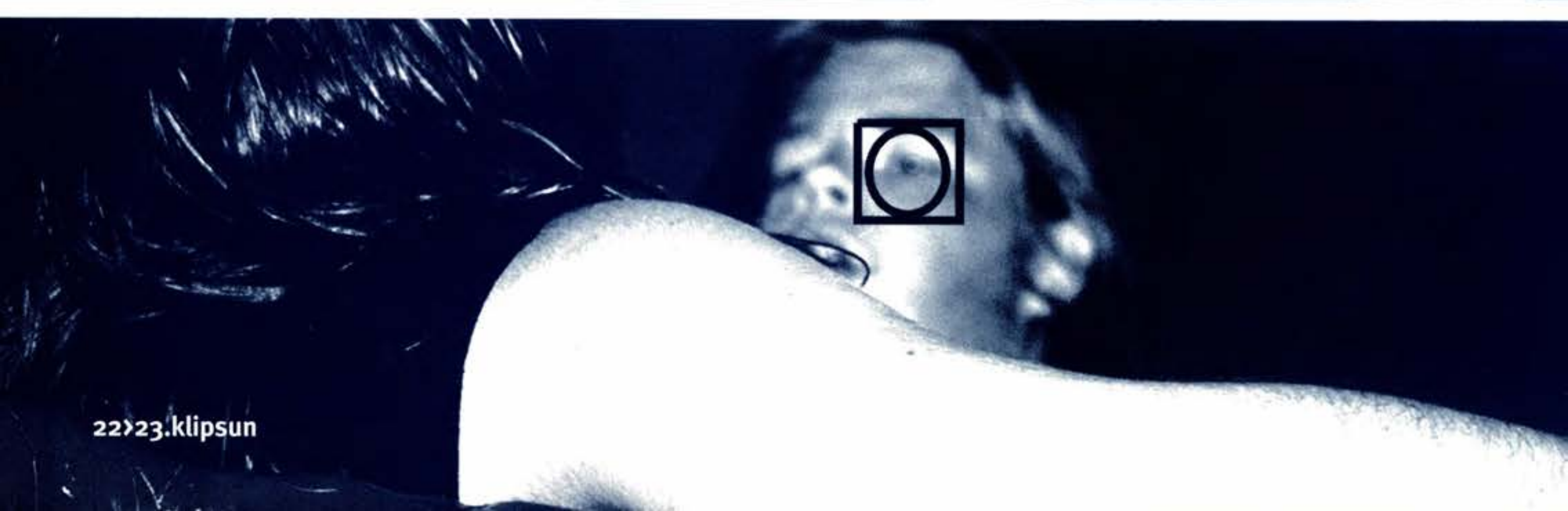
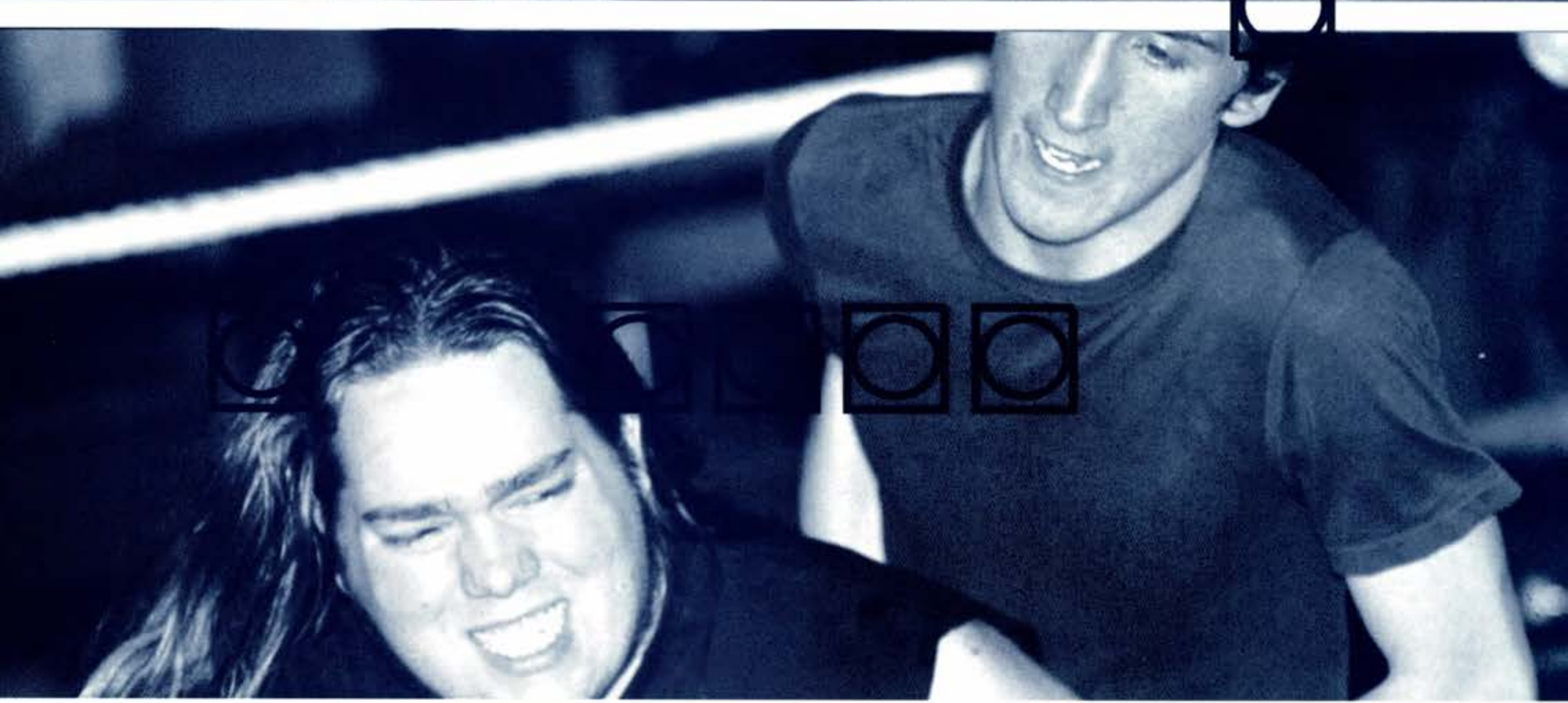
At first glance, students at a Wednesday practice session don't fit the standard image of typical pro wrestlers. In the ring are 10 prospective wrestlers, including two women and two young Asian men. None of the wrestlers seem particularly large.

Holding it all together in the ring this practice night is Vicious Verne Siebert, barking out orders to students.

The wrestlers are learning a move known as a Sunset Flip, where one wrestler is bounced off the ropes and then gets flipped backwards onto his back.

Siebert has wrestlers take this to another level, though. As the victim of the Sunset Flip is falling to his back, he is able to get his feet around the shoulders of the aggressor and pull him





down to the black vinyl surface of the ring with a reverberating thud.

On a Thursday night, Vellios is evaluating the wrestlers. Growing enrollment has prompted him to establish three tiers of classes: beginner, intermediate and advanced.

Vellios has the students come out in pairs and perform the maneuver they've learned.

Wrestlers tumble over themselves and each other in exaggerated motions. Swinging their arms wildly, they fly forward — doing front rolls, left-side rolls, right-side rolls and finishing with a rather unnatural-looking backwards roll.

This night, 11 wrestlers accomplish these moves with varying degrees of success.

Heaslip is first and deftly rolls around, but some others are not as agile. The wrestlers must be able to do countless numbers of moves on demand.

"Headlock, two tackles, hit him again," Vellios yells out to Taj Johnson, who wrestles as Average Joe Johnson.

Johnson goes to work on his partner in the ring, Michael So, who wrestles as Chinatown Gangster Mike Lee.

The two wrestlers take turns doing all sorts of moves. Vellios and his assistant trainer, Chance Beckett, shout out more moves, and the wrestlers subsequently attack each other with vigor.

"Monkey Flips."

"Leap frog, leap frog back."

"School boy."

"Sunset Flips."

Vellios grimaces and turns away as Johnson and So crumple awkwardly to the ring in a painful-looking pile of limbs after blowing one of the moves. The collision causes the wrestlers gathered around the ring to wince. Vellios lets them shake it off and continues to the next moves.

"Body press."

"Cross body off the second rope, backwards."

So pops up on the rope, eyes Johnson over his shoulder and flings himself up and over. He is completely upside-down as he smacks into Johnson, who is standing only a few feet away acting if he is unaware of the impending impact.

"Forearm to the head."

"Punches — right, left, straight."

"Chops — right, left, straight."

The wrestlers take turns slapping each other with the sides of their semi-open hands.

"European uppercut."

"Vertical suplex."

When Johnson gingerly picks up So to do what is known as the scoop slam, a move where one wrestler picks up the other and drops him onto his knee, he hears about it.

"Hey, you wanna stroke his cock next time you do that? What was that?" Juggernaut, Vellios' hulking, shaven-headed assistant yells out, lurking at the side of the ring.

The room erupts with laughter; a little levity eases the tension. The wrestlers are tired and tonight's evaluation is almost done. They'll know what they need to work on to become better, more seamless wrestlers. They'll practice what they know until their technique is flawless. Then they'll learn and perfect new moves.

Following their training, many of these wrestlers will end up fighting with the ECCW or other circuits around Canada.

At this school, graduation doesn't mean a diploma. What it can mean is a position on the ECCW's tour or another comparable wrestling tour. They will put in their time taking long bus rides to small towns to do county fairs or wrestle in front of a smattering of fans at Eagles' Hall.

From there, some will go on lucrative Japanese tours or perhaps, the big time, the WCW or WWF and big paydays. 🗡️





recycled spirits

What may be junk to some becomes a garden of sculpted art in Daniel Klennert's hands. **Heather King** takes a trip to Elbe, Wash., to introduce Klennert and his creations. Photos by Sarah Hodge.

Giraffe on the right — can't miss it.

The directions seem clear enough, but the urban sprawl disappears under a thick blanket of evergreen trees. Mount Rainier's icy slopes emerge from the horizon.

Elbe, Wash., in its entirety finally appears, trains on the left and a metal giraffe on the right. Majestic and tall, a mouthful of greens droops from its iron lips. Behind it stands sculptures of horses, humans, dinosaurs and trains.

A gate made of sculpted metal, marked "Spirits of Iron," opens just wide enough for cars to scrape through.

Dream-like music spills loudly from a blue warehouse into the biting winter air. Outside, a crackling fire surrounded by empty driftwood chairs suggest that the creator of this strange sculpture garden is not far.

An iron dream catcher arches over the entrance to the sculpture garden. Underneath, a wooden plaque reads "Field of Dreams." Caught in it are the dreams and fantasies of artist Daniel Klennert, 42, a welder, monumental sculptor and junk collector. The rock trapped at the dream catcher's center represents his property.

"I like using mostly old metals from what has made America what it is today," Klennert says. "I use a lot of Model-T Ford parts, old shoe lasts which were used to repair shoes instead of buying new ones, old farm plows, old combine wheels and sprockets, drive lines out of cars and trucks, backhoe teeth, drive chains of motorcycles and rock crushers.

"I guess what I like to collect is rusty, bent, wore out and broken pieces of metal," he admits.

There is no entrance fee — Klennert only wishes to share his art and see how visitors react to his work.

"I don't look at it (art) as dollar signs," Klennert says. "I look at it as, 'is it going to turn people on.'"

Not quite as modest as his creator, an iron cowboy stands proud just inside the field, pointing a gun at gut level holding a sign that



reads, "Your Donation to my Dream is Greatly Appreciated. Thank You!"

A driftwood horse stands center field. A perfect left eye, naturally shaped from a knot in the wood, invites the touch. With a friendly face, barbed wire twists through its insides, rusty nails poke out from its wooden bones.

The giraffe that greets visitors stands 17 feet tall, prominently placed front left to catch the attention of passers-by. Blue sky fills the spaces between iron patches forming a lifelike coat of red and blue that follow the muscle contours of a live giraffe. A wagon wheel supports its bulging stomach. A mane of twisted, rusty nails falls down its long neck.

"I've been offered \$35,000 twice for it," Klennert says. Both offers were turned down.

Klennert strides up, hands hiding from the cold in his pockets, wearing layers of flannel shirts. A tall brown cowboy hat rests on his head.

The crow's feet at the corner of his eyes are as deep as his love for art and as long as the path that landed him on this spot, surrounded by his creations.

"My love for my creations comes from the same place in my soul that loves my daughter," Klennert says. "I'm having a love affair with a 250-amp welder, and these are all my children."

To seduce his welder Klennert likes to flip through the stations in search of the perfect music to set the mood.

"Music stirs the imagination," Klennert says. "I start dancing with my metals — I mean it's cool!"

In his studio rusty bolts, nails, hooks, chains and other small items are organized into small containers. Pieces of Model T Fords, rusted tractor teeth, old gears — he can identify them all — line the shelves.

Through the back the larger pieces of his collection sit clumped together as neatly as bent, rusted old junk can be piled — only to Klennert it is not junk, it's treasure.

"That stuff is like gold to me," Klennert says, pointing to a crumpled old water tank buried in a pile of rusting bits and pieces. As he hunts through the rusting treasure, future sculptures take shape in his mind.

"One piece will jump out at me as a horse, a dinosaur or the beak of a bird," Klennert says. "I fall in love with the piece of metal, the love follows me through to form what is in my mind."

Klennert's main source of junk is a 6,000-acre ranch in eastern Washington. Remains of towns once thriving in the mid 1800s lie rusting at the bottom of three ravines.

"I'm cleaning up America by welding old stuff into art," Klennert says.

From a small wooden crate labeled "Dan's Toys" Klennert pulls out an old rusty sickle.

"Toucan bird," he says, bolts of excitement shooting from his eyes.

He rummages through the box, junk spilling onto the floor. He holds up two white pieces of metal together to form a beak and places a broken metal bird's claw holding a glass marble on the top right. Although he doesn't say it, his eyes

beg the question: What do you see?

"Alligator," he says smiling.

The game continues until the box is completely empty, its contents strewn on the cold cement floor.

"Dan makes a kid out of all of us," said Christina Alexander, coordinator of the Peace Arch Park International Sculpture Exhibit and Art show where his horse sculpture, "Buckeye," grazed last summer.

"Picking up a piece you might see a bird," Klennert's father Charles says. "To go from there and make the whole thing, that's something else."

Klennert has always loved art, but didn't develop his talent until he was a young adult.

He remembers this as his first brush with art was dashing ahead of his three brothers at age six to make sure he was first to open a magazine that had connect-the-dots exercises inside.

As a teenager Klennert sat on the front porch drawing and woodcarving while other kids joined gangs and got into trouble.

"Art was the only thing that kept me going in school," Klennert says.

"He'd sit around and draw comic pictures," his mother, LaVaun, says. "I never thought much of it except that he might work for a paper drawing comic pictures."

"I'm having a love affair with a 250-amp welder, and these are all my children."

Klennert didn't think much of his artistic abilities either and when he

was offered a construction job out of high school, he took it without thought of perusing art as a career.

In 1972 he became a mechanic and his foreman taught him how to weld.

"I had art in me all these years," Klennert says. "By changing wore out metal I found art."

Klennert started to weld small sculptures — horses, cowboys and birds — that he gave away as Christmas gifts.

"One out of 10 was attractive," Klennert says, "you know, had some credit out of it as art."

His first two sculptures, small and simple, rest on either side of the iron dream catcher marking the entrance to Klennert's "Field of Dreams."

"They are the ones who started it all," Klennert says smiling.

Taking a friend's advice, Klennert entered small craft fairs and won several awards in Port Townsend, Puyallup and Yakima. Then he went on to sell his goods at the Fremont Fair.

"I couldn't believe people were laying down good money for something I loved to do," Klennert says.

In 1985, Klennert destroyed his back doing construction and was told he could only work at McDonalds or a desk job.

"If I'm going to be poor I might as well do my art," Klennert remembers telling himself.

Klennert's decision was confirmed as he watched his ex-wife's mother, who had scrimped and saved so she could retire and travel to Europe, pass away.

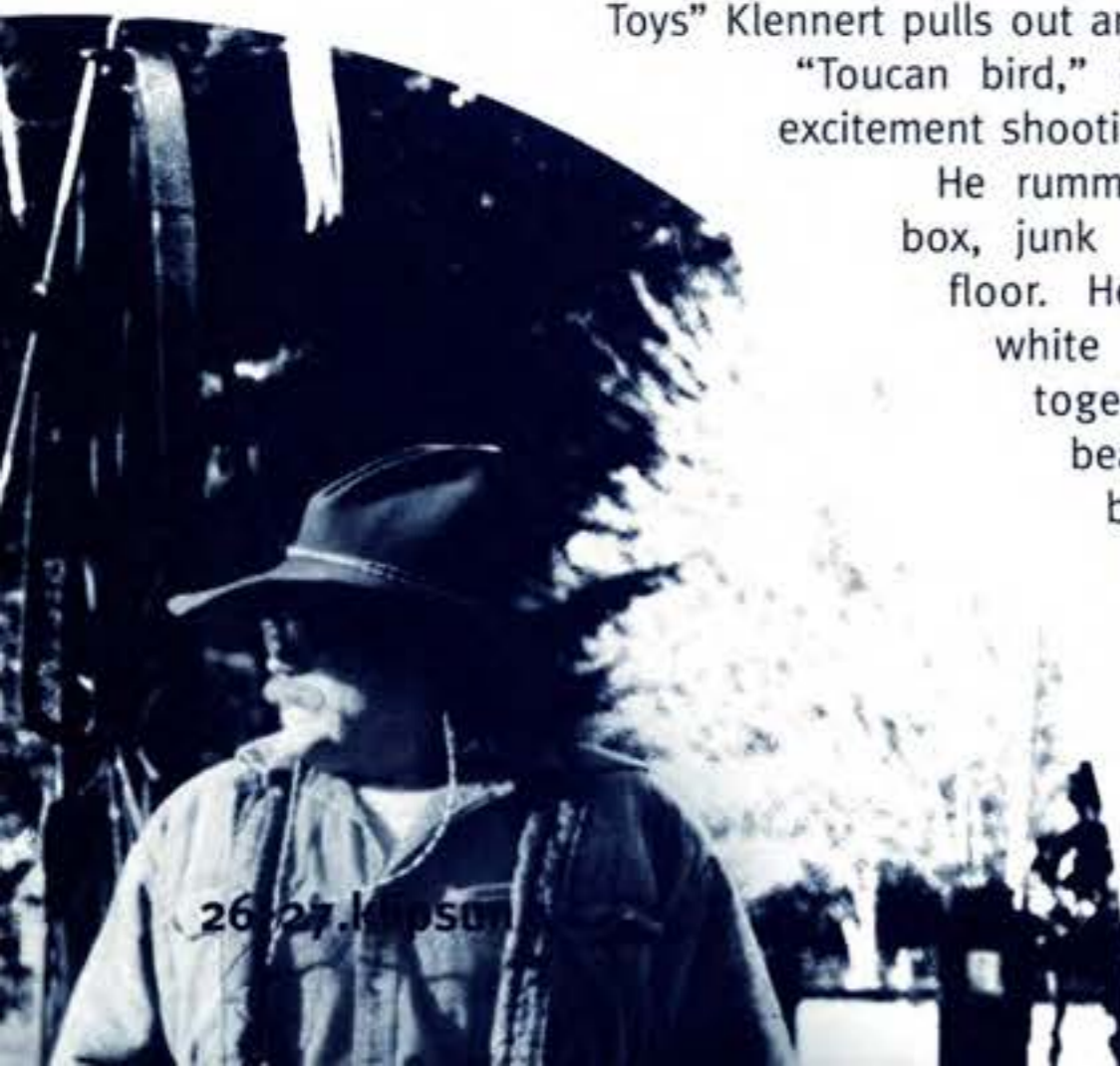
"Everybody works for something looking toward retiring so they can live their life," Klennert says. "That's bullshit."

"I knew right then and there," Klennert remembers, "I'm going to go for it."

The chase for his dream included many bumps and bruises along the way.

"Man, I hauled all this stuff to Santa Fe," Klennert says looking over the field. "What a joke."

In the summer 1994, Klennert decided to pick up and move to New Mexico, where he was told an artist community would be waiting with open arms to accept him. What any native New Mexican could have told him was that the town is completely overrun by snooty artists. He had 46 sculptures down there and



nowhere to put them.

Boom truck wheels kicking up Santa Fe dust, Klennert turned right around and headed back to Washington, where he rented a studio in Ballard.

"I was hurting because I hadn't been welding for a year," Klennert says.

The studio, cubicle in a large building shared by many artists, could not hold all his sculptures. He scattered them all over the Seattle area, loaning sculptures to cities and storing them in friends' yards.

"I always dreamed of having all my family together," Klennert says. "All my children, made out of junk, together."

When a woodcarver tipped him off to a three-acre lot along Highway 207 near Elbe, he made an offer.

Human skulls found when clearing the property hang above his office in his studio. Rat infested and overgrown, it was no easy chore, but Klennert transformed the land into his "Field of Dreams" which is visited by about 15,000 people each summer from all over the world.

"He can make an art lover out of anyone," Alexander said. "The way he creates, forming together pieces to make animals, captures most everybody's imaginations."

A red rental car comes to a halt on the side of the road across from the park. Out pops a young couple. First, they peer curiously from outside the fence, then lock hands and enter the gate to explore the sculpture garden.

Giggling, the man poses with a gunslinger, pistols ready; his legs are made from large pipe wrenches. The woman poses with "Buckeye," a 12-foot-tall horse. He has a coat made of horseshoes, a wagon wheel ribcage, and an early 1900s sewing machine forming his pelvis. The couples laugh and explore the rest of the field.

These sorts of reactions make the years of hard work worth it for Klennert. He cherishes sharing artwork and creativity with others.

Last year, Klennert sold a fish sculpture to a man on Vancouver Island, who invited him to a barbecue to show his sculptures.

"I thought, 'cool, I'll celebrate life and drink with the canuks,'" Klennert says. "A hefty fee and government bullshit from both countries soured the great journey. I couldn't get across the border; that pissed me off."

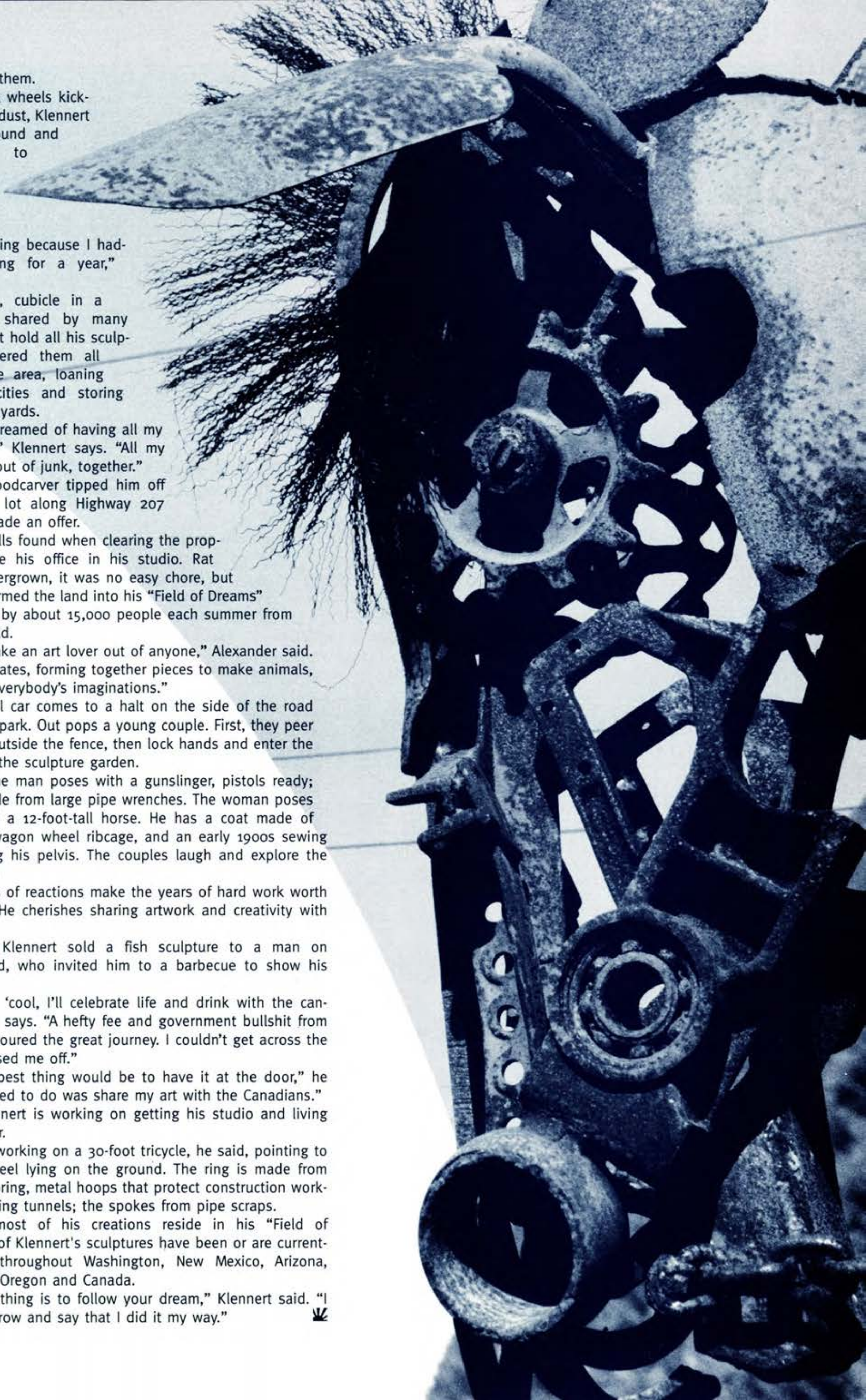
"The next best thing would be to have it at the door," he says. "All I wanted to do was share my art with the Canadians."

Today, Klennert is working on getting his studio and living quarters in order.

He is also working on a 30-foot tricycle, he said, pointing to an immense wheel lying on the ground. The ring is made from construction shoring, metal hoops that protect construction workers from collapsing tunnels; the spokes from pipe scraps.

Although most of his creations reside in his "Field of Dreams," many of Klennert's sculptures have been or are currently on display throughout Washington, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Oregon and Canada.

"The main thing is to follow your dream," Klennert said. "I could die tomorrow and say that I did it my way." 





making mittens out of kittens



While some think of dog hair on the couch as a nuisance, Nancy Simmerman sees it as exotic fibers with which to spin and knit. **Shannon Ward** follows the process of knitting hair to winter wear. Photos by Daniel J. Peters.

Nestled in the woods at the north end of serene Lummi Island, Nancy Simmerman chats with 10 girls and women, ranging from 9 to 75 years old. While she chats, her quick fingers move methodically – she tucks a needle under the loop, wraps yarn around the back of the needle and pulls the loop into a perfect stitch. The hat she knits does not consist of the usual store-bought yarn, however, from Jo-Ann Fabrics or The Wool Station.

What sets Simmerman's yarn apart is that it is spun from pet fur such as Chow Chow, a black lab mix and a silver tip, which she uses to knit winter apparel such as hats, sweaters, scarves and gloves.

"I've been spinning dog fur for over 30 years," Simmerman says, "but I just began doing it commercially."

Not only does she spin dog and cat fur; she also spins other exotic fibers such as yak and camel hair.

"You can buy these fibers," Simmerman says. "There are a number of places in the state that sell exotic animal fibers."

She also has stumbled across some other interesting hair. While in Alaska, she found a small amount of grizzly bear hair stuck to some bushes. She picked the hair off the bushes and eventually spun it, but it was only a handful – not enough to make anything. She also came across a mountain goat in the mountains in Alaska and gathered enough hair from the animal to make a hat.

Under the name Gude Erth Farm & Crafts, Simmerman promotes her spinning skills at the Doggie Diner in Bellingham and by word of mouth.

Simmerman, 63, wears comfortable attire – a burgundy wool sweater, black leggings and purple-green-and teal-striped hand-knitted socks. Her style of clothing is relaxed, like her personality.

Simmerman wanted a quieter life and found knitting to be a calming hobby. After spending the past 32 years in Alaska working as a freelance photographer, Simmerman felt it was time to retire. With two photography books filled with rugged Alaskan scenery, including commercial fishing boats and icy mountain tops, Simmerman said the many close calls she had traveling to get the perfect shot drove her to the serene lifestyle of Lummi Island.

The change has been positive, but when she first arrived, she wasn't able to relax.

"I had to finish my house first," Simmerman says.

Although it is the fourth house Simmerman has built, it is her first straw-bale house in Whatcom County.

Tonight the white stucco walls, which conceal 150 bales of straw, warm Simmerman and her guests on this chilly winter evening. Her guests make themselves comfortable on the couch, wicker chairs with overstuffed cushions and the wool rugs on her hardwood floor.

An ounce of fur will yield approximately 60 yards of washed yarn, ready for knitting.



A gentle rippling sound of an indoor water fountain, the glow of clear, miniature lights and the curtain of ivy dangling from a stone ledge that separates kitchen from living room creates a calming effect as the knitters work.

Although these girls and women are knitting with store-bought yarn, Simmerman considers the hair of dogs and cats exotic fibers.

“Wearing the hair of the dog while walking the dog is the ultimate in stylish recycling,” she says. While many people might be more than a bit apprehensive about wearing their stinky dog’s fur, the smell is usually not a problem.

Taimi Gorman, 44, is the owner of Colophon Café and the Doggie Diner. She says she had no reservations about having her black Chow Chow’s fur spun into yarn.

“Chow Chows are pretty odorless – I thought it sounded like a wonderful idea,” Gorman says.

Gorman began collecting her dog Emperor Liwu Chow’s fur long before she heard about Simmerman knitting animal fur.

“Chow Chows blow coat twice a year,” Gorman says. “Entire pieces, I mean huge chunks, come off the dog. I just started brushing him out and storing the fur in a box. I had no idea what I was going to do with it.”

Simmerman advises clients to store the hair in a paper bag rather than a plastic bag to allow the fur to breathe and avoid lumping.

“Cat fur especially will mat up into these lumps,” Simmerman says, “especially long-haired cats’ fur.”

Simmerman tells clients to brush the under-fur of the pet, which is the hair that is grown deep within the straight, outer, guard-hair coat. If the pet is finicky and difficult to brush, one can always collect the fluffy masses of fur underneath the bed or the sofa.

Some people want the fur of their pet spun into yarn for a sentimental keepsake. Gorman, a dog lover, is one of those people.

Gorman gave Simmerman puppy and adult fur from Emperor Liwu Chow, and Simmerman spun and knitted it into a scarf with a little wool mixed in.

“It’s amazing the difference between the puppy and adult fur,” Gorman says. “The puppy fur is so soft. The adult fur is a little coarser.”

Gorman also wears a square pin Simmerman knit-

ted with the fur from Gorman’s Chow Chow, which holds miniature wooden knitting needles.

At the Doggie Diner, Gorman sells items she considers higher-quality than those found at a pet store.

“We sell things Nancy has made, like magnets or pins to wear, and we also sell things like sweaters,” Gorman says.

Simmerman assures her customers that the products she knits with the yarn from pets’ fur will not have that “stinky dog” smell.

Simmerman combats the smell by putting the fur through rigorous washings. She prefers washing dog fur after it is spun because, if it is washed before, it tends to lump up. However, it is necessary if the smell is unusually unpleasant.

“When I get a bag of some dogs’ fur, I have to keep it on the porch until I can wash it because it’s just so stinky – I can’t possibly work with it,” Simmerman says.

Cat fur usually doesn’t have the odor problem, but she washes it anyway.

If the fur is washed after it is spun, Simmerman soaks it for about half an hour in liquid hand soap.

“Then I treat it really roughly – I pound it and work it quite a bit because I want it to start to felt together and hold together,” Simmerman says, while pounding the sides of both her hands onto the table. “I want it to get its shrinking done so when it’s ready to knit it won’t shrink that much more. It’ll go through at least three sudsings, depending on how bad the doggy smell is. I just keep washing until the doggy smell is gone.”

Simmerman always asks clients ahead of time whether they’ve used flea powders or any other chemicals on their pets.

“I always wash it first then or, if need be, wear a mask while I spin,” Simmerman says.

Next to the large, farmhouse dining table, a wooden rack consisting of two shelves holds almost two pounds of Alaskan husky fur. The fur is soft like an angora rabbits and has no odor to it.

After Simmerman washes the animal’s fur, she cards it.

“Carding mixes the fibers and opens the lumps,” Simmerman says.

“I’ve been spinning dog fur for over 30 years.”



She produces two hand cards, which are wooden paddle brushes resembling something one would use to comb a dog or cat. She places a small amount of fur on one paddle and brushes the other paddle against it.

“Coming off the animal, you have some long hairs and some clumps of really short hairs,” Simmerman says. “It spins into a better yarn if you have the short fibers mixed into the long ones.”

As she cards the fur, it becomes smooth and fluffy.

Simmerman also uses an electric carder, which is quicker and easier than the older hand cards. She is able to card more fur at one time.

She then spins the fur.

“Spinning is two motions,” Simmerman says. “One is that you’re pulling the fiber out, that’s called drafting, then the wheel with the drive band actually twists the yarn.”

As Simmerman explains this, her striped-socking feet alternately press the wooden pedals of her spindle, left, then right, left, then right.

“A lot of people think that the yarn I’m spinning goes around the wheel, but it doesn’t,” Simmerman says.

As she pedals, the treadles run the drive band, which transfers the twist, or the power, to the fibers.

“If I hold the yarn steady like this, it keeps twisting,” Simmerman says. “When I have enough twist, I release it. Dog fur is slippery, so it needs a lot of twist.”

She steadily holds the yarn in front of her chest as she slowly peddles, building up the tension in the yarn. Every so often she allows the tension to pull the yarn away from her chest when she’s achieved the right amount of twist.

“It’s really an experience thing,” Simmerman says. “Pretty soon you just can tell how much twist you need.”

The whole process of treating the fur, from start to finish, is long and tedious.

“By the time it’s finished, I’ve put a lot of time into it,” Simmerman says. “That’s why I have to charge 30 cents a yard. I’m still not getting paid very much.”

Simmerman says she charges half that amount in exchange for fiber. She will spin all of the pet fur, give half of it to the client, and save half for herself.

An ounce of fur will yield approximately 60 yards of

washed yarn, ready for knitting. A hat or scarf for an average-sized person requires two to four ounces of fur. With one ounce of fur yielding approximately 45-70 yards of yarn, enough yarn for a hat or scarf would cost between \$27 and \$42. The amount of fur required can be reduced if Simmerman combines it with an equal amount of fine wool.

“Now this is the under fur of a black cat that I’ve blended with white wool,” Simmerman says, pointing to a two-inch ring with 11 different samples of animal fur which have been cleaned, blocked and skeined. “Cat hair is so slippery that I have to blend it with wool. It won’t hold together, so I have to use a very fine, soft merino wool.

“Aren’t these colors wonderful?” she asks, pointing to the ring. Colors include varying shades of grays, blacks, whites and tans with the textures of angora or cashmere dangling from the sample ring.

When Simmerman completes the hat she is knitting, she will donate it to Whatcom Volunteer Center for Project Warm-Up. This is the only requirement she has for her guests who join her Tuesday evenings to knit – they donate their first completed item to the homeless or less fortunate. These items are knitted with machine-washable, machine-dryable yarn donated by Whatcom Volunteer Center.

“We have 30 different organizations that have asked for items for this year,” Joy Keenan, director of the volunteer center, says. “Nancy is one of the 40 people who knit and donate all year.”

Just a few of these organizations are Lake Whatcom Treatment Center, Lydia Place, and Bellingham Childcare and Learning Center.

After the volunteer center receives the items, tags that read, “This item was handmade for you with loving care – we hope it warms and cheers you. Brought to you by the Whatcom Volunteer Center,” are placed in every item.

Simmerman and her Tuesday-night group knit at a leisurely pace and chat. The Lummi Island Knitters have completed 40 adult hats, 79 kids’ hats, seven scarves, two sets of mittens, 13 pairs of slippers and three lap robes last year.



