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Carina Linder Jimenez
Western Washington University

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KLIPSUN

WINTER/2015

CRAVE

TUNING IN TO TINGLE

Experiencing ASMR

**RUNNING
INTO THE PAST**

*The revival of a 100-year-old
adventure marathon*

THE PILL GAME

*Living life sober
one day at a time*

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One of my favorite novelists, James Joyce, once wrote, “I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today. I am today what I established yesterday or some previous day.” These two sentences speak to the ongoing reality that is a person’s life.

Everyday people are looking forward toward a change or looking back at what they once needed. We live in a world that is perpetually unsatisfied but also entrenched with hope. To reach a world people want to live in they may choose to stand silently in a demonstration, or rush head first and fists crashing into a protest. Another person may simply be gripping onto each day as they let go of an addiction or escape a social status.



We here at Klipsun have also been feeling the pull toward something new. Currently, Klipsun is a bi-quarterly publication. We have decided to change to a quarterly publication.

Why? Just like any person wants to reach their highest potential, we too wanted Klipsun to push itself to reach its highest journalistic ability. We craved a larger quarterly publication with more in-depth content for readers to sink into. We wanted an active online presence that included releasing articles that weren’t going to be in the printed publication. We’re going to provide more for our readers not only in quantity but quality.

The previous publication, Perspective, was one of our first moves toward an online-first publication. Before distributing the print publication, we released all the articles online. With Crave you will also begin to notice us release articles and multimedia pieces that aren’t related to the publication theme.

These are some of the steps we have begun taking toward keeping our readers engaged throughout the year. More changes will continue to occur and we hope you stay involved as Klipsun expands.

CARINA LINDER JIMENEZ

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KLIPSUN

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STORY BY BROOKLYNN JOHNSON

Photo by Jake Parrish

Infographics by Rachel Simons

TURNING

COLOR

INTO CASH

The different shades of marketing

WAKE UP.

Turn on the light. Yellow. Make the bed. Purple. Walk to the kitchen. Turn on the coffee maker. Black. Grab an apple to eat. Red. Take a shower. Grab the shampoo. No, not that one. Grab the pink bottle. Get dressed. Put your jeans on. Blue. Zip up your jacket. White. Fill your coffee mug. Green. Lock the door. Silver. Go to work.

Colors are all around us. Many of the colors that define the consumer products in a person's home and day to day life are chosen for them before they hit the stores. Graphic designers and marketers use knowledge of color and respective human response, an idea called color psychology, in their creative process. "People make up their minds within 90 seconds of their initial interactions with either people or products. About 62-90 percent of the assessment is based on colors alone," According to author Satyendra Singh in "Management Decision," published in 2006.

It is scientifically known that color is composed of light of different wavelengths coming into contact with the eye. But marketers have figured out a way to put this science into a social context and have been turning color into cash.

Rebekah Leigh is a freelance graphic designer in Seattle, Washington who graduated from the University of Oregon with a degree in digital arts and graphics. She uses her knowledge of color and emotional response in working with her clients.

Leigh designed a set of business cards for a massage therapist. The cards, she says, were various tints of blue with white.

"I came up with that color scheme for her because to me it was a color scheme that gave a relaxing vibe," Leigh says, which seemed fitting for the atmosphere of a massage parlor.

Leigh recalls showing the client a set of orange business cards and the owner of massage parlor was immediately turned off.

While the orange for the massage parlor may not have been a good fit, another of Leigh's clients in Mexico who owned his own laser printing company felt that an orange color scheme was a perfect fit for his own business cards.

"He was all about the yellow, the orange, and the red. For him that created a feeling of, you know, we're fast, we are good," Leigh says. "It was masculine for him."

Color helps to sell a service and companies use specific colors to identify themselves in the marketplace.

McDonalds. Red Robin. Pizza Hut. Dominos. What do all of these places have in common?

- 1.) They sell food to consumers.
- 2.) Their logos use the color red.



"THEY [PEOPLE] PREFER BLUE FOR PRODUCTS THAT ARE FUNCTIONAL OR ASSOCIATED WITH WATER"



"RED AFFECTS THE METABOLISM BY ACTUALLY STIMULATING APPETITE. SEEING RED MAKES THE HUMAN BODY PHYSICALLY CRAVE FOOD AND THEREFORE CUSTOMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO STOP IN FOR A QUICK BITE TO EAT"



"HE WAS ALL ABOUT THE YELLOW, THE ORANGE AND RED. FOR HIM THAT CREATED A FEELING OF, YOU KNOW, WE'RE FAST, WE'RE GOOD."

According to Singh, the color red creates a physical response in the human body. Red affects the metabolism by actually stimulating appetite. Seeing red makes the human body physically crave food and therefore more likely to stop in for a quick bite to eat.

Logos are not the only way restaurant marketers take color into account. According to Singh, sit-down restaurants often paint the walls blue, a color often associated with relaxation, in order to create a calm, pleasant vibe for their guests.

That type of environment increases a customer's likelihood of remaining at the restaurant longer and increase their food and drink sales. A good experience can also lead to a customer to return to the restaurant multiple times. Colors are directly factored into the financial success of the restaurants.

"Does color influence things? Absolutely. Does it sell you anything? Not at all," says Daniel Purdy, Associate Director of Western Washington University's MBA program at the College of Business and Economics.

"Let's face it, we are not going to go to a restaurant where we don't like the food just because of the color," says Purdy.

Purdy describes the four "P's" of marketing.

"You have promotion, you've got product, you've got price, and you've got place," Purdy says. All four of these factors need to be satisfied for a successful sale. Color is only part of the marketing technique.

"I absolutely love Lamborghinis," Purdy says.

But the car's hefty price tag that stops him from taking the car home with him. "No matter how much I am taken with the advertising, no matter how taken I am with the product, if it doesn't all work together, I'm not buying it."

Color may not sell a product, but it can make a person look at it and even evoke certain feelings.

The whole idea of color psychology in marketing is to improve the consumer experience, in store atmosphere and product satisfaction. According to, "Color Psychology: Effects of Perceiving Color on Psychological Functioning in Humans," a peer reviewed article published in 2014 by Andrew Elliot and Markus Maier, blue stores are perceived to be calming, and less crowded than those of other colors. Furthermore, customers want to buy products in the colors that match their function.

According to the article, "they (customers) prefer blue for products that are functional or associated with water, and prefer red for products that are luxury items or are associated with status, such as a sports car."

Would a can of CocaCola be recognizable

at first glance without its signature red label? Would the famous, “M,” for McDonalds still stick out in the line of sight if it was a color besides yellow?

Color can integrate into the brand of the company, becoming a point of recognition for the brand. The red of the target logo has integrated into the large cooperation’s identity; red shopping bags and red shopping carts. The white logo representing Apple products is seen in the company’s white computer desktops and Ipods.

Purdy picks up a package of earl grey tea from nearby. The package is purple.

“Purple is the color of regal, royalty,” Purdy says. Earl...royalty. This may have been a pur-

poseful choice.

While certain colors have specific associations in general, it is important to remember that each individual’s color preference is a personal opinion.

“Any color can have any meaning to any person,” Leigh says.

Despite the fact that individual opinions form when it comes to color, designers and marketers are attempting to capitalize on American consumer and buying trends, contributing to a multi-billion dollar behavior.

And that’s a lot of green. **K**



ORANGE IS THOUGHT TO BE EXPERIENCED AS AROUSING OR WARM

◀ *Designers and advertisers intentionally make objects certain colors for a variety of reasons, such as drawing attention to the object, or invoking a feeling of hunger or cleanliness.*



PURPLE IS THE SYMBOL OF ROYALTY AND WEALTH



GREEN HAS POSITIVE LINKS IN THE NATURAL REALM (E.G., GREEN FOLIAGE AND VEGETATION)



STORY BY SAM SUNDERLAND

Photos by Annmarie Kent

Infographics by Rachel Simons



TUNING IN TO TINGLE

Experiencing ASMR

▲ *Photo illustration demonstrating whispering and hand rubbing*

SOUNDS THAT FEEL GOOD — THEY'RE different for everyone that feels the tingly sensation of ASMR. Fingers clicking away on a keyboard, brushes slowly moving down the back of a hand, fingers scratching at the spine of a book, hair rustling through hands, food mashing around in mouths, whispering voices and many other small, seemingly insignificant sounds may go unnoticed by the majority and felt by only some.

These sound triggers send tingles down Nataly Scheidt's spine, traveling swiftly up to her head and culminating in an all-over calming sensation.

Scheidt first noticed this feeling during class in middle school. The scribble of a pen on paper and the click, click, click of a mechanical pencil instantly put her body at ease. She wasn't aware of it then, but the feeling was a reaction called ASMR, Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response — the tingly, pleasurable sensation felt at the back of the neck, scalp or spine in response to certain visual and auditory stimuli.

Once community-generated websites such as Reddit and YouTube began talking about these sensations, a culture developed wherein thousands of videos have been made recreating visu-

al and audio triggers with millions of views and hundreds of subscribers tuning in to tingle.

Scheidt and fellow linguistics major Brooks Donohue, both Western seniors, watch ASMR videos while doing homework or relaxing before they fall asleep.

During college, both Donohue and Scheidt discovered ASMR videos while browsing Reddit. Under the SubReddit R/ASMR, titled "Sounds that feel good," viewers can watch and discuss videos that cater to their specific triggers.

Each video is tagged to indicate whether the video's creator intended for it to be an ASMR trigger or whether it was an unintentional trigger. Videos tagged "intentional" often portray ASMR artists that will sometimes whisper into their camera while they talk about their day or in some cases show off their makeup collection. Sometimes, ASMR artists role-play events or scenarios that are common triggers, such as a scalp massage or haircut.

Unintentional videos are videos already made that trigger ASMR in viewers. Known for his soft voice and relaxing videos, late scenic painter and "The Joy of Painting" television host Bob Ross has become a popular uninten-

tional ASMR artist.

Scheidt says collection videos, in which an ASMR artist slowly talks about their collection of video games, books and more, are popular among the ASMR community. However, she prefers video game ASMR videos. During these videos, the sounds of clicking buttons and typing on a keyboard relax Scheidt into an almost slumber.

The pitch of a female ASMR artist's voice triggers Scheidt more than a male voice, though for Donohue it's the opposite. Donohue's favorite ASMR video is mostly auditory — a binaural head massage video that states in the title "Wear Headphones!" Still pictures of shampoo, towels and candles take up the screen.

The video begins with a paper dressing sheet rustling as if the artist places it around the viewer's neck, then the faucet turns on and water comes gushing out, as if it's right in the viewer's ear. A shampoo bottle clicks open and out squirts shampoo. The massage happens

during the next few minutes — hair scrunches as shampoo mixes with water, fingers scratch against the scalp, then the water runs to rinse it all off.

Donohue listens, with headphones secured, as the sounds send tingles between his ears, then down his spine like rushes of electricity.

Many people do not feel anything listening to these videos, and even more have never heard of ASMR. Some of her friends have given the videos a chance, but others think they're just plain weird, Scheidt says.

So what does experiencing ASMR mean and why doesn't everyone experience the sensation?

Steven Novella, a clinical neurologist and professor at Yale University School of Medicine, believes that although there is little research behind the concept, it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Similar to migraine headaches, many people report the same symptoms and feelings although there is no definitive answer to whether it's a true phenomenon.



▲ *The sound frequency of pencil on paper.*



▲ *The sound frequency of a clicking keyboard.*

For Karissa Burnett, a second year Clinical Psychology Ph.D. student, the lack of research wasn't enough.

The Fuller Graduate School of Psychology student first remembers experiencing ASMR in second grade while her teacher was reading "The Cat in the Hat" aloud to the class.

"I called it 'the feeling' and have experienced it ever since," Burnett says in an email.

Burnett found the ASMR community after randomly deciding to search for the "tingly and calm feeling" online while procrastinating on a class assignment.

Discovering ASMR was an enlightening experience for Burnett. Following her passion for scientific inquiry, she decided to join Dr. Craig Richard of Shenandoah University and Jennifer Allen, who Burnett says coined the term 'ASMR,' to lead research efforts studying those who do and do not experience ASMR.

Those who do not experience ASMR are skeptical, which Burnett says is expected with any

new area of research. So far, the ASMR community has been eager and willing to participate in the study, Burnett says.

"They are excited to see it taken seriously and to uncover its origins," she says.

Experiencing ASMR can be summed up as a "tingly sensation from sounds and experiences," though there is currently no scientific research to qualify the phenomenon as anything more than a feeling. Whispering voices and brushes against skin might send chills down hundreds of YouTube subscribers' spines, but until more scientific explanation emerges, ASMR will remain an unexplained sensory experience. ^K



▲ *The sound frequency of running water.*



THE PILL GAME

Living life sober one day at a time

STORY BY:
BEATRICE HARPER

*Photo Illustrations
by: Jake Parrish*

▲ *In order to inject heroin, the drug needs to be melted into a liquid before drawn into a syringe. Users will often use a table-spoon and lighter to melt the drug, turning it into a dark brown substance.*

HIS HANDS TREMBLE AS HE CLUTCHES the pill bottle; little white ovals clatter into his strong, clammy palm. One, two, three, four ... no, five—five will put him in a calm state of mind for the day. Twenty minutes later, as a customer screams at him over a misunderstanding, he smiles, his dark eyes lighting up. On first glance, he appears composed, well dressed in a crisp shirt and slacks, an air of charismatic confidence about him, but upon deeper examination into his daily rituals, one would realize this is the life of a functioning OxyContin addict.

Since 1996, when OxyContin was first introduced to the pharmaceutical market as a pain reliever, rates of Oxy use have grown exponentially. In more recent years, Oxycodone, a generic version of OxyContin, was altered to be tamper proof — meaning that for those cracking the pills to instantly release the drugs numbing effect, it would no longer work to satisfy their cravings.

Today, Mike, 35, is a recovering addict that has struggled with addiction since he was 27 years old.

Mike's use initially began as a way to combat the stressors of being thrust into a high-powered management position that he simply was not ready for. An ex-military friend with a lifetime Oxy prescription, following a wartime injury, suggested Oxy as an alternative to managing work-related stress. From there, Mike's use increased from being a coping mechanism at work to a full-fledged addiction.

Within eight months, he was taking Oxy five days a week and experiencing withdrawal symptoms when not using. He lost compassion for his employees and only cared that the company was meeting its monetary goals. If he didn't have opiates in his system, he couldn't manage.

"As long as my needs were being met — so long as I had Oxy," Mike says, "I didn't care about anything."

As the medical world began to catch on to recreational misuse of Oxy, restrictions were enforced to make abusing the drug more difficult and Oxy became harder to attain, Mike says. He contacted over 20 dealers, hearing the same words from each one — there was no more Oxy to be had, but they did have heroin.

"There was no question, there was no thinking— it was either get sick, or make the switch to heroin," Mike says.

Twenty eight states displayed death rates

“I KNEW THAT I WAS EITHER GOING TO DIE — OR GET SOBER”

from prescription opiates as having declined by 6.6 percent between 2010 and 2012. In the same years, lethal heroin overdoses climbed from 1,779 cases to 3,635, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Known for its euphoric numbing properties, the Drug Enforcement Agency classifies heroin as a schedule I controlled substance, having a high potential for abuse with no accepted medical qualities.

In prior jobs Scott Martinez, a risk reduction specialist at Western's Prevention and Wellness Center, had patients who sold or gave away their prescribed opiate-based pharmaceuticals — such as Oxy or Hydrocodone — in exchange for heroin, or for money to buy it.

Addicts will sometimes intentionally injure themselves to receive prescriptions, says Lex Rivers, regional manager of Catholic Community Services of Whatcom County's recovery center. Whereas pharmaceuticals are amply prescribed but expensive to fill, heroin is relatively cheap, Rivers says. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania released the report "Heroin: Combating this Growing Epidemic in Pennsylvania," which stated that heroin is cheaper to purchase than beer.

Heroin builds a tolerance, and doses increase over time to achieve the same intense high as the first time, Rivers says. If addicts attempt to quit, their body feels sick from the withdrawal of the drug. Each use reprograms the body into perceiving heroin in the body as being normal, he says. The body goes from being numb all the time to experiencing withdrawal feelings, which can be incredibly painful both physically and mentally.

Mike's growing addiction led him to ask his parents for money, claiming it was for a mortgage payment, although he used it to get high, he says. His ex-wife found a bankcard that didn't belong to their shared account, and when she questioned him about it he covered it up with lies. Mike lost his wife, his little girl, his house, his life savings, his friends and many jobs to his addiction.

Mike's dealer, a friend that had introduced him to his ex-wife, finally contacted her, worried about the amount Mike was using. His family intervened and eventually admitted

Mike into rehab. Although, the clinic's method of pushing people through the system was not what he needed to get clean, Mike says.

Mike relapsed and fell into a darker place. He hit rock bottom when he realized he was using heroin as an escape to get away from all the people he'd hurt, and lost, from getting high. He was on the brink of committing suicide to get away from the pain, because when he wasn't high the burden was simply too much to bear, Mike says.

"I knew that I was either going to die — or get sober," Mike says.

Mike chose to live. The decision was not an easy one, but he found a treatment center that helps patients attain their personal goals. He was able to focus on investing in his health and long-term happiness. He sat in a room for the 72-hour withdrawal period,

▼ *Heroin users often times start out abusing painkillers such as OxyContin then begin using heroin when the pharmaceuticals no longer have a desirable effect, or are difficult to acquire.*





alone with his pain he refused to take medicine prescribed to recovering addicts to help with the pain. It was difficult, but it was the reality he needed, Mike says.

“I’m still exploring myself and my spirituality, but I am very, very happy with what I have in my life,” Mike says.

Heroin cravings activate areas in the brain that control dopamine, or the release of pleasure, Martinez says. For a recovering addict, the brain must be reprogrammed to learn to receive pleasure from day-to-day activities instead of drugs.

“They [addicts] have to learn how to find natural, normal means of attaining happiness,” he says, “As they are locked into a world of perpetually using again and again in order to keep withdrawal symptoms away, or to keep from getting sick.”

Mike’s recovery has not been easy, he still experiences ramifications of his past choices. His credit is in the red, he spent an enormous amount of money on drugs and he lost many relationships. But he learned life isn’t about material things, it’s about what a person can do to better the world and be more conscious

of what’s going on. He’s learned to give love without expecting anything in return, to live life with integrity and to be a man, he says.

“I wake up each day with purpose — each day is different, but it’s to be the best person I can be, to find joy in the little things in life,” he says.

Today, nearly 11 months clean, Mike is positive and continuing to work on remaining sober. He has cravings, not for heroin anymore, but for simple things that he will never be able to have so long as he is sober, such as drinking a beer at the end of a long day.

“When you live life in addiction you only have one thing on your mind,” Mike says, “And that’s where, and how, you’re going to get your next fix — you don’t have time to see the beauty in life.”

In the end, his hope for living a positive existence and changing the world with his outlook keeps him going, as he takes sobriety one day at a time. **K**

▲ *The most common form of heroin intake is by injection, which involves the melting of the drug into a liquid form and injecting it into the body using a syringe.*

MEATLESS MEALS

Pescetarians indulge in the ocean's bounty



STORY BY:
BEATRICE HARPER

*Photo Illustration
by: Rachel Brown*

THE SMELL OF SEARING SALMON WAFTS through the house accompanied by the scent of cracked black pepper, sautéing green peppers, onions, garlic and basil. Steam fogs Sam Konieczka's glasses as she stirs her dinner. Her roommate fries chicken next to her, but it won't be a dish Konieczka samples. They share the meal, Konieczka eating only her pescatarian tailored diet of salmon and vegetables.

Cravings for meat are something Konieczka still has frequently — supplemented by eating tuna sandwiches at least twice a week, she says. The recommended amount of protein is 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish, a half-cup of beans and either one egg, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter or 1 ounce of cheese, according to a 2014 report by the National Institutes of Health. This means pescatarians can obtain the protein their bodies require without meat.

Stephen Gruenheit, the Bellingham Community Food Co-op's health clerk, says that a proper amount of iron in a pescatarian diet is important in maintaining a healthy balance of minerals within the body. He advises whole food-based supplements, which are bonded with natural food elements and easier for the body to break down. "Taking a large amount of iron can be harmful and stagnate the digestion of the body," Gruenheit says.

Lisa Samuel, a registered dietitian nutritionist, says that if you eat a meat-free diet, all the nutrients you require can be obtained through plants. A pescatarian diet can boost omega-3s, which research shows can improve mood, Samuel says in an email. Eating fish

can also raise sources of protein and B-12, which can be lacking in strict vegetarian or vegan diets.

Bellingham's coastal location provides fresh, local seafood, Konieczka says, helping curb her meat cravings. Konieczka was originally vegetarian, but couldn't resist crab rangoons. Konieczka recalls thinking, "Oh, seafood's so good—I can keep that in my diet."

Konieczka's cravings and love of seafood resulted in her coworkers at Bellingham's downtown Avenue Bread admiringly nicknaming her, "The Slammin' Salmon." "I feel like I could eat a salmon every day if I could afford it," she says.

Konieczka can feel when her body is lacking protein depending on the moods she finds herself in. When her body is sluggish, she knows she is simply hungry for seafood. She listens to her body to fulfill her dietary needs. She acknowledges that for protein, meat is quicker to cook compared to preparing vegetables. "It takes longer, but feels better in the long run," she says.

Family meals can be difficult for Konieczka as her family often teasingly encourages her to eat meat when she's visiting home. Last Thanksgiving Konieczka's father came to visit, taking her to Ivar's Pier 54 in Seattle. They shared a plate of steaming seafood, which she appreciated, since it can be difficult to share a meal with those that don't eat the same diet.

If Konieczka ever eats meat again, it would only be if she were traveling, she says — as a substantial part of learning about a culture is experiencing their cuisine and the most delicious dishes often include meat. ❏

▲ *The recommended amount of protein is two to three ounces of cooked meat, poultry or fish, a half-cup of beans and an egg, two tablespoons of peanut butter or one ounce of cheese, according to a 2014 report by the National Institutes of Health. A pescatarian diet can also boost omega-3s.*

STORY BY LILY JAQUITH
Photo Illustration by Rachel Brown
Infographic by David Young Shin



BATE AND CATCH

The hunt to end stigmas of self pleasure

MASTURBATION. A WORD THAT COULD MAKE a room full of sixth graders giggle and still bring silence to a college lecture hall.

Along with the occasional reflex to blush every time the word comes up is the assumption that men masturbate more than women.

The stereotype that women never masturbate and all men do appears to be just that, a stereotype. Ninety-one percent of men between ages 20-24 have masturbated in their lifetime, while 76 percent of women in the same age group say they've masturbated in their lifetime, according to a 2010 study done by The Journal of Sexual Medicine.

The 15 percent difference is a far cry from the assumption that women never touch themselves and men never stop.

DICTATED BY SOCIETY

Western's Associated Students Sexual Awareness Center Coordinator Allie Moore is skeptical about statistics that convey any sort of difference in the number of men that masturbate compared to the number of women.

"I wonder if that number is just reported because women don't want to talk about it, not that they're not necessarily masturbating," Moore says. "I think it's a little of both."

Sarah Covert-Bowlds, former AS Women's Center Coordinator, feels the same way. She's inclined to believe numbers are pretty even between men

and women masturbating.

There are societal pressures could also be causing women to underreport.

Masturbation ties in with the idea that men have more sexual energy, says Ray Jacobsen, assistant coordinator of the AS Sexual Awareness Center.

This gives the impression that men think about sex all the time, so they have to masturbate more. The idea of women having a sex drive and masturbating gets left behind.

Sex education is also often designed for men, she says. So naturally it's more comfortable for men to talk about it.

It's almost expected that men masturbate early in their lives, says Danny Canham, former assistant coordinator for the AS Women's Center. Men are expected to be more comfortable with their bodies, so it's assumed they would masturbate.

Canham feels many women don't even think of masturbation as a possibility until much later, he says.

Moore believes that men are taught to be far past the standard of sexuality, while women are taught to be far below it.

"Male sexuality is always accepted and rewarded by society," she says.

Masturbating isn't a requirement, Covert-Bowlds says. But it is harmful for women who find pleasure in masturbation to feel they're the odd one out among female peers.

"The general view of female masturbation is that it can turn on men and that's what it's about," Moore

▲ *Photo illustration of a woman masturbating in her home.*



says. "I really hate that."

For a woman there's shame in being sexual, Moore says.

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Changing the language surrounding masturbation is the key to getting rid of the stereotype and making up the difference, Jacobsen says.

Moore believes part of the stereotype might come from the idea that people can't masturbate when they're in a relationship.

Women are expected to be there for their husbands, she says. There aren't as many options for women to open up about their sexuality while promoting a sex-positive culture.

"No matter what decision you make [about sexuality] make it for you," Moore says. "If you do it, own it and be happy about it."

It's important to remember masturbation is healthy for anyone, she says. It's the safest form of sexual activity.

Open communication about masturbation makes it less of a big deal than it once was, Canham says.

Masturbation is important to many people, Jacobsen says, whether you're a young person learning about your sexuality or someone much older who doesn't have a partner anymore.

"If we work on making masturbation more of a topic for conversation and a more positive thing, then it might be the key to reversing sexual repression," she says.

"Sex for One: The Joy of Selfloving" by Betty Dodson explains that by creating a better dialogue around masturbation, people, especially women, are able to better ask for the kind of sex they want from a partner.

If women are more encouraged to masturbate, and know themselves, then communication can increase in sexual encounters with a partner.

Better sexual health education is essential to changing the stereotype, Canham says.

Through education and the changing views of society the assumption could change, Covert-Bowlds says. But it's not going to happen anytime soon because this goes so far back.

By making this a safe topic, Jacobsen says, masturbation can become more approachable. Recognizing the barriers to talking about it is the first step. [↗](#)

R U N N I N G I N T

The revival of a 100-year



O T H E P A S T

-old adventure marathon



STORY BY: ALEX WITHROW
Photos by Annmarie Kent



FORTY-EIGHT HOURS AND 17 MINUTES

of willpower and determination. Forty-eight hours and 17 minutes of running, sweating and climbing. Forty-eight hours and 17 minutes with almost no sleep. On Aug. 1, 2014, three men ran from Bellingham Bay to the top of Mount Baker and back in 48 hours and 17 minutes.

The group left Cornwall Beach at noon and didn't reach the Ridley Creek trailhead to begin their hike up the mountain until after midnight. This was the fourth attempt to follow the path of the Mt. Baker Marathon, a train, car and foot race that began in 1911 and ended in 1913. Their run eliminated the car and train portions of the marathon, instead the run is done entirely on foot.

RUNNING MAN

Daniel Probst spearheaded the two-day, 100-mile run. Inclement weather and the difficulty of the run had sent him home three times before. The top of Mount Baker is covered in snow and ice late into the summer causing a blinding glare from the sun. A lightning storm struck during one of his attempts, and the group could feel the buzz of electricity in their metal ice axes.

Probst's goal is to revive the historic Mt. Baker Mar-

athon and turn it into a new and improved ultramarathon through his nonprofit organization, the Cascade Mountain Runners.

The marathon has garnered attention from a variety of sources over the past several months including the Bellingham Herald, Trail Runner and Adventures NW.

Over the last 10 years, Probst has run about 40 ultramarathons set all over the world. These races are not for the faint of heart. An ultramarathon has to be at least 26.2 miles long, and Probst prefers races that are much longer. During a 200-mile race in Italy, he only slept for seven hours over the course of five days, he says.

"Running 100 miles is never easy. It gets easier, but it's never easy, and you never know if you're going to finish when you start," he says. "It's kind of a metaphor for life, you've got to start things that you don't know if you can finish."

His current challenge is getting the Mt. Baker Marathon ready to run by June 2015. This means fundraising, attaining permits and finding volunteers to help him rebuild the Ridley Creek Trail, one of the paths used in the original marathon, he says.

But the run is always worth it. The sense of camaraderie among participants and the emotional benefits

*Volunteers ►
make their
way back to
the trailhead.*

◀ *Probst conversing with Russ and Cindy Pfeiffer-Hyott.*

of being out in the woods inspire Probst to continue on this path and restore the Mt. Baker Marathon, he says.

“This weekend we were on the side of a snow-covered mountain, with a 1,000 foot drop down to the tree-line, in super slick conditions and we’re all watching out for each other,” he says. “It’s what makes you feel alive and you crave that.”

The marathon has its roots in Bellingham, which is another reason Probst wants to revive it. “This felt like the right race to bring back because it’s got all this history here that’s part of the race,” he says.

A RACE THROUGH HISTORY

Todd Warger, local historian, author and documentary filmmaker, recently codirected a film about the original Mt. Baker Marathon, entitled “The Mountain Runners.” The film has won a collection of awards in addition to receiving two Emmy nominations.

The Mt. Baker Marathon began as a way to attract tourism to Bellingham at the turn of the century. It was the United States’ first “adventure race,” a sport that has evolved into the ultramarathon. The racers ranged from professional runners to coal miners, from bedspring makers to postmen, Warger says.

The race consisted of taking either a car or a train from Bellingham Bay to one of two trailheads, running

to the top of Mount Baker, running back to the vehicle then driving back to Bellingham, Warger says. The runners had the option of taking the 32-mile round-trip trail that began in Deming or the steeper 28-mile trail that started in Glacier.

The cars and trains were then stripped down to their bones to make them lighter and faster, supposedly giving those racers an advantage. The runners would drive through treacherous roads with streams of muddy water trailing down the sides, and conditions were hardly better for the trains, Warger says.

“A lot of the runners said the transportation was worse than the run because it was so dangerous and they felt more out of control,” he says.

For the first two years of the marathon, the race would start at night so the snow on Mount Baker would still be packed and firm in the morning when runners reached the mountain, Warger says. The men were forced to carry jerry-rigged lanterns made from buckets filled with lard and candles as they smashed through the muddy trails.

Out of the 37 men who participated in the three marathons, only 12 completed the race, he says.

Rules changed in 1913, and the marathon began in the morning that year to allow more spectators to see the race, Warger says. This resulted in two men’s



fatal falls into mountain crevasses due to the low visibility at night.

The race didn't go on after 1913 for several reasons. The spectators saw the marathon as a kind of "human horse race," where wealthy entrepreneurs exploited less well-to-do citizens into running in the treacherous marathon for the prize money at the end, he says.

JJ. Donovan, a timber and railroad tycoon based in Bellingham, felt the race reflected poorly on the area. The Panama Canal would be built in 1914 and Donovan knew he needed the world to take him, and his town seriously, if he wanted his ships and lumber to succeed in this emerging market.

"Whatever JJ. Donovan said, people listened," Warger says. "If he said 'This is done' and he's not going to support it anymore, then everybody else backed out too."

The race organizers went bankrupt and the marathon was over.

"It wasn't just a race, there was a lot of interest in nature and going back to the mountains," Warger says. "I think locally it's interesting how those feelings and those emotions about 'The mountains in the backyard' haven't changed."

BACK TO THE STARTING BLOCK

Aaron Poh ran the marathon alongside Probst last summer as his first successful ultramarathon. He had attempted the race once in June but failed to reach the summit of Mount Baker.

The two met through Fairhaven Runners, a local running group that holds weekly runs, Poh says. He had expressed interest in the marathon but was shocked when Probst extended an invitation to do the trial run with him last August.

"I was super stoked about it, super excited, but I

was also like 'Do you really think I can do this?'" he says. "He had faith in me, so I felt reassured that I would be able to."

He had previously completed the Chuckanut 50k and a few other long-distance runs, but had never attempted anything like the grueling 100-mile marathon, he says.

The marathon was challenging for many reasons. Large cedar trees, 3 to 4 feet in diameter, which had fallen across the overgrown path, blocked their way. The men were carrying large packs and an array of climbing gear, and midway up the mountain they began to run out of water, Poh says.

"It was super hot on the mountain. I knew it was going to be hot, but I was amazed by the reflection of the sun on the snow," he says. "I was just pouring sweat the whole time." Poh was concerned about the threat of dehydration, but he knew panicking would be an unnecessary blow to morale, he says.

The runners in the original marathon in the early 1900s would have faced these same conditions, yet many were still able to complete the race.

"When I was going up the Ridley Creek trail I was just amazed that people were doing this 100 years ago," Poh says. "I think it's important to pay tribute to the people that founded our area—it's easy to overlook how this town was built and how it came to be."

Whether in 1911 or 2014, the Mt. Baker Marathon has attracted runners from all walks of life because of these challenges, not in spite of them.

The marathon has been able to transcend time and overcome barriers for more than 100 years. Humans have an innate companionship with the outdoors, and no amount of distance or time will be able to alter this bond. [K](#)

*(left to right)
Volunteers
Samantha Briggs,
Russ Pfeiffer-Hoytt,
Cindy Pfeiffer-
Hoytt, Jason Sams,
Daniel Probst
and Dar Surratt
watching the sun
begin to set on
Deming Glacier
after working on the
Ridley Creek Trail. ▼*



STORY BY **KATELYN DOGGETT**

Photo Illustration by Jake Parrish

Infographics by Hannah Johnson



**NOT
YOUR
FAULT**

***STRENGTHENING SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICIES
ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES***

[THE FOLLOWING STORY CONTAINS GRAPHIC MATERIAL
PERTAINING TO SEXUAL ASSAULT & RAPE.]



“BUT YOU WANT IT, SO WON'T YOU AT

least give me a blow job?” he says while lying on his rumpled blankets, she struggles for anything to say while pinned underneath him. She turns her head sideways attempting to get him to stop kissing her and mumbles something that almost sounds like a “no,” but is not quite audible. Her mind is racing and she forgets how to speak as her black dress bunches up above her waist, as his hand begins moving between her thighs. She closes her eyes and goes to a happy place, wishing she were anywhere but in this moment, refusing to give in to any of his pressuring. After what seems like years, he gets up and angrily leaves, complaining of being led on. She immediately begins crying, while two of her other friends are sleeping on an adjacent bed.

The night didn't go as planned. There had been alcohol to celebrate the end of spring quarter 2013, and she thought she made the right decision by staying the night in her friend's dorm room instead of walking home intoxicated. After falling asleep on the floor, she woke up in her friend's roommate's bed, where he was kissing and touching her against her will.

The girl in the incident was me. I am a survi-

vor of sexual assault.

While that night's events could have been more extreme, they happened without consent of both parties. I chose not to report the incident, and for the longest time I blamed myself and wondered if it was even considered sexual assault. I told myself that I had been too drunk and couldn't remember all the details. Maybe I had led him on because perhaps my dress was too short, maybe I could have done more to stop him. The guy was a mutual friend, and I had always assumed a sexual assault would happen between strangers. I didn't tell many people about the incident except for a few close friends. Even if I were to have reported it, I didn't know where or whom to turn to next.

Students and educators are working together to change the way sexual assault is perceived on campuses throughout Washington state. Sharing my story is my call to action to change the ideas around sexual assault everywhere.

Every two minutes another person in the United States is sexually assaulted, amounting to about 237,868 survivors of sexual assault annually, according to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN). In 2013 only three forcible sex offenses were reported at Western Washington University, according to the Annual Security and Fire Safety Report.

Sexual assault is defined as any actual or attempted sexual contact or behavior with another person without that person's consent, according to Western's Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sex Discrimination, Including Sexual Misconduct. Sexual assault includes “Engaging in actual or attempted sexual touching, genital-oral contact, penetration and/or intercourse without consent,” according to the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code.

The new Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sex Discrimination, Including Sexual Misconduct was released in September 2014. The new policy is more comprehensive and includes clearer definitions of sexual violence, says Dr. Sue Guenter-Schlesinger Western's Title IX Coordinator. Title IX of the Education Amendments from 1972 requires colleges not to discriminate on the basis of sex.

“Western has been in front of the pack in terms of getting our policy in line with new regulations and we will continue revising it as we need to,” says Guenter-Schlesinger. “We do it because we care about our students, faculty and staff. That's why Western is interested. Yes it is compliance, but it's more than just that. You come to school to learn and our obligation is to make sure nothing mitigates that.”

While there are strong policies in place, Western's reported forcible sex offenses don't accurately represent the amount of sexual assaults that occur, says Josie Ellison, Western's representative on the Washington Student Association's (WSA) new task force for the prevention of sexual assault.

Sixty percent of sexual assaults are not reported to police, according to RAINN. Based on statistics and Western's enrollment, 406 reports of sexual assault were expected at Western in 2013, according to the Higher Education Accurate Rape Reporting tool, which means 403 sexual assaults potentially happened and weren't accounted for.

"A lot of folks just don't think this happens on Western's campus because we're such a 'liberal' school and we're so progressive that nobody does that," Ellison says. "In real life that's not how it is, and ideas about sexual assault need to change."

Survivors don't report sexual assaults for many reasons, Ellison says. Often, the survivor will think the assault was their fault because they may have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or because they thought they could have done more to stop it from occurring. Resources, while available, are not readily apparent to survivors, she says, and they won't want to spend time searching for the next steps of what to do. The survivor will choose not to report the incident because they don't clearly know the next step, she says.

Sometimes the survivor doesn't think their experience was serious enough to report, or a survivor has difficulty accepting they were sexually assaulted, says Katie Plewa, Western's Consultation and Sexual Assault Support (CASAS) coordinator. CASAS provides survivors with emotional support and helps them access all resources available during their healing process including academic support, orders of protection, emergency leave, housing services and judicial services.

"When someone is sexually assaulted, their experience is often inconsistent with what we see in the media," Plewa says. "We often think of sexual assault happening in a dark alley, perpetrated by a stranger with a weapon. While this happens, it's much less common. If anyone experienced something that was unwanted and sexual, it's serious, and they have the right to seek support and/or justice."

The WSA task force, created in the summer of 2014, is a group of students working to combat and raise awareness of sexual assault on college campuses.

ALL TOO COMMON



1 in 6
American women
has been the victim
of an attempted or
completed rape
in her lifetime



1 in 33
American men
has been the victim
of an attempted or
completed rape
in his lifetime



Sexual assault
has **fallen by**
more than **50%**
in the last two
decades.

"To me, it's a basic human right to not have your body violated [sexually] and I'd like to make sure that it's something that doesn't continue to happen on college campuses—or anywhere," Ellison says. "The fact that it's so prevalent and widely accepted is something I find bothersome and would like to work against."

The WSA task force will focus on updating the campus culture around survivors, increasing available resources, implementing a way to anonymously report perpetrators and bringing awareness of what sexual assault is, Ellison says.

Starting winter quarter 2015 all students will be required to take an online sexual violence training course, Guenter-Schlesinger says. Currently, the only education students receive is through the Social Health and Responsibility Education tutorial incoming students are required to view. The training focuses on scenarios involving sexual violence, bystander intervention, prevention and consent. It is inclusive to all students of different ethnicities and gender identities, Guenter-Schlesinger says.

Western is home to many groups and resources that all desire to see a change about how sexual violence, and assault, is perceived through educating and supporting students, Guenter-Schlesinger says.

"There are a lot of ideas that people bring to college about what college is all about, norms that aren't really norms," says Western's Empowerment and Violence Education (WEAVE) volunteer Elin McWilliams. "People have false expectations and letting students know that violence and sexual assault aren't supported at Western is important."

WEAVE is a peer-health educator group on campus working to empower and educate students about issues including sexual assault and consent.

In addition to the added training for all students and staff, efforts to spread awareness about sexual violence and assault include sending out an email twice a year to all students and staff with Western's up-to-date policies, placing posters advertising CASAS around campus, responding to input and suggestions from students and in the future potentially advertising resources on KUGS, Western's radio station, Guenter-Schlesinger says.


Ellison, McWilliams and Guenter-Schlesinger want to increase talk of sexual assault on campus because it tends to be a subject that people avoid, they say. Ellison wants Western to stop perpetuating rape culture, realize that victims aren't always straight white women and learn how to support survivors. In order for stu-

dent's perspective of sexual assault to change, victim blaming needs to end, she says.

Victim blaming occurs when responsibility is placed on the "victim" or survivor for being sexually assaulted, instead of putting it on the perpetrator of the assault, McWilliams says.

"It's detrimental in our society because instead of focusing on the problem we are focus-

experience to help alter the way people view sexual assault. Even though I do wish that night never happened, I don't seek pity for what I experienced. I do desire change. While Western is a progressive campus on its way to changing the way sexual assault is viewed, it's an ongoing process, Guenter-Schlesinger says.

"Everybody would like to say there's zero [sexual violence] happening anywhere," Guenter-Schlesinger says. "But the truth is that we're making progress. Are we there yet? No. We're not 100 percent there yet. What is important is that we have the processes in place that we communicate to the public what their options are that our actions speak louder than our words and that the appropriate action is taken. This institution takes things seriously. We don't want it here." 

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AT WESTERN IS ANY 'UNWELCOME BEHAVIOR OF A SEXUAL NATURE THAT IS COMMITTED WITHOUT CONSENT OR BY FORCE, INTIMIDATION OR COERCION,' ACCORDING TO WESTERN'S STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES CODE.

ing on the person experiencing the problem," McWilliams says. "We are invalidating [survivors] and making them feel like it's their fault, rather than teaching the perpetrator not to commit acts of violence."

Victim blaming happens not only on college campuses throughout Washington state and the United States, but also to a larger extent in today's culture, Plewa says. Many people still believe various misconceptions about sexual assault and will fail to hold offenders accountable when it is never a survivor's fault.

"We need, want and must develop a culture of caring," Guenter-Schlesinger says.

'Consent at Western is defined as a voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. It is informed, freely given and mutual, according to Western's policies. Other aspects include that consent cannot be given when intoxicated, silence does not equal consent, coercion or force invalidates consent, past consent does not imply future consent and that consent can be redrawn at any time.

Almost two years after I was sexually assaulted, I have finally accepted that it was not my fault, and am willing to speak out about my

COUNSELING & SUPPORT RESOURCES

IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SEE A CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELOR AT CONSULTATION AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT (CASAS) TO DISCUSS YOUR REPORTING OPTIONS IN DETAIL, AND TO HAVE SOMEONE THERE FOR YOU WHILE YOU REPORT. THE CASAS HELP LINE IS (360) 650-3700. WE ALSO ENCOURAGE YOU TO UTILIZE THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU:

- **WWU COUNSELING CENTER**
(360) 650-3164
- **STUDENT HEALTH CENTER**
(360) 650-3400
- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES**
(360) 715-1563

TURN UP THE VOLUME

The handcrafted amplifiers of Ben Verellen



STORY BY:
TOMMY
CALDERON

Photo by:
Tommy Calderon

IN THE BASEMENT OF A HOUSE ADJACENT to the Interstate 5 freeway in Seattle a booming sound shakes the walls. The year is 2007 and Ben Verellen, 28, is creating his first guitar amplifier. The basement has a half dirt, half concrete floor that's filled with a few laundry machines, scattered music equipment and a couple of fold out particle board tables that Verellen uses as a makeshift workbench. It's dark and musty, but Verellen works late many nights.

Today, Verellen, 34, owns Verellen Amplifiers and has a workshop in the Fremont district of Seattle. Verellen has remained the sole proprietor for the past seven years. He does all the construction of the amplifiers, sends all the emails, makes and answers all of the phone calls and sends any order he gets.

It's personal for him to be the one creating, he says. Verellen has the capabilities to grow into a big production line of musical gear but he chooses to keep things the way they are, he says.

"I can talk to every person who wants to buy an amp," he says. "I think that's worth a lot, that's worth more to me than trying to shoot for the moon and get some million dollar operation going."

He's caught the attention of musicians from around the world. He's crafted amplifiers for musicians including Nate Mendel of the Foo Fighters, Scott Shriner of Weezer and Cory Murchy of Minus the Bear.

Every day brings something different, Verellen says. Ninety percent of the amplifiers created by Verellen are custom made. This keeps him engaged in what

he does and it consistently demands him to add new skills into his arsenal, he says.

The amplifiers are encased in sturdy aluminum cases that are mounted in handmade wooden boxes.

For Verellen, also being a musician affects the way he makes amplifiers, he says. He is the guitarist for Seattle band Helms Alee and drummer of Constant Lovers and believes that it's about music first, then the gear.

"A mistake people make is that the secret tool is right around the corner," he says.

He brings this idea into his creations and builds amplifiers with the intention that each amp will be the last amp anyone needs, he says.

Kelton Sears, bassist of the Seattle Band, Kithkin, says part of the reason why he and so many other musicians cherish Verellen Amplifiers is due to their build quality.

"If my house caught on fire, my cat and my Verellen Amplifier are what I would grab," Sears, says.

Rain pounds on the roof of his quiet workshop. Verellen is finishing up Friday at his shop by repairing a friend's amp and constructing another. He takes a sip of coffee as he continues to work.

"It's great being able to do something that involves something I've always loved," Verellen says.

When Verellen looks at the future, he hopes he is still in the same shop creating as he currently is and that it continues to let him live comfortably. **K**

▲ *Ben Verellen, 34, stands in front of one of his work benches while holding one of his custom guitar amplifiers at his workshop in Seattle, Friday, Nov. 21, 2014.*

STORY BY BECCA FREIMUTH

Photo by Jake Parrish

Infographics by Hannah Johnson

CONNECTING THE DOTS OF ADOPTION

Man builds a relationship with his birth parents



NERVES GOT THE BEST OF 18-YEAR-OLD

Drew Fisher as he sped up the highway on his way to Snohomish Falls. “It was just bad luck,” Fisher says as he remembers the speeding ticket he received that spring day in 2010. Although the cop had no sympathy for him, Fisher continued on his way up to the falls for a very important meeting. He looked around as he parked, and his eyes connected with the back of a woman who stood next to a Subaru.

“Oh, that’s her for sure,” Fisher, now 22, recalls.

As he approached the woman in her mid-30s, his nerves grew stronger and he forgot all about the inconvenient ticket he attained earlier. As she turned around, a smile inched

across her face.

“You look just like your father with your nose and curly hair,” she said.

For the first time, Fisher met his biological mother.

Fisher grew up in Redmond, Washington with his adoptive parents and older brother who was also adopted. Both boys never thought about their adoptions because their parents were very open about it from the beginning, says Fisher’s brother Ryan.

While Ryan only received cards on Christmas and birthdays, Fisher maintained communication with his biological mother throughout his childhood through letters. With their

▲ *Raised by adoptive parents, 22-year-old Drew Fisher met his biological mother for the first time in 2010, and his biological father in 2014.*

adoptive parents' support both boys met their biological mothers when they turned 18.

Since then Ryan, 27, has not increased communication with his biological mother.

"I know I could call her and talk to her at anytime," he says. "I've just had a rough past ten years, so it's just the last thing on my mind."

He knows little about his biological father since all his birth mother remembers is his first name. Finding out more information about his father could answer some of his remaining questions, Ryan says.

A MEDIATED ADOPTION

Both the boys' adoptions were mediated adoptions, which is a form of an open adoption. These types of adoptions are becoming a new standard to the adoption process. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute conducted a survey in 2012 based on 100 adoption agencies. About 40 percent of the 14,000 to 18,000 infant adoptions were mediated adoptions, according to the survey. In a mediated adoption, the child and parent have no direct contact with each other but the agency facilitates the exchange of pictures and letters.

Fisher is unsure about what agency his adoption was through.

Agencies such as Open Adoption and Family Services, located in Seattle, promote expanding what an open adoption looks like. OAFS focuses on merging two extended families, says Shari Levine the executive director of the agency. The term open adoption has become an umbrella term for many different forms of adoption, she says.

"What we found to be the most successful open adoptions are when the people who are involved are truly empowered to create their own healthy relationship," Levine says.

LINKING PARALLELS

When Fisher turned 18, his adoptive mother handed him an old cardboard shoe box. Inside he found dozens of letters from his biological mother, written when she was pregnant with him.

"I was 18 at the time, and she was 18 when she wrote them. It was just kind of like a time capsule," Fisher says. "I think this is what really made me want to know her because I found out so much more."

Through these letters he began to see par-

CREATING AN ADOPTION PLAN AT OAFS



The birth mother looks at prescreened families she wants to learn more about



She then looks at an online "family book" — a collection of photos and questionnaire answers — of her top choices



The birth mom chooses a family to meet and begins to build a friendship with them



If the birth mom finds a fitting family, a legal document outlining visitation is drawn up



After the baby is born, an "entrustment ceremony" is performed as the baby joins his or her adoptive family

allels between their lives. He discovered she enjoyed listening to Led Zeppelin, her favorite foods and her passion for outdoor adventure. He saw pictures of her in the places that he had visited and her as a YoungLife camp counselor at the same camp he had attended.

At this time, Fisher's passion was skiing. He would drop everything and move anywhere if it meant a good season of fresh snow on the mountain. He saw pictures of his biological mother skiing and discovered they had a similar passion— a commitment to adventure.

In the letters, she explained how her pregnancy was a blessing and was happening for a reason, Fisher says.

"She really wanted to convey that in the letters," he says. "She couldn't have been more mature and adult-like about what her child was going to read however many years later."

He knew he had to meet her.

OPEN ADOPTION AND FAMILY SERVICES

On average, OAFS successfully completes 40 adoptions per year. With a pool of 60-85 adoptive families waiting, the agency is contacted by 350 expecting parents for "options counseling" every year, Levine says.

For 30 years, OAFS has been a pro-choice agency, meaning the birthmother has the right to explore her three options: keep the baby, adoption or abortion. Ninety-five percent of adoption agencies are religiously affiliated, which makes OAFS unique in the world of adoption agencies, Levine says.

"When she lands on a decision, she will feel like it was a decision that was hers and a decision that she feels good about," Levine says. If the expecting mother doesn't choose adoption, OAFS gives her the resources she needs.

Although the average number of visits a birthmother has after the baby is born is two to four with OAFS, they do not expect every adoption to follow this model. The birthmother might go through different stages throughout her life, Levine says.

"If she decides she doesn't want the ongoing contact she doesn't have to access it," she says. "But what we've found is birth parents aren't like that, they are curious beings who want to know."

Working with OAFS that option is always available because all the adoptive parents genuinely want an ongoing relationship with the birthmother, she says.

ANOTHER MEETING

Fisher knew nothing about his biological father until June 2014 when he made the effort to connect with him, four years after meeting his biological mother.

“It was pretty easy,” Fisher says about finding his birthfather’s information. He googled the name and found a number on a website for his biological father’s rental property.

As the phone rang, Fisher remembers feeling as if he was knocking on his neighbor’s door about to explain how his baseball went through their window.

“It was kind of that feeling almost, that ‘Please don’t answer the phone so I can leave a message, so I don’t have to talk to you,’” Fisher says. “That nervous excitement, erring on the side of not wanting them to answer. But then it happens.”

Over the past six months, Fisher has continued building his relationship with his biological father. The first time they met, his father repeatedly expressed how thankful he was that Fisher contacted him, Fisher says.

“He figured that after 22 years, I was never going to contact him if I didn’t do it right when I was 18,” he says.

NEXT STEP

“WHEN SHE LANDS ON A DECISION, SHE WILL FEEL LIKE IT WAS A DECISION THAT WAS HERS AND A DECISION THAT SHE FEELS GOOD ABOUT.”

Fisher continues to build his relationship with his birthparents based on their similar core beliefs and mutual love for adventure and nature. He says they are more like long-lost siblings than his parents.

“The fact that my biological parents are happy to be a part of my life and want to see me do well and keep in touch, it’s a really good feeling,” Fisher says. If it had been a closed



adoption he would have felt less wanted and more abandoned, he says.

His adoption has given him more respect for the process and is thankful that he wasn’t brought up in a broken home, Fisher says.

“I would consider myself very fortunate to have regular contact with my biological mother and father,” Fisher says. “They are healthy relationships with really great people, and they will continue to grow.”

As Fisher looks into the future he sees his relationships with his biological parents continually growing. He has not met either of his birth parents’ spouses and hopes that will be the next step to these special relationships in his life. **K**

▲ From left to right, Drew is pictured with his adoptive parents Debie and Jeff, and his brother Ryan. Photograph courtesy of Drew Fisher.

A LITTLE TASTE OF SPAIN

Professor harvests specialty peppers



STORY BY:
TARA ALMASSI

*Photo by:
Anmarie Kent*

AS SEAN DWYER NIBBLES OFF THE END OF a slender, wrinkly green pepper, sautéed in olive oil and sprinkled with sea salt, a scalding sensation takes over from his head to his gut. He takes a gulp of freshly squeezed orange juice – the only thing that will numb the burn.

A Padrón Chili pepper is not an average green pepper. Although known to be mild, approximately 1 in 10 explode with an excruciatingly hot sensation.

Dwyer, a Western Spanish professor, is one of the only people in the Pacific Northwest to grow this single heirloom, non-hybrid species, which originated in Spain, he says.

Dwyer reminisces about his first experience eating Padrón peppers in Madrid with a group of 20 Western students he took on a study abroad trip in 2011.

After a long and exhausting day roaming the crowded streets of Madrid, Dwyer and his students sat in a quaint restaurant owned by a couple from the oceanic community Galicia, a town northwest of Madrid.

His favorite part of the day was sitting with a glass of his favorite red wine in hand and a plate of tapas – Spanish small plates and appetizers – while people watching in the plaza. One of the tapas was the traditional sautéed Padrón pepper.

“There is a peacefulness after the workday is complete [in] sitting back, enjoying food which includes these peppers, having good conversation and watching the people walk by,” Dwyer says.

The robust smell and flavor fascinated him.

“In a period of 4 weeks, I ate these peppers over 15 times,” he says.

Once back in the United States, Dwyer found the peppers he had grown so fond of were difficult to find due to the climate.

His craving for the Padrón pepper heightened, as he felt homesick missing warm, sunny days in Madrid.

In winter 2013, one of Dwyer’s previous students brought him back a packet of Padrón seeds from Spain. He immediately began researching the best ways to grow peppers by going to local Bellingham nurseries and searching the Internet. He found that most people suggested growing the seedlings indoors.

“[I] carefully hovered over these [peppers] until early November. They’re like my babies,” he says.

For Dwyer, these are more than just peppers – they comfort him.

Dwyer is able to share this feeling of nostalgia with Western Spanish professor Paqui Paredes, who grew up in Galicia. The two often use food and conversation about food to share their experiences of the culture, Paredes says.

When Paredes moved to the United States, she realized how much she missed them.

“The smoky flavor takes me back to sitting at a bar in Spain, having drinks and laughing with friends,” Paredes says.

As Dwyer picks up another pepper, he smells the freshness, which reminds him of a green pepper. As he takes a small bite, the smoky and peppery flavor takes over his mouth, transporting him back to Spain – his favorite place that makes him feel at home. ❧

▲ Sean Dwyer holds his last batch of Padrón Peppers for the season.

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