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KLIPSUN

M A G A Z I N E

SPOONS & SUSPENDERS

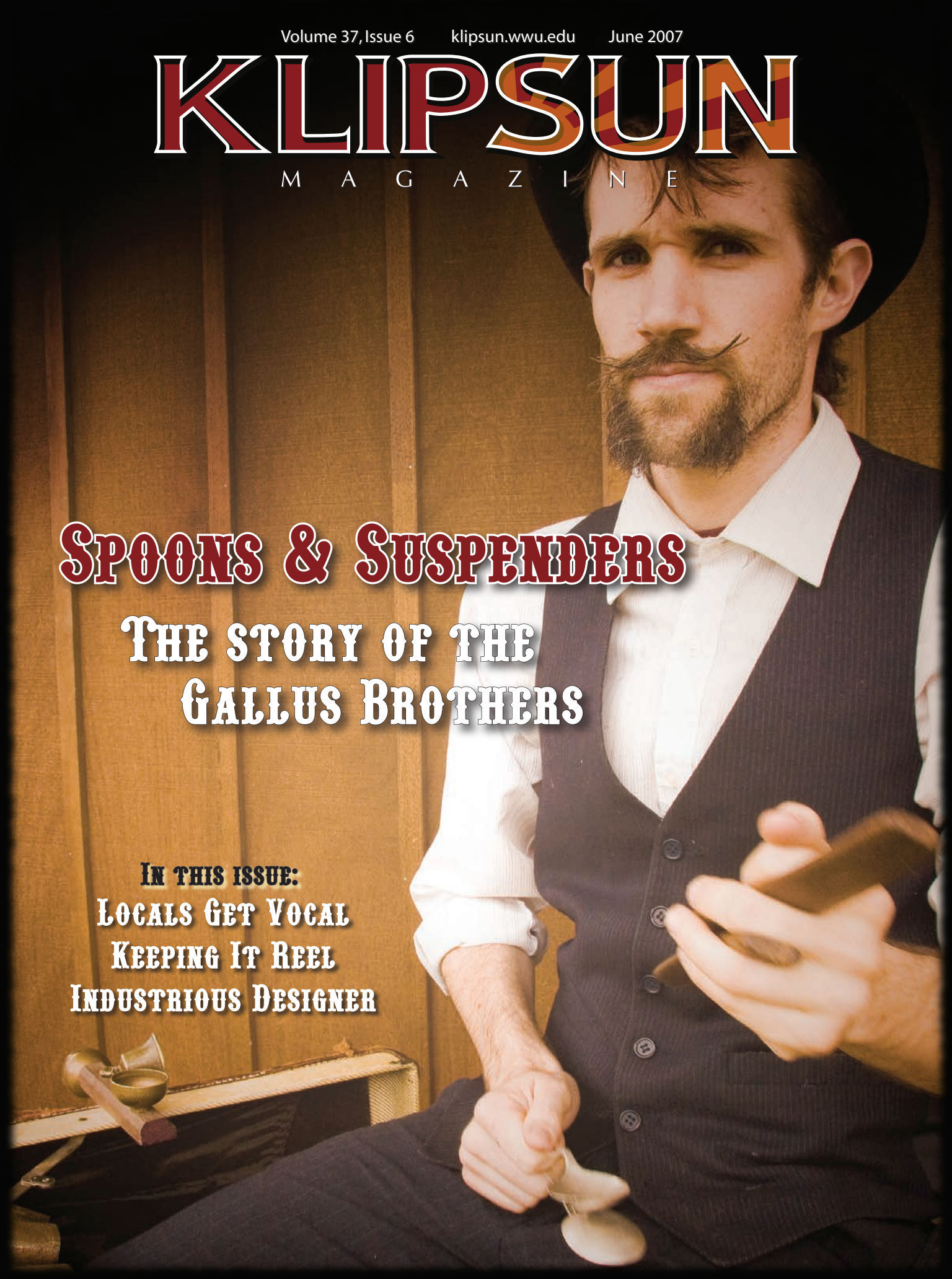
THE STORY OF THE GALLUS BROTHERS

IN THIS ISSUE:

LOCALS GET VOCAL

KEEPING IT REEL

INDUSTRIOUS DESIGNER



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**FROM THE
EDITOR**

I started thinking about this note the minute I became Editor-in-Chief, but here I am, minutes before deadline not knowing what to write. An elite group of people has come before me and they all seemed to have something profound to say. So, I went where I always go when I need inspiration — my friends. The most eloquent person I know, had this quote from the movie “Serendipity” on his Facebook profile:

“The Greeks didn’t write obituaries. They only ask one question after a man died: ‘Did he have passion?’”

This sparked my interest. In the beginning, it didn’t seem we had a common thread to the stories in this issue, but looking at them now, passion runs through these tales of extraordinary people and amazing adventures. It doesn’t matter where your passion lies; it just matters if you have it or not. Whether your passion lies in sports, entertaining, academics or people it doesn’t matter. All that’s important is finding something you love that you can do with the people who mean the most in your life.

With the end of my college experience looming, I can’t figure out where the time has gone. I have spent four years with some incredible people by my side. My passions have grown from what they were when I was a bright-eyed freshman. They now lie in my friends, family and my experiences. These passions will follow me wherever life takes me next.

Enjoy these stories of other people’s passions and then go out and discover your own.

Thanks for reading,

Kimberly B. Oakley

Kim Oakley
Editor-in-chief

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KLIPSUN

M A G A Z I N E

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ultimate frisbee

Down & DIRT

A whirling disc spins in seemingly perpetual flight. Like a shuttle from a bad sci-fi flick, the Frisbee attempts to fly home — in the out-of-bounds line. A swift hand darts up taking the disc captive. As the hand latches victoriously onto the Frisbee, a wincing cry and crunching sound proves the remainder of the body a loser. Looking down, a tangle of metal, fabric and blood declares the end of this player's season.

A punctured lung from a lawn chair will set any player back, Devan Larson, 19, says, who is a member of Western's ultimate Frisbee team. While Larson didn't experience this particular injury, he's heard this story enough to know what is at stake, physically.

Frisbee is no longer limited to play with a pet dog or photos in university promotional pamphlets. The members of DIRT, Western men's ultimate team prove its dedication to the sport through countless weekends at competitions, midnight practices in the snow and even raising money as event security in their spare hours.

Mixing elements of soccer, football, basketball and other sports, ultimate Frisbee is the potluck of the sports world. In the game, two endzones serve as goal-scoring areas.

To score, a player must make a successful pass to another player running to the endzone they're attacking. When holding the disc, players can't move. A turnover occurs when the Frisbee hits the ground or is intercepted by the other team. The defense "marks" players by staying close to them like a second shadow, in hopes of a turnover.

Players must break into the open to receive the disc and score while escaping from opposing players.

Approximately 100 hopefuls gathered this year to dodge opponents, sprint to goal lines and toss Frisbees on top of a few inches of snow still freezing the field, Larson says. After two cancelled tryouts to avoid a white blanket over the green field, Larson says they ended up on snow anyway.

The results of tryouts brought at least 40 to 50 people on both teams, with 21 athletes recruited for the A team, Larson says. Larson is now a starter on the A team after a year's experience. DIRT reels in most of its members through promotion at the Associated Students Information Fair in the fall. DIRT lasts all year and is active from the beginning, the reason Larson says many stick with the sport.

"Some will sign up for another club sport that will say 'sit tight, we start in the winter,'" Larson says. "Our team starts practicing immediately."

On the A team this year, Brett Goodman, 19, is the only freshman. Goodman played ultimate during his high school days and now commits to DIRT full-time. At Western, Goodman says he played with DIRT although he was still on roster for track. In the

end, he never ended up lacing his shoes for the track team; Goodman says he has more fun participating in ultimate.

"Our team is a lot of fun — you don't get hassled if you don't play that often," says Aly Lenon, A team captain.

Larson says that while ultimate team members can play another sport at the same time, it's hard to manage. Besides track, ex-soccer and cross-country players make up most of the other teammates, he says.

Tommy Lingbloom, 23, has been playing for DIRT for five years. Lingbloom says the challenge to get better makes the sport more fun. Lingbloom says the transition for players with several years experience went from 100 in the nation to 12th and in the Division I bracket (the more prestigious of two divisions). There, Western plays top tier ultimate schools like Stanford University and University of British Columbia in the Ultimate Players Association (UPA) tournament. This year's sophomores, Lingbloom says, are playing at a much higher level than he was when he was a freshman.

Lingbloom says the team was just coming together when he joined, but a real program now exists.

"Now we're passing the baton to the new generation," Lingbloom says, "Over 50 percent of the team are sophomores this year."

Members of DIRT often raise money by working as event security guards on weekends in Seattle or Everett, Larson says. A group of 20 to 30 players will drive down for the weekend to make fast money,

Larson says. The yellow jackets with the Contemporary Service Corporation logo on the back will probably belong to an ultimate player, Larson says.

"I actually did security at a Guns N' Roses concert before finals week and didn't get back until four in the morning," Larson says. "But hey, that's how we can go to all the big tournaments."

Lenon says during the week before a big competition, the team has an eating and sleeping schedule to improve their game. Specifically, Larson says a week before tournaments, team members try to eat a lot of protein on Monday and Tuesday, vitamins on Wednesday, and carbohydrates on Thursday and Friday. Practices sometimes run from nine until midnight, Lenon says. The team recently placed fourth at the UPA Northwest Regionals, where they competed against 15 other schools in the area, such as the University of Washington and the University of California system. Larson says the current ranking is the highest the team has received in the history of the sport at Western.

—Nate Warren

Design by Jenny Leak



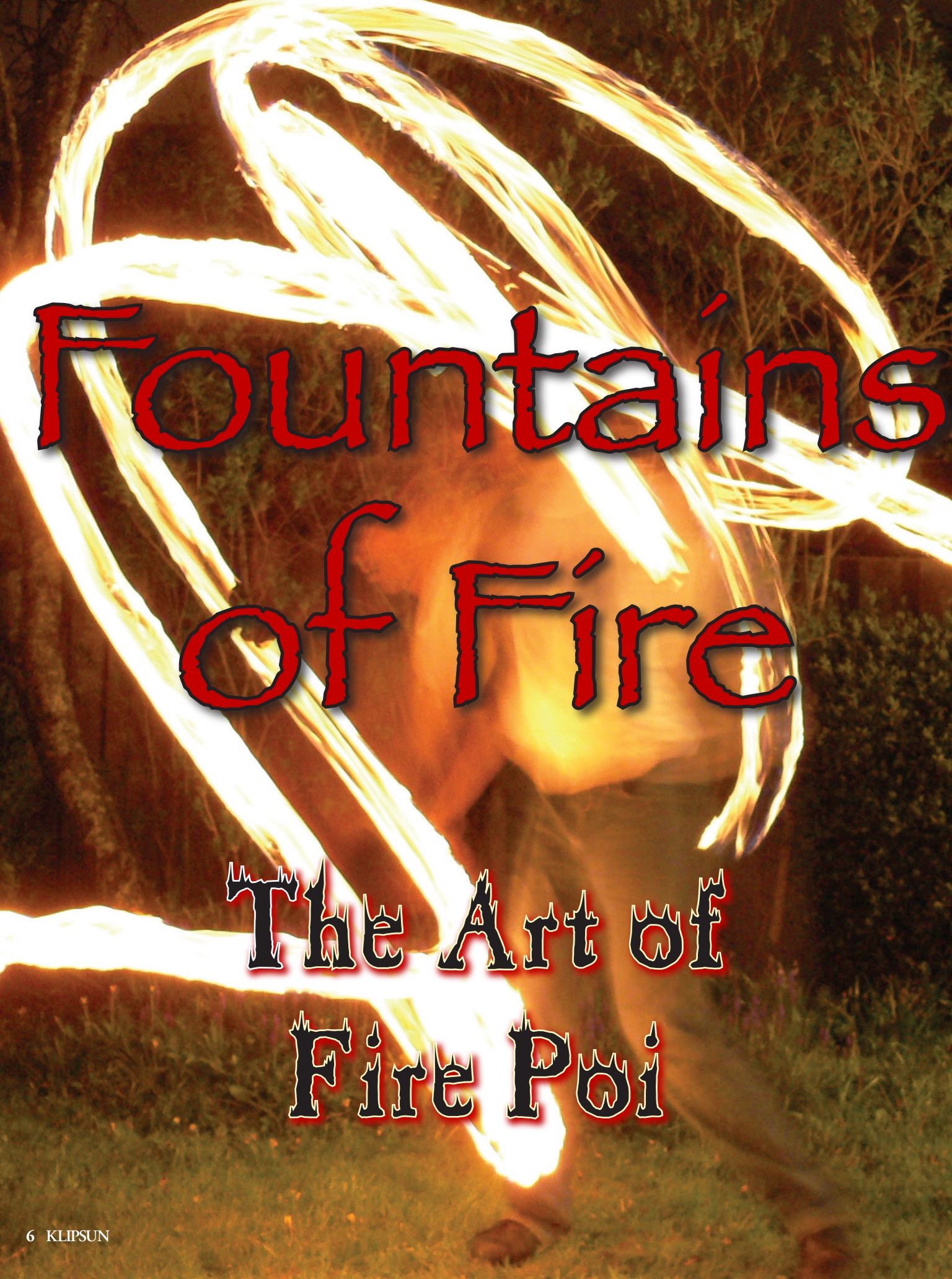
PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Sophomore Jeffe Gebring passes the frisbee during a pickup game with DIRT: Team B.



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Junior Luke Widtfeldt (left) and senior Josh Miles fight for the Frisbee at a pickup game with DIRT: Team B.



Fountains of Fire

The Art of
Fire Poi

Megan Shaw stands on the grassy earth dressed in jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt and a wet, blue beanie protecting her hair from the impending danger. In each hand, a steel chain hangs from the weight of a glowing fireball dangling at the end. As drumbeats fill the night air, her arms begin to swing and brilliant colors of orange and yellow pour from her undulating hands, painting the black sky with sculptures of fire. As the centerpiece to the art, Shaw rhythmically bends and accents her body to the beat, commanding the flame to join her in dance.

Shaw, a Western junior, performs fire poi, popularly known as fire dancing. Shaw learned fire poi in May 2006 while in Nkhata Bay, Malawi. She received free lessons from a man who was staying at the same hostel. She says her first time spinning with fire was intimidating, yet thrilling. Shaw says the roar of the fire slicing through the air, resembling the sound of a closely flying jet, adds immensely to the experience.

"It was such an adrenaline rush because I felt the power of the fire on the side of my body and I was making it move," Shaw says.

An ear-to-ear smile stretches across her face as she reminisces about her first encounter.

"It was exhilarating."

Fire poi is an art in which one dances to music while spinning a poi in each hand. A poi consists of an ignited nylon wick that hangs from a steel chain. Shaw says the essence of the art is not only in creating aesthetically pleasing shapes with fire, but also making the flame and performer dance together.

"When I saw poi I always thought it was really beautiful," Shaw says. "I really like the way the body dances to make the fire move."

Shaw describes the dance style as "hippie dance" where one loosely moves, bending and spinning to the beat. If the beat slows, so does the dancer and the flame. The tail of the fire shrinking as it suspends in the air as though taking a deep breath. As the music speeds up, the dancer moves faster and rapidly spins the flame, creating one enormous glowing globe of fire.

Traditionally, the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand practiced poi. Women used it to increase flexibility in their hands for weaving baskets, and men performed poi to strengthen their hands and arms and improve coordination for battle.

Pete Wasson, 27, who lives in Cambridge, England, taught Shaw in Africa. Wasson stayed at the hostel free for six months in exchange for entertaining and teaching fire poi there.

Wasson says he teaches the art because he loves watching people obtain the skills and experience fire dancing.



"Some people pick it up really quickly and others take longer, but the end result is the same — getting it makes people really happy," Wasson says. "That is lovely for me."

Wasson says learning the basic moves can take from 15 minutes to a couple days, depending on the person. He first shows them basic moves using practice poi, which are bags of rice sewn inside nylon. These moves are then built upon to more complex combinations involving dance.

Shaw says the basic moves are easy to learn, but transitioning from one move to the next, seamlessly combining the individual poi movements, is what gives the dance individuality.

"Most anyone can learn each movement, but to make them transition into one complete movement and dance at the same time is the hard part," Shaw says. "That is the art of it."

Wasson says people soon conquer their fear of dancing with fire after they try it. Even though a few arm hairs are occasionally singed, people soon realize how low the risk is of catching on fire.

Wasson says the ultimate goal for a poi performer is to not think about technical aspects, rather to just dance and become lost in the moment.

Amy Moe, who graduated from Western in June 2006, is a fire poi performer who has almost reached this level. Moe says practicing almost everyday for six months is what got her to this point. She says the most wonderful moment during fire poi is when she loses herself in the world of dance. No longer does she think about the steps, rather she just allows herself to move.

"The poi is now an extension of my body. I can feel the weight of the poi and it feels like a natural part of me," Moe says. "My dance is the lead and the poi simply follows."

As the flame fades into the night the bright orange patterns begin to streak, revealing the individual lines of fire that create the gigantic glowing globe. The dancer spins the poi furiously through the air, coaxing the flame to diminish. The drum stops and with deep breaths the dancer walks away. Darkness returns and the night air is still again.

—Alyse Clacey
Design by Kyra Low

PHOTOS BY ALYSE CLACY

(top two) Megan Shaw and Tim Thorpe lighting and preparing the poi.
(middle) Megan Shaw spinning fire.
(bottom) Amy Moe spinning fire.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY MOE

Seeing is for the

D O G S

One afternoon several years ago, Daisy Phillips walked into her homeroom class at Fairhaven Middle School with her six-month-old dog Dexter in tow. Daisy looked for a place to sit; Dexter looked for a place to poop. Panic struck as Daisy frantically picked Dexter up and carried him down the hallway – quite the feat for a 100-pound middleschooler carrying a 50-pound dog – in hopes they would make it outside soon enough to avoid disaster.

“It’s really embarrassing when you’re 13 and your dog poops in middle school,” Daisy says, who has now potty-trained nine dogs in nine years.

But such is the life of a guide dog trainer.

Daisy’s current trainee is Lois, a six-month-old yellow lab with a laid-back personality. She falls asleep under Daisy’s desk during class, perks up at the quietest mention of lunch and even winks at people.

“Maybe she’ll get me a man,” Daisy jokes. “I can’t wink.”

Daisy has been training guide dogs since she was 12 years old, simply because she wanted a puppy. That desire led her to Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc., a California-based organization that trains canine companions.

The puppies are bred from professional guide dogs in California and then transported to trainers like Daisy throughout the West Coast. Trainers then teach the pups their name (which are given at birth, not decided by the trainers), potty train them and most importantly, socialize them.

“We take them everywhere,” Daisy says. “They need to be comfortable in any situation a blind person would be in.”

And what better place to socialize than the mall? Every Monday, Daisy and Lois go to the Bellis Fair mall to catch up with the three other Whatcom County guide dog trainers and their K9 pupils. The group shares training tips, commiserates about life and usually ends up at Dairy Queen for ice cream.

These outings are important for young guide-dogs-to-be because it teaches them to be comfortable in a public setting, Linda Knutzen says, who has led the training group since 1994.

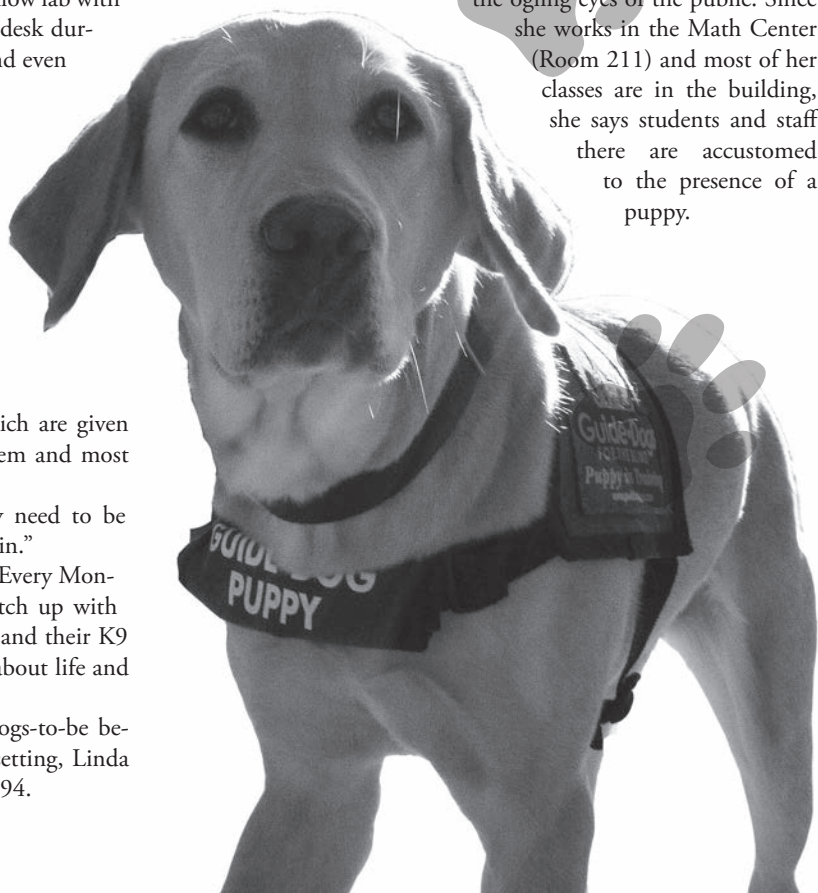
“What we’re trying to do is make them confident and self-assured,” Knutzen says. “Because fearful dogs won’t guide.”

So far, the only thing Lois is afraid of is walking through puddles. She’ll go around or even jump over a puddle to avoid getting her feet wet, Daisy says.

Besides the occasional potty patrol, training a guide dog requires hours of daily commitment. Walking, training, socializing, playtime – all this must fit into a trainer’s daily schedule.

“I can’t go anywhere and expect to get things done quickly if I bring the dog with me,” Daisy says.

Bond Hall is Daisy’s hide-away from the ogling eyes of the public. Since she works in the Math Center (Room 211) and most of her classes are in the building, she says students and staff there are accustomed to the presence of a puppy.



“Me and Lois nap together sometimes,” says fellow math major Ian McInerney. “We always had a dog in the family, that’s why I’m always happy to see Lois.”

As much as Daisy would like to keep Lois, guide dog training school awaits Lois in December. Daisy says she tries not to think about it.

“You cry every time,” Daisy says. “And then you get another one.”

Daisy says she doesn’t know yet when she will get her next puppy – she got Lois five minutes before saying goodbye to her last trainee Shep.

She pulls Lois up into her lap and strokes her soft yellow coat. Lois willingly lays belly-up, basking in the attention she is receiving and unaware of what the future holds.

—**Isaac Bonnell**
Design by Kyra Low



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

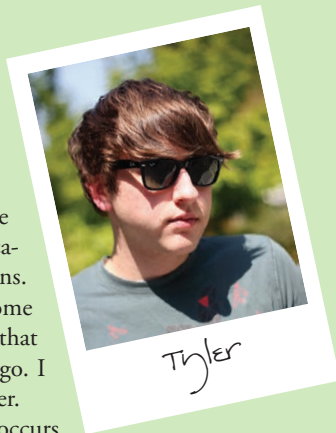
Daisy and her K9 pupil Lois get up close and personal.



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

This puppy trainer group meets every Monday at Bellis Fair Mall to help walk their puppies in training, which helps them get used to busy areas where future owners would have them.

Look Haute This Spring



Winter quarter is the ugliest quarter of the academic year for two reasons. First, sunny days become memories of some event that occurred a few months ago. I think it was called summer.

The second reason occurs as a result of the first. Western students suffer underneath puffy, hooded, weather-resistant and unflattering jackets.

Like wet ostriches, scrawny legs hold up plumpy-topped torsos as students scurry to class in herds. Just as bad is when Western's unevenly bricked surface allows for everyone's favorite winter experience of ankle-soaked denim from the numerous pools of water that litter the campus like minefields. A single look up from the ground may cause a very wet disaster.

Sometimes, students don't seem to care and wear weather inappropriate clothes, like short-sleeve shirts and flip-flops. It makes me wonder if those students are experiencing a type of post-traumatic stress. Students can't handle their uniform of North Face fleece zip-ups and decide they can fight the winter weather in capri pants. Inevitably, the soldier loses to Pacific Northwest rain and only draws weird stares from other students, wet feet and an onset of hypothermia.



Thankfully everyone made it to spring break alive and mostly dry... and warm.

I decided to reward my jacket for its fine work last winter. It's sitting in a Salvation Army donation bin. Now that I'm free of my ill-fitting winter uniform, I look around at some of my fellow fashionable classmates and decide I want to play too.

An important tool for playing the game of discovering new styles and trends is to find a location on campus that provides maximum coverage of numerous students and their style at once. Somehow, I needed to find Western's equivalent of a ship's crow's nest, minus the sea-chapped lips and belled Navy sailor pants.

I decided to go to a location on campus where fashion is often judged, but nobody will admit to it. I took a seat on Western's fashion runway: the library's Sky Bridge. Being on the Sky Bridge reminds me of watching a fashion show. I am a spectator, and members of the student body are the models. I want to know where these students bought their clothes and why they are wearing them.

It's easy to jump in a car and ride down to the Bellis Fair Mall and get sucked into the numerous winter clearance sales. Sometimes shopping at the mall reminds me of a type of hunting sport. I drag my lethal weapon in the form of a plastic card, search for easy and cheap prey in department stores, buy it and drag it back to my house to hang in my closet proudly like a deer head that hangs over a fireplace mantle.

To get away from the mall I like to jump into consignment stores because they're excellent places to create a unique and personal style. Just be careful when selecting an entire spring outfit with items you purchase

at Goodwill because though separately each piece looks vintage and unique, collectively they can make you look homeless.

Regardless, I love when I see people who play with fashion by mixing old and unique with new or mainstream ideas and pieces of clothing. When I watch students walk on campus, a definite theme helps me mentally select students who I think have brilliant style. If you make an observer stare and compel them to consider how your outfit was inspired, then you, in my opinion, have succeeded in having style.

My recommendations for essential spring items that will steer you on a path of fashionable success while walking on campus or down the catwalk that is the Sky Bridge are few but significant. Be bold this spring with color and patterns. Girls need to throw their flared leg jeans away. Middle school is over. Slip on a pair of skinny jeans or leggings underneath a skirt. If you're a boy who's feeling daring this quarter, try on a pair of skinny jeans and throw something on top that's not of the hooded sweatshirt persuasion. Compliment those jeans with a pair of Converse or Vans slip-ons. Keep your flip-flops for the beach and your workout shoes for the elliptical. So long as you're not wearing stripes with plaid this spring then enjoy experimenting with your style.

If boutiques or consignment stores are not your cup of tea, you might check out the R.E.I. in Sehome Village. I found a black North Face fleece jacket that's so apparently popular on our campus. I tried on one of the abrasion-reinforced shouldered jackets. I thought it would be good for our sometimes windy spring months. Then, I stood in front of a mirror.

Needless to say, I didn't buy it. I'd rather wear plaids with stripes.

—Tyler Nelson

Design by Kyra Low

PHOTOS BY CULLEN HAMM & MARK MALIJAN

★ L O C A L S ★ ★ G E T ★ ★ V O C A L ★



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Lisa Boon sings karaoke at El Gitano on Friday night. Boon sings karaoke on a regular basis.

*Margaritas and microphones in hand, devoted locals kick back with karaoke at El Gitano weekend tribute to the amateur performer. **Megan Swartz** pulls up a chair and enjoys the entertainment. Photos by **Mark Malijan**. Design by **Kyra Low**.*

Rita Jones' heart pounds as she hears her name called over the sound system and the clinking of glasses. Leaving her husband and margarita behind, she makes her way up to the stage. Her sweaty palms make grabbing the microphone difficult. A wave of fear washes over her as she looks toward the crowd of expectant faces. Then, on cue, her clear and smooth voice hits the first few notes of Faith Hill's "This Kiss" and she senses the exhilaration of the crowd. For the next three minutes, Rita feels like a star.

This rush of energy and empowerment keeps Rita and her husband Randy Jones coming each Friday to El Gitano's karaoke night.

"When we sing karaoke, we are not only entertained but get to be part of the entertainment," Rita says as she sits across the booth from her husband, finishing off a plate of sizzling fajitas and slurping up the remains of her strawberry margarita.

For those who pursue karaoke, performing is a passion that goes beyond just being a sing-along after too many drinks. El Gitano, which at 11 years is the longest-running karaoke show in Bellingham, offers these enthusiasts a venue where every Thursday night beginning at eight and Friday and Saturday night beginning at nine singers can hone their skills in a comforting and friendly environment.

El Gitano assistant manager and bar waitress, Victoria Burlin-

game says an empty seat is hard to come by at El Gitano on a Friday or Saturday night, since Bellingham has such a large contingent of bar-goers and karaoke fans.

"I think we are so successful because we have a dynamic show that draws from all types of crowds and we are known in the community as a place to go for good karaoke," Burlingame says.

Karaoke, a Japanese term meaning empty orchestra, originated in 1970 when Daisuke Inoue a singer in Kobe, Japan, released his songs on a tape without the words so his fans could sing along. After becoming incredibly popular in Japan, karaoke spread first to East Asia in the 1980s and subsequently to other parts of the world, becoming beloved in United States during the early 1990s.

Confidence radiates from Lisa Boon, 22, who goes by Luscious Lisa on the karaoke stage. As she begins to perform Etta James' "I Just Wanna Make Love To You," all eyes in the room shift to her, drawn in by her professional-sounding and resonate voice. The crowd laughs as Boon begins to serenade a 40-something-year-old man in the audience, while seductively running her finger down his arm. This is her time to entertain.

Boon has always loved to sing and grew up in a family of musicians. Now Boon karokes three nights a week.



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Doug Hall nervously steps up to sing “Santeria” by Sublime at El Gitano on a Friday night. This is his first time singing at the restaurant.

“I love to entertain and karaoke gives me the chance to be the center of attention for a few minutes,” says Boon elated after her performance sitting at a table of friends.

Boon says her karaoke experience has given her a sense of community.

“I have become best friends with people I have met through singing karaoke,” Boon says.

Boon’s signature song is Gretchen Wilson’s “Here For The Party” because it has significance to her since the song is about waiting all week to let loose and have a good time and not getting upset by the judgments of others. She says when she sings a song that has meaning, she performs it better because she has passion.

“‘Here For The Party’ means something to me because I come from a farm and I am proud of who I am,” says Boon. “I don’t care what people think of me. I am just here to be myself and have fun and that is what this song is all about.”

Shelby Ortiz, 28, is a regular karaoke performer all over Bellingham. She captured the attention of the Star Entertainment owner, an equipment dealer who leases karaoke equipment to local venues. He asked Ortiz to become a karaoke host at El Gitano. The host is in charge of getting the crowd involved, working the equipment and introducing each performer. Ortiz now emcees every Thursday at El Gitano.

“El Gitano’s karaoke is the best because it has a welcoming, laid-back vibe where people come to have a fun time,” Ortiz says. “Many people who come don’t even sing because it’s also just entertaining to watch.”

The Dos and Don’ts of Karaoke

Dos

- Take big breaths during the performance
- Bring a group of friends for support
- Have a drink to relax
- If you mess up, laugh and have fun with it

Don’ts

- Don’t scream in the microphone
- Don’t sing slow sappy love songs because the crowd will be bored
- Don’t quit if you mess up
- Don’t mess up the equipment
- Don’t karaoke if you are plastered

Ortiz says some karaoke places are more serious and people make it a competition.

"Some people just get crazy about it," Ortiz says. "Those people are karaoke divas because they think they are the best and instead of just having fun with it, they take it very seriously, which is not fun for the crowd."

Each karaoke regular has his or her own favorite story about karaoke divas. For example, one common practice among divas is to complain about the sound system and act like a superstar during a recording session, sticking his or her finger in their ear complaining that he or she can't hear themselves. Another diva would insist on using his own microphone, adorned with brightly colored scarves.

Ortiz sings at the beginning of the night and between rotations, which is when all of the singers have performed and can then sing another song. Her signature song is "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey, but she also loves to mix it up.

"I will sing anything," Ortiz says. "I will rap, do pop-y dance songs, I'm not shy."

Ortiz says three types of singers perform karaoke: people who can sing, people who can't but think they can and people who know they can't but have fun with it.

"People like to sing karaoke because everyone likes to get their ego stroked," Ortiz says. "Having people cheer for you makes you feel warm and fuzzy and that is a great feeling."

Rita and Randy Jones, a married couple of nine years with two small children, go to sing karaoke as a date night. Rita, born and raised in the Ferndale area and Randy, a native of Arkansas, now live in Blaine and frequent El Gitano because it has a fun environment where they feel comfortable singing.

"Singing is something that we both love to do," Rita says smiling across the table at her husband. "It's a nice escape from our lives and a fun thing that we can do together."

Randy, a truck driver, began singing at karaoke bars 11 years ago when he was on the road, as a way to pass the time away from his family. His favorite karaoke moment was when he was in Mississippi and he performed George Strait's "The Chair."

"As I sang, everyone got up and danced," Randy says with his pronounced Southern drawl. "If you sing well, they will dance."

Rita loves to hear Randy sing and thinks he has an amazing voice. One night at El Gitano, Randy serenaded Rita, making it intimate, by bringing the microphone from the stage to her table and singing while standing over her with his arms outstretched and their gazes locked.

"It was totally cheesy, but I loved it because all of the girls in the bar were oohing and ahing," Rita says.

Although Rita and Randy have their favorite signature songs, they are now trying new ones to change it up. Rita is trying to stay away from ballads and sing more upbeat songs because they get the crowd more pumped and into the performance. The couple is also thinking of singing duets.

As Rita performs a new song, the bubbly Gwen Stefani tune "Sweet Escape," Randy watches his wife attentively as he mouths the words as they pass across the shiny 50-inch plasma-screen TV.

"When she and I stink, like we hit a note wrong, we know and we look at each other while we sing," Randy says with a chuckle.

"We always tell each other the truth about how the performance went, but she's always sweet and if I do badly she just says, 'that wasn't your best.'"

"That's because, he always sounds good, unlike me," Rita says interjecting, with a smile.

Rita says although some people take karaoke seriously, she and her husband just do it for fun.

"Although I always want to do well, it doesn't really matter because half the people are so lit that they will hoot and holler no matter what," Rita says. "It feels nice when it's loud for you, even it's pity applause, it still feels good."

Ortiz stands up the final time for the night and announces

what will be the last song. Reading from the bottom of the list she calls out a name and a young woman looking barely old enough to be in the bar shyly moves to the stage. She falters for a split second, but then, seeing the warm faces of the crowd, heads bobbing to the beat and lips moving to the words, she belts out the opening verse of Fergie's "My Humps." A new karaoke star is born. ✨

“Although I always want to do well, it doesn't really matter because half the people are so lit that they will hoot and holler no matter what.”

-Rita Jones



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Josie Lin sings "I'm a Bitch" by Alanis Morissette at El Gitano Friday night. Lin is a regular at El Gitano and comes in every Friday.



SP00

PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN, ILLUSTRATION BY CIARA O'ROURKE
The Gallus Brothers perform acrobatics while playing instruments at their show.

NS AND SUSPENDERS

THE GALLUS BROTHERS

From dinner to dancing, **Katie Raynor** explores the spoon-playing, suspender-wearing world of the Gallus Brothers and what has made them a Monday night must-see. Photos by **Cullen Hamm** and **Mark Malijan**. Design by **Ciara O'Rourke**.

Lucas Hicks, slight in stature and outfitted in a long-sleeved striped button-up shirt, stands at a tiny stove stirring his dinner in a cast iron frying pan. The stove sits on a smooth, slightly shiny gray concrete floor in Hicks' house. From the outside, the house resembles a cabin one might expect to see amid a forest of evergreens, not just off Bellingham's heavily trafficked Alabama Street. Hicks' friend Devin Champlin walks through the door, which features a telephone receiver as a door handle, carrying two planks of wood.

"Aren't these nice?" Champlin asks Hicks, indicating his cargo.

Hicks agrees and offers Champlin some dinner before transferring his mother-of-pearl and black accordion from the well-worn red couch to the floor. He reclines on the couch, plate of food in hand, while Champlin perches on a nearby chair.

"Thanks for dinner, Lucas," Champlin says enthusiastically.

Hicks and Champlin, both 28, comprise the Gallus Brothers, one of Bellingham's most popular and charismatic musical acts, and the Monday night mainstay at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro. Hicks says the pair has been playing their brand of ragtime crossed with blues and country music together since October 2005.

As for the musicians' initial meeting before forming the Gallus Brothers, much

of it had to do with being in the right place at the right times.

"We met a long time ago at the Old Town Café," Champlin says. "I was just passing through town playing music then and Lucas came up and gave me one of his CDs."

Both say how Bellingham ended being the setting for playing music together was somewhat without design. Hicks hails from western Colorado and spent summers in Mount Vernon with his dad. He says he moved here to attend Western, where he graduated in 2000 with a degree in music, and to try to make a name for his former Colorado-based band, Pacer. He moved around frequently after graduating but often found his way back to the Northwest and ended up settling here.

"I came back up and was visiting friends and family a lot," he says. "The last time I came up I saw Devin up here and said 'Hey, why don't we play together?'"

Champlin jokes that their act was all Lucas's idea.

Champlin, who in addition to playing music is now a full-time carpenter, hence his wood delivery to Hicks' house. He was born and raised in Chicago and lived in Tucson, Ariz. for four years before moving to the Northwest. He says the first time he came to Bellingham he was simply passing through, and although location wasn't a deciding factor in his musical career, he is satisfied with the roots he's established here.

"Playing music I'd be doing anywhere," he says. "But that being said, this

was a welcoming, supportive community right off the bat."

The Gallus Brothers occupied Monday's music bill at Boundary Bay for nine months before Champlin left for six months to attend an accredited school for guitar-building in Phoenix, Ariz. Three months ago, after Champlin returned, the duo resumed their weekly show, and Hicks says they are pleased with the support offered by the Bellingham community — residents and other artists alike.

"I think it's great, I'm amazed," Lucas says. "It's a well-supported scene. I play in like four different bands, [the music scene] is awesome."

Champlin says a shared taste for ragtime-influenced music and atypical fashion choices drew he and Hicks together.

"We both wore suspenders, and when we met we were the only guys we knew who both wore them," he says smiling through a thick beard. "Lucas thinks we're trendsetters."

Suspenders are now popular attire among audience members who frequent their shows, says Hicks.

Boundary Bay general manager Janet Lightner, who helps with Boundary's music selection, says the audience at a Gallus Brothers' show is made up of a predominantly younger crowd but the duo appeals to a broad age range.

"[The audience is] a core younger group of people under 30," Lightner says. "But there are those older people who linger and catch the show. They enjoy it and come back."



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Hicks and Champlin play their instruments on the front porch of their house.

She says 50 to 100 people normally attend their Monday night shows, and attendance varies based on the number of other shows or concerts happening that night in town.

Hicks and Champlin, dinners now finished, banter easily and a shared excitement for the music they both love dominates the conversation. Champlin springs out of his wooden chair and bounds up the stairs to

the loft that juts halfway across the width of the house. He turns up the volume on a song warbling from the speakers, then settles back into his chair, smiling, content with the music selection.

Hicks says the music the two listen to is the music they play, both during their shows and on their album “The Suitcase Rag,” which was released a year ago.

“We’re unique in personal style, but we don’t write most of our own songs,” he says.

For the uninitiated ragtime or blues fan, the duo’s influences will most likely be unfamiliar — the band’s MySpace page lists Hoosier Hot Shots, Gus Cannon and Jimmie Rodgers among a slew of others as top influences. Champlin says his sources of inspiration come from all over the musical map.



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Whatcom students Kaara Anderson (left) and Lyndsay Peterson dance while the Gallus Brothers perform at Boundary Bay.

"I listen to a lot of blues guitar, but also stuff like piano, jazz bands and stuff and try to break it down for finger-style guitar," he says.

The Gallus Brothers' music translates into live shows that leave audiences sweaty and sore from dancing and sometimes, famously, waltzing late into the night in the middle of Railroad Avenue outside Boundary Bay. Lucas explains the origin of this perennial, romantic end to nights of bouncy, upbeat ragtime.

"Here's my perception of how it started," he says. "We kept getting encores. We'd play for two to three hours straight and people would just clap. We got to the point where I would grab my accordion and Devin would grab his guitar and we'd just sprint outside."

He says one of their Monday night shows in April produced one of the biggest post-show nocturnal waltzes to date.

Hicks and Champlin punctuate their shows with acrobatics such as juggling and standing on each other's shoulders, and those theatrics combined with a solid musical foundation have spelled success for the Gallus Brothers. While Champlin still holds what many would label a traditional job, Hicks has been able to step full-force into the world of professional musicianship.

"I guess I'm a full-time musician," Hicks says. "I'm able to gig a few times a week. I actually got to play every night for two weeks in a row, the last two weeks. But that doesn't happen very often."

Champlin says apart from their weekly Boundary Bay show, the duo doesn't play in Bellingham often. They recently returned from a West Coast tour, playing in cities such as Seattle, Phoenix, Ariz. and Portland, Ore., which he says they've played at least seven or eight times. A steady touring schedule feeds both the performers' musical appetites. Both

say they don't have singular long-term goals in mind apart from continuing to make the music they love in some capacity.

"It's a huge part of my life, one of my biggest passions," Champlin says. "It's just something I can't help doing."

Lightner says that passion comes through in their live show at Boundary Bay every Monday. Hicks, in addition to the accordion, plays a suitcase contraption outfitted with a cymbal, a horn and vari-

ous other sound-makers. He and Champlin, who plays the guitar, joke and interact with audience members and create a personal, engaging experience.

"[Shows are] fun, connected, communicative," says Lightner. "There's a narrative you feel from the Gallus Brothers to the audience."

Lightner says that relationship with the audience and the rarity of the ragtime, Vaudeville style of music they play in today's musical landscape are why the pair is so popular among Bellingham audiences.

"That human piece of it that reaches out to the audience and doesn't stand above them," she says. "They're much more down to earth than that. And when you're playing a suitcase and spoons and everything, people really like them."

Hicks, now standing and walking around the rust orange-walled house, says he's happy with where he is career-wise. The duo is booked to play shows on weekends through September, including shows in Alaska, at the Port Townsend Country Blues Festival and the Old Time Festival in Berkeley, Calif.

Hicks is adamant about what he hopes audiences take with them after a Gallus Brothers show, and not just about his original semi-sarcastic answer urging audience members to bring home their CDs.

"The lasting idea that you should dance to music like that," he says. "It's dance music. That's what this music came from."

Hicks says he wants to inspire a departure from the decidedly polite Northwest habits of subtle head-nodding and foot-tapping to music that encourages full-body participation. The turnout at their shows indicates they're well on their way to inspiring movement in each and every body in Bellingham. 🌟

**“ WE BOTH WORE
SUSPENDERS AND WHEN
WE MET WE WERE THE
ONLY GUYS WE KNEW
WHO BOTH WORE THEM.
LUCAS THINKS WE’RE
TRENDSETTERS.”**

**—DEVIN CHAMPLIN,
THE GALLUS BROTHERS**



PHOTO BY CULLEN HAMM
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CIARA O'ROURKE
The Gallus Brothers bring the crowd to its feet Monday nights.

Keeping it

By next summer, the locally owned and independently operated Pickford Cinema is set to relocate to a larger facility. **Bradley Thayer** discusses the future of the community-centered theater with those who have a bigger picture in mind. Photos by **Mark Malijan**. Design by **Ciara O'Rourke**.



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

A lone cup sits in the rubble that will become the Pickford Film Center.

reel.



The future pickford film center, located on Bay Street, is a far cry from complete.

The windows are barred. A dirty wooden floor supports an array of four-by-four pieces of wood, ladders and work benches. Pigeons fly up into the air and float back down slowly in response to even the slightest movement.

It's a gutted building.

On the other hand, walking up to the current Pickford Cinema on Cornwall Avenue, buying a ticket, walking three steps through the door and standing before a small concessions counter, buying \$2 popcorn and waiting in a line forming at the "Flavor Station" holds the type of comedic charm that leaves a smile spread widely across patrons' faces. It's definitely not ordinary.

The pigeons' wings flitted endlessly as human voices and laughter carried down the stairwell into the future Pickford Film Center's main floor. By next summer, the main floor will be filled with similar chatter and laughter from patrons – leaving the birds to fend for themselves outdoors again. Some wonder whether the birds' loss will be Bellingham's gain.

The community has voiced concerns about whether the Pickford can retain its independent, small-cinema feel after expanding into a two-screen film center expected to seat three times the current 88 people next summer.

The discussion upstairs began with the topic of the Pickford's first and current incarnation – a tiny cinema that has not only endeared but also helped educate and entertain an entire community.

Alice Clark, executive director of the Whatcom Film Association and a Western graduate, wears a slight smile. She is reminiscing about her and several friends buying the old Grand Theatre, creating what today is the Pickford Cinema. The years following the purchase brought plenty of struggles for the theater.

Clark tells a story about walking with a past board member to see a movie at the cinema. She puzzles, trying to remember the title of the film she saw that day.

"Who is it? The guy, the stupid geek guy," she says.

She begins to get excited, as if the answer is on the tip of her tongue – she snaps her fingers as she exclaims, "Napoleon Dynamite!"

Her enthusiasm is obvious. She is referring to the low budget independent film from 2004 that eventually blew up and became a hit. Although, the crew at the Pickford is far too modest to brag about "calling" the film's obvious appeal before its moronic lead character danced the nation into a frenzy.

Clark's story continues with them walking up to the theater and joining a group of people waiting outside. Then, the realization hit them – people were waiting.

"There's a line! There's a line!" she says, mimicking their reaction at the time, which was jumping up and down with glee.

The theater was still young, but it was becoming a landmark in a city deprived of a source for independent cinema.

"It still makes me really happy to go there and see that people actually show up," Clark says.

Ultimately this rapid growth is pushing the current effort to expand.

The Whatcom Film Association bought the building it will convert to the film center in December 2004.

Clark, Michael Falter, the program director for the Pickford and Jennifer No, the Pickford's theater manager aren't the only people who believe this progression of the cinema is undertaking is a perfect fit for both the theater itself and the community.

Volunteers who work at the current cinema repeatedly offered to set the record straight regarding the upcoming expansion. Alex Hudson, a political science major at Western, is just one of many examples.

“People are worried it’s going to be like any other theater where you have to pay five dollars for popcorn and everyone is in little uniforms and they’re playing Will Ferrell movies. It will be clean and shiny and fancy, but they’ll still be playing really cool movies.”

—Alex Hudson, volunteer

“Just because something gets bigger doesn’t mean it gets worse,” Hudson says, a volunteer at the Pickford for approximately one year.

Hudson says the reason she loves the current Pickford is that the tiny cinema is completely unlike any other theater.

“People are worried that it’s going to be like going to any other theater where you have to pay five dollars for popcorn and everyone is in little uniforms and they’re playing Will Ferrell movies,” Hudson says. “It will be clean and shiny and fancy, but they’ll still be playing really cool movies.”

One quality Hudson believes will remain unchanged is the Pickford’s dedication to enhancing the surrounding city.

really doing is creating a hub for the community to come and hang out and it’s just going to be such a different experience.”

Falter elaborated on this idea with an example from one of his film classes. He asked his students who had seen the film “Little Miss Sunshine.” With most of the students’ hands raised, Falter then asked who had seen the film at the Pickford. Those who had, proceeded to give the film rave reviews describing how hilarious the movie was. After asking the people who saw the movie at a larger, more generic theater for their impressions, the reviews were less favorable. These students didn’t know how the others found the film so amusing. Falter

and have it stimulate me a little bit and make me think, so I don’t have to be spoon-fed a formula. I don’t want to be paying that much for a date and walk in thinking, ‘I know exactly how this is going to end,’” she says.

Falter begins to speak in his methodical and careful manner.

“I think the idea of sitting in a theater with a glass of Boundary Bay beer and some dark chocolate with no commercials...”

The term “selling out” simply does not apply here. The Whatcom Film Association’s ideals have not changed.

The Pickford staff closely watches the waste the theater and its patrons generate. Jennifer No, the theater manager at the Pickford, introduced a recycling program and after adding a separate container for food waste — the theater drastically cut down on how much it throws away at the end of the week.

In the same vein as being waste-cautious, the new Pickford Film Center will be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certified, adding a 10-percent hike to the price of the project. The certification assures a whole-building approach to sustainability by maximizing performance in



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

A drawing of what the inside of the new Pickford will look like (left), and a photo of the Pickford’s current location.

“I feel like it respects the intelligence and maturity of Bellingham as a community,” she says. “It’s important to maintain heterogeneity within the community and avoid a homogenous culture. Not everyone wants to see ‘Spider-Man 3’ or stuff that’s bad. Bellingham is a community that has proven it wants alternatives.”

The man in charge of deciding which alternatives to the mainstream the Pickford will offer community members is also a lecturer at Whatcom Community College. Falter is a busy man.

“My feeling is that film has always been more about the community than the picture on the screen,” Falter says as he leans back in his chair, obviously savoring this short break from his hectic schedule. “I think what we’re

came to the conclusion that the audience at a theater with a more community-oriented feel, like the Pickford, is more likely to feed off of each other and enhance the whole experience of watching a film.

Clark agrees with Falter, saying although the physical space will be different, she believes the Pickford experience will remain unchanged. After all, the people running the theater will be the same, prices and concessions will still be affordable and geared toward health and perhaps most importantly — the association is still nonprofit.

Clark says going out to a movie will always be something people should enjoy doing and at gigantic, uniform theatres having a full experience is more difficult.

“I want to go to a movie with someone

areas of human and environmental health. The Pickford Film Center will be one of the first “green” theaters in the United States.

“I think we have always tried to be a good community member,” Falter says.

The community, in return, has embraced the Pickford and all the events the WFA puts on including the Traveling Pickford Show, the Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival, the NW Projections Film Festival and the True/False Film Festival.

Support in the form of donations, however, has been shaky at best.

At this point, funding for the project has reached a strange sort of middle ground.

“We’re at a point where people aren’t acting on faith or even the fact that it’s a

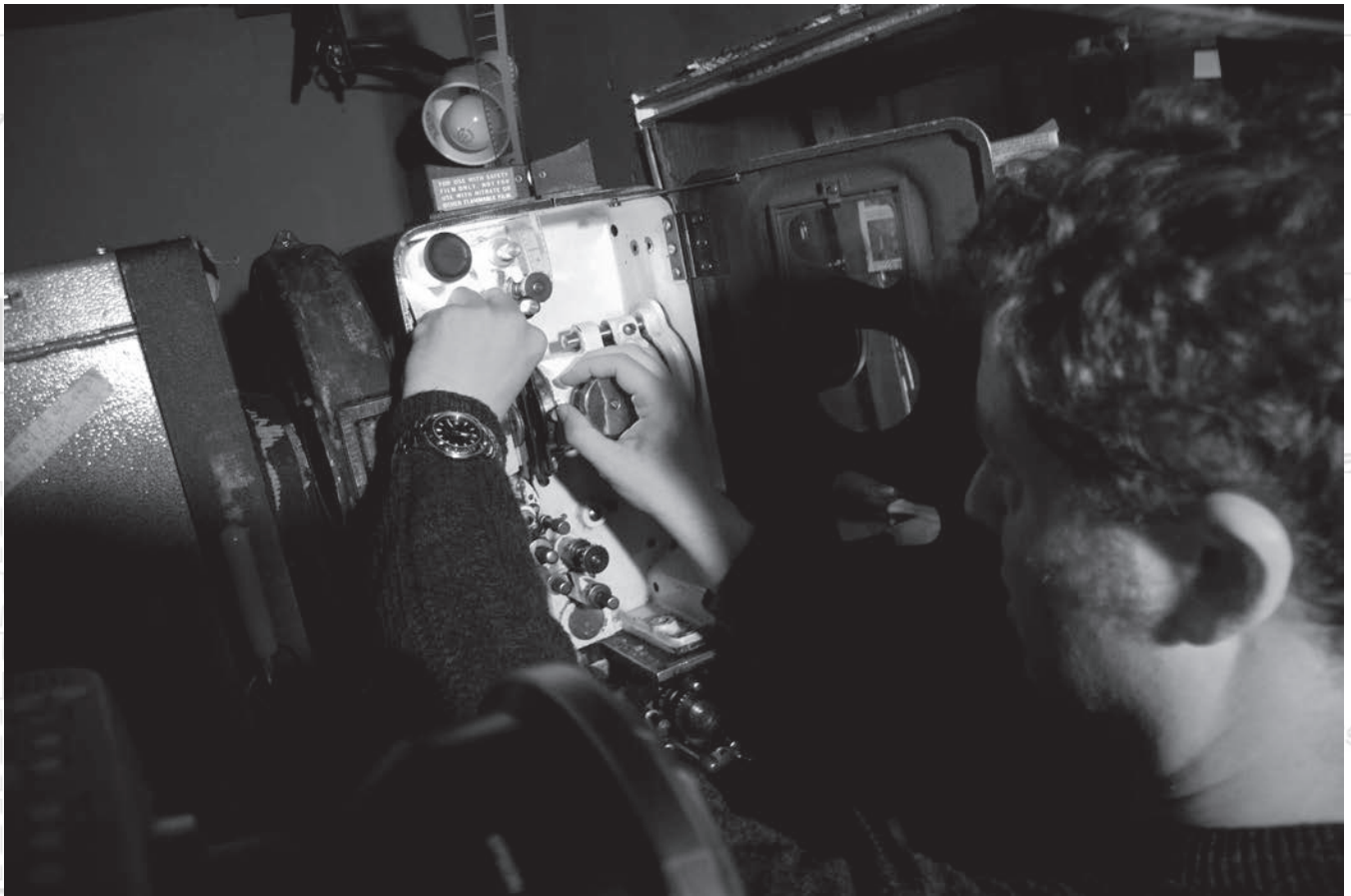


PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Steve Meyers manages the projector at a showing at the Pickford Cinema. Meyers has been working at the Pickford for six years.

good plan,” No says. “But people just want to see results and unfortunately we need money to make results.”

The money-part of the discussion doesn’t last long. Clark and Falter are self-labeled cinephiles. And, as one might’ve guessed, the conversation quickly turned back to film.

Clark recalls a time when the film association put together a discussion panel after the showing of a documentary outlining the everyday struggles of deaf people. They brought in four sign language interpreters from Western and the discussion became heated.

“It was way beyond entertainment, I mean it just is,” she says. “To open people’s minds is what I love about film.”

Independent cinema undoubtedly adds to Bellingham’s culture. Falter, who has lived in many places with great access to culture such as New York and Seattle, lived in Bellingham before a consistent

independent film outlet was available. He also recalls a time when downtown Bellingham was a “ghost town.” Now, he says downtown is thriving with funky coffee shops, cool stores and live music.

“There are a lot of reasons I choose to live in Bellingham – it’s beautiful, there’s water, there’s mountains, but now we also have culture and I think we are a very important part of that,” he says.

Long after the pigeons have moved on, people will step inside the new Pickford Film Center from a cold Bellingham night and, after the initial wave of warmth washes over them, they’ll find that plenty more comforts await. 🐦



PHOTO BY MARK MALIJAN

Whatcom Film Association members involved in the renovation pose for a photo in the yet to be renovated space where the Pickford will be.



Heroes of the Half Shell

Amidst the Caribbean Sea, where vast hills of pristine black sand and seemingly endless trees partially cover any resemblance of a beach, resides Gandoca, a city located in southeastern Costa Rica. Spanning January through April, this remote city becomes known for much more than its sheer beautiful scenery. This four-month span is the most popular time for endangered leatherback sea turtles to come ashore to lay their eggs, and most recently, it became 18-year-old Paloma Lowe's reason to spend her spring break trying to ensure that sea turtles do not become extinct.

Lowe says her journey to Costa Rica was a spontaneous decision. On January 25, Lowe, a Western freshman from northern California, walked through Red Square like she did every weekday for class. However, this day marked Western's International Opportunities Fair, an event where more than 50 organizations set up booths to offer students the opportunity to study, work and get involved in global events. While on campus, Lowe says she was drawn toward a bright orange booth with a large banner that read "i-to-i."

"I decided to visit the most colorful booth," Lowe says, while chuckling either out of embarrassment or her comedic tactic in decision-making.

The booth is sponsored by i-to-i, a travel provider that offers students many opportunities, such as traveling abroad to do volunteer work or finding a job in a foreign country. Alexia Nestora, director of i-to-i North America, says the company attends schools and fairs and works with career and study abroad counselors.

"We are a fun, young brand and I think that is a lot of the

draw," Nestora says. "Volunteering abroad needs to have an element of fun in it for people to truly enjoy it and I think students feel confident if they go with i-to-i, they will get that great combo of hardcore volunteering and cultural immersion."

The bright colors of i-to-i's booth drew her attention, but the chance to visit Costa Rica during her spring break and help protect leatherback sea turtles caused her to obtain more information. The only thing Lowe and her parents had to pay for was a plane ticket, which cost less than \$1,000. Everything else, such as food and shelter, was paid for by i-to-i.

In order to protect the sea turtles, Lowe and approximately 30 other volunteers from around the globe had various duties, such as guarding the hatchery and patrolling the beach with bags to carry the sea turtle eggs and flashlights with red screener to dull the light so the sea turtles would not be disturbed. During a beach patrol, when volunteers spot sea turtles, they must measure and tag the turtle, plus take the eggs to the hatchery for protection.

"The hatchery was like a checkerboard and we could only lay the eggs in certain sections," Lowe says. "For example, [the eggs could be placed in] the black squares because we need enough space in between so that they didn't infect each other, and there was netting around it and then little canastas around each nest."

For four out of the five nights she spent in Gandoca, Lowe says her five-person group patrolled the beach from 8 p.m. until midnight in search of sea turtles. When Lowe was not patrolling the beach, she liked to relax, read and talk with the other members, but



the temperature always reached the high-90s and it was too hot to spend a lot of time in the sun.

Throughout Costa Rica, sea turtle eggs and shells are in high demand by poachers, says Alice Crowley, a 23-year-old Western alumna, who visited Costa Rica during the same time as Lowe. Crowley says that even though it is illegal to poach, if a poacher gets to a turtle before the volunteer, the poacher owns the eggs. Poachers can sell the eggs for 50 cents to \$1, and each nest can have upwards of 70 eggs, Crowley says.

“I think it’s sad poachers try to sell the shells and eggs of turtles,” Lowe says. “But at least Costa Rica has tried to stop poaching [by making poaching illegal].”

However, poachers were not the only reason it was difficult to protect the sea turtles.

With 80-degree nighttime temperatures, Lowe says making the roughly five-mile walk up and down the beach became somewhat of a grueling chore. Not seeing any turtles until two days before she left made the trek even more cumbersome.

“It sort of began to seem pointless,” Lowe says. “I had to lower my expectations.”

Fortunately for Lowe, on her last night of patrolling the beach, she saw what she had come to Costa Rica for. As the clock approached midnight, Lowe’s beach patrolling shift was almost over and the odds of seeing a sea turtle began to dwindle. It was nearing late and the beach was pitch-black. She nearly lost all hope. Lowe had been in Costa Rica for five days and not seen any turtles. But fate intervened moments before midnight. Lying offshore in front of

Lowe laid a six-foot leatherback sea turtle laying her eggs.

“When I finally saw a sea turtle, it was amazing,” Lowe says.

“When I first saw the sea turtle I thought, ‘[Wow], that’s huge!’... Thank God I saw one.”

Most people do not get to experience the volunteer work Lowe participated in during spring break. Not only did Lowe say she visited Costa Rica in all of its beauty, but she helped a species from possible extinction. As Lowe’s plane departed from

Gandoca, she thought of everything she had helped accomplish, and she knew this spring break would never be forgotten.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALICE CROWLEY
A photo of a turtle on the beach in Costa Rica.

—Tyler Huey
Design by Jenny Leak

JUST WANGING IT



*Mathias Roten is one of Switzerland's avid speed-flyers traveling the world hoping to spread the new sport's name. Reporter **Kelly Joines** embarks on the great adventure of grasping this new extreme sport.*
Design by Jenny Leak

The late afternoon sun lends a warm glow to the snow on Whistler Blackcomb. The deepening bluebird sky is rich and heavy, creating the illusion it is closer than usual. The weather is perfect — exactly the spring skiing conditions 28-year-old Mathias Roten hoped for during his flight from his home in Thun, Switzerland.

Roten lifts his face toward the sky to feel the steady wind on his bronze cheeks. His dark eyes close in meditation. The only sound is that of the air rushing in his ears. He opens his eyes and looks down, past his red Atomic skis, at a line he's been scoping out all day. Outlined by Whistler's tall cedars and firs, this line poses new challenges in a terrain unlike that of the familiar steep dropoffs and rock beds in the Alps.

Roten drops into his line. Ever conscious of tree wells, he weaves through the grand, snow-laden bark giants. Gaining speed, he heads for clearing, only to find that it drops into more treetops below. He has no time to think, only enough to react by instinct.

Adrenalin rises as he closes in.

He commits and his body drops.

Break. Flight. Freedom. Life.

As he pulls down on his circular break toggles, parachute wings lift his body above the trees. Red, eight-meter wings soar above him, cutting in and out of the sun's dimming rays. On top of the wings, Columbia flies, merging into the all-too-close bluebird sky. Roten is flying — speed-flying.

He recalls this day vividly as it presented the thrill of tackling new terrain in one of the newest snow sports. Speed-flying, known in some countries as speed-riding, combines skills of freestyle skiing, paragliding and skydiving. All that is needed are skis, wings and a thrill for downhill speed sports.

The sport gained international attention in France in 2005, but originated in the Alps where test pilots for a wing manufacturing company, Gin Gliders, were looking for ways to improve parachute wings.

Speed-flying, similar to other free-flight sports, doesn't rely on motor-power for flight. Its closest cousins are paragliding and skydiving. However, speed-flying is set apart by allowing skiers to remain in constant contact with the snow, says Chris Santacroce, the only U.S. importer for speed-flying equipment, at Super Fly, a specialized free-flight store in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Unlike what most people imagine, speed-flyers don't require a helicopter to get up to ideal terrain. All it takes is a few chairlifts and a hike into the backcountry or out-of-bounds areas, as the sport can be enjoyed on terrain from flat to vertical extreme, Santacroce says.

As for necessary speed-flying gear, Roten says most skiers already have half of the basics — backcountry, or powder skis and avalanche equipment for safety. A harness and wing are the remaining components to speed-flying.

Slightly bigger than the size of a picnic table, speed-flying wings are composed of material similar to that of a sky diving parachute. The lines are cleaner, which makes for a smoother glide, explains Santacroce. Harnesses made for speed-flying are comparable to those for rock-climbing except they are more substantial and comfortable for skiing.

Beginning speed-flyers should have experience skiing and know how to paraglide or use a parachute. Experience with other wing sports such as kite-surfing, skydiving, or downhill speed sports definitely helps, Roten says.

"Someone who does a lot of downhill sports knows more about speed, staying close to the terrain, how to react instinctively and play with the mountain," Roten says. "It doesn't mean that someone who's been paragliding for years will be better than someone who hasn't — it just can help. Say some crazy downhill mountain biker could be better because he is used to speed and the terrain. It's a thing of mentality and how you approach the sport."

Beginners learning how to speed-fly should start on a small hill with a bigger wing, Roten suggests. A larger wing has more drag, carries less speed and has a larger margin for breaking. As the skier gains speed, the wing automatically lifts. With enough momentum, the skier can jump by pulling on the break toggles.

"When you know how to play with the wing on top of your head, go to a steeper slope," Roten says. "If you have the right place to start, I tell you everyone can do it — I mean most people who can ski, or are willing to learn how to ski, can do this sport because you can choose your slope."

For more advanced speed-flyers who want to ski steep terrain, Roten says a smaller wing with a "bad glide" would enable for more

skiing and less gliding. Roten says each wing can handle a margin of angles. If there is too much angle, the wing will stall and won't create lift. If the angle is too small, the wing will collapse.

Like downhill skiing, speed-flyers check their line down a slope before committing. Rock ledges, turns and drop-offs must be considered.

"With a big mountain, where you have lots of terrain you don't know and can't see from the top, check it out," he says. "Check the mountain so you make sure when you fly around the corner you know you won't come across any bad surprises such as trees or an exposed rock face."

The speed that wings can gather may be dangerous in unfamiliar terrain, especially for a beginner or intermediate flyer used to only flying at 20 to 30 miles per hour.

"Wings can gain a speed from 30 mph to 80 mph depending on its size. A 15-square-meter wing is a beginner size and much slower than, say, an 8-square-meter wing," Roten cautions.

“Wings can gain a speed from 30 mph to 80 mph depending on its size.”

—Mathias Roten

Like most extreme sports, the reward of speed-flying comes with risks. This is true for even the most advanced sports enthusiasts pushing their skills to the next level.

"The most important thing is to know the limits and how far you can go," Roten says. "As far as I can look back, I try to find limits. How much faster can I go? How much closer to the stone can I fly? Can I touch it? If I have a bad feeling then I will back off and take it easy. In the end it has to do with, for sure, reaching my goals but at the same time have fun with it and not force it."

In some countries speed-flyers must have a paragliding license. Because the sport is still in its beginning stages, guidelines and requirements differ among countries.

"Because ski areas don't know much about speed-flying [in the U.S.], you have to go off-piste, or to out-of-bounds areas because of liability reasons," says Santacroce.

Here in the Northwest, ski resorts such as Mount Baker and Crystal Mountain are following suit and speed-flyers must seek the backcountry.

"Even where it is allowed in-bounds, many times it is necessary to hike a good distance away from designated runs where there aren't other skiers or snowboarders. It would be too crowded and dangerous otherwise," Roten says. "Besides, the powder is better where people haven't gotten to it yet."

Roten encourages speed-flying enthusiasts to search out places ideal for the sport. Although the world is well explored, it hasn't been explored in terms of speed-flying.

"That's the best part about a new sport," Roten says. "You get to go out and explore different mountains to see if they are good. You don't know. You have to go find it."

And he found it at Whistler Blackcomb.


Flying over the shadows of trees, lengthening as the sun sets, Roten remembers how the cool air rushed against his ears while he gripped his break toggles. As the red Columbia wing descends, he closes his eyes once again, grateful that the sky is not so far away. 



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRED PATTOU
Mathias Roten with his parachute.

InDustrious DESIGNER



Twist, twist, twist. Pop. The cork from a Martini Asti Champagne shoots across his Seattle home as Adam unveils his refreshment to celebrate the last night of 2006. He holds a champagne flute as he pours a glass for his girlfriend Sherrie and then collects the cork from the ground. However, what he saw in his hand was not a cork, it was the vision of what it would soon become — a chair.

“It’s amazing to see that transformation from trash to treasure,” says industrial design student Adam Weisgerber as he flashes back to his New Year’s Eve. His curiosity and creativity have led him to win an international competition and landed him an internship at General Electric in Louisville, Ky. for this school year.

Weisgerber has always loved to make people happy. Even as a small boy he loved to entertain his friends and family with magic escape acts and juggling torches.

“I’ve singed off my eyelashes a few times,” he laughs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM WEISGERBER

He is now incorporating his passion of risk taking into his design work by striving to enhance products including everything from a back massager to refrigerators and ovens. Weisgerber says he is interested in industrial design because he is slowly improving the worlds’ products.

“What you design physically touches millions of people,” Weisgerber says.

The Contest

After Weisgerber rang in the new year, he started to sketch his ideas for a chair for the annual Design Within Reach Chair contest in Seattle in February. His guidelines were to make a 4-by-4-by-4 inch chair only using parts from a champagne bottle, excluding the glass, and he could use glue to hold it together. One cork was from New Year’s Eve and the other was from his parents. He also had a wine cork to practice his design on.

As Weisgerber was finishing up his chair, he wanted to add an element to make it look more three-dimensional by burning the edges to make them darker. He took his chair over to the stove and laid it on its side.

“Then it started smoking and expanding really fast,” he laughs.

Luckily he was able to sand it back down. To his surprise, Weisgerber was still the winner out of 1000 participants worldwide.

“I had seen the other chairs and certainly some were better than mine,” he says.

“I really should have gotten something like second place.”

Weisgerber says a chair made of an orange label and wires for the legs should have won.

“The curves on it were immaculate,” he says in awe.

For winning the contest Weisgerber received a \$1,500 gift certificate to spend at Design Within Reach, the Seattle furniture store that hosted the contest. His chair will also been on display at the store throughout the spring.

Weisgerber entered the contest for fun since he has more spare time in the evenings. His nights aren’t cluttered with homework like most college students because he’s away from school working for his internship.

General Electric

While Weisgerber may have more time at night he spends 40 hours per week at his internship during the weekdays. He was one of the two selected students out of the 12 in his class for an internship at General Electric along with classmate, junior Jerimiah Welch.

Western and General Electric have an exchange program in which one or more students may compete for an internship for General Electric.

Last year no one from Western was chosen, but this year the company chose both Weisgerber and Welch who have both taken time off from school to complete this

internship. They will return to Western in the fall as seniors.

Although he was hesitant to move to Kentucky at first, Weisgerber says he's grown to love Louisville. Welch and Weisgerber live in the same neighborhood.

"My neighborhood is the only place you'd find a punk kid with a Mohawk or a gay coffee shop around the corner," Weisgerber says. "It actually kind of reminds me of Bellingham."

At General Electric Weisgerber is enhancing designs of refrigerators and ovens. One of his latest projects is figuring out how to make a steel refrigerator door magnetic.

"Moms want to put everything up there," he says.

He discovered a way to put scrap metal behind the doors, which made them magnetic.

Weisgerber says his internship has shown him the real world of industrial design.

"Sometimes it's not that clear when you are student and you are focused on your school work," he says. "You just focus on what you need to get done and you don't look at how it fits into the scheme of things."

While Weisgerber has contributed to General Electric with his refrigeration concepts, Welch has been focusing on projects that involve lighting. Welch's latest project was to come up with better lighting for a wine cooler. He says he had to consider several factors when coming up with his design.

Wine's taste can spoil under fluorescent light because of a chemical in the light energy. He says the vibration from the refrigerator may also spoil the light and he needs to come up with a concept that takes all of this into consideration.

Although they do not work together every day, Welch says he enjoys working with Weisgerber when they brainstorm together. They recently worked on a project to develop new ideas for induction cook tops, which are stovetops that visibly do not give off heat, but only conduct with a pan.

"The first thing we did was turn on the coffee maker," he says. "Caffeine helps brainstorming."

The two then brainstormed what kind of technologies could be added to the stove and what the possible problems of the stove would be. The rest, he says, is top secret.

Their supervisor, Chris Bissig, an industrial design manager at General Electric, says the students bring a fresh and young perspective to the company.

"Different perspectives are the number one thing that can push us to foster new thinking at General Electric," Bissig says.

Bissig says both have been highly contributing team members.

"They aren't like those traditional interns you see on movies that have to just serve coffee," Bissig says. "They don't need my supervision all the time because they just get things done on their own."

School Days

Weisgerber's curiosity has always been a part of him. From the moment he sat at home as a little boy taking apart phones and VCRs to see how they worked to developing the curiosity about how to make them better, Weisgerber has been interested in the world around him. He confesses to be one of the only students who signs up for classes he doesn't need just because he's inquisitive about what he can learn.

"I am always asking questions," he says. "Curiosity is good in every profession."

Weisgerber's college success started with his entrance into the Western industrial design program. The program accepts 24 freshmen and 24 sophomores every year and the top 12 move on to their junior year.

Industrial design professor, Jason Morris, met Weisgerber the first quarter he taught at Western.

"The first time I met Adam I had been here for a week and he came into my office to show me a design he had from the previous quarter," Morris says.

Morris says the design was a level above any student work he had ever seen.

"He throws it down on my desk and asks 'what is wrong with this design?'," Morris says. "It's almost as if he was saying 'you need to challenge me'."

Professors are not the only people who think highly of Weisgerber. Arunas Oslapas, a Western industrial design professor of 16 years, says Weisgerber was selected by his peers and three industry professionals as the program's junior of the year last year.

Oslapas says Weisgerber's research has helped the program during one of its big projects of coming up with a new iPod case.

Last year Apple Computers asked Brenthaven, a company that designs laptop and MP3 cases, to design an iPod case. Brenthaven decided to ask the Western Industrial Design students to help them come up with ideas for the design.

Western junior Shawn Deutchman was the winner. His design was marketed and sold in the Apple Stores and Brenthaven stores.

Oslapas says Weisgerber did extensive research by looking up reviews online about other iPod cases and reported his information back to the class. He found that many iPod owners were worried about scratching

the iPod and the class used this information in their designs.

"I call him the little professor," he says.

Oslapas' favorite design of Weisgerber's is the "rub" which is a back massager made with all sustainable material. For the feet of the massager Weisgerber used canisters from Starbucks whipped cream containers. For the body he used wood scraps from Greg Aanes Furniture. The project was one Oslapas calls "from trash to cash" in which students had to create a product from all sustainable materials.

“It's amazing to see that transformation from trash to treasure.”
—Adam Weisgerber

The massager sold out at The Whatcom County Museum Gift Shop last year and sold out, Oslapas says.

Welch's design was also featured at the gift shop. His design was lamps made out of olive jars filled with automotive glass and an old car battery. When a person turns the lid, the light comes on.

His sold out as well.

The Future

As for now, Weisgerber's plans include working in an industrial design firm, but he isn't going to narrow it down yet.

He may follow Oslapas' nickname of being "the little professor" and actually become a professor one day.

He says he's also interested in becoming an architect.

"But those are the extraneous thoughts," he says. "I still love design."

Whatever he decides to do, Weisgerber will take his passionate curiosity along for the ride. Whether it's a cork from New Year's Eve or a piece of metal at General Electric, Weisgerber's curiosity will mold what many see as garbage into treasure for all to use.

—Kacie McKinney
Design by Jenny Leak

KLIPSUN IS A LUMMI WORD
MEANING "BEAUTIFUL SUNSET."



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