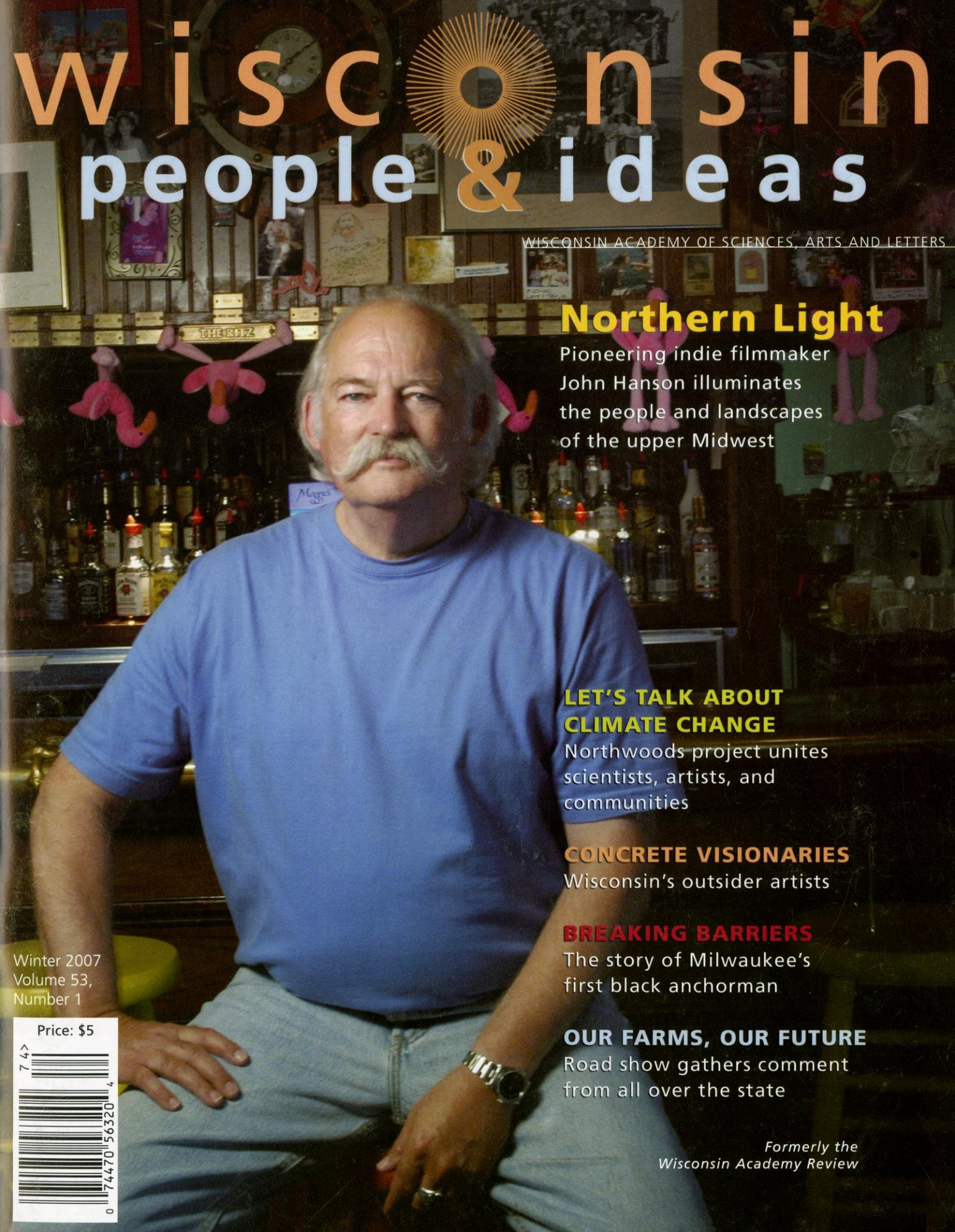
Wisconsin people & ideas. Volume 53, Number 1 Winter 2007

Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, Winter 2007

wisconsin people & ideas

WISCONSIN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ARTS AND LETTERS



Northern Light

Pioneering indie filmmaker John Hanson illuminates the people and landscapes of the upper Midwest

LET'S TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Northwoods project unites scientists, artists, and communities

CONCRETE VISIONARIES

Wisconsin's outsider artists

BREAKING BARRIERS

The story of Milwaukee's first black anchorman

OUR FARMS, OUR FUTURE

Road show gathers comment from all over the state

Formerly the Wisconsin Academy Review

Winter 2007
Volume 53,
Number 1

Price: $5

leading thinkers, important issues

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ACADEMY EVENINGS

wisconsin academy of sciences, arts and letters

Richard Davidson

Be Happy Like a Monk—Richard Davidson

Tuesday, February 13, 7–8:30 pm
Promenade Hall, Overture Center for the Arts

Back by popular demand! UW–Madison psychology professor Richard Davidson, recently named one of the world's 100 most influential thinkers (*Time* magazine), is searching for the source of happiness—and has used Buddhist monks in his lab as a model group. What has he discovered about the secrets and brain science of happiness?

Edward Uhlir

Dave Cieslewicz

Millennium Park: A Triumph for Chicago, an Inspiration for Madison—Edward Uhlir and Mayor Dave Cieslewicz

Tuesday, March 13, 7–8:30 pm
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in Overture, lecture hall

Chicago's new Millennium Park transformed 24 acres of commuter rail lines, neglected parkland, and a parking lot into a vibrant cultural showcase on the lakefront. Edward Uhlir, Millennium Park's director of design, architecture and landscape, describes how they did it; Mayor Dave Cieslewicz responds with ideas for Madison. We welcome a lively discussion with all who care about parks, urban design, and sustainable growth in our city. Moderated by Susan B. King.

Wendy Crone

Science of the Small: How Nanotechnology Is Changing Our Lives—Wendy Crone

Tuesday, March 27, 7–8:30 pm
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in Overture, lecture hall

A nanometer is about 1/50,000th the diameter of a human hair, yet the increasing ability to manipulate materials on the nanoscale could revolutionize the way that almost everything is designed and made. UW–Madison engineering professor Wendy Crone enlightens us on what nanotechnology can already do, what it is doing in the state of Wisconsin, and invites us to imagine what nanotechnology may hold for our future.

$2 SUGGESTED DONATION

Admission is free but tickets are recommended to ensure seating. They are available at the James Watrous Gallery in Overture, third floor. James Watrous Gallery hours: Tues/Wed/Thurs 11–5, Fri/Sat 11–9, Sun 1–5. We regret that tickets cannot be mailed or reserved by phone. Exception: Attendees who reside outside of Dane County may order tickets from Barbara Sanford, bsanford@wisconsinacademy.org, 608/263-1692 ext. 13 (e-mail preferred).

More information at www.wisconsinacademy.org

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John and Sally Mielke Family Fund

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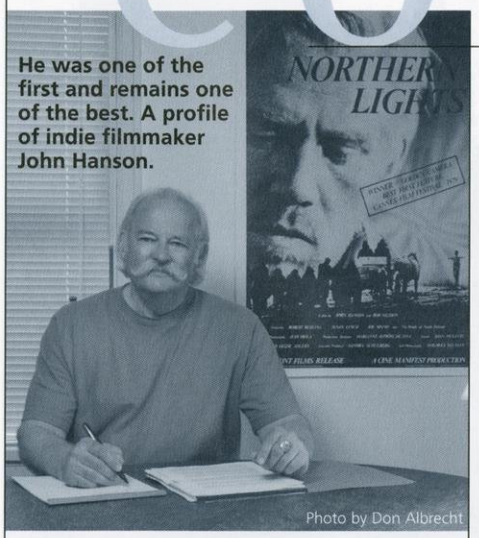
features



He was one of the first and remains one of the best. A profile of indie filmmaker John Hanson.

Photo by Don Albrecht

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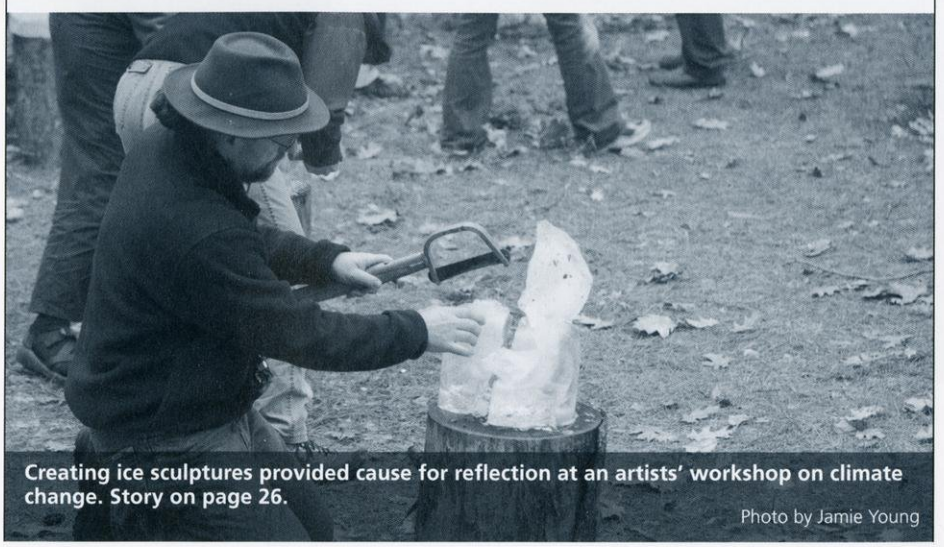

Creating ice sculptures provided cause for reflection at an artists' workshop on climate change. Story on page 26.

Photo by Jamie Young

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Meet the dwarfs! Story on page 32.

ENLIGHTEN YOUR LIFE!

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters connects people and ideas from all areas of knowledge and all walks of life to learn about the latest achievements in thought and culture in our state and explore how we can best address our problems. It is a place where all people can come for reliable, unbiased information and interaction with Wisconsin's most innovative thinkers.

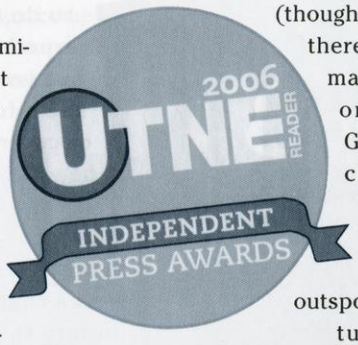
The Wisconsin Academy was founded in 1870 as an independent, nonprofit membership organization separate from the state and the university. For financial support we rely on grants, donors, and our members.

Enrich your life (and receive this magazine regularly) by becoming a member! Learn more on page 11.

Seize the Day

Sometimes a nomination feels as good as the award. Especially if you decide to celebrate like crazy because, regardless of who wins in the end, that nomination is yours and nobody can take it from you (and, besides, the champagne bottles have long since been emptied. No taking those back, either!).

I'm talking about our nomination for an Independent Press Award by the *Utne Reader,* a magazine that sifts, winnows, and delivers the best of the independent press six times a year. (One can think of it as a kind of *Reader's Digest* of the alternative press.) This line of work puts *Utne* in a position to hand out special awards each year to publications that consistently do an outstanding job.



And this time around, for the first time, the Wisconsin Academy's magazine was nominated for best regional and local coverage alongside such esteemed publications as *The Stranger* (a Seattle weekly edited by Dan "Savage Love" Savage), *The Oxford American,* and the *Chicago Reader.* It is also, we believe, the first time the magazine has received national recognition in its 52-year history, though we have in recent years received statewide honors from the Milwaukee Press Club.

Given the quality of the competition, I don't expect we'll win—but being mentioned in the same breath as the aforementioned publications is reward enough.

The magazine also received another honor, this one a little offbeat. The last edition under its former title, the *Wisconsin Academy Review*—specifically, the issue from last winter featuring "Miss Annie Mae's Hats" on the cover—has been placed in a time capsule at the Overture Center in honor of Madison's sesquicentennial. It will be opened in the year 2056 to great fanfare, I am sure (though, alas, I can't plan to be there). With this honor, the magazine is piggybacking on the James Watrous Gallery's exhibition of church hats from the black community. The show was a rousing tribute to an admirable, outspoken woman with "hattitude"—Miss Annie Mae McClain—and the black church traditions that nurtured and inspired her. Many thanks to Women in Focus, the nonprofit group that nominated our inclusion, as well as hat owners Carol Lobes and Joe McClain. We are very proud of this honor!

FELLOWS NOMINATIONS

In our last issue we featured our most recent selection of Wisconsin Academy Fellows—men and women of outstanding achievement in their fields. We welcome your nominations for our next selection. The deadline is March 1; visit our website for nomination materials or call Gail Kohl at 608/263-1692 ext. 14.

Joan Fischer
jfischer@wisconsinacademy.org

UP AND COMING

A glance at gallery exhibitions this winter. More info at www.wisconsinacademy.org.

JAMES WATROUS GALLERY

Overture Center for the Arts, 201 State St.
Tues/Wed/Thurs 11–5; Fri/Sat 11–9; Sun 1–5
Admission free of charge

SURVEYING DESIRE XV: OVERTURES
CAROL EMMONS
Through January 19

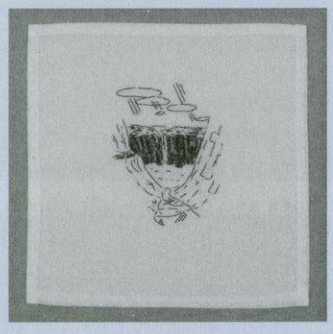
Carol Emmons, *Surveying Desire X: Quest,* 2003

SPECTRUM
An Exhibition of Artwork by the 2006 Wisconsin Arts Board Visual Arts Fellows

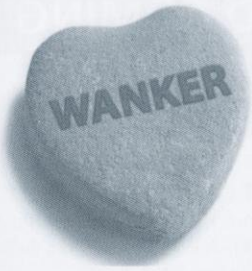
February 2–March 18

Opening reception Friday, Feb. 2, 5–7 pm
Artists' talks begin at 5:30

Stephen Milanowski



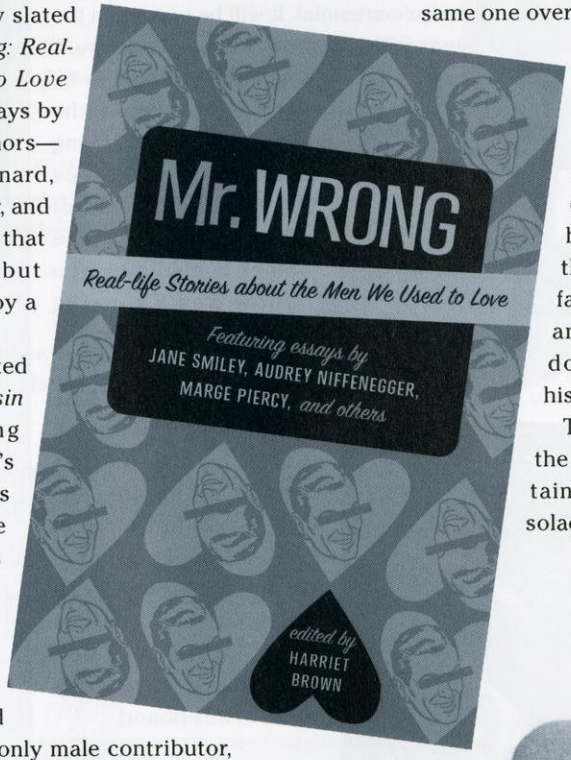
Chris Niver



toxic Hearts

Some of us have never gotten over the end of *Sex and the City*. Where's Carrie, where's Miranda, where's the dish about disastrous dates, hot sex, wrenching breakups, and the search for lasting love?

Pour yourselves a cosmo and snuggle up with Mr. Wrong—the book, that is. Wickedly slated for a Valentine's Day release, *Mr. Wrong: Real-Life Stories about the Men We Used to Love* (Ballantine Books) features original essays by some of our country's most noted authors—Jane Smiley, Marge Piercy, Joyce Maynard, Jacquelyn Mitchard, Audrey Niffenegger, and Whitney Otto among them. Looking at that star-studded cast, one can't help but wonder: Is falling in love with a bad boy a prerequisite for being a writer?



Mr. Wrong was conceived of and edited by Harriet Brown, the editor of *Wisconsin Trails* magazine, whose own dating resume includes one of the collection's showstoppers: a man who enjoys wearing his dead mother's clothes (she dumps "Norman Bates," as she calls him, within hours of this confession).

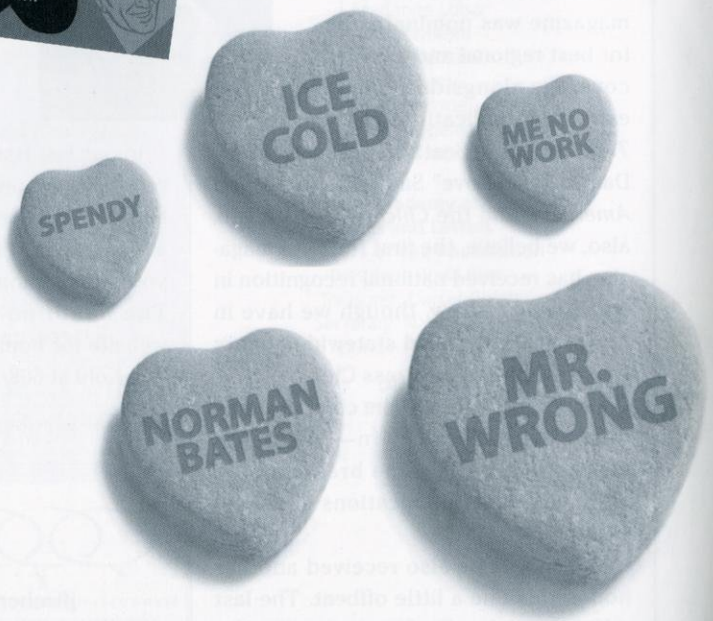
Other Wisconsin authors include, of course, Mitchard, whose reunion with the dream man of her youth is spoiled by a deal-breaking new problem; and Raphael Kadushin, who, as the book's only male contributor, recounts a youthful heartbreak in London by a "kept man" who had to dump him ("I can't afford to see you," he says). That close encounter with the financial realities of this world—and the lesson that money often trumps—constitutes Kadushin's true loss of innocence.

These beautifully written moments of pain and perception put *Mr. Wrong* on a level above the ongoing barrage of women's relationship talk, ranging from *Sex and the City*—which trafficked mostly in caricature, not character—to *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a whole canon of chick lit, and numerous magazines and daytime talk shows. Yes, there is humor (do not miss Sara Ekks' "I Married a Wanker!" or Marion Winik's "The Ten Most Wanted"). But many of these pieces rip open a wound, with the cruel joke being most decidedly on the author. Joyce Maynard, Marge Piercy, and Robin Weston describe being duped, respectively, by a prison inmate, a two-timing professional, and a self-styled spiritual leader. (Maynard's story is particularly chilling.) In retrospect the authors recognize how their vulnerabilities of the moment made them easy prey, and they walk away wiser. But not foolproof. As Piercy puts it, "I believe that in love you are entitled to a great many mistakes so long as you aren't making the same one over and over."

Brown says she was inspired to do the anthology "by the experiences of three friends in one year, each of whom thought she'd found her Mr. Right and discovered some years later that he was Mr. Way Wrong. It got me thinking about how many times I'd fallen for a guy I knew was wrong, and how many other women had done that, and, well, the rest is history. Or herstory."

The quest for love goes on. And in the meantime, *Mr. Wrong* offers entertainment, insight, and the timeless solace of story.

by Joan Fischer

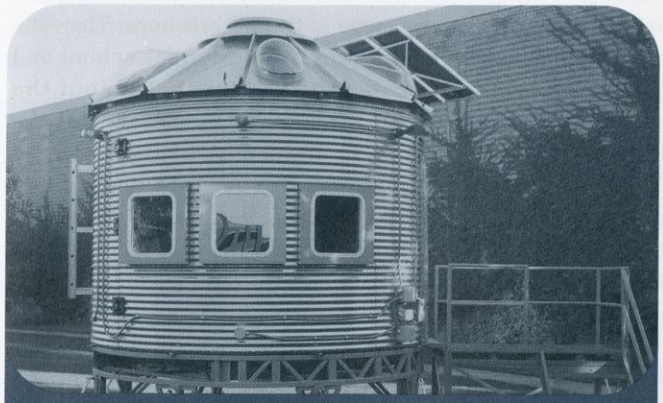


singing in a silo

Visitors to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan are perplexed when they walk the grounds. It appears as if a spaceship constructed from a silo has been placed on a launchpad tucked behind the Arts Center—complete with a solar panel and stairs.

In fact, it's just MIKE, short for Music Integrated Kiosk Environment. MIKE is a sculpture—it was made by altering a grain bin with salvaged camper parts, truck parts, and other found materials—a sound recording studio, and a performance stage all in one. This odd conglomeration is the brainchild of Wisconsin public art artist Richard Saxton and Indiana sound artist Stuart Hyatt.

How—and why—did they come up with the idea of a traveling silo for recording and musical performances? (Yes, MIKE can and will travel, though doing so requires a massive crane and a flatbed truck.)



MIKE, outside and in. Photos by Kathleen Quigley

"I have always wanted to make something out of a grain bin," says Saxton. "Growing up in the Midwest, I have found it such a familiar form on the land, and I really enjoy the history of people making new things out of ready-made structures. It is a way of working that is utilized by everyone from farmers to influential makers like Buckminster Fuller."

As for the portability, "From the beginning, MIKE was thought of as being somewhat mobile," Saxton says. "It is probably personal experience mixed with the way things are being built these days—the combination of I-80 stretching through where I grew up and the mobile culture that is prevalent in our lives today, with people buying condos instead of homesteads and carrying iPods and mobile phones."

The notion of MIKE appealed to Ruth Kohler, director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, as a wonderful project for its Connecting Communities program, which has artists-in-residence work with community members to create visual and performance works of art.

Construction took place last summer at Lakeshore Technical College with the participation of nearly 100 students, faculty members, and area residents from all walks of life. A local construction company coordinated MIKE's transport, and the silo/stage/studio was moved to the rear grounds of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Next MIKE was outfitted with recording equipment, and the project's next phase began. More than 70 composers, musicians, storytellers, poets, and others from around the region visited MIKE to compose and record original songs.

The project culminated with an evening-length performance using MIKE as a stage, and some of the music was preserved in a CD that is now for sale at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. The collection has been described as a kind of rockabilly blues loosely inspired by Sheboygan history.

Saxton and Hyatt have moved on to new ventures, but MIKE has a future, with plans to travel to other Wisconsin communities for similar musical and performance projects.

So keep your eyes open for any silos that look like spaceships, for performers who come in and out at strange hours without being abducted to distant galaxies.

It's only MIKE, one of the most unusual arts-and-music projects Wisconsin has ever seen.

by Kathleen Quigley

John Michael Kohler Arts Center
608 New York Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920/458-6144
www.jmkac.org

Hours
MWF 10 am–5 pm
T/Th 10 am–8 pm
S/Su 10 am–4 pm

For more information about important work involving the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, see the story on concrete artists beginning on page 32.
For more information about Richard Saxton, see municipalWORKSHOP, www.municipalworkshop.org
For more information about Stuart Hyatt, see TEAM Records, www.teamrecords.org.

GIRLS IN POP CULTURE

IT'S HARD OUT THERE FOR A GIRL. Girls are bombarded daily by the media with highly sexual and often destructive or violent messages about what will make them popular and the place of women in our society. From the widely publicized partying antics and self-starvation of young actresses like Lindsay Lohan and Nicole Richie to the promiscuity and exhibitionism of the "Girls Gone Wild" series and rap lyrics deriding women as bitches and hos, it's hard for adolescent girls to understand what their real choices are and how and why they are being manipulated.

Two moms in Madison have had enough. Kelly Parks Snider and Jane Bartell, both mothers of adolescents, have drawn upon their respective skills as a visual artist and a video producer by teaming up—along with more than two dozen middle-school girls who participated—to create Project Girl, a two-year arts-and-awareness project that culminates with an exhibition/exposition this spring.

The Project Girl Exposition is a free multimedia art exhibition with workshops developed specifically for girls in middle school, focusing on the effects of contemporary media on the lives and attitudes of adolescent girls. It brings together young girls with artists, health care providers, academics, and concerned mothers and fathers, and features visual and literary works by professional Wisconsin artists combined with a selection of thought-provoking topical student artwork.

The project is being hosted by Edgewood College in Madison as part of Women's History Month and runs March 2–April 22. Afterward, the exhibition will travel to other venues around the state.

Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton will speak at the exposition's opening in Madison on March 2 at 7 p.m., sharing thoughts on the importance of media literacy to the healthy interaction, learning, and empowerment of young people, especially adolescent girls.

And earlier that day, two two-hour workshops with middle-school students feature Lyn Mikel Brown, a professor of education and human development at Colby College and a leading book author and thinker on the subject of adolescent girls, popular culture, and self-image. Her works include *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes* (with co-author Sharon Lamb), and *Girl Fighting: Betrayal and Rejection Among Girls*. Schools are invited to sign up in advance for these workshops, which take place from 9 to 11 a.m. and noon to 2 p.m. Brown will also speak that evening after Lawton.

According to Lawton, efforts like Project Girl "take a key step toward ensuring the empowerment, health, and development of the potential of tomorrow's generation of Wisconsin women."

During the past two years, Parks Snider and Bartell collaborated closely with 25 middle-school girls of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to develop the project's peer-to-peer curriculum and traveling art exhibition.

Using art as a means of reflection and expression, Project Girl brought noted artists, poets, researchers, psychologists, art therapists, and academics together with young student collaborators in workshops to explore the commercial media's effects on actions and views held by the girls. The project received support from the Wisconsin Arts Board, the YWCA of Madison, Girls Incorporated, Arts Wisconsin, and the East Madison Community Center.

The multimedia art exhibition is the outcome of these workshops. The exhibition will travel to other school and community venues throughout the state. Parks Snider and Bartell describe it as "a workshop-based expo designed to increase awareness and understanding among Wisconsin's adolescent girls of the motives and manipulation of the commercial media and provide them with tools for a healthy response to that influence."

For more information or to book a school group, see Project Girl's website at www.projectgirl.org or contact Kelly Parks Snider at kpsnider@charter.net.

Lyn Mikel Brown takes on questionable messages.

Photo by Brian Speer courtesy of Colby College

SMALL TOWNS GET GRANTS FOR RURAL LIFE PROJECTS

The Wisconsin Humanities Council (WHC) is offering a new grant program focusing on "Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin" as a humanities-based complement to the Wisconsin Academy's initiative on that sector's future (see page 20).

Grants will be awarded to organizations in communities with populations of 5,000 residents or less, and whose programs explore the rich and diverse histories, arts, ideas, and values of Wisconsin's evolving rural and agricultural heritage.

"Strong public humanities programs can strengthen and enrich communities by stimulating collective reflection and conversation among neighbors and strangers," says Dean Bakopoulos, the WHC's executive director. "We are eager to work with rural communities in developing a variety of strong proposals."

Because the Wisconsin Academy's program looks toward the future of farming and rural life, the WHC encourages proposals that help rural communities address the economic, environmental, and demographic changes they face, using the humanities to promote collective reflection and community conversation. Projects that increase the scope of existing community programs and/or bring together a diverse range of organizations (nonprofit, business, faith communities, social service providers, etc.) are encouraged.

This grant pool is supported by a $15,000 donation from The Boldt Company, a Wisconsin-based construction services organization, plus matching funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"The Boldt Company is pleased to sponsor this initiative because we feel it will spark thoughtful and vibrant conversations about the changing nature of farming and rural life in Wisconsin," says Tom Boldt, CEO of The Boldt Company. "By bringing together the missions of two of our state's most vital cultural organizations, we hope to inspire creative humanities programming that deals with complex issues."

Boldt serves as president of the board of the nonprofit Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

Organizations may apply for major grants or mini-grants using the standard WHC application process; there are no special guidelines or application forms necessary. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhumanities.org or call 608/262-0706.

BORDERS, WALLS, AND HEDGES

A traveling exhibition examines the boundary line

WE LIVE BETWEEN FENCES—personal, national, geopolitical, and conceptual. And as we dismantle boundaries we no longer need, we also erect new barriers (with plans for the U.S.–Mexican border being a salient recent example).

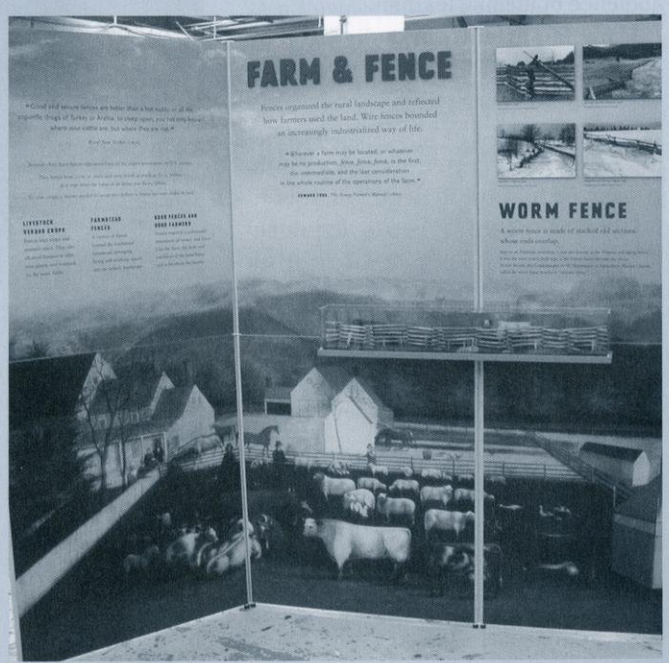
From picket fences to chain links to barbed wire and beyond, fences can denote everything from security and decoration to ownership and industry. They dictate our behavior and cement property lines. But who defines that property? How have rivals negotiated boundaries in the past? And how do we reinforce our borders today?

Between Fences, a traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution, will tour six towns around Wisconsin beginning next fall as part of the Smithsonian's "Museums on Main Street" program.

Brought to Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the *Between Fences* exhibition will spend six weeks each in Waupaca, Hales Corners, LaFarge, Sauk Prairie, Clear Lake, and Cable. The exhibition will be hosted by small museums, community centers, libraries, and historic sites that were selected through a competitive application process. Each community will celebrate the Smithsonian coming to town with related events and programs.

Designed for communities of 10,000 residents or less, *Between Fences* reveals how central the fence is to the American landscape. Its assemblage of tools, images, literature—and, of course, fences—prompts us to reflect on the role of the fence in our lives and see a common icon in new ways.

For more information on the *Between Fences* Wisconsin tour, go to www.wisconsinhumanities.org.



The Wisconsin Idea Goes Digital

> "As a researcher far from major library collections, I really appreciate the effort and time that has gone into digitizing *Foreign Relations of the United States*—it's a wonderful resource."

> "Thank you for creating the *Icelandic Dictionary*. I am astonished and profoundly grateful that such a valuable resource should be made available to the public, free of charge."

Such comments would make former University of Wisconsin president Charles Van Hise proud—proud to know that 100 years after he first challenged the UW to "make the beneficent influence of the University available to every home in the State," one small university unit, quietly tucked away in UW–Madison Memorial Library, has embraced and carried forward this principle with great enthusiasm and commitment.

The University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Center (UWDCC) creates and publishes online digital resources that fulfill and build upon the "Wisconsin Idea," as championed by Van Hise. Internet technology and its pervasive use have allowed the digital collections staff to extend this guiding belief further than Van Hise or his contemporaries ever imagined, delivering an array of varied and valuable educational resources to a worldwide audience of lifelong learners.

Many important works digitized by the center also will be made available by Google Book Search as part of a recent agreement with the UW–Madison Libraries. The agreement expands access to hundreds of thousands of public and historical books and documents from more than 7.2 million holdings at the libraries and the Wisconsin Historical Society Library. UW–Madison is the eighth institution to join Google's ambitious effort to digitize the world's books and make them searchable.

Since its founding in early 2000, the Digital Collections Center has worked collaboratively with faculty, staff, and librarians on UW System campuses to create digital resources that support instructional and research needs of the UW community. The project uniquely documents the university and the state of Wisconsin and provides access to rare or fragile items of broad research value.

These resources are publicly accessible online and are organized into collections spanning a range of subjects, including art, ecology, literature, history, material culture, music, natural resources, science, and social sciences, as well as the university and state as subjects in their own right. Digital resources within these collections include books, journals, archival collections, photographic images, art and illustrations, historic maps, music, oral histories, and video.

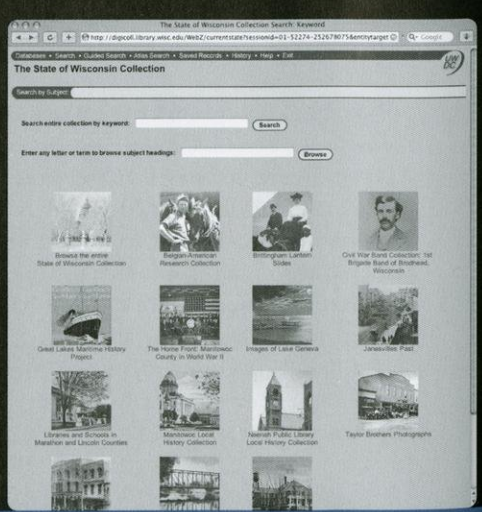
"One important objective of the center is to create collections that have a direct classroom application," says Patrick J. Wilkinson, director of the Forrest R. Polk Library at UW–Oshkosh. Faculty members across the state, Wilkinson says, have reported using these digital collections in assignments that introduce students to archival and other primary research materials. Wilkinson serves as chair of the digital collections center advisory committee, sharing oversight of the center with UW–Madison's Nolan Pope.

Over the past five years, the UW digital collections have grown at an exponential rate, from 150 photos and 35,000 text pages in 2001 to a staggering total of 42,000 photos and 1.3 million

Our Digital State

The center's State of Wisconsin Collection presents published and archival materials such as books, correspondence, sound recordings, maps, and photographs presenting an in-depth examination of Wisconsin's unique cultural heritage and history. Resources include oral history recordings of Belgian American immigrants, documents relating to agriculture and rural life in Wisconsin, correspondence detailing local experiences during the Civil War and World War II, audio recordings of regional folk music, historic photographs revealing the Great Lakes maritime industry, and a wealth of other materials that superbly document the history and development of Wisconsin communities. These resources include the *Wisconsin Academy Review,* now known as *Wisconsin People & Ideas,* as well as the Wisconsin Academy's peer-reviewed journal, *Transactions.*

Visit our state online at http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI



text pages as of fall 2006. Collection use, too, has skyrocketed from 290,000 hits in 2001 to more than 5 million in 2005. In all, the UWDCC has logged more than 10 million hits since its first year. And the Google Book Search partnership is expected to provide the most massive user influx yet.

"We've fielded reference inquiries from people all over Wisconsin, the United States, and several foreign countries—questions that we've been able to answer by using or referring patrons to our digital collections," says UW archivist David Null.

An example of this global sensation is work done by UW–Madison German professor Marc Silberman, who collaborated with the center to develop a tool to help researchers and instructors locate translations of works by the German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht.

Says Silberman, "I have received grateful comments from researchers, writers, and translators throughout the world, including an inquiry from Spain asking for advice about setting up a similar bibliographical database for Spanish translations of Brecht's works based on the UWDCC model."

The Bibliography of Bertolt Brecht's Works in English Translation (http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/BrechtGuide) includes more than 2,600 entries.

Another example is work done by Dick Ringler, a UW–Madison professor emeritus whose digital projects with the center include a collection of poems and prose works by the Icelandic poet and naturalist Jonas Hallgrimsson. He's also done a collaborative project with the University of Iceland to develop a course in modern Icelandic and an audio and text project presenting his own new translation of *Beowulf*.

"The Jonus Hallgrimsson project was described in a *Times Literary Supplement* [London] review as 'outstanding,' and has since been used at both UW–Madison and the University of Iceland for instructional purposes," notes Ringler.

The University of Iceland continues to use the modern Icelandic course site to teach the language to foreign students both in Iceland and abroad. And, as evidenced by user feedback from around the country, the *Beowulf* project enjoys use beyond the university.

In the past year, the digital collections center has partnered with UW System faculty and librarians, public libraries throughout Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and other institutions within and beyond Wisconsin not only to create digital resources but also to share their expertise in digital library project development, technologies and standards, and digital preservation.

According to Sally Drew, the reference and loan library director with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the UWDCC provides significant consultation, training, and technical support for librarians and educators who are developing digital collections. That support covers everything from content selection, metadata creation, and image scanning to infrastructure development and preservation.

"I have worked with the UWDCC to assist Wisconsin public library staff in digitizing local historical materials for use by the general public, K–12 students, and scholars," says Drew. "This has been an excellent experience—one that created a valuable and persistent learning environment for all participants."

From works by William Shakespeare and James Joyce to exquisite images capturing daily life in Africa, China, and Thailand, the UW digital collections make the world's riches accessible at the touch of a fingertip, and promise to engage audiences and inspire scholarship for years to come.

For more information about the UW Digital Collections Center, visit http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu.

by Vicki Tobias

From the UW digital collections: "A Goodbye Kiss" from the *Manitowoc Herald-Times*, 1940, and "Dairying in Wisconsin," a report from 1924.

Madison in Photos

Noted photographer Zane Williams has come out with the perfect gift for residents, visitors, UW alumni, out-of-state relatives, and pretty much anyone else who loves Madison.

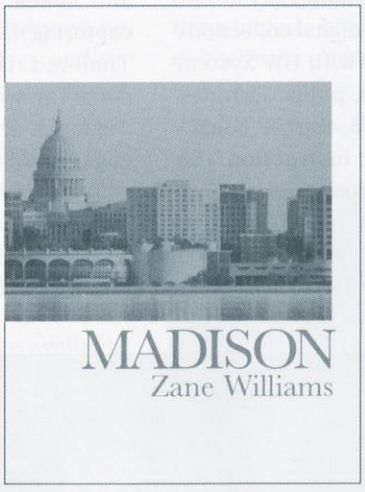
Madison, published by Williams' own Franklin Street Press, takes the viewer not only to some of the city's most beloved sites—the Dane County Farmers' Market, the Memorial Union Terrace, and the Capitol Square, as well as our newest landmark, the Overture Center for the Arts—but also includes comment by such knowledgeable community figures as Lynne Eich, George Austin, and Jerry Minnich.

An earlier Williams photo book, *Double Take* (UW Press), a coffee table favorite a few years back, presented an often poignant side-by-side view of various Madison landmarks today, as photographed by Williams—and as they looked in the 1920s, as photographed by the legendary Angus McVicar.

This is Williams' first contemporary collection since his book *Wisconsin*, which was the official book of the state sesquicentennial in 1998. The new book is actually a creative outgrowth of that earlier work, Williams says.

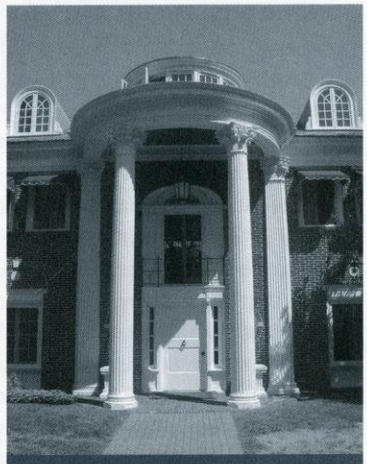
"I had a lot of images of Madison from that project, and I am always shooting things in my own backyard," says Williams, who lives in downtown Madison. "After doing the Wisconsin book, I felt it would be a natural to turn my attention to a book on Madison."

He has done so with his usual sophistication, top-quality photography, and close attention to detail. Make room on your coffee tables for what is sure to become an instant classic.



CWW Prizes Include Artist Retreat

The Council for Wisconsin Writers this year adds a stay at the creative artists' residence Edenfred to its prizes for Wisconsin writers.


Art happens here: Edenfred, in the Madison Highlands.

Entries are now being accepted to the CWW contest, which awards $500 for published works by Wisconsin writers in a number of categories. **The deadline for entries is January 31** (postmark).

The council invites entries published in 2006 by Wisconsin residents in eight categories: short fiction, short nonfiction, book-length fiction, book-length nonfiction, children's literature, poetry book, a set of five poems (including two published in 2006), and outdoor writing. Another category, major achievement, offers $1,000 for a work of outstanding merit in any genre. Out-of-state judges select the winners. Awards are given out at a banquet honoring the winners this spring.

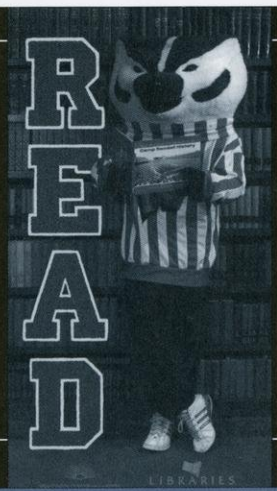
For the first time, winners also will receive a weeklong stay at Edenfred, a villa in the Madison Highlands run by the Terry Family Foundation. Entry blanks and rules may be found at www.wisconsinwriters.org.

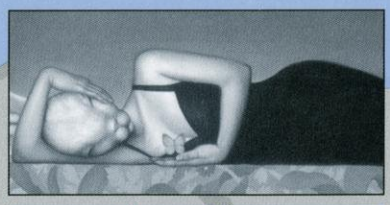
The Council for Wisconsin Writers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting awareness of Wisconsin's literary heritage and encouraging excellence among Wisconsin writers.

For more information about Edenfred, visit www.edenfred.org.

BUCKY SAYS READ

Bucky Badger has teamed up with the Wisconsin Center for the Book and the UW–Madison Libraries to promote reading in Wisconsin. Nearly 1,000 copies of the poster were distributed to children and their parents on the National Mall this fall during the National Book Festival. Additional posters were distributed on campus and through the Madison Public Schools. The Wisconsin Center for the Book is an affiliate of the Library of Congress and the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.





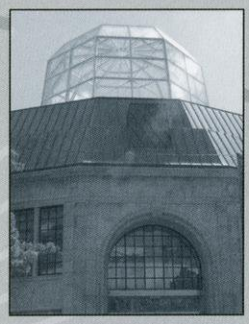
the gallery

The James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy in Madison's Overture Center for the Arts is *the* leading showcase for Wisconsin artists. Many exhibits presented there tour to other galleries in Wisconsin.

the idea

The Wisconsin Idea at the Wisconsin Academy brings together Wisconsin residents with a diverse array of experts and stakeholders to find solutions to statewide problems. "The Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin" is the newest initiative in this program.

$25 gets you here!



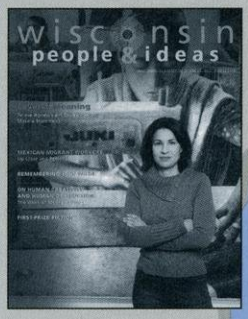
the public forums

These gatherings bring the public together with experts on a wide variety of timely topics for fruitful discussion and learning. The Academy Evenings forum series takes place at the Overture Center for the Arts in Madison as well as at partnering venues in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. More locations will be added in coming years.

the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters connects people and ideas from all walks of life to celebrate thought, culture, and nature in our state and address our common problems.

Our programs are a catalyst for ideas and action.

By becoming a member, you will support these vital programs—and enhance your life by becoming a part of them!



the magazine

The award-winning *Wisconsin People & Ideas* (formerly *Wisconsin Academy Review*) is the only magazine in the state to highlight contemporary Wisconsin thought and culture. It features art, fiction, poetry, and articles by and about the thinkers who help shape our state.

Your $25 membership* includes the following materials:

- *Wisconsin People & Ideas,* our quarterly magazine (retail value: $20)
- Invitations to our gallery receptions, special events, and forums
- Discounts on ticketed Wisconsin Academy events, including our forums and writing contests
- Our peer-reviewed journal, *Transactions,* devoted to topics treated in various Wisconsin Academy programs

*special one-year intro rate; regular price $35.

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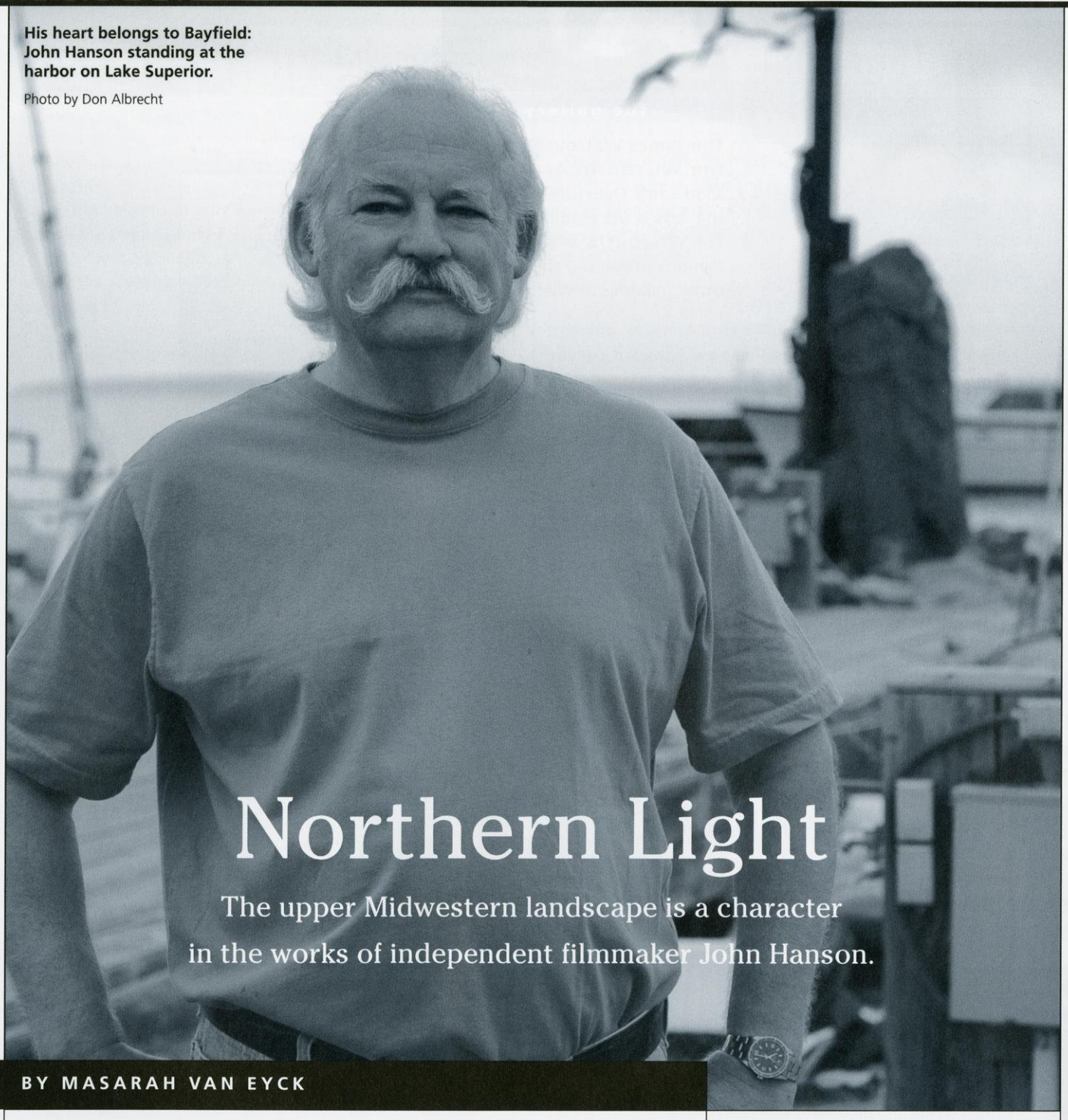


His heart belongs to Bayfield: John Hanson standing at the harbor on Lake Superior.

Photo by Don Albrecht

Northern Light

The upper Midwestern landscape is a character in the works of independent filmmaker John Hanson.

BY MASARAH VAN EYCK

WALKING UP THE STEPS to John Hanson's front door in downtown Bayfield, we discover a plastic bag of freshly picked corn on his doorstep. There is no indication of the gifter, but Hanson just shrugs; it's not so surprising in this north shore town where everyone waves and leaves their front doors unlocked—even wide open—when no one's home.

When we walk into his neatly kept bungalow, however, the decor is perhaps less common to Wisconsin's northwoods. The downstairs walls are covered with Latin American tapestries, oversized signed photographs of vast prairie landscapes, whimsical Parisian sketches of cats, and—most prominent—photographs of people. Lots of people.

Shaking hands with Robert Redford at the 1985 Sundance Institute summer workshop.

There's John in black and white with dark sideburns behind a camera shooting *Northern Lights*, a film that would earn the *Camera d'Or* for Best First Feature at the 1979 Cannes International Film Festival. There is one of the film's main characters, Henry Martinson—not a professional actor at all—recognizable from his proud prairie farmer's stance. There's John with his old friends and the owners of Atlantic Media, a New Hampshire–based film production company with which he's currently working. There he is with his arms around his mother and sister.

As we climb the stairs to his office, I find more souvenirs: a 1978 distribution poster from *Northern Lights*, a photograph with Robert Redford during Hanson's time at the Sundance Institute, a shot of the crew from a later motion picture, *Wildrose*. On the shelves sit handbills and awards from film festivals, mementos from friends. Meanwhile, over the back of a chair drapes the treated skin of a buffalo from his home state of North Dakota.

Once you get to know Hanson, the juxtaposition of these elements make sense. He is at once a small-town dweller, extolling places "where kids run free in backyards," and happily pointing out that Bayfield's population of around 600 is about the size of his hometown of McClusky, North Dakota. At the same time, his some three decades of independent filmmaking and artistic activism have made him an internationally respected director and producer who has spent much of his professional life in Boston, New York, and San Francisco.

Hanson is a small-town dweller who extols places "where kids run free in backyards"—and at the same time, he has spent much of his highly respected career in Boston, New York, and San Francisco.

Even Hanson's appearance exemplifies this duality. With his white handlebar mustache, oversized belt buckle, and faded jeans, he looks like a seasoned local character—maybe an old-time soda fountain owner, or a dignified southwestern cowboy. But he talks deliberately in a low, careful voice that reveals a certain reserve; while generous with this interviewer, he clearly prefers questioning to being questioned.

Not surprisingly, then, the films and documentaries from what Hanson jokingly calls his "checkered career" unwaveringly tell other people's stories. They also insist on the histories of regular folks, people who, he says, "don't have much money, but have a tremendous amount of life and vitality and ideas." Most often, the fictional and real characters in Hanson's films are familiar-looking Midwesterners: farmers in the Dakotas, nuns in northern Minnesota, kids coming of age in Iowa, miners in the Iron Range.

But Hanson rejects the suggestion that there is any larger theme or trajectory to his films. "When you're making a movie, you're not standing back and saying, 'How does this fit into my body of work?'" he says. "Each film is a separate entity, a story in itself. Believe me, you don't have time to think of anything else. You spend most of your time as an independent filmmaker in development."

Indeed, the struggle to keep his projects afloat financially is something Hanson has in common with many of the people in his films. Although the prospects of independent filmmakers have improved over the last decades—thanks in large part to Hanson's and his peers' initiatives—the disparity between independent and mainstream film budgets is vast.

The happy trade-off, he says, is that "the storytelling is all your own."

"You don't worry about what other people will think," he explains. "Hollywood does that with its marketing schemes. But in the world of independent film you're just buried in your story. And then you move on to the next."

Today, independent filmmakers enjoy a certain cachet, thanks in part to Hollywood figures like Harvey Keitel and Robert Redford who have invested themselves in the industry. But in the late 1960s, when Hanson first peered through the lens of a camera, there were no such "indie" filmmakers. Sure, there were filmmakers on Hollywood's margins, but there was nothing like the collective identity that now permeates (and sometimes complicates) the industry.

Hanson takes pride in this community. "I haven't just been this lone voice in the wilderness," he says. "I've really tried to always also take on the challenge of producing and distributing independent films."

In fact, his aid has been instrumental. For one, he helped found the Independent Feature Project, now the most wide reaching organization that supports and promotes films made outside of mainstream studios. He is also one of the founders of the Film Workers Union, a short-lived progressive union in San Francisco that ultimately merged with a union at a local public television station.

After the release of *Northern Lights*, Hanson also cofounded his own company, New Front Films, an association of filmmakers, businesspeople, lawyers, and others devoted to the development and production of independent films. (In fact, two films under the New Front banner, *Heat and Sunlight* and *Waiting for the Moon*, went on to win the Grand Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.) Later, he helped establish the New York–based First Run Features, which distributes independent documentaries and first-run features.

When asked why he has devoted his career to independent ventures when his success might have allowed him access to larger pockets, Hanson says simply, "To give voice to people who are ignored by the greater culture."

And to this end, he points out, Bayfield gives him a low overhead. But finances aren't the real reason that he has found himself back in the Midwest after decades on the coasts. Instead, he clearly loves the people and the land—whether prairies, cornfields, great lakeshores, or miles of nothing but snow. More than backdrop, these are the settings that hold—and help to tell—the stories that matter to him.

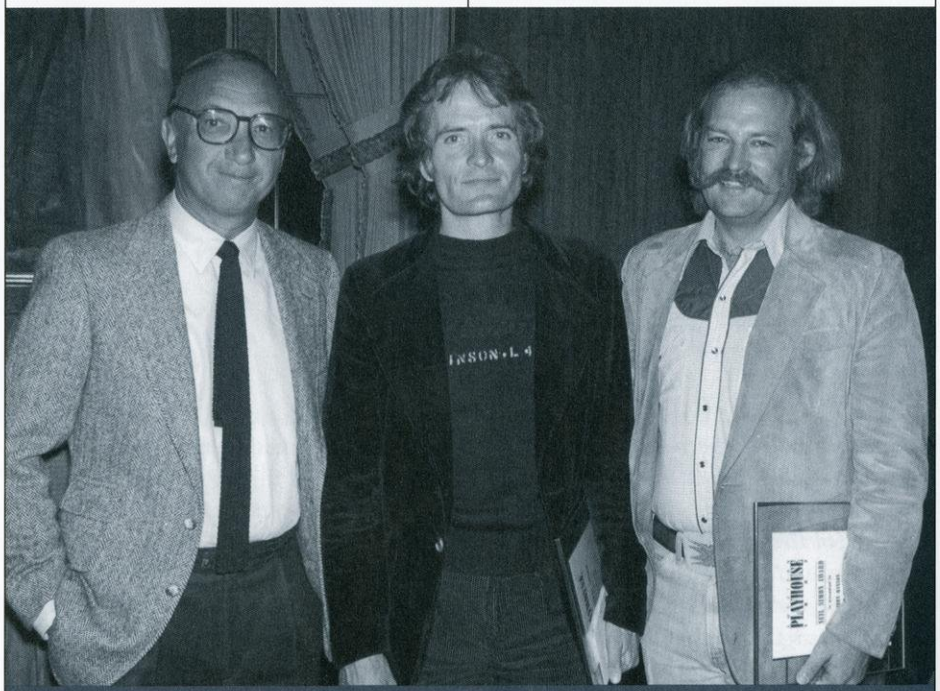
LANDSCAPE AS CHARACTER

"In films," Hanson explains, "landscape is always a character for me."

The impression was made early. While born in the Twin Cities, Hanson was soon sent with his sister to stay with his mother's parents on their farm in a Norwegian American community in North Dakota. He fondly remembers those few months before his mother (and, three years later, his father, back from the Second World War) joined them and set up what he calls their "very '50s life."

"I felt very nurtured on the farm," he remembers, noting that the first songs he heard were in Norwegian, his grandparents' native tongue. "We used to sit and watch the storms come in."

His early years on the prairie were surely the inspiration for the prominence of Midwestern landscapes in his films, and also in a yet-unpublished



Neil Simon (left) in Los Angeles presenting directors John Hanson (right) and Rob Nilsson (center) with the Neil Simon Award for Best Screenplay for a Television Dramatic Series. The screenplay was *Northern Lights*, which was shown on the PBS series "American Playhouse" after its run in theaters.

book of photographs—really portraits—of the Dakotas that he has compiled over the years. In each shot, the horizon is remote, a thin line dividing strata of light. Many capture an icon of the prairie: grain elevators, windmills, isolated graveyards, lone signposts on empty roads going nowhere. If I hadn't heard him talk with such warmth about these images, I might have thought they looked, well, bleak.

"To me it's all about how light hits something," he says. And as he flips through the pages, I begin to see how each photograph captures different moods of the land—foreboding skies, brilliant evening clouds, sweltering fields of wheat. Indeed, each reveals a different character.

But if Hanson's formative years provided him with a main character for many of his films, his draw to Midwesterners' stories seems to have been nurtured later in life, and far from the place where he grew up.

If Hanson's formative years provided him with a main character for many of his films, his draw to Midwesterners' stories seems to have been nurtured later in life, and far from the place where he grew up.

At 15, thanks to a successful paper route, Hanson received an academic scholarship from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* to attend New Hampshire's prestigious preparatory school, Phillips Exeter Academy. It was an opportunity that would catapult him out of familiar territory and, in turn, provide him with a distanced perspective on the communities he left behind.

"My family had never heard of a prep school," Hanson laughs. "We thought it was a college." Still, both of his parents had enjoyed higher educations and assumed the same for their children. And so Hanson left for the coast.

"I took the train to Bismarck, changed in Chicago, changed in Boston, and then arrived in New Hampshire," he remembers. There, another world ensued. "At the station I arrived in my Levis while the other boys were already in their coats and ties." (The school's director of admissions took him to Brooks Brothers later that same day.)

Ultimately, the quality of education Hanson received at Exeter helped him obtain a full scholarship to Carleton College, bringing him briefly closer to home while he studied drawing and painting in Northfield, Minnesota.

Auspiciously, his scholarship job was to project the 16mm films in the art school's auditorium for Carleton's film series. That's where he saw his first Bergman films—three or four times each. And, although he was still far from imagining himself as a filmmaker ("I loved movies," he says, "but I never thought it could be a career—it seemed too remote, something people did in big cities on the coasts"), those early screenings would have a clear influence on his later work.

Instead he took a cue from a couple of uncles and turned to architecture, attending the Harvard Graduate School of Design on a partial scholarship.

By that time, however, it seems that film had decided on him, thanks in large part to his friend, and later film partner, Rob Nilsson.

"We'd be having a beer and he'd say 'What are you doing in architecture? Movies are where it's at,'" Hanson says. Finally, Nilsson put a crank 8mm camera in his hands. "In the second year I picked up that movie camera and a lightning bolt struck."

This was the late '60s, when filmmaking had taken a democratic turn and underground movie screenings were popping up in Boston and New York City. Hanson's urban pieces like "Hot Dog Man" and his proto–music videos set to his painted portraits of Warhol and Dylan fit right in.

He was quick to share the word. When he took a job teaching art to inner-city kids through Boston's Milton

The original members of the San Francisco–based film collective Cine Manifest (1972). A documentary about Cine Manifest by member Judy Irola premiered to glowing reviews (a "hilarious, fascinating film") at the Mill Valley Film Festival in October.

The stories that attracted Hanson weren't being told on the coasts, nor would they interest Hollywood. They were stories of regular folks, unglamorous jobs, unresolved conflicts, small triumphs.

Academy, he put cameras in his students' hands and encouraged them to film their own lives.

"It was one of the very first film workshops for black teenagers in the States," he says proudly. He had seen the power of a lens and understood there were stories to tell through it.

But the stories that attracted Hanson and his friends weren't being told on the coasts, nor would they interest Hollywood, for that matter. They were stories of regular folks, unglamorous jobs, unresolved conflicts, small triumphs.

Taking a leave of absence from Harvard, Hanson moved to San Francisco, where he worked for a time with Francis Ford Coppola at American Zoetrope. But soon he and five others started their own group, Cine Manifest, a film collective of what he calls "activist artists."

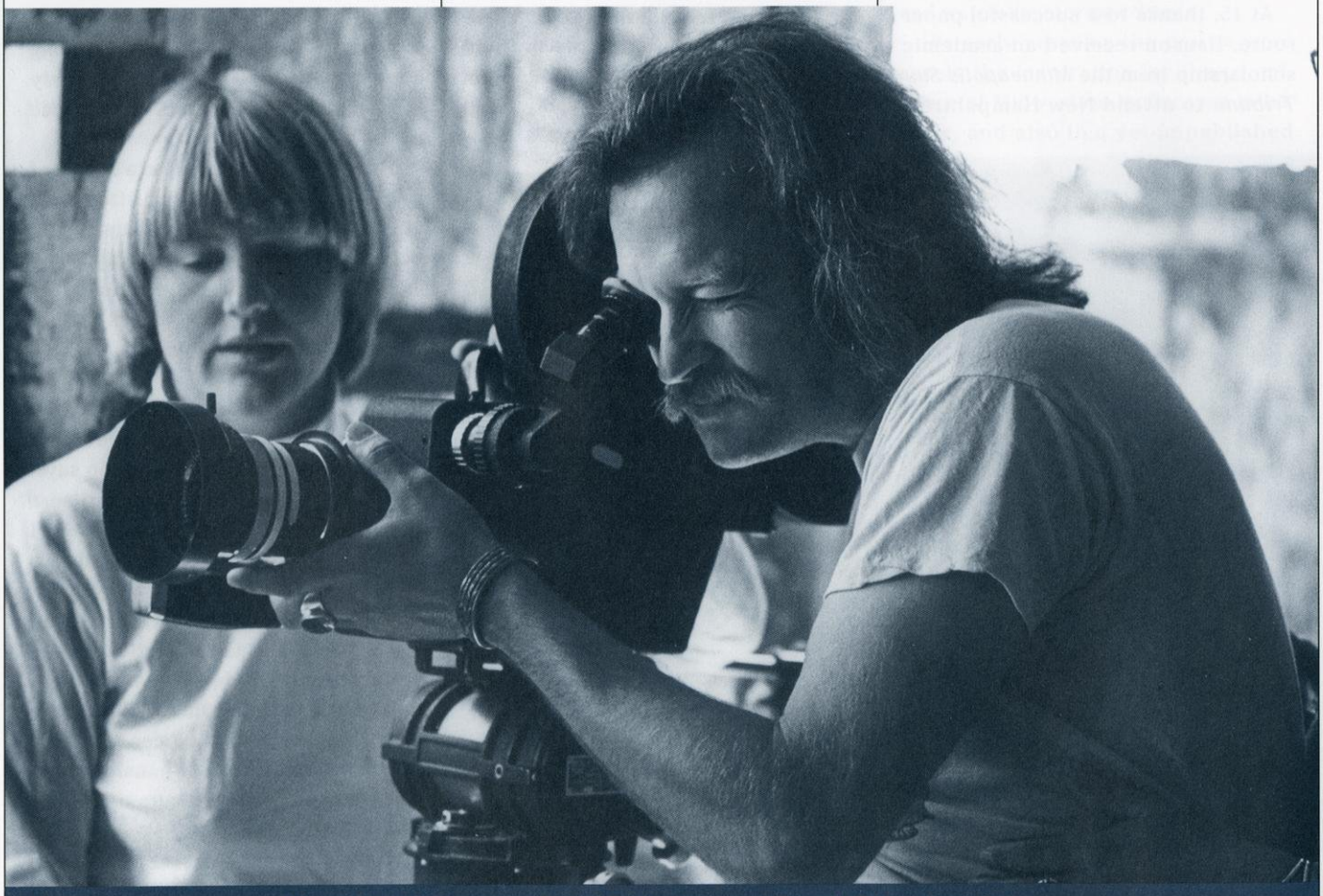
With Cine Manifest, Hanson in 1974 produced *Western Coal*, a documentary about strip mining in Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas.

"We wanted to make movies that were about something, that made a difference," he says.

Their feature, *Northern Lights*, did just that. Written, directed, and edited by Hanson and Nilsson, the film was elegantly shot by cinematographer Judy Irola on 16mm film that was later blown up to 35mm. Largely black and white, the film is a grainy, moody account of the 1915 struggle of the Non-Partisan League—an assembly of Dakotan grain farmers who successfully rallied against the local bankers and middlemen in Minnesota who dictated their grain prices.

Some of the dialogue is in Norwegian, and long stretches of it are without dialogue at all—just Bergmanesque scenes of stark-faced Scandinavians trudging through punishing landscapes of wind and snow. Many of the actors, including Henry Martinson, were bona fide North Dakotan farmers old enough to remember the League.

Not unlike the characters themselves, Hanson and his friends traveled with



John Hanson setting up a shot on the set of *Northern Lights*. Camera assistant Dyanna Taylor stands by.

the film across North Dakota, securing screenings in local theaters. "This was one of the first independent films, and we were among the first to self-distribute," he says.

They received warm receptions. "People in North Dakota loved the film because they all have family who know that story."

Then it was off to Minnesota for more distribution, until the Cannes Film Festival gave them international attention. It was a coup for which none of them was completely prepared: cocktail parties with movie stars, flattery from producers who previously would not have returned their calls.

"You think it's going to be like that from then on," Hanson says, shaking his head. "But that was once in a lifetime."

MAKING SENSE OF PLACE

While the thrill of his first hit cooled, Hanson moved to New York, now sure of his path. But the Midwest soon drew him back. Attending a reception for *Northern Lights* on Minnesota's Iron Range, he says, he felt there was something in that northern mining community that needed to be told. Returning to New York, he told his then-companion and fellow filmmaker Sandra Schulberg, "I think there's a story out there."

Later that year, they moved to a cottage on Ely Lake, outside Eveleth, Minnesota, to sit in bars, talk with the locals, and hear firsthand the issues that preoccupied them.

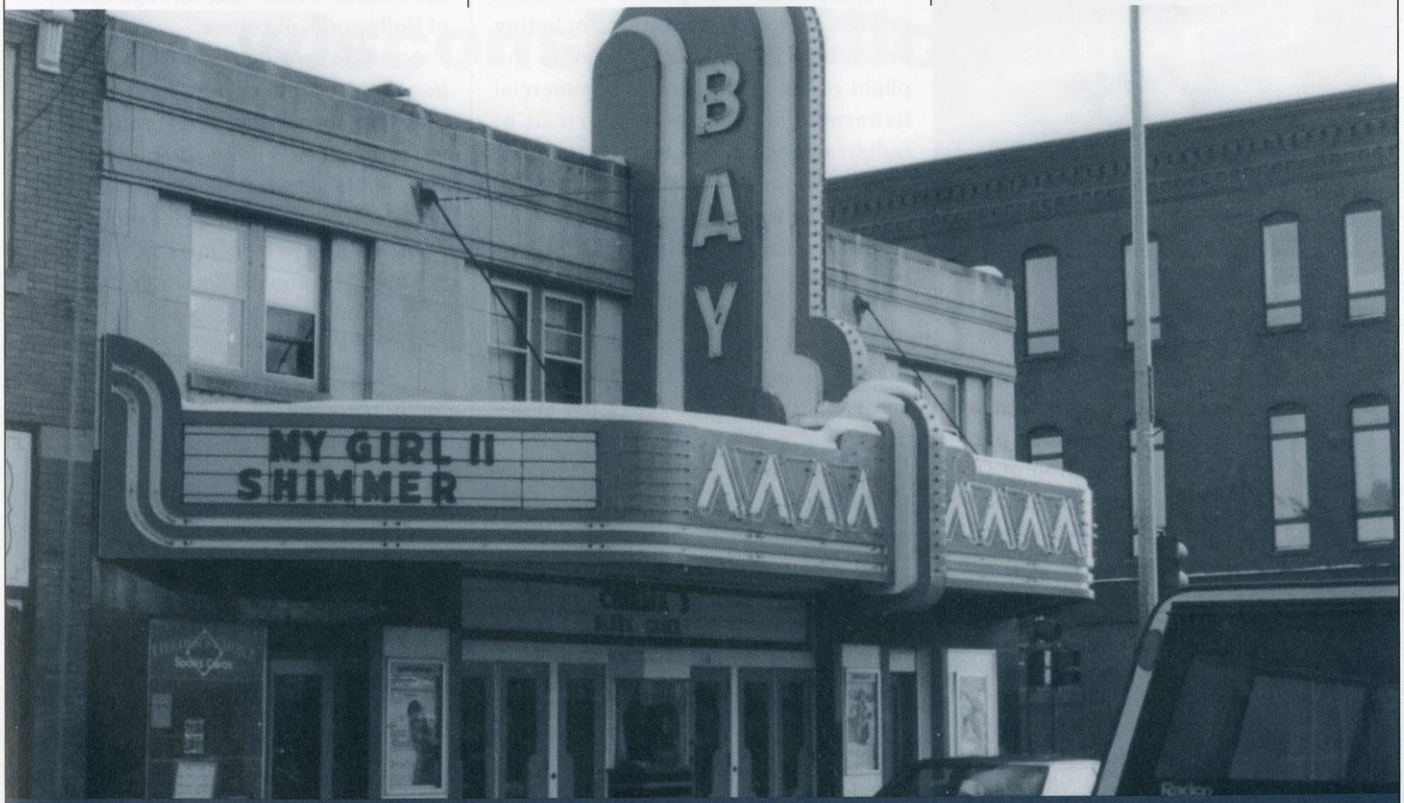
"Turns out, the big story was the fact that women had begun working in the mines," Hanson says. By the time they had written the script and prepared for filming, they had garnered the full cooperation of locals. Even one of the mines agreed to let them film on location. "We lived in that community for two years before we started shooting," he says.

And so they made *Wildrose*, a chronicle of one woman miner's struggle for work that takes place both on the Iron Range and in Bayfield (many miners were often also seasonal commercial fishermen). As with *Northern Lights*, a handful of the film's cast were residents of towns themselves.

"Many of my films are about movements," Hanson says. "But it's about seeing that larger movement through the eyes of one person's stories. You reveal the political through the personal," he explains. "You have to get into the soup of a character's life."

Wildrose, produced under the New Front Films banner and released in 1984, was well received in the U.S. (it was selected for the prestigious New Directors/New Films series at the New York Museum of Modern Art, for example). But it was hailed abroad and was a finalist for the Critics Prize at the Venice Film Festival.

This is not an uncommon occurrence for Hanson's films, whose populist themes and subtle scripts seem to be more compelling to European audiences. (Indeed, a later film, *Shimmer*, shot in Iowa and directed by Hanson, was shown in Switzerland for 5,000



The Bay Theatre in Ashland, featuring *Shimmer*. Hanson's love of small theaters throughout his career inspired him to compile a book's worth of photographs of small town Midwestern movie theaters. He hopes to produce a documentary, *The Return of the Last Picture Show*, on this subject.

people on a giant screen under a starry sky.)

Encouraged by these successes, Hanson returned to San Francisco, where he spent a monthlong residency at the Sundance Institute working with screenwriter Waldo Salt (think: *Coming Home*, *Day of the Locust*, *Midnight Cowboy*). There, his next project, *Smart Money*, was one of seven films selected as part of Sundance's directing and screenwriting workshop.

Continuing to develop *Smart Money* and other films such as *Windbreak* (to star Ed Harris), Hanson then moved to Los Angeles, where he worked out of an

A Hanson double bill of *Northern Lights* and *Shimmer* in Fargo, North Dakota.

office on the Warner Brothers studio lot and had an office in a building complex owned by George Lucas. There he began a labor of love: arranging a Norwegian, Danish, Canadian, and American partnership for the film adaptation of Ole Rolvaag's novel *Giants in the Earth*.

"I had deals for all of these films," Hanson says, "but none finally went into production because of the usual Hollywood broken promises and last-minute cold feet."

It was the last straw. "I left that world behind without regret," he says now, though he still maintains friendships with many L.A. producers, directors, and actors.

Besides, he says, Bayfield had "gotten into his blood."

Soon after, he bought a house right across the street from his college friend Mary Rice, who also had been an enthusiastic supporter of *Wildrose*. (A photograph of that crew—including a handful of Bayfield residents—still hangs above the bar at Maggie's, one of Rice's popular Bayfield restaurants and the setting of this magazine's cover photo.)

"In a sense I've come full circle after 30 years in Boston, New York, and San Francisco," he says. "And Lake Superior is kind of like the prairie—endless horizon, big sky. You experience the weather, the landscape. You know it's a powerful place here."

Now Hanson's film and video production company, Northern Pictures, has a Bayfield address, although he is often away on location for months at a time. Meanwhile, his projects have turned both intensely local and farther afield.

At the urging of Rice, for example, Hanson has chronicled the oral histories of what he calls Bayfield's "elders." (The recordings are housed in the Bayfield Video Archives.) He also has completed several public television profiles and documentaries, including *Troubled Waters,* which explores the plight of the north shore's commercial fishermen, and *Sisters*, a portrait of Duluth's Benedictine community facing the challenges of the modern world. (The latter was recently broadcast on the national PBS television series *Independent Lens*.)

Today, Hanson is in the midst of documenting the lives of three generations of hoteliers on Minnesota's north shore and is a strong supporter of the area's progressive economic and environmental movement toward a "sustainable Chequamegon," inspired by the Swedish model of "eco-communities."

Hanson, now himself an "elder" of the media industry, also has begun to sit on boards of grant-making agencies such as the Wisconsin Humanities Council, one of his previous benefactors.

At the same time, Hanson's current project with Atlantic Media has him spending months at a time in New Hampshire. They are in the final stages of a stunning documentary, *Rhythm Is the Soul of Life*, about the internationally acclaimed Nigerian drummer and cultural ambassador Babatunde "Baba" Olatunji, who brought African culture and drumming to Harlem in the 1960s. In the documentary, men who began studying under Olatunji as boys, and others who worked within his peace movement, celebrate his widespread influence. (Olatunji died in 2003.) The film splices together historical footage from Harlem, scenes from Olatunji's native village, and, of course, rousing and colorful footage of drummers, dancers, and chanters lost in the complex rhythms.

"This is just a great story and a great message," Hanson says of that project. "It touches on world peace, racial equality, the importance of loving people. He was a man of the people, like Gandhi or Martin Luther King."

It's a big reach for a boy who began his love for film as an usher at the Roxy movie theater in McClusky. "The Main Street movie theater was our life when we were young," he remembers. "You went into the dark and saw places all over the world. It was our window to the outside world—but through the lens of Hollywood, of course."

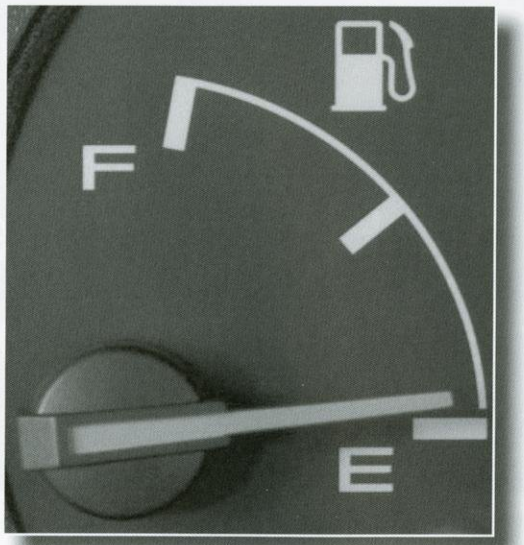
And so it would seem that Hanson has devoted his career to expanding that lens to include both broader and more familiar views of the world—visions of everyday people in the midst of historical and political movements.

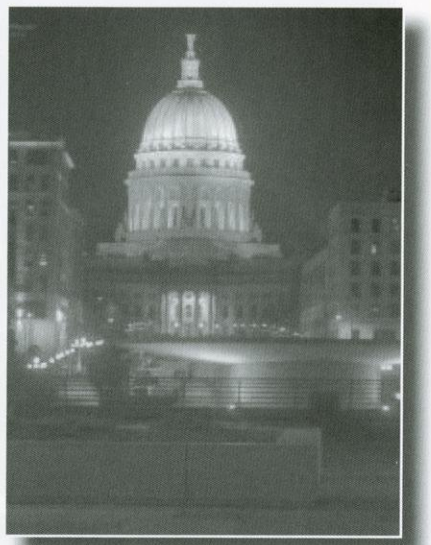
At an age when most consider retiring, Hanson has many more projects in mind, including *Nameless,* a feature set in the North Dakotan Badlands, as well as a documentary on the burgeoning "creative communities" in New England states.

Clearly, Hanson's work is hardly finished.

"I just wish I had the money to make more films," he says. "After all, as filmmakers we can work as long as we can stand and say 'Action!'" ✹

Masarah Van Eyck is director of development and communications with the Wisconsin Humanities Council and is editor of WHC's special section in ***Wisconsin People & Ideas***.





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Field Notes *from the "Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin" initiative*

Farming Forums Reaped Rich Harvest of Opinions

Photo by John Urban

BY BILL BERRY

IT IS A WONDERFUL GIFT BESTOWED upon those who record human activities—to be still, listen, and learn from others.

When I tell this in a social setting, it goes more like, "I get to hang out with people who are a lot smarter than me and take notes when they talk."

That was certainly the case during the recently completed series of six regional forums of the Wisconsin Academy's "Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin" initiative. Those involved and those who attended the forums won't soon forget some of the lessons we learned, whether from experts in academia or experts in the field.

That information will help us greatly as we take on the second phase of this Wisconsin Idea project, which includes a statewide conference May 14–15 at Monona Terrace in Madison and a final report due mid-2007.

The forums engaged people in all parts of the state at sites in Menomonee, Oconomowoc, Ashland, Menasha, Platteville, and Wausau. We have collected rich caches of information and been blessed greatly by our interactions with people from all walks of life. We're now sorting this information and working with core groups to develop recommendations for the final report.

The spring days were lengthening when we started the forum season back in May, and they were going the other direction by the time we wrapped up at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau at the end of October. It was a lot of work and a lot of fun. And before we put the forums behind us, here are just a few field notes from a season of listening.

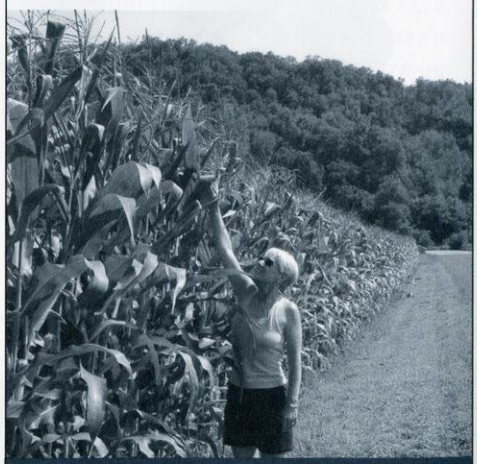
Oakfield High School principal Paul Dix used a down-to-earth style to underscore the challenges facing Wisconsin's rural schools at a presentation at UW–Fox Valley in Menasha. "One of the things I fear most about rural schools is the possibility of them going the way of neighborhood grocery stores or neighborhood taverns. Schools are the focal point of small communities. They're a gathering place. At athletic events and other activities, people spend most of the time talking about what's happening, what's doing, who's getting married, maybe who's getting divorced."

An article in the spring issue of *Wisconsin People & Ideas* magazine will focus on how enrollment declines, transportation costs, and other challenges are strapping rural schools across the state. It is a topic worthy of our attention, as are several other rural themes that will be explored in that issue of the magazine.

Rural education needs came up time and again across the state. Perhaps even more often at our forums, people raised the issue of health insurance needs on Wisconsin farms. This is a hard one to understand for middle-class urban people who take health care availability for granted. On the farm, large percentages of families are uninsured or underinsured. There are more than a few stories about farmers who head to Fleet Farm for animal antibiotics so they can treat their own illnesses.

Mosinee dairy farmer Sandy Cihlar says it's time to call for action. At the same Menasha forum, she put the issue in perspective: "Farmers' strong work ethic and deep traditionalism make it hard to change when they really should for their own health."

Cihlar believes that change will come only when rural residents raise their voices. "If a large number of rural Wisconsinites speak out, the issue might receive the attention it needs," she says.



Reaching for the tall corn in the town of Coon; and (right) farm machinery displayed outside a school in Cashton.

Photos by Bill Berry

Of course, there won't be people on the farm if the farmland is gone. The American Farmland Trust estimates that 70 percent of the prime agricultural land in America is in danger of development. The Milwaukee-to-Madison corridor here at home is one of the top three areas at risk in the country.

It was another dairy farmer, Keith Langenhahn, who put out a strong call for preservation of Wisconsin's farmland during our forum in Wausau, which isn't far from his Marathon City homestead.

Langenhahn told of how his family has farmed the same land since 1878. There's a subdivision across the road these days. When he had to chop hay on Labor Day, a subdivision neighbor stood in his driveway shaking his head at Langenhahn. "My farm has been there a lot longer than what we put up with across the street," he says.

Langenhahn, who is an official with the Wisconsin Counties Association and chair of the Marathon County board, called for growth boundaries that separate urban areas from green space. It's not only good for farmland, but reduces infrastructure costs brought on by sprawl, he says.

"Wisconsin has to do something to preserve agriculture. We need a purchase of development rights program as soon as possible, and we don't have a lot of time to study. We have to do some cramming," Langenhahn says. When words like that come straight from the mouth of a century farm owner, they carry a lot of credibility.

Then again, get two farmers talking about the same subject, and you're likely to get two divergent opinions. Waupun farmer Bill Bruins, president of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, was a presenter at the Wausau forum. He, too, favors preserving farmland but thinks that perpetual easements that underpin PDR, or purchase of development rights, programs are tough for farmers to swallow. Forever is a long time, he notes.

If the forums taught us anything, it's that there is no one fix for farming in Wisconsin. The issues are too plentiful and complex, the viewpoints too varied. But that very diversity was cited time and again as an enduring strength of rural life in Wisconsin. We are different than the Corn Belt states like Iowa and Illinois, although we can grow corn just fine. We can grow potatoes, too, and snap beans and peas and ginseng. We have dairy farms of all sorts and sizes, sensuous orchards full of fruit, forests that serve the needs of paper mills and wood products industries while keeping our waters pure and nurturing diverse flora and fauna. We have decent food system infrastructure, and our cities, though vastly different than 100 years ago, are still inextricably linked to what goes on in rural Wisconsin.

It's good for rural folks to keep that in mind, too. Tom Hunt, research director of the Pioneer Farm at UW–Platteville, reminded us of that at a forum held there on a chilly autumn day: "If I leave you with no other message, it's that we need to diversify." Wisconsin working lands, he says, "have to follow total quality management—environmental, economic, and social." Support from city folks is a lot more likely when farms meet those goals.

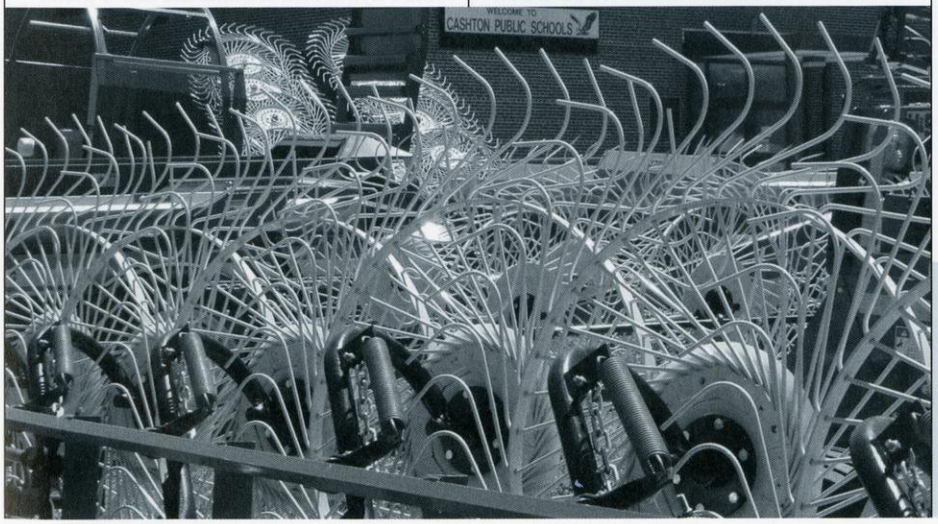
The history of farming and rural life in Wisconsin—indeed, in the nation—is also a history of innovation, born of the kind of ingenuity required of people used to making do with the tools at hand. The rural lifestyle at stake in Wisconsin today is at once a seat of hallowed tradition and an incubator for a kind of inventiveness that our urban settings can't produce.

Forum season has come to an end. Hundreds of citizens across the state participated. Tens of thousands more learned of the project thanks to attentive coverage by Wisconsin's newspapers, radio and television stations, and web-based media. Through it all, we have staked out some pretty important common ground. Virtually everyone involved has agreed that it's worth our time to put our precious rural heritage under a microscope and take a good look at its health. In doing so, we have also dared to consider what a healthy and sustainable future might look like.

Stay with us, folks. The forums are done, but the real work has just begun. ✺

Save the Date!

Your voice is needed at the Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin statewide conference May 14–15 at Monona Terrace in Madison. One-day options available. For more information, visit www.wisconsinacademy.org/idea or contact project director Wilda Nilsestuen at wnilsestuen@wisconsinacademy.org, tel. 608/263-1692 ext. 12.



Bill Berry is a communications specialist with the Wisconsin Academy's Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin initiative. His "Field Notes" column keeps readers informed about the project's progress. He welcomes your comments at billnick@charter.net.

Family photos courtesy of the author

Portrait of My Father Hunting

BY JASON STEIN

MY FATHER WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST A KID—a teenager—that day decades ago when he stuck a rifle barrel out of the window of a 1956 Chevy and into the rushing wind.

The car was rolling down a highway in Kansas, doing maybe 45 miles an hour as my father tells it, toward a spot where a sparrow hawk sat on a fencepost. An older friend of the family was driving. He was taking my father and my uncle on a hunting trip out in the western part of the state. The road was straight and the land empty, with nothing and no one to injure with a wild shot. That was all that those three would have needed for a motive to shoot, and for their generation of hunters any bird of prey, competing as it did for some of the same game, could seem like a plausible target.

The sparrow hawk waited, a clump of feathers no bigger than a blue jay, protected by its small size and the laws against killing it. My father had the .22-caliber Winchester out the window, steadying it as best he could against the buffets of the wind and the bumps of the road.

Then the sparrow hawk was in the air and flying away from them. The car came abreast of the post and by then my father's cheek must have been pressed into the stock, his left eye closed and his right eye squinting over the open sights, the wood and steel and youth welded together for one moment before the rifle cracked.

More than anything else, my father, Gary Dawdy, is a hunter and a shooter. As a boy, he wore out BB guns the way people wear out socks. He had four or five of them, and together they probably fired more shots than were exchanged in certain short wars. Over the long summers of hard use the stocks would come loose from the metal action, the cocking lever would snap, or the barrel would get too worn to shoot straight. My father says the guns would just "wear out," as if some force of nature beyond his control were to blame.

And sometimes there did seem to be something beyond the ordinary at work, when with a single shot he'd flatten a running coyote at 250 yards or pick off a penny he'd tossed into the air. Great shots lived in the barrels of his rifles and shotguns like bees in a hive, awaiting only some provocation to come flying out. He and the older generations of hunters in my family had the virtuosity with a gun that great athletes have with a bat and great violinists have with a bow. Few things about him have mattered as much to me.

A state utilities regulator by profession, my father is a wiry man with brown hair, honest eyes, and crooked teeth. He was born in Topeka and, with the exception of a stretch in California when he was trying to make a career as a boy singer, he lived almost all his life in the Kansas capital. My father was the kind of man who wouldn't start arguments with strangers or win them with his wife. He fit the suburbs where we

lived, a neighborhood where the modest cars were driven slowly and no sounds of music were ever heard from the street. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway's character Robert Jordan sees his father and has the sudden sad feeling of being much older than he. In my own youth, I read that passage and felt a stab of recognition.

I never had that feeling while we were hunting. On November mornings Dad would wake me and I would shuffle out to the kitchen for breakfast, sleep still coiled about me like a constricting snake. I would fork in the eggs he'd made and help carry the gear out to his green 1972 Ford pickup, taking care not to wake my mother or my sister. Some mornings I'd go to the kennel and get the dog—always a white- and brown-splotched German shorthair. The first dog I remember was the inexplicably named Blue, a hunter who could point and retrieve like no other I've seen. Then came Ben, and Bridger, who died young, and after him Ranger. These last two dogs were solid enough but more likely to earn the old-time insult of "Dilbert" from my dad for some bit of stupidity or insubordination. All of them would hear you coming and know exactly why you were fetching them in the darkness before sunrise. In their eagerness for the hunt they would paw the kennel door and whine and bark and raise an outcry to rouse our still-sleeping neighborhood.

"Quiet now. Settle down," I'd say with that imperious tone a boy directs at the only creatures he can, younger children and animals. Then I'd herd whichever dog it was out to his carrier in the pick-up bed. Dad would take the wheel and I would slide into the passenger seat with an unloaded shotgun angling barrel-down between my legs. We would head north out of the suburbs, the sky still without a hint of morning, dark enough on those November drives to let me glimpse the earthward glimmer of my first shooting stars.

It took an hour to make the drive out to Nemaha County, where my mother had grown up and most of her family still lived. The very names of those farm towns—Corning, Centralia, Seneca—seemed made of the same strong stuff as their inhabitants. The land around them rolled gently, like a poorly tucked sheet, with crops, pastures, and woods spread over its slopes and flats. We turned off onto the dirt roads of Nemaha County in the gray hour before dawn, when there is light but not yet color, and the fields look like a black and white photo of themselves. Snow swaddled the hillsides and mist lay on the land like the breath of God.

When I was young, I would ask Dad about animals and he would tell me about what they ate and did—what time of day a deer would bed down or a rooster pheasant would head into the crop fields to eat, where and when it was best to catch them.

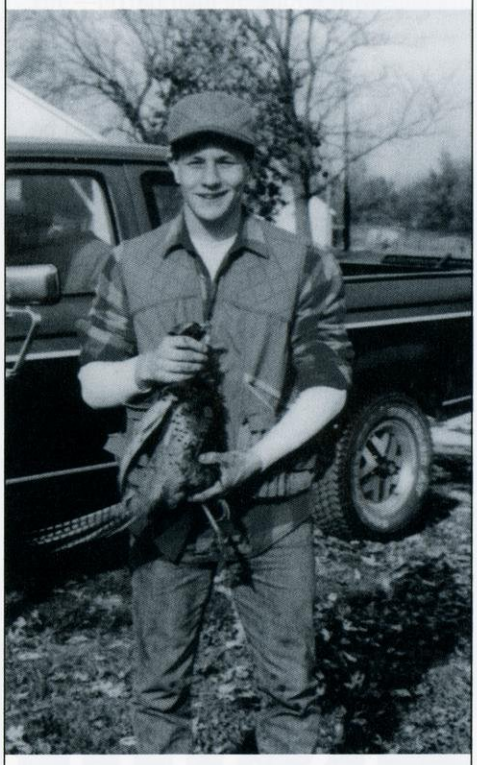
"Could a moose fight a mountain lion?" I would ask. Or, "Could a dog fight a coyote?"

Dad would take the most outlandish of my matchups—grizzly bear versus elk, say—and reply thoughtfully, pointing out the advantages of one or the other. "A housecat wouldn't mess with a bobcat," he'd say. "Not if he knew what was good for him."

All the outings run together in my mind, so I will have to cobble together details from many trips to tell the story of one: We parked the truck beside a field owned by an uncle and started out, the frosted grass crunching under our feet. We hunted the draws, the creeks, and the hedgerows, where pieces of windblown trash sat curled under the trees like some strange native species. The dog slipped ahead, nosing every breeze and bush for what scents lingered in that frozen landscape.

We walked for a couple of miles, most of that a silent plod without any event or conversation, only the occasional sing-song command shouted at the dog: "Get back here now!" "Birds, birds, hunt 'em up!" My body warmed a little from the exertion and my mind drifted like a snowflake.

Into these idylls rang the cackle of a flushing ring-necked pheasant, as jolting as an electric charge. The rooster flushed a few yards in front of me with its desperate cry of flight, its feathers as brilliant and varied as any human finery against that pale landscape. I had a vague sense of another pheasant flying toward Dad as I flicked off the safety of my shotgun and brought it to my shoulder, a series of motions so involuntary that I never quite remember carrying them out, let alone willing myself to do so. The recoil of the shot jerked the gunstock back into my shoulder—once, twice—and the bird jerked and folded in the air, hitting the ground so hard I thought I heard the thud.



I went to pick up the rooster and saw that Dad (his shots were just now registering in my mind) was going after one of his own. My bird was lying dead where it had fallen, the spotted plumage and dark, iridescent head looking like something that had been stitched together from the feathers of several birds. The fact of its death had a weight that I could feel as easily as the bird itself. Its body felt warm in my hand as I reached back to slip it in my game vest. The scent of cordite drifted in the air—dark and irresistible like the odor of earth or of the censer in a high church mass.

Dad had his bird in one hand and he was looking over at me. "You got one? All right!" he said. Whenever I managed

even a routine shot, his excitement always trebled.

We walked the draw to the end, ready for one last bird to spring from the dwindling stretch of cover. Then 50 yards ahead of us a rooster did flush—he had run the draw out to the end and now he rose from the last patch of grass. I raised my gun but didn't fire—the pheasant was already too far. The bird was quartering away from us, his wings beating the air and his long neck stretching out toward safety. Dad had his gun up, too—a 12-gauge with a long 30-inch barrel—"his cannon," he used to joke. I knew what he was doing—he had described this to me before. He was leading the bird so far that its head and not its body would be at the center of his shot pattern, which was the most reliable way to take a rooster at that range. The gun boomed once and the pheasant flew on out to 65 and 70 yards now, toward the limit of the possible for a shot. The gun boomed again and the bird fell dead at the very threshold of its escape.

Dad renewed in me that awe at his aim, shot by shot, over a lifetime. So I believe, though I was born two decades too late to see it, the outcome of that ill-advised, ridiculous shot he took at that sparrow hawk. He hung the rifle out of the window that day as the car moved down the highway and the bird flew straight away from him, those swift wings and the wind and the bumps of the road all conspiring to send his shot astray. The rifle fired and the sparrow hawk fell pierced to the earth, the victim of an impossibility, of a shooter's serendipity that charmed a man's life and a boy's.

After we had retrieved the pheasant and walked out the draw on that trip together, we turned back and headed for the truck, walking across the snow-filled furrows of the plowed field. Dad led the way across the rough ground and the dog ran slow, tired arcs around us. Home, the point at which a father and son would split and turn to their separate affairs, was still hours away.

I am seeing myself now as I walked behind my dad, stepping in his boot-prints to make my way a little easier over the snow and the frozen clods of dirt. The wind is blowing cold and I am feeling tired and hungry and all at peace and I could be at this moment nine years old or 15 or even older. It has always felt the same to walk in step, across the fields, behind my father. ✹

Jason Stein, a graduate of UW–Madison, the University of Strasbourg, and the University of Kansas, covers the state Capitol for the ***Wisconsin State Journal****. He lives with his wife and their two sons in Madison.*

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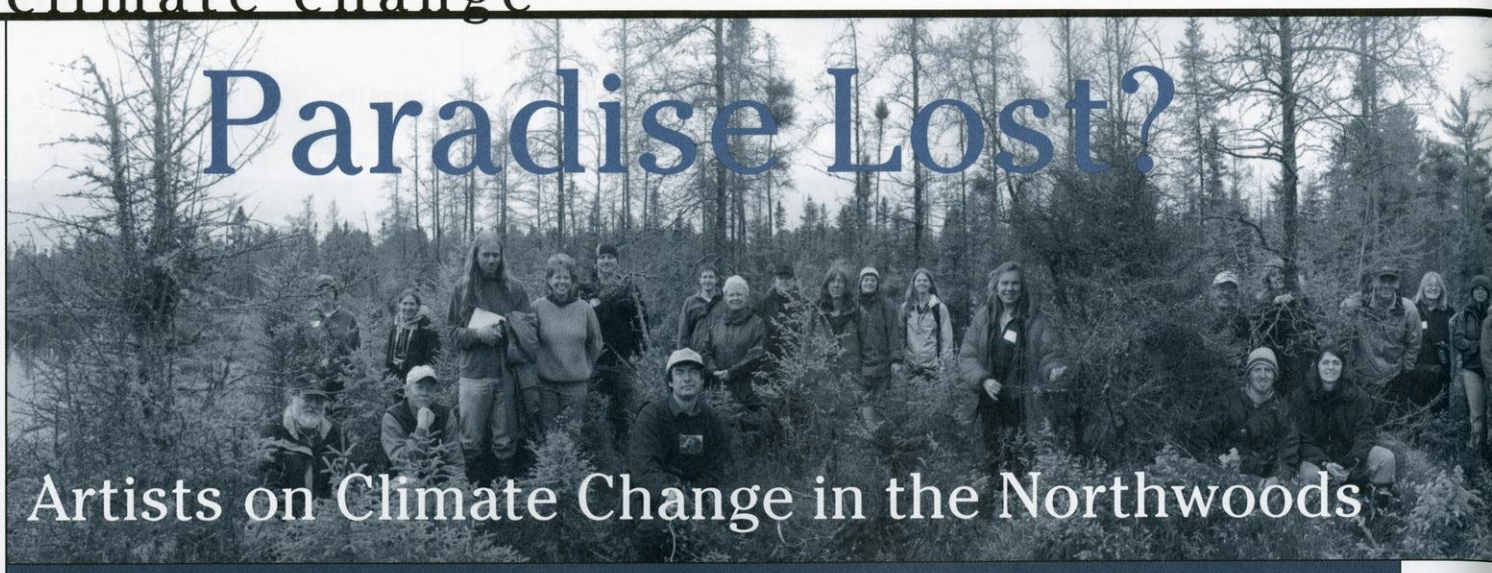
Paradise Lost?



Artists on Climate Change in the Northwoods

Scientists, artists, and educators have come together to create a traveling arts exhibition on climate change and its impact on the forests and landscapes of northern Wisconsin and Michigan. Here we present one writer's response as a participant.

BY JOHN BATES

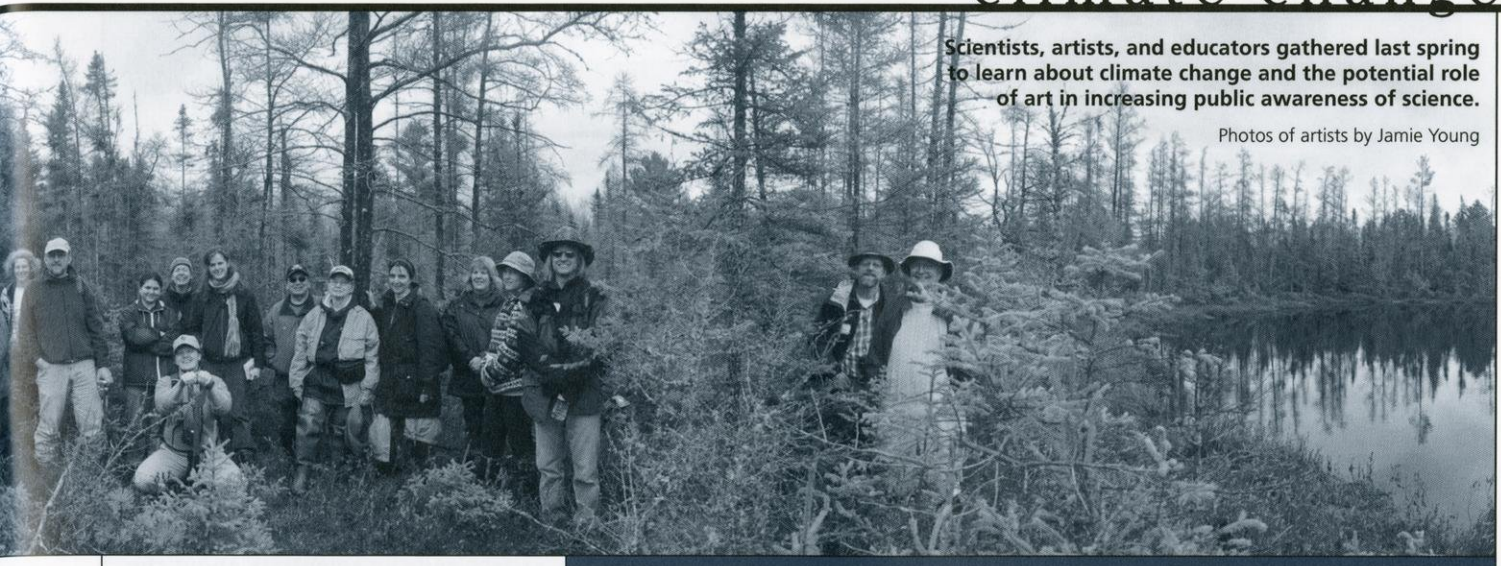
THE CLIMATE CHANGE SCENARIOS CURRENTLY PROJECTED for Wisconsin at the end of this century utterly boggle the mind. Conservative middle-ground scenarios show Wisconsin becoming the climatological equivalent of Arkansas, while Madison's climate will morph into a twin of Oklahoma City's. By 2080, the mean summer (June 1–August 30) temperature for Madison, now 67 degrees F, will likely rise to 85 degrees F. Meanwhile, the Northwoods may gradually transition into an oak savannah.

That's so difficult to imagine, so close to what we can only think of as science fiction, that all of us have a great deal of trouble even conceiving of the possibility. Yet there it is, looming on the horizon like the eerie bruised sky that so often precedes a tornado. But how does one address the coming of a tornado, much less the coming of a global environmental upheaval? Climate change is such a vast topic, the terminology so difficult, the computer-modeled evidence so complex, the potential loss so enormous, that it is nearly impossible to get our arms around it.

Yet we must respond. So far, though, Wisconsinites have failed at anything resembling a regionwide response, and the question is why. Perhaps we are in such a state of emotional fatigue from the world's incessant litany of environmental ills that we can no longer adequately respond. We reflexively either duck, hide, or throw up our hands in despair and frustration. After all, there is the scientific tipping point for climate change, and then there's the human emotional tipping point. Tipping points don't always tip people into action. Like the stages of grief, people are often first tipped into denial, anger, flight, or anything other than having to deal with the problem itself.

Or for those of us who live in the Northwoods, perhaps at the heart of our failed response is our lack of a richly internalized sense of place. Before you can adequately heal the wounds of a place, or be asked to save a place, you have to first profoundly love it. Leopold wrote, "We only grieve for what we know." In order to march into the climate change battle, we northerners may need both a deeper ecological literacy and a greater sense of belonging to the North. However, the problem is that these come only from long and engaged experience—there's no short course, no weekend trip that will do it. Perhaps our lack of response to climate change shows that we don't love the Northwoods enough.

Or perhaps we have failed to respond because so many people are so skeptical



Scientists, artists, and educators gathered last spring to learn about climate change and the potential role of art in increasing public awareness of science.

Photos of artists by Jamie Young

about science. The science on climate change alone clearly hasn't been enough to tip us into action. Many people simply don't trust science, or scientists. Humans tend to like things black and white, and since science is a continual search for truths that are always evolving and being reinterpreted, the average person is left with a slippery slope to navigate. What statistical studies should I believe? How can I evaluate the scientific data, and how can I evaluate the models that are derived from it? Whose interpretation of the studies is closest to the truth? For many, believing in climate change boils down to this: who are you going to trust?

Scientists, of course, face the same credibility dilemmas within their fields, and have learned to filter the credible from the merely speculative by evaluating whether a study was peer-reviewed, by looking at its funding source(s), by looking at its methodology, by determining if it represents a consensus viewpoint of other reputable scientists, and by assessing the reputation of the author(s). The public, though, is used to "spin," and many find it easier not to believe anyone rather than try to sort through the spin on highly complex issues. "You can't believe any of it" is a common refrain. And thus climate change ends up as the baby thrown out with all of science's bathwater.

I know of no scientist who does not admit that our present understanding of life on this earth is tentative and incomplete. Physicist and author Chet Raymo

ARTISTIC VISION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Paradise Lost? Artists on Climate Change in the Northwoods" began by convening 20 artists, seven scientists, and six educators last spring to learn about climate change and the potential role of art in increasing public awareness of science. The artists then created paintings, sculpture, poetry, and music reflecting their perceptions of the science of climate change, its effects on northern ecosystems, and what we can do to decrease negative effects. The result is a traveling exhibition that brings together their works with related science information and visuals.

As the exhibition travels, educators will visit community schools prior to the show's arrival to involve students in science and art activities focusing on climate change. Student art will be included in the exhibition. The tour includes a panel discussion at each opening, and local organizations interested in climate change are invited to hold related events.

"Climate change is going to affect the Northwoods," says project director David Mladenoff. "It's important that others in society, not just scientists, help convey this message. Artists can communicate and reach people in ways that scientists cannot."

Exhibition content and programs not only provide an overview of global climate change, but also examine which aspects are most relevant to northern ecosystems, what changes can be expected in this region, and how humans, collectively and as individuals, can help reduce or reverse the damage.

The exhibition will travel as follows:

Nicolet Community College, Rhinelander, Feb. 17–March 19

Gogebic Community College, Ironwood, MI, March 31–April 19

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, Ashland, April 28–July 31

North Lakeland Discovery Center, Manitowish Waters, Aug. 3–Aug. 25

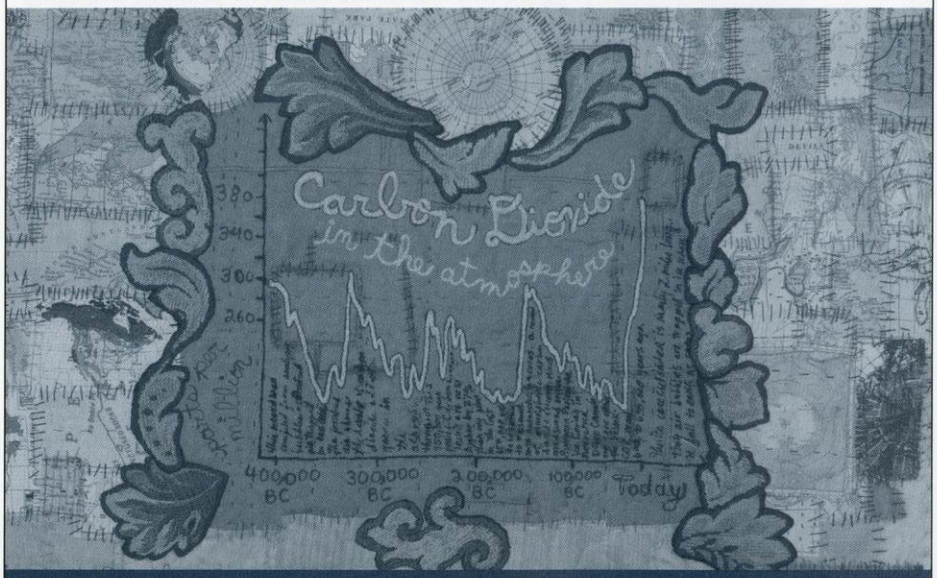
Omphale Gallery, Calumet, MI, Sept. 1–Oct. 31

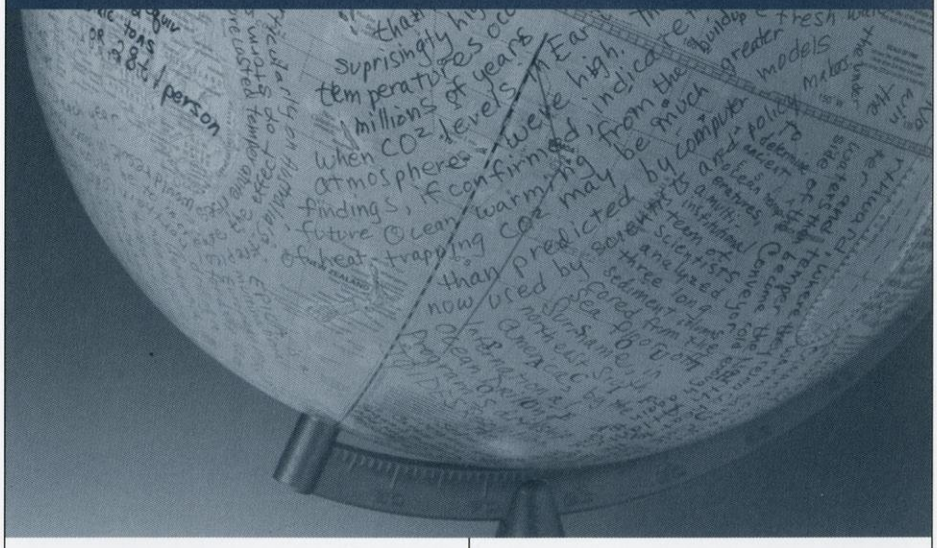
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Gallery, Wausau, Nov. 18–Jan. 21, 2008

Madison, location TBA, Feb.–March 2008

Contact alert: If you know of teachers who wish to participate, please contact Zach Wilson, North Lakeland Discovery Center, Manitowish Waters, 715/543-2085, zach@discoverycenter.net. If your organization wishes to plan an event in conjunction with the exhibition, please contact Dolly Ledin, 608/222-4865, daledin@wisc.edu, or Terry Daulton, 715/476-3530, tdaulton@centurytel.net. See www.wisc.edu/cbe/k-12/paradiselost? for more information.

The exhibition is funded by the Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment, the Wisconsin Arts Board, and the Bruning Foundation. Project directors are Dolly Ledin, UW–Madison Center for Biology Education, and David Mladenoff, UW–Madison Department of Forest Ecology and Management.





Details of works by Bonnie Peterson. Above, *It's Just Math,* 46" x 54", mixed media, embroidery, heat transfers, and stitching on silk, velvet, and brocade. A graph depicting 400,000 years of Earth's atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide is surrounded by map fragments, photographs from the Lake Superior region, and images of the ozone hole over Antarctica. Below, *Climate Change Globe,* acrylic paint, marker, and paint pen on 12"-diameter school globe. Earth's shorelines are painted to reflect higher sea levels and the oceans are annotated with climate change information.

writes that despite its lack of perfect truth, "Science is the one truth system committed to change rather than preservation ... Science is conservative, but of all truth systems that propose to explain the world, it is also the most progressive." Revolutions can happen in science, he says, and do. And when they do, it's easy to lose faith in science if you thought that science had the truth all along. Black and white have always been colors antithetical to science. Einstein once said that the most important tool of the scientist is the wastebasket, and thus as we learn anew today, much of what scientists learned in the past ends up consigned to the circular file.

Likewise, art works best not in black and white, but in a sea of color, in bursts of creative insight. Raymo writes of the intersection of art and science, "Knowledge is an island in a sea of mystery ... We are at our best as creatures of the shore, with one foot on the hard ground of fact and one foot in the sea of mystery ... It is at the shore that the creative work of the mind is done—the work of the artist, poet, philosopher, and scientist."

That is where we, the 20 artists working on this climate change exhibit, now find ourselves—on the shore where science meets art. And the question we have been asking ourselves is how do we reach nonscientific audiences with art that reflects science?

To help us answer that question, we were invited in May to a three-day workshop where we were addressed by a climatologist, a soil scientist, a limnologist, a bog ecologist, a forest ecologist, an Ojibwe elder, a community organizer, and a geographer. During our time together, questions flew between the artists and the scientists about the scientific data and the interpretations of the data, about the uncertainties and the unknowns, about one another's art, about the process of trying to incorporate a profoundly complex scientific concept into art, about what the public might best respond to, about the purpose of art and science, and our purposes as artists and scientists.

We grew to appreciate one another. Diana Randolph, a painter from Drummond, wrote later of this relationship:

> What struck me was the passionate manner that the scientists delivered their research. Their enthusiasm was contagious. I took notes diligently, sometimes not quite understanding some of the data. But I was determined to read over my notes at a later time to understand and absorb all of the scientific info that was presented to us. I laughed when John Magnuson, a UW–Madison limnologist, admitted that he was petrified with fear when each of us at the workshop was given a small sketchbook as a gift. He wondered if he had to draw something with one of the professional artists looking over his shoulder. It hadn't occurred to me that a scientist would have any anxieties, also. After a while, the lines that separated our careers vanished.

Throughout the workshop, each artist had the chance to explain the medium

Continues on page 30

Ghosts

(upon reading an article projecting the loss of millions of species due to global warming)

Many ghosts already roam this land.
Some are simply and utterly gone—
the passenger pigeon,
the Carolina parakeet,
the heath hen.

Some species are ghosts in waiting,
alive,
but already splintered
into ragtag remnants,
hiding along the edges of their former ranges,
hanging on in tiny encampments.

"Perhaps we are only here for saying: House,
Bridge, Fountain, Gate . . ."
wrote Rainer Maria Rilke.
"But to say them . . .
oh, to say them more intensely than the Things
themselves ever dreamed of being."

In Europe I could say
Azure-winged Magpie.

In Australia I could say
Boyd's Forest Dragon.

But I live here,
The Northwoods of Wisconsin.
So I say
Pine, Spruce, Cedar, Hemlock
Loon, Winter Wren, Blackburnian Warbler,
Gray Wolf, Moose, Snowshoe Hare
Mink Frog,
Red-backed Salamander
Spring Azure Butterfly
Labrador Tea, Cranberry
Dragon's Mouth Orchid

I am trying at this particular moment to say
White-throated Sparrow.
White-Throated Sparrow.
white-throated sparrow.

I'm talking about this white-throated sparrow,
the one singing from the river edge
as the night succumbs to grey dawn.

I want to talk with birds.
I mean TALK.
I want to know everything.

Right now, I want to know why this white-
throated sparrow sings
with such silver clarity
while the alder flycatcher has so plainly little
to say.

And how is it that its song says NORTH
That when I hear the white-throat
(*Oh, sweet Canada Canada Canada*)
I see the crimson-pink flower of bog laurel
smell sphagnum moss
feel the soft threads of cottongrass between
my fingers?

To speak of this tiny bird as Rilke asks of me,
I must hear its otherness,
and
know how to sing in celebration of a long
night gone by,
and
know how to grace the wind with an ecstatic
simplicity
that says
Sparrow.

I kneel in prayer.
I dance,
dancing with the ghosts,
dancing with the living,
dancing with the dying.

The light and the shadow are in the trees
on the water
among the rocks.

by John Bates

Artists working in a medium highly vulnerable to climate change—ice.

Continued from page 28

within which he or she works and what each tries to bring to their art. And we grappled with what we were trying to accomplish and how to get it done. We talked about the exhibit itself, how it could potentially be interactive, how attendees could contribute to it, how school kids and the community at large could contribute, how we might give up fundamental control of the exhibit to the community, how we could incorporate the scientific community into the exhibit for people who wanted the science too, how we could take the outside (nature) inside, and the inside of an art exhibit outside.

We talked about having an urn for people to place their prayers, a wishing tree for people to hang their wishes, light bulbs that people could buy right there so they could make a change as soon as they got home. We wondered how we could attach an activity to each artist's piece so the public could interact with it and point out ways for all of us to see the piece in a variety of ways. We thought about creating a time capsule into which to place the exhibit at its conclusion, to be opened on New Year's Eve 2099. We talked about creating take-home messages of our interconnectedness, our uncertainty but our willingness to act anyway, our local sense and spirit of place, our ownership of how we choose to live our lives, our hopefulness, our sense of greater community, our honoring of future generations.

John Magnuson, the aforementioned emeritus professor of limnology at UW–Madison, used the metaphor of a compass to describe the role of science: "The compass is what science is—it points the direction and lays out alternative paths." He added, "The gyroscope represents the political and cultural debates that ultimately lead to some accepted view." The gyroscope spins the debates, spins ethics, spins actions until we are led to follow a particular path.

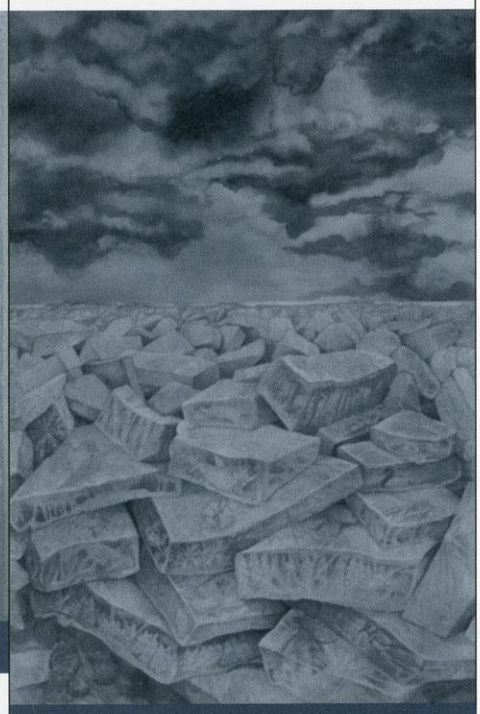
At times we used the metaphor of fire. The scientists urged us to see that we need to put out the big fire of climate change and not fight the thousands of little fires that will result if we don't.

One artist said we needed to be "fire souls," which triggered a thought in me that we needed to be controlled burns—that science and the art have to be fused but managed carefully. I thought of how controlled burns clear away the understory, expose the soil to light, and kindle new growth. Perhaps, as both artists and scientists, we have to see ourselves as cautious evangelists, breathing the fire of our convictions, but not the fire of chaotic thought, or a fire from which people would run. Indeed, relative to climate change, we need to be a campfire that people will gather around, think the deep thoughts that fire somehow elicits, see one another in that flickering glow for the combination of science and spirit that we truly are, and then carry that fire the rest of our lives.

Joe Rose, a Native American elder from the Bad River Ojibwe Reservation, told us that we were in the age of the Seventh Fire. "At the heart of everything is this—everything has a spirit. If we were to accept this, and all of its meaning, we would never harm anything."

Clearly, we need in this exhibit to help people feel a reverence for the entire natural world, and that reverence needs to be sacred or spiritual, however that meaning manifests for every individual. We have no choice but to enter into a long-term love affair with this

Save Our Spruce, by Jennifer Slack



Winter's Warning, by Helen Klebesadel, watercolor, 55" x 40"

planet, a marriage in its deepest soulful promise where we will actively choose to live out our love in our daily actions and gestures. It has always seemed to me that too many of us engage with this planet in the equivalent of one-night stands. We skip away in the morning after having taken all the riches from it, and never look back. Love requires our commitment. It's a spilling over, an overflowing, a high tide that doesn't recede.

One biologist wrote, "The conservation of rivers is not a matter of rivers, but of the human heart." Substitute anything you wish for "rivers," including the Earth, and the statement holds true. The intellect is only part of the route by which we create change—the most powerful course has always been through the heart.

How do we hope in this exhibit to reach all these hearts? Through the channels that have always worked best with humans—through the arts, through direct experience, through stories, through relationships. But also with science. "Art and science are each sublime activities of the human mind; we are less than human without either," writes Chet Raymo.

If we achieve any success in this work, it will occur only through igniting others. We know we can't do it alone—there are no independent creatures. Doing your own thing, the mantra of the '60s, has always been a lie. Human life, like the natural world, is built on links, on interdependence, on connections. I heard C.Y. Allen, a professor at UW Stevens Point, say once, "Freedom isn't doing whatever you want. It's knowing who you are, what you're supposed to be doing on this earth, and then doing it."

Terry Daulton, a biologist and painter from Mercer and the primary driving force behind the exhibit's creation, says of her hopes for the exhibit:

> "As far as what art can do that science can't—I actually see art and science as part of a continuum. I often see science that I think has artistic elements, and art that is based on science. Our society tends to see the two as diametrically opposed but I see them as linked. What artist isn't inspired by some part of the world as we know it. What scientist doesn't love and gain inspiration from the topic he/she is exploring. Good science is artistic. So I think that the art can communicate in a way to catch people's attention and leave them inspired to learn more or be more open to new ideas."

I believe people are willing to be tipped into change, but what we all want to know is can we be tipped into something better, something that helps bring our lives into greater balance and lessens our stress, our disillusionment, our anger? That may be the largest challenge that we face in this exhibit—how do we in a few small pieces of art convey both the desperate need to react to climate change and yet point the way with light rather than total darkness? As artists, perhaps all we can ultimately do is blend our voices, our art, our deepest inspiration into the cauldron of earth's life, try to illuminate new possibilities, and see what happens. ✺

John Bates is the author of six books on the natural history of Wisconsin's Northwoods. He has worked as a naturalist for 17 years, guiding botany, birding, hiking, kayaking and canoeing, snowshoeing, and other trips and tours. John lives with his wife, Mary, on the Manitowish River in Iron County.

Wisconsin's concrete visionaries

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PEYTON SMITH

TUCKED AWAY IN RURAL WISCONSIN are some incredibly captivating outdoor sculptural environments made of concrete and embellished with paint, glass, broken china, and other cast-off items. They are truly amazing to behold.

Yet they are also relics of their time, a vanishing art form, all created by self-taught vernacular artists who spent their retirement years in a visionary quest to document their lives and the changing world around them by building massive concrete environments.

"We have a concentration of nationally significant vernacular artists and their environments in the state that are clearly great art," says Leslie Umberger, senior curator of exhibitions and collections with the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, a major repository of the work of artist environment builders.

In fact, these unique bodies of work are considered so important that they were bought, conserved, and gifted to not-for-profit communities and organizations for education and enjoyment by the Kohler Foundation, Inc. of Wisconsin, which since the late 1970s has focused on preserving the work of regional folk architecture and art environments.

WISCONSIN CONCRETE PARK

It's hard to rank these on a national scale, but the work of Wisconsin artist Fred Smith "is beyond compare, and his is considered one of the most exceptional and original sculptural environments in the country," says Umberger. Smith, the creator of the Wisconsin Concrete Park in Phillips, had no schooling and could neither read nor write. Yet he built a 3.5-acre panorama of more than 200 imaginative sculptures that reflect the Northwoods history, legends, and culture.

Born in 1886 of German immigrants who settled in the Northwoods, Smith was influenced by the surrounding wilderness. A lifelong logger, he felled vast stands of virgin timber by hand and became a local legend known for his great physical strength. Even when he got married in 1913 to Alta B. May, he kept on logging during winter. But in summer, he and Alta homesteaded a 120-acre farm near Phillips, growing Christmas trees and ginseng and cultivating an elaborate ornamental rock garden. They also raised six children.

In 1936 he built and operated the Rock Garden Tavern next to the homestead and in his early 60s in 1949 he gave up logging and sort of retired. During the next 15 years his productivity was simply amazing: He meticulously created and embellished a dazzling display of life-size and larger-than-life-size sculptures and tableaux of Indians, local people, mythical figures, and animals.

Smith's art and materials were inspired by the world around him. In *The Art of Fred Smith,* by Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, Smith is quoted as saying, "Them ideas is hard to explain, ya know. Might be something ya see, or like, or hear from someone else. Could be anything. It's gotta be in ya to do it."

The first element of his park was a barbecue of rock and low-relief concrete portraits to celebrate the Cleveland Indians' victory over the Boston Braves in the 1948 World Series. He followed this with monumental low-relief plaques commemorating Indians, patriots, and local characters. A deer tableau was inspired by an image he saw on a boy's sweater. Another is of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln inspired by a photo he saw of a monument honoring Lincoln and his wife created in Racine by sculptor Frederick Hibbard: Aptly so, Smith labeled his piece "The Second Monument of Its Kind in the USA."

Smith's early works reflect an established tradition of commemorative monuments and memorials. As his work evolved he began to create more complex three-dimensional sculptures to immortalize mythical heroes, Indians, local legends and friends.

"Smith was able to do what he did because concrete was cheap and available and it was easy to work with and embellish without having formal education," says Jim Leary, professor of folklore at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a cofounder of the Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures.

Smith created his concrete figures by digging molds in the ground, wrapping wooden support structures in wire, and pouring layers of hand-mixed cement into the molds. He decorated the figures with paint and shards of broken glass, reflectors, and other found objects (he liberally used Rhinelander Beer bottles from his tavern). Due to their massive

Fred Smith created sensational compositions of texture that enliven the immigrant and animal sculptures with reflected light and color in his park that contains more than 200 statues.

Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park contains many images of native Indians. "I hear so much about Indians it makes me pretty near cry. Not far from here, they want to run the Indians off. The Indians don't hurt nobody. They got the right anyway. They was the first people here and they want to run them out now. Makes me crazy when I think of that kind of world," Smith lamented, as told by Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi in *The Art of Fred Smith.*

Smith's horses are adorned with Rhinelander beer bottles he collected from his tavern and document the role animals played in logging and farming.

size, he hauled the pieces to their sites with horses or a logging truck before setting them upright and anchoring them onto footings. He paid particular attention to their placement so that the statues fit into the natural landscape.

Real antlers and skulls grace deer, elk, and moose. Horseshoes adorn the feet of each horse, and real plows and wagons are liberally used. In fact, Smith used nearly everything at hand and particularly appreciated the historical value of common objects.

"Throughout history, people have created art with local materials that reflect the world around them and their life experiences. Coupled with that is the immigrant or first-generation experience of our concrete artists. They blended old-world landscape and culture with a new landscape rich with resources and a mix of immigrants from throughout Europe," adds Leary. "It was a time of great cultural mixing, exploitation of the land, technological change, and religious patriotism.

"We see this in the representation of American Indians and immigrants. We see popular cultural icons from such movies as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which in its time was an incredible cultural phenomenon. There are patriotic representations of American flags and eagles that celebrate the right to own land. There are representations of animals, such as deer, that in Europe were reserved as the 'Kings game,' but here could be hunted by the common man. From a cultural and folklore point of view, these works are extremely significant. The artists celebrate the fact that they are Americans within the larger concept of the changing culture around them," Leary says.

A statue of the mythical logging figure Paul Bunyan was Smith's favorite. But he believed that Sacagawea (there are more monuments to her in the U.S. than to any other American woman) was the most important. Stone and Zanzi also note Smith said, "She was with Lewis and Clark all winter long. The woman didn't need no compass. She's the one that opened up the whole country. That's why I got so many Indians here. I like Indians because they're damn smart people."

Nature is expressed via sculptures of deer, elk, moose, bear, and birds. Smith uncannily documented the facial features of Czechoslovakian, Finnish, German, Norwegian, Polish, and Swedish immigrants. Lumberjacks cut down a tree with a real eight-foot saw, farmers work the land with horses and oxen, couples celebrate a double wedding, a photographer takes pictures, Mabel the Milker hand milks a cow, and there is the ubiquitous Wisconsin beer drinker.

Popular culture is illustrated via the lion, tiger and angora cat sculpture that came from a photo of a painting from a book that he was given by Robert Amft, a Chicago architect and artist who frequented the area to fish. A sculpture of Ben-Hur and chariot celebrates the movie of the same name. A gigantic muskie pulled by horses celebrates the

For years the Paul and Matilda Wegner grotto was known locally as the "Glass Church" (background left), named after the marvelous 8-by-12-foot glass mosaic church, which was also the site of Paul's funeral. It depicts the Lutheran, Catholic, and Jewish religions, considered the great religions of Germany at the time, under the legend "One God One Brotherhood." Also shown are Jacob's Well (center) and the Pulpit (right), frequently used for preaching to crowds of locals on Sundays.

ubiquitous tall tales about the big one that got away.

Smith continued to sculpt until 1964, when, just after having completed the last horse in his massive Budweiser Clydesdale tableau, he suffered a stroke that eventually laid him up in a nursing home until his death in 1976.

While well known locally, his national reputation was taking hold at that time. In 1974, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis) mounted a landmark exhibition, "Naives and Visionaries," exploring art environments of nine artist/builders, including Smith and Wisconsin's Herman Rusch, who created Prairie Moon Garden. Yet, after Smith's death, the park's future remained uncertain and the ravages of nature were taking their toll.

Fortunately, in 1977 the Kohler Foundation purchased Wisconsin Concrete Park. Just as restoration was under way, a devastating summer downburst damaged three-quarters of the figures and uprooted hundreds of mature pines. Oddly enough, the storm provided an opportunity for more thorough restoration. Some of the original rotted wooden armatures were replaced with steel, and the pieces were reassembled to make them more impervious to extreme weather conditions. A few of Smith's statues were also taken to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center for permanent display and as insurance, "to protect a selected few in the event of further weather damage or natural disaster," according to Terri Yoho, executive director of the Kohler Foundation.

When the restoration was completed, the Foundation gifted the site to Price County for use as a park and outdoor museum. In 1995, a not-for-profit arts organization, Friends of Fred Smith, Inc., was formed to continue to preserve the park. This would suit Smith just fine. Stone and Zanzi further note Smith said his work was for "all the American people everywhere. They need something like this." As such, he refused to sell a single sculpture or accept a commission, even though he was offered a pretty penny many times. "I never sell any 'cause it might spoil it for others."

PAUL AND MATILDA WEGNER GROTTO

The Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto near Cataract was built primarily by Paul with some help from his wife, Matilda, both of whom emigrated from Germany in 1885 and settled in southwestern Wisconsin. In 1889 they purchased a farm near the village of Cataract, where the couple farmed and raised five children. In 1916 they left the farm operation to a son and Paul oper-

This "Gold Star" connotes patriotism and commemorates Paul and Matilda Wegner's son, who lost his life defending freedom during World War I.

An arched entrance with the word "home"—part of the "Concrete Fence with Glass Shards"—provides a welcoming entry to the Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto. This detail offers a close view of the glass rosettes and a yellow ceramic bird.

ated a garage in nearby Bangor. When he retired in 1927, the couple returned to the farm in summers.

"The artists were definitely inspired by the European grotto aesthetic and grotto environments that were being constructed in the Midwest, particularly the Dickeyville Grotto in Wisconsin. This grotto was widely publicized throughout the state, and all these artists were known to have visited or been inspired by stories and photos of the grotto," says Umberger (see sidebar below).

"It was a time when people took trips to visit the grotto and many would have attended its grand opening. That was the popular culture of the day, much like television and the internet is today," she adds.

In fact, when Paul and Matilda visited the wondrous Dickeyville Grotto in 1929 they became "transfixed," and Paul became inspired to begin a "retirement project." At the farm, he immediately set to work building a concrete environment even though he had no artistic training. He copied the Dickeyville technique of studding concrete with glass and ceramic objects. He first built a decorative fence around the property with a concrete archway that spells out the word "Home" in crushed black glass.

"A common element is that almost all concrete environmental builders were men who did hard work with their hands all their lives, such as farming and logging. And so it's not surprising that when they wanted to express themselves, they took on laborious and physically challenging projects and built such spectacular environments," says Yoho. "The Wegner grotto, though, involved Paul's wife."

When Paul and Matilda Wegner visited the wondrous Dickeyville Grotto in 1929 they were transfixed, and Paul became inspired to begin what he thought of as a retirement project.

The Wegners' imaginative environment of more than 40 statues evolved from personal vision. Paul kept on building until his death in 1937, and thereafter his wife worked on the grotto until her death in 1942. The result is a remarkable and fantastic grotto and sculptural garden: It is a site of color and light decorated with thousands of glittering glass pieces, broken china, and porcelain figures interspersed with other curiosities such as seashells, Indian arrowheads, and shell casings.

The grotto contains, among other statues, a giant reproduction of the Wegners' 50th anniversary cake (their last creation), an American flag, glass-encrusted birdhouses and the steamship *Bremen*. Their Lutheran ecumenical bent is played out in a prayer garden, peace monument, and glass church, all of which served as places for quiet reflection, wedding ceremonies, public preaching, and community gatherings.

The Wegners' patriotism is expressed via a glass-encrusted "Gold Star" to commemorate those who lost one or more soldiers in World War I, in which the Wegners lost a son. Their grotto was owned by the family until 1986, when the Kohler Foundation purchased the site. Sculptural restoration included extensive stabilization and surface repair and landscape clearing to re-establish the original environment. Gifted to Monroe County in 1987, the Wegner Grotto is a stunning sight amid the quiet countryside.

GRANDVIEW

Grandview in Hollandale was the home of Nick Engelbert, who was born in Austria in 1881 and immigrated to the United States in the early 20th century.

GROTTOS OF THE MIDWEST

The Midwest is blessed with a legacy of religious grottos. Their creators are considered to be among the most important vernacular artists in the United States—artists who expressed their vision by building massive environments of embedded concrete. The grottos reflect the times in which they were built, with religious and patriotic themes. Their builders were not schooled in architecture or any formal art tradition. Rather, the availability of inexpensive concrete made the creation of these incredible structures possible without the use of blueprints or written plans. During their building they all received widespread attention in local and regional newspapers. The birthplace of the grotto movement in the U.S. is Saints Peter and Paul Church in West Bend, Iowa, home to the **Grotto of the Redemption**, which takes up an entire city block. It illustrates the story of the redemption, from the fall of man to the resurrection, and was built by Father Paul Dobberstein. It is reportedly the largest collection of semiprecious stones, minerals, and petrified materials in the world, and is valued at some $4.3 million. The **Dickeyville Grotto**, built by Father Mathias Wernerus on the grounds of the Holy Ghost Church in Dickeyville, Wisconsin, is another awe-inspiring sight adorned with thousands of pieces of sparkling glass and ceramics, shells, marbles, minerals, rocks, petrified wood—and even doorknobs. The **St. Phillip Parish Grotto Shrine** in Rudolph, Wisconsin, was built by Father Philip Wagner. Unlike the others, this one is constructed primarily of native rock bedecked with mature trees and extensive plantings. It also contains the Wonder Cave, an enclosed tunnel one-fifth of a mile long containing dozens of statues and plaques. For more information, see http://csumc.wisc.edu/newsletter/grottos.htm

To commemorate his wife's cultural heritage, Engelbert built a statue at Grandview of "The Three Patriots" to honor the founding fathers of Switzerland (left to right: Arnold Melchtal, Walter Fürst, and Werner Stauffacher, with beard).

Grandview's "Viking in a Boat" honors Nick Engelbert's neighbors, who were originally from Norway.

Nick Engelbert's "Family Tree" statue at Grandview whimsically portrays his family as monkeys at play. Here, a detail.

Rusch's formal and rigid self-portrait at Prairie Moon Garden contains this hand-lettered legend: "Herman A. Rusch. Born in a log cabin in 1885 near Arcadia, Wis. An outdoor man all his life. A lover and student of nature. Farms 40 years then sells farm to his son. Always helping him in busy times and at the same time started this venture when 71 years old. And did all the work himself. In building and on the grounds. A good way to kill old age boredom."

In 1913, he married Katherine Thoni, a Swiss immigrant, and spent their honeymoon in the village of Hollandale, where they soon settled and raised four children on their seven-acre farm. Engelbert also worked as a cheese maker, and in the 1920s he and Katherine started the Grandview Dairy.

Engelbert created his first concrete sculpture in the 1930s while recovering from a sprained ankle. Family members recalled that initially he was quiet about his sculptures but he kept on building them. By 1950 his entire yard was transformed into a landscape of over 40 sculptures, arranged within rich and colorful garden beds designed by his wife. To top it off, Engelbert decorated the exterior of his clapboard farmhouse with a colorful mosaic of concrete embellished with stones, shells, glass shards, and fragments of dinnerware and porcelain figurines.

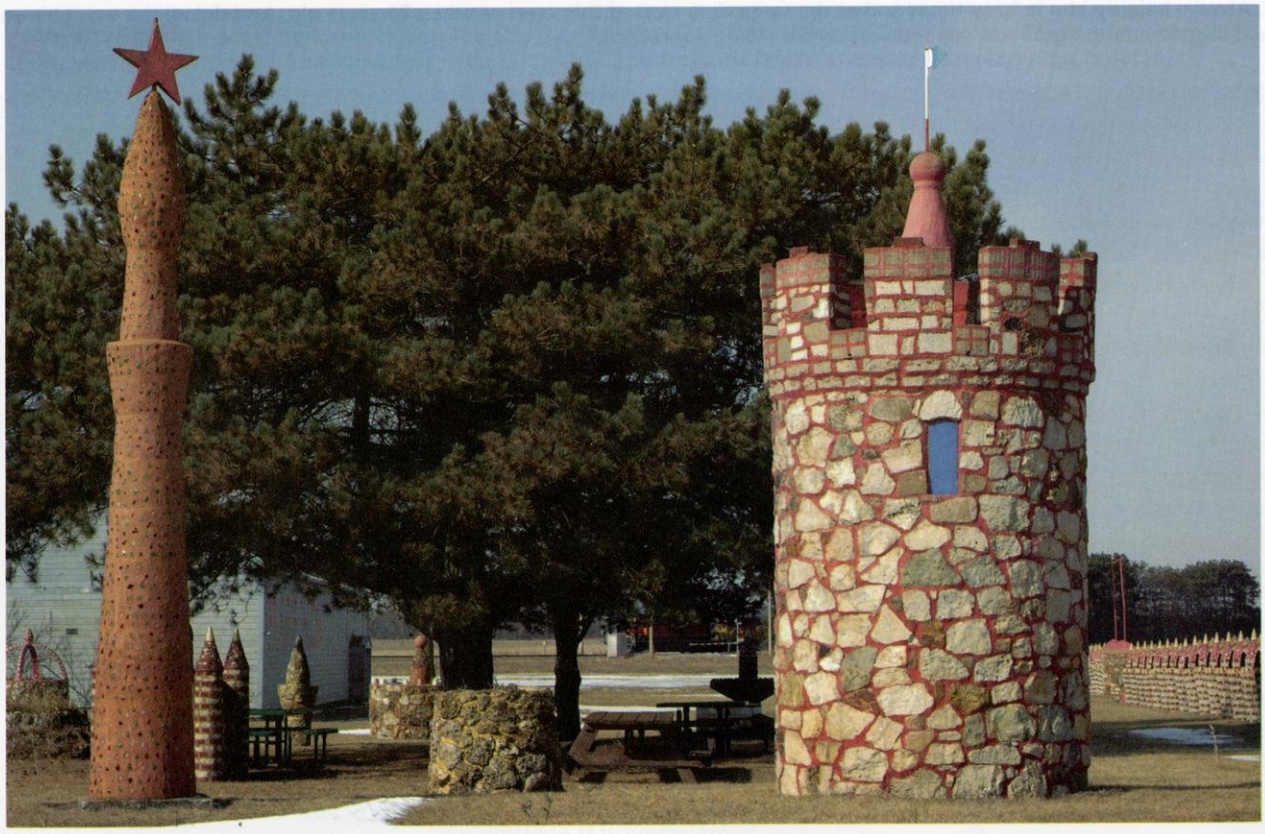
As with the other self-taught artists, the sculptures were influenced by his experiences, his heritage, and popular culture. His sculptures depict patriotism, history, mythology, and fairy tales. The sculptures include Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, an American eagle, a stork with baby, a Viking of Norway, a monkey and organ grinder, and Neptune's fountain. Engelbert's landscape also features monkeys playing in a tree, Swiss patriots standing tall, and at one time had Uncle Sam consorting with a Democratic donkey and a Republican elephant. A decorative fence also surrounds his property.

But he was not done: In 1951, on his 70th birthday, Engelbert received a set of oil paints and began to teach himself to paint. During the next decade he created a second major body of art consisting of 74 paintings depicting scenes of his sculptural environment, exotic places he visited, and humorous scenes of everyday life.

After Katherine died in 1960, Nick left Grandview to move closer to his children. He died in 1962 and Grandview was sold at auction. The owner cared for neither the sculptures nor the bedecked house, and during three decades of neglect the statues and house deteriorated, succumbing to damage from wind, rain, snow, ice, fallen tree limbs, and vandalism.

Again coming to the rescue, the Kohler Foundation purchased Grandview in 1991. Restoring the rundown house and crumbling sculptures took three years. Many were restored. Others could not be salvaged and were re-created, incorporating some of the original work. Still some, like Uncle Sam and Paul Bunyan, have been lost forever. Like Smith's works, a few of Engelbert's statues are on display at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

The signature piece of Herman Rusch's Prairie Moon Garden is a 260-foot arched fence with 28 conical posts constructed with alternating bands of chiseled white rocks and red bricks, topped with gold cones. The colored mosaic glass and polka-dotted arches are molded concrete over the iron wheels of old grain drills that he cut in half and stretched. Below, "Rocket to Stars" (left), "Small Planter" (center) and—Rusch's final piece and among his most impressive—a 13.5-foot watchtower (right) built of rocks he gathered from a nearby quarry and pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle.



In 1998 the Kohler Foundation gifted Grandview and the house to the Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation.

PRAIRIE MOON SCULPTURAL GARDEN AND MUSEUM

The art and fantasies of Herman Rusch are preserved at Prairie Moon Sculptural Garden and Museum near Cochrane. Rusch was born in Wisconsin in 1885 of East Prussian immigrants. In 1914, he took over the family farm and married Sophie, and together they raised three children. After 40 years of farming he retired and began to collect unusual machines, natural phenomena, curios, and personal mementos, and bought the Prairie Moon Dance Pavilion to create a museum to display the natural oddities.

To make the grounds interesting, Rusch built his first sculptures around 1958, a concrete and stone planter and the site's largest piece, a colorful 260-foot arched fence. So began a 16-year obsession to create a colorful fantasy world of gigantic sculptures based on his belief that "beauty creates the will to live." Without formal art or construction training, he developed exceptional structures exhibiting excellent masonry and artistic skills. Sometimes Rusch added color to the freshly mixed concrete; sometimes he painted the surfaces. He embellished some of his work with seashells, bits of broken bottles, shards of crockery, and mirrors.

The site includes a birdhouse, an Indian scout on a pony, a stegosaurus, a Fountain of Venus, a rocket to the stars, a Hindu temple, and more. The Kohler Foundation's website reports that Rusch said he "just kept on building. You don't ever know where it will end up when you start." Of the painted concrete self-portrait that gazes at his sculpture garden he said, "I'll still see what's going on here when I'm not around." He also purchased and added some concrete sculptures created in the 1930s by Halvor Landsverk of Minnesota.

At the age of 89 in 1974 he finished the last of his 40 sculptures. His vision and artistic sense of form and color were also bringing him national acclaim. That same year, he was one of nine self-taught artists to be represented in the seminal "Naives and Visionaries" exhibition in Minneapolis. He ran his museum until 1979, when at age 94 he finally called it quits so he could find a "little more time for fishing and fiddling." He died at age 100, and Prairie Moon was sold at auction and fell into neglect.

Again the Kohler Foundation stepped in and in 1992 purchased the site. The sculptures required stabilization, surface repairs, cleaning, and painting to re-establish the original palette (27 colors were isolated with stereoscopic microscopy). Landscaping revived the garden. After restoration, the Foundation donated the site to the Town of Milton, allowing Rusch's art to remain a testament to his claim that, in life, "a fellow should leave a few tracks."

"These art forms speak so strongly to our souls and cultural heritage the Foundation believed it was and is essential that we preserve them so they do not disappear," says Yoho. "They are all fragile and at risk. And with the vision of the Arts Center as a repository for vernacular environment builders, we have been able to help save many of them.

"We are unique as a foundation. We're small and once we buy a property and support restoration, our staff remains active in all phases of the project. We then work with the local organizations to ensure that there are ongoing plans for maintenance and preservation," adds Yoho.

The golden age of the vernacular artist environment builder is over — it saw its heyday in the 1920s to the 1970s. But, thanks to the efforts of the Kohler Foundation and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, some of the most nationally significant treasures will remain preserved for public viewing and education for generations to come. ✹

Peyton Smith is an assistant vice chancellor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison with a master's degree in journalism. *Smith thanks the William T. Evjue Foundation for providing support to document concrete parks and religious grottos in the Midwest.*

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Nick Engelbert's Grandview, the Nick Engelbert House
http://www.kohlerfoundation.org/nick.html
http://www.nicksgrandview.org/index.html
http://www.portalwisconsin.org/grandview.cfm
http://www.wnrmag.com/travel/1999/jun99.htm
Herman Rusch's Prairie Moon Sculptural Garden and Museum
http://www.kohlerfoundation.org/rusch.html
http://www.portalwisconsin.org/prairiemoon.cfm
http://www.jensenconservation.com/port/prairie_moon.html
Paul and Matilda Wegner's Grotto
http://www.kohlerfoundation.org/wegner.html
http://www.portalwisconsin.org/wegnergrotto.cfm
John Michael Kohler Arts Center
http://www.jmkac.org/
Kohler Foundation
http://www.kohlerfoundation.org/

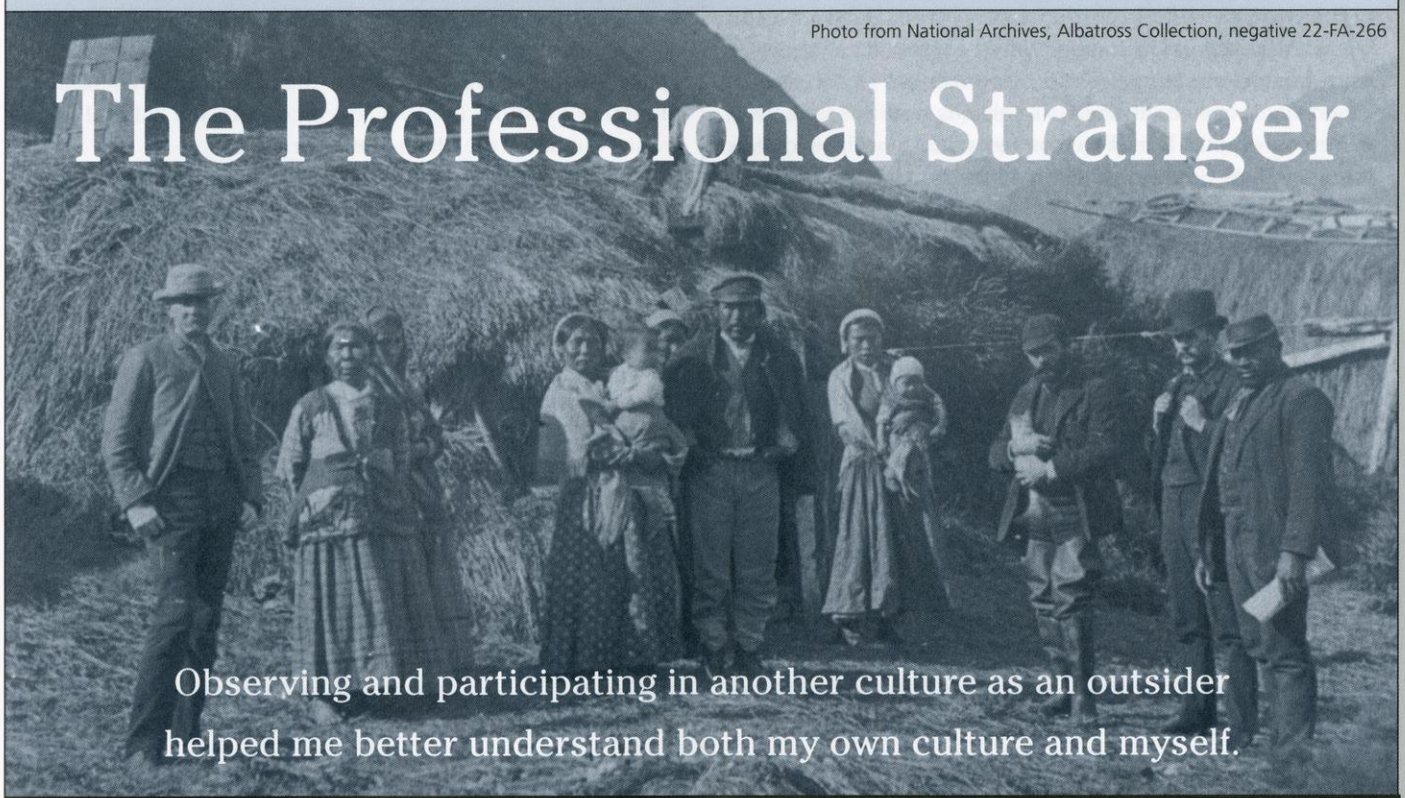
The Humanities in Our Lives

A special section from the Wisconsin Humanities Council

The humanities seek answers about who we are, where we have been, what we value—and why. They include (but are not limited to) literature, history, philosophy, anthropology, film, music, and other arts criticism, jurisprudence, religious studies, and languages. In "The Public Scholar," we ask creative Wisconsin thinkers to explore an issue of social or cultural importance through the lens of the humanities. In "The Humanities Moment," we ask authors to take a more personal look at their experiences with a humanities discipline. At the Wisconsin Humanities Council, it is our mission and our pleasure to highlight the role of the humanities in our lives—and in the world of *Wisconsin People & Ideas.*

Photo from National Archives, Albatross Collection, negative 22-FA-266

The Professional Stranger



Observing and participating in another culture as an outsider helped me better understand both my own culture and myself.

BY JOANNE B. MULCAHY

Photo from Kodiak Island's Old Harbor, ca. 1890. Alutiiq and crew from the fisheries research vessel *Albatross* in front of a traditional *Ciqlluaq,* or house.

"Now I will tell you about culture. Culture is that garden. This is not a thing of nations. It is not about Goethe and yeshivas. It is children playing. Culture is the simple grass through which the wind blows sweetly and each grass blade bends softly to the caress of the wind..."

—Shmuel, quoted by Barbara Myerhoff in *Number Our Days*

Boarding the southbound ferry for Seattle on a shimmering August day, I welcomed the long, silent passage. The life I was leaving behind on Kodiak Island, Alaska, brimmed with talk. My boyfriend, Bill, regaled me with fishing tales as we mended nets; customers fed me with gossip at my waitress job; women appealed for aid over the crisis line I answered for the Kodiak Women's Resource Center. Woven into the web were the voices of Native Alutiiq midwives, telling stories as we picked salmonberries, recounting a world I yearned to understand. Swimming in the cacophony, I packed my bags for Wisconsin to study anthropology.

Life in Madison would be simpler: study, solitude, and the search for a self defined apart from others. I moved in with my sister, Chris, an undergraduate classics major. Her life dazzled with quicksilver movement. After studying all day, she would don a brown-hooded outfit to wait tables at a restaurant called the Monastery. Some days our only contact was a morning hello, bagels in hand.

Many days during that fall, I spoke to no one. At first, I welcomed the solitude. I busied myself with what I'd felt most deprived of living on an Alaskan Island: books. The university's library enticed me to wander, especially through the anthropology shelves. I stalked "culture" as though I were hearing the

word for the first time. In a sense, I was. "Multiculturalism," "culture wars," and "cultural bias" now buzz through conversation, but this mosaic of meaning was not always daily currency. When my first assignment came to write an essay on the concept of culture, I pondered: Should I include Culture, capital C, as in Mozart and La Bohème? Or focus on the small "c" culture of the Russian Orthodox rituals, painted hunting hats, and oral traditions of Kodiak's Alutiiq people?

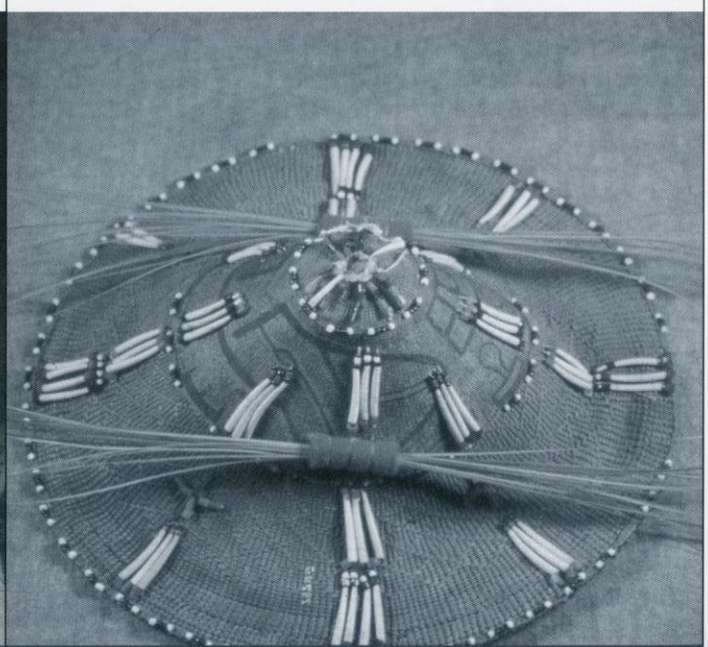
For two years, I'd recorded stories from Native Alutiiq women. Narratives overlapped, often expressing straightforward lessons about family and responsibility. Other stories, especially those about women's roles as traditional healers, were more cryptic. Mary Peterson recounted how the midwives just knew, how God had guided her hands on her first delivery. Katherine Chichenoff's stories echoed Mary's. "It was so much better before we had doctors." I was after the unstated rules of Alutiiq society but I couldn't quite excavate their meaning. Graduate school, I was sure, would offer me the tools.

It didn't occur to me that culture might include my own life—the Irish Catholic universe of my childhood, the Italian foods of our neighbors, or the storytellers of my extended family. As a child, I'd journeyed from Philadelphia to New England each summer with my parents and five siblings. We drove at night, drugged on Dramamine, awakening in my mother's hometown of Fair Haven, Vermont. Local characters like Bub gave us green mint candies from his knobby stubs. He held us in thrall with stories of the local slate quarries that had claimed his fingers. My mother's high school friends lounged at Lake Bomoseen and drank Budweiser, spinning memories of dances at Keene Manor. From Vermont, we headed to Boston, where we played penny-ante gin rummy with my grandmother, kicked balls on my father's childhood street, and climbed the shiny firetrucks my uncles rode at work. Thickly braided stories hermetically sealed our world.

Stories wouldn't help me now. In graduate seminars, we learned the language of "isms," as though personal experience would pollute the purity of ideas. Theory was king. One young man who dressed preacher-like in black suits could recite entire passages from Marx's *Das Kapital.* Several people in my first-year seminar dropped out during the first few weeks. I never learned much about the remaining stalwarts. They spoke the protective jargon of Hawaiian kinship, the meaning of mother's brother in Africa, of cargo cults and cultural relativism, but never the idiom of the personal.

Yet something in this new world woke me up. Theory helped me name my work on Kodiak as an incipient form of ethnography—immersion in another culture through participant observation, then writing about the process of discovery. Moving between taking part and observing, one could untangle patterns, be in a culture, yet not of it—"a professional stranger."

After a night in the library, I'd call Bill to relate my discoveries. The phone would ring and ring. The crab season must have opened, I'd muse. I wouldn't let myself imagine him in the B&B Bar, perhaps with someone else. A passage from Margaret Mead's *Blackberry Winter* haunted me. She describes her isolation in the field: "It is the babies who keep me alive in contexts in which otherwise my sense of touch is seldom exercised." Mead quotes her husband, Gregory Bateson, to explain, "It is not frustrated sex, but frustrated gentleness that is so hard to bear."



Left, Mary Peterson, an Alutiiq elder from the village of Akhiok on Kodiak Island, weaves an Aleut basket, a tightly woven, very fine form of basketry. Right, the Aleut hunting hat is a good example of the brightly colored traditional design worn by men at sea. They often were trimmed with sea lion whiskers, feathers, and ivory. The shape of the headgear indicated a man's rank.

Photos courtesy of Joanne B. Mulcahy

I began to envy Chris' brown-robed figure departing for the Monastery. Waiting tables meant human contact. I missed doing crossword puzzles with the waitresses in Kodiak. Even the customers who'd harassed me now seemed so congenial, so human. I sought solace in imagining the magnum opus I would write about Alutiiq culture. Sometimes I'd go to the terrace at the university's student union, sit under a rotunda of stars above Lake Mendota, and fantasize about first light breaking over Kodiak's snow-capped mountains. As I biked home, the wind on my skin was the most sensuous connection I would have for months.

Autumn in Wisconsin unfolded with all the multihued drama I'd missed since my childhood in Pennsylvania and New England. Yet oddly, I yearned not for the brilliant Vermont landscape, but for the nearly indiscernible passage of fall in Alaska. I talked to Bill less frequently. By Thanksgiving, when he came to visit, it was clear that we couldn't stay together. He needed a partner to temper the harsh Alaskan winter. I had to rest on the side of the gulf I'd crossed to come to graduate school. I remember eating half a cheese omelet the day he left, then nothing for days. The panic spiraled. Weight fell from my body. I began to resemble the spines of books that had so enticed me in September, now pale substitutes for human companionship. Though my sister sympathized, our schedules rarely allowed for time together. Winter squeezed out the last light as I sank deep into depression.

January in Wisconsin: my feet sticking to the frigid magnet of linoleum floors, the skid of my bicycle across black ice, the pull of my belt against slackening jeans, hands clutching the typewriter's edge, my sister's puzzled look when I glared at her for interrupting my studies. I floated above time, fed by pure abstraction, light as dust. On subzero-degree mornings, though the terrace above Lake Mendota had closed, the lake's frozen depths called to me like watery sirens.

I feared burdening anyone with my problems. Growing up, we lived by the adages we heard daily. My father's favorite was "Blood is thicker than water"; my mother's, "Say a little prayer." Face hardship by doing for others and guard family secrets. When I skipped classes in high school, my mother brought me to a local priest. I thought him clueless but kind, and at least not a stranger. Now, desperation drove me to an outsider—a counselor at the university clinic. Deb was a graduate student doing her first internship. With a status so similar to my own, she seemed suspect.

In our first session, I crouched in a chair as far from Deb as I could be, rigid as the ice-laced branches outside the clinic. I offered a thumbnail sketch of my early life, the move north, and the separation from Bill. Deb took dutiful notes as I detailed the logical reasons for my depression. When I got to "It's so cold in Wisconsin," her curly black head popped up. "Really? Colder than Alaska?" "Yes, really," I snapped just before I broke down. I missed my family, I sobbed. I missed Bill. I could not survive alone.

"We all have to separate from family," Deb soothed. "You'll get over Alaska. You'll make it on your own." You understand nothing of large Catholic families, I thought as I departed, convinced of my original assessment. You haven't heard "blood is thicker than water" your entire life.

The village of Old Harbor today (2001). Photo by Patrick Saltonstall, Alutiiq Museum

Still, one of Deb's suggestions made sense—seeking a connection to community outside my studies. I found a part-time job at a center that helped senior citizens. Mainly, I cleaned apartments. When I finished, I would stand with residents before family photographs and coo over their grandchildren. They longed to tell me stories—about themselves, their children, the path each life had followed. Their tales illuminated anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff's term for our species—Homo Narrans, "Humankind the Storytellers." Each tale opened up an intimate space that I could enter, if only briefly.

These family shrines also made real my reading about kinship. Anthropology uncovered a dizzying array of family systems: Native American clans of wolves and ravens, female husbands among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, Australian Aborigines who merge grandchildren and grandparents into a single generation. Family was about duty, money, power, whom to marry, and how to raise children. Family was also about love, community, and security in old age. Lost in my singular life, I wondered if and when I would fit myself back into this lattice of human connection. I was the one who wandered from my own clan. My sister would go back East when she finished school in Madison. Could I ever reenter that fold? Was my relationship with Bill really over?

I assuaged my loneliness with the older residents' needs. A month into work, I saw a posted announcement for a job at a trailer park on the outskirts of Madison. A stamp from the previous month topped the wrinkled page. When I asked the secretary why the job remained vacant, she just shrugged.

I rode the bus to the park, and then soldiered my way through parallel rows of aluminum-sided oblongs framed by crusty snow. My destination was the last trailer. A strong smell emanated from inside. A young woman in her twenties answered my tentative knock. Light, wispy blond hair framed a thin face and wire-rimmed glasses. A worn parka sprouting down covered faded hip-hugger jeans. "Oh, good! You're here," she said, extending a hand. "I'm Rosie." I entered, breathing through my mouth to avoid the putrid smell. Two blonde children curled under an old sleeping bag atop a built-in bunk. A tower of clothing, musty blankets, canned foods, and yellowed newspapers rose on a pullout table at the center.

On the bottom bunk, almost invisible among the junk, lay an old woman in black. White hair streaked with yellow haloed her crevassed face. A light mustache fluttered with her breath. Rosie pointed to the children, "Sonny. Rachel. That's Gran, my great-great-grandmother. We need help with her. Johnny, my husband, leaves early. I get the kids to school, then race to work." I agreed to return the following week. Rosie followed me outside, hand on my arm. "Gran's gonna die anytime. We brought her here because there's no money for a rest home. Besides, I don't believe in them places. I want my kids to know death, not to fear it."

I journeyed each week to the trailer through the hardest months of winter. Gran needed little attention. I fed her soft foods and grew accustomed to the smell. When the children returned from school, they would perch by Gran and stroke her hands. Sometimes her fingers strummed theirs in return; other times she lay silent, her mustache rising and falling. Pieces of Rosie's life emerged: Johnny's battle with alcoholism, her continually thwarted attempts to return to school as she juggled work with care for this extended family. I began to hunger for my trips to the trailer. Hope returned that I would find connection again.

One March day when the temperature soared into the fifties, I leaped from the bus, buoyed by the weather. Rosie waited at the trailer entrance, her head bowed. Tears filled her eyes as she looked up: "Gran's gone." Rosie performed a ceremony that comes back to me now in dreamlike fragments, a story-prayer pieced together from shards of AA philosophy, Christianity, and her idiosyncratic beliefs. On the back of a slip of paper, perhaps a grocery list, Rosie traced for Sonny and Rachel Gran's path to heaven. On side roads along the way, old friends awaited. "See? Here's Aunt Linda. Gran will be with her now." The children seemed enticed by Gran's journey; they now had a story to carry with them. Rosie ended her creative medley with a message to God. "We loved Gran very much and we know you'll love her, too. Say goodbye," she directed Sonny and Rachel. The children waved as they sprinkled dried flower petals over the ground. Were they roses? I only remember that Rosie had saved them from the previous summer. "We'll need them sometime," she had said. "And death won't give us no warning."

I didn't cry until I got on the bus, my sadness leavened by the richness of this connection between generations. Rosie and her family had allowed me in, trusted me to participate in something as sacred as death. This was ethnography—the privilege of entry, taking part and bearing witness. This was culture, as rich with meaning as any tribe or clan I'd studied. This was family, given by blood but shaped by individuals.

I felt light as I biked to school the next week. Green buds signaled the beginning of spring. I now saw culture everywhere, in realms exotic and everyday—opera and movies, the Kodiak women's tales, the unstated rules for graduate student talk, the adages I'd heard as a child. For the first time, I could stand outside my own family and see our ways as cultural. "Blood is thicker than water" is a story we tell ourselves—a universal narrative with shape-shifting dimensions. We are hard-wired for family and clan, but each culture mixes blood and water differently. My loneliness in Madison spun my self to its essence, revealing a story both cultural and truly my own.

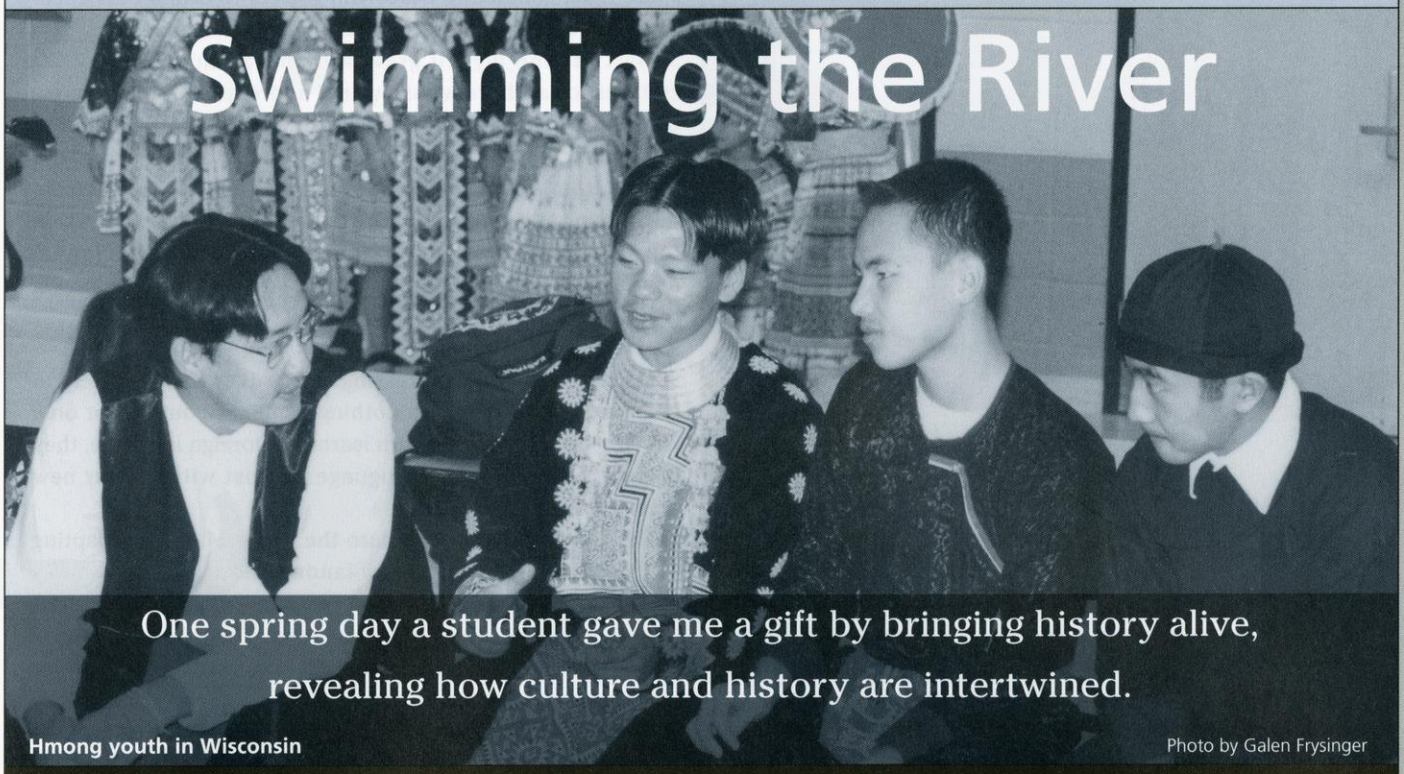
Joanne B. Mulcahy teaches and directs the Writing Culture Summer Institute at the Northwest Writing Institute, Lewis and Clark College, in Portland, Oregon. She is the author of ***Birth and Rebirth on an Alaskan Island,*** *a biography of an Alaska Native healer. Her essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including* ***The Stories that Shape Us: Contemporary Women Write about the West*** *and* ***These United States****. Her awards include fellowships from the Oregon Institute of Literary Arts, the New Letters nonfiction award, and grants from the British Council, the Alaska Humanities Forum, and the Oregon Council for the Humanities.*

The Humanities Moment

Brought to you by the Wisconsin Humanities Council

In this feature, an author reflects upon a life-changing encounter with one of the humanities disciplines.

Swimming the River



One spring day a student gave me a gift by bringing history alive, revealing how culture and history are intertwined.

Hmong youth in Wisconsin Photo by Galen Frysinger

BY ERICA HANSON

MIKE, A YOUNG AMERICAN-BORN HMONG, was giving a speech contrasting his father's childhood in the hills of Laos with his own childhood growing up in western Wisconsin. I was teaching oral and interpersonal communications at the Chippewa Valley Technical College. My students had to deliver their first formal presentations in front of the class on any cross-cultural subject of their choosing. Mike had volunteered to be the first speaker.

A picture of the Mekong River came onto the screen.

I had seen this photo and others like it many times before, but Mike gave it new meaning when he said matter-of-factly, "When the war was done and the Americans left, my father swam across the river towing my grandmother on a raft and carrying my oldest sister on his shoulders."

After that, the river stopped being what it had always been for me. Previously it had been news, then history, relegated to a geographical feature of a section of the world I'd never visited and never wanted to visit. But Mike's words transformed it into a living feature of a life and a landscape that was inconceivable to an American woman in her 50s.

The Mekong flows from Tibet through China, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, ending up in the South China Sea. Mike's photo showed it at a broad point, looking deceptively calm and serene. One of the largest rivers in the world, it also is dangerous, with unexpected flows and rapids and varying depths.

To tackle this river with no boat, to have an elderly woman and a baby dependent on you to keep from drowning, and to steer them from the devastation of war to life on the other side of the world: these are unimaginable feats to me.

Mike's words, spoken in a classroom decades after the event by a person not even born at the time, conveyed to me and to the 15 students, who ranged in age from 18 to 24, that history is not just a string of words and dates to remember. History is the people who were there and those who come after them. History is composed of fears, hopes, and memories superimposed on events and set in landscapes that encompass not just scenery, but also the culture of the people and their times.

My life experience is so removed from that of Mike's father. Mike and I share a far more similar background and culture, despite the difference in gender, age, and ethnicity. Mike was trying to understand the past that had brought his family here and made his parents who they are. In doing so, he was able to give to his listeners that spark of knowledge that transcends the barriers of culture, time, and place. We were no longer sitting on hard chairs in a Midwestern classroom

Street scene in Laos Photo by Galen Frysinger

listening to a student give a speech. It was no longer spring semester in the 21st century. Instead, we were in the hills of Laos in the 1970s and a war was winding down.

I was Mike's age when the Vietnam War seemed to always be the daily headline. My boyfriend was in the first group to have their military draft status determined by lottery. Mel's number was 12, and he was one of the lucky ones who went off to college rather than to the jungles of Southeast Asia after graduation. Mike's father didn't have any choice. The Hmong had to fight. And they fought for our side, even though few of us in America knew of it then or now.

Mike is a natural storyteller who carries on a long tradition of oral history from his Hmong ancestors. Not only did that skill get him an A-plus, but he brought alive for me and for his classmates the life of the Hmong before and during the Vietnam War. He was at ease in front of the classroom, where he was able to reach out to us, furnishing a glimpse of another culture we could not have seen without his help. His presentation included news photos accompanied by his articulate explanations, delivered in a gentle voice.

Mike's speech generated an interest in me to learn more about the Hmongs' role in the war, as well as their culture there and in America. This in turn expanded my interest to other cultures, which ultimately led me to an interest in multicultural communications.

As a graduate student, I started developing my master's thesis last summer. I played with several topics related to teaching adults, such as the use of problem-based learning as a method of teaching business communications. Interesting enough, but hardly gripping.

I wanted to pursue a subject that not only appealed to me but also could contribute to others now and in the future, here and elsewhere. Plus, I wanted something that I could build on afterward for my education specialist and doctoral theses.

As I looked at and discarded topic after topic, I was, in my spare time, contacting Wisconsin writers to arrange for them to speak as part of the 2006/2007 Lake Menomin Authors Series. I found myself gravitating to authors from other cultures, or authors whose works addressed other cultures. One of the writers we selected was Sheila Cohen, the author of *Mai Ya's Long Journey*, a nonfiction book about a family's travels from a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand to Madison, Wisconsin. As I e-mailed back and forth with Cohen to set up the speaking dates, I was reminded of Mike's father, grandmother, and sister, and their journey that began by swimming the Mekong River.

They came from one culture, moving through a familiar landscape and climate, crossing a river that led ultimately to another culture, one with nothing familiar about it. Not only were these people faced with learning a foreign language, they had to create a written language to exist within their new country.

The Hmong have settled into the upper Midwest, adapting to the cold weather and new landscape, and, like so many other immigrants, adapting to the new culture where their traditional family roles were reversed. Their American-born children are now the elders' guides, communicating in a new language the mysteries of a new world.

The Hmong are only one group of people who are changing the face of rural Wisconsin. What was once an ethnically encapsulated area is now multilingual and diverse. And I now know what I want to do—guide people of all backgrounds as they "cross the river" between cultures.

Mike's words helped me define this personal direction, which is one I can follow with passion and purpose not only through my remaining years as a graduate student but also in my career as an educator. That's a pretty big gift for a 19-year-old man to give his teacher that spring day.

That day, there was a moment of silence when Mike was done speaking. Then one of Mike's classmates summed it up. "Wow, man, that is awesome."

A business consultant for 12 years, Erica Hanson is now a part-time adjunct communications instructor at the Chippewa Valley Technical College. She is working on her master's degree in career and technical education at UW–Stout. In her spare time, she is finishing a novel about life in western Wisconsin called ***The Pine Tap Bar and Bait Shoppe.***

wisconsin | humanities | council
community through conversation

This special section is edited by Masarah Van Eyck, Wisconsin Humanities Council.

poetry

Resurrection

Maybe she doesn't remember,
maybe she thinks I don't
remember how we found him night
after night, so deep steeped on his recliner
that we couldn't wake him, my brother
and I, as one on each side we'd shout,
shake, shove our lost
father's dead weight back to life, as if our

lives depended on him finding his way to
  where we believed
he belonged, next to our mother, who long
  asleep, lay
ignorant of this ritual: how we'd peel
his fingers off the last unfinished can,
  stand him up, weak neck overwhelmed
by its heavy load, then watch him sway
side to side, waving to something invisible,
  as we willed him down the hall.

by Wendy Vardaman

Wendy Vardaman, of Madison, holds a Ph.D. in English from University of Pennsylvania and has poems, reviews, and interviews in or forthcoming in journals including *Main Street Rag, Free Verse, Pivot, Portland Literary Review Journal, Moon Journal,* and the *Wisconsin Poets Calendar.* She received a Pushcart Prize nomination in 2005 and was runner-up in 2004 for the Council for Wisconsin Writers' Lorine Niedecker Award.

Madison

Dear Ones—9 degrees last night
and now the fog, rising with
the temperature from our ten inches
of snow, rimes the trees, the grasses,
making a white-furred world
through which we dash into our buildings,
our hectic holiday lives—and I want
to slow down, let my lists go,
cancel meetings, forget the tasks,
go back out into the quiet of it
on my whispering skis, past marsh,
grass ferny with frost, past
Picnic Point's feathered trees,
to watch the water rising into cloud
and crystal, my breath making white
feathers of my eyelashes, cheeks warm
with heart's warm blood, moving into
this morning like no other—
I want to say, when I come
to the end of my days,
that I did not forget
the beautiful fragility of the world;
that there were mornings I entered
into its brief, altered, and altering
weather—entered, and came back changed.

by Robin Chapman

from *Images of a Complex World: The Art and Poetry of Chaos*

Robin Chapman is author of five chapbooks and three books of poetry, including the two Posner Poetry Award–winning collections *The Way In* (Tebot Bach) and *Images of a Complex World: The Art and Poetry of Chaos* (World Scientific, with J.C. Sprott's fractal art). Her book *The Dreamer Who Counted the Dead* will be published by Word Editions in 2007; and her anthology, co-edited with Judith Strasser, *On Retirement: 75 Poems*, will appear from University of Iowa Press in April. Her poems have appeared in *American Scholar, Hudson Review, OnEarth,* and *Appalachia,* among many other journals. She is a two-time recipient of Wisconsin Arts Board Individual Development grants and teaches poetry workshops at The Clearing in Door County. She is a professor emerita of communicative disorders at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Hearing Loddigs Died

Drops of rain on the window. Surely tears.
I am all caught up in thinking of trout.
The rain gets done and birds are busy on the lawn.
My wife talks to me. It is not her fault
that she does not know where I am.
What kind of man must I be in her mind?
Finally it seems very important to look
the way I feel, but I can't. I say,
"You do not know where I am."
I turn the computer off,
find a clipboard and coffee, and head upstairs.
I become hungry for every concrete thing I see:
my bag of carving tools, a clothespin,
our envelope of taxes, a hand print on a window.
Going by, I pick up my short-wave radio.
I don't know why. He was over eighty,
in a crumpled grocery bag of flesh.
I don't know why my wife doesn't know
where I am up here. We are closer than she thinks.
She in her third hour on the phone and I
listening hard to foreign language on the radio.

by John Graber

John Graber earned an MFA from Iowa in 1972 and has taught high school and college English. He has lived with his wife in a village of 94 people in northern Wisconsin since 1978, where they raised three children. His poetry has appeared in the *American Poetry Review, Iowa Review, Poetry Northwest,* and *Kansas Quarterly.*

Written Below Constellations Named for Private Body Parts

Betty kicked it off with the line about taking tea
one summer afternoon near a beach. Adele
added an imagined lover and Bob, the smell
of dead carp. That's when Janette changed the
tea to wine, at night, below constellations named
for private body parts. And Fred, thinking of his
senior prom, alluded to lyrics by the Four Sons.
Adele's daughter, Sea (real name Cynthia),
not much for spelling, imagined that four suns
meant an hallucinogenic dream. After they left,
Janette and Sea smoked a joint in Janette's
Chevy down by the boat launch. Fred snuck
over to Adele's for sex as Betty straightened up
the front room and piled cups and saucers in
the sink. Bob went home to warm up "fishticks"
in the microwave and compose his own poem.
It was about the poetry group's trying to write
something together. It sounded a lot like this.

by John Lehman

John Lehman is the coauthor of *Everything Is Changing: How to Gain Loyal Clients and Customers Quickly,* from Zelda Wilde Publishing. He is also the founder of *Rosebud* magazine, one of the largest literary journals in the United States, and the poetry editor of *Wisconsin People & Ideas*. His Madison advertising agency was Lehman Advertising and Marketing. John now makes his living as a writer, publisher, business consultant, and public speaker.

Lately He's Been Trying to Not Be So Sentimental about Things

The shirt his first wife
sewed for him, too large now
and lately out of date again,
she cut out the pattern

from the Saturday paper
and pieced it together
all Sunday afternoon on the floor
while he put on a pot roast

and peeled some potatoes
in the kitchen they had painted
on a whim the weekend before
an impish orange and yellow,

thinking even at that instant
how the small house must have looked
from outside, at a middle distance,
glowing in the November gloom.

Or the 8 x 10, pre-Kodacolor,
hand-tinted, "courting photo,"
as his father like to call it,
where his parents were still together

and thought they always would be,
their arms lightly around each other
in some innocent gesture of
a tenuous, post-war intimacy,

on lawns tinged nostalgic green,
under the perfect weather
of a barefoot June, of Senior Prom,
of graduation, wedding, honeymoon

where people pledged not lightly
to always love one another
and smiled into each other's faces
as if that's all that mattered.

by Bruce Taylor

Bruce Taylor is the author of *Pity the World: Poems Selected and New* (Plain View Press 2005) and the recipient of the 2006 Major Achievement Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. His poetry and translations have appeared in such places as the *Chicago Review, The Nation, New York Quarterly,* and *Poetry.* He is currently serving as lead judge of the 2007 *Wisconsin People & Ideas* Poetry Contest.

Girlfriends

in the past 3 days
I've been rejected
4 times
with notes
written in that nearly
flirtatious semi-cursive
of the hip
college-educated
sexually liberated
20-some-
year-old woman

& in these notes
I was told

my poems
need to explain
themselves more

I don't
know how to
break stanzas

my lines
are too

skinny

& the number
of credits
on my cover
letter is
"off putting"

none
of these women

promised
that if

I changed
how I've written for
21 years &

abandoned the tricks
I've used in cover
letters for almost as long

they'd publish as much
as
a word of mine

on the other hand

3 of the poems
they found flawed
had already been
accepted
elsewhere

now that I
think of it

it's never been easy
for me to have
lost

& having

won has always
been harder

by Mark Wisniewski

Mark Wisniewski is the winner of the 2006 Tobias Wolff Award and the recipient of a Pushcart Prize. His novel, *Confessions of a Polish Used Car Salesman,* is in its second printing; *One of Us One Night,* his chapbook of poems, was published recently by Platonic 3Way Press. His work has appeared in more than 200 magazines, including *Poetry, Missouri Review,* and *Poetry International.*

Holiday Greetings

from the Dalton's who wish you and yours a most
Merry and would like to take this opportunity
to share what a special year it has been for Suzie
trained hard and finally made the Tri-County

Stars then was demoted to second string to give
the coach's daughter more playing time so they
finished their season 3-18-and Kenny made honor
roll and went uptown to celebrate when a couple

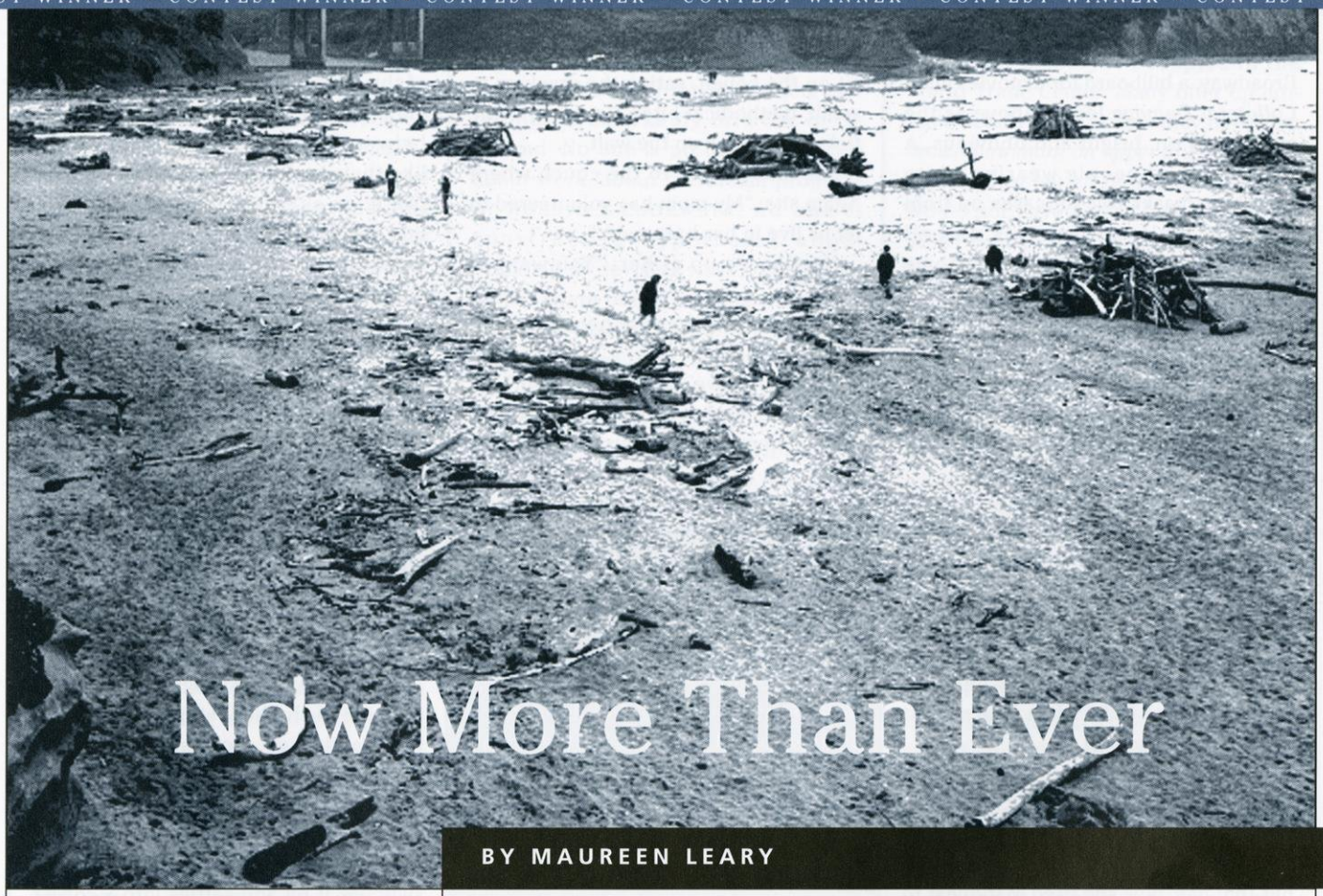
thugs left him unconscious in the street however
the charges were not for attempted murder since
they didn't leave him in the *middle* of the Kane
met a stepbrother he never knew he had when

his mother unexpectedly died and suddenly
there was a whole forest of kin Kane had never
met wondering why he was hanging around so
long since she had cut him out of her we won

a six-night cruise to the Bahamas but yours truly
fell on ice outside of Piggly-Wiggly the day before
and ruptured a hope you are looking forward as we
are to an exciting New love Candy Kane & the Kids

by Shoshauna Shy

Shoshauna Shy is the author of three chapbooks produced by Pudding House Publications, Moon Journal Press, and Parallel Press. Her work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest, Cimarron Review, Seattle Review,* on "Poetry Daily," and elsewhere. One of her poems was selected for inclusion in the Library of Congress program, "A Poem a Day for American High Schools," launched by former U.S. poet laureate Billy Collins. She is a member of the Prairie Fire Poetry Quartet, founder of the Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf program, and works for the Wisconsin Humanities Council, which presents the annual Wisconsin Book Festival.



Now More Than Ever

BY MAUREEN LEARY

Photos by Bill Blankenberg

WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW/HARRY W. SCHWARTZ BOOKSHOPS SHORT STORY CONTEST WINNER

THIRD PLACE

"SHOULD I CALL IN?" Joan paces from living room to kitchen, shoeless, but still dressed for the office. She can't figure out how important other people think this is: two buildings have fallen down—is this considered sufficient reason to miss work?

"I don't think we can get through." Adam sits on the couch, eyes fixed on the television screen: the recurring image of a plane disappearing into the side of the World Trade Center, rolling clouds of debris, people running. "I don't think it really matters anyway."

"Yeah—I guess." She sits next to him. A part of her still questions when this footage is from: where, what country, what film. The strenuously composed newscaster reappears, urging those watching to give blood.

"Let's go," Adam says, agitated. "We shouldn't just sit here."

On Lafayette Street, people stand dazed on the sidewalk, congregating in concerned huddles, *I'm okay*, the constant, tentative refrain. A man in a dark suit covered with white ash walks by, leaving a horrified silence in his wake.

They stand in line in front of St. Vincent's Hospital to give their phone number and blood types to a strangely cheerful man with a clipboard. Joan is fairly certain she is O negative—or was it O positive? She remembers her ninth-grade biology teacher saying it was something common.

The man jots down their information. "We'll call when we need you to come in."

They wander downtown wordlessly, holding tight to each other's hands when they cross the street, like siblings.

At the corner of Canal Street and West Broadway, a billboard for a movie called *Collateral Damage* looms above as the sun blazes on, bright and oblivious. A procession of people wearing white breathing masks roll suitcases up from Tribeca, while others talk on cell phones or hug indiscriminately. Some look as though they have just stopped crying, others appear ready to start. Joan remains dry-eyed with disbelief. She has the sense that she has been sprayed with a chemical coating, like something made flame-retardant.

The phone rings just once before Joan's mother picks up, reciting the name of the HMO where she is a receptionist.

"Mom?"

"God—where *were* you?" She sounds beleaguered. Joan imagines her face looking hard, as it did when Joan missed curfew in high school.

Joan sits on the bed: "Our phone didn't work—I've been trying."

Her mother recounts the various times she had tried to get in touch with her that day, how she used Mapquest to figure out how many miles Joan lived from the site: 1.4. This uninterrupted, chattering monologue is her mother's usual response when something happens that she finds upsetting. Her voice becomes high, her tone strident and detached. Joan picks at a string on the quilt, filled with the familiar feeling that she has done something wrong.

Her mother asks why Joan and Adam don't move back to Wisconsin—she just cleaned out the basement, they could stay down there. "Nothing *ever* happens here," she says, and tries to laugh, but it comes out more like a bleating sound.

Joan forces a laugh for her mother's benefit. "I should probably go—we're supposed to go give blood, I think."

There is the sound of nose blowing. Her mother clears her throat: "I love you, Toots."

"Love you too," Joan says quickly. "Bye." She looks out the window at the waning sunlight. Her mother used to leave notes addressed to *Toots* on the kitchen table, along with four graham crackers on a plate. Joan would take her house keys from around her neck and sit on the couch, eating the crackers in small, methodical bites, listening to the tick of the clock on the wall.

She stands next to the couch where Adam sits: "My mom has volunteered to let us live in her basement."

He glances up at her: "You want to go?"

"I think I'd rather die here than live with my mother."

"I can't believe you just said that." His substantial eyebrows meet in an expression of incredulous disgust.

WINNING WORDS

Why lead judge Margaret George chose "Now More Than Ever"

A mismatched young couple in New York must reevaluate their lives in the shadow of 9/11. In spite of the mountains of descriptions we've already had of this cataclysmic event, this story finds arresting new images and perspectives of the day our world turned upside down.

"What? It's not like I meant it." She sits at the end of the couch furthest from him. She used to tell herself his displays of righteous indignation were evidence of a good, solid heart. Lately, they seemed just another vestige of his privileged upbringing, a specific sort of arrogant naiveté unique to the wealthy and liberal.

Adam flips between CNN and MSNBC. They watch the only slightly varied footage of planes hitting buildings, listen to the sound of glass breaking, the groan and squeal of metal. He switches to the BBC, the British accents making everything sound comfortingly arch. Joan yawns: saturated, numb with images. They watch until the sun has set, until the violet light of the screen is all that illuminates them. They watch to drown out the disconcerting quiet outside their window, the insistent beating of their hearts: *Go-Now Go-Now Go-Now.*

The green numbers of the digital clock say *4:27.* It is not late afternoon—the darkness makes her almost certain of this—though it doesn't feel like night either. She feels suspended somewhere between the two in a room that looks like their bedroom, but doesn't sound like it: an alternate-reality East Village lies beyond the window, a soundstage devoid of distorted bass lines and agitated drunks.

She tries to remember the moment she became aware her eyes were open, when exactly she closed them. According to the clock, there are three hours unaccounted for. A haunting despair has settled over her, the feeling of being abandoned and utterly alone, like when she used to wake from her afternoon nap to find that the light had changed, standing to hang on to the side of her crib, waiting for someone to remember her.

She sits up and swings her legs over the side of the bed, stepping softly on the hardwood floors, closing the bedroom door behind her.

A lone lamp has been left on in the living room; the TV is in a rare moment of repose, just a blank screen. She switches it on and settles into a corner of the couch. One of the few channels without some sort of *Attack on America*–themed coverage is airing a show about the rise and inevitable fall of a band she had been obsessed with during her junior year in high school. She has already seen this episode, can anticipate the seminal moments: the humble beginnings in a bleak, rust-belt town, the vermin-infested apartment in New York, the part where the club owner says they lost their punk credibility, the repeated visits to rehabilitation facilities.

The present-day shots show bloated faces and enormous, generic-looking houses in gated communities, stunned infants and wary wives. Each band member's parting words seem like some defensive-sounding variation on *I'm so much better off now*, the tinkly piano and string soundtrack signaling that the show is over.

She longs to see the band onstage again as they had been during their drug-addled early years. When she was 16, they played an all-ages show at a

glamorously dilapidated venue called *Okay's Corral* near the University of Wisconsin campus. Against Joan's protests—*What if someone gets mad?*—her friend Michelle grabbed her hand and pulled her to the front, bumping sweaty shoulders out of her way until they were just two rows from the stage. The lead singer caterwauled and clawed at his emaciated chest, turning himself inside-out while Joan stood captivated, seeing the possibility for a different kind of life, hoping against all reason that he would open his eyes and notice her, take her away from her mother, from trigonometry, from Wisconsin.

Though there are no photographs of her from that time, this is the self she sees with the most clarity: one side of her head shaved to the scalp, lipstick the color of dried blood, a large recurrent pimple on her chin, layers of shapeless clothing in colors unflattering to her round ruddy cheeks. She used to construct these outfits out of some fierce internal directive, wanting to look in the mirror and recognize the ugliness and disquiet she felt, the desperation and rage.

At the office, desks sit empty while everyone congregates in conference rooms or around the employee microwave—this in spite of a mass e-mail circulated that morning from the president of the firm urging all employees to do their *patriotic duty* and *get back to the task at hand.*

Her coworkers have donned different faces for tragedy that Joan finds much more appealing than their usual ones. They are generous and thoughtful, sharing doughnuts and potato chips, passing boxes and bags of non-Atkins-approved foods usually absent from the premises. It doesn't feel like work, but some kind of shamefully festive gathering, everyone touching each other's sleeves, telling where they were, sharing secondhand stories of near-misses. It reminds her of going to wakes when she was little: her relatives, usually so reserved and self-conscious, suddenly tearstained and animated.

She appreciates the reorganizing effect of grief, how it makes life feel like a pop-up book, everything important thrust to the forefront, everything else fading unremarkably into the background. No one is pretending to care about work, about petroleum products or nonstick cookware, no one is constructing hypotheses about branding or devising ways to make the public aware of the amazingly essential services these companies provide. Walking to the train, she realizes that this has easily been her best day at the office.

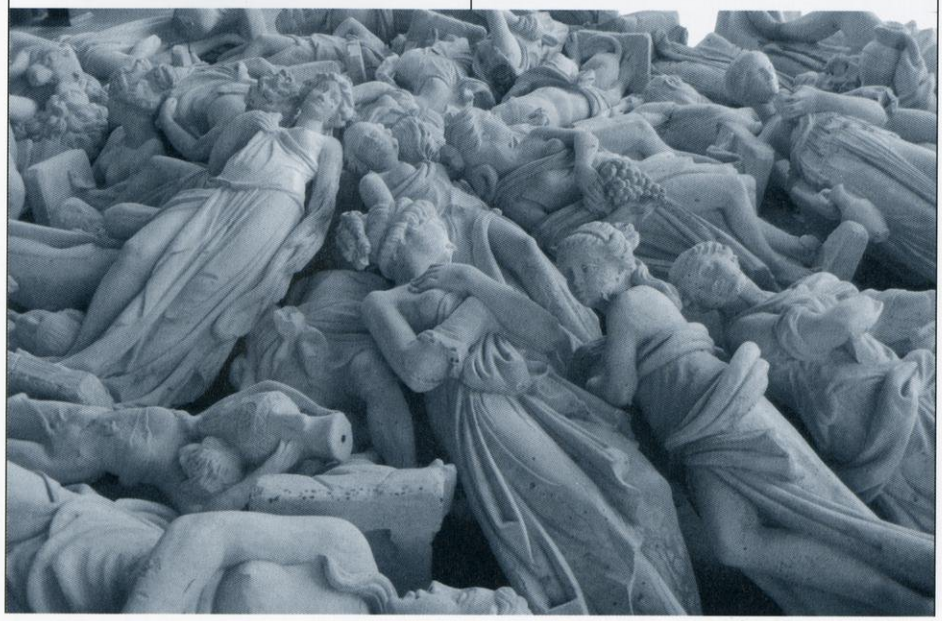
She gets off at the stop before hers, delaying her return home to Adam and his conspiracy theories, the results of his exhaustive online research implicating the Reagan administration: *The U.S. military trained bin Laden as an Afghani freedom fighter, you know.* There was no solace in his revelations: it was like finding out the neighbor you always suspected to be a child molester actually was.

The fence around Union Square Park is lined with mismatched votive candles, hung with stuffed animals strung up by their necks. Hundreds of computer-generated flyers attached to poles and railings have appeared seemingly overnight. They bear photographs scanned and cropped courtesy of Photoshop, accompanied by typed descriptions of the missing. Most begin with a line or two stating where the person worked, which tower and floor his or her employer occupied in the World Trade Center. Many offer up intimate details of the bodies they have lost: *brown birthmark on upper thigh, tattoo of Tweety Bird on left breast.* Things Joan would not have known had she merely stood next to them at the crosswalk or sat across from them on the train.

The flyers have phone numbers or e-mail addresses; some promise cash rewards for information about the disappeared. Joan wonders if the families actually think these people will be found, if they believe they are wandering down some obscure street near the West Side Highway, dazed and dusty, waiting to be recognized.

The brides are everywhere, pruned of their bouquets and champagne glasses, relieved of parents and wedding parties. There is one near the Gandhi statue with her veil blowing sideways, the groom cut from view, now just a disembodied, dark-suited shoulder. She appears to have been enlarged several times, the grainy pixels revealing a strain in her smile, a deadness in her eyes probably unapparent in the originals.

Adam had asked Joan to marry him on the beach behind his parents' summerhouse the month before. The water was gray, the rocks bleach-white and she felt like laughing, as she usually did at moments that were supposed to be filled with earnestness and import. *Yeah—okay*, she said. A few yards away,



an enormous sea tortoise lay rotting magnificently, flies and birds taking up residence on its remains.

There are aspects of Adam's life she likes the idea of being connected to: his creative tenacity, his accomplished friends, his sharp, capable parents and Holocaust-survivor grandparents who say things like *Your education is the only thing no one can take away from you.* In Adam's family, it was not enough merely to go to college, to just have a job, everyone was expected to be brilliant, to excel in some inimitable way. They were all so comfortable in their intellectualism, wearing it like the old pajamas they sat around in on Sunday mornings at their country house, their conversations laden with references to Kantian ethics and J.S. Mill. Joan hoped some of this rigor might be transferred to her; her relationship to her intellect was fraught and uncertain, an ill-fitting wool blazer she donned for certain occasions, one that dug in at the armpits, rode up her back.

She walks the remaining seven blocks downtown, stopping to look up at her apartment building from across the street; the lights on inside make the interior look hot and bright.

Adam is at the kitchen table when she opens the door. He stands up: "Guess what I got?"

Joan puts her bag down in the hallway: "I don't know."

He dangles a laminated card suspended from a metal chain in front of her face with his name and the name of a construction company typed on it.

"What is it?"

"It's a pass to the site."

"How'd you get that?"

"Josh's dad knows one of the engineers." He scratches at something on the face of the card with his fingernail. "We're going down there to shoot some footage tomorrow."

"Huh." Joan lines her shoes up on the mat next to the door. She can't imagine wanting to go down to the actual site, she prefers to see it all on television, pretend it is happening somewhere far away.

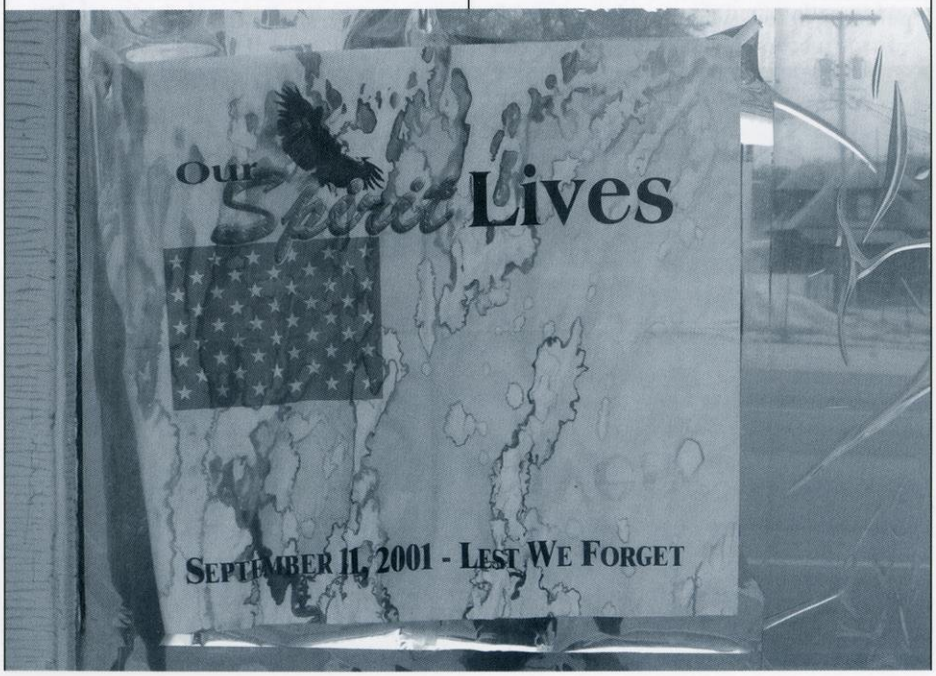
"Do you know how hard it is to get one of these things?" He looks as excited as the day he was granted an interview with a group of retired Coney Island Freak Show participants.

"I guess I don't."

He leans against the kitchen counter: "What?"

"Nothing—it just seems a little soon." Joan sits on the couch and turns on the TV.

"Who do you think filmed all the stuff you're watching right now?" He shakes his head. "I'm calling my mom."



Adam walks the length of the kitchen with the phone in one hand, twirling the pass on its chain with the other—making it spin—like a lifeguard's whistle on a lanyard, his voice animated, buoyant.

She had lost the ability to affect him some years back, though she could still remember a time when he seemed to find her fascinating, her upbringing almost exotic. *So no one you knew in high school went to college?* He would ask. She knew he liked to think of her as someone who had transcended her shabby circumstances, triumphed over tragedy. He tended to regard people in cinematic terms, casting her as the winsome Midwestern escapee, Diane Keaton to his Woody Allen in *Annie Hall.*

She used to worry that he would find her out, realize that she was actually impatient and deceitful, indolent and covetous; someone who had grown accustomed to living in his apartment, who felt entitled to the high-tech stereo equipment and stainless steel refrigerator with its expensive coffee and cheese. Eventually, she came to the unsettling realization that he simply disregarded the parts of her that didn't correspond with his original vision. Like the subjects of his documentaries, he just edited them out.

Joan hangs her bag on a hook in her cubicle and turns on her computer, clicking the icon for Internet access. The screen shows a photograph of Osama bin Laden with a link underneath: *When will Osama bin Laden be caught? Vote.* Her mailbox contains the same 15 messages she has yet to respond to: her sister Ellen, acquaintances from college, former coworkers, all replying to the e-mail she sent out two weeks ago with the subject line *I'm fine*. They want to know what it feels like; they want the contact high. Last week, she had been more than happy to oblige, recounting the story repeatedly, adding insightful, Technicolor detail. Now it feels like a breakup she has no desire to discuss, the story no longer exciting, just exhausting and sad.

Two other messages have appeared since yesterday evening: a forwarded

poll asks who is having the bigger post-September 11th existential crisis, fashion editors or PR executives; a mass mailing from a woman she roomed with in college urges everyone to *Remember that this is an international event! An international tragedy!* Dina had done a stint in the Peace Corps but now worked at an imported cheese shop in Madison, Wisconsin. Sophomore year, she used to sit sulking on her bed until Joan asked what was wrong.

Joan lines up her stapler and three-hole punch, opens and closes the top drawer of her file cabinet. She listens to Judy in the next cubicle making a spate of personal calls while their boss is in a meeting for upper management. In a mere handful of days, budgets have been cut, events postponed indefinitely, focus groups canceled. She finds herself sitting at her desk most of the time, trying to appear occupied: reorganizing data from previous projects, changing the color of her screensaver, dusting under her computer. She has noticed executives doing variations on the same things in their spacious offices: reshuffling, making neat piles, striding purposefully toward nothing in particular.

A new e-mail from the president of the firm appears in Joan's inbox with the subject line *Staffing Issue*. The company is going to a *skeleton staff* until business picks up again; recipients of this e-mail are advised to pack up their personal belongings, to expect a phone call within 10 days outlining a more long-term plan.

"Shit," Judy says from the other side of the wall. "Joan?"

"Yeah?"

"Did you get this e-mail from Patti?"

"Uh-huh."

There is the familiar squeak of Judy's desk chair. She appears in Joan's cubicle, sits on her desk. "Can you believe they would pull this shit at a time like this?"

Joan shakes her head, staring at Judy's black suede pump. She has noticed that most people who say things like *at a time like this* hadn't known anyone in the World Trade Center, didn't live anywhere near it.

"They'll be sorry—what are they going to do without us?"

"I don't know." Joan has a hard time believing that the superfluous nature of their positions wasn't apparent before.

"I'm so screwed," Judy says. "At least *you're* getting married."

"We're not married yet." Joan's boss had said something similar when he found out she was engaged: *PR girls all quit after they get married.* It seemed like he was joking, so she laughed. *A PR girl who was getting married!* It sounded so ludicrous, so far from how she thought of herself. He didn't join her laughter, just gave her a bemused look and walked away, leaving her standing next to the men's room.

Judy isn't listening to her anymore, staring off somewhere, chewing on a pale pink thumbnail. She stands up: "I'm going to start looking—what's that PR headhunter's site again?"

"I don't know." Joan surveys her overly organized desk. There is nothing here she wants to bring with her: no photographs or plants, no desk toys. She takes a paper clip from her dispenser and unfolds it: she won't have to come here anymore, she can walk out at the end of the day, unapologetically filled with contempt, without the sinking knowledge that she will have to re-up for it all over again tomorrow morning.

Still, she can't quite imagine where she will go. She used to think of herself as hardworking, but has begun to realize that though she has worked a lot of hours in her life, she was always just sort of there, bringing drinks or counting money or, most recently, writing press releases in her cubicle. Not particularly ambitious on her own behalf, she always seemed to be a part of someone else's idea, her past a series of hopeful beginnings that devolved into the same disheartened drone.

Judy goes by with a sheaf of papers in her hand. Her black pants and pointy-toed shoes are almost indistinguishable from the ones Joan has on, from the office attire worn by so many other New York women. There is something obscurely sad about them; they seem to reflect a distinct narrowing of possibilities, a persistent lack of hope. There were things she wanted to do once, but they all seemed too difficult now, too impractical. Her twenties had burned off in a blur of assistant positions and sporadically attended continuing-ed classes: ceramics, creative writing, photography. There were late, boozy nights with similarly employed aspiring actor/playwright/puppeteer friends, making pronouncements, hatching plans, but little in her daylight hours reflected the things she said she wanted to do, just mornings on the train and the yawning stretch of climate-controlled hours in between.

She walks the carpeted corridor to the watercooler, drawing a paper cupful from the spigot. Outside the twenty-first-story window, the late afternoon sun falls across some of the surrounding rooftop topiaries, leaving others in the shade. The Chrysler building peeks out insouciantly, reminding her of the way she felt when she first moved to New York after college, how the majestic backdrop of the city seemed to give her otherwise unremarkable life drama and significance.

The after-work crowd hurries by as Joan exits the train station at Astor Place, East Villagers dispersing to their various addresses. Posters in the windows of delis and liquor stores declare *I Love New York Now More Than Ever.* It seems a confusing message, one that leaves her feeling anxious and vaguely guilty. Is she supposed to love it more now that it has been defaced? She used to feel like she could depend on New York, that even if she was flimsy and boring, she was a part of something brassy and invincible.

Up ahead, the massive interruption in the downtown skyline makes the city appear disconcertingly unfinished, inadequate. It makes her think of a drawing from the illustrated *Chronicles of Narnia*: an intricate pen and ink rendering of Aslan the lion after the forces of darkness had captured him and shaved his mane, tied him to the ground with stakes and rope, left him to die alone, humiliated. She turned to the illustration repeatedly when she was little,

studying it, disturbed and fascinated, the blatant horror of it giving way to pity, to her first inklings of dread and despair. It seemed joined to her in some strange shameful way, almost as if she had drawn it herself, as if the image had already existed in her mind's eye, connected to her life in a way she couldn't fathom.

The apartment is almost dark when she gets home. "Adam?" she calls, switching on the kitchen light. There is no answer, just the echo of her voice. The stainless steel counters are gleaming, the smell of synthetic pine lingers. The cleaning woman comes on Mondays and the apartment always seems more cavernous and sterile in her wake.

Joan opens the bottle of Riesling someone brought to their engagement party and pours a generous glass, taking a long drink while retrieving the voice-mail messages. The first is Adam saying he should be home around nine; the other one is her mother, asking if Joan wants a gas mask *in case of chemicals on the subway*. Something about her voice makes Joan think of biting down on a piece of tinfoil.

Though under normal circumstances they rarely spoke, her mother seems to have developed a sudden need to believe that she is wise and useful, relevant to Joan's life. She has taken to calling almost daily, to say that *everything happened for a reason*, or to ask if Joan needed duct tape and plastic for her windows, if she wanted one of the rhinestone American flag pins a woman in her office is selling, if she has talked to her father yet. No. No. And No. But these are not the answers her mother wants.

Adam bends over, kissing the vicinity of Joan's mouth. "I'll probably be late—can you pick up the dry cleaning?" Sun glints off the silver chain holding his pass around his neck.

"It's not like my day is exactly packed."

"You always said you hated that job, anyway." The door closes behind him.

Joan pours herself another cup of coffee and slides the newspaper in front of her. The front page of *The New York Times* features a story about two formerly commitment-phobic men who proposed to their long-suffering girlfriends in the wake of recent events, propelled through the doors of fine jewelry stores by their fear of dying alone.

A few pages in, a special section is devoted to abbreviated obituaries of those killed in the World Trade Center called *Portraits of Grief*. They strike her as remarkably similar: each casualty seems a budding humanitarian or civic leader, someone who loved and was loved by small children, old people, or animals—sometimes all three. According to the narratives provided by parents or wives, none of the dead were gladly childless with a penchant for reality television, none of them hated the 90-hour weeks they were required to work at investment-banking firms, none of them were voluntarily estranged from their families, confused or selfish or unknown.

What would her family say about her, what random tidbit of biographical information would the *Times* find significant yet innocuous enough to spin into a three-hundred-word narrative? Perhaps her mother would volunteer that Joan had liked cats. Her father might say that she had graduated from the University of Wisconsin and majored in something like art history—*but don't quote me on that* he would say with a laugh.

He came to Joan's college graduation ceremony with his expensive camera equipment and took a photograph of the girl who crossed the stage just after Joan. *That's not me*, Joan realized as she looked at the picture of an unfamiliar girl shaking the chancellor's hand, but said nothing. The girl did resemble her after all.

She paces from one end of the apartment to the other with the jittery feeling that she has gone past her caffeine threshold, raced straight through the sense of possibility to the acute anxiety that lies just beyond. She changes into a sweater and jeans, grabbing her keys.

Passing the dry cleaners, she takes a series of turns until she is headed straight downtown. She recognizes this courting of sorrow with shame and embarrassment; this same impulse had compelled her to attend funerals of people she barely knew, to pine for men she hadn't loved, to listen to sad songs in the dark of her bedroom, waiting for something that could qualify as a feeling.

She stands behind a cement blockade with a small crowd of people, peering down the street into the piles of wreckage. The aerial views, the newspaper photographs could not convey the reality, the enormity, of the smashed and mangled girders. It reminds her of the impound lot near her childhood home: sad stacks of flattened cars with smashed headlights, discarded, tossed aside, useless.

There are eerily recognizable remnants of staircases and elevator shafts, jagged exterior walls and window casings where people stood with the terrible knowledge that it was too late for them, people who held hands with their coworkers and jumped, leaving behind cubicles and Xerox machines, regrettable marriages and aging parents, private stashes of unrealized dreams. Was there any relief in that great whoosh of weightlessness?

A woman to her right snaps a picture with a disposable camera, then advances the film with her thumb and takes another. Joan starts walking back uptown, stopping to read a flyer taped to the side of a phone booth. It bears a photograph of a woman with Southeast Asian features. The typed text underneath is longer than others Joan has read, rambling and unsure: a coworker saw her exiting the World Trade Center after the first tower was hit, but the woman still hasn't gotten in touch with her family, with her fiancé. The woman's eyes are alert and perceptive; Joan imagines her watching the buildings come down from a few blocks away with a sense of horror—yes, of course—but also with the sudden awareness that she has been liberated from reality as she previously understood it, that her life has been redefined, has broken wide open. Perhaps she chose that moment of chaotic possibility to walk away from

what she had known, what she had wrought, boarded a ferry to New Jersey, took a Greyhound bus to Atlanta or Chicago, started over.

A few feet away, a folding table is stacked with T-shirts, postcards, and miniature replicas of the twin towers. Tourists mill around it, looking for something to purchase and put on a shelf. Joan picks up a snow globe: it has a tiny World Trade Center inside of it, surrounded by emergency vehicles.

The man behind the table smiles at her, he is missing his left incisor: "Five dollars—for you, three."

Joan puts it down: "I think I'm going to pass." She thinks of the president imploring them to shop.

A family of three approaches: a man, a woman, and a girl of 15 or so with a spray of acne across her cheeks, her hair limp and unremarkable save for a single blue streak down the left side; a button on her book bag says *Whatever, you moron.*

The father holds up a T-shirt with the ominous-sounding *We Will Not Forget* superimposed over a cheap-looking American flag graphic. He turns to the girl: "Kristi, do you want something?"

A look of disdain flashes over the girl's face: "No thanks."

The mother examines a set of World Trade Center postcards: "Someday you can tell your grandchildren you were here—you were a part of history."

"Yeah, if you think rubbernecking at an accident is being a part of history."

"Why do you always have to be so negative about everything?" The mother pays for the postcards and stows them in her fanny pack, zipping it up tersely.

The parents charge forward when the light changes, the girl lagging behind a few steps. Joan falls in stride with her at the crosswalk: "I like your pin," she says, as they reach the curb.

The girl looks startled: "What?" Her parents have doubtlessly warned her about the crazy people in New York.

Joan smiles: "On your bag?" She suddenly feels intrusive and overly jocular.

"Oh—yeah." The girl glances at Joan: there is no fear in her expression, merely impatience, slight confusion. It is the face of someone who sees not a kindred spirit or even a peer, but just another bland, smarmy adult with an insistent smile, wanting something.

As the girl hurries up the sidewalk toward her parents, Joan pauses in front of a Starbucks, letting her get a good distance ahead. Something about the girl's inelegant gait, the way the hem of her pants drags on the pavement, makes Joan's throat constrict, her face warm. The parents make a space between them as the girl approaches, reabsorbing her. Tears blur Joan's vision, leaking from their ducts for no reason that she can explain or justify, but they arrive nonetheless, abrupt and bewildering, like loss. ✹

Maureen Leary is a graduate of the MFA program in creative writing at Hunter College, where she was the recipient of the 2003 Bernard Cohen Prize for Fiction and the 2004 Margaret Fahy Raynor Thesis Award. Her fiction has been published in ***Bust***, ***Beloit Fiction Journal***, ***Big City Lit***, ***Redivider***, *and* ***Laurel Review*** *and has been rejected by countless other fine publications. She also writes for* ***Isthmus***, *an alternative weekly newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, where she lives.*

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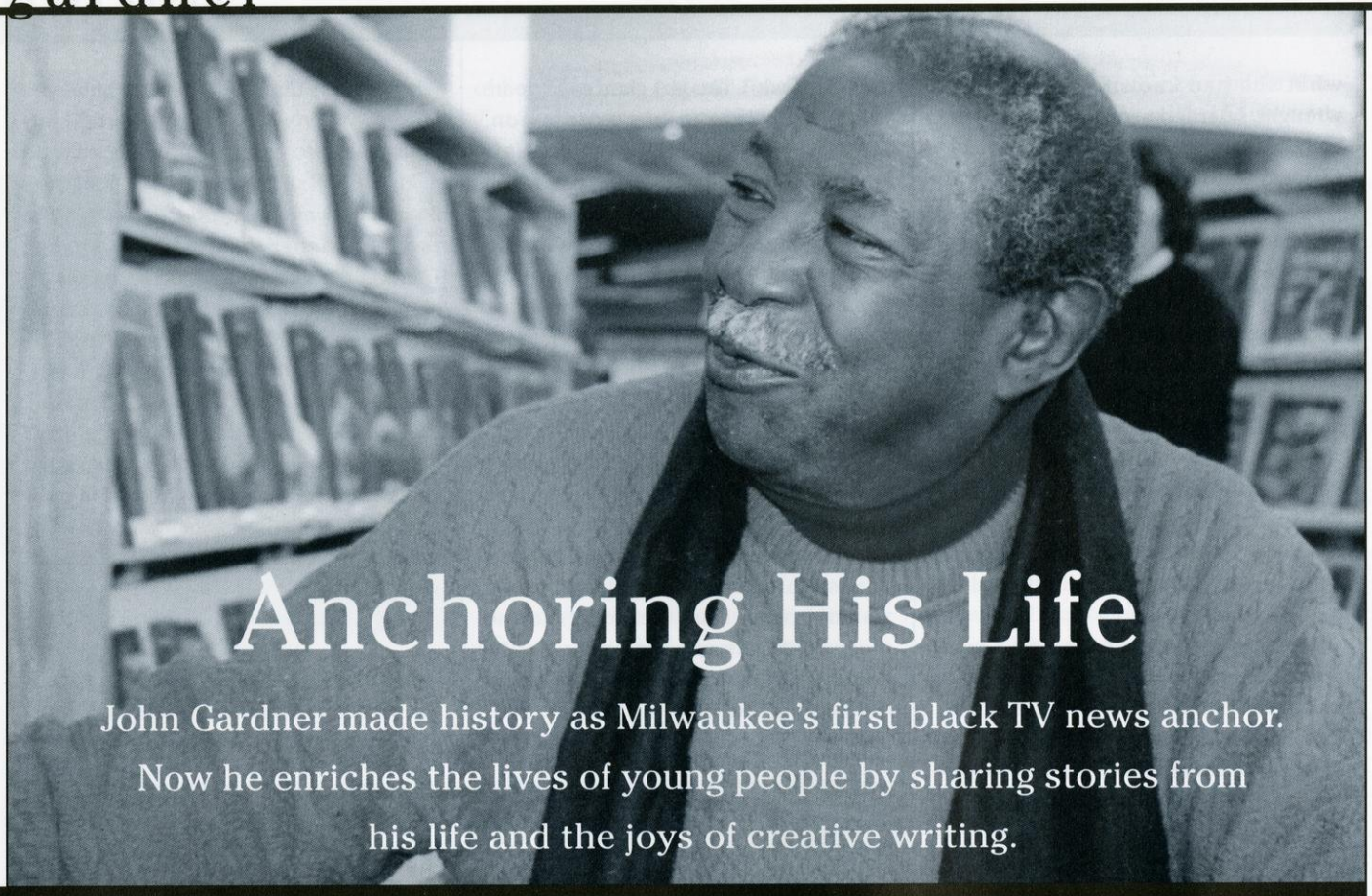


Anchoring His Life

John Gardner made history as Milwaukee's first black TV news anchor. Now he enriches the lives of young people by sharing stories from his life and the joys of creative writing.

BY NATE GRIMM

Photo by Jaclyn Poeschl

JOHN GARDNER'S VOICE IS RICH AND DEEP, bringing to mind Ossie Davis and James Earl Jones. While it's his voice that invites the audience in, it's Gardner's words that make the audience stay. Gardner grabs a book off the shelf and walks confidently to the table that was set up for our videotaped interview in the middle of the high school library in Slinger, a community 25 miles north of Milwaukee. Like an optometrist looking into a patient's eyes, he calmly looks into the camera and delivers a message to an audience he is still eager to mold. "You are the author of your own life story."

Now 68 and an avid writer, much of John Gardner's passion for telling a good story stems from the 25 years he spent as a broadcast journalist in the Milwaukee and St. Louis areas. As Milwaukee's first black news anchor in the tumultuous first years of affirmative action in the early 1970s, Gardner is in a position to comment on overcoming obstacles. The memories are vivid as he describes a delicate situation in an industry where appearance and ratings rule. As the interview proceeds, so does Gardner's intensity. It's as if, after years of keeping his feelings to himself, a long-dormant faucet of emotion has been turned on again, allowing the words to come pouring out. He shakes his head about the past and pleads for people to change the present so that we can have a better future.

Watch the local news today in Milwaukee and you see many diverse faces. It seems the glass ceiling that existed in television for many years has been erased. But go back 35 years, and most likely you would have seen only white television news anchors and white reporters on Milwaukee television. John Gardner helped minorities break through. Despite being told summarily in 1969 by a news director at a local station where he was interning that "society wasn't ready for a black face on television," Gardner persisted. He thought back to the advice he had received as a child. His parents, poor Arkansas dirt farmers who had moved to Milwaukee with only an eighth grade education in the early 1940s, always stressed to John that it was important to seek higher levels of education. After becoming the first in his family to go to college, Gardner was hired by a different news station, Channel Six, in 1970—then WITI, now Fox—becoming the first black television news anchor in Milwaukee.

"It was a well-kept secret that I was the first black news anchor in Milwaukee," Gardner says. "After I was hired by Channel Six, the network at which I had interned—the one that had let me go—saw that diversity would work, and hired Bill Taylor from WNOV. Bill and I got to know each other fairly well and he was a fantastic professional."

DEFYING EXPECTATIONS

The path to becoming a news anchor wasn't simple. When he went to Lloyd Street Grade School in Milwaukee in the 1940s, Gardner was one of four black children in the whole school. At the time, race meant nothing to him, but he would soon be taught that it mattered to others. "I knew I was different. My skin was dark and most of my classmates' skin was light. I knew that. I always believed that I could grow up and be anything I wanted to be. I didn't know it would get to a certain point and you can't go up anymore, and that they had people like me pigeonholed. In retrospect, they had me pigeonholed from birth. I was meant to only exist in a very small area. Not to rise hardly at all. I didn't feel that way in school. I felt just like everyone else. The older I got, the more I began to see it wasn't true."

"I always believed that I could grow up and be anything I wanted to be. I didn't know it would get to a certain point and you can't go up anymore, and that they had people like me pigeonholed."

At Milwaukee North Division high school, Gardner didn't know what he wanted to do for a living after graduation. He liked drawing but wasn't encouraged to do it. "I really didn't have much career guidance in high school. Sometimes I would make up floor plans and then draw the house according to the floor plans. I showed it to my high school teacher and he all but dressed me down and threatened to send me to the principal's office. It was not part of the assignment and he wanted me to stop."

At that age, Gardner never seriously considered journalism, but he did know he wanted to communicate to others. "I learned as a very young child that it was very difficult for children to communicate to the world and that the world did not listen very well to children. I think somewhere deep inside me I decided that I was going to grow up to communicate, to make an effort to communicate, to the outside world, the world around me. As I did so, I gravitated towards journalism."

After high school, Gardner went into the Air Force, where he got his first experience with radio and using his voice to help others. "The radio I did there was ground-to-air operations: talking to pilots. It was an exchange of information." As in many institutions in the 1950s, his race was an issue for some people. "When I was in the military, they made me supervisor at the radio station and many didn't want to take orders from me because I was black. They said they wouldn't 'let me' give them orders. I told them they had to take orders from me. If they didn't, they could be court-martialed. You had to get a sledgehammer at times to get your point across. They just didn't get it."

While he enjoyed using his voice to talk to pilots and to give cadence, he still never thought much about using it in a career after the military. "I never really connected military radio to commercial radio. It didn't dawn on me until several years later when my wife at the time said that I had a nice voice and should go to broadcasting school."

Gardner enrolled at the now-defunct Career Academy in Broadcasting on Jefferson Street in 1967. The experience he got there gave him a well-rounded look at the world of broadcasting. After finishing in 1969, he worked as an intern for WTMJ under the tutelage of Dave Adams, the announcing supervisor. "Dave was a great announcer and a prince of a man. I have not seen or heard a better announcer, before or since. Dave constantly sang the praises of my work and gave me as many on-air assignments as humanly possible."

But it was there that another boss, the news director, spoke the line that would motivate Gardner to go to college to become a journalist: "Society wasn't ready for a black face on television."

"I never mentioned to him that I intended to be on television. I guess he just assumed it," Gardner says. "Perhaps I painted the picture of someone who could be on television. My physical makeup, my voice, and the way I carried myself. When he said that, he lit a fire under me. I was thinking at the time that this man didn't know me, yet he had the audacity to tell me what society wanted and what I could and could not be. The first thought that occurred to me was, why not? This was 1969. What did society have to do or what did I have to do to make society ready for a black face on television, and

why was this man telling me that it wasn't?

"It was about this time when Dave Adams, normally always in good spirits, approached me with a long face, shocked and pale. When I asked him what was wrong, Dave told me that he had just been told by management that if he didn't stop helping me that 'he would be out on the street with me.' A few days later, a month before my three-month internship was to end, I was called into the production manager's office and told flatly that I had to leave because I was too ambitious. I was put back temporarily but I took it with a grain of salt. I burned no bridges and thanked him for his indulgence and I went to college a few months later. That's when I started my journalism career."

MERIT, NOT COLOR

Focusing on Adams' encouragement rather than the views of management, Gardner continued to pursue journalism because he felt it was a way he could help the world, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

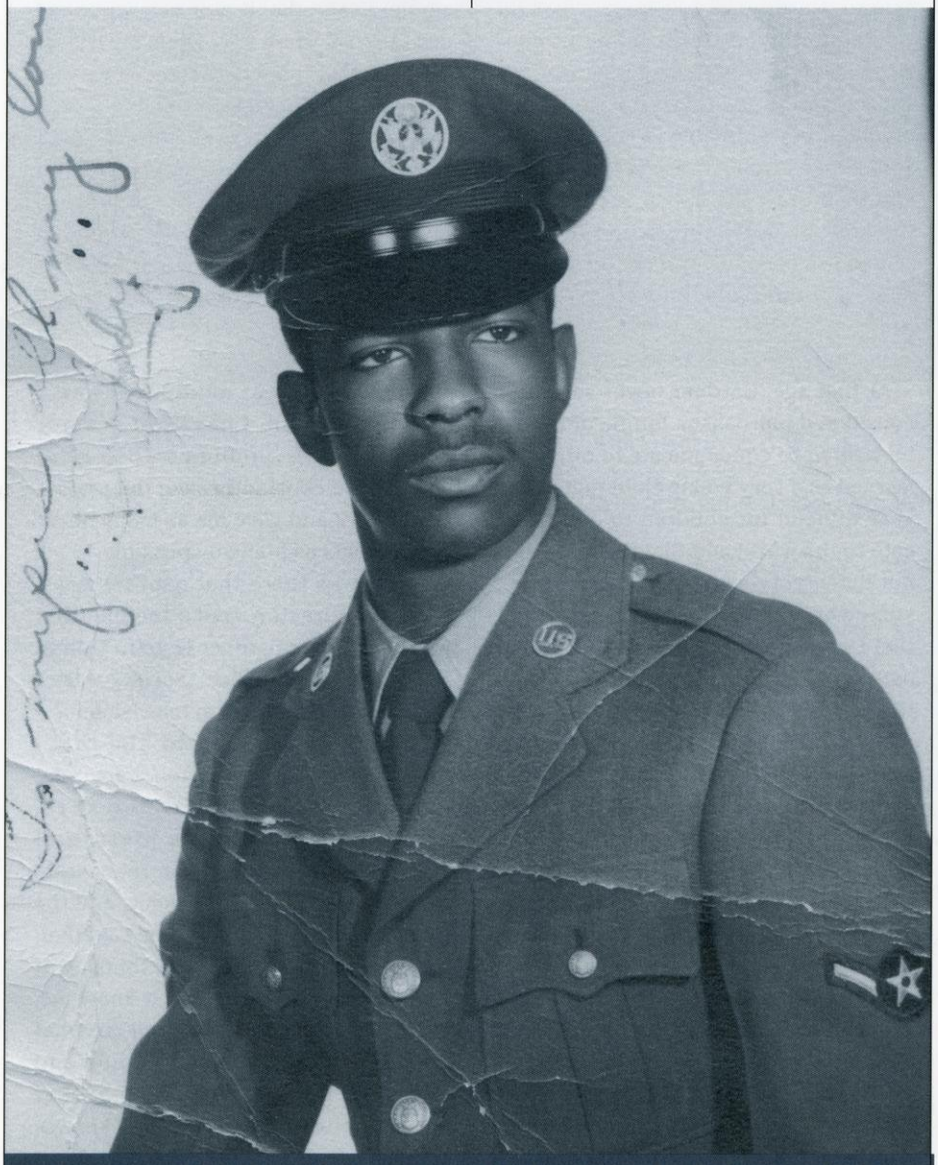
"What interested me was the lack of communication I found between myself and the people I knew and how wars were started because of a lack of communication," says Gardner. "At the time, civil disobedience around the country and in Milwaukee was prevalent. The civil rights movement was at its peak. This was a time when everyone was trying to give his or her point of view. Everyone was talking and very few people were listening. I figured I could play a role as an intermediary perhaps between the society at large and the Establishment."

Gardner spent about a year and a half at WEMP radio anchoring the evening news after his internship while he took classes in journalism and psychology at UW–Milwaukee. It was then that he received the job offer from Channel Six in Milwaukee.

"I didn't take it right away because I didn't want to go into TV news at the time. I wanted to stay in radio news. Then they kept offering more money. They threw a lot of money at me and I finally took it." Incidentally, one of the first stations to call and offer Gardner a job after he took the job at Channel Six was the station that had let him go as an intern. "I politely turned them down," Gardner said.

While at UW–Milwaukee, Gardner was one of the few minorities in the program. "When I was a journalism major at UW-Milwaukee in 1970–71, nine times out of 10 I was the only black student in the class. The reason you didn't see many minorities, in my opinion, was because most black people would look and see there was no chance for them to be anything in broadcasting. They would see very few role models. I didn't look at that. I didn't care. It never occurred to me at the time that I didn't see many other black people in class so I should go into a different trade. I didn't think that way. It was something I wanted to do and something I wanted to be."

The year and a half that Gardner stayed at Channel Six was informative. "The staff was so instructive. They were great teachers in broadcast journalism.



Gardner entered the Air Force after high school, where he got his first experience in radio in ground-to-air operations.

Photo courtesy of John Gardner

Everything went very smoothly. I learned from the masters."

In 1973, an ABC affiliate in St. Louis offered Gardner a job, promising him more input in the news presentation in a larger market. He took it because he was in his early 30s, which was getting old for a television anchor. Many stations were looking to hire anchors in their 20s.

After arriving there, he soon found things weren't quite as they seemed in the interview. "I did learn something very disconcerting. The average person I talked to there was more concerned with how I was dressed and how I looked rather than what I was saying. They focused on my tie, my shirt, and I had to refocus their attention on the news, the story that I had presented to them. Their interest was gravitating even at that point more towards the entertainment side of television rather than the informative side of news."

Gardner soon found out that his philosophy of judging people on talent wasn't a philosophy all shared. In fact, many people at the station saw him only as a way to appease affirmative action proponents.

"I burned out of news after going to St. Louis and finding out that they had suckered me into taking the job. They only wanted a black person to work there," says Gardner. "They did so because they were being sued by several civil rights groups. They weren't sincere about hiring me as a working journalist. I felt betrayed because they restricted me to a point where I could do very little of what I was there for. I wanted them to treat me like everyone else, like Channel Six did, and they didn't. I was the only one at the station getting good ratings but I was largely ignored.

"I was committed to trying to make it work until one day it occurred to me that it wouldn't. My general manager had called me in to get some bogus charges on a local black politician who was getting in trouble. My manager was a Republican. The politician was a Democrat and he was getting into the Republicans' hair and my general manager wanted me to trump something up, get something on him that was real or not. I didn't openly refuse. I just didn't do it and I fell out of favor with my general manager."

"The average person I talked to there was more concerned with how I was dressed and how I looked rather than what I was saying. Their interest was more in the entertainment side of television rather than the informative side of news."

There were many insults and soon Gardner began to see the ugly side of journalism. "There was too much that was self-serving. I was told that it was about serving people. Broadcasting seemed to be in business for itself."

After leaving television, Gardner went back to his first love: radio news. "I loved radio but I was reaching a point where I believed that broadcasting didn't love me. I was highly restricted in what I was doing as a freelance announcer. They only wanted me to do stories that were black. Everything had to be narrowly focused and boxed in

Gardner with Channel Six in the early 1970s, where he broke ground as Milwaukee's first black anchorman.

Photo courtesy of John Gardner

Gardner took all the feelings that were building up in him and wrote poems. He was finally able to communicate his feelings in a way that he wanted. Creative writing was a rebirth.

and that's how I felt for years: narrowly focused and boxed in."

THE WRITER WITHIN

Things got tougher for Gardner. His mother died, he got a divorce, and his ex-wife moved to Boston with their son. That's when he started to turn to writing. He took all the feelings that were building up in him and wrote poems. "It began to well up, all that was accumulating in me, and it came out, unintentionally, in the form of poems."

Poems were written to his son, to his employers, to society in general. Gardner began to see anew how powerful words could be. He was finally able to communicate his feelings in a way that he wanted. Creative writing was a rebirth.

After working at jazz and easy listening radio stations in St. Louis for 14 years, Gardner left for Boston to be closer to his son. All the while, he continued to express himself through writing. When Gardner returned to Milwaukee in 1994, he began to take classes again at UW–Milwaukee in creative writing and got his bachelor's degree in 2002 at the age of 65. Writing was both enjoyable and therapeutic.

After being diagnosed with prostate cancer, the urgency to get words down on paper for others increased.

Gardner shares his writing and mentors other writers at the Veteran's Hospital and the Kettle Moraine Writer's Group in Germantown. People listen to his advice, love his writing—and race is never an issue. "My friends at the Kettle Moraine Writer's Group never talk to me about being black unless it's something pertaining to something I've written. My being black has nothing to do with myself being there. It has nothing to do with the esteem my fellow writers have of me. It's all due to talent, and I love that—and I'm not accustomed to that in my life. Being judged on just talent. It's beautiful. It's wonderful. What a great world it would be if this were how things worked: according to one's ability. It sounds so simple but obviously is very hard to come by."

Gardner shares his writing and mentors others with the Kettle Moraine Writer's Group in Germantown.

Photos by Jaclyn Poeschl

With his cancer now in remission, Gardner has taken his message of hope to a larger audience. He began speaking with youth in southeastern Wisconsin. As part of his presentation for English classes at Slinger and Menomonee Falls high schools, Gardner models how to use writing to express one's self and how to read poetry slowly and emphatically. After sharing some events in his life, he centers the discussion on Langston Hughes' life and how similar he found it to be to his own. "I wrote some poems 20 or 30 years ago that were quite similar to what Hughes wrote about. In researching Hughes' life over the last few years, I've found some striking parallelism as far as events are concerned."

Like Gardner, Hughes started as a journalist and wrote poetry about obstacles. Hughes' poem "As I Grow Older" describes a wall of bigotry and discrimination and was written many years before Gardner wrote about a similar wall he was facing in broadcasting in his poem "From Me to You." Gardner intends to share many of his original poems in the autobiography he's working on. He also hopes to visit more schools to share his stories with students. "I hope that they can take something from my experiences and weave it into the fabric of their lives."

Gardner's advice for students and society is simple. Look beyond skin color. Look at ability. "Race has been made too much of an issue because it shouldn't have been made an issue in the first place. And because it was so much of an issue before, it's what it is now."

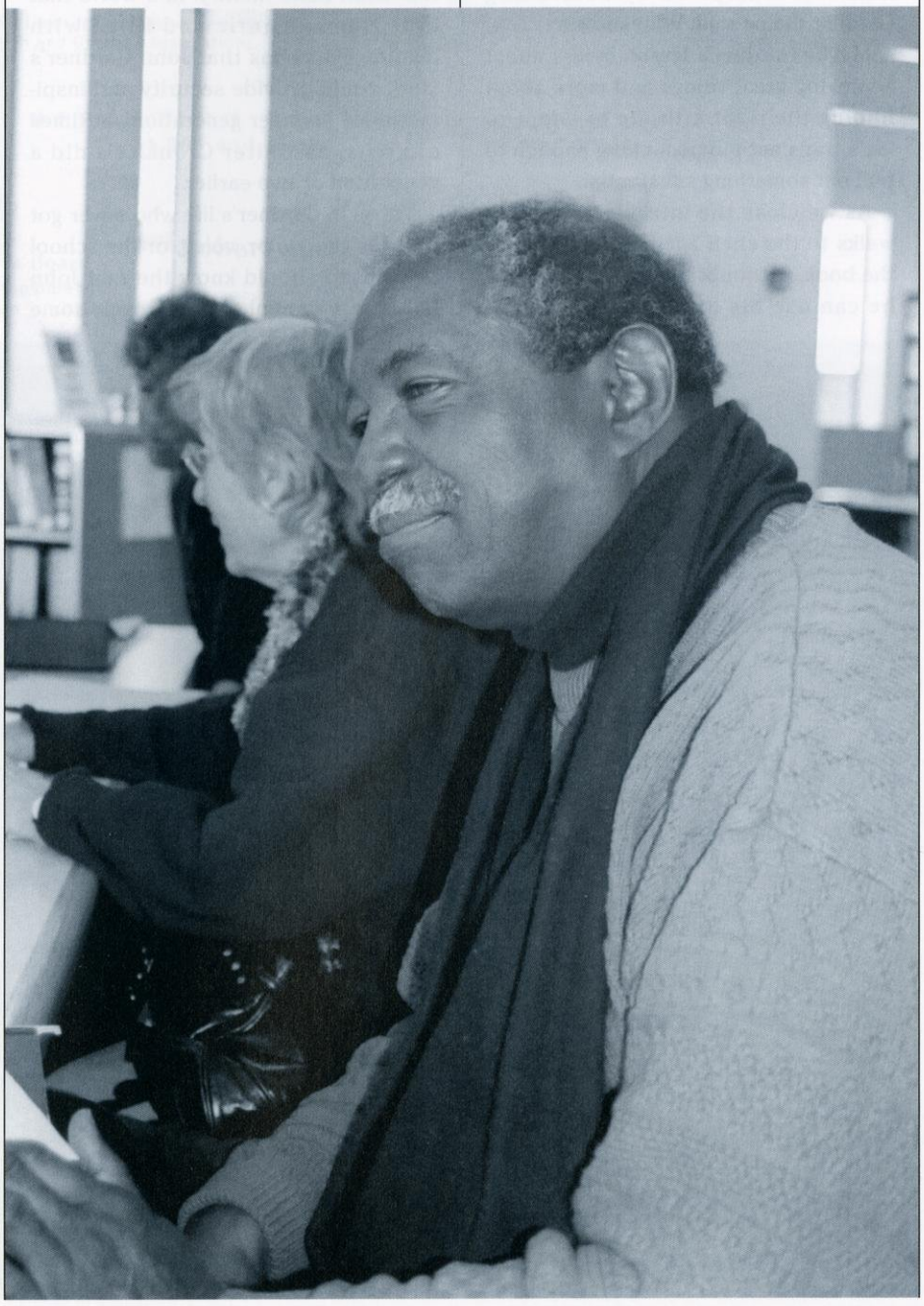
Be grateful. "I think I learned at an early age not to burn bridges. I saw my playmates doing things that would eliminate their abilities to go back and redo. I learned that there will be a time in one's life where I may have to go not from point A to B but B to A."

Observe others and don't make the same mistakes they did. "You don't have to make the mistake in order to learn from it. Just watch what people do; there is a way to get through life without getting burned."

If you're a child, don't let anyone step on your dreams. If you're an adult, encourage children. "Too many young people are stifled at an early age. Stop stifling the awareness of being, of coming into being whatever you can be. Whatever your intellect or wherever your ability takes you, let it free flow. Maybe we can come up with some answers in the world."

While Gardner's own dreams, at least in broadcast journalism, may have not been fully realized, it is safe to say that he made things easier for others to reach their dreams. Gardner's presence as a pioneer in Milwaukee television history doubtless had an effect on hiring practices in the city's television news industry. He believes he may have convinced a few people in management that change was possible. "I don't think it's circumstantial that soon after I did it was when the numbers [of minorities on air] increased drastically. They saw that I was working at Channel Six and my ratings were good."

Without a successful, visible role model like John Gardner on Channel Six, maybe Bill Taylor wouldn't have been hired by Channel Four. Without



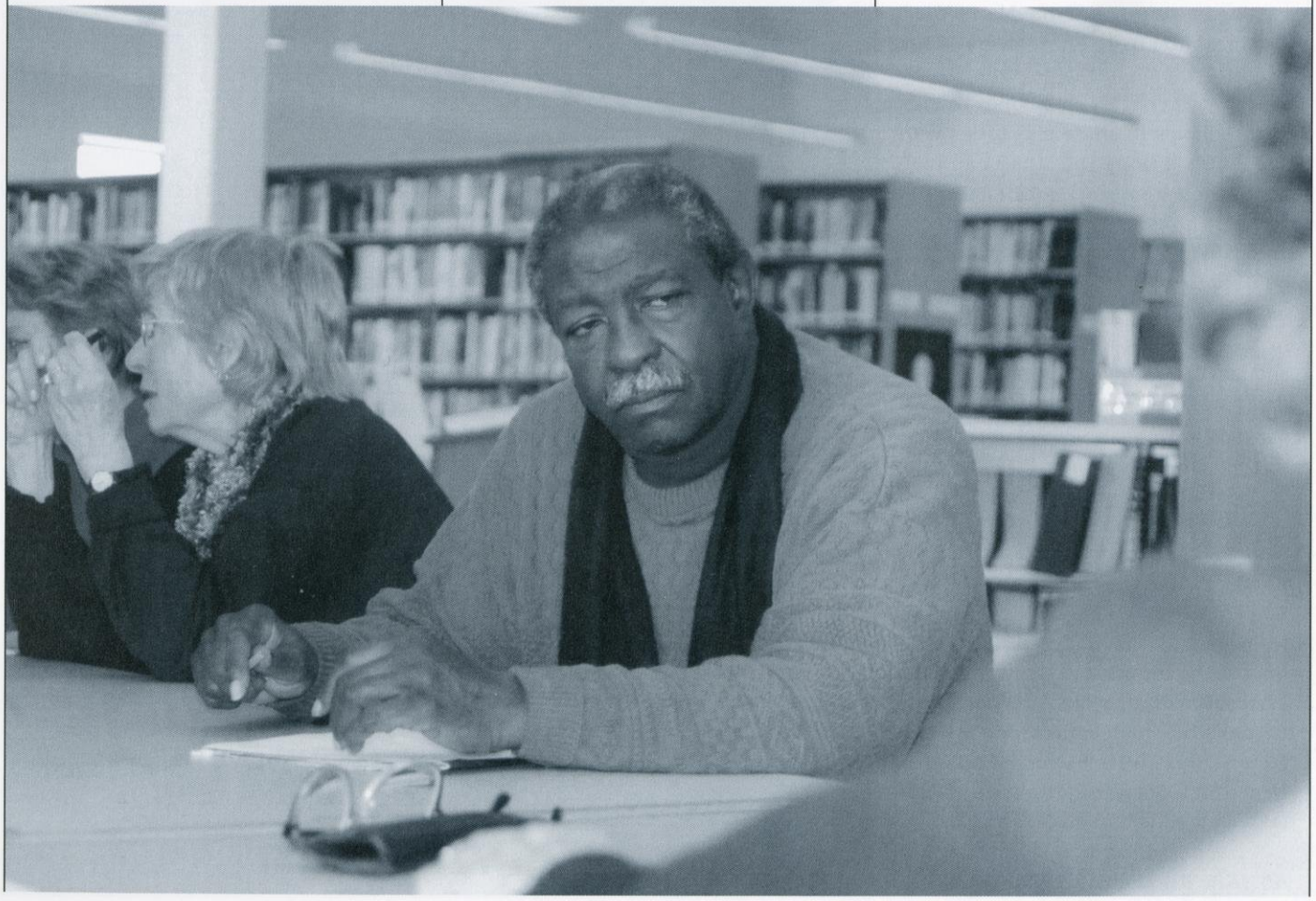
Gardner's success, maybe those diverse faces viewers started to see on Milwaukee television news in the 1970s would've decided to pursue other professions or jobs in other markets. Maybe there are African American broadcast journalists working today who grew up in Milwaukee in the 1970s and would not have been inspired to become journalists without seeing men like Gardner and Taylor break through. Possibly there have been future great writers or journalists in Gardner's writing groups or classroom visits who have been inspired by something Gardner did or said. Who knows?

Maybe Gardner's lesson is less about achieving great things and more about finding the right attitude to adapt to life's transient moments long enough to pull out something substantial.

As we close the interview, Gardner walks to the shelf again and puts back the book, no doubt hoping that one day he can use his own book instead of someone else's book for his model. Gardner looks odd to me standing by the bookshelf looking at books. When I walk through the library during a regular school day, the students are either sitting next to a computer or socializing with friends. They don't stand and look at books anymore. For a few seconds, I soak in the silence and appreciate the moment. It's rare for a high school library to be completely silent. Even more rare is having an uninterrupted discussion with a man who was an important part of Milwaukee television news history. In a world that is at times chaotic and filled with disorder, it seems that John Gardner's story could provide security and inspiration for younger generations in times of crisis, as Walter Cronkite's did a generation or two earlier.

Those in Gardner's life who never got past his skin color, voice, or the school he went to should know the real John Gardner: a symbol of the struggle some talented minority youth faced in Milwaukee and a survivor who has returned to live near his childhood home still looking to give to others. ✹

Nate Grimm is a teacher and writer. He has been teaching social studies and English for 10 years, the last nine at Slinger High School. Grimm is involved in teaching students how to conduct oral history interviews and was a recipient of the Washington County Historical Society's 2006 Edith B. Heidner Award for preservation of local history. In his effort to share examples of authentic perspectives on local history and original poems with his students, Grimm videotaped an interview he conducted with poet and retired broadcast journalist John Gardner, which became the basis for this article.



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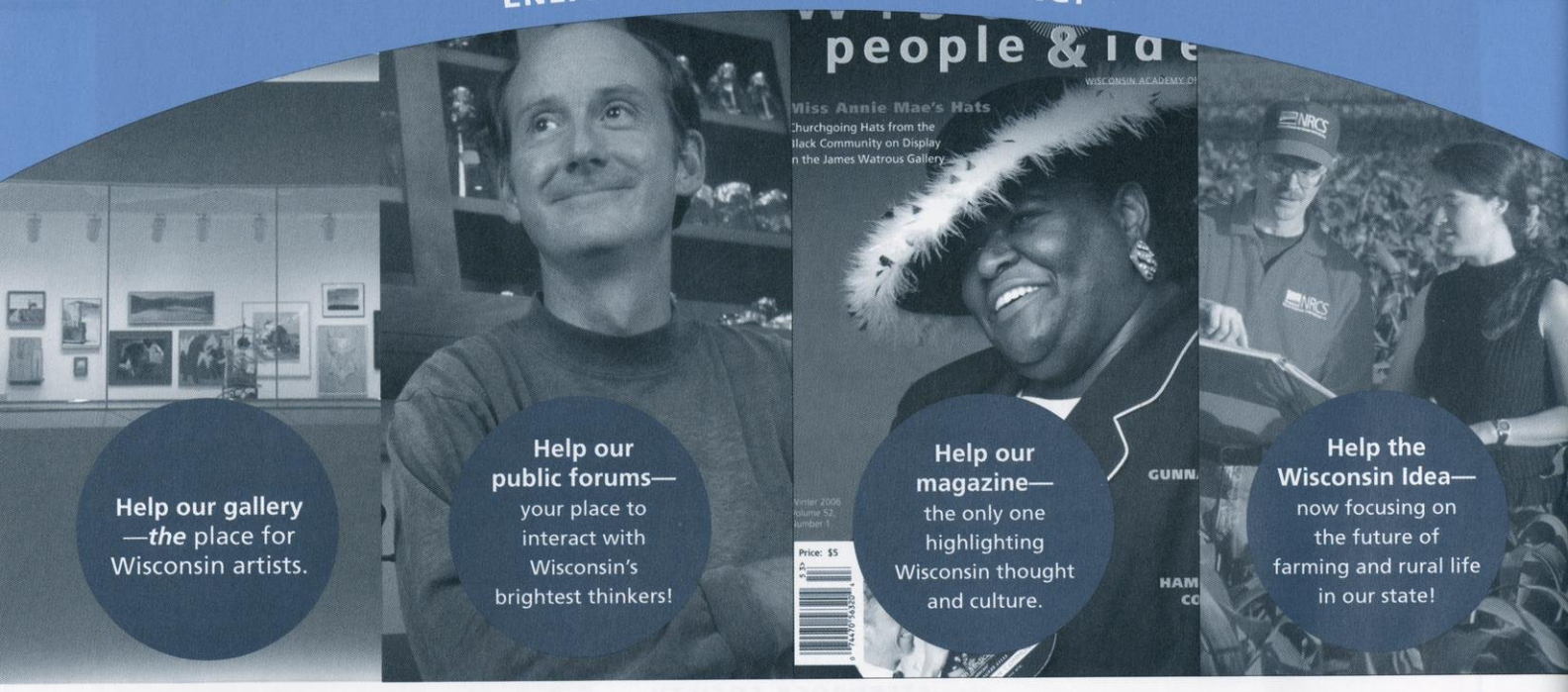

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For Minerva Society donations or program sponsorships of $500 or more, please contact executive director Michael Strigel at 608/263-1692 ext. 11, mstrigel@wisconsinacademy.org, or Gail Kohl, director of development, at 608/263-1692 ext. 14, gkohl@wisconsinacademy.org

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Greetings from Grandview, a concrete park in Hollandale by outsider artist Nick Engelbert. The "Organ Grinder with Monkey" not only welcomes visitors but also provides a handy donation box for ongoing preservation of the site. Learn more about Engelbert and Wisconsin's other concrete park artists beginning on page 32.

Photo by Peyton Smith

Price: $5

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