



## **Wisconsin Academy review. Volume 48, Number 2 Spring 2002**

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# Wisconsin academy review

THE MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Notes from a  
Nazi Prison:  
Gerda Lerner's  
Memoir of Resistance  
and Triumph

■ Statewide  
Poetry Contest:  
Read the Winners!

■ Justice Without Borders:  
Wisconsin's Global  
Campaign

■ **SPECIAL SECTION**  
Homegrown  
Conservation:  
The Revolution Is Here

■ The Tale of  
Coon Valley



Gerda Lerner, author of a new memoir,  
pioneered the field of women's history.

Photo by John Urban



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## spring 2002

### features



Gerda Lerner at her graduation from Columbia University in 1966.

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Contributors include the Aldo Leopold Foundation, Blufflands Alliance, Fox/Wolf Rivers Environmental History Project, Gathering Waters Conservancy, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Sustainable Woods Cooperative, Trout Unlimited, and the Urban Open Space Foundation.

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The Wisconsin Academy's quaint little ways.  
By Robert G. Lange.

### Past and Present

"Many of the founders of the major modern women's organizations came from the Midwest and from Wisconsin, so much so that in the 1970s they were jocularly known among movement leaders as the 'Wisconsin Mafia.'"

—Gerda Lerner, historian and Wisconsin Academy Fellow, writing in the *Wisconsin Academy Review* (1994)

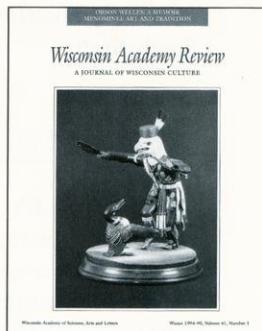
A "mafia" of engaged citizens from all walks of life gathers right here at the Wisconsin Academy. See page 11 for an offer you can't refuse.

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters provides a place where people who enjoy reflecting upon culture, nature, and the problems of our times can gather for fruitful discourse and meaningful action. Together, we help create a thinking community.

The Wisconsin Academy was founded in 1870 as an independent, nonprofit membership organization, separate from the state and university. Our mission is to gather, share, and act upon knowledge in the sciences and humanities for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin. *Everybody is encouraged to join.*



Meet our statewide poetry contest winner, page 34.



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The Wisconsin Academy Review wishes to thank Bruce Jacobs for his generous support.

# A poetic state



**A**nnouncing our statewide poetry contest was like tapping into a sugar maple bursting with sap (please allow this non-poet a little heartfelt springtime imagery). We released torrents of poetry from all around Wisconsin, resulting in 359 submissions—considerably more than we were expecting (by contrast, our short story contest drew 122).

Needless to say, we were delighted. “I don’t know of any event that has better proven the vitality and incredible caliber of poetry across the state,” says our poetry editor John Lehman, who sponsored the contest. Contest judge and Wisconsin Poet Laureate Ellen Kort was so moved by the quality that she was relieved to hear we would publish the runners-up in our next issue. “I’m glad that I could choose another 10,” she said.

For all our talk about human needs—for love, for aggression, for power—we never mention our need for poetry. We received many, many submissions about September 11 (and you can read one of them in our next issue). It was amazing to see how many people turned to poetry as a means of understanding and communicating their grief, their anger—the whole gamut of dark emotions. Says Waukesha poet Dale Ritterbusch, our second-place winner: “Poems are not mere intellectual exercises or the fretwork of the imagination; they define our lives, our sense of time and place, and they help make sense of the world.”

Making sense of the world through poetry: that is a worthy endeavor, and we are pleased to provide it with an inspiring forum. Our thanks to all who entered the contest. Please come back next year!

As for this year’s winning poems, you can read them in this issue, starting on page 33.

## RADICALS, REDEFINED

Try this notion on for size: radicals are people who openly, doggedly, and patiently strive for consensus and cooperation with people who have different views from their own.

Now that *is* radical.

It’s a concept embodied by “the radical center,” a phrase that was born about a decade ago among ranchers, government agencies, and environmental groups in Arizona and New Mexico who saw that reaching out and working across the usual “us against them” divisions was the only way to protect shared values and respond to growing pressures on the land.

This enlightened concept has spread to the Midwest, and has even informed many local conservation efforts right here in our state, if you listen to people like Curt Meine, the Wisconsin Academy’s director of conservation programs. Witness

his enthusiasm for “community-based conservation,” local efforts that often depend on creating a radical center in order to be successful. Says Meine in his introduction to our feature on community-based groups: “They reflect a willingness to work hard, forge new relationships, and overcome boundary lines (real and metaphorical) in meeting that commitment.” And, as Renae Anderson’s feature on Coon Valley shows, this legacy of community involvement in conservation has very deep Wisconsin roots.

In this issue we’re letting these groups tell their stories. Whether it’s farmers and conservationists forming a partnership (“Farming and Conservation Together,” or FACT), landowners stewarding their woodlands in a manner that satisfies both economic and ecological goals, or local citizens restoring trout streams for the benefit of the ecosystem and anglers alike, these groups provide amazing examples of people bridging their differences for a greater good. That greater good, Meine notes, is building healthier human and natural communities.

These projects have had some astounding results. Writes the Aldo Leopold Foundation’s Buddy Huffaker of FACT’s successes in consensus-building: “When the process began I could not have envisioned this assemblage of people sitting in front of the community presenting a unified vision.”

I would like to point out, without too much smugness, that the Wisconsin Academy has been seeking the “radical center” for years without ever using that term. Bringing together groups with diverse or divergent viewpoints, with the goal of finding common ground, is pretty much our stock in trade. I can’t think of a better example than our ongoing Waters of Wisconsin initiative on sustainable water use and conservation. This project brings citizens together with representatives from industry, agriculture, conservation, government agencies, and Native American tribes to assess the state of our waters, formulate a viable water use ethic, and make recommendations for future policy. But the theme of reaching out, of building community among the divided, runs through everything we do, beginning with our interdisciplinary name.

Are we a community-based project? Well, the state is our community—and we welcome everyone to join us.

Happy reading,

Joan Fischer  
 joanfischer@facstaff.wisc.edu  
 608/263-1692 ext. 16

# Sweet Seduction

Who makes the most delectable chocolates in the land? *Consumer Reports* has spoken, with some surprising results.

"The best chocolates came from lesser-known makers," the magazine pronounced in its February issue. "Lesser-known" as in Candinas Chocolates, of Verona, Wisconsin ([www.candinas.com](http://www.candinas.com)). Candinas was one of only three chocolate makers nationwide to achieve the rating of "excellent," ranking behind Martine's Chocolates and La Maison du Chocolat in that category.

The winning assortment was the Candinas 36-piece box (price: \$41). "Ultra-smooth dark and milk chocolates with especially good hazelnut, caramel, and liqueur-flavored centers," praises the magazine, accentuating the "fresh cream and butter notes."

Fine chocolates from Wisconsin may boggle the mind, but consider: chocolatier Markus Candinas, 32, has Swiss parents and trained as a confectioner in their homeland.

Candinas, whose hip style is reflected in his chocolate's fun packaging—"Preferred over cookies by nine out of ten Santas," claims his Christmas wrapping—says that freshness and retaining the natural moisture of ingredients help make his chocolates special.

"The differences are quite plain to the normal person," he says. "You don't have to be a famous food critic when it comes to sampling different kinds of chocolates and tasting the difference."

Despite his fancy training, Candinas is not one to wrinkle his nose at, say, Hershey's, whose "Pot of Gold Premium Assortment" (price: \$8) was rated "good." Rather, he diplomatically draws upon car examples to illustrate the differences.

"It's almost like putting a Hyundai in the same survey as a top-of-the-line Mercedes," he says. "The Mercedes is the better car, but it would doing an injustice to say that a Hyundai isn't a good car; it's just a different world."

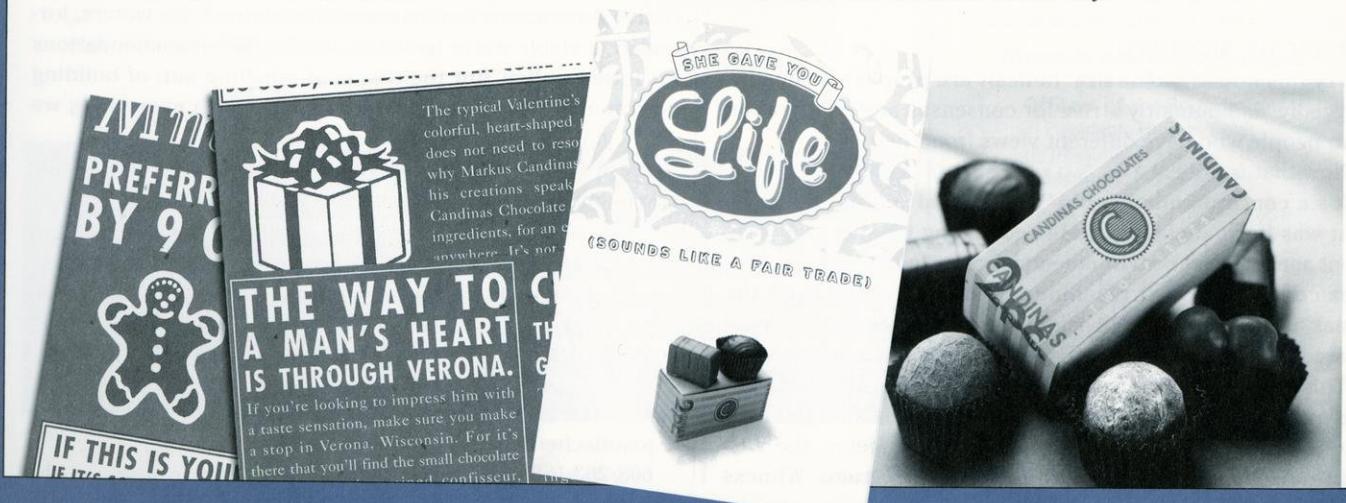


The Mercedes of chocolates:  
Markus Candinas showing off the goods.

Photo by Jeff Mikkelsen

The other-worldliness of Candinas chocolates was ecstatically verified by a Wisconsin Academy staffer who received a box for Valentine's Day. Not only is it the best chocolate she has ever tasted—she is saving the box because "it's too beautiful to throw away."

We have two words: Mother's Day.



# a SALUTE to SKIP

The Wisconsin Academy Gallery in June honors a master of Wisconsin studio furniture: Clifford R. Johnson, better known as Skip, who founded the woodworking program at UW-Madison in 1965 and over the next 25 years made it into one of national note.

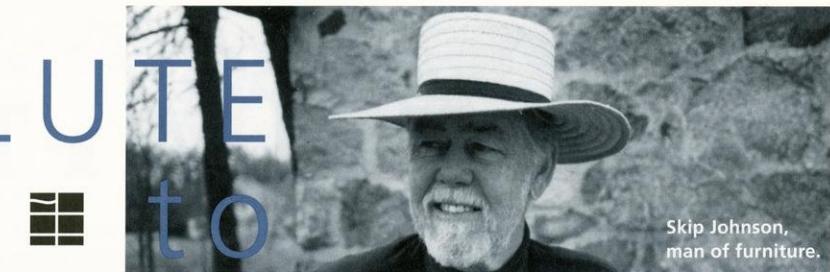
"Skip Johnson and Friends" runs June 5-28 and will feature not only a work by Johnson but also eight pieces by some of his many protégés, including Tim Dalton and Ron DeKok, who is curating the exhibit.

"The show is meant to be a tribute to him by his students to honor him and show their appreciation for what he has contributed to their lives," says DeKok.

Besides being an active mentor, Johnson created furniture that has appeared in numerous exhibits and collections both public and private. His career includes 121 exhibitions, 26 publications, 32 awards, 19 grants, and 74 workshops and lectures, DeKok says.

The Johnson show takes place during a time of "all things furniture" in Madison. The Elvehjem Museum has a studio furniture exhibit April 6-June 16, and June 6-8, UW-Madison is hosting the annual conference of the national Furniture Society.

The "Skip Johnson and Friends" show is the Wisconsin Academy Gallery's contribution to the furniture frenzy. You can meet Johnson and the other artists at a reception on Friday, June 7, 5-7 p.m.



Skip Johnson,  
man of furniture.



A Johnson chair. Other works, from left, by William Leete, Tim Dalton, and Ron DeKok.

# Pen Pal Artists

*A Hamady Wilde Sampler: Salutations* 1995 (Perishable Press, Mt. Horeb, 2001) is the ninth published collaboration between those senior deans of Wisconsin art, bookmaker Walter Hamady and painter John Wilde. The subject and content of the book is—on the surface—collaboration itself, presented with an intoxicating fervor through the skeletal framework of their friendship.

Despite close proximity in home and workplace—both were professors in the UW-Madison art department—Hamady and Wilde, who is also a Wisconsin Academy Fellow, have corresponded since 1971. An unofficial count estimates that they exchanged 1,159 letters through the year 2000. Precisely because of their salutations, this welcome collection is an addictive and hilarious read. I charged on from one spurious appellation to the next, giddy for the rest of the day. Hamady should consider a trade run with modest production (this edition is limited to 95).

Beyond the matter-of-fact theme of collaboration, the entire book beautifully teases the reader with traces of a complex and intimate friendship. Each layer of greeting, the fragmented bodies and affectionate closings, provides shadows, or as Hamady suggests in the notes, a tip for each swollen berg. Despite correspondence reduced to the bare minimum, a warm, palpable portrait of each sender emerges.

Like their previous collaborations, especially 1985 *The Twelve Months* (1992) and *John's Apples* (1995), the book is exquisitely crafted and densely packed with absorbing details. At times the book feels like a Perishable Press companion to the lives of Wilde and Hamady; it begs simultaneous consultation with their previous projects and unfolding independent works. We glimpse Wilde beginning the Elvehjem Museum of Art's *With Friends* (1987-88) or his profound 1995 summation, *Wilde-world Revisited*. Hamady struggles with the endless minutiae of running the



"A complex and intimate friendship" is chronicled in *Salutations*.

press while making collages and assemblages. They comment amusedly on the attention of admirers or lack thereof. But it ain't all self-referential: In 1991 there are several subtle or direct references to the Gulf War. We hear the strains of mortality, of joy in family or concern over illness and ending relationships.

Sometimes Wilde and Hamady are like two high school boys trying to one-up each other or make each other laugh out loud in class. Watch how they transmogrify an appellation draped over them by a Milwaukee journalist (October 9, 1990). They push the intelligible limits of address-aliases and are called on it by grumpy postal folks (March 5, 1992). The salutations begin politely, with Johns and



Walters, and gradually grow hairy. They can be inexplicable: "Dear Osculumator Puckerer of the Orisorbicularis"; adolescent: "Dear Squeazy in the Wee wee"; jabbing: "Dear Finally Famous"; or outrageous: "Dear Hottentotenstrottertrottel-mutterattentater." The collective sense is one of affection.

Text has played an important role in Wilde's art, and a serious analysis of this aspect should be undertaken. His earliest paintings incorporated collage; his breakthrough drawings included swelling storms of text; he has published journal excerpts. Perhaps his most important work (due to its persistent reverberations) is a World War II journal—very much a book—filled with text and image and one of the most startling objects produced by any American artist in the 1940s. *Salutations* adds to

this oeuvre because the book as a work of art extends Wilde's talent for mining his past for new artistic material.

Hamady continues to make paper as magical and books as precious as they were a thousand years ago. His projects rely on an intensely analytical mind to come into the world successfully, yet he is that rare artist who continuously catches the viewer off-guard, whether it is through typography or binding, layout or editing. Hamady is literally bursting with a fiery fountain of new ideas; it's his control that paradoxically heightens their impact. The effect is that of watching a three-year-old with a dozen rabid rats manage to coax them to his mouth for serene kisses. Why Hamady hasn't received the attention he so richly deserves as a contemporary artist might be explained by a handful of

cynical suppositions about a finicky, restless art world. It is time he received a comprehensive retrospective; whoever does it would be wise to let him design the book.

by Robert Cozzolino

*Robert Cozzolino is an art history Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His primary area is 20th-century American art, and he has published work on Ivan Albright and John Wilde. Cozzolino is the curator of an upcoming retrospective exhibition, "Dudley Huppler Drawings," which will be on view at the Elvehjem Museum of Art in Madison July 13-September 22.*

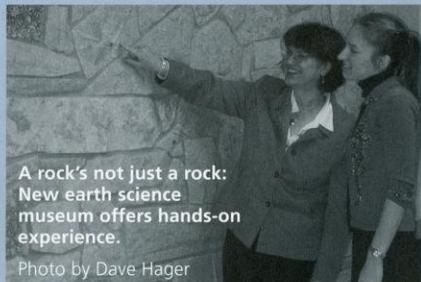
## New Museum Rocks

The young people of Wisconsin will soon have the opportunity to travel through geologic time at UW-Fox Valley's new Weis Earth Science Museum.

The museum will illuminate Wisconsin's rich land history, including exhibits on mining and geology, says director Joanne Kluessendorf. Built right next to the Barlow Planetarium, the museum is intended to link earth and space science education. The last person to walk on the moon, Harrison "Jack" Schmitt, the lunar module pilot for the Apollo 17 mission in 1972, will speak at the museum's grand opening on May 6.

The museum will provide informal science education through the depiction and promotion of Wisconsin's geology and mining heritage, and by underscoring the importance of the earth sciences to society.

"I want visitors to never think of a rock as 'just a rock' again," says Kluessendorf. "Geologists are like detectives. We use



rocks as clues to reconstruct earth's history."

Exhibits will range from a 19th-century lead mine tunnel reproduction to a fossil rubbing wall. Gallery titles reflect the range of exhibits visitors can expect: "Walk Through Geologic Time in Wisconsin," "Wisconsin's Mining Heritage," a Mineral Gallery, and "Earth Materials and Society."

Former governor Tommy Thompson named the Weis Museum "the official state mineralogical museum of Wisconsin." And it will benefit all state residents, according to Kluessendorf: "The understanding of earth science gained at the

museum will also allow citizens to make better-informed, responsible decisions about environmental and economic issues that affect our neighborhoods and our planet."

Besides being available for field trips, the museum will cooperate with such youth organizations as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts to create after-school and extracurricular activities. There will also be minority and gender-specific programs. Volunteer activities for the community include leading tours, assisting with displays, and working in the gift shop. The museum also plans to have guest speakers and workshops.

The museum is named for UW-Fox Valley Professor Emeritus Leonard Weis and his wife, Donna, who made the first gift toward its establishment. Thus far, the museum has been wholly funded by philanthropic gifts.

by Molly Schmidt

# SCHOOL IN THE PINES

## SWAYING PINE FOREST, SEVEN LAKES, WETLANDS, AND 22 MILES OF HILLY TRAILS ARE THE HOME OF A COLLEGE

preparatory boarding school set to open this fall near Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin. The pristine natural setting on 1,200 acres is most appropriate for the school's unusual focus: wildlife, natural habitats, environmental stewardship, and innovative uses of technology. Graduates of Conserve School, as it is called, will be "capable of developing creative, ethical solutions for 21st century global sustainability issues," according to the school website.

Certainly the concept is innovative; Conserve may be the first environmentally oriented residential high school in the nation, according to director John Friedrick. The vision comes with a hefty price tag: \$25,000 a year, though Friedrick says many scholarships will be available.

Conserve School was the dream of the late Jim Lowenstine, the chairman of the board and president of Central Steel & Wire Co. in Chicago. He envisioned a school on his Wisconsin retreat, Lowenwood, to preserve the land and promote environmental education. Lowenstine

turned over his land and considerable fortune to an appointed board of trustees, mostly friends and officers of Central Steel & Wire, to manage the school.

"We are focused on sustainability, the ability for us to be sensitive to the needs of other creatures so we live in harmony," school director Friedrick recently told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "Yet we believe that in our type of conservation, there is room for both loggers and tree huggers."

The \$60 million campus includes such amenities as a personal computer for every student, fully equipped laboratories—lasers, microrobots, micrometers, and endoscopes are just some of the technologies—and a student-teacher ratio of 10 to one. In the dormitories, where students have private rooms and shared baths, there will be one house parent for every five students.

According to Friedrick, Conserve School is looking for "highly qualified, multitalented teachers." One of them is science teacher Paul McLeod, who has

expertise in field geology, Spanish, anthropology, and architecture (and is an Eagle Scout besides).

"I have nearly 20 years of experience as a professional geologist, and I really like the fact that the folks at Conserve recognize the value of this kind of experience for the sake of education," says McLeod.

McLeod will incorporate the school's environmental focus into his teaching by taking classes outside the classroom for observation. "I can buy a table to illustrate how running water can create sedimentary structures in sands, but I would rather find a place on campus with real sand and real running water to illustrate that point," McLeod says.

Conserve School also seeks talented students. According to head of admissions Stefan Anderson, the school will admit up to 160 applicants in the first year. The school is looking for students in the top 25 percent of their grade level who excel in one of Conserve's five scholarship areas: academic achievement, environmental stewardship, outdoor activities, ethical commitment, and group achievement.

Sulé Surges, of Conover, Wisconsin, wishes to attend Conserve. One day she'd like to be a lawyer, a geneticist, and a photographer. "I could be a DNA specialist in law, and when the person asks for photographic evidence I could incorporate my interest in photography," says Surges. First told about Conserve by her parents, Surges is confident that Conserve School is where she can achieve her goals. "The real question is, why *wouldn't* I want to go to Conserve School?" she says.

by Molly Schmidt

For more information, see  
[www.conserveschool.org/home/html](http://www.conserveschool.org/home/html)



# EDUCATION ABROAD

BY ANTHONY MWAKIKUNGA

Three days in my life have been my happiest. The day Amos, my first child, was born; the day I married Gertrude; and Friday, May 19, 2000, the day I rode my bicycle to Karonga Post Office to pick up a registered letter.

For weeks, I both anticipated and dreaded that letter. Whatever news was folded inside, good or bad, I knew it would affect my life more than anything else ever had.

My heart was pounding so hard at the post office that my body shook. I unfolded the letter and read the first word: "Congratulations!"

I was one of five teachers from Malawi, a small nation in southeastern Africa, who had been selected to receive a full scholarship to study at Lakeland College in Wisconsin. By accepting this offer, we agreed to leave our families, friends, and jobs for three years and study year-round to complete a bachelor of arts degree in education. We would become teachers of teachers, with new jobs waiting for us after graduation at one of Malawi's six teacher-training colleges. For our careers, this would mean a change in status and a raise in salary, but most of all these scholarships would give us a chance to help develop our country into a more hopeful place for our children.

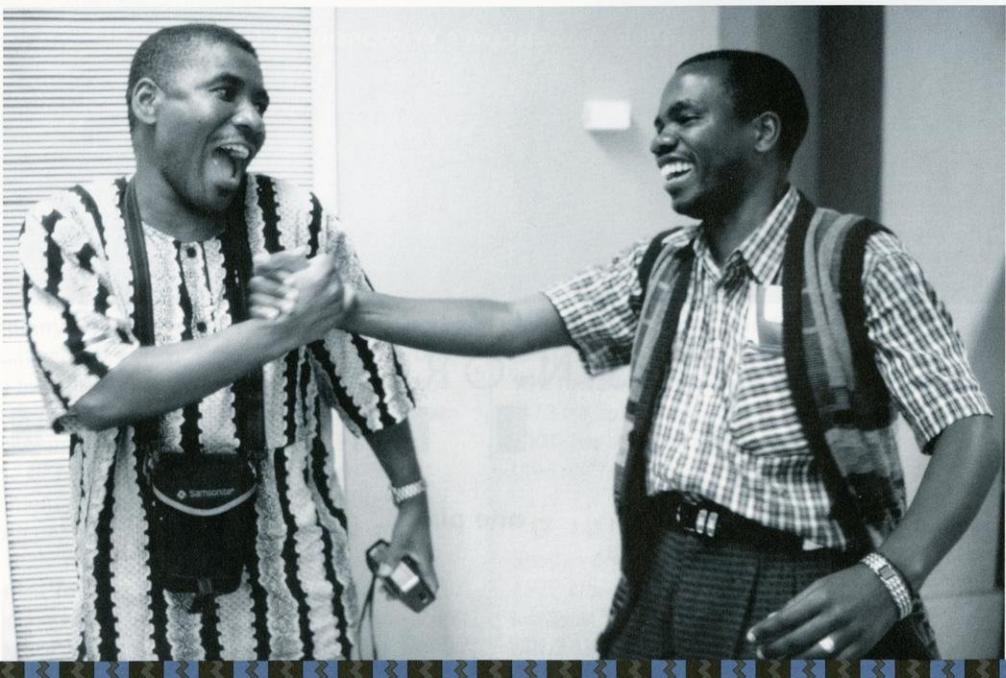
In Malawi, fewer than 1 percent of our people attend college. In fact, only 15 percent of our children go to high school. This

is barely half of what the overall rate is for Africa. In the United States, 97 percent of the children are able to go to high school. Malawi simply does not have enough qualified teachers for all of its children because ours is one of the poorest countries in the world. The average person in Malawi makes less than \$200 per year. A teacher makes only about \$70 per month. And to make matters worse, the AIDS epidemic now kills about 600 teachers a year in Malawi. Consequently, an opportunity like the Lakeland College scholarship is only a dream to most Malawians. Maybe it is even beyond a dream.

Lakeland College began the Malawi Teacher Education Program in 1999, with its first cohort of students. Those five were chosen from 350 applications. The next year, I was one of 1,400 to apply. In August 2001, a third cohort of five friends arrived and another will arrive in August 2002, just after the first cohort graduates and returns home.

This program is a partnership of Lakeland College, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the government of Malawi. USAID provides us with health insurance, a monthly stipend, and air travel. Malawi compensates our families for lost wages while we are gone and guarantees jobs for us when we return. Lakeland gives us tuition, room and board, and the help and friendship of its staff, fac-

**Friendship far from home:**  
Lakeland student Andy Mwanyongo (left) greets new arrival Michael Gondwe at the airport in Milwaukee.





No desks, chipped walls: A typical classroom in Malawi.

ulty, and students. We are most grateful to everyone for making this dream become real.

A few weeks after getting my acceptance letter, my three children stood on the side of the road at the Karonga bus stop, crying as I boarded the motor coach for the 10-hour ride to the airport. Their tears pulled at me inside so much I felt that three years was too much time to be away. My wife looked at me

sadly, but I knew I had to go. On her face was also the hope we had talked and dreamed about so many times together.

I later learned that the four other scholarship students who would travel with me to the U.S. had similar experiences in their regions of Malawi when they said good-bye to their wives and children. Although it was difficult to leave, it would have been even harder to stay and give up hope. We are all working very hard to learn as much as we can in these three years in the U.S. We know it is our duty to work to benefit our country. The Lakeland scholarship is helping us do that.

*Lakeland College is a 140-year-old, four-year independent liberal arts college with its main campus in Sheboygan. For more information about Lakeland's Malawi Teacher Education Program, contact Barbara Nelesen at 920/565-1456.*

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## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



Wisconsin Academy  
of Sciences, Arts and Letters

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters provides a place where people who enjoy reflecting upon culture, nature, and the problems of our times can gather for fruitful discourse and meaningful action. Through our many programs and projects, we help create what Aldo Leopold called a "thinking community." The Wisconsin Academy is an independent, nonprofit organization, separate from state government and the university. We are funded by grants, by private endowments, and by our members. **Your membership is important to us.**

### WHAT YOU'LL SUPPORT

Here are a few Academy projects  
(for more, see [www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org)):

- **Waters of Wisconsin**, a statewide investigation of water use, policy, and conservation. Our study will provide independent, reliable information and recommendations to legislators and the general public about how to best manage one of our most precious—and threatened—resources.
- **Public Forums** on topics of current interest. The next statewide public forum will focus on our water initiative. It will take place at Monona Terrace in Madison on October 21–22.
- **The Wisconsin Academy Gallery**, the only noncommercial gallery in the state to feature different Wisconsin artists every month. In 2004, the Gallery is moving to the Overture Center in downtown Madison.
- **The Intelligent Consumption Project** bridges the gap between conservation and consumption, taking forest resource use as a model. A wide range of people in forestry nationwide—from loggers and environmentalists to representatives from business, agriculture, and academia—are working to formulate a viable consumption ethic.
- **The Wisconsin Center for the Book**, affiliated with the Library of Congress, conducts many programs in support of literature and the book arts. Example: "Wisconsin Authors Speak" brings writers to communities throughout the state.

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Fireweed: "The common name alludes to its quick growth in areas devastated by fire, the pink magenta flowers brightening the fire-blackened land."

—John E. Klimas and James A. Cunningham, *Wildflowers of Eastern America* (1974)

## Resistance and triumph



Gerda Lerner and husband, Carl, at her graduation from Columbia University in 1966. Lerner didn't start college until she was 38 years old, but she began teaching as an undergraduate and earned her master's and Ph.D. degrees in only three years.

Photo courtesy of Gerda Lerner

BY JOAN FISCHER  
PORTRAITS BY JOHN URBAN

All her life, historian Gerda Lerner has been not just a survivor but a fighter. In her new memoir, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography*, she illuminates the private history that led her to become one of the foremost scholars in her field.

GERDA LERNER WAS A RECENT REFUGEE and only 21 years old when she wrote these words for her teacher in a 1941 Los Angeles writer's workshop:

"I've lived under six different governments; I've been a student, a nanny, a housemaid, a research worker, a salesgirl, an office worker; I've worked in a factory and I've worked in hospitals; I've been in prison and I've gone to the opera twice a week. I've been married, divorced and am now married again. I've supported myself for the last three years. Four years ago I used to have a governess, because my father thought it was proper ..."

Lerner's life became not one whit less fascinating over the next six decades. She went on to raise a family, become a key player in the women's movement, and, at the relatively advanced age of 38, begin a serious academic career in which she pioneered the previously unexamined field of women's history. Lerner founded the nation's first master's degree in women's history in 1972, and in 1981 established a doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is now the Robinson-Edwards Professor of History, Emerita, and a Fellow of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

The purpose of her memoir, Lerner writes, is to reveal what made her the kind of scholar she became—the person behind the profession. Accordingly, *Fireweed* ends in 1958, when her academic career begins.

As a piece of self-analysis and self-revelation, the book is honest and compelling. But because Lerner's life is so tightly linked to major world events, the book succeeds as a piece of history as well. Lerner, as a historian, takes great care to place her life in the context of her times, sometimes using snippets of news stories as they related to her life. The overall result is enlightening, personal, and moving. Standout themes and events include:

- A vivid and horrifying description of the Nazi thrall in Austria. "The Germans had to be educated in violent anti-Semitism; the Austrians erupted with it spontaneously," writes Lerner, a Jew, of her countrymen (Lerner became involved in the resistance movement). "Within weeks of the Anschluss the situation of Jews in Austria was far worse than that of Jews in Germany five years after the Nazi takeover." Her upper-middle-class family fled to Liechtenstein, where her father had set up a business.
- Her weeks in a Nazi prison (see book excerpt, page 17), which "were the most important events of my life—they gave it a meaning and a shape I have ever since tried to comprehend." In particular, the experience with her cellmates taught her that "if you wanted to survive you could not do it alone and you had to fight with all

"The most important thing is that you must be engaged in the world. How, is for each person to choose."

your strength to keep some sort of social contract. That is what I learned in jail .... and it has marked all my life irrevocably."

- Her complex relationship with her mother, the artist Ili Kronstein. Lerner managed to get a U.S. visa while her family remained in Europe. Many relatives perished in concentration camps; her parents and sister dispersed throughout Europe, finding precarious "safe harbor" in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and elsewhere. Ili's letters to Lerner alternately begged her, frantically, to "do something" to get her to America—which was impossible, given the rigid quotas on immigrants—or joyously described the artistic unfolding she was experiencing for the first time, away from her husband and social constraints. Kronstein died of multiple sclerosis in Switzerland after the war. Lerner's pain over failing to understand and connect with her before her death remains with her, she writes, to this day.
- Coming to terms publicly with her Communist past. "I want to be honest with my readers, my students and my colleagues, honest about who I am, who I was, and how I got to be who I am. I neither regret nor disown my political past," she writes. She and her husband, Carl Lerner, a film editor and director, were involved in left-wing activities ranging from struggling to unionize the film industry and resisting the Hollywood blacklist to grassroots work in the civil rights movement.

For Lerner, Communists had been "anti-Fascists," her fellow Nazi resisters in Europe; and in America, she saw no contradiction between "a firm allegiance to this nation and its Constitution, and the belief that the social system, as it has evolved since the time of the foundation of the nation, needs

improvement .... I believed that socialism was a long-range goal, attainable by democratic means, which would make life better for the vast majority of people." She does reproach herself for failing to acknowledge the evils of Stalin, and for not revealing until now the details of her Communist past. With this memoir, it seems, she hopes to set the record straight.

We spoke with Lerner in a phone interview from her winter home in Durham, North Carolina.

**Why did you choose to present the first half of your life through the lens of politics?**

Because to me the connection between politics and thinking is a very close one and one that I believe is essential to my life. In our culture, and in most patriarchal cultures, we have made an artificial division between thinking and acting, as though the two were mutually exclusive. I believe, with Hannah Arendt and many others who have expressed this well, that thinking, the solving of problems by mental constructs, can be valid only if it is validated by experience, by the application of thought in public life. And that's politics.

**And was the designation "political autobiography" an adequate umbrella for covering the more personal aspects of your life as well?**

I'm not as concerned with telling my personal life as I am with explaining what made me the public person that people know.

One other reason why I chose to write a political autobiography is that in the life of my generation, politics determined our lives. And in my personal life, the choices I was able to make depended entirely on the politics of the world in

# interview

which I lived. Most Americans do not understand that because until recently, we have had so much freedom of choice we have the illusion that politics does not affect us.

**How does the title *Fireweed* relate to you personally? Do you consider yourself a survivor first and foremost?**

Yes. But I am not just a survivor. Fireweed does not just survive, it creates new life out of destruction. So I guess that appeals to me.

**What made you decide to record and share the pre-professional, that is, pre-academic, part of your life?**

Because that's the important part of my life. Without it, the other part would not have been possible. It would have been much different.

**Did you gain any insights about yourself through the act of writing about your life?**

No. I could not have written about it if I had not had the insights before writing. Some people write for what they call a catharsis. I'm not that kind of a writer. The act of catharsis has to be worked out before you attempt to create a work of art. You have to have distance from it.

**One of the signature characteristics of your work is caring about outsiders, caring about "the other." We actually see this trait in you before the Nazi persecution, when you were as much of an insider as a Jewish person could be in Austria. How do you suppose you got that characteristic, as it didn't seem to be particularly nurtured in your home?**

I had a very strong sense of justice and fairness. I wanted the world to be a just and fair place, and it obviously wasn't—and that disturbed me right from the beginning. Maybe one reason is that I was raised in a household with servants and I always noticed how the servants were treated badly, and it always bothered me. When I was four or five, I watched my mother getting dressed.



"I wanted the world to be a just and fair place, and it obviously wasn't—and that disturbed me right from the beginning."



Whatever she didn't use, she dropped on the floor. She walked away from it, and the maid would have to pick it up. It bothered me, even as a small child.

You can see this in some sensitive children who were raised with privilege that was denied to others in their environment. Children notice these things. I don't know if all children notice, but there's no question that it is something I was aware of very early.

When I wrote about slavery and abolition in my book about the Grimké sisters, who grew up with slaves, I noticed that they had the same response based on what they had observed at home. Politics begin at home.

**You write that you are afraid, even now, to write about your involvement with the Communist Party so long ago. Why?**

Because in America we have not really settled with what we call McCarthyism. Many people still have stereotypes and tremendous prejudices against people who identified themselves as Communists. I am aware of the fact that many people who respect me and respect my work will be shocked to hear this and may react very negatively. I would be happy if that weren't the case, but I am afraid that that will happen.

**The Nazi period sensitized you enormously to any government acts to curb or curtail civil liberties. Clearly you saw similarities between Nazi Europe and America's "time of the toad," as you call it in your book—the time of Communist witch hunts. How much are we risking now in post-September 11 America?**

I see many very frightening signs. I see us creating a deviant "outgroup" once again. For example, the treatment of the Afghan prisoners, whom we are taking halfway across the world without a trial, without investigation. We are removing them from their homeland, we are putting them in open cages, like animals.

It's horrible. And I think the only reason for doing it is that the government wishes to create this terror group as the new scapegoat for everything that's wrong with society. It is very dangerous.

I also see the automatic, knee-jerk "patriotism," in quotation marks, in response to the terrorist attacks, and the immediate demand for conformity, so that anyone who questions whether bombing Afghanistan was the proper response will be treated as a traitor. That's familiar ground, I've been there before.

This speaks of a profound disrespect for democracy on the part of the people who have made [this situation], a mistrust of democracy. It says that we cannot trust the American people to evaluate the deeds of people who are our enemies. It says that the government must protect the American people from themselves. That's dangerous. Whenever that happens, it leads to abuses by the group in power.

**Where can a person who cares about social and economic justice find a political home in America these days?**

I think that there are many ways in which one can take an engaged position today, as there always have been, but they are local. Each person has to find his or her own way of action. I don't believe that we need to identify ourselves as belonging to a large organized group in order to work for a more just society. Some may content themselves with working on the prison system in the U.S. Others may work on inequities in education. There are hundreds of causes you can deal with.

"In America we have not really settled with what we call McCarthyism. Many people still have stereotypes and tremendous prejudices against people who identified themselves as Communists."

## PIONEERING HISTORY

### GERDA LERNER'S BOOKS INCLUDE:

- The Woman in American History* (1971)
- Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (1972)
- The Female Experience: An American Documentary* (1976)
- The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (1979)
- Teaching Women's History* (1981)
- Women Are History* (1986)
- The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986)
- The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (1993)
- Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (1997)
- The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimke* (1998)

But the most important thing, the thing I have always lived by, is that you must be engaged in some way in the world in which you live. How, is for each person to choose.

**In your memoir it is striking how you always were politically engaged, no matter what your circumstances were, whether you were caring for young children or could barely speak the language.**

That's one thing I hope people will get from the book and find it applies to their lives. I am a very happy person, and have been a very happy person most of

# interview

my life even though I lived through dark times. I am happy because I found the balance between adjusting, or surviving what I was put through, and acting for what I believed in. That's the key.

## What's the connection between your own life and your work in women's history?

First of all, I think my life has made me into a strong resister. I am able to resist the demand for conformity. When I was faced with noticing that half the population has no history, and I was told that that's normal, I was able to resist the pressure. That was something that my life equipped me to do. Having lived through the transition from being an

accepted and rather privileged member of society and from one day to the next being a total outcast and victim, I learned something about how society can manipulate people. I applied that to understanding how it was possible to manipulate half the people of the world to accept that they are inferior. I learned that from my life.

That sparked my interest in the construction of race as a means of oppressing people. I didn't have to wait to be told that, I was interested in that from my own experience.

Finally, the fact that I spent 20 years or more organizing women at the local and regional levels taught me that women are active, strong, and know how to

exercise power—and that the people who deny or ignore that fact are wrong. I knew that from my life. I was better able to penetrate the academic construct than I think the normal, younger student would have been.

## You didn't formally begin your academic work until your late thirties, but you were then able to speed through, no doubt in part to your life experience.

[Starting so late in life] is unusual for many academics, and that's one reason I decided to write about it. That experience might help some of the young people who are floundering in the academy. They don't know why they are studying. Some of them must live a little longer before they can benefit from their education. I've always believed in that, and that, too, comes out of my life.

You can see that I'm trying to bring it all together here!

## Why have you said that this will be your last book?

[laughs] Because I'm 82 years old, and I take 10 years to write a book. I don't think I have it in me to write another one, but that may change. I don't want to put it in writing! ▀

*Joan Fischer is editor of the Wisconsin Academy Review.*

Lerner with children Dan and Stephanie in front of their house in Los Angeles, 1948.

Photo courtesy of Gerda Lerner





Gerda Lerner at age 16, about a year before she was jailed.

Photo courtesy of Anita Dorfer

# The Test

In this chapter from Gerda Lerner's memoir, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography*, Lerner is put in a Nazi prison at age 17, along with her mother. The experience was to change her for the rest of her life.

BY GERDA LERNER

THE CELL DOOR WAS MADE OF STEEL, solid except for a small window at eye level. The steps and corridors were of steel as well, and every footstep echoed loudly. I do not remember how I got there or any of the preliminaries that must have taken place: registering, being fingerprinted, checking my clothes and the bundle of toiletries I had brought from home, getting my blanket, then being led upstairs and along the interior corridor unto which the cell doors opened.

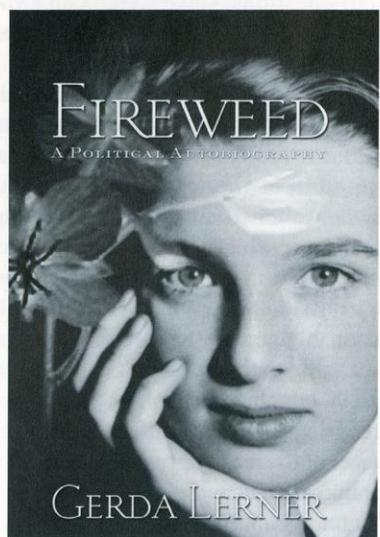
I remember being separated from my mother somewhere downstairs—they led her away and she turned back toward me, trying to look encouraging, but I saw that she was terrified and the tears stopped inside my head, hard rocks. We had tried to be brave as long as we were together, each for the other one's sake and now it all had hardened into that rock-like feeling behind the eyes and in the chest. Keys opened the lock on the cell door, and someone pushed me in and then the door clanged shut. I stumbled; a young girl grabbed my arm. Another got up from the only seat there was. "Sit down," the girl said. A third young woman moved aside to let me in.

The cell was just large enough for one person, crowded for two. Now we were

four. A bunk with a straw sack on it hung suspended by chains from the wall; similarly suspended were a small table and the single seat. On the opposite side of the table, close to the door, was an open toilet without a seat. One of the girls now sat on it, using it as a chair. The left wall of the cell was about six feet away and bare. The single, double-barred window was about three feet square and so far up against the ceiling one could see nothing but a sliver of sky. The walls were concrete, painted grey. There were two straw bags spread on the floor, covering every inch of space. Every time one of us moved, she bumped into another person. The air was thick and smelly. I began to shiver, as though I had a fever.

"I'm Poldi," the girl said. "This is Lise and that one, on the floor, is Magda. She

Reprinted with permission from the forthcoming book  
*Fireweed: A Political Autobiography*  
 (Temple University Press, April 2002).



just came in this morning." At this, Magda began to sob noisily.

"Enough," Lise said. "You've been at it all day." She was small, brown-haired and rather pretty. She looked about my age, as did Poldi, who was blond, stocky, with freckles and ugly crooked teeth. Poldi spoke in heavy dialect and seemed inordinately cheerful. I tried to focus on the girls and not look at the cell anymore, but nothing in my body seemed to work as it should. I shivered.

"You missed supper, such as it is," Poldi explained. "Drink some water, then you won't feel so hungry." She poured some from a pitcher on the table into the single cup and offered it to me. I took a few sips and felt like gagging.

"So what's your name?"

"Gerda."

"And what are you in for?"

I shrugged. "They just came and took me and my mother." Lise and Poldi did not look Jewish and I was afraid to bring up the subject.

"What did they do with your mother?"

"They took her away downstairs." At this I began to sob and sob, and nothing could stop me.

"That's what you get with all your dumb questions," Lise said. "Can't you wait a minute?" She patted my shoulder. I just sat there sobbing.

Since I could not or would not talk they gave up on me after a while and one of them went to the bed and another slipped in at the foot of the bed and Magda stretched out on the straw sack on the floor, which left just a small space between her and the wall. It had grown dark outside but an electric light bulb was on, high up on the ceiling, and there were lights in the hall shining in through the eye opening in the door. I stretched out, still sobbing, and felt the hard canvas of the mattress against my cheek. It stank of sweat and dirt and the blanket they had given me and which I tried to wrap around me to stop my shaking and shivering smelled worse. My face nearly touched the wall and I held myself stiffly so as not to push against Magda, but after a while when she had cried herself to sleep she leaned against me and that felt warm. I stopped shivering and lay on my back, trying to collect myself and not wake the others. I was exhausted and could not sleep. The light was in my eyes, no matter how I turned, and there

was constant noise, a variety of bad sounds out in the hall that I felt I'd rather not interpret. I was terrified. This was what I had feared and imagined for four years and now it had happened. All the nightmare pictures I had made in my head for all these years now came out and they were real, they were happening to me and I thought if I opened my mouth I would just scream and scream. I'm going to die here, I thought. I'm too young to die and I'll die here like an animal in a trap. For some reason the thought made me stop sobbing. I needed to think, keep my wits about me.

Someone stepped on me and over me. I sat bolt upright. It was Lise going to the toilet. Embarrassed to be watching her I turned toward the wall. I'm gonna die in a stinking toilet, I thought. Lise again stepped over me and crawled back into her bunk and I felt sorry for myself as I had never felt sorry before and the tears began again. It was comforting to cry and make myself feel like a baby, but there was no mother and no friend and there would be no one and somehow I got back that sense I'd had when I played Captain Amundsen on the South Pole. It was cold and dangerous and I was alone—all I could do was to try and be brave. To be brave I would have to stop myself from thinking terrible thoughts; I would have to stop listening to what was going on out in the hall. I would have to do what was needed to get out of this cell alive, whatever came after it. I would have to stop worrying about my mother; she would have to manage for herself.

I began to calm down. With new shrewdness I made use of the fact that the others were sleeping to go to the toilet in some sort of imagined privacy; then I crawled under my blanket, closed my eyes and fell asleep. In all the nights in jail thereafter I slept a full night's sleep.

They wake you up by pounding on the door with a stick, which sounds like tanks coming at you. There was a lot of shouting outside, all incomprehensible; then the door was flung open, the girls in the bunk jumped down, Magda sprang to her feet and everyone started dragging the straw sacks out.

"What're ya dawdling for?" a warden bawled at us. "Get going, we haven't got all day." I stumbled around trying to get

shoes on my feet and barely made it before we were ordered out of the cell.

The prison was one of the regular Austrian civil prisons, six stories high with cells opening onto an interior enclosed courtyard. The two ground floors were closed off from our view and all we could see was two floors below and one above us. Now prisoners were moving along the walkways, slowing down as much as possible so as to make the most of the opportunity of looking at one another, greeting acquaintances, exchanging a few words. The wardens, on the other hand, tried to move us along as fast as possible to keep us from talking. The other floors were all occupied by men. On this first day I barely could take it all in and let myself be pushed toward the end of the corridor, which was a washroom with ten or more tin sinks lined up on both walls. There was only cold water and at each sink there was a small piece of yellow laundry soap. We had a very short time in which to wash and I was told by the experts not to waste time brushing my teeth here; that could be done in the cell. Some of the women tried to rinse out their underwear, but there was barely time for that. Later I learned to wash only one part of my body each day in rotation and to use the precious time for conversation instead. We were locked inside our cells day and night except for the few minutes in the washroom and the "time out." This hour in the open courtyard was something to which we were entitled by law once a day if the weather permitted, but we only got it a few times a week, at best. The civilian guards, still conscious of rules and regulations that had to be observed, explained that this was due to the terrific overcrowding in the jail in the past few months. They just didn't have the staff to let all of us out each day.

Once back in the cell we swung the bunk frame up against the wall and locked it, now giving us "free" floor space in our six-by-twelve-foot cell. A warden and prisoner-flunkey rolled a cart with food from open door to open door. We were supposed to line up against the left wall and wait. Poldi was the person nearest the door and used the time for animated exchanges of shouts and information with the other inmates.

Each person got a large mug with brownish hot liquid and a good-size

chunk of black bread. Then the door was flung shut. I tried the so-called coffee and could not swallow it. Magda had not even touched it and pushed away her mug on the table.

"Drink it, both of you," Lise advised us. "The soup at lunch and dinner is worse and that's all you gonna get. And save some of your bread for the rest of the day. That's it and no more."

I watched Lise and Poldi measure out their morning ration of bread and put the rest away with the small pile of their belongings they kept on the single small shelf above the table. Magda's little bundle was on the floor in the far corner, but she was not saving her bread, she just kept chewing on it.

"She's afraid we're gonna steal it," Poldi said venomously. "Yesterday she was worried about her money and today it's the food. We don't steal, stupid, we're Socialists."

Magda stared at her in horror and backed off against the wall. She was older than the rest of us, perhaps twenty. Her hair was permanent-waved and her eyebrows had been plucked into the shape of a perfect arch. Although she looked disheveled now and pale with fear and crying, she obviously was a girl who spent a lot of time doing her make-up. Judging from her clothes and good shoes she was well-to-do, which was probably one reason for Poldi's antagonism toward her. Poldi and Lise were dressed like working-class girls. I was amazed that they would admit so freely to being Socialists.

Lise seemed to read my mind. "You and your big mouth," she scolded Poldi.

"What's the difference," Poldi replied. "We got nothing to lose. That's what we're here for. Anyway, she gets on my nerves, that fine lady with her bawling and complaining. We're all in the same boat here."

The flunkey came for the cups and spoons and Poldi got momentarily diverted. "We got to get chairs in here," she demanded. "This is a one-man cell and they're stuffing four of us in here and no place to sit all day long."

"You ain't the only one," the flunkey replied, surly.

"What's up?" One of the wardens got into the conversation.

Poldi repeated her demand, adding, "I know what the rules are—each gets a chair or something to sit on."

"Ah, the big-mouth red," the warden said in disgust. "You better stop telling me my business." She slammed the door shut and grumbled outside.

Still, a half hour later the flunkey opened the door and brought a small wooden stool. "All the luxuries of home."

We were ecstatic at this development and thanked and hugged Poldi. She immediately took the occasion to organize us into some discipline—each got a number and we would take turns sitting on bench, chair and toilet, with one still left to sit on the floor. After breakfast, tooth-brushing time, then toilet time, then storytelling.

It was bad enough when the others used the toilet in the small, unventilated space. When my turn came, I balked. Poldi and Lise were nice about it. "Just try, we've all had to get used to it."

But I couldn't perform and thinking of what might be the consequences of my excessive daintiness did not help either.

"We'll all turn around so you can have privacy."

"Drink a glass of water, sometimes that helps."

With so much camaraderie one could get used to anything. Or almost anything. After a few days I did get used to it and even managed to tolerate the comments and crude jokes and the strict rationing of toilet paper. There never was enough of anything and t.p. was considered an indulgence. We used it as our only paper for writing, making games and sometimes drawing, so it was precious indeed. "How do you know so much about the rules?" I asked Poldi, hoping to elicit her story.

She was glad to oblige. Anyway, storytelling was the morning's activity and we each had to take our turn. You could tell anything that came to mind, but first you had to tell about yourself and your family.

Poldi, now nineteen, had been here before. She was arrested after the 1934 uprising, together with her parents who had been February fighters. She had been caught with some leaflets her parents had given her to hide. Anyway, everyone in the building knew she was an active member of the Socialist Youth group. She got a year, but because of her

age they let her out after six months. What actually happened was she got an ulcer from the stinking food and they had to put her in the hospital and that was too much trouble, so they finally let her out. This time they had just taken her together with her father for no special reason. Yeah, she still had the ulcer but it was okay as long as she ate regular.

"This slop?"

"You gotta eat it or you'll get an ulcer too," Poldi said emphatically.

Lise's story was somewhat similar. Her father was a streetcar conductor and very active in his trade union. They lived in a housing project and the whole family, father, mother and an uncle, were arrested in February after the fighting. Lise and her kid sister and brother stayed with neighbors, but the parents were out soon. This time the situation was a lot worse—her father was in jail somewhere, arrested for leading a demonstration at work against the Anschluss—Lise thought he'd get six months at least. And then a few weeks later she'd got caught painting slogans on a wall—"Free the prisoners" is what she'd written.

"They'll let you go with time served," Poldi predicted, "seeing you got no record."

Maybe, maybe not. Lise was more worried about her father, to whom she was very attached.

"Mine is no good," Poldi told us. "Even if he is a Socialist. He's always beating up on us—but not on me. No more."

Magda had little to tell and clearly did not feel like sharing much with the rest of us. She was a secretary in a nice office but had lost her job just a few weeks ago, when the new law against Jews came out. Then she'd been hauled in on one of these street actions—a gang of SA men made all the Jews they could round up scrub the pavement on their hands and knees. She'd taken off her good coat and put it on the sidewalk before starting to scrub and that so enraged one of the men that he arrested her and brought her in here. She had no idea what the charge was, but whatever it was it was a lie.

"It can't be a big deal," Lise thought. "Probably they're just trying to scare you."

Magda agreed. "I'm sure I'll get out today. They'll see it's just a mistake." We

argued that awhile, but contrary to her despondency yesterday, Magda's optimism seemed unshakable today.

The lunchtime soup was up to Poldi's dire predictions. I forced myself but could barely get it down. "Why is it so salty?"

"That's not salt, that's bromide," Poldi enlightened me. "That's to keep us quiet. It's in the dinner stuff, too. There's nothing you can do but eat it."

"They're poisoning us..."

"You got the idea."

Now it was my turn for desperation. "Doesn't it make you dopey and forgetful?"

"Sure, you get sort of stupid and satisfied with everything," Poldi said unhelpfully. "That's why they give it to you. So we don't have any riots."

"That's terrible. I have to do something. I have to be alert and keep my memory or I can't take my exam when I get out."

"What exam?"

It was amazing to me that I could have forgotten about the exam for almost twenty-four hours. All year, it had been foremost on my mind and my first thought on entering the prison was that I simply had to get out in time for it. The Matura, the final exam after eight years of academic Gymnasium was the absolute prerequisite for a university education anywhere in Europe. With it, one could enter the university; without it, never. Students who failed one or another part of the Matura might retake it the following year, but that was their last chance. My exam was scheduled for May 29, five weeks away. I'd been preparing for it all year.

All the girls thought I would be out in plenty of time for it. It wasn't as though I were political or criminal or anything like that ... But what if I lost my memory because of the bromide? Poldi thought if I would walk around vigorously after eating, the drug would have no effect.

The way they did with the suicides they caught on time, let them walk it off. How did she know so much about the suicides? That question led to another of her jail horror stories, which entertained us for at least another hour.

I brooded over my problem all afternoon. At dinnertime, when the warden came in, I asked when I would get a hearing and tried to explain about my exam. She thought it was a great joke.

"You've just got here. Wait your turn." This set off Magda who tried to tell her how it was all a mistake in her case, but all she got in reply was the door being shut in her face. Now totally despondent, Magda crouched in a corner and did not say another word.

After the straw sacks had been handed out and the light turned on, our door was opened once again and the warden pushed in a girl. "Move over for her and manage the best you can," she said not unkindly. "I'll see if I can get you another mattress."

"And where will we put it?" Poldi screamed in outrage. "Hang it from the ceiling? We're overcrowded already, put her somewhere else." She banged on the door with her fists. "That's against regulations, you can't do that. You can't do that."

But they could and they did and the mattress for her never came. We stood around looking at her and what we saw frightened us.

She was small and skinny and could not have been older than twelve, though she looked like ten. She wore a thin, ragged cotton dress and a dirty shawl, the kind peasant girls wear, which she had placed over her head and shoulders and clasped tightly at the neck. Her black lace-up shoes were worn down, and her black cotton stockings marked her as a peasant girl more surely than anything else in her appearance. She looked terrified; the tears streaked down her cheeks. Every few minutes she

wiped her nose with her shawl and sniffed loudly. We tried to find out her name and got incomprehensible gibberish.

"She's a Gypsy," Poldi guessed.

"A Slovak peasant."

"A Croat."

The girl backed off against the wall. "A Yid," she finally brought out.

"My God," I exclaimed, "she's talking Yiddish." I told her to slow down and finally managed to make something out of what she said. Her parents were street peddlers in the Jewish quarter in the second district, and they had all been arrested by the police. Apparently beaten, for she shielded her head with her arm and gestured blows. Her teeth were chattering. In her agitation, she accidentally touched Magda.

"Get away from me, you dirty Polack," Magda shouted. "I don't want to get your vermin."

"You cut that out," Poldi told her, offering the girl our only cup. She drank greedily. "I bet she hasn't eaten a thing."

The girl nodded and Poldi surveyed our meager stash of hoarded bread from this morning. "Let's all pitch in and give it to her."

Lise and I brought our last slices and placed them next to Poldi's on the table, but Magda refused. "I don't have to," she argued. "I want her out of here, the dirty thing. Anyway, I ate up all my bread."

Poldi slapped Magda in the face with the back of her hand and began to search through Magda's pile of things. "Ah, there you are—she's been hoarding ..." She came up with a small crust of bread, which she added to the other pieces on the table. "You eat now," she told the girl gruffly as though she were an obstreperous kid sister.

The girl fell to at once, eating the way people do who are truly hungry. She seemed indifferent to the violence of feelings her entry in our cell had provoked and continued her silent, concentrated eating as though she were alone.

Magda made a careful circle around Poldi and inched up to the door. Suddenly she put her face against the window and began to scream. "Let me out of here, I'm innocent. I'm in here by mistake, let me out." She banged the door with both fists and both feet. Her voice and behavior were different from before; she seemed quite out of control and uncaring of any consequences.

I wanted only to get my hands on her and strangle her cries, to beat her, destroy her, because she was pulling me with her, tempting me to that place from which there was no turning back.

"Stop it, you'll get us all in trouble," Poldi screamed at her, trying in vain to pull her back from the door.

Lise urged us all to the rear of the cell. "She's cracked," Lise shouted. "Let her be, they'll take care of her."

Even though my heart was pounding and my head seemed about to burst with tension, I knew it was good advice. We had to separate ourselves from Magda. I was so angry at her, I had to hold my hands against my body to keep from hitting her. The door was flung open.

"Shut up this minute," the warden commanded. "I'll put you in the rubber cell."

By now we were all screaming. The warden grabbed hold of Magda and pushed her outside, slamming her against the wall. Lise threw Magda's bundle after her.

"Take that child out of here," Poldi demanded. "You're not supposed to have children in here. Let her out, she's just a child."

When the door opened again, the girl tried to hide under the bunk. Two wardens pushed into our cell, slapping us aside to get at her. Finally they half-carried the girl out, her feet dragging limply along the floor. The slamming of the door was followed by a sudden, ominous silence.

■■■

It is sixty-three years since these events happened. I have not been able to think of them, remember them or write about them in all these years, except for making a short story out of one small jail incident the year after I came to America. It was a "good" story, describing a positive incident in all that horror, the only positive incident that happened. The rest of it I could not deal with, and even as I am writing this I cannot deal with it. I remember most my feeling of deadly hatred for Magda at that moment, a feeling so violent and overpowering I have never experienced the like before or after. I would gladly have seen her dead. I did not care if she were put in the padded cell, beaten or killed. She had carelessly endangered us all; she had put herself outside of our fragile community of survival. What horrifies me about this memory to this day is how quickly and totally I came to such

feelings of cruelty, violence and hatred. They were the other side of total helplessness, of profound, unalterable fear.

It was the same thing some nights later when a woman lost her mind and raved and screamed in an inhuman, possessed voice that echoed through the steel hive in which we were pinned down, each in our enclosure, like butterflies stuck on pins in display boxes. Her screaming made us conscious of what it was to be a prisoner, locked up in a tiny enclosure and utterly helpless, while her voice proclaimed that freedom in insanity was still freedom and death was a way out, a way to be chosen. She had passed into that realm where guards could not touch her; they could kill her but they could not touch her; her demented voice howled with that wild animal cry that dissolves steel cages and the jailers' power to punish. And what did I feel? I remember it clearly—I felt blank, poisonous hatred. I wanted only to get my hands on her and strangle her cries, to beat her, destroy her, because she was pulling me with her, tempting me to that place from which there was no turning back. And when they dragged her out of her cell and then suddenly her crying stopped, and we made pictures in our mind about the way in which they flung her, unconscious, into the padded cell in the basement, even then there was no pity. Only relief.

This was about survival and victims didn't survive. They could go mad or be beaten to death or starve and choose their own form of death, but if you wanted to survive you could not do it alone and you had to fight with all your strength to keep some sort of social contract. That is what I learned in jail, in the first forty-eight hours and the ensuing days and weeks, and it has marked all my life irrevocably. These hours, days, weeks and months in jail were the most important events of my life—they gave it a meaning and a shape I have ever since tried to comprehend. Perhaps if I had been thrown into a different cell, everything would have turned out differently. But I happened, quite by accident, to be thrown in with two women whose knowledge of how to survive was stronger and sounder than my own and whose politics had shaped their knowledge and ethics. I learned from them as I had to, very quickly and thoroughly,

and it is to them I owe my survival as much as to anyone. I also owe to them those parts of me that are hard, bitter and frightening to other people.

Once the three of us were alone in that cell we brought some sort of order and rhythm into our lives. I ran a school—classes of the regular one-hour length in German, literature, history, math, French and geography. It was my way of fighting the bromide-induced mental lethargy and the prisoner's worst enemy, boredom. We had an hour of physical exercise each day and an hour of political discussion. It was a full day and a full program and through our contact with prisoners in the other cells our scheme spread to other cells on the floor and even to the men. Our "school" became a model for the rest of the prison. We had orderly times for "relaxation"—playing with cards made of toilet paper, chess sets made of chewed-up dried bread and dominoes made of twigs collected in the yard. We sang songs each day to cheer ourselves up. When, the second week of my stay in jail, my rations were cut in half—all Jews were put on half rations—Poldi and Lise shared their food evenly with me and I accepted. By then we knew each other as "politicals" of similar persuasion. We were humane and decent to each other and we would have done anything to help one another. And yet we could be monstrous to those who threatened our group survival.

This is not humane and certainly not good and I wish I could tell a tale of heroic survival in full humanity. Others have told such tales and maybe they are the truth and maybe they are half-lies. I would not know and nothing I know can help me to imagine such tales as reality. My children, as adults, have complained to me about their childhood having been "so serious." I suppose that is one of the marks I carried with me—I am "so serious" and nothing much has been able to shake that. Another mark I carried out with me was claustrophobia. I cannot be in a small enclosed space—a ship's cabin, an airplane toilet, a narrow room without view, even a small elevator—without feeling that panicky tightness of the jail.

There is a big difference between being a regular prisoner with a finite sentence to serve and being the kind of prisoner I

was. Even Poldi and Lise with their complex political past could expect some sort of orderly progression of events—an examination, a trial, sentencing, a finite number of months that had to be served. I was, as it later turned out, a hostage for my father and the only purpose of keeping me and my mother locked up was to put pressure on him to return from abroad and be jailed himself. When this did not succeed and my father was blackmailed into signing away his business without compensation, we were released. But this I could not know at the time. I only knew that as a Jew there were no more rules or laws protecting me. Someone had grabbed me, stuffed me in this steel cell and thrown away the key. I might stay there forever, for all I knew. When there is that kind of perspective, total lawlessness, willful power on one side and abject powerlessness on the other, one can survive by either having hope or by settling with the likelihood of one's own death. I did both.

My hope focused on my Matura exam. To get out in time for that exam became my fixed idea, my obsession.

I began a systematic campaign to bring the situation to the attention of the guards, the prison authorities, the police, the Gestapo. Each time the door was opened, I recited my request for a hearing. I wrote petitions on toilet paper and handed them to the amused wardens. I formally and repeatedly requested an interview with the Chief Warden. What I accomplished was to have the guards mark me down as slightly crazy, but also to make them aware of my situation. There was never any response, no promise, no reply. I used my one-postcard-a-week mailing privilege to implore my friends on the outside to petition the school authorities to get me released. After a few weeks I changed my approach and asked just to be allowed to get out of jail under guard to take my exam. The guards considered this so unusual and crazy a request that they may very well have transmitted it to their supervisors—I later learned that it was part of my dossier. This campaign occupied a lot of my energy, attention and emotions; at the very least it had the effect of giving me hope and a goal.

I have good reason to believe that my release and that of my mother was at least hastened by my campaign. What I

later learned was that, quite independently of me, the Nazi teachers in my school had started a campaign to get me released. As it happened, I was the only imprisoned student in the school. This was in the early months of the Nazi occupation of Austria and the old laws were still in effect. The final solution was years away. Thus my Nazi teachers were convinced that my case represented an aberration of justice, a simple mistake.

I was the best student in my class and had been selected for a part similar to the role of the valedictorian. In our school system a student could elect to do an honor's thesis in one subject, which usually meant a full year's work of research and writing. Few students chose to add this to the burdensome last year of preparation for the Matura. I had done so and had completed my thesis on the subject "The German Ballad through Five Centuries." It had already been approved and rated "excellent" by the supervising teacher of German Studies, who happened to be a devoted "illegal" Nazi, meaning that she had belonged to the Nazi Party for years before the Anschluss. This honor's thesis on a subject dear to her heart accrued much credit to her and it may be for this reason she involved herself in a campaign for my liberation. In a way, I was her "Exception Jew"—the one Jew who did not fit her stereotypical anti-Semitic ideas, the one Jew she knew intimately. She wrote in my behalf to the Board of Education, even the Gestapo. When I was finally released she told me all about these efforts and said, naively and with utter conviction: "If only Hitler had known what they did to you, it would never have happened."

I knew nothing of all this, as the days wore on in jail. The only change was for the worse. The cut in rations made us constantly hungry and hunger became a compulsive preoccupation. We talked of food, fantasized of food, dreamed of food. I struggled against headaches, racing pulse, dizziness, lethargy and forgetfulness. And death moved closer and closer.

Poldi had met a comrade during one of our "time out" periods in the yard, a woman in her twenties who had been caught running an illegal printing press. She expected a speedy trial with only two outcomes possible: concentration camp or a death sentence. The woman was trying to deal with this bravely and

Poldi and Lise were the only comrades she knew in jail who could understand her ordeal. She did not know which outcome she hoped for, but Poldi knew and hoped for the death sentence. "They just kill you slowly in the camps," she pronounced with her usual uncanny wisdom in such matters. "It's just a slower death and on top of it you've got to work for them." To hear her and that woman talk in such terms, quite seriously and without any dramatics, was like entering the world of the dead. I listened to the words and to something else, vibrations of courage coming out of their simple faith in the immortality of their revolutionary cause. One day in the yard the woman moved close to us and pressed a kerchief into Poldi's hand. "I'm going tomorrow," she said quietly. "Keep that, as a remembrance."

"Austria?"

"No, Germany, I don't know where."

"Maybe it'll be one of those straight work camps," Poldi said encouragingly. "They're ok."

"Maybe you'll be where my father is," Lise said. "Look for him." The woman nodded. She looked very pale and quite calm. "I'm dead already," she said, "so it can't get worse. You take care." We promised to take care, whatever that might mean. That night Poldi cried for the first time. And I thought of death and how one must choose. We all must die and we do not know when or how, but we can choose to live unafraid by being ready to die. I am dead already so it cannot be worse. This is the road of the heroes, and suddenly it seemed no longer unattainable but quite simple, quite wise. Everything people in power do to their victims is based on instilling fear and ultimately all of that fear comes down to fear of death. If one could learn to be ready for death, one could live unafraid, one would be free, as this woman was free.

I celebrated my eighteenth birthday in jail. I wanted to get out and take my exam and be able sometime to study at a university. I wanted to follow my boyfriend to America. I wanted to help my mother and sister get out of Nazi Germany. I really wanted to live. But to survive I had to become braver than I was and to do that I had to accept that I would die here. It was quite miraculous

how calm and strong the will to live became, once one accepted death.

The notches on the wall that served as my personal calendar of imprisonment grew and grew. The Monday of my exam was only a few days away and nothing had changed. No response to my appeals, no interrogation, nothing. Whoever had shut me up in that cage had forgotten my existence. Even the guards showed some concern and told me not to give up hope. They might still let me out Saturday. Nobody ever was let out on Sunday. But Saturday passed and Sunday passed and Monday morning came with the usual jailhouse clatter and discomfort and noise. Nothing. Nobody said anything to me, as though they were hoping I did not know what day this was. Eight a.m., the start of the exam. It would go on until three in the afternoon with a one-hour break for lunch. The same the next day and on for four days. The last day was the oral exam; then it was over. And here I was, forgotten.

Right after breakfast, the warden opened the door and told me to come out. I reached for my bundle, but she said to leave it. Bad news, it meant I wasn't going "out." My heart started racing wildly with hope—perhaps they were after all going to let me go to the exam with a guard? No, that wasn't it. "You're going to the Gestapo," the warden said.

They took me in the prison van along the Quai and the Danube Canal to the Hotel Metropole, where our imprisonment had started five weeks ago. Then, we had just been briefly questioned and sent on to jail. Now, I worried about being interrogated by the Gestapo instead of by the police. This must mean they had found out about my political work. If that was so, then it was all over for me. Poldi had told us a number of horror stories of what went on in the padded cells they had installed in the basement, how they tortured you there and beat you and left you near dead. I tried not to make pictures in my head.

Gilded woodwork and crystal chandeliers ... I ended up in some anteroom that still looked as it had when the Metropole was simply a hotel. One could imagine the waiters hurrying down the corridors with trolleys of room-service food and fancy drinks. I sat on a satin-covered, gilded chair. What an absurdity ... Two hours

passed, then another. No food, no drink; there was a guard outside the door. I had not had a chance to eat my breakfast bread; by one in the afternoon I was weak with hunger. Then the door opened and they brought my mother in. We hugged and cried and for a few minutes managed to whisper to each other, hoping no one would come into the room and separate us. She thought all of this was a good sign; we would be interrogated and freed. I told her about the exam and she thought it still might work out. If they let us out today, I could still take a part of it and maybe make up the day I missed some other way. I thought, she's trying to cheer me up.

"Whatever they ask you to sign, sign it," my mother said, "the lawyers can take care of it later."

I did not agree but I did not want to discourage her, so I just nodded.

The inner door opened and they called my mother away.

"Mach's gut," she called from the door. Do it well.

A moment later I got called into another office. The man who confronted me was small in his black Gestapo uniform. He wore rimless glasses and looked more like a bookkeeper than a policeman. He offered me a chair and asked a few perfunctory questions, referring to the dossier he had in front of him. Where was my father? Did I know he had taken gold and money abroad, which was a capital offense?

My spirits rose. These questions meant he knew nothing about my politics. Yet suddenly his tone changed and he spoke quite sharply. "Take your glasses off." I thought he would hit me and hesitated, but then I did as he told me.

"Take your jacket off."

I felt sick with fear. Was he going to attack me, rape me? I froze. He repeated his order.

"I'll take nothing off," I said as firmly as I could. "You'll have to force me." I jumped up and stood with my back to the wall.

He looked at me angrily and I stared back at him, willing and ready to make him fight with me. Since he had a pistol in his belt, this was quite foolish, but I did not consider my odds at all.

"Oh, sit down," he said disgustedly. "You've seen too many movies."

"I've been arrested without reason and I've not been charged with anything."

I've been in a stinking overcrowded cell for five weeks and been given half rations so I'm starved. They put bromide in the soup and the coffee to dope us up. Are there no laws left?"

"There are laws," he said. "Of course there are laws. I'm trying to get your case cleared up. So sit down and cooperate."

I sat down and put my glasses on. He pushed a cigarette case toward me and I took a cigarette. "I need some food," I said. "I haven't had anything since five o'clock yesterday."

"That's too bad. But we don't run a hotel here. You better answer my questions—I can send you back to jail, you know, or I can send you to Dachau."

"I don't care where you send me," I said, and I meant it, too. "I've been asking for five weeks to be allowed to take my Matura exam and today is the day and here I am while the exam's going on. So I don't care."

He looked at his papers. "Ah, yes, you're the 'crazy one' with the exam." His voice was a little more relaxed and natural now. "You really care so much about it?"

"I do."

Again, he looked at his papers. "I see you did an essay on the German ballad. Now that's a strange topic for a Jew." This did not seem to call for a reply on my part. "What can you possibly understand about the spirit of the German ballad?"

"I've read German ballads all my life," I said. "I've studied them for two years. I probably know more about it than you do." I realized as soon as the words were out that being impertinent to this man was not smart, but by now I really did not care what happened after.

"Let's see," he said. "What ballads did you write on?"

I named four and he knew them all and had an opinion of their merit. I responded to him as though we were sitting in a living room having a friendly chat. "This subject," he said finally, "happens to be my special interest. I'm a high school teacher."

My eyes went to his black uniform, the SS insignia, the pistol. "Well," he said, "under more normal circumstances."

I took a chance and asked him a technical question that had interested me in my work on the ballads. He had an answer, and again for a few minutes we talked earnestly and interestedly as

though we were in a different time, in a different place.

"You do seem to know your subject," he conceded.

"So you keep me here and I can't take my exam and I'll never get to the university," I said bitterly.

"Just wait here." He got up and left the room. I tried not to think, since the whole situation was crazy and utterly unreal. This could not be happening to me or anyone.

He came back with a cup of coffee and a roll on a plate. "Here."

The way prisoners do, I did not wait or hesitate, for the food might vanish. I ate and drank and he watched me not unkindly.

"I'm sorry you missed your exam," he said. "Such things happen. It's a big organization."

"Why don't you let us out," I cried. "My mother hasn't done anything either."

"We'll see." He closed his folder and pointed me to the door. Strangely, as I rose to go, he also rose and extended his hand, as though this were indeed a social occasion. I shook his hand and he passed me on to the guard. My mother was not here and I thought, the way this had gone, it was some kind of trick or a miracle, but surely it was not real.

I was pushed into the paddy wagon and driven, at dusk, to the Elizabeth street jail and handed over to my usual warden, who marched me down the iron corridors, the clangong door, the key. There were Poldi and Lise waiting, as I entered the cell.

"They didn't beat you?" Poldi exclaimed in surprise.

"No. But they'll keep me here till I rot." I was so dejected I could barely get my story out and only the amazement shown by Lise and Poldi made me see what had happened other than in the worst light. I had been lucky, running into the one halfway decent fellow in the Gestapo; it had been a wild fluke he shared my interest in the German ballad. But in the end, what did it matter. I had missed my exam and I was back here and again, they'd thrown away the key.

I passed the next days in hopeless despondency, no longer even bothering to mark their passage on my wall calendar. All of Poldi's cheering explanations and her hopeful interpretation of every portent and sign only had the effect of

driving me deeper into despair. I had lost all hope and with it all nerve. It was as though in that wild abandoned dice game I had played with the Gestapo man I had shot all my reserves and now nothing was left.

On Monday, six days after I had been to the Gestapo, the door opened in the late afternoon and the warden called my name. "Come on, you're going."

I did not move.

"Take your bundle," the warden said impatiently. "You're going out."

"I don't believe you."

Poldi pressed my bundle in my hand. "Come on, it's real."

"They'll just send me to Dachau," I cried. "I'm not going."

I braced myself against the wall and sat down in the corner farthest from the door.

They actually had to carry me to the door and they half-dragged me out the corridor. Only when we had passed the first steel gate, the chief warden showed me a pass. "You're going free," she said. "Not a minute too soon—looks like you're losing your marbles."

"Damn," I said. "Damn, damn, why couldn't you have let me go last week when it mattered?"

And so, reluctantly I left jail. But first I was reunited with my mother in an official-looking police office, where we were given some papers to sign. I read them and was appalled—we agreed to leave Germany (Austria) at once and never return. Until such time as we were going to leave we agreed to report to our local police precinct once a week and explain why we were not yet gone. I wanted my mother not to sign this, but she already had. She urged me to sign right away and not make a fuss—they wouldn't let us out if we didn't sign, so why argue. I signed what was in fact an order of deportation and loss of citizenship without any due process or trial or cause. And then, only then, were we out on the street.

We took a streetcar home, and I felt terribly self-conscious in my smelly clothes, which hung from me like the clothes on a scarecrow. It seemed to me I had lost thirty pounds and everyone in the streetcar must be able to see we were just out of jail. Walking from the streetcar stop to our house seemed an exhausting task. We were both weak and holding on to each other.

Our apartment was closed and dark, so we went downstairs to Grandmama's where they greeted us with tears and great excitement. My sister was beside herself with joy.

"You're out just in time for the Matura," said my Aunt Emma.

"That was last week."

"Not at all," she said. "They postponed it for a week because they had to find a new commission. An all-Nazi commission."

It was true. She showed me the official letter from school and the date was tomorrow, 8 a.m.

I will never know whether it was my Nazi teachers' appeal, my prison campaign or that crazy interview with the Gestapo man—here I was, free and just in time for the exam. I went the next day, a small celebrity among my teachers and classmates, and appeared before the Nazi examination commissioners, each with his or her Nazi Party pin in the lapel, and asked to be permitted to eat during the exam.

"Why such an outrageous request?"

"Because I was just let out of jail," I said, "and I've been systematically starved and doped with bromides. I'm too weak to take the exam if I can't have something to eat." It appeared the commissioners were familiar with my case and, after a brief consultation, granted my request. And so, feeling somewhat smug and triumphant in my puny display of political resistance, I munched on cheese sandwiches all the way through my four-day exam. And despite it all, I graduated magna cum laude and received the handshake of the super Nazi commissioner congratulating me on an exceptional achievement. It was a humorous grace note to a harsh reality. What had gone before was deadly serious and marked me for life. What would come after was much worse for all of us. And my promising academic career, that wonderful utopian goal toward which all my energy and hopes had gone during those weeks in jail, vanished in the storm that swept over Europe and over our lives. I would not get back to it for over twenty years. □

# Consider Job Loss

We all want a clean environment and fuel efficiency—but we must make sure our advances are based on sound science.

BY JAMES S. HANEY



**M**ANUFACTURERS and the United Auto Workers of America stand united in opposing increases in the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard because it would kill vehicle sales and jobs, especially in Wisconsin. Since 1995, Congress has repeatedly rejected the proposal as a jobs killer.

That's why the United Auto Workers of America is among those leading the charge to stop the legislation that would force auto companies to meet a 37 miles per gallon standard for both car and truck fleets by 2014.

"We cannot accept demands for excessive increases in CAFE standards that would jeopardize the jobs of UAW members," the UAW says on its website. "It is important that any changes to CAFE not aggravate the challenging economic circumstances facing automakers and their suppliers and result in additional job losses for American workers."

Currently federal standards mandate a manufacturer's fleet average of 27.5 miles per gallon for cars and 20.7 miles per gallon for light trucks—pickups, minivans, and sport utility vehicles. Because light trucks have become more popular with American consumers some members of Congress are pushing to increase the CAFE standards for lightweight trucks or restructure the way such vehicles are classified.

The massive increased fuel efficiency mandate is a threat to Wisconsin jobs and poses hazards for our highways as smaller, lighter vehicles are forced onto the streets. Because the standards are fleetwide averages, American manufacturers who traditionally control a greater share of the large-vehicle market would be put at an unfair disadvantage when compared to foreign competitors.

When considering the increased CAFE standards, there are two numbers that need to be kept in mind—4,000 and 1,800. That's the number of autoworkers in Janesville and Kenosha. Not to mention the hundreds of businesses and workers whose livelihoods are directly linked to the success of the auto and truck industry.

The increased CAFE standards would kill jobs at Janesville's GM plant and Kenosha's DaimlerChrysler plant. Kenosha is a community that was rocked by plant closings in the past, but

has rebounded with DaimlerChrysler's massive new engine-building facility for SUVs.

The tougher mandate will hurt Wisconsin workers hard, targeting "made-in-Wisconsin" vehicles. The GM plant in Janesville manufactures the Suburban, Yukon, and Denali, while the DaimlerChrysler's Kenosha Engine Plant manufactures engines used in the Jeep line.

Fewer vehicles sold means fewer big auto industry paychecks rippling through local economies. And that hurts throughout the local economy—grocery stores, restaurants, retailers, theaters, and everyone up and down Main Street.

And, while we all want a clean environment and fuel efficiency, we must make sure our advances are based on sound science. For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that if fuel efficiency of cars and trucks were doubled, it would cut greenhouse gas emissions only by 1 percent. In other words, we'd kill a lot of jobs for very little environmental protection.

Here are some of the facts:

- Under current law, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is charged with establishing fuel economy standards. This process began October 1, 2001, and will consider key elements such as technological feasibility, costs, safety, emission controls, consumer choice, and the effects of the auto industry.
- Today, all manufacturers have advanced technology to improve vehicle fuel efficiency, lower emissions, and increase safety. Government mandates are not the answer.

- The auto industry invests billions to develop and introduce breakthrough technologies that will lead to significant fuel economy gains without sacrificing the features that consumers demand. Aggressively increasing CAFE standards at this time will divert resources from this essential effort.
- Tougher fuel-efficiency standards would force auto manufacturers to make smaller, lighter vehicles that would result in more highway injuries and deaths.
- CAFE does not reduce foreign oil dependence. In 1974, imported oil amounted to 35 percent of U.S. consumption. Today, fuel economy has doubled and oil imports have risen to 50 percent.
- For every 10 miles per gallon in increased fuel efficiency, it is estimated that vehicle sales decline by 5 percent. That leads to lost jobs.
- Congress can provide consumer tax credits that encourage the purchase of new types of highly fuel-efficient advanced technology vehicles.

When the manufacturers and the UAW agree, it's important for policymakers to take note. A massive hike in the CAFE standard will kill jobs and hurt Wisconsin. ▀

*James S. Haney is president of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce and a board member of the Wisconsin Academy Council.*

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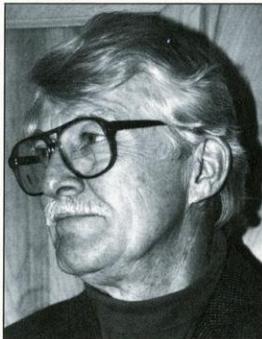


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# Oil Wars

Behind the War on Terrorism  
and other battles in the  
Mideast lurks a U.S. fight to  
ensure a cheap oil supply.

BY PAUL G. HAYES



ALMOST HALF A CENTURY AGO, the late M. King Hubbert, a geophysicist for Shell Oil Co., predicted that oil production in the lower 48 United States would peak in the year 1970. His prediction in 1956 was met with skepticism if not scorn by his industry—until it proved to be uncannily accurate.

Oil production in fact peaked in 1970 and at the level of production he foresaw. Never before had so much oil been produced in the country that had pioneered the oil age. Domestic production has steadily declined since.

Hubbert understood that the peak year of production was historic. Roughly half of the resource remained, but, being harder to find and produce, it was the expensive half.

U.S. oil consumers—5 percent of the world's population burning 30 percent of all the energy used each year—did not notice the moment because American oil companies had begun to import cheap foreign oil. Consumer attention became focused, however, when the Arabs imposed an oil embargo on the United States in late 1973, ushering in the first oil-based energy crisis.

I was in a Milwaukee audience in 1974 when Dr. Hubbert, by then famous and working for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), explained his science. Pointing to his now-familiar bell curve, he said: "This means that a person born in the United States in 1935 who lives to be 70 will witness the production of 80 percent of all the oil that the United States will ever produce."

I took it personally. Born in 1934, I received a driver's license when gasoline cost 30 cents a gallon. I am the epitome of the oil culture, a beneficiary of its mobility, its freedom, and its luxury. According to Hubbert, no one who lived before me used as much as I did, no one who is born later will use as much, and no one outside of the United States will use as much.

Recognizing that world data about petroleum was less complete, Hubbert moved on to predict that world oil production might peak as early as the first decade of the 21st century, by

which time the world population would have doubled again to approach seven billion persons.

A prudent response to Hubbert's findings would have been to encourage policies to reduce our use of oil to husband the remaining reserves, to find alternate sources of energy, and to encourage policies to humanely bring unsupportable global population growth rates in line with the resource base.

But the American response has been the opposite. We fight for cheap oil.

It may not have seemed obvious on September 11, but it has become so with extended press coverage since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Oil, and specifically the lavish use of it by the United States, lies at the heart of today's events.

The terrorist Osama bin Laden has said so repeatedly and plainly. No American leader has denied it. High on bin Laden's list of complaints against the United States are the presence of American troops on the sacred soil of his native Saudi Arabia and the inescapable fact that they are there to protect Middle Eastern oil fields and the political status quo of Saudi Arabia.

Thus, the War on Terrorism has erupted as the fourth crisis in 29 years in which Middle Eastern oil is at the center.

The first was the Arab oil embargo of 1973-74, in which the Saudis wrested control of their oil fields from the Arab American Oil Co., which had dictated both production rates and price. When the embargo was lifted, the world price of oil had risen from about \$2.40 a barrel to \$12.50 a barrel.

The second was the Iranian Revolution of 1979-80, in which Islamic theocrats deposed the American-backed Shah and during which Iranian oil fields ceased production. At this time, the world price of oil reached \$40 a barrel, precipitating a period of inflation in the United States unprecedented in the 20th century.

The third was Operation Desert Storm, or the Gulf War, in 1990-91, in which a U.S.-led consortium defeated Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army—but not before Hussein had torched Kuwait's oil fields. Notably, Saudi Arabia was the staging area for the Americans, and Americans have been stationed there since, to the distaste of bin Laden.

Of the four, the War on Terrorism promises to be the most expensive and the longest, and to have the least predictable outcome. Nevertheless, it is no less than the others devoted to ensuring the flow of oil from the Middle East at low prices, which has been the *de facto* policy of the United States throughout the oil age.

One wonders if the World Trade Center attack would have occurred if our response to the Arab oil embargo of 1973 had been to establish policies that would have reduced our reliance on Middle Eastern oil. If Hubbert was right, we would have to do so one day anyway, regardless of international politics.

Because the resource dictates it.

Hubbert's science still pertains, and a recent exercise by the U.S. Energy Information Agency concluded that the peak year of global oil production would occur between 2004 and 2037, the latter prediction accepting new USGS data on undiscovered world oil reserves and a 2 percent annual growth in production.

Meanwhile, Americans remain blithely tied to a commuting system that can only be described as profligate, wherein heav-

A prudent response would have been to reduce our use of oil, find alternate sources of energy, and humanely bring global population growth rates in line with the resource base.

ier vehicles than ever are being driven to deliver a single rider to work and back.

Even so, in first presenting the administration's proposed energy plan, which stresses oil production, Vice President Dick Cheney dismissed conservation as a serious component. Recently the Bush administration delayed the deadline for American auto manufacturers to produce an automobile that uses dramatically less petroleum.

Our efforts to keep petroleum cheap and flowing are cruel distractions. The true price of gasoline at the pump properly should include the billions spent on our efforts to keep oil flowing cheaply, including the energy-intensive air wars imposed on Iraq in the Gulf War and Afghanistan in the War on Terrorism.

Perhaps Americans would appreciate the true and tragic cost of their transportation system if, when they filled their tanks, they paid a price for gasoline pro-rated on the mileage-per-gallon of their vehicles, the number of passengers they carried, and the importance of the trip.

It's an interesting idea, but it isn't likely under present policies. As the late Dr. Hubbert told me in conversation a year before his death in 1989, when U.S. imports of oil began to equal domestic production, "We're just living in a fool's paradise." ▀

*Paul G. Hayes, a former science writer for the Milwaukee Journal and numerous other publications, is a Wisconsin Academy Fellow, a member of the Wisconsin Academy Review editorial advisory committee, and Vice President of Letters on the Wisconsin Academy Council.*

# To read a poem

Perhaps the current poetry craze has left you in the cold, feeling as puzzled or intimidated as you did in high school English. For those new to poetry, or for poetry lovers wishing to renew their appreciation, our poetry editor and contest sponsor John Lehman takes a fresh look at an old friend.

BY JOHN LEHMAN

**W**HAT IS POETRY, anyway, and what makes some poems better than others?

Most of us started out as kids singing ourselves to sleep with nursery rhymes. We wrote poems to our moms each Mother's Day, maybe even tried a few lines as we secretly mooned over a cool classmate. But then something happened, and the more teachers exclaimed how wonderful poetry was, the less wonderful it became.

And it wasn't just us. Academics and literary journals seemed to delight in turning poetry into a secret language that only they could interpret. It wasn't poetry's detractors who ruined it for us, but its supporters. Last week in a Madison parking structure I saw a bumper sticker that said: "Dear God, save me from your followers!" Dear poetry, please do the same.

All this would be fine if we could live without poetry. But there are times when we need it. There are gaps that advertising images and popular song

lyrics just don't fill, no matter how clever they may be. We may be too old for Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein, but thanks to a resurgence of interest, poetry is flourishing again. So where do we begin? How do we jump in?

Donald Hall, a wonderful poet who taught at the University of Michigan, states that at minimum poetry is different than prose in these two distinguishing characteristics: *fixity* and *energy*. Fixity means there is one exact word and a correct placement of that word. He claims that if you change a sentence

or paragraph of a novel it will not greatly alter its meaning. If you change one word of a poem, you change that poem. Here's a little example, a short piece by Gregory Orr:

### Washing My Face

Last night's dreams disappear.  
They are like the sink draining:  
a transparent rose swallowed by its  
stem.

"Transparent" fits water going down the drain but why a rose instead of, for example, a chrysanthemum? I get a feeling these were pleasant dreams, but when I look at the words I see he doesn't say that directly. It is suggested by the type of flower, rose, often associated with beauty and love. It's almost as if there's an unspoken contract between the poet and the reader. The poet says, "I will take time to find that right word, if you will take time to appreciate why I have chosen this one in place of another." Word usage is a great place to start when digging into a poem.

Here's an even shorter poem, by Robert Frost, that illustrates energy, the second characteristic:

### The Span of Life

The old dog barks backward without  
getting up.  
I can remember when he was a pup.

Energy simply means the efficiency with which a poet uses language. In two lines we have not only a picture of a dog, but also of the observer "looking backward" over both their lives. Visually we don't get much of an image, but read the lines again and notice the long, accented vowels of the first line that cause you to read it slowly, then contrast them with the short, prancing-puppy like ones of the second. Frost uses the title to push this sound picture into metaphor. Which

brings me to three additional traits that distinguish great poetry from the rest.

### SHAPING MOVEMENT

Most poetry has something prose does not, and that is the margins of white space to the left and right. That means that as a poet I am deciding how to end the line, not just letting the word processor automatically move the cursor to the next because I've run out of space. When you combine line breaks with sentences, you have the ability to move the reader forward, slow them down or bring them to a complete halt. For example, at the end of the first line in the excerpt from "Let Evening Come," below, we slow down at "abandoned" because it is the end of the line, but don't come to a stop because it isn't the end of a sentence. Only when the end of the line has a period do we take a full pause (as with the 3rd, 4th, and 6th lines). And look how the momentum builds in the second stanza—the lines are relatively the same length, but the sentences within them become shorter and shorter (like having more notes per bar in music).

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned  
in long grass. Let the stars appear  
and the moon disclose her silver  
horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.  
Let the wind die down. Let the shed  
go black inside. Let evening come.

Many poets break lines by spoken, thought phrases ("He disappeared in the dead of winter:/The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,/The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day."), but others play with the relationship of the sentence to the line, varying the flow, as one would in composing music, so that the rhythms affect us even if we wouldn't know the mean-

ing of the words. Spacing and irregular rhyme are jazz-like riffs adding to the vocal interpretation. Do you see why people who write poetry get excited by its possibilities? It's a form with built-in musical direction that allows you not only to tell your story, but also show people how to read and hear it. By the way, as you might deduce from the images, "Let Evening Come" is about coming to terms with death. Jane Kenyon, who wrote the poem and was married to Donald Hall, died of leukemia in 1995 at the age of 47.

### EMOTIONAL BEATS

Robert Frost talked and wrote a great deal about poetry, but one of the truest things he ever stated is, "A piece of writing is as good as its drama." Let me tell why I think this is so. A number of years ago I and three other poets had a book published called *Quick Blue Gathering*. When we did readings together we each took the podium for 15 minutes and read our own poems. It occurred to me this might be more interesting if there was one thing that a couple of us did together. I took Robert Frost's "Death of a Hired Hand" and broke it into a reading for two voices. Rita Miller and I read the parts. I was surprised at how easy this was to do and how effective the result was.

Many years later, when my own book came out, I asked my wife if she'd help me at a reading in the same way, but this time with a couple of my poems. They also easily split into two voices (though not necessarily male and female; sometimes they were right brain versus left brain or the perspective of older age contrasted with one of youth). These two different (or opposite) voices are what create drama.

In everyday living we try to avoid or resolve conflict, but conflict is at the heart of art. Under the control of the written page, art allows us to explore ramifications *beyond* our everyday life. It's not enough to experience reality on the page. We want heightened reality. A practical lesson I've learned is that whenever a poem I'm writing seems flat, I search out the opposites, or competing factors, within the poem and build upon their differences. These conflicting elements make a piece exciting—we don't know what is going to happen, which of

In everyday living we try to avoid or resolve conflict, but conflict is at the heart of art. Under the control of the written page, art allows us to explore ramifications beyond our everyday life.

them is going to triumph. As the advantage switches from one side to the other, we in the audience experience an emotional swing. In writing, these are called "emotional beats." They work the same way as turnovers (one team getting the ball from another) in an exciting basketball or football game.

In this excerpt from a very long poem by Frost called "Home Burial" we become engrossed wondering which of the opposing sides is going to win. It's actually better if you *don't* know what the poem is about, because then you can better appreciate the interaction between the man and the woman. Much of this is conveyed through their changing physical positions:

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs  
Before she saw him. She was staring  
down,  
Looking back over her shoulder at some  
fear.  
She took a doubtful step and then undid  
it  
To raise herself and look again. He spoke  
Advancing toward her: 'What is it you  
see  
From up there always—for I want to  
know.'  
She turned and sank upon her skirts at  
that,  
And her face changed from terrified to  
dull.  
He said to gain time: 'What is it you see,'  
Mounting until she cowered under him.  
'I will find out now—you must tell me,  
dear.'  
She, in her place, refused him any help  
With the least stiffening of her neck and  
silence.  
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't  
see,  
Blind creature; and awhile he didn't see.  
But at last he murmured, 'Oh,' and  
again, 'Oh,'  
'What is it—what?' she said.  
    'Just that I see.'  
'You don't,' she challenged. 'Tell me  
what it is.'

In describing the camera shots of *Citizen Kane*, Orson Welles once said he wanted each character to have his or her own unique angle so that even if a viewer didn't know the plot the viewer would be able to understand the story. We're always looking up at Kane (Welles

My point isn't about interpreting a particular poem, it's about embracing the process of seeing things poetically.

even built a trapdoor on the set to get the camera at a very low angle) and looking down at Susan Alexander, the singer who is his less-than-talented protégé. Remember the camera shot that comes down through the skylight of a nightclub where she's performing? Well, here we have the same thing, but it's even better because the man and woman change position, as the emotional advantage swings from one to the other. The man begins at the foot of the stairs and rises to eventually tower over her. However, they are both upstaged by an unknown presence outside, which they glance at through the window.

The couple in the poem have lost their child. What she always sees—and he comes to see—is the child's grave outside the window (the "home burial" of the title). She's lost in her grief, he sublimates his by returning to the routine of work. This is intolerable to her, and despite his threats that if she walks out the door she can never return, she leaves. Their marriage is over (also the "home burial" of the title). Frost uses his characters as the director of a stage play might, and the result is that we experience the feelings of both as if they were our own. In Frost's case, in his real life, they were. Frost and his wife tragically had lost a baby, but unlike the couple in the poem they were able to weather it together. Why would he change the ending in the poem? The easy answer is that he was trying to make it more dramatic. A more thoughtful one might be that within the safety of art he was playing out his (and our) worst fears in order to see what would happen. Most of us remember Frost's recitation at John F. Kennedy's inauguration, but here is what the insightful Kennedy had to say about Frost: "If Robert Frost was much honored during his lifetime, it was because a good many preferred to ignore his darker truths."

### MIRROR TO MEANING

Speaking of Frost, can you tell me the central metaphor of these poems: "The Road Not Taken," "The Mending Wall," "Home Burial," "Birches," "After Apple-Picking," and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"? Easy, the central symbol is right in the title. But of what is each metaphor a symbol? The poet is holding up a framed picture that shows us his experiences, but also, reflected in its glass, we see ourselves and our world shining back at us in the reflection.

Let me distinguish between two types of metaphor. What I'll call a closed metaphor directly draws the comparison—death is like sleep, for example (this is a simile, or expressed rather than implied comparison, but still a type of metaphor). We understand and have experienced sleep, whereas we want to get some feeling for death which we have not experienced firsthand. If I had a blackboard, to the left we could make a column of the traits of sleep and connect some with traits of death in a column to the right. Some traits they share easily come to mind: a lack of consciousness in both, being weary at the end of the day is like being weary toward the end of your life. We might draw some conclusions that are less sound, that is, we wake up from sleep, therefore there must be resurrection after death; but aptness (as well as originality) determines why one metaphor is better than another.

On the other hand, what if there were also a metaphor in which all we had were the column of traits on the left and the heading, "Our Life," to which they were to be compared on the right—an open metaphor? In a long metaphoric work we would call this a parable, or if it involved animals, a fable. But this open metaphor is precisely what Robert Frost does in his poems. He gives us one side of the comparison and then forces us to find the correspondences in the other. This is why I believe he never wanted to

give us his definitive interpretation of his pieces. He's encouraging us to become poets. With greater or lesser success all poets try to do the same. How do poets get readers to make the leap? They choose situations rich in connotation that seem trivial, even silly, if we only take them literally—such as an old man reminiscing about swinging on trees in "Birches," the couple arguing over who can see a grave in "Home Burial," someone anxious about night in "Let Evening Come," and even an old dog looking over its shoulder ("The Span of Life") or water going down a drain in "Washing My Face."

My point isn't about interpreting a particular poem, it's about embracing the process of seeing things poetically. As you read the winning submissions from the *Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry contest, look at how individual words are used and note how the condensation of the poem intensifies its emotion. You might read several of these aloud, letting the sentences, line breaks, and spacing suggest pace and

emphasis. Question what conflicting elements are in the pieces and which ones you are rooting for. And finally, challenge the poem and yourself by asking, "So what?" How do these works apply to *your* life and clarify *your* experiences?

One final consideration. Poetry is not a spectator sport. Why not take a few minutes after reading these selections and write one of your own? You don't have to show it to anyone, but if you like it, take it out from time to time to polish it. If you really think you have something, send it to next year's contest. But whether you do this or not, know that by taking the time to thoughtfully read what you or someone else writes, you have taken the first steps to once again becoming a poet. ▀

*John Lehman* is poetry editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. His published poetry books include **Shrine of the Tooth Fairy** (CBR Press, 1998) and **Dogs Dream of Running** (Salmon Run Press, 2001). He teaches workshops in Wisconsin and at writers' conferences across the country. Lehman is the founder and associate publisher of **Rosebud**, a national literary magazine, managing partner of Zelda Wilde Publishing, and the publisher/co-editor of the free Madison quarterly, **Cup of Poems**. His most recent venture is a series of small-group writing/travel workshops ([www.writerjourney.com](http://www.writerjourney.com)).

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# Poetry contest winners

"THE MARK OF A GOOD POET is being able to lay down a line or two on paper that the reader will carry in his or her mind to retrieve again and again for the pure pleasure of it. I'm thrilled with the quality of the poetry that is so obviously alive and thriving in Wisconsin. I'm honored to stand among so many fine poets and to applaud their work. My congratulations to each and every poet who submitted their poetry, and to the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters for making it visible."

—Ellen Kort, Wisconsin Poet Laureate  
Lead judge, *Wisconsin Academy Review*  
statewide poetry contest

Last fall the *Wisconsin Academy Review* announced a statewide poetry contest. We are delighted to present the winners in this issue:

**FIRST PLACE:** James Lee, Madison,  
*Winner of the John Lehman Poetry Award, \$500*

**SECOND PLACE:** Dale Ritterbusch, Waukesha, \$100

**THIRD PLACE:** Eleanor Stanford, Madison, \$50

Our warmest congratulations to these very fine poets!

We would also like to express our thanks to our panel of judges, who went above and beyond the call of duty—over the holidays, yet—in coping with an unexpected 359 entries. Robin Chapman, Ellen Kort, Andrea Musher, and Richard Roe are gifted poets in their own right. We thank them for so generously lending their time and expertise to discover and recognize the abilities of other Wisconsin poets.

Another big thank-you is in order, and that's to our contest sponsor, John Lehman, who also serves as poetry editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. John's dedication to poetry in our state is truly boundless. He put down his own money to help make this contest happen, and also served as our contest coordinator. John is extremely gratified by the high turnout, which proved something he's been saying for years: Wisconsin is blessed with many eager, gifted poets who have long been looking for a statewide forum for their work. Finally, we would like to thank Abella Studio and Canterbury Booksellers in Madison for their valuable in-kind contributions to the winners' prizes. We are not listing all prizes here for reasons of space.

The ultimate beneficiary of this contest is you, the *Wisconsin Academy Review* reader. The contest has provided us with a treasure trove of wonderful poetry, and we plan to draw upon it in various ways throughout the year. Look for poems by our contest runners-up in the very next issue.

Joan Fischer  
Editor  
*Wisconsin Academy Review*

POETRY CONTEST  
RUNNERS-UP

Mariann Ritzer, Hartland  
Timothy Walsh, Madison  
William T. McConnell, Verona  
David Graham, Ripon  
Rebecca Conn, Stevens Point

Alice D'Alessio, Madison  
Sara Parrell, Madison  
Anne-Marie Cusac, Madison  
Annette L. Grunseth, Green Bay  
Richard Swanson, Madison

## First Place

JAMES LEE  
Winner of the  
John Lehman Poetry Award



ELLEN KORT, on  
"we will take it with us"

The poet asks the reader to enter this poem at a fast run. It's a poem that needs no set-up, a litany, fresh and full to the bursting point, one high-jump after another. I like the universality and the carefully chosen specificity of the images, the metaphoric leaps that leave us breathless, the poem's down-to-earth narrative of forgiveness. This is a haunting poem, musical, a humming in your ear long after reading.

one

## we will take it with us

my mother will be down there with pie tins and dish rags  
and my father will be down there with buckskin gloves, empty shotgun shells, and tv antennas  
and my sister will be down there with Barbie doll legs, a denim-decorated record player, and  
some desiccate butterfly cocoons  
and my brother will be down there with a Plymouth duster steering wheel, a wedding ring, his air  
force fatigues and kerosene-filled mason jars  
and lord my father will be down there with some hole-in-the-toe leather work boots, an '81  
Chrysler torque converter, and his short-stack eggs and coffee  
and lord my mother will be down there with her singer sewing machine to mend the dandelion  
roots, and she will be down there with her laundry baskets and swollen ankles  
and lord my sister will be down there with her placenta and Prozac, and the tail feathers from her  
parakeet, and she will be down there with cold hot dogs and her daughter's dirty neck  
and lord my brother will be down there with his pump-action air rifle and all of the blue jays he  
popped out of the maple, and he will be down there with his souvenir Brewer baseball bat and  
his broken cologne bottle shaped like a bullet  
and lord lord i will be down there with my momma's ice cream scoop, and i will be down there  
with my toboggan and my tobacco,  
and lord lord i will be down there with my cross-country running shoes and 4-h ribbons, and i  
will be down there with my silver ring and mottled tongue,  
and lord lord we will be down there, oh we will weep there, separate, unholy,  
holding our trinkets with our bony fingers, missing each other,  
the same way we do now.

## venison and mashed potatoes

orange season.

two weeks of chili so spicy the mice were kept at bay.  
 oyster crackers with the chili in a chipped bowl  
 (allegedly from England), looked at the collector  
 plates meticulously mounted behind his head,  
 looked at the German beer mugs, F-15 ash tray full of butts  
 the carrot colored season,  
 orange snowmobile suit with bloodstains at the dinner table,  
 deer tag haphazardly pinned to his back  
 and creased between chair and shoulder  
 he handed me the gun, taught me how to focus  
 i was startled by the cold rifle scope on my eye,  
 struggled to see anything through that icy lens, but i gave up,  
 handed it back when i heard more cracks and booms up the valley  
 more chili more oyster crackers gobbled with a deliberate rhythm until

hush,

a doe burst through the cornfield  
 she stopped at the pond for a swig of spring water  
 still sitting, he slid aside the glass patio door,  
 took aim, pop! the sudden smell of sulfur and painful ache in the left ear  
 he stood the still-smoking rifle in the corner,  
 gargled a swig of coffee, grabbed a bowie knife  
 and stomped out into the snow;  
 her limp pink tongue still wet with pond water  
 hung from her mouth like taffy  
 i went along, asked about the shape of the blade  
 triangular, said it was for assassins  
 it left wounds that wouldn't heal,  
 said as he split the white fur of her belly  
 and gave her steaming soul to the pond fog

orange season, rendered deer filling the freezer,  
 venison steak and mashed potatoes to eat  
 every night for two weeks  
 this was not like the hunting of grouse, no,  
 no careful footfalls in the forest,  
 no rapid twitter of quick wings following  
 a pointer's carefully twisted paw,  
 this was no buckshot season  
 this was hot chili season,  
 cold scope season,  
 venison and mashed potato season,  
 the suns setting in orange deer blood, westerly and deep

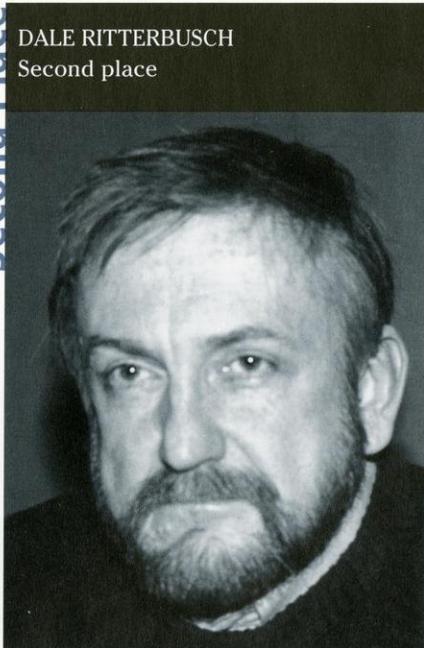
James Lee lives in Madison, frequently reads at open mikes around town, and has often been featured on radio—no surprise given the vivid imagery of his poetry and the excitement he generates when reading it aloud. Lee has been featured on WORT 89.9 radio as a member of the Radio Literature collective and on the show "Radio Buzz," and has also read on Wisconsin Public Radio's "Higher Ground." His poem "father's finger" was published last June in **Shampoo Poetry**, an online magazine out of San Francisco. In addition, Lee made it to the finals of the Taos Poetry Circus in June 2000.

Lee works as a computer programmer. His hero in high school was e.e. cummings. He began writing poetry in the 8th grade at a laundromat, he says, "between the rinse and spin cycles, to a girl [I] would never kiss."

# poetry winners

Second Place

DALE RITTERBUSCH  
Second place



ELLEN KORT, on  
"The Stinger"

This is a tough-minded poem, honest and defiant, written in a voice that underscores the strength of the human spirit. Its power lies in its physicality, the intricate linkage of common violence in our daily lives. Each image, each right word carefully placed, skillfully manages to carry the reader along. It is visual, textural, and wonderfully articulate.

Two

## The Stinger

*Momma's boy* my stepfather said,  
*always running behind your mother's skirt.*  
We got along that way for years,  
a tension, sharp as a hunting knife  
between us. But when the pretense was down  
we'd play catch, usually at evening, after supper  
when the sun left a lengthening shadow  
across the yard. He'd throw them soft,  
at first, maybe a little spin, a curve  
that I'd misread, maybe a throw to the side  
I'd have to stretch for. I'd wing it back,  
and when I threw one wide and low he missed it,  
had to run across the flower bed to get it.  
The next few were the same, same speed,  
same placement, setting me up for the stinger—  
a ball thrown sharper, harder, with movement  
that made me think or guess in the deepening shadows  
of the setting sun. I'd take them hard  
in the webbing of my glove—the speed,  
the force, pulling my glove back, pushing it  
into my chest, sometimes close to my face.  
Then harder, where I'd miss it with the web,  
catch it in the pocket where it reddened  
my hand, bruising the bone, the stinger showing me  
throw after throw what he meant: *Momma's boy*  
it said, burning my hand with each catch,  
*Momma's boy* as the sky reddened like a welt.

## The Quarry

**No Trespassing** signs  
 aren't much of a deterrent  
 when you're seventeen  
 and the water is the deepest  
 blue-green you've ever seen—  
 promise of cool water  
 after dark, a forbidden swim  
 into unmarked dangers,  
 no line of floats, no lifeguard,  
 just the quiet call of crickets  
 and a few stars charting a safer course.  
 It is a tradition taking off our clothes,  
 diving in, swimming to the rock ledge  
 across the quarry where we could rest,  
 catching our breath, stilling the heart  
 to tell stories, brag of girlfriends,  
 pronounce our futures, rag on  
 teachers for their silly rules.

And on that night, late,  
 when even our friends were fast asleep,  
 almost on a dare you and I  
 parked down the road,  
 snuck over the fence,  
 walked to the water  
 to watch the still moon float.  
 My arm around your shoulders  
 slipped to your waist, a touch  
 among the crickets, night birds calling,  
 quarry stone still warm  
 from the lengthening sun.  
 The moon rode on the silken water  
 as we kissed, as we broke  
 apart to feel the embarrassed thrill  
 of being nude. We jumped in,  
 the water deep and cool as a kiss,  
 the touch of your wet arms, your back,  
 treading the deep soul of the night.  
 And we swam, breaking the moon  
 into small pieces of light and water,  
 and when we crawled back out  
 your arms shivered, your shoulders,  
 as much from my kiss as from  
 the late night chill.  
 What could have happened  
 in all these years  
 to break that spell, to lose everything  
 the water dreamed?

Dale Ritterbusch is the author of **Lessons Learned**, winner of the 1996 Council for Wisconsin Writers' Posner Award. He is an associate professor in the Department of Languages and Literatures at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he teaches creative writing and literature. His creative work has appeared in such anthologies as *Carrying the Darkness, The Vietnam War in American Stories, Songs, and Poems*, and *From Both Sides Now: The Poetry of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath*. Additionally, he has been published in such periodicals as *War, Literature & the Arts, Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature*, and the *Wisconsin Review*. The Wisconsin Arts Board awarded him a grant for 1997. A native of Wisconsin, he resides in Waukesha with his wife, Patricia, and daughter, Kerry.

"The compression of language that defines poetry intensifies and actually creates our experience of the world," says Ritterbusch. "Poetry, like painting, sculpture, dance, or music, has physical properties which the various senses, and, in fact, the whole being respond to. Poems are not mere intellectual exercises or the fretwork of the imagination; they define our lives, our sense of time and place, and they help make sense of the world."

Third Place



ELEANOR STANFORD  
Third place

ELLEN KORT ON  
"The Killer of Flies"

There is an ordinary loveliness to this poem. I like its sardonic humor, its easy, conversational style, its trusting voice that gathers the human threads that bind us into a bundle of paradoxes to carry with us as we grow older. It is written in a language raw with meaning and rich with insight. There is a celebratory density to it that offers wisdom, pathos, and hope.

Three

## The Killer of Flies

"After I am 80, I want to be a killer of flies."  
—from a student composition, Cape Verde

In the meantime, I will be a baiter of hooks  
and a caster of lines, a keeper of chickens, a layer  
of bricks. I will be a vendor of sweets  
on the street corner, a mender of holes in socks  
and sleeves. I will be a tinker of scrap, a riveter  
on the assembly line in the factory of pipe  
dreams.

But when I am 80, I will dedicate myself  
to flies. In July, when they proliferate,  
at parties where rain blows in the curtains and young girls  
wave dishtowels above the cakes and sweating  
sodas, I will forsake my old professions  
of hip-swayer and hand-holder, of two-stepper and strummer  
of *coladeiras*. I will take up my post by the *doce de leite*,  
I will outdo any young thing of thirteen  
in the wrist-turn and rag-flick.

And on the dry December afternoons, when the numbers  
dwindle, I will sit on the porch with a swatter and a glass  
of gin, noting how the buzzing dims, how options narrow  
and the clamour of callings fades to one clear held note.

*Doce de leite* is a  
sweet milk pudding.  
A *coladeira* is a  
mid-tempo song.

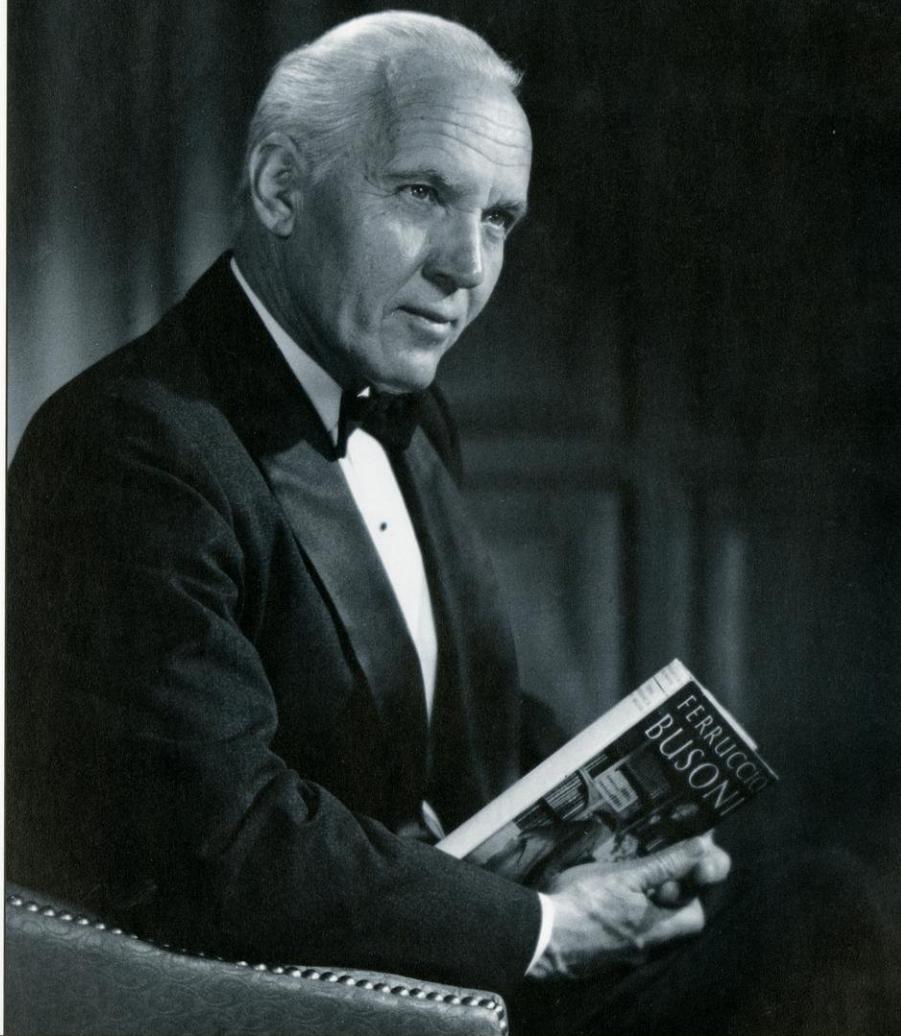
## Yiddish Elegy

Since you've been pronounced  
no longer breathing, suddenly  
you're everywhere: we schlep  
to work and home, find ourselves  
farklemped without a reason, sobbing  
in guttural syllables. A glimpse  
of blintzes in the supermarket  
freezer or an episode of *Seinfeld*  
is all it takes. But what should we expect,  
that you'd slip off like a nebbish,  
fade into the woodwork? Should we be surprised  
when you show up at your own shiva, wearing  
cowboy boots and dyed blond hair,  
bearing a potato kugel? Such a sheyne  
meydel, the bubbies whisper over their plates  
of honey cake. Why does she have to hide  
that pretty punim under so much makeup?  
You stand silently behind the card table  
of cakes and cookies and slice the apfelkuchen,  
hand out a curse with each sweet mouthful:  
Already you've forgotten me.  
An onion should grow in your throat.

*Eleanor Stanford was born in Washington, D.C., and graduated from New College in Sarasota, Florida, in 1998, after which she spent two years in the Peace Corps in the Cape Verde Islands. Along with her husband, she lived on Fogo, an active volcano, where she taught high school English and learned how to carry things on her head. She is currently a graduate student in English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Stanford has had poems published in *Folio* and *The Atlanta Review*, where she won second place in the 2001 International Poetry Competition. She has also had a chapbook published by NewCollage Press.*

*"Poetry is a way of communicating emotion, which, like a painting or a song, cannot be paraphrased," Stanford says. "I draw inspiration from reading poetry, and also from other artists, especially those in my family—from my mother, who is a painter, my father, who is a filmmaker, and my three brothers and my husband, who are all musicians."*

# Gentlemanly Dane



BY SOLON PIERCE

**J**UST OVER 60 YEARS AGO a Dane came to Dane County—a decisive step, he later recounted many times, “that I have never regretted.” It was a perfect fit. There was something homespun and authentic in the nature of the man—a sense that he was cut from the same cloth.

Just over 10 years have come and gone since Gunnar Johansen left us. For a man who lived to see every decade of the 20th century, one wonders how the 21st would have been yet a new challenge.

I knew Johansen in the final decade of his remarkable life. My parents had clipped an article out of the *Wisconsin State Journal* in 1976 when Gunnar retired from the University and several years later had the temerity to call him up and ask if they could bring two sons

out to play for him. Of course Gunnar assented, and so we went—from Mount Horeb out to his house in the woods, just beyond the county line in Blue Mounds.

The enormous two-keyboard Steinway in Gunnar’s living room genuinely scared me when I learned that I was about to play on it. “I think I’ll just use one keyboard...” is how I remember nervously prefacing what seems now a rather unmemorable version of Chopin’s “Polonaise Militaire.”

## Dane

Some thoughts on the late, great pianist Gunnar Johansen, a Wisconsin Academy Fellow.

“Supreme humanism and unfailing generosity” were qualities that Johansen embodied.

Photo by Edgar L. Obma

Gunnar was celebrated in Denmark before he ever came to American shores—he had led a fast-paced life of motorcycles and damsels—and seemed to be almost a regular feature in the Copenhagen newspapers. When he did arrive in 1929, his U.S. debut in San Francisco brought forth the following headline: “Scandinavian Acclaimed as Piano Genius.” He traveled far and wide, earning plaudits from Chicago to Stockholm. But it was when he came to Wis-

consin in 1939 as artist-in-residence that he truly settled down, figuratively and literally.

Gunnar's art, like his life, was as rough-hewn as the firewood he loved to chop—made of stern and uncompromising headlong momentum, driving endlessly forward.

One commentator, in trying to put a finger on what made Gunnar's pioneering cycle of Liszt recordings unique, wrote: "Johansen is less concerned with where he is than where he is headed. His technique is not of the superhuman variety ... but in the end, that only adds to the power of the performances ... there is an adventurous virtuosity here, an attempt to transcend human limits."

I heard Gunnar play a stunning version, at the age of 80, of Liszt's "Ad Nos, Ad Salutarem Undam" in Mills Hall. It almost seemed as if he played right through the notes, that notes themselves no longer mattered—they were only a gateway, stepping stones on an overwhelming psychic journey. Gunnar's playing was so often a magnifi-

cation of musical intent—ideas and stories and emotions writ large across a cosmic landscape.

Johansen's own compositions frequently seem to open up in musical space this kind of gateway to other worlds: a celestial orientation toward the future—powerfully in keeping with the character and breadth of Gunnar's extramusical concerns. One of the last times I visited Gunnar, we watched *Nova* on Wisconsin Public Television together.

The essence of Johansen's achievements for me rests not only in the tangible legacy he left in his work, but within the timeless example of his supreme humanism and unfailing generosity. He took up the mantle of Liszt's *genie oblige*—with genius comes obligation—in earnest, and raised it to a new level. He gave of himself in so many ways, and when Gunnar and Lorraine showed up at one of my performances in Madison, I could not have been more honored.

Perhaps that, in the end, is what will always stay with me about Gunnar: he helped me to realize that life's proper

posture is one of gratitude, generosity, and grace—one that he upheld to the very end of his days and perhaps even beyond—though his spirit may now be at rest, it is yet always moving, like his adopted home of Wisconsin, forward. ▀

*Solon Pierce was born in Plymouth and raised in Mount Horeb. He recently received a doctorate in piano performance from the University of Minnesota, where he completed his DMA thesis on Gunnar Johansen's career. Pierce has performed frequently in his native Wisconsin, including appearances with the Festival City Symphony of Milwaukee and the Madison Symphony, and in radio broadcasts on Wisconsin Public Radio ("Sunday Afternoon Live from the Elvehjem").*



# THE GLASS MENAGERIE

by TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

An American classic of great beauty and complexity. Tom, Laura and Amanda Wingfield each create idealized fantasy worlds — longing to escape to a life beyond the family's St. Louis tenement. But can they survive the dramatic event that forces them to face reality?

APRIL 12 – MAY 5

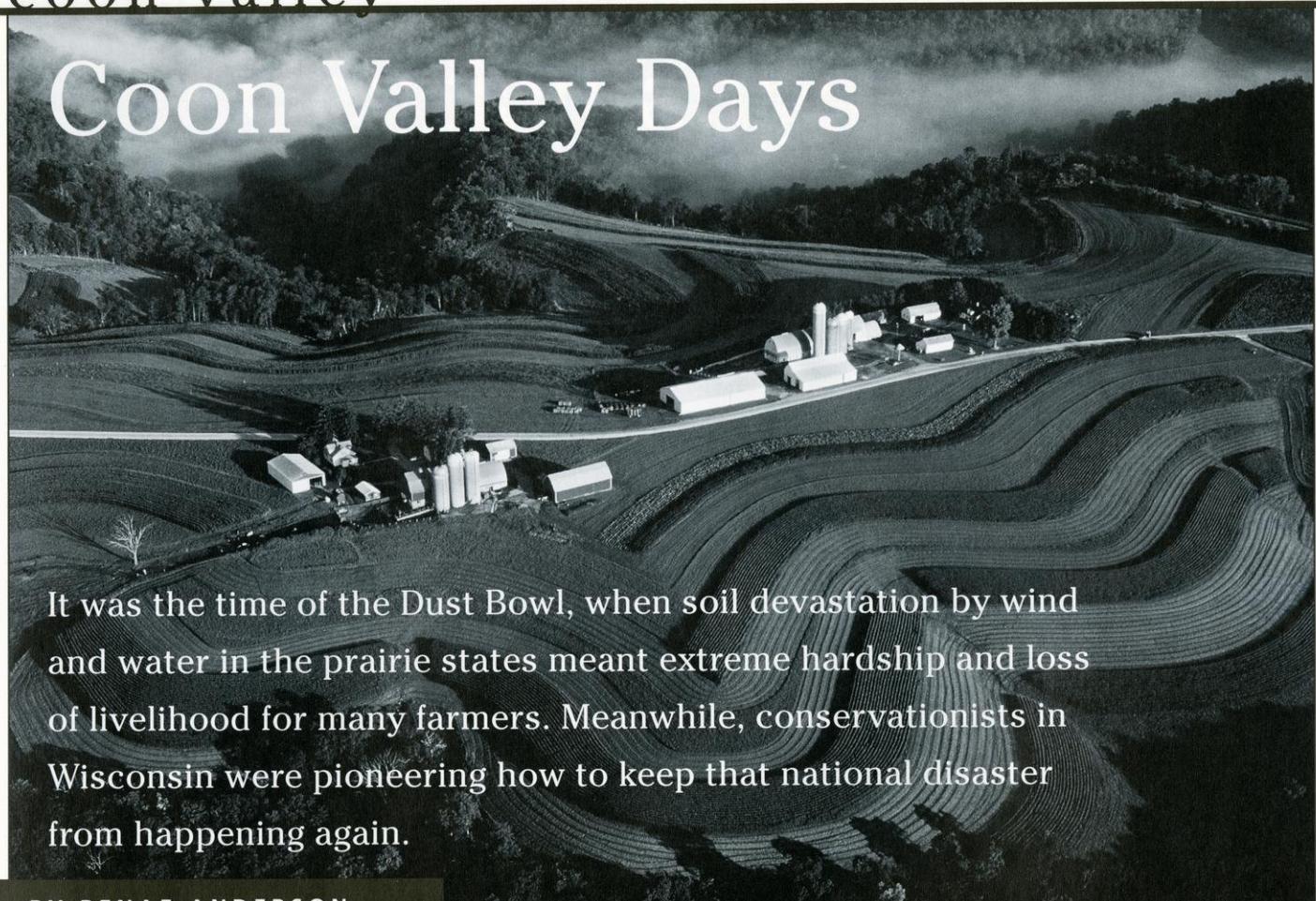
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# Coon Valley Days



It was the time of the Dust Bowl, when soil devastation by wind and water in the prairie states meant extreme hardship and loss of livelihood for many farmers. Meanwhile, conservationists in Wisconsin were pioneering how to keep that national disaster from happening again.

BY RENAE ANDERSON

**Made in Coon Valley:**  
An aerial photo of the Manske farm taken in 1995 shows how anti-erosion contouring strips pioneered in the 1930s have been preserved to this day.

Photo by Jim Richardson  
© Richardson Photography

**I**T TOOK ONLY 70 YEARS, from the time of the first infusion of white settlers to the early 1930s, for traditional farming methods to reduce the land around Coon Creek from pristine to the brink of agricultural uselessness. It took nearly 70 years to revive Coon Creek, as measured by the barometer of native brook trout, and it is still on the mend. With the horsepower and intense cropping abilities we now have, we could rappel back down that slope in much less than 70 years, were it not for the ethic and the knowledge gained from a short-lived, wildly successful erosion-control demonstration project—the first in the nation—in Coon Creek Watershed.

From 1847 to 1870, nearly every reasonably suitable acre around Coon Valley, Wisconsin, was turned to farmland. Wheat was a rich crop at a dollar a bushel, and land was cheap at two dollars an acre. After 20 boom years, fascination with wheat faded as soil lost its

fertility, rust assaulted the crop, and wheat growers moved on westward to the Plains. New settlers came in with livestock, particularly dairy cattle, but the land was wearing out. Erosion claimed much of the topsoil and left a trail of gullies, some too big to cross

with a wagon. Cattle grazed higher and higher up the steep wooded hillsides, and pastures were turned to crop fields.

The chronic insult to the land cover perturbed the natural overland flow and absorption of rainwater, channeling it down until it became a scouring flush off the hillsides. The beauty of the coulee passed away with the soil and the trees. Coon Creek grew wide and shallow with sediment, and too warm for trout.

"One time back in the late '20s we had three floods in one week," recalled Adolph Lee, one of the Coon Valley pioneers, in a 1969 interview when he was still living on his farm. When he had moved there as a boy in 1898, he could jump Coon Creek wherever he chose. A few years later, farmers could no longer store their hay on the creek banks; and roads washed out regularly.

As Aldo Leopold noted in his 1935 essay, "Coon Valley: An Adventure in Cooperative Conservation" (*American Forests* magazine), Coon Valley "is one of the thousand farm communities which, through the abuse of its originally rich soil, has not only filled the national dinner pail, but has created the Mississippi flood problem, the navigation problem, the overproduction problem, and the problem of its own future continuity."

All over the country, gullies, floods, dust storms, and droughts were driving people off the farm. These troubles were sadly accepted by many as a necessary part of feeding the nation, but they raised a blaring alarm for those few with an eye and an understanding of soils. Hugh Hammond Bennett, a soil surveyor with the USDA, had spent 20 years investigating soils in every state in the nation. He despaired at the abuse of land that was ruining the soil, piling it in drifts of dust and choking the riverways. He began a crusade, as zealous as any missionary, to stop the potential apocalypse that had fed the decline of other great civilizations.

Bennett campaigned with conviction that soil erosion was among the most urgent of world problems in the 1920s. His countless fiery speeches, articles, and lobbying paid off in 1929 with the creation of 10 federal-state Agricultural Research Stations, one in La Crosse, to experiment with erosion control under Bennett's hard-driving leadership. La Crosse was wisely chosen to study ero-

sion, as it was located among some of the most severely suffering agricultural lands in the nation. This land, with its long history of tribes prior to the plow, has no memory of the glacier itself, but the heavy layer of silty loess blown in upon it made it rich and fertile. Over 10,000 years, 8 to 10 inches of topsoil formed in the windblown silt, making it one of the best soils in the world for agriculture—naturally fertile, but with a particular weakness to erosion.

The Congress of 1933 appropriated \$5 million for erosion control. Bennett convinced Franklin D. Roosevelt that vegetation, with minimal engineering, could check the runaway erosion that was ruining America's breadbasket, and put a lot of people to work as well. FDR appointed Bennett as director and first employee of a new New Deal agency, the Soil Erosion Service (SES). Bennett assembled a fired-up crew of believers with a wide range of scientific and practical experience to work on the whole of the problem. He purposely sidestepped the elixir promises that had scammed many down-and-out farmers, such as single-purpose soil treatments, miracle plants, and log structures to cure erosion. The new agency focused on the whole farm and all its resources. Later the Soil Erosion Service was renamed with a more positive spin—the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)—and transferred to the Department of Agriculture, with Bennett as its chief.

Bennett called on R. H. Davis, then superintendent of the La Crosse Erosion Experiment Station, to help him pick a site for a conservation demonstration project. FDR had advised them to pick a site large enough to produce spectacular (and speedy) results. Dozens of watersheds in the 12-million-acre unglaciated valley of the Upper Mississippi were in bad shape. But Coon Creek Watershed had a good location and seemed to have the best potential for cooperation, or, in other words, the least hostility. Bad Axe watershed, just over the line from Coon Creek and also a likely candidate, took itself out of the running when rabid anti-FDR, shoot-the-revenuers sentiments led residents to literally kick the first brave surveyors out of the area.

Davis, and the leading thinkers on land use at the University of Wisconsin—Noble Clark, E. R. Jones, Otto Zeasman, Warren Clark, and Aldo Leopold—proposed the Coon Valley location, marked out along watershed lines. Bennett designated it "Project No. 1," and it became the first watershed project in the nation. It was 22 miles long and nine miles wide, encompassing 92,000 acres straddling three counties, with outlet directly to the Mississippi River.

### RAISING COON

The watershed was divided into four units, with a conservation planner assigned to each. The four planners



Each farm was an experiment. No one knew what type of planting would best stabilize a streambank or halt a gully, but the fervor of saving the countryside carried the staff on to the next idea.

were Herb Flueck, later the SCS state conservationist for Minnesota; Marvin Schweers, who became state conservationist for Wisconsin; John Bollinger; and Joe Schaenzer.

Davis and the four planners sat down in late 1933 to figure out from scratch how this conservation project would work. They had to prove that conservation would build farm income while restoring the soil and water. Crop yields would need to increase to make up for the acres that would be fenced, seeded, or planted to trees instead of crops.

In January 1934, they devised this general land use plan:\*

**Open pasture with slopes >40 percent**

*Fence out cattle and plant trees*

**Woods with slope >25 percent**

*Fence out cattle; plant cover in critical spots (gullies)*

**Crop fields with slope >20 percent**

*Seed to pasture or hay*

**Ridge top fields with slope <10 percent**

*Terrace and contour strips*

**All other fields with slope >3 percent**

*Contour strips*

**All flat fields**

*Use crop rotations*

\* *Second Annual Report, Coon Creek Demonstration Area, 1934-1935, SCS*

The planners worked with a circle of young, hopelessly dedicated "technicians"—agronomist I. K. Landon, forester Eric ("The Swede") Quistgaard, engineer Gerald Ryerson, economist Melville Cohee, soil expert Alex Robertson, and Ernest Holt, wildlife biologist, who was brought in at Leopold's urging.

They took some of the research from the university and the experiment station, interpreted it, and applied it to the Coon Valley situation. They decided what should go into a farm plan, which conservation practices would be best and how to implement them, what the

government role should be, and what the farmer would have to do.

A farmer had to agree to follow the farm plan, which he himself helped write, for five years. The government would provide free seed, fertilizer, lime, fencing supplies, and much of the labor. The first signers also got a 50-cent-per-acre payment. Most early cooperators later admitted that they signed the agreements expecting to go back to their old ways after the five years were up. They did not.

Each farm was an experiment. No one knew what type of planting would best stabilize a streambank or halt a gully. Sometimes seedlings failed, a drought hurt, or check dams blew out, but the fervor of saving the countryside carried the SCS staff on to the next idea. The all-

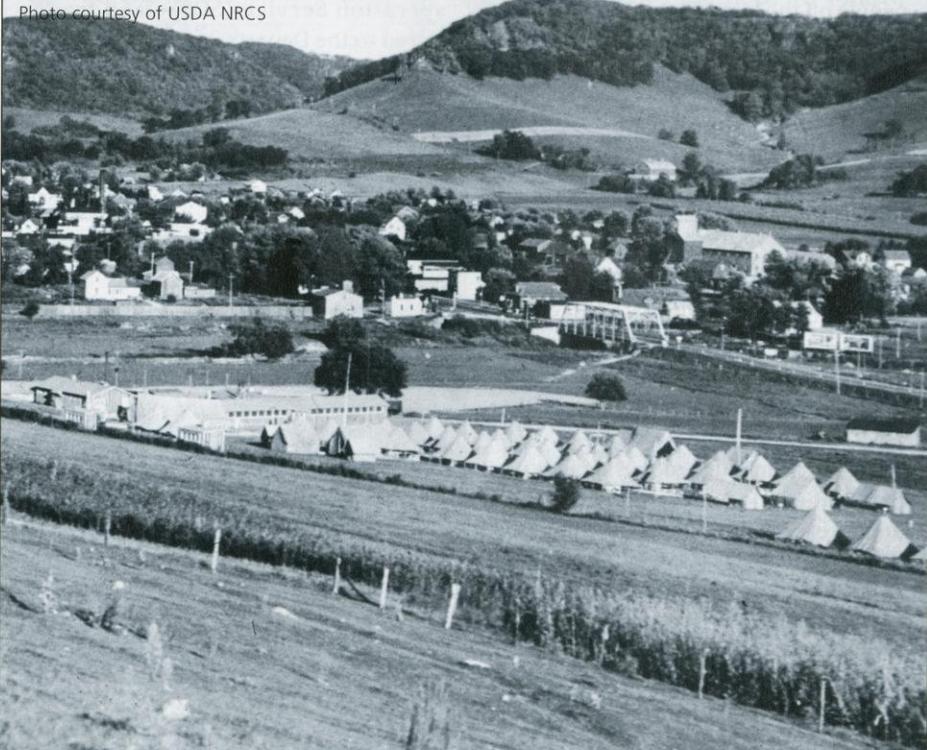
star lineup of "technicians," each arguing with his own expertise and learning from the others, helped put a balanced menu of ideas on the table.

Herb Flueck, one of the four farm planners, or contact men, years later recalled the heady, hearts-on-fire atmosphere: "We developed some know-how and I want to tell you we developed it quick. We were hungry. We went there to work. We didn't take vacation the first year. Everybody worked—we had 227 farms planned the first year."

The farm planner and an assistant went to the farm, armed only with an air photo and a hand level. Said Flueck, "Two people can get all the contour lines you need with a good hand level. We marked the contours, the new fence lines, the terraces, and drew up the plan. Manske Ridge, that I had planned, was the first showpiece in the area, and now it's the most-used picture showing original conservation work." Nearly 40 years later, in 1973, Elmer Manske still remembered and welcomed Herb Flueck back to his farm, and they looked over the contour strips that were still farmed by his son, with a nip and a tuck here

**Conservation boot camp:** The Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Coon Valley, 1934. Nearly 200 young men, supervised by the military and directed by Soil Conservation Service staff, provided labor to implement conservation practices.

Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS



and there to further strengthen the erosion control.

Aldo Leopold was no doubt pleased to see wildlife biology on equal footing with agronomy, engineering, and the other specialties, and this was only through his own coaching and influence. Herb Flueck recollected that Leopold "went out with the farm planners and R. H. Davis, and we came to some conclusions that we wanted to incorporate wildlife in the farm planning."

Leopold pointed out in his Coon Valley essay that the SES offered to each farmer "a re-organized system of land use, in which not only soil conservation and agriculture, but also forestry, game, fish, fur, flood-control, scenery, songbirds, or any other pertinent interest were to be duly integrated. It will probably take another decade before the public appreciates either the novelty of such an attitude by a bureau, or the courage needed to undertake so complex and difficult a task."

By 1935, more than 300 farmers were "genuinely interested" wildlife cooperators, with 329 food patches and 161 winter feeding stations tended by farmers. One optimistic group formed a

"It will probably take another decade before the public appreciates either the novelty of such an attitude by a bureau, or the courage needed to undertake so complex and difficult a task," wrote Aldo Leopold about Coon Valley.

shooting cooperative in anticipation of the day their efforts would literally come home to roost.

#### FARMERS AND FEDS

In early 1934 a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp landed in Coon Valley, staking their tents on 12 acres of flat valley floor owned by Lewis Brye and his cousin. By late fall, the barracks had been constructed, housing 190 CCC boys who moved down from the Long Lake CCC camp to provide the strong backs needed for conservation work.

It was a delicate matter to persuade farmers to sign an agreement with the government. Even though many were in dire straits, a hearty distrust of the federals held them back. Two letters were

mailed to all farmers in the watershed assuring them that simply visiting with a soil conservationist would not, popular opinion to the contrary, oblige them to anything.

Adolph Lee was among the first to sign up for help. I. N. Knutson, the banker in the village of Coon Valley, encouraged Lee and pressed many of his other farmer-borrowers to get into the program. He had sound business reasons—the steep, bare landscape allowed ever more frequent floods, which washed out roads or buried them in sediment. The milk trucks couldn't get through to pick up milk for the dairies. Farmers didn't get paid, and loans would default. Tenancy, as opposed to farm ownership, had

Hugh Hammond Bennett and his wife look at contour strips at a farm in Coon Valley, 1946.

Photo by M. F. Schweers



# Coon Creek Memories

For many farmers, working with "the government" meant ostracism.

BY JACK DENSMORE

Bill Steenberg sat perched on a bar stool enjoying a morning beer in a tavern in Cashton. Bill, I had been told, was the first farmer to use contour stripcropping in the Coon Creek Project and, perhaps, in Wisconsin. I had come to ask Bill how he happened to be a soil conservation pioneer.

In southwestern Wisconsin's coulee country, this first erosion-control demonstration project included all of the 92,000 acres of the Coon Creek watershed. Initiated in 1933, it was one of several such projects started across the country under the leadership of Hugh Hammond Bennett, first chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

When I looked up Bill Steenberg in 1964, he was then 84 years old, but he still remembered the night more than 30 years ago when he made the decision for soil conservation:

"I was milking cows one evening when Marv Schweers, one of the erosion boys, stopped in to see me. Marv said, 'I suppose you feel like your neighbors, they want to wait a year before signing up with the soil erosion project.' I said, 'No, I want to sign up now!'

"Before Marv left that evening we had worked out the new pattern for my fields. I was desperate, my wife had died, my five children were hungry, I didn't have enough feed for my 12 cows, and my fields suffered from drought and erosion. I knew I had to give up or change."

Even Bill wasn't prepared for the reaction of his neighbors. He was ostracized. In their view, he had given his farm to the government. Even his brothers who farmed nearby refused to exchange work with him. Bill worried all summer about how he would handle the grain harvest that fall. Fortunately, when the time came for threshing, his brothers relented and gave him a hand.

As Bill returned his attention to his morning beer, he said, "I am most proud of the way my sons are carrying on with the farm plans we started 30 years ago."

*Jack Densmore started working for the Soil Conservation Service in the summer of 1935, after graduating from the University of Minnesota. He was first assigned as a forester to the La Valle CCC camp and was then promoted to the Coon Creek Project in the second wave of technicians stationed there. Densmore's responsibilities were in forestry and wildlife management, working in a team with an agronomist, an economist, an engineer, a soil scientist, and a farm planner. They learned from each other, becoming well-rounded soil conservationists. Densmore, now retired, lives with his wife, Betty, in Madison.*

jumped in the previous 10 years. In 1931, the property tax delinquency rate was 32 percent.

The burning vision of Hugh Hammond Bennett launched a thousand missionaries against erosion. They were confidant or arrogant enough—they were, after all, young college grads—to try to convince a farmer, born and raised to the land, to try a whole new way to till and plant. This is not a small thing. Those farmers were working without a safety net—no crop insurance, no commodity support price, not even food stamps to fall back on. Just hungry children to think about, and scorn from neighbors distrustful of the government.

In 1934, the SES staff hauled their generator and their glass slide projector to every one-room schoolhouse in the watershed to put on a play, "Old Man Erosion Gives Up," which drew standing-room-only crowds every night—22 performances with a total audience of 1,310. The play pits the destructive abilities of Old Man Erosion against the handsome young Mr. Conservation (Mel Cohee, the SES economist) in a battle for farms and topsoil. In the morning, there would be a line of farmers waiting to get conservation plans for their farms. Nationally, Hugh Hammond Bennett continued the drumbeat with national radio broadcasts and speeches on "Soil Erosion, Our National Menace."

The initial wave of farmers, although leery of the government, adopted conservation practices rapidly because they were so desperate. Their farms no longer produced enough grain for their few cows, pastures were overgrazed, cash crops were low. In the first year and a half, 418 of 800 farmers signed up, bringing 40,000 acres into the program.

But not all farmers jumped on the bandwagon. Sometimes the conservation staff couldn't even get a hearing and were dismissed politely at best. Other times they were threatened or run off the road. Even Lewis Brye, who hosted the CCC camp on his farm, wouldn't sign the paper to be a cooperator. But like many others who were too independent-minded to get in league with the government, he tried to mirror the contour strips that he saw and built fences to keep the cattle off the steep wooded hillsides. Once it was pointed out, the cause and the solution of the ecological dys-

function seemed obvious to most people.

In January 1935, with interest dying down, a Farmers Advisory Committee of eight elected conservation farmers traveled around on their own dime to help their neighbors see the light. They brought in 68 more signed cooperators.

How did they convince the hard cases? They didn't. Even after the hubbub of success, SCS forester Jack Densmore still served witness to anti-erosion-control sentiments. To some farmers soil erosion was just an inevitable aspect of farming, a natural phenomenon.

#### KEEPING THE FAITH

The Soil Conservation Service has now morphed into the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Eventually, 95 percent of the watershed has come under a conservation plan. Jim Radke, NRCS district conservationist for Vernon County, points with confidence at some of the few sure signs of recovery since the environmental bottoming out of 1930, but acknowledges that we will never return to pristine conditions:

Soil erosion reduced 75 percent on sloping cropland

"I see good farmers who are angry that we are losing the contour strips to corn and soybeans. They say it shouldn't happen, and they are right," says Jim Radke.

Gullies reduced 77 percent by 1978  
Grazed woodlands decreased by 85 percent

Coon Creek is much less flashy now; flooding is rare and relatively subdued when it does occur. Stream baseflow, which measures the core amount of water in a stream without the enhancements of weather events, continues, even now, to increase. That means the land is able to absorb its rain and slowly, steadily release it through springs to the creek. Radke has seen dry creek beds begin flowing again as the springs have more water to feed them. Recuperation will go on for decades more, as the creek adjusts to its new floodplain, and the health and structure of the soil slowly rebound.

Radke, with 20 years on conservation guard in Vernon County, worries. "I see

good farmers who are angry that we are losing the contour strips to corn and soybeans. They say it shouldn't happen, and they are right. Five years ago we had 1,200 dairy herds, now only 700. Without dairy we don't need hay, without hay, the contour strips don't work to control erosion. At least we have the technology of no-till planting to offset the loss of the strips."

Gullies were and still are a tricky problem. In 1933, Alex Robertson, with the immodest job title of "soil expert," came to Coon Valley after doing soil survey on the Little Missouri River Badlands and was shocked. "The erosion in the Valley was unbelievable; we mapped deep gullies in practically every sloping field. Twenty years later, after the project was successful and over, new surveyors came in and figured we had overstated the case."

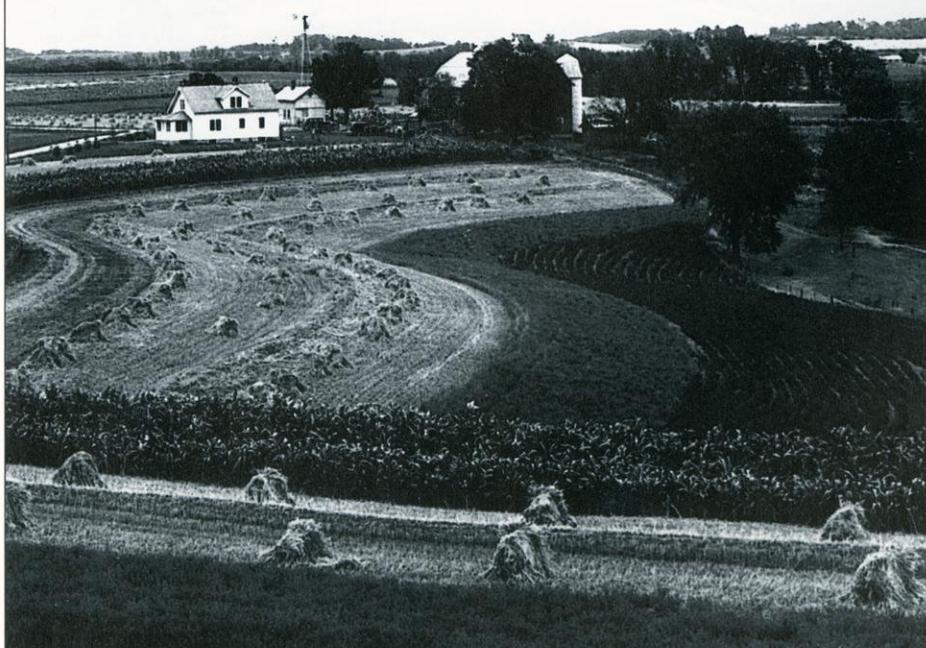
However, gullies continue to cut and creep into ridgetop fields, although they are much smaller than the gaping maws of 70 years ago. Radke guesses there are 4,000 small active gullies nibbling at the field edges in this watershed alone. Conservation plans, with contour strips and reduced tillage, have essentially beaten the sheet-and-rill erosion that filled the stream with sediment. But with no crew of CCC boys anymore, the staff time and dollars needed forbids much in the way of gully control.

The Coon Creek Project was as spectacular and short-lived as a firework. Started in late 1933, with huge results seen after barely a year, it proved too successful to take on any more cooperators after March 1935. The CCC camp buildings were dismantled in 1937. A parade of a thousand visitors came through to either gawk or marvel, mostly marvel, at the contour strips, the terraces, and the healing gullies.

Seventy years later, 93-year-old Mel Cohee, the original economist and actor, remained as passionate as ever right to

A farm in Coon Valley, Wisconsin in its 10th year of using stripcropping, 1977.

Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

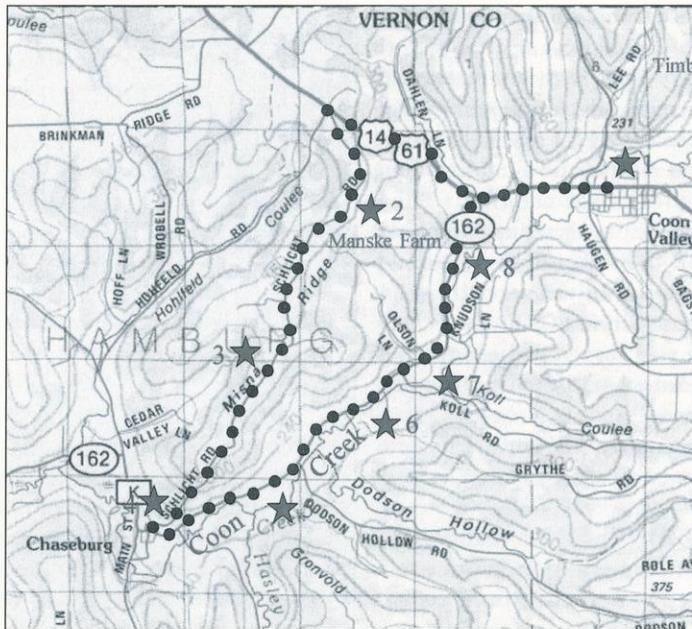


# coon valley

the day he died, still planning a conference in celebration of the hero of soil conservation, Hugh Hammond Bennett. The fervor of these conservationists is a legacy that inspires.

The lesson of Coon Creek is that conservation on private land is a public-private partnership. The interests of the community are best served when the caretakers of the land have the means to do the best they can through technical assistance right there on the farm, not advice given from behind a desk, plus a reasonable program to bridge the economic barriers. As Congress continues to tinker with the recipe for the role of government, wrangling over technical, educational and financial assistance, the adventure in cooperative conservation continues. ▀

*Renae Anderson, a native of Sauk County, is the state public affairs specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Wisconsin. She is also involved in Waters of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Academy's statewide initiative on water use and conservation.*

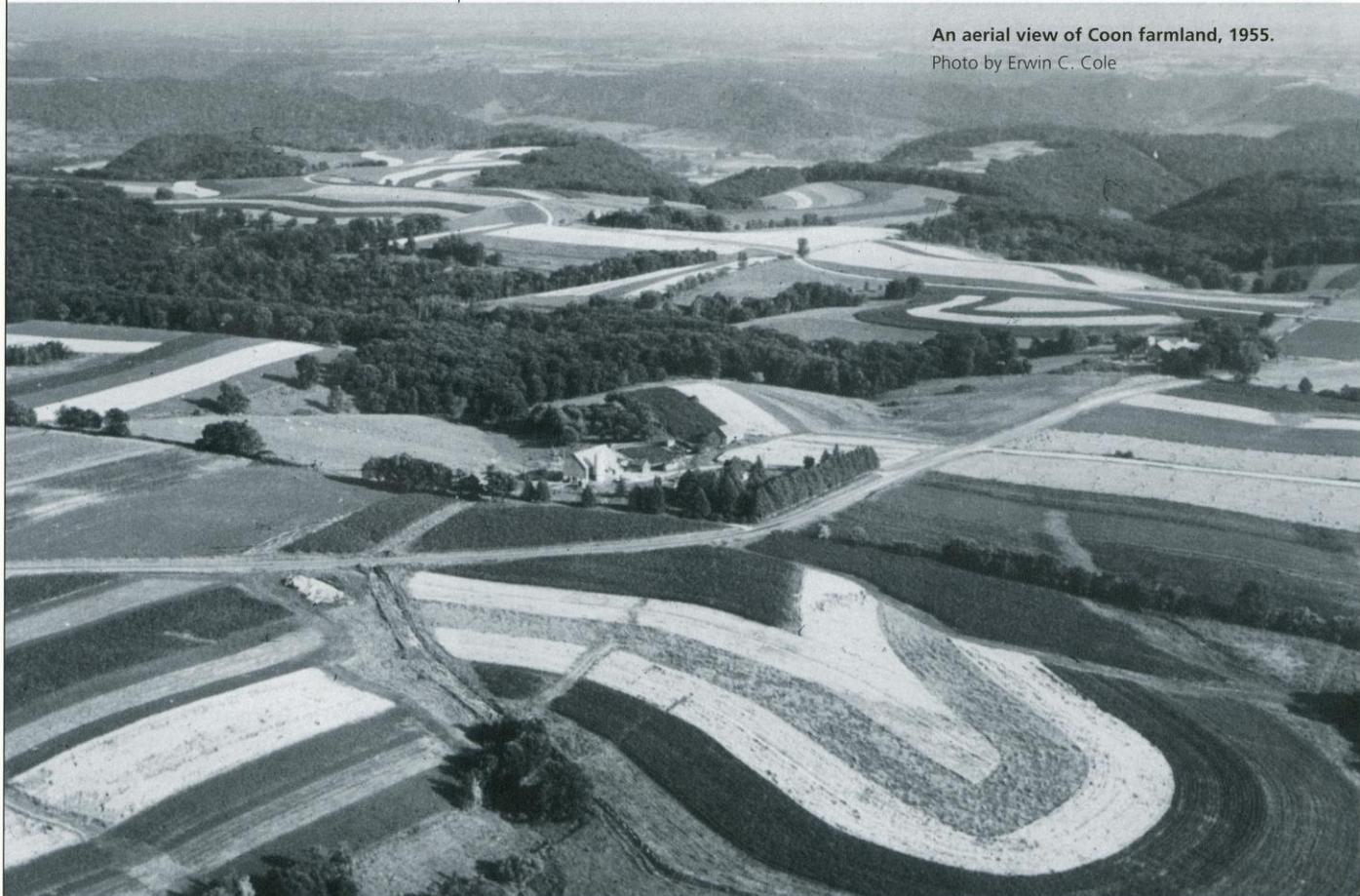


## Coon by Car

For a firsthand look at the Coon Valley watershed, consider taking a self-guided driving tour. Easy-to-follow instructions are located at the Natural Resources Conservation Service website: <http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/news/publications.asp> as Coon Creek Driving Tour (coonctour.pdf).

An aerial view of Coon farmland, 1955.

Photo by Erwin C. Cole



# Homegrown Conservation

## The Revolution is Here

All around Wisconsin, residents are taking conservation into their own hands by forming groups to protect their local natural surroundings. What is community-based conservation, and why is it such a vibrant movement?

Our special feature takes a look at some of the state's most compelling stories, written by the people and groups that helped make them happen.

BY CURT MEINE  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GROUPS WHO SHARE THEIR STORIES

A QUIET REVOLUTION IS OCCURRING IN THE WORLD of conservation and environmental stewardship. This revolution has arisen over the last decade in response to problems, needs, and opportunities that traditional approaches to environmental reform have been unable to fully address. The revolution has no single leader or manifesto, and its expressions are as diverse as the landscapes and human communities where it has emerged. It is challenging assumptions about environmental politics even as it reinvigorates the spirit of citizen involvement in conservation. In the articles that follow, we hear about Wisconsin places where community-based conservation is occurring, from the people who are making it happen.

Community-based conservation is a catch-all term for a wide array of locally driven activities. It may refer to a watershed organization restoring a local stream, lake, or wetland; a land trust working to protect open space in a threatened rural landscape; an urban group revitalizing its neighborhoods while enhancing environmental quality; a partnership of farmers and conservationists coming together and finding ways to merge their interests. Diverse though they are, community-based conservation projects share the basic goal of building healthier connections between human and natural communities. They rest on the conviction that, over the long run, conservation and community well-being depend on a caring commitment to the land. They reflect a willingness to work hard, forge new relationships, and overcome boundary lines (real and metaphorical) in meeting that commitment.

Why have community-based approaches taken hold in the environmental arena? To answer that question, one must take a long view of conservation as (in Aldo Leopold's words) "the slow and laborious unfolding of a new relationship between

people and land." The conservation movement coalesced in the early 1900s in response to decades of unchecked exploitation of the continent's forests, grasslands, waters, and wildlife. Government stepped in to protect diminishing forests, scenic parklands, and important wildlife areas, especially in the nation's public domain. With the rise of the environmental movement as a political force in the 1960s and 1970s came an increase in the regulatory role of the state and federal agencies charged with environmental protection.

As necessary as these governmental actions were and are, they have been unable to achieve the goal of restoring and maintaining healthy ecosystems. Public lands constitute only 30 percent of the American land base, and even our best protected public forests, parks, and refuges are under increasing pressure from forces that arise beyond their borders. Private land conservation efforts have only recently begun to experience a badly needed renaissance. Community-based approaches have stepped into the void in our public policy. They are experimental efforts that take seriously the proposi-

tion that *all* lands and waters are of conservation value, and that they need and deserve attention if those values are to be retained and enhanced.

The movement toward community-based conservation reflects new realities and new knowledge. Conservation biologists and resource managers have had to "scale up" their response to a wide array of challenges, from improving water quality to protecting wildlands, from recovering endangered species to confronting the relentless march of urban sprawl. That means having to work in new ways across old boundaries. Public agencies have themselves realized the limits of "top-down" approaches in land management, and the need to engage local partners in their stewardship work. More than anything else, however, community-based conservation

From a site conservation workshop in Merrimac with Gathering Waters.



reflects the basic intent of motivated citizens, landowners, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and local governments to assume a greater share of responsibility for the biological diversity, ecosystem services, and environmental quality of their home places.

These efforts are flowering across the American landscape, but Wisconsin can claim a special place of distinction. In 1933, the Coon Creek watershed near La Crosse became the site of a novel approach to land management. More than 300 area farmers, collaborating with university researchers, the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps, and technicians from the U.S. Soil Erosion Service (predecessor to today's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) formed the Coon Valley Erosion Project. Together they made Coon Valley the world's first watershed-scale erosion control and integrated resource management project. We may justifiably return now to a much-improved Coon Valley as one of the birthplaces of community-based conservation.

For each of the stories told here, there are a dozen others unfolding across Wisconsin's landscape. Conservation is revitalizing not only our landscapes, watersheds, riverways, farm fields, and neighborhoods, but our sense of community and citizenship as well. There is no assurance that these experiments will all work, and all face the challenge of sustaining themselves beyond the initial period of inspiration. However, these projects have a way of producing their own creative

energy. That energy may allow the current revolution in conservation to mature into a still richer *culture* of conservation.

*Curt Meine, Ph.D., is director of conservation programs with the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.*



## A River Runs Through Us

BY TODD L. AMBS,  
RIVER ALLIANCE OF WISCONSIN

If the old adage that "all politics is local" is true, then certainly all river and watershed protection must ultimately be local if it is to be effective. Thankfully, the state of Wisconsin is blessed with a wide array of community-based conservation groups and initiatives that are producing positive results for our waterways and watersheds.

A recent survey conducted by the River Alliance of Wisconsin identified more than 100 grassroots organizations that list river and watershed protection as part of their mission. Eighteen of these groups were formed within the last three years. As this community-based conservation movement continues to grow, such organizations, joined by the large number of lake associations and land trusts in Wisconsin, will play an increasingly important role in proposing water policy, designing conservation and restoration programs, and advocating for changes in how Wisconsin's water resources are managed.

This sudden explosion of river and watershed organizations is due in part to a grant program that was created by the state of Wisconsin in 1999. The Rivers and Streams Protection Grant Program is unique in that it provides funds for activities to help form or build the capacity of such grassroots organizations. River Protection Grants cover up to 75 percent of eligible project costs; recipients are responsible for providing the other 25 percent, which may be cash, in-kind contributions, or donated services. Water-focused groups that were previously loosely knit associations are now able to organize, formalize, receive training, and become more effective advocates for their home waters. Interested individuals, local and county government entities, and existing citizen organizations have also used this grant program.

A brief glimpse at these 100-plus groups shows that they are distributed around all of Wisconsin. Their activities include a wide range of projects, including outreach and education, river restoration, river cleanups, water-quality monitoring, land acquisition, watchdogging the activities of natural resource agencies, and direct advocacy.

The River Alliance of Wisconsin's Local Groups Assistance program provides technical assistance and support to individuals and groups working to establish or expand local river and watershed organizations. To date, the River Alliance Local Groups Assistance Manager has worked with many River Protection Grant recipients.

The work that is being done across the state is very exciting. Organizations are bringing local folks to the table, educating them about the importance of clean water in our rivers and watersheds, and then developing action plans to make a healthy river a part of a healthy community.

Examples of this sort of community-based conservation include:

#### APPLE RIVER ASSOCIATION (POLK COUNTY)

This project exemplifies foresight on the part of landowners and residents who anticipate changes over the next 20 years due to development pressure. Anticipating increasing development pressure and related zoning and water-quality issues in this area near Minnesota's Twin Cities, local citizens want to take an active role in planning for the long-term health of the Apple River. The Apple River Association (ARA) is in the planning stages and has formed an energetic core of members from across the watershed. They have composed bylaws and formed a board of directors and a panel of district advisors from each section of the river. The ARA has begun its work by focusing on increasing community awareness of the Apple River and the issues it faces.

#### FRIENDS OF THE BRANCH RIVER (MANITOWOC COUNTY)

Formed several years ago, the Friends of the Branch (FOBR) works in this priority watershed area to reduce polluted runoff. Many Branch River neighbors already participate in good soil conservation practices, and the FOBR works to expand them. The group's scope also extends beyond organizational development in their own watershed. While working to further

develop their own group, the FOBR saw a lack of higher-level river conservation organizations working in the Lakeshore Basin. They are working to form a larger nonprofit group, Friends of the River Alliance (FORA), to serve as an umbrella organization in other parts of the Basin.

#### FRIENDS OF THE JUMP RIVER (PRICE COUNTY)

The Friends of the Jump River (FOJR) seeks to preserve the wild and natural character of the Jump River corridor, which has been listed as potentially eligible for Federal Wild and Scenic River status. The only citizen river group in the Upper Chippewa Basin, the FOJR was formed out of an interest in protecting the land in perpetuity. Group members own nine miles of river corridor, and they are exploring such protection methods as conservation easements and proposing a local tax program for rivers. The FOJR has organized several outreach and protection projects, designed and implemented a water-quality monitoring schedule, and surveyed aquatic invertebrates in the Jump River, and is currently developing a strategic action plan for the Jump River.

These are just a few examples of community volunteers working to protect and restore rivers and watersheds—our ribbons of life. People working locally, invested in the resource in their own backyard, offer some of our best hope for the future of the waters of Wisconsin. State government and such organizations as the River Alliance must continue to encourage and facilitate the formation of community-based watershed organizations, especially in the northern part of the state, if we are to meet the increasing challenges of the 21st century.

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The Red River in Shawano County.

Photo by Paul Wozniak

# Forests Forever

BY ALICE D'ALESSIO,  
SUSTAINABLE WOODS COOPERATIVE

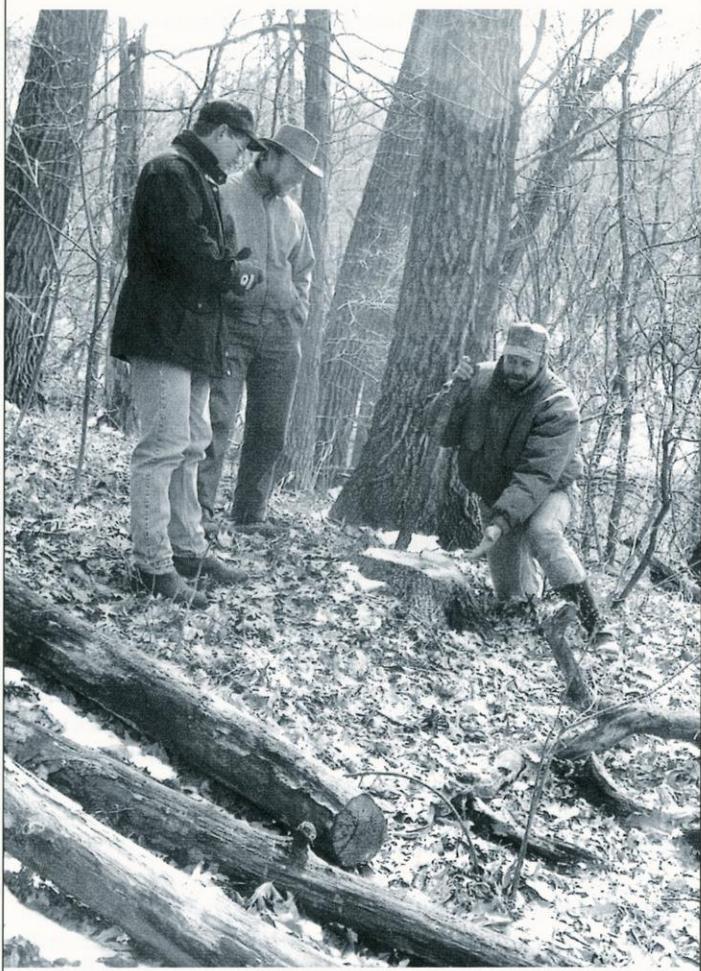
*"Your ghost will walk, lover of trees"*  
—Robert Browning, "De Gustibus"

I'm a lover of trees, no question. It has always been so. When I found myself possessed of 80 acres of beautiful woodland in the driftless area of Wisconsin, I was filled with a passion to keep those trees healthy, walk in their quiet temples, praise and revere them. I soon learned that it takes more than doting on them to keep them healthy.

The DNR Department of Forestry encourages harvesting mature trees to keep a woods vigorous and productive. Harvest? Productive? The words conjured up acres of ugly clearcutting. I was only too familiar with the history of how Wisconsin's fabulous forests fell before the Paul Bunyans of yore.

But I found that there were other people concerned with keeping their woodland healthy *and* productive, using techniques perfected by the Menominee Indians on their tribal lands northwest of Green Bay: selective cutting of mature trees, removing the crowded, crooked, and diseased. We had all heard horror stories about unscrupulous loggers who took the best timber and left an ugly and depleted wasteland.

Our coming together was the nucleus of the Southwest Sustainable Woods Cooperative. We learned from forester Jim Birkemeier, who spearheaded a movement for sustainable woodlot management. Jim gained SmartWood certification—the declaration to the consumer that the wood he marks for

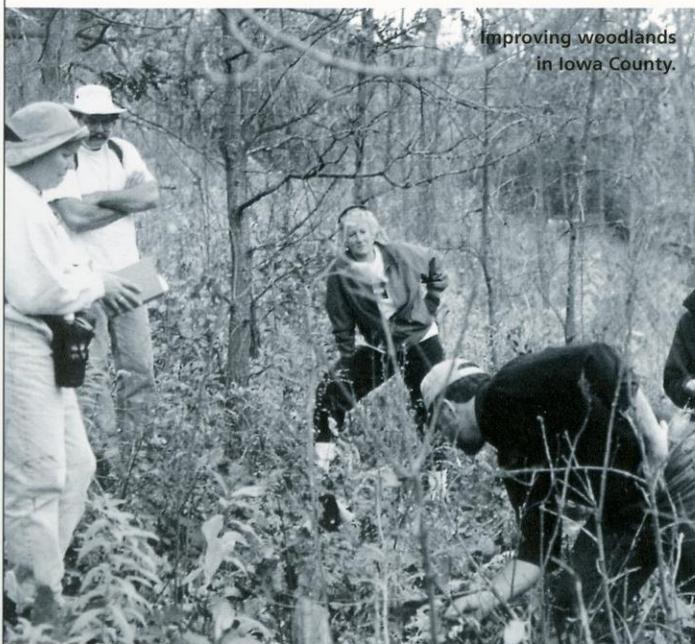


harvest comes from a forest managed not for quick profit, but for continuing growth and diversity.

Now three years old, the Co-op has over 150 members representing over 20,000 acres of land. These members have pledged themselves and their resources to a better way of forest management. About a dozen members have harvested already, sending through more than 50,000 board feet of timber. Some are working with one of our foresters (Jim Birkemeier and Fred Clark, both SmartWood certified) to inventory and mark for upcoming harvests. Other members have joined simply to learn how to better manage their land.

The Co-op owns a sawmill in Lone Rock where logs from member lands are graded and scaled, rough sawed and dried in a solar kiln. We are not professionals, though we borrow expertise; we are understaffed and board members often pitch in to fill the gaps.

Our biggest challenge is to machine wood that may not be top grade—remember, it's "worst first" with sustainable harvesting—into product that will bring our members some profit from their timber. The wood makes beautiful flooring, and some of the more unusual kinds of wood—aspen and black locust—have been big successes. We have customers, such as Leick Furniture in Sheboygan, who value the SmartWood certification for their product and put in regular orders. We need more customers with Leick's principles.



Recently, SWC was the recipient (with two other wood co-ops) of a federal grant for \$330,000 that will assist us in our marketing and promotional efforts. We're excited about the opportunities this funding will provide.

We're learning all the time. There's a sense of community in learning together, and a sense of pride in knowing that we are managing our own forests, not selling them off to the highest bidder. Regular workshops, newsletter mailings, tours, and work parties are an important part of the Co-op's educational effort. Our hope is that "certified SmartWood" will become to wood products as important a label as "organic" is for farm products. Wisconsin forestland is a treasure, and proper management can add growth rings, delight visitors, and bring income to owners in perpetuity. What more valuable effort could we join than to be good stewards to our forests?

If Browning is right and my ghost walks, she will be walking among the stately oaks, white pines, and sugar maples. She will be dodging hickory nuts and walnuts, monitoring yearly growth, checking regeneration. A happy ghost.

*Alice D'Alessio is a board member of the Sustainable Woods Cooperative.*

*Contact: Sustainable Woods Cooperative, P.O. Box 307, Lone Rock, WI 53566, tel. 608/583-7100, [www.sustainablewoods.com](http://www.sustainablewoods.com)*

## In Land We Trust

BY VICKI ELKIN,  
GATHERING WATERS CONSERVANCY

My career in community-based conservation began not in Wisconsin but thousands of miles away in Latin America. In 1989, I found myself in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic working for the Inter-American Foundation. At about the same time, land trusts in Wisconsin were coming together to form Gathering Waters Conservancy.

The job with the Inter-American Foundation was so rewarding I thought I'd never find anything else like it. Formed in the 1960s, the foundation supports grassroots development and community organizations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Our ultimate aim was to give people the tools, skills, and resources to be active participants in shaping the future of their communities.

Today, I do much of the same type of work as the executive director of Gathering Waters Conservancy. The context and cli-

mate are different, but our ultimate objectives are similar, and the work is equally rewarding.

As the statewide service center for Wisconsin's 45 land trusts, Gathering Waters provides the resources, support, tools, and information land trusts need to permanently protect the lands that define and sustain their communities. Like the Inter-American Foundation, Gathering Waters encourages and empowers people, acting collectively, to shape the future of their communities through voluntary action.

Land trusts are officially defined as private, nonprofit conservation organizations that protect land in perpetuity by purchasing or accepting donations of land or conservation easements from private landowners. But land trusts do much more than protect individual parcels of land. At a time when development pressures and urban sprawl affect almost every community in the country, land trusts provide a mechanism for community members, working in partnership with private landowners, to ensure that the places they love—places that make their communities home—will endure and survive.

Getting good ideas for site conservation at a Gathering Waters workshop in Merrimac.



Land trusts may be one of the oldest examples of community-based conservation in the United States. The first land trust was founded in Massachusetts in 1891. Today there are more than 1,200 local land trusts operating in every state across the country, making land trusts the fastest-growing segment of the conservation movement. This trend can be seen in Wisconsin, where two-thirds of our land trusts have been established in the past decade.

Nationwide, these private, citizen-run organizations have protected 6.47 million acres of land. In Wisconsin, where the movement is relatively young, land trusts have protected an impressive 90,000 acres. They also rely on thousands of volunteers, members, and supporters to get their work done.

Each year, Gathering Waters offers dozens of seminars, conferences, workshops, and other services, such as one-on-one mentoring, affordable legal assistance, and professional consulting, to increase the effectiveness and strengthen the capac-

ity of Wisconsin's land trusts. Through our programs and events, we provide land trusts a forum to exchange ideas; meet their peers; and learn from, reenergize, and inspire each other.

Wisconsin's land trusts face many of the same challenges as the groups I worked with in Latin America: how to attract effective board members, how to raise funds for operations, and how to build community support for programs? These are the hurdles that face most nonprofit organizations. Land trusts face additional challenges given their responsibility to complete complex land transactions and ensure that lands are protected in perpetuity—and forever is a long time. Gathering Waters makes the often difficult and complicated process of starting and running a nonprofit organization and negotiating land deals easier and less daunting.

At Gathering Waters we invest in community-based conservation. We invest our time, resources, energies, and hopes in the people and organizations that have the vision to preserve what they love about Wisconsin today so that it can be enjoyed tomorrow. We are confident that our investments will pay off.

*Contact: Gathering Waters Conservancy, 211 South Paterson Street Ste. 180, Madison, WI 53703, tel. 608/251-9131, [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org)*



## Saving the Brookies (and more)

BY CATHY ENGSTROM,  
BLUFFLANDS ALLIANCE

When landowners along Pine Creek (just south of Maiden Rock) saw national realty signs sprouting near the creek's mouth, they began to organize. They knew that Pine Creek is one of the last creeks in Wisconsin that still supports a naturally reproducing population of brook trout. "Brookies" require very cold, clear spring-fed water to survive, and new housing developments could have destroyed their habitat.

The landowners turned to the Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy (WFC) for advice and support. WFC turned to the Blufflands Alliance. Thanks to the combined efforts of these groups and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Pine Creek and its "brookies" are being protected.

Though the Pine Creek project began locally, taking vision to reality often requires partners from around the state and country. That's why, in 1993, WFC became a founding member of the Blufflands Alliance, a coalition of land trusts—private, nonprofit land-conservation organizations—that protect the Upper Mississippi River bluffed area in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois,

and Iowa. The Alliance now includes seven full partners, including three from Wisconsin: WFC (based in Menomonie), the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (based in La Crosse) and Gathering Waters Conservancy (based in Madison).

Since 1993, Alliance partners have protected more than 10,000 acres along the Upper Mississippi River, including 4,403 acres in Wisconsin. Protection strategies include private conservation easements, land donation, bequests, acquisitions, and more. Protected land may be owned privately, by land trusts, or by such public agencies as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Major Alliance funding comes from the McKnight Foundation, which provides a multiyear challenge grant that's divided among the participating land trusts. To receive the grant funds, each partner raises local matching funds for its operations and its projects in the bluffed lands. McKnight's consistent challenge funding has enabled some Alliance partners to add extra staff and resources for bluffed land efforts—and has enabled some new land trusts to grow more quickly.



Alliance partners meet quarterly to share techniques and consider the ecosystem as a whole. Between meetings they work with local landowners, develop local partners, and raise local matching funds. And they call each other for advice when needed.

"Support from the Blufflands Alliance was critical for the Pine Creek project and for so much of our work," says Rick Gauger, WFC's executive director. "Without financial support from the McKnight Foundation and encouragement from our Alliance partners, I can honestly say we wouldn't be protecting half the acres we are now."

In working on the Pine Creek project, WFC consulted with Alliance partners who had done similar work and then dis-

cussed protection options with Pine Creek residents. Key landowners chose to permanently relinquish their development rights through private conservation easements, and others followed suit—270 acres so far and more on the way.

Meanwhile, WFC applied for Wisconsin DNR stewardship program funding to buy the parcel with all those realty signs. Thanks in part to the local support shown by the neighbors' donated easements, WFC submitted the top-ranking grant application for state funding and now owns 85 acres at the mouth of Pine Creek. They will conserve its natural features and provide access for public fishing. And the work continues. "Because this watershed is so small and the landowners are so committed, we have the unique opportunity to protect an entire watershed," adds Gauger. "We're not there yet, but we're well on the way."



The Blufflands Alliance also brought help to the Mississippi Valley. Veteran Alliance members "helped my board with questions like how to start a land trust, how to do a conservation easement, and other basics," says Cynthia Olmstead of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, founded in 1997. "The funding from the McKnight Foundation was also instrumental in helping us get started. Then, once we had the McKnight grant, we had a local donor willing to fund my position—almost a surprise." Four years later, MVC has protected more than 900 acres.

Support from the Blufflands Alliance was helpful, too, in organizing the ambitious La Crosse River Conservancy Project. The project protects a rich, riverine area in the heart of urban development. Partners range from individual and corporate landowners to the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska to state and federal agencies. "To me, community-based conservation is all levels working together and leveraging each other's money and efforts," notes Olmstead.

"I see the Blufflands Alliance as part of a 'nested' approach to conservation," observes Mark Ackelson, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a founding Alliance member. "You need local people on the ground to help local landowners, not just outsiders planning and talking about it. On the other hand, it's shortsighted to protect one side of the river and ignore the other—not to mention what's happening upstream."

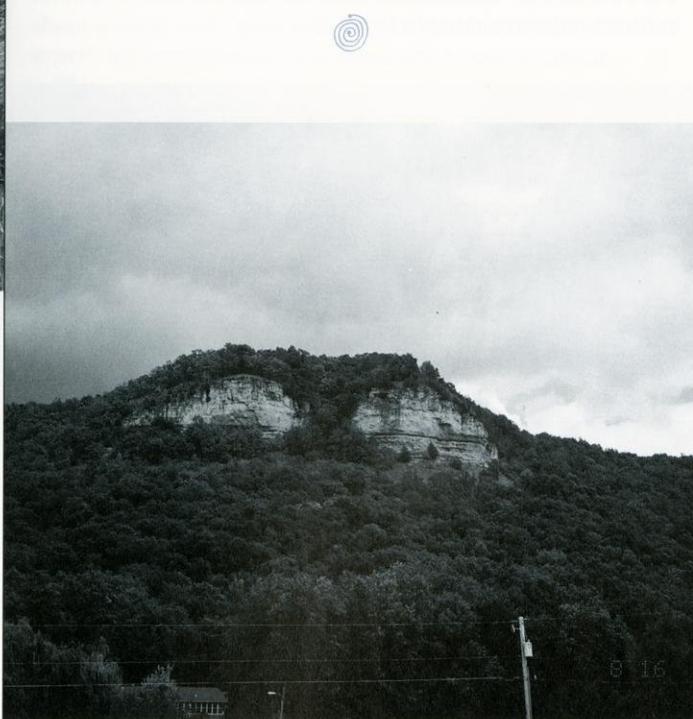
But even big visions start locally. "A lot of our work is one-on-one meetings in people's kitchens," adds Rick Gauger. "We listen to why their land is so important to them—and then help them find ways to meet their goals. They use our expertise as a land trust to meet that vision. In turn, we rely on the expertise and resources of the Blufflands Alliance."

*Cathy Engstrom is communications coordinator for the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a founding member of the Blufflands Alliance.*

*Contact: Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy, 500 Main Street Ste. 307, Menomonie, WI 54751, tel. 715/235-8850, [www.wi-fc.org](http://www.wi-fc.org)*

*Mississippi Valley Conservancy, P.O. Box 2611, La Crosse, WI 54602, tel. 608/784-3606, [www.centurytel.net/mvc](http://www.centurytel.net/mvc)*

*Gathering Waters Conservancy, 211 South Paterson Street Ste. 180, Madison, WI 53703, tel. 608/251-9131, [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org)*



*(Opposite page and left) Pine Creek, with a Pine Creek landowner fishing for "brookies" in the creek's clear waters. This owner protected his land with a conservation easement. (Above) Twin Bluffs, part of another conservation effort by the Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy.*

# To Catch a Trout

BY TODD HANSON,  
TROUT UNLIMITED

In a world where people can work for months without feeling they've made a real difference, Wisconsin's 4,000 members of Trout Unlimited get great satisfaction in being able to reverse 150 years of stream degradation in a single morning.

Of all the activities done by the state's 21 local TU chapters, one of the most rewarding is working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to restore trout streams. Running water from glaciers once changed the landscape of Wisconsin. With a little help from TU members, water will quickly scour away years of silt, exposing gravel that harbors aquatic insects that in turn feed minnows, trout, otters, and other members of a healthy coldwater community.

Sometimes TU's stream projects involve narrowing channels that have widened from years of cows grazing along the banks. Other times they involve returning the meander to rivers that have been silted-in from today's farming or yesterday's logging. I know a TU member who was quite shocked to see a large trout swim right past his legs to claim dibs on a pool on the Tomorrow River in central Wisconsin while people were still in their waders working to finish it!



But no matter what the project, these efforts always involve the cooperation of local landowners who are pleased to see the streams on their property regain their former glory.

Though habitat restoration is a mainstay of TU's work, members are becoming increasingly involved in influencing state and local policies relating to nonpoint pollution, land use, development, and groundwater depletion—all of which can

degrade trout waters long before local citizens notice other environmental problems.

Wisconsin has some of the best trout fishing in the country, and thanks to local groups like Trout Unlimited working with a DNR committed to habitat development, our streams are generally in better shape today than they have been for 100 years. If we find ways to tread lighter and smarter on the land, our state's trout streams can be a claim to fame forever.

*Todd Hanson is editor of Wisconsin Trout newspaper, affiliated with Trout Unlimited. Contact: Trout Unlimited—Upper Midwest Office, 211 South Paterson Street Ste. 270, Madison, WI 53703, tel. 608/250-2757, [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)*



## Reading the Land Together

BY BUDDY HUFFAKER,  
ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION

*"I am trying to teach you that this alphabet of "natural objects" (soils and rivers, birds and beasts) spells out a story, which he who runs may read—if he knows how. Once you learn to read the land, I have no fear of what you will do to it, or with it. And I know many pleasant things it will do to you."*

—Aldo Leopold, *Wherefore Wildlife Ecology* (1947)

"I wanted to be a wildlife biologist, but everyone told me there weren't any jobs. So I went into farming," says Duane Hohl, a landowner whose farm is about five miles as the crow flies from Aldo Leopold's shack and farm along the Wisconsin River. To most people it would have been an innocuous comment made in passing. However, I received it more as testimony, revealing to me a great deal about the values Duane carries with him as he works his land.

We were in the middle of a volatile situation that characterized the antagonistic relationship between agriculture and conservation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was proposing to establish the Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge in Sauk and Columbia counties of Wisconsin. Because of the proximity to the Leopold shack, which served as the setting and inspiration for much of his famous book, *A Sand County Almanac*, the FWS felt the refuge would be a tribute to his conservation legacy.

Many of the landowners in the area were irate about the plan as they saw the establishment of a refuge as a threat to their livelihood. But I believe the greatest offense to the landowners was the insinuation that after working the land, for generations in some cases, that they were not good enough stewards of the land.

Duane voiced what many landowners were saying: they understood the importance of conservation, but they also knew that there are many ways to practice it. The farmers knew from living and working on the land that the fields, riparian areas, and woodlands on their farms supported a great deal of wildlife while simultaneously producing food and fiber.

A handful of us recognized these shared values and committed ourselves to developing an alternative to enhance both agriculture and conservation. We agreed to the name "Farming and Conservation Together" (FACT). The voting members of the committee included three landowners, four representatives from affected local governments, and three conservation organizations. Nonvoting members included representatives from county, state, and federal agencies as well as a representative from a Wisconsin U.S. senator's office. Together we agreed upon a vision for the area: "A long-term balance of conservation and agriculture made possible through community based oversight and coordination of voluntary enhancement options" (FACT 2000).

The most memorable step in the process of developing this alternative was an open house hosted by Steve Luther, a committee member and farmer. All of the local landowners were invited, and we cooked hamburgers and brats for everyone. After the audience of nearly 60 people went through a condensed process of venting similar to the committee's, they listened and then questioned the committee's ideas. By the end of the evening the community had expressed its support and respect for our work. To be honest, when the process began I could not have envisioned this assemblage of people sitting in front of the community presenting a unified vision.

Because of our commitment to work together, we succeeded in developing a viable alternative to conservation independent of complete government ownership. As we move toward implementing our vision we still face numerous obstacles, including funding for private conservation practices, escalating land values, and increasing taxation for conservation acreage, to name just a few.

Through these improved relationships we are better equipped to read the landscape together and develop solutions that pay dividends for both ourselves and the land.

*Buddy Huffaker is executive director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. A version of this essay appears in **The Farm as Natural Habitat** by Dana L. Jackson and Laura L. Jackson (forthcoming from Island Press).*

*Contact: Aldo Leopold Foundation, P.O. Box 77, Baraboo, WI 53913, tel. 608/355-0279, [www.aldoleopold.org](http://www.aldoleopold.org)*

# A Philosopher's View

BY MICHAEL P. NELSON,  
UW-STEVENS POINT

I am a philosopher.

Worse yet, I am an environmental philosopher.

Mine is a world of argument analysis, a compulsion for consistency, an undying and unceasing aching for uncovering underlying axioms, an insatiable—almost hysterical—insistence on intellectual honesty and integrity, and a perverse faith in and reliance on the power and force of reason. So, how in the world could such a person be linked to community-based conservation? Or, perhaps more appropriately, why would anyone in conservation wish to be linked to such a person?

Certain factors have converged in my early adult life. Unlike many of my academic brethren, I am a fiercely proud native specimen: born and raised on copious amounts of dairy products and the Green Bay Packers, compulsively drawn to woods and water, committed to hard work and pickup trucks, prone to stretch vowels and utter the occasional "you betcha" or shoot a smile and "good morning" at a total stranger. In other words, my commitment to community is solidly forged.

This condition has dovetailed perfectly with my professional work as an environmental scholar and professor specializing in ecological ethics and the work of fellow community-committed Wisconsinite Aldo Leopold. More recently I have witnessed firsthand the power and passion of contemporary conservation efforts in this state and have been brought into the fold of the Wisconsin community-based conservation effort. It has been the greatest honor and privilege of my life to be so included in this world of heroes; amid this outpouring of passion, concern, effort, love, grace, and damn good humor. No people in the world merit more respect (and I'll pop anyone in the nose who says otherwise). However, this convergence and inclusion has come with a price: a deep and profound soul-searching for a gift to contribute that would in any way compare to those that my new family gives us all every day. What is it that philosophy—what is it that I, a philosopher—can offer conservation? I can think of three things, three interrelated things I believe all efforts need: motivation, clarification, and justification.

Conservation is premised upon certain value axioms (e.g., concern for the long-term health of all humans is warranted; the land possesses intrinsic as well as instrumental value) and assumes that certain actions flow from and are justified by those values (e.g., act to protect the northern forests that provide clean water; work to restore an oak savannah because it's the right thing to do). Philosophers are proficient at uncovering, clarifying, and articulating those values. We are also good at justifying those values and the connections between them and the



actions that follow. Finally, the addition of philosophical rigor to our conservation movement can help us not only construct arguments to defend our actions, but clearly defend those beliefs and actions in light of the dissent we encounter daily.

In sum, I am involved in all community-based conservation efforts in this state, as we all are. And, like all of us, I feel morally obligated, as Leopold put it, to humbly undertake "the oldest task in human history," discovering how to live gracefully and sustainably on this *landscape that we call Wisconsin*.

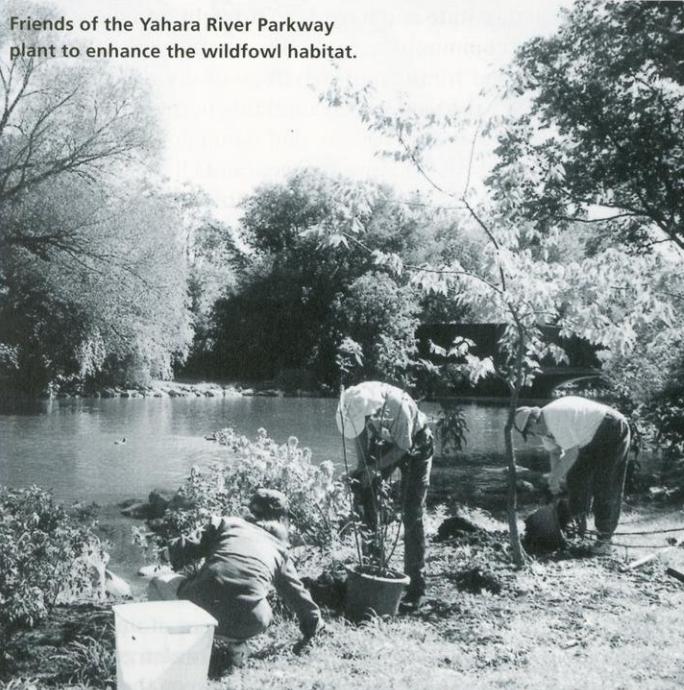


## Nature in the City

BY GERI WEINSTEIN-BREUNIG,  
URBAN OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION

A river is a key voice of a city, town, or community. On arriving in Madison, barely seven years ago, I looked for its river. The chain of lakes in and around Madison is well known, yet the Yahara River—the chain—is not. In Madison, the Yahara connects lakes Mendota and Monona. The river link and adjacent parkland comprise 16.4 acres of the Yahara River Parkway and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Among those who believe the river should have a louder voice is Heather Mann, founder and director of the Urban Open

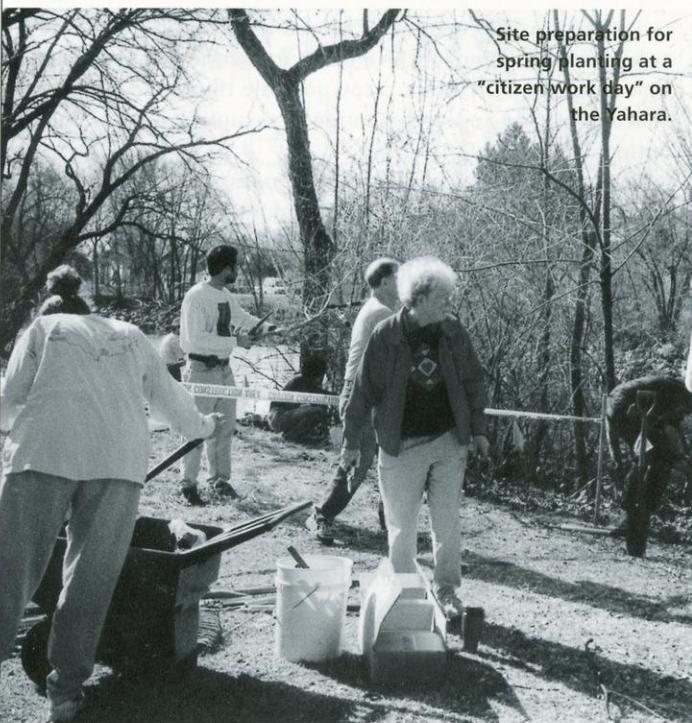


Friends of the Yahara River Parkway plant to enhance the wildfowl habitat.

Space Foundation (UOSF). UOSF is an urban land trust. Its mission is to protect a community's critical lands and waters.

In 1998, the Madison Community Foundation gave the UOSF a three-year grant. The grant was to make the Yahara River Parkway a model of citizen-based conservation and stewardship. As project manager, I created a team of community residents. They included local artists, educators, biologists, landscape architects, fishermen, canoeists, and wildlife enthusiasts in addition to staff from the Madison Parks Division. Together, we drafted a work plan.

The Yahara River Parkway is land held in public trust. Why, then, is it a conservation issue? The answer is a need to conserve the vision of park designer Ossian Cole Simonds. Simonds had the foresight, in 1903, to know nature must be a vital and vibrant part of our daily lives. Where people live is the place to experience forested riverbanks, views up and downriver, open expanses, and fish and wildlife habitat. Ironically, Simonds succeeded too well. He created landscapes



Site preparation for spring planting at a "citizen work day" on the Yahara.

where natural processes, rather than being controlled, seem free from human influence. Human input seemed unnecessary. Consequent decline in the health of the Parkway's ecosystems led to declines in its historic, educational, and recreational benefits. For the Yahara River Parkway, loss of the land's public benefit—not the land itself—is the issue. Conservation is achieved not by acquisition but through stewardship and management.

During year one, UOSF sponsored plantings of native trees, shrubs, and wetland vegetation, bringing the community into the park as agents of change. Community groups included recreation interests; 4-H clubs; Madison Gas & Electric employees; neighborhood residents; and students from throughout the city, including Hmong, African-American, and Latino youth.

Year two saw projects to improve canoe and fishing access and the start of the Friends of the Yahara River Parkway.

The core Friends group has decision-making power and is reaching out to others to join. They have completed a needs inventory of the river and parkland, have drawn up plans, and are taking action on a number of stewardship projects. They are removing invasive species, stabilizing the riverbank, planting native trees and shrubs, and increasing native oak populations in the park. In coming months, stewardship of the Yahara River Parkway will include cultural programming, educational outreach, and active support for improved pedestrian connections along the river. A century-old focus on the lakes expands to include the river—the chain linking them together.

This model in citizen-based management corresponds with UOSF's focus on nature nearby—the land and water at our front door. It corresponds with its belief in people taking responsibility for natural places they believe in. There has also been personal reward and inspiration. Seeing Aldo Leopold's stewardship ethic at work in a public place is rewarding, but listening to people equate stewardship of land and water with stewardship of community, family, and self is the inspiration.

*As a cultural geographer, principal of Cultural Waters, Inc., and consultant to the Urban Open Space Foundation, Geri Weinstein-Breunig works with government agencies as well as nonprofit and community organizations to protect watersheds through citizen-based management and stewardship.*

*Contact: Urban Open Space Foundation, 200 North Blount Street, Madison, WI 53703, tel. 608/255-9877, [www.uosf.org](http://www.uosf.org)*

## River Tales

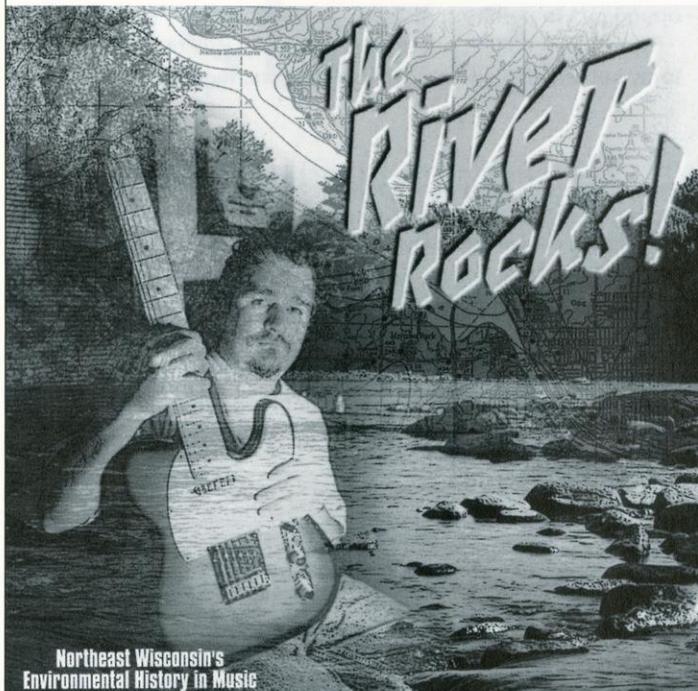
BY PAUL WOZNIAK,  
THE FOX/WOLF RIVERS  
ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY PROJECT

*"The care of the rivers is not a question of the rivers but of the human heart."*

—Tanaka Shozo, Japanese conservationist

Every time I walk across or to the Fox River, I say hello to it. Yes, to the waters. As in "Hi, Fox River, how ya doin' this fine day?" My kids think I'm crazy. It's not that I think the Fox River hears me, not that it could even if it had ears. It roars like a jet engine as its waters come over the small dam in downtown De Pere. I don't expect the Fox River to hear me, because I'm saying hello to myself, the part of me that is connected to nature, but which I have lost contact with, like a twin brother separated from me at birth. I know he's there, and I know he'll live on long after I am gone.

It's this connection that has kept me on the mission of collecting local history since 1989. It's not just me doing it. We have a group called the Fox/Wolf Rivers Environmental History Project. It's a nonprofit, all-volunteer group that is recording and popularizing stories about the environment. Not so much the well-recorded tales of loggers and Native American wild rice beds, though we do use some of those tales in our efforts.



Our effort is much more 20th-century focused. We hear from people who hunted ducks in wetlands filled for progress. We talk to founders of parks and wildlife areas about what motivated them. We talk to industrial workers who saw things on the job that they wish they hadn't seen, and we talk to businesspeople, politicians, and conservationists about the push-and-pull of river politics.

We see ourselves as an environmental education and history research group, not an environmental activist group. We work to include opposing views on issues. Fitting with this, we don't advocate specific political positions or actions.

Our geographic focus is a 6,400-square-mile area drained by the Fox and Wolf rivers of northeast Wisconsin, although we are working to foster the formation of history projects in other Wisconsin river basins.

Since readers are from all over Wisconsin, I note that there are two Fox rivers in Wisconsin, and this has led to some confusion. The "other" Fox River flows through southeastern Wisconsin and into Illinois. "Our" Fox River (and its northern branch, the Wolf) flows through cities like Ripon, Oshkosh, Appleton, and Green Bay. The Wolf flows from Crandon through the Menominee Reservation, ending in the pool lakes just west of Oshkosh.

The History Project is a small attempt to reconnect the community with the river through history. Even if you don't

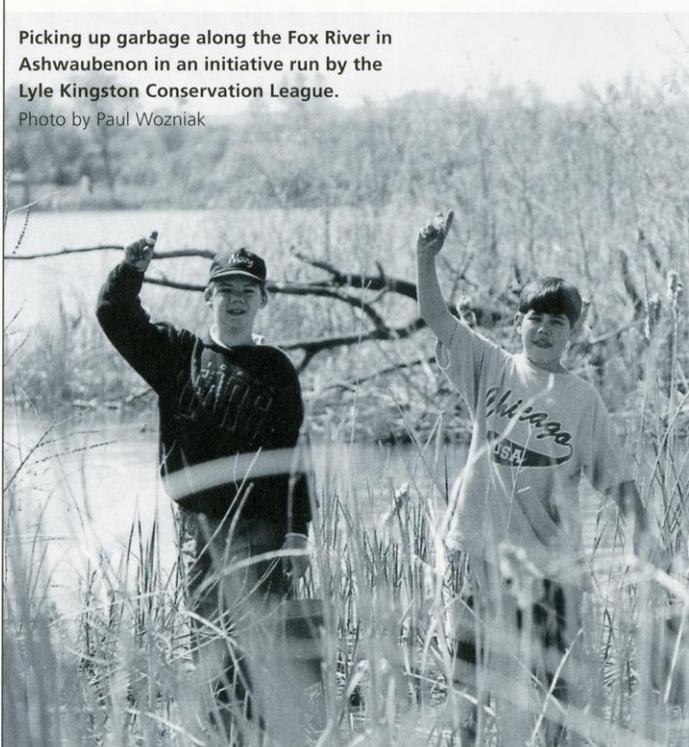
care about environmental issues—and unfortunately many do not care—you may well be interested in a story about your town, the waters nearby, or an area you've been to.

We've recorded eyewitness accounts of rivers burning in the 1950s, fish colored like a rainbow from discharges, and "alligators" in the river (actually floating mats of paper waste in the shape of logs). We've also recorded stories of environmental politics in the McCarthy era, suspicions of media censorship, and tales of subterfuge and scheming by political opponents in pollution debates.

How do we collect our stories? Much of it is taped oral history, but we also search old newspapers, meeting notes, and

Picking up garbage along the Fox River in Ashwaubenon in an initiative run by the Lyle Kingston Conservation League.

Photo by Paul Wozniak



technical documents, and we receive contributed letters and manuscripts. Stories are extracted and have been used in two videotapes, a music CD, slide presentations, and radio and TV interviews.

We've published some stories, biographical profiles and chronologies in *Voyageur*, the magazine of northeast Wisconsin history, and in *Transactions*, the journal of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. We have deposited most of our collection of oral history tapes, newspaper clippings from throughout the 20th century, photographs, and other items at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Cofrin Library. We're seeking funds to transcribe the tapes and make the collection more usable by the public.

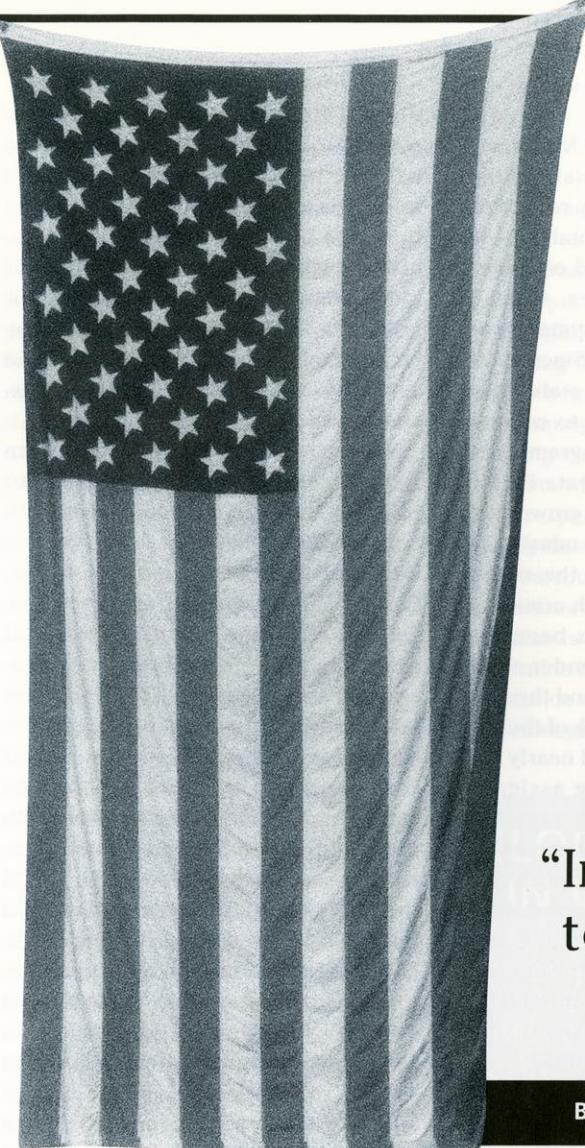
History today has to be multimedia (there's even a journal called *The Journal of Multimedia History*). So our website, [www.foxwolf.org](http://www.foxwolf.org), has short versions of stories we've collected as well as downloadable music from our CD, *The River Rocks*, a collection of 10 original songs written by Wisconsin

artists based on stories we've collected (and you can download the songs for free at [www.foxwolf.org](http://www.foxwolf.org)). Some songs are used in our videos "Of Time and the River" and "The Day They Blew Up the Bog," which are popular with schools throughout Wisconsin.

Probably the most valuable projects of our outreach are the slide talks given to service clubs, seniors groups, conservation clubs, teacher in-service seminars, and civic organizations. It's there that the truth is found: The more stories you give away, the more others volunteer their own. It's like a river that goes on forever. ▀

Paul Wozniak is coauthor of a forthcoming book with Earth Day founder and former Wisconsin governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson (a Wisconsin Academy Fellow) and journalist Susan Campbell. **Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise** looks at environmental progress in the 32 years since the first Earth Day. It will be published later this year by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Contact: The Fox/Wolf Rivers Environmental History Project care of Jen Metcalf, 1596 Amy Street, Green Bay, WI 54302, tel. 1-888/FOXWOLF, [www.foxwolf.org](http://www.foxwolf.org).



# Global Justice

Wisconsin, through the Justice Without Borders program, is leading an ambitious effort to make "justice for all" a reality around the world.

**"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."**

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

BY JUDITH E. OLINGY AND RANDY KRAFT

**S**TANDING AS OUR PROUD VISION for the United States since it was written in 1892, the Pledge of Allegiance ends with a simple but powerful three-word commitment: *justice for all*. "Justice for all" is another way of describing the value our country places on basic human rights—that freedom from all that is unjust is guaranteed to each of us as Americans by our government. It commits each of us to the notion that regardless of race or ethnicity, level of education, or how much money one has, each of us is entitled to be treated fairly under our laws. In essence, Americans believe that all people should be afforded the fundamental right to fair treatment as human beings. We further believe that all governments should cherish and protect this fundamental right.

Nowhere is this right to fair treatment more important than in the administration of criminal justice in the United States. Our Constitution and our laws embody the concept that all criminal defendants are to be treated fairly under the rules of law. This notion is the guiding light of the Supreme Court's *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision, handed down in 1963, and its progeny. It holds that all criminal defendants have a right to meaningful legal representation, even those defendants who are too poor to hire counsel. This value also is embodied in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights that proclaimed each person "charged with a penal offence" has the protection of "all guarantees necessary for his [or her] defence." There should be no dispute that meaningful counsel always is necessary for an adequate defense.

Yet, in spite of the Pledge of Allegiance's promise of justice for all, and in spite of the United Nations proclamation, the fundamental right to meaningful legal counsel for every person charged with a crime, regardless of how poor or disenfranchised he or she is, still is not protected by justice systems in many areas of the world, including parts of the United States. Historically, the prosecution functions have dominated the landscapes of many of our world's criminal justice systems. Resources have concentrated on the police, prosecutors, and court systems, producing a system whose strengths lie in arresting and imprisoning those who are without influence, or are too poor to obtain counsel. Too frequently, little effort has been given to protecting the fundamental human right of having competent counsel beside each person charged with a crime that could result in the loss of that person's life or liberty.

### JUSTICE WITHOUT BORDERS: WHY WISCONSIN?

The state of Wisconsin historically has put much effort and many resources into protecting the fundamental right to counsel for all those accused of crimes that carry serious penalties. A small appellate public defender system was started in the state in 1965. Since then, previous governors, and the state legislatures, have seen the need to commit greater resources to the program. Consequently, the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office (SPD) has grown into a statewide system with the mission to provide effective counsel to the state's poorest citizens charged with crimes.

Nicholas L. Chiarkas has been the Wisconsin state public defender since 1988. Under his leadership, and through the dedication and hard work of the 550 employees in the agency and nearly 950 private attorneys who take assigned cases, the SPD has been recognized as an effective and cost-efficient agency. In both 2000 and 2001, the SPD received a Wisconsin Forward Award in recognition of its pursuit of organizational excellence. This award, based on the internationally recognized Malcolm Baldrige Award for Performance Excellence, has been earned by only one other state agency as of 2000. With good reason, the Wisconsin SPD has served as a model for others.

Israel is a prime example. In the mid-1990s, that country was paying particular attention to developing its indigent defense services. Having just appointed its first national public defender, Kenneth Mann of Tel Aviv University, the U.S. State Department and American University arranged for a symposium consisting of leaders in the public defender field as a means of advising the fledgling Israeli system. Chiarkas was asked to participate.

Mann was particularly intrigued by the fact that Wisconsin's system was able to produce quality representation at a fair cost, two components that would satisfy his own country's Ministry of Justice. The fact that Wisconsin accomplished this using a combination of in-house and private attorneys also fit Mann's need to include the private bar in the development of the public defense system. Consequently, Mann chose Wisconsin as a model for Israel's system.

Subsequently, in 1998, the U.S. State Department sponsored Chiarkas to travel to Israel in order to consult with and advise Israel's National Public Defender Office. During a side trip to Gaza, Chiarkas also met with representatives of the Palestinian National Authority, including the attorney general and several judges. They, too, were interested in the concept of a public defender system. The success of Chiarkas's trip to Israel led Mann to send 10 of his managers to Wisconsin for a 10-day training and information-sharing session in October 1999. Called the Gideon Initiative, the project was funded by more than 100 Wisconsin-based organizations and individuals.

Like Israel, Japan also has looked at reforms within its own legal system. In 1999, Chiarkas was invited to Japan to meet with lawyers and judges, and to speak to the Japan Federation of Bar Associations in Tokyo. After that visit several other countries contacted Chiarkas, eager to discuss the need for a public defender system. Clearly, more and more countries throughout the world were recognizing the fundamental right to meaningful legal representation for those charged with serious crimes.

Justice Without Borders was created to respond to this need. It stands today as a nonprofit organization with a mission to promote, through the exchange of information, ideas, and expertise, meaningful legal representation for every individual around the world who faces deprivation of life or liberty. Justice Without Borders' vision seeks to create a world where all justice systems ensure fundamental human rights.

Justice Without Borders is comprised of an international advisory board from 15 nations. The members include government officials, private practitioners, representatives from nongovernmental

More and more countries throughout the world were recognizing the fundamental right to meaningful legal representation for those charged with serious crimes.

organizations, and academics from universities around the globe. Each board member brings a unique perspective on criminal justice matters in general, with specific interest in the defense of criminal defendants.

Funding and other resources for Justice Without Borders come entirely from private entities, including the Johnson Foundation, Ina Pogainis (who has been defending the indigent in Wisconsin for the past 25 years), lawyers and law firms, and Midwest Express Airlines. The University of Wisconsin Law School Alumni Association provides the avenue for accepting all monetary donations.

### THE PROGRAM TAKES FLIGHT

Though the project is in its infancy, at least three important functions of Justice Without Borders have been identified. First, Justice Without Borders seeks to build a strong global network for sharing knowledge about, and giving support to, the promotion of meaningful advocacy for criminal defendants around the world who face the loss of life or liberty. At a minimum, this will include identifying unique and common challenges among Justice Without Borders participants, and the development and promotion of best practices that may serve as appropriate models of meaningful representation. Second, Justice Without Borders will seek to provide on-the-ground assistance to any country that has an interest in, and commitment to, providing meaningful representation to those facing loss of life or liberty. This assistance could involve peer-to-peer visits, exchanges, demonstration projects and the like. Third, Justice Without Borders will seek to create and grow an institute for training, development, and research to support all of its work.

Within this functional framework, Justice Without Borders' first international summit will take place in Wisconsin May 3-5 at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread complex near Racine. We expect representatives from more than 20 countries to attend. Those countries and jurisdictions include China, Costa Rica, England, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Palestinian National Authority, Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Slovenia, South Korea, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, and the United States.

Prairie Band Potowatomi Nation, Scotland, Slovenia, South Korea, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, and the United States.

The primary goal of the international event is to identify, among the participating countries and jurisdictions, both the unique and the common barriers to meaningful representation of individuals facing deprivation of life or liberty, and to begin designing approaches to overcoming those barriers. It will be a working conference at which the participants will provide information about their respective jurisdictions, and ultimately develop solutions to the problems surrounding the lack of meaningful representation.

It also is hoped that the meeting will determine how Justice Without Borders assistance missions can best be helpful in challenging and overcoming the iden-

Much of the world's conflict results from the emphasis that is still placed on the differences among people. Justice Without Borders, however, is taking a different approach by focusing on our commonalities. If it is true that peace is not merely the absence of violence but rather the presence of justice, it is a significant opportunity when such jurisdictions as Israel and Palestine National Authority agree that providing meaningful legal counsel to those charged with crimes is a fundamental human right.

The fact that the impetus for promoting this vision is happening right here in our own backyard is further evidence of Wisconsin's historical commitment to fundamental fairness—and to our national vision of justice for all. ▀

## GLOBAL SUMMIT IN WISCONSIN

The following countries and jurisdictions are expected at Justice Without Borders' first international summit May 3-5 near Racine:

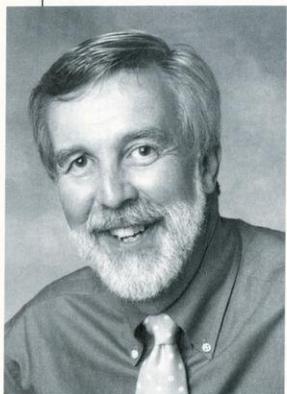
China, Costa Rica, England, Hungary, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Palestinian National Authority, Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Slovenia, South Korea, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, and the United States

tified barriers to meaningful representation. The meeting will develop measurable objectives for such missions, and will identify countries in need and want of the assistance. Finally, the meeting will start the process of developing a curriculum for the Justice Without Borders training and research institute.

The agenda for the first international summit obviously is ambitious—but so is the organization's mission. There is far too much conflict in our world today. As it happened, the tragedy of September 11th required postponement of the international summit, which originally was scheduled for last September.

*Judith E. Olingy is a founding member of Justice Without Borders and is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School. Randy Kraft is a founding member of Justice Without Borders and is the public information officer for the Wisconsin State Public Defender's Office. You can learn more about Justice Without Borders at [www.justicewithoutborders.org](http://www.justicewithoutborders.org).*

## Quaint, and Proud of It



In early February the Wisconsin Academy was invited to speak before journalists at the annual meeting of The Associated Press/Wisconsin Newspapers Association. This was a wonderful opportunity, and we put together a powerhouse panel of strong and articulate supporters.

The group consisted of Jim Haney, president of Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce; Mike Dombeck, former chief of the U.S. Forest Service and professor of global environmental studies at UW-Stevens Point; Pat

Leavenworth of the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service and co-chair of our Waters of Wisconsin initiative; Curt Meine, director of the Wisconsin Academy's conservation programs; and myself.

The panelists discussed both the value of the Wisconsin Academy to our state's residents, and how the Wisconsin Academy could best serve as a media resource. Our appearance was made possible by panel moderator Dave Zweifel, editor of the Madison-based daily, *The Capital Times*. We are very grateful to Dave for extending this invitation.

Following our presentation, we threw the topic open to questions. And, indeed, there were questions. On the plus side, what emerged was a clear need by reporters for reliable, comprehensive information free of political or commercial bias—exactly what the Wisconsin Academy has pledged to provide with its Waters of Wisconsin initiative. In many other content areas, too, we are endowed with great stores of knowledge, contacts, and resources to be tapped by both the news media and the public.

Another question was not so easily answered, but has prompted a great deal of reflection on my part as it went right to the heart of what the Wisconsin Academy is and hopes to be.

A veteran journalist asked whether the Academy's interest in presenting public policy programs directly to the public—programs that involve hundreds rather than thousands or hundreds of thousands of people—isn't a bit "quaint" in a world of sound bites, round-the-clock TV coverage, the Internet, and sophisticated marketing and ad campaigns.

Having now looked up the definition of "quaint" in Webster's, I wish I had simply answered by saying "Yes, we're quaint, and happily so!" "Quaint" is more than fusty. Hear now what Webster's has to say: quaint: "Marked by skillful design; marked by beauty or elegance; unusual or different in character; pleasingly or strikingly old-fashioned or unfamiliar."

"Different in character" is what I'll focus on here. What the Wisconsin Academy does in its public presentations is radically "different in character" from what usually passes for debate and discussion in today's society. Building from the evening TV news being capsulated into 20 minutes to college campuses where controversial speakers get shouted off the stage, I have come to fear for the survival of genuine and mean-

ingful civil discourse. I see the Wisconsin Academy as being *obliged* to provide those settings and publications where a variety of responsible viewpoints can be heard.

Is that "different in character" from the prevailing means of providing and obtaining information in modern America? You bet. Does it matter how many people come? While numbers do not affect the value of the event to those in attendance, we are committed to building a larger audience. Why? Because what we offer is so rare and valuable that we want more people to experience it. Our Bill of Rights Forum last fall brought together panelists and presenters, often on the same stage, from such diverse groups as the Cato Institute and the ACLU, the former general counsel for the CIA and the Center for Constitutional Rights, keynotes U.S. Senator Russ Feingold and U.S. Representative James Sensenbrenner (who was unable to attend at the last minute).

And—here's the real difference—audience members were able to talk back, ask questions, interact directly with key players in these vitally important public issues. I view the Wisconsin Academy as one of the "keepers of the flame" of the honored American value of free and open discussion. The Lincoln-Douglas debates are my personal model for what the Wisconsin Academy should aspire to.

I would like to share my response to an e-mail criticizing my last Back Page, "God Bless Whom?" (Winter 2002). That letter and several others questioned whether the Wisconsin Academy, as reflected in my column, is becoming overly liberal (in my column I had asked for a more thoughtful public discussion regarding the war in Afghanistan). I think it may be of interest to know what motivates me:

"I am telling the truth about what I believe is the role of the Academy: to foster discussion and analysis. I am here because the Academy should be a gathering place for those who are interested in using knowledge in a proactive way in Wisconsin and American society. I will not link the Academy to a particular philosophy or political position, but I will continue to push for the Academy to provoke questions, raise issues, and tackle tough subjects."

The Wisconsin Academy invites and welcomes a variety of viewpoints. We have done so for our entire history, and we have no plans to change. Knowledge is unsettling by its very nature, inviting people to venture out with their many diverse thoughts and opinions.

It is a privilege for me to be allowed to write this column. As always, I look forward to hearing from you. Truly.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob".

Robert G. Lange  
Executive Director  
rglange@facstaff.wisc.edu  
608/263-1692 ext. 12





Coon Valley, Wisconsin, still wears its stripes as the nation's first big showcase of innovative soil and water conservation techniques. But have you ever heard of it?

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