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## **Wisconsin Academy review. Volume 50, Number 2 Spring 2004**

Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, Spring 2004

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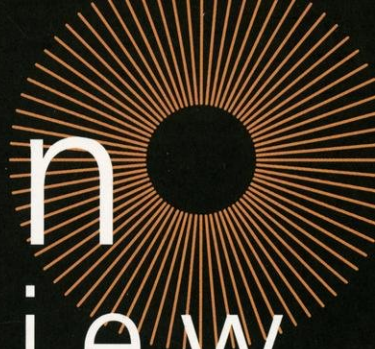
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# wisconsin academyreview



CELEBRATING  
50 YEARS

THE MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Wisconsin and  
the Rainforest:  
Make the Connection



The Special Ed Dilemma:  
Can We Do Better?



Barbara Lawton on  
Water, Arts, and  
Community



Statewide Poetry  
Contest: Read the  
Winners!



Rural Arts in Wisconsin:  
Blooming Against  
All Odds



Aldo Leopold's  
Writing Life

Price: \$5



Wisconsin kids cross the bridge at  
the Tirimbina Rainforest Center  
in Costa Rica.



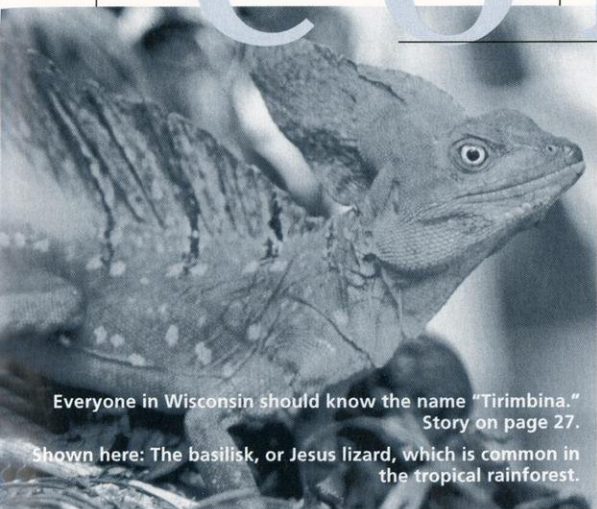




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## spring 2004

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Everyone in Wisconsin should know the name "Tirimina."  
Story on page 27.

Shown here: The basilisk, or Jesus lizard, which is common in the tropical rainforest.

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* (ISSN 0512-1175) is published quarterly by the nonprofit Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters and is distributed **free of charge** to Wisconsin Academy members. For information about joining, see page 44 or refer to the contact information below.

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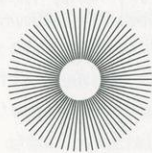
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**wisconsin academy**  
of sciences arts & letters

1922 university avenue | madison WI 53726

tel. 608/263-1692

[www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org)

[contact@wisconsinacademy.org](mailto:contact@wisconsinacademy.org)

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This essay on the great conservationist won an award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. By Inga Brynildson Hagge.

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Photo courtesy of Folklore Village





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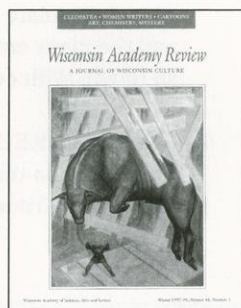
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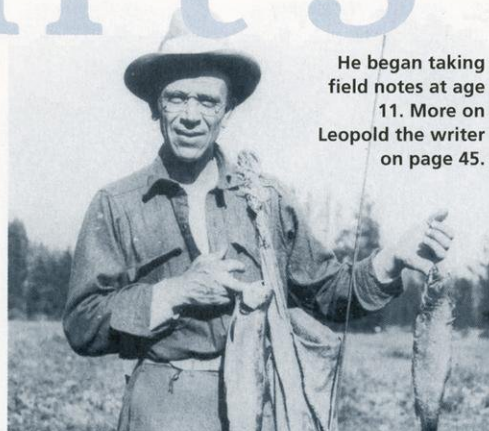
"Artists whose work was approved by a review committee were hired and received a weekly wage ranging from \$25 to \$40. I was a recent graduate of the university and was hired ... as an 'entering artist' at \$25 a week. It seemed a bountiful wage to a young, unemployed artist."



—James Watrous, writing in the winter 1997/98 edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. Watrous painted the UW Memorial Union's Paul Bunyan murals as part of the Public Works of Art Project during the Great Depression. Watrous went on to become a distinguished painter, art historian, and professor at UW–Madison, where he became known as "the father of the Elvehjem Museum" for his instrumental role in its founding. Read about the latest Watrous legacy on page 58.

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters connects people and ideas for a better Wisconsin. We were founded in 1870 as an independent, nonprofit membership organization, separate from the state and the university. Our mission is "to encourage investigation, disseminate knowledge, and promote integrated application of sciences, arts, and letters to preserve and further develop Wisconsin's heritage of cultural and natural resources."

Enrich your life by becoming a member! Find out more on page 44.



He began taking field notes at age 11. More on Leopold the writer on page 45.

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## UP AND COMING

# Research you can chew on



If you're a scientist hoping to reach the masses, feed us chocolate.

Allen Young, a cacao researcher and VP with the Milwaukee Public Museum, has created a chocolate bar to spread the word about rainforests.

The connection? Researchers have discovered that tiny flies called midges, pollinators of cacao trees bordering the tropical rainforest, depend on the rainforest for their survival. Cacao trees are the source of the world's chocolate. Therefore, clearing the rainforest to create more cacao groves in an attempt to produce more chocolate is bad for both the environment and for business.

Proceeds from chocolate sales support research by the Milwaukee Public Museum and the University of Wisconsin–Madison to help farmers improve their cacao harvests while preserving the rainforest. Cacao de Vida dark chocolate is available at Milwaukee Public Museum shops and other specialty shops for \$3.50. Personal testimonial: It is excellent! You can read more about Wisconsin's rainforest education center (bet you didn't know we had one!) on page 27.



The chocolate of life: Milwaukee Public Museum's new benefit bar helps Wisconsin-based cacao research projects in Costa Rica.

### NOMINATE A FELLOW (Deadline April 10)

Over the past few editions you may have become more familiar with Wisconsin Academy Fellows—men and women of outstanding lifetime achievements in and beyond their fields of endeavor. Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson wrote a piece for the Fellows Forum in the fall. Jazz musician Ben Sidran appeared on that page in the last issue. This edition brings us Athan Theoharis in the Fellows Forum and Allen Young as author of our cover story.

These examples may give you a sense of who the Fellows are in terms of stature and achievement. You can see the full list on our website, along with—and here's the real news—nomination guidelines if you know of somebody you believe should be a Fellow. The deadline for us to receive materials is April 10. We very much welcome your nominations!

### MORE ACADEMY NEWS

You'll see more news about the Wisconsin Academy starting with this issue. Members know

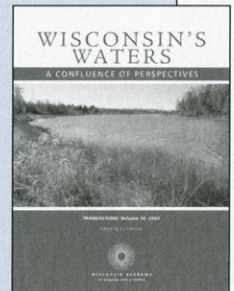
that we discontinued our quarterly newsletter and promised to include more Academy news in the *Review*. You'll see that change most saliently right on this page—please glance at the new column to the right—and in Inside the Academy on page 58, which will now run in every issue. We hope you find that the continuing information helps you get more out of your membership. As always, we welcome your comments about these or any other changes!

Joan Fischer, editor  
jfischer@wisconsinacademy.org  
www.wisconsinacademy.org

### The Book of Water (order it now!)

Our new book on water is ready to go. *Wisconsin's Waters: A Confluence of Perspectives* was edited by Curt Meine, director of the Waters of Wisconsin initiative, and reflects the many viewpoints and pools of knowledge tapped by WOW. Authors include WOW co-chair Steve Born on groundwater policy, tribal attorney Glenn Reynolds on a Native American water ethic, and Paul Kent on water and the public trust doctrine. Authoritative but never dry, the book serves as the newest edition of *Transactions*, the Wisconsin Academy's peer-reviewed journal dating back to 1872.

Members of the Wisconsin Academy can get it **free of charge** by leaving a request at 608/263-1692 ext. 17 or at [contact@wisconsinacademy.org](mailto:contact@wisconsinacademy.org).



### Making Water Laws Transparent

A key recommendation of the Waters of Wisconsin initiative was to formulate a comprehensive statewide water policy. A new database moves us a step closer to that goal. The Wisconsin Water Policies Inventory, created under the direction of WOW co-chair Steve Born and Elisabeth Graffy, provides a searchable, up-to-date overview of the major state policies pertaining to water. Check it out at <http://aqua.wisc.edu/waterpolicy/>

### Oscars for Artists

The first Wisconsin Visual Art Lifetime Achievement Awards will be presented on Sunday, May 2, 1:30 p.m., at the West Bend Art Museum, 300 S. Sixth Avenue, West Bend. The event is free of charge (donations encouraged) and includes a talk by William Gerdts, professor emeritus, New York Graduate School of Art. For more information, contact Randall Berndt at 608/263-1692 ext. 25, [rberndt@wisconsinacademy.org](mailto:rberndt@wisconsinacademy.org). The Wisconsin Academy is one of three arts organizations leading this effort.



## MIDDLE EARTH, MILWAUKEE

Where can you find the best collection of J. R. R. Tolkien materials this side of the Bodleian?

The surprising answer: Marquette University, whose already significant collection of Tolkien manuscripts, proofs, papers, and memorabilia—including the 9,250-page original manuscript of *The Lord of the Rings*—has just been bolstered by a major new collection of secondary sources about Tolkien. Purchased for an undisclosed sum from Grace E. Funk, a librarian and Tolkien fan from Vancouver, the collection's 2,376 items include volumes of the bootlegged Ace edition of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy from the 1960s, videotaped documentaries about Tolkien, and out-of-print memorabilia.

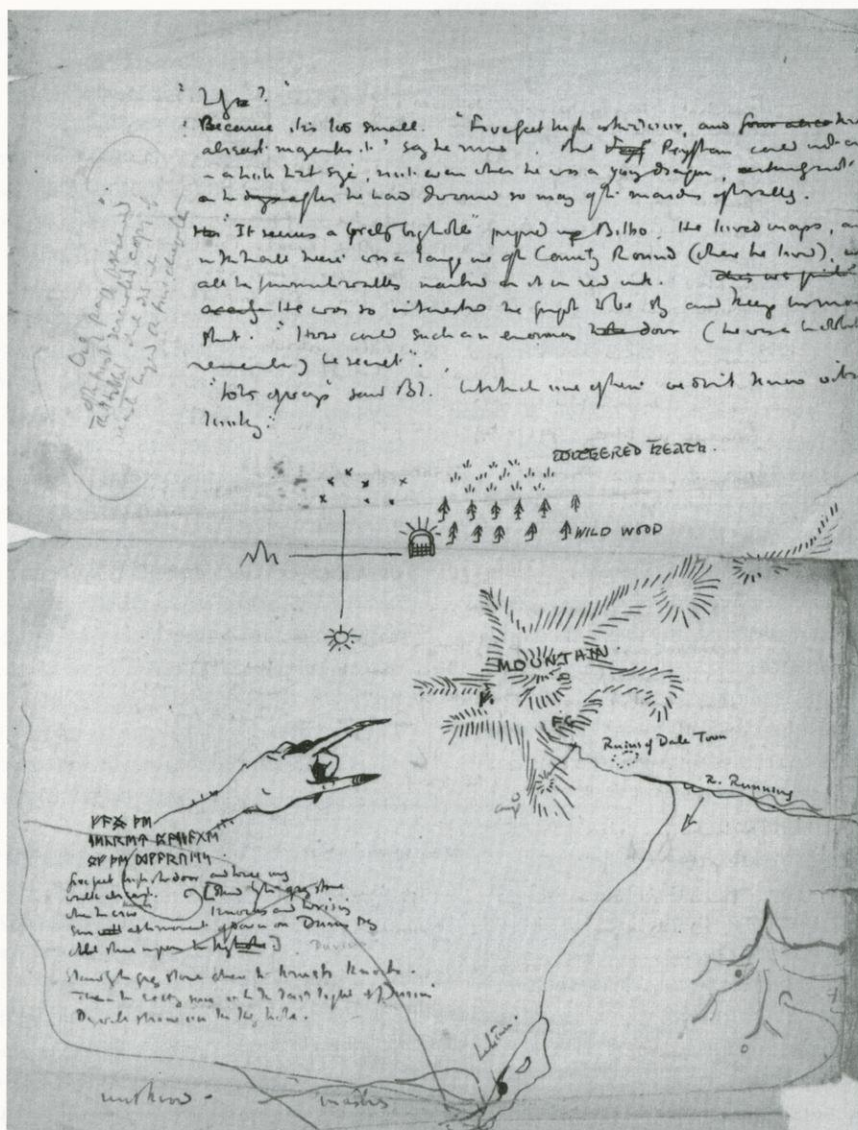
Funk decided to sell her collection to Marquette after attending a conference there several years ago of the Mythopoetic Society (a group that studies Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and similar writers) and seeing the university's already significant Tolkien holdings. Marquette had purchased the *Lord of the Rings* manuscript, as well as the original manuscript for *The Hobbit*, the hand-drawn book *Mr. Bliss*, and the novella *Father Giles of Ham* in 1957, long before Tolkien had a cult following.

Tolkien was a professor of English at the University of Oxford in England, and Oxford's Bodleian Library has the only other Tolkien collection to rival Marquette's, scholars say.

The collection promises to further elevate Marquette's already Mecca-like status among Tolkien fans. More than 3,000 visitors a year come to view the collection, which is easily accessible to the public at Marquette's Raynor Library. That number is up from about 400 a year before the *Lord of the Rings* movies were released.

Small wonder that in May, Marquette archivist Matt Blessing plans to deliver a paper at the Midwest Archives Conference in Milwaukee entitled "Manuscript Collections as Tourist Attractions."

The Funk collection will be available for viewing by mid-2004, in time for a Marquette-hosted conference in October called "The Lord of the Rings, 1954–2004," a celebration of the trilogy's



Original of Thrór's Map, from *The Annotated Hobbit*, by Douglas Anderson  
Image courtesy of Marquette University, © The Estate of the late J. R. R. Tolkien 1937

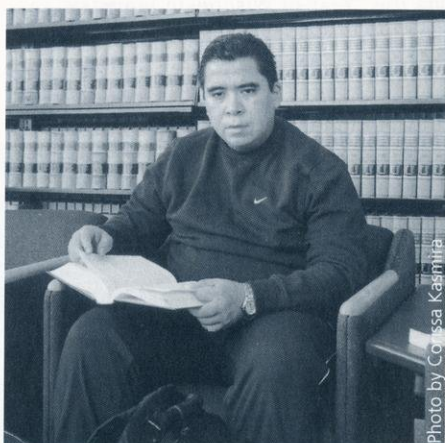
golden anniversary. The conference, featuring original research by nearly 20 Tolkienists, is open to the public.

Also, the Raynor Library is hosting weekly presentations about the Tolkien collection through May 12. Various documents, including pages from the actual manuscripts of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, will be available for viewing.

For further information, visit [www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives/tolkien.html](http://www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives/tolkien.html) or contact Blessing at [matt.blessing@marquette.edu](mailto:matt.blessing@marquette.edu) (tel. 414/288-5901).



# FREE & LEGAL



In the past three years, Chris Ochoa has moved from a life behind bars toward passing the bar.

The Texas man was wrongfully convicted of rape and murder and served 12 years of a life sentence before a team of UW-Madison law professors and their students in the school's Innocence Project took on his case and proved, through DNA testing, that Ochoa was innocent. (The *Wisconsin Academy Review* ran an article about Ochoa and the Innocence Project in the fall 2001 edition, shortly after his release.)

Now 37, Ochoa is finishing his first year of law school at UW-Madison. And he will be one of nine law students working on the Innocence Project this summer, where he will visit prisons and work on cases similar to his own.

Why did he decide to study law?

"Because when I got out, lawyers were the only people that I felt comfortable being around," says Ochoa. "In law school, being in that atmosphere—although sometimes it is emotionally difficult—is where I am most comfortable."

Considering Ochoa's experience—the then-22-year-old restaurant worker, who had no criminal record, confessed because allegedly he was threatened with the death penalty and with rape by prison sex predators—he maintains a surprising amount of faith in the criminal justice system, though he notes it could stand improvement.

"The criminal justice system and legal systems have improved a bit since I was released, but there is a lot of work to be done to tune the systems up to where our forefathers intended them to be," says Ochoa.

In particular, more attention should be paid to the defense side of criminal law when the subject is taught, he says. "It is overly skewed to the prosecutors. Perhaps people who go on to be prosecutors think there is only one view—guilty—because of their early teaching in law school. Justice should be the emphasis, either justice for the victim or justice for the wrongly charged or accused persons."

For professors and fellow students alike, Ochoa brings a unique and valuable viewpoint to the table.

"He brings a deep passion for the proper administration of justice," says law professor John Pray, who as co-director of the Wisconsin Innocence Project has known Ochoa for nearly five years as a client, friend, and, as of this summer, a student. "He can read a case for a class and understand that the law of the books looks very different from the law as practiced at the local level."

What characteristics does he value in Ochoa?

"He is a kind, gentle person who respects others," says Pray. "He is determined to advance himself so that he can help underprivileged people in our society—whether it be the economically poor, or other innocent incarcerated persons. He will hold fast to his basic values."

Adds codirector and law professor Keith Findley, "Chris is also remarkably forgiving, patient, and resilient. He went through a horrible ordeal, and came out with very little bitterness. More than anyone else I am aware of who has been through a similar experience, Chris stands out as one who has somehow managed to find a way to move forward."

## Colorful Fiddles

Some of Wisconsin's most renowned visual artists have taken up the violin—for painting, that is. Their paintings on retired violins have given the instruments new value as collectors' items to be auctioned as a benefit for the Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestra.

The exhibit of 11 violins, titled "Art of Note," includes works by Ed Paschke, William Wiley, Joan Zingale, Marko Spalatin, and Wisconsin Academy Fellows John Wilde and Lee Weiss.

The Wisconsin Academy Gallery hosts the exhibit from March 22 to April 2, with a reception on March 26, 5 to 7 p.m. After that, the exhibit travels as follows:

### April 5-16

Wisconsin Arts Board  
101 E. Wilson Street, Madison

### April 19-May 21

Grace Chosy Gallery  
1825 Monroe Street, Madison

### May 22

Raffle, Reception, and Auctions  
UW-Madison Lathrop Hall  
1050 University Avenue, Madison  
5:30-7:30 p.m.

For more information, visit the Art of Note website at <http://artofnote.org>



Fiddlin' around: Works by Ed Paschke (left) and Joan Zingale (right).



# WISCONSIN'S YEAR OF FORESTRY

To many people, Wisconsin and woods are synonymous, as much of a signature landscape as the state's prairies and waters. This year marks a century since E. M. Griffith, Wisconsin's first state forester, began restoring the wasteland of Northwoods stumps resulting from mass clear-cutting for agriculture and the lumber industry.



Red pine cone

Photo by Scott Nielsen courtesy of DNR

The forest management program established by Griffith and other legislative, conservation, and community leaders in the early 1900s and the decades that followed led to widespread rejuvenation and the 16 million acres of forest—covering nearly half the state—that Wisconsin enjoys today.

Coming right off Wisconsin's Year of Water in 2003, Gov. Jim Doyle has declared 2004 the "Year of Wisconsin Forestry" in recognition of the importance of our forests. From maple syrup festivals in the spring to colorama tours in the fall—and recreational opportunities year-round—millions of residents and visitors enjoy the beauty of Wisconsin's forests and appreciate the many ways they improve the quality of life in our state.

Numerous government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and community groups are joining in recreational and educational activities to celebrate the Year of Wisconsin Forestry. Activities include an "Open Woods" day on Saturday, May 15, when the nearly 60 percent of Wisconsin forests that are owned by private individuals and families will be open to the public for hikes, picnics, tours, and other activities. Throughout the year, state forests and tree



Forest along the Brule River

Photo by Scott Nielsen courtesy of DNR

## BATTLE OF HOLY HILL

More than 800 acres of hardwood forest centered on Washington County's magnificent Holy Hill would be permanently protected from development under a Forest Legacy program that began in November with a federal grant of \$2 million.

The grant was included in the appropriations bill of the US Department of the Interior, largely through the efforts of the Wisconsin congressional delegation, especially those of Senator Herbert Kohl and Representative David Obey.

The money will buy conservation easements under which landowners will agree to restrict future intensive development and maintain the land in permanent, sustainable forest. Seven owners control 866 acres of forest, perhaps the largest privately owned forest remaining in southeastern Wisconsin.

The largest owner by far is the order of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, which owns the National Shrine of Mary at Holy Hill and controls 435 acres of surrounding oak, maple, and ash forest.

The Ozaukee-Washington Land Trust applied for the grant, supported by the Mid-Kettle Moraine Partners Group, the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation, and the southeast district of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Mid-Kettle Moraine Partners Group is an outgrowth of an initiative of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters begun by the late Wisconsin congressman and

Wisconsin Academy Fellow Henry S. Reuss and Ody Fish, then Wisconsin Academy president.

Reuss proposed that the Wisconsin Academy revitalize the dream of connecting the north and south units of the Kettle Moraine State Forest through Washington and Waukesha counties with a substantial greenbelt centered on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The greenbelt would preserve the best remaining glacial and natural features of the rapidly urbanizing area.

The \$2 million, along with a smaller amount of local matching funds, will finance the first year of a possible four-year pro-



Photo courtesy WI Dept. of Tourism



nurseries will hold open houses, and county fairs and other local events will feature forestry displays. A summer reading program at Wisconsin libraries will focus on forestry topics and readings, and Girl Scouts can earn a special Year of Forestry patch. (Further notice to kids: this year, Smokey the Bear turns 60!)

You can find out more by visiting [www.wisconsinforestry.org](http://www.wisconsinforestry.org).



## FORESTRY IN THE GALLERY

A special exhibit at the Wisconsin Academy Gallery starting in April pays tribute to Wisconsin's forests. UW-Madison art professor Tom Loeser is leading students in making furniture and art objects out of wood. They are working in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory, which finds innovative, environmentally sound ways to use wood and wood by-products. Stay tuned to [www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org) for more information.

gram to cost up to \$8 million. If fully successful, the program would protect the seasonal home of a number of scarce migratory birds, as well as an abundance of other wildlife species.

A popular segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail has been maintained for years around Holy Hill, the result of a handshake agreement between the Friars and the Ice Age Trail Foundation. Under this new program, the Ice Age Trail Foundation will seek to formalize the agreement to permanently protect the trail and to extend it through the entire forest from southwest to northeast.

Reuss described his vision in a speech to the Wisconsin Academy in Madison in 1995, during a banquet celebrating the Wisconsin Academy's 125th anniversary. Shortly after, the Wisconsin Academy assembled the Kettle Moraine Task Force. It issued two reports: one outlining the vision of a continuous greenbelt in southeastern Wisconsin along the Kettle Moraine and the second suggesting a strategy of how to bring the vision to fruition.

The resulting Mid-Kettle Moraine Partners Group came into being three years ago. It is an informal coalition of public and private groups active in protecting the land of the Mid-Kettle Moraine area.

by Paul Hayes

## Astronomy's First Lady: The Madison Connection

Trailblazing New York playwright Chiori Miyagawa's new play about Caroline Herschel, one of the world's first women astronomers, has several Madison connections. First, in May there will be a public reading of *Comet Hunter*, as it is called, in partnership with the Madison Repertory Theater and the UW-Madison theater department. Second, while writing the piece, Miyagawa consulted with the UW-Madison's Jim Lattis, a historian of astronomy and director of the UW Space Place, for scientific verification.

"He became more than a science consultant. He was also the dramaturg for the play," says Miyagawa. Miyagawa learned about Lattis from a mutual acquaintance at the MacDowell Colony artists' retreat, where Miyagawa was working on the piece.

The play focuses on Caroline Herschel and her more-famous brother and colleague, the 18th-century astronomer William Herschel. There were many elements about Caroline Herschel's life and work that drew Miyagawa to her story.

"Her small stature from her childhood bout with typhus interested me, because she came to imagine the universe in a larger picture than most people in her time," says Miyagawa. "Her immigrant experience at age 22 from Germany to England interested me, as I also left one country to find home in another. And I saw a love story between a brother and a sister who shared a common love for the stars."

Miyagawa's approach impressed Lattis, who in addition to being a science historian has had a longtime interest in theater.

"Chiori managed to turn the usual Herschel family history on its head and see the relationship from Caroline's point of view," notes Lattis. "Her play recounts Caroline's accomplishments and life in their own right. Also, Chiori has made these historical figures into people with whom we can identify, which is something theater does well—but does rarely for scientific figures."

Madison theatergoers interested in the May reading can visit the Madison Rep website ([www.madisonrep.org](http://www.madisonrep.org)) for more information.



Photo by Carol Rosegg



# Book Shorts

Some reads for spring by Wisconsin writers

## *Black Eye: Escaping a Marriage, Writing a Life*

by Judith Strasser

(Terrace Books, University of Wisconsin Press)

*Stu moves toward me. I say something. He swings. The plastic tray cracks against my right forearm. A simple law I learned in high-school physics: for every action, an equal and opposite reaction. A glob of pea soup flies off the end of the wooden spoon. It hits the white ceiling over the stove.*

*My arm reddens and swells. I go to the hospital. "How did this happen?" the resident asks.*

*"My husband hit me with an ice cube tray. It was an accident."*

*He shakes his head. He says the arm's not broken, but maybe I should talk to the police. He gives me a sling to wear. I put it on and go home.*

*The soup hardens on the ceiling. It is still there, a small dark splat, five or six years later when we sell the house.*



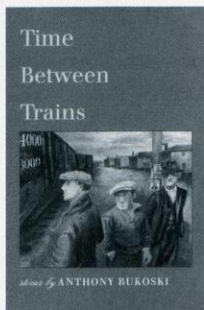
Here is a tale of domestic violence in high places. One would never think of Judith Strasser—a successful poet, a former senior producer of Wisconsin Public Radio's *To the Best of Our Knowledge*, and a member of Madison's affluent lakeside intelligentsia—as a battered wife, let alone one who endured years of abuse. But that's part of the point. Strasser serves up a painful, unsparing memoir of her efforts to save a destructive relationship, and the artistic awakening that helped her get out.

## *Time Between Trains*

by Anthony Bukoski

(Southern Methodist University Press)

With names like Pani Pilsudski, Ewa Zukowski, Stanislaus Coda, and Tad Milszewski, you know you've entered the world of Anthony Bukoski, a Superior-based writer who makes mass immigration from Poland feel like it happened yesterday. You can feel the relentless cold of a land dubbed "Siberior," hear the thick accents, taste the kielbasa in these 13 intertwined short stories, Bukoski's fourth collection. *Booklist* calls the stories "some of the most beautifully written since Sherwood Anderson's in *Winesburg, Ohio*."



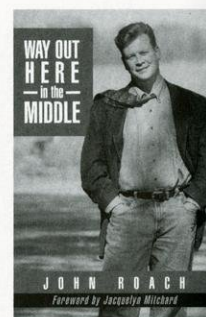
Bukoski's East End of Superior will in some ways feel like foreign territory even to residents of other parts of Wisconsin. But readers everywhere may relate to and appreciate his portrayal of small-town, hard-knock resilience and the solace found in everyday connections.

## *Way Out Here in the Middle*

by John Roach

(Jones Books)

If Shakespeare's Falstaff were a Midwestern baby-boomer, he'd be a lot like John Roach. We're not talking about physical appearance (Roach, though robust, is hardly "a tun of man"), but some other salient characteristics: a cheerfully bombastic manner, a constant eruption of emotion and opinion, a love of women, food, drink, and song, and an overriding sense of humor and intelligence. Roach, who owns a marketing firm in Madison and cowrote an award-winning screenplay for David Lynch (*The Straight Story*), has been writing a monthly column for *Madison Magazine* for the past 10 years. This "best of" collection provides an easy catch-up for those who've been missing the fun, and a handy keepsake for those who haven't.



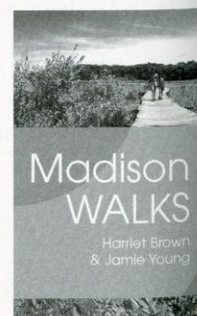
## *Madison Walks*

by Harriet Brown and Jamie Young

(Jones Books)

We confess to a soft spot for any book that calls the Wisconsin Academy Gallery "one of Madison's best-kept secrets"—but we'd appreciate this book even without the mention (it also notes that the gallery is "small but elegant" and shows "top-notch work by Wisconsin painters, photographers and artists").

Anyway. Here are 18 glorious walks in and around the capital city that include the urban (the grand old homes of University Heights), the natural (the Pheasant Branch Conservancy), and the interspecies-sociable (Dog Park). Note that co-author Harriet Brown, who also is the new editor of *Wisconsin Trails* magazine, has just released a chapbook of her poetry titled *The Promised Land* (Parallel Press). She is also a winner in our statewide poetry contest. You can read her work on page 40.





# Milwaukee's Muse

**M**ilwaukee has a new muse: Marilyn Taylor, a teacher of creative writing at UW-Milwaukee, has been crowned city poet laureate.



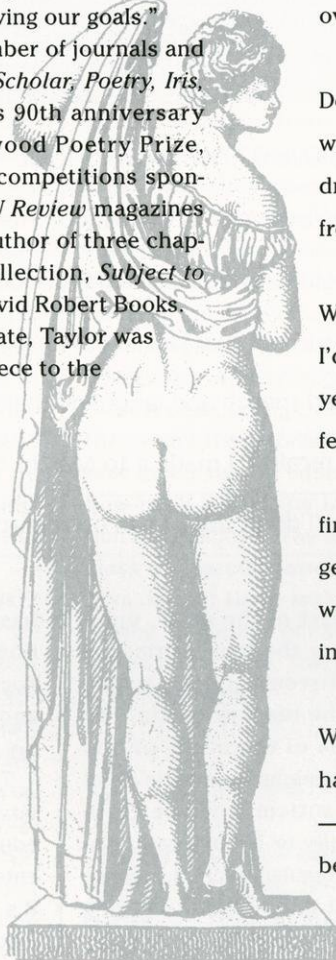
"Marilyn Taylor was chosen to be poet laureate based on her solid reputation as a poet, teacher of poetry, and her well-reviewed publications," says Kate Huston, city librarian and head of the poet laureate selection committee. The Milwaukee Public Library established the poet laureate program four years ago to recognize great poets in the

Milwaukee area and raise the visibility of poets and poetry.

"I believe poetry enhances our lives and enriches literary discourse in a community," says Huston. "By holding readings and promoting poetry through workshops and other programs, I believe we are achieving our goals."

Taylor's work has appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *The American Scholar*, *Poetry*, *Iris*, *The Formalist*, and *Poetry* magazine's 90th anniversary anthology. Winner of the 2003 Dogwood Poetry Prize, Taylor also took first place in recent competitions sponsored by *Passager*, *The Ledge*, and *GSU Review* magazines and the Anamnesis Press. She is the author of three chapbooks, and her second full-length collection, *Subject to Change*, has just been published by David Robert Books.

As one of her first acts as poet laureate, Taylor was kind enough to submit the following piece to the *Wisconsin Academy Review*.



## Sappho Under the Arches

Straight-spined girl—yes, you of the glinting earrings,  
amber skin and sinuous hair: what happened?  
you've no business lunching with sticky children  
here at McDonald's.

Are they yours? How old were you when you had them?  
You are far too dazzling to be their mother,  
though I hear them spluttering *Mommy Mommy*  
over the Muzak.

Do you plan to squander your precious twenties  
wiping ketchup dripping from little fingers,  
drowning your ennui in a Dr. Pepper  
from the dispenser?

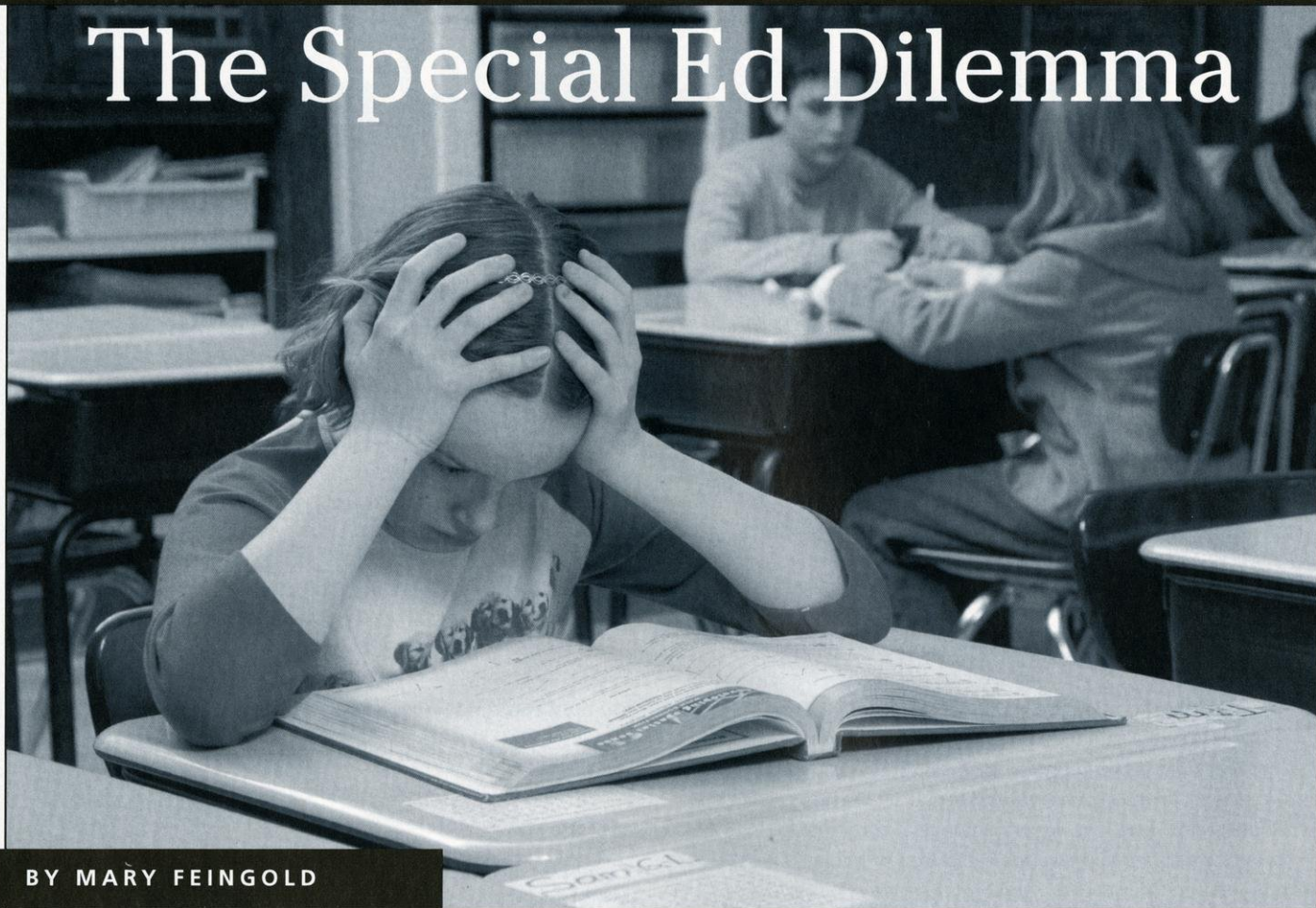
Were I you for one schizophrenic moment,  
I'd display my pulchritude with a graceful  
yet dismissive wave to the gathered burghers  
feeding their faces—

find myself a job as a super-model,  
get me to those Peloponnesian beaches  
where I'd preen all day with a jug of ouzo  
in my bikini.

Would I miss the gummy suburban vinyl,  
hanker for the Happiest Meal on Main Street?  
—Wouldn't one spectacular shrug suffice for  
begging the question?



# The Special Ed Dilemma



BY MARY FEINGOLD

The demand for special education is spiraling. What will we do about a service that is essential from a legal, humane, and moral standpoint—but often is hard to define, difficult to deliver, and, in our present budget structures, nearly impossible to fund?

Photos by Sandy Wojtal-Weber

**I**N THE MIDDLE OF THE LAST SCHOOL YEAR, a second-grade teacher in a mid-sized Wisconsin city almost quit her job. Her class of 16 had six students with varying degrees of disability. "I had a student who was emotionally disturbed, two kids with Asperger's syndrome [a form of autism], two who needed speech and language therapy, and one who was learning disabled," she recalls. "I made it to March. Then I walked into my principal's office and said, 'I don't think I can do this anymore.'"

In another part of the state, upon hearing this story, the former principal of a suburban Wisconsin middle school says he feels the teacher's pain. "To meet the needs of the child who is sedated in a wheelchair, and the child who has mild autism, and the child who's emotionally or behaviorally disturbed, and the regular ed child, and the gifted child, that is a rather challenging thing for even the best teacher to do. And everything goes to hell in a hand-

basket when the child who has emotional disabilities picks up a pair of scissors and decides to thrust it toward another student, which did happen in my school."

These are not the happy scenarios envisioned by the shapers of special education policy. Or hoped for by parents of both special and regular ed kids. It's true, in the simplest and most self-evident way, that the law that drives all special education policy—the



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—couldn't be more noble or more clear: Every child has the right to a free and appropriate public education, it says, and every child should be taught in a regular classroom if at all possible. If any child needs help—in the form of aides or specialized instruction or nursing care—then the school will provide it.

As a result, IDEA is a law that quite literally has rescued hundreds of thousands of children from institutionalized non-futures. And some observers say its practice of educating students with and without disabilities in the same classroom has also transformed a full generation of regular ed kids into adults who are much more accepting of differences than their parents are. Because of these and many other benefits, there is virtually no dispute about the importance of the law's principles.

What educators, parents, and policy makers aren't in agreement on, though, is how to respond to stories like the ones above. What can be done, they ask, when what the law promises isn't what its implementation delivers?

"My principal knew I wasn't complaining. I've taught for 29 years and I love my school and my kids and my job," says the second-grade teacher who nearly quit. "So he knew when I said I couldn't that I really, truly couldn't. For the rest of the year we kind of triaged. If aides in other classrooms had free time they spent it in my room, helping. At times I had four or five adults in my room. When I went home at night all I did was either go right to sleep or do yoga. My husband was very understanding. And that's how we all got to the end of the year."

It's hard to say who is more upset when problems arise from the way we educate special needs kids today. Certainly parents are outraged. Their regular ed kids aren't learning, they say, because the teachers are busy tending to the special ed kids. And their special ed kids aren't learning, they say, because teachers shuttle them from room to room or simply—and illegally—ignore guidelines on how to teach students with special needs. And sometimes it's worse than that. Last

IDEA is the mother of underfunded mandates. Not once has the full amount of promised federal financing of special education ever materialized.

year a Milwaukee elementary school special ed teacher was charged with five counts of felony imprisonment for tying a student to a chair in a darkened, locked storage room.

Even many of the best teachers, though, have about had it with some aspects of special ed. There's too much paperwork, too much classroom disruption, not enough academic instruction. Why, they ask, are the aides assigned to help kids with special needs the least-trained and lowest-paid people in the school? For their part, special ed teachers and aides are burning out at combat-fatigue rates; a recent study conducted by the Washington Education Association revealed that only 36 percent of that state's current special education teachers think they'll still be working in the field in five years. Administrators aren't any happier; principals say they spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with issues related to special education. School board members bemoan the lack of flexibility in special ed law and the lack of common ground or even common sense when rules are challenged.

Most of all, though, everyone laments the money, the astonishing gap between how much special education costs and how little is actually in public education's checkbook. The lesson of today's class on special education, everyone says, is that there isn't nearly enough money. The lesson of tomorrow's is that, barring a miracle, there never will be. Class dismissed.

## TEN CENTS ON THE DOLLAR

And they're right. Because in addition to being a landmark civil rights law, IDEA is also the mother of all underfunded mandates. Not once in more than a quarter century, since the law that is now

IDEA was passed in 1975, has the full amount of promised federal financing of special education ever materialized. It's never even come close; only in the past five years, in fact, has it approached the halfway mark. The National Education Association reports that federal monies now fund about 18 percent of the cost of special education nationwide.

In Wisconsin, property taxes make up the lion's share of this state's remaining tab. The Madison Metropolitan School District, for example, will use local property tax money to fund 66 percent of its \$56.9 million special education budget this year. State aid will account for nearly 30 percent, and federal grants and entitlements will cover the final 4 percent—only one dime for every promised federal dollar.

"I don't understand how anyone can argue that federal funding is not an issue," says Joe Quick, the Madison school district's public information officer. "Clearly, it is an issue for our property tax payers."

Adding to the money trouble is the fact that, statewide, school expenditures are capped by law. One result of these caps is that at periodic and anguished school board budget hearings across the state, parents of regular ed kids become cast as the ogres who would rather fund band trips than wheelchair ramps, while parents of special ed kids become portrayed as the usurpers who would sooner cheat the three Rs than cut a few occupational therapy hours. The regular ed parents have numbers on their side—there are more of them and the school boards are comprised of elected officials who need votes. The parents of special ed kids have a law on their side that guarantees their children a free and appropriate public education no matter how much it costs.

"Special education is protected by federal law," explains Madison's super-



# special education

intendent of schools Art Rainwater. "So that's the first dollar. We have to fund everything else with what's left. We've done a good job under the revenue caps of keeping our priorities; up to now we haven't affected education. But that won't be true much longer."

After all, those first dollars add up. The average annual price tag of educating a regular ed student in Wisconsin is about \$9,500. That figure rises to \$13,000 per student per year for the majority of special ed students in the state. After that, though, expenses take a sharp upturn, corresponding to the severity of a student's disabilities. It can run a school district \$40,000 or more to enroll a child with significant cognitive disabilities. In Madison, this translates to \$5.5 million, which is how much the district will spend during the current school year to meet the needs of its 149 most disabled students.

## THE OTHER NUMBERS

But what if it's not just the money? That question has hummed beneath the surface of the financing problem from

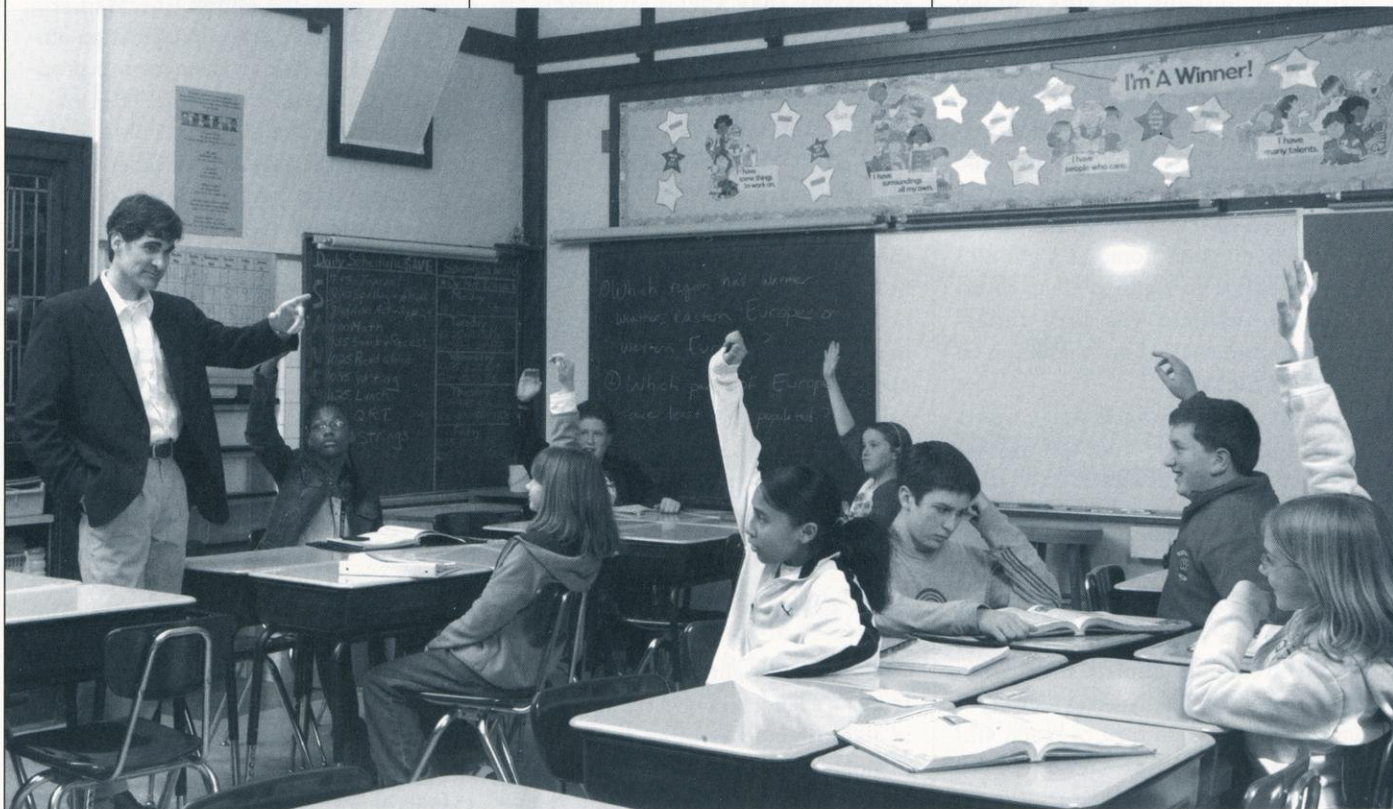
the very beginning, but it takes on a special timeliness with IDEA up for congressional reauthorization this spring.

"In a lot of ways the problem of funding is easier to talk about," says Ken Cole, executive director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. "The harder discussion is whether it is appropriate or even possible to provide what the law says we must provide to every child." It's a discussion that is complicated, say Cole and other observers, by the complexity of the law and subsequent court rulings. And by the bureaucracy that has grown around its implementation. And by the competing realities of everyone it touches. And by the mission creep that has characterized special education in recent years.

For one thing, along with the numbers that frame the present financial crisis, there are other numbers that have become increasingly problematic for parents, educators, and policy makers. In the 1980s, reports Thomas Hruz in his *Wisconsin Interest* essay "Rethinking Special Education in Wisconsin," the numbers of children placed in public school special education programs throughout the state

began to increase. Other research shows that in 1983 there were a total of 71,266 students classified as being in need of special education in Wisconsin. In 1993 there were 95,459. Today there are 127,026. In some state school districts more than 30 percent of the student body is in some form of special ed. Statewide, an average of one in eight K-8 students is receiving special education services in public or private schools.

These students fall into one or more of several categories defined by the federal government and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: They have speech or language impairments. They have a hearing, visual, orthopedic, or health impairment. They have autism or a traumatic brain injury. They have cognitive disabilities. Or they have an emotional behavioral disability or a learning disability. Students can receive special education services in the public schools only if it has been determined that they have one or more of these disabilities, that they need assistance, and that the assistance will grant them access to a public education.





There are some easily recognized reasons for the increasing presence of children with disabilities in the public schools. Medical advancements, for instance, make it possible for more and more children with profound disabilities to survive early childhood. And whatever its causes, autism is being diagnosed more frequently. Further, as Rainwater and others note, disabilities are a natural fact of life, and children with all manner of disabilities have long been in public schools but are only recently being counted—and provided with the education that is their right.

Hruz argues, though, that the system also creates disabilities where there may be none. The categories of learning disabled and emotionally disabled, he says, are what's really driving the increase in Wisconsin. He calls them "soft categories" in his report and says that they're wide open to subjective interpretation—similar children are deemed emotionally disturbed in one school district and merely unruly in another. Together, the categories of learning disabled and emotional or behavioral disabled accounted for more than 55 percent of special ed students in

public schools in 2002, Hruz reports. And, he adds, the category of learning-disabled students swelled so rapidly in one recent five-year period that it alone accounted for 53 percent of the total increase of students receiving special education services in Wisconsin during that time.

Other statistics reveal grim trends within what educators call the problem of over-identification. A disproportionate number of special ed students are male, for example. And a disproportionate number have non-white heritage. Nationally, African American students

## When Special Ed Works: A Case Study About a Boy

This is a story with a happy ending, even though it's about a boy—we'll call him Jason—who entered school the way a hurricane enters a coastal village.

"Jason was completely out of control," recalls his kindergarten teacher. She holds up a hand and ticks off the usual suspects. "He had attention deficit, although it turns out that that wasn't diagnosed until later. He had an iffy home life. He'd never been in a structured setting before. He was impulsive. He was bright. There was a discrepancy between his potential as exhibited on tests and what he was able to do in class."

Hurricane Jason ran wild in the classroom. He wouldn't sit in his seat. He couldn't wait for his turn. He didn't raise his hand. He never shut his mouth. By the end of that school year, Jason had already been referred, assessed, and found to be in need of special education services in the areas of speech, language, and emotional development. He entered first grade with an individualized education program designed to help the school meet his needs.

Since he had already fallen far behind his classmates, reasonable short-term goals were set forth in the IEP with an eye toward bringing him up to speed over the long term. Jason would "use an indoor voice 50 percent of the time," for example, and would progress one-half of a grade level in math that year. He would work with the special ed speech and language teacher during certain structured activities. An important benefit of the IEP process was that the teachers were able to discover that Jason's mother wasn't so much "iffy" as she was overwhelmed. In meeting with the teachers to draw up the IEP, they all got to know one another better and ultimately became a team that worked together and complemented each other's strengths.

Jason met nearly all his goals during first grade and exceeded a few. The IEP team reconvened several times during

the year to fine-tune the IEP, set new short-term goals and adjust the long-term goals accordingly. His behavior improved; so did his ability to focus and concentrate. He entered second grade still behind, but not by quite as much.

And so it went, year after year. Jason's teachers and his mother stayed with the program and they stayed in touch with one another. Jason's IEP was documented according to special ed law, was revisited as needed and reviewed on schedule. Jason continued to make incremental improvements. "He stops playing [during recess] when the bell rings nine out of 10 times" is how one milestone was noted in third grade, for example. And in fourth grade he caught up to his classmates by jumping two reading grade levels in that one year.

Today Jason is in fifth grade and his torrential reputation is behind him. He still has an IEP because he still needs one. He still uses some special ed services, but not as many as he did in first grade. "You'd walk into a room now and you wouldn't know he was an LD/ED kid," says his fifth-grade teacher. She smiles when she says this, but her smile fades fast when she's asked to consider where he might be today had the special education services, and most specifically his IEP, not been available.

"I think he would be incredibly frustrated and significantly delayed," she says. "He would be constantly in trouble, in the principal's office, suspended. Eventually we'd lose him."

Instead of documenting heartbreak and failure, though, Jason's IEP documents the reasonable expectations that caring educators set for him, and the ways in which they supported him while he reached for his goals. In short, Jason's IEP tracks the many small successes that add up to an education—and a happy ending.



# special education

Nationally, African American students are nearly three times as likely as white students to be labeled mentally retarded, and nearly twice as likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed.

are nearly three times as likely as white students to be labeled mentally retarded, and nearly twice as likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed, according to a report published in 2002 by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. In Milwaukee public schools, not quite 60 percent of the student body is African American, yet more than 67 percent of the students in special ed are African American. Similar rates have alarmed school districts across the state, and the push is on to reexamine all aspects of over-identification.

"We have to have a more rational policy in terms of eligibility," cautions UW-Madison professor of special education Julie Mead. "We do have disability categories that are socially constructed, where kids are only disabled at school. Why, for example, do the people who are affluent tend to have

the kids with learning disabilities and the people who are not tend to have the kids with emotional disabilities?"

## FAIR IS FAIR

As systems go, regular education is designed to be uniform and special education is not. It's a paradox of paradigms in which a one-size-fits-all supersystem must accommodate an individual-based subsystem. Tensions between the two flare especially high whenever the focus turns from the problem of financing to the question of whether special education is "fair." And that discussion is indeed, as the school boards' Ken Cole noted, a more difficult one to have. Much of the time it's moot, anyway, because the law is the law. But when the law is up for congressional reauthoriza-

tion, advocates of all stripes step up to argue over what is, in fact, fair.

"IDEA doesn't go far enough in dealing with disruptive behavior," said Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, in a press release issued during the bill's 1997 reauthorization. "It enforces a double standard for disabled students and non-disabled students."

"Congress has totally ignored parents and has sided with school administrators who claim that parents are bankrupting school districts with demands to 'fix' their children," said Dawn Klein, a mother of a disabled student, in a 2003 letter published on the website of the advocacy group "Our Children Left Behind."

When children are inappropriately identified as having special needs, they receive services and protections to which they're not entitled. And when children are appropriately identified as having special needs, they receive services and protections to which other children aren't entitled. "Aha!" parents say. The law isn't fair because it grants special privileges to children who don't even qualify for them. And it isn't fair because it protects the rights of only certain children, and because it serves too many children, and too few, and not the right ones. Not, for instance, ours.

"We're used to thinking about equity in terms of 'sameness' and discrimination in terms of 'different,'" explains UW-Madison professor of special education Julie Mead. "But when we're talking about discrimination on the basis of a disability, that paradigm gets flipped on its head and difference becomes necessary for equity." In the case of special education, an unequal distribution of resources is intended to achieve an equal result: access to public education for all.

## THE ABCS OF SPECIAL ED

That's the macro level. On the micro level, where the problems crop up, the difference to which Mead refers is spelled with out with acronyms. There's the IEP, or individualized education pro-





gram, which is what every special ed student has that none of the other, regular ed, kids have: his or her own, personalized instruction manual, drawn up by teachers, special educators, parents, administrators, school psychologists, and others. An IEP must, by law, specify what the student needs—physically, educationally, socially, or environmentally—in order to have the same access to a public school education that a non-disabled child has. The IEP must, by law, document how those needs will be met by the school district. And it must set goals for the student's progress. IEPs are reviewed every year and reevaluated every three years.

Hey, say parents of regular ed kids, where's my kid's IEP? Be careful what you ask for, caution the parents of special ed kids: an IEP is what they give you when they're not going to help your kid. It's the good intention that paves the way to a hellish round of meetings, accusations, inaction, and lawsuits. It's a blueprint for how to follow the letter of the law while ignoring its intent in favor of procedure. It's an off-track on your kid's educational railway. Administrators, sticking to the macro level, say that an IEP is a great tool with which to plan and track a student's progress. Many say they wish every child had one, and some even predict that such a day will come.

The difference between policy and action is also spelled LRE, which stands for least restrictive environment. This is where, according to law, every child with special needs is to have them met. In practice, LRE means a regular educational classroom whenever possible. And the classroom is indeed where some IDEA advancements have met with their greatest successes. Vonnie Bathke, for example, has a son who attended middle school in the Chippewa Falls school district last year. She described his disabilities and his school experience as part of a March 12, 2003, Wisconsin Public Radio broadcast. "He has a seizure disorder and absolutely all of his needs have to be met by another person, and he's nonverbal," she said. "Being in a regular classroom has meant everything to my son. It's meant the

## And When It Doesn't: A Case Study Saving Mandy

"Mandy"'s IEP, created when she was still in the lower grades at a suburban Wisconsin elementary school, pointed to a slew of problems. Her primary exceptional educational need was help in dealing with her emotional disabilities, and her secondary one was help with speech and language. Mandy was unpredictable and violent, her teacher reported, and wildly impulsive and untruthful. She scored in the single-digit percentiles on speech and language tests.

Her IEP recommended that she split her time in school equally between participating in regular education and receiving special education services. She was to start each day, according to the plan, in the regular classroom. Various short-term and long-term goals were set forth: Mandy would learn to "stop and think about consequences before she does something," according to the IEP; she would learn to "sit quietly," and "stay on task longer." Outbursts would be handled according to a five-step process that involved the regular teacher contacting the school office, which would then contact the emotional disabilities teacher. Mandy would be moved from the regular classroom to the ED classroom, a space designated for helping children with emotional disabilities. She would cool down, she would problem-solve with the ED teacher, and she would return to the regular classroom. Her IEP was signed by the five people who devised it: her teacher, her guardian, the principal, the special ed director, and the ED teacher. So far, so good.

Mandy's IEP was followed to the letter. When she had an outburst she was moved, settled, and returned. It's just that her outbursts involved screaming and throwing things and trying to run from the room, and they occurred early and often—about a half-hour into most days she attended school. And it's just that moving her took three adults, typically the teacher, the principal, and the janitor, who would corner her, pry her loose from whatever she'd grabbed onto, pin her arms and legs while keeping free of her teeth, and carry her struggling, 40-pound body log-style from the regular ed room. It consisted of the other students looking on in horrified silence and listening as her howls receded down the hallway. "Settling her" consisted of an already-too-busy ED teacher sometimes sending Mandy back to the regular ed classroom—and to her exasperated teacher and traumatized peers—after only 10 minutes of cool-down time. Then the entire cycle would start over except that this time, as specified by the IEP, Mandy would be sent home.

"I believe very, very strongly in inclusion," says Mandy's teacher. "The benefits to all the children are very real and very important. But it is hard to teach phonics when someone is screaming in the corner."

Was any of this fair? Some parents of regular ed kids complained, but the teacher notes that while the entire situation was unfair, it was probably most unfair to Mandy. "She belonged in a self-contained ED room, if she could have managed that. What she really needed more than anything was just to be held and rocked for a long, long, long time."

Mandy, it turns out, wasn't so much emotionally disturbed as emotionally devastated. Her father was gone, her mother was dying, her guardian was giving up custody, and when she—yes, Mandy—wasn't a psychiatric inpatient at a local hospital, she was in a foster home with parents who were trying to decide whether to adopt her. For Mandy, school was a daily attempt to be rescued by the nice lady in the front of the room, and a daily dashing of the hope that that would ever happen.



# special education

world. And some of the kids in his class have become his friends. They knock on my front door and ask to come in and play with him."

The LRE protection becomes a sticking point, though, when not everyone agrees on where, exactly, the least restrictive environment is for a given child. The teacher who nearly left her job, for example, believed that four of the six special ed kids in her room were not functioning well enough for her classroom to be their least restrictive environment. She said they'd have reaped greater benefits from being taught down the hall, in a special ed room, by the special ed teacher. Their parents disagreed, though, and her principal, not wanting to risk the time and expense of a legal challenge to any change in their placement, decided to keep the students where they were—and make do until the end of the year. Similar decisions are made in districts throughout the country. Some principals say they're unhappy with such results and would like the law changed.

"School districts need the authority to place students in appropriate settings," said Harriet P. Brown, a California school administrator, in her March 2003 testimony before a congressional committee looking at IDEA reauthorization. "[D]istricts are often held hostage by parents who have revoked consent for placement when the student has significant educational needs."

Not nearly as often, counter parents and advocacy groups, as students are denied access to education by districts who balk when it comes to making the simplest of accommodations. There are also times when one child's explicit right to a least restrictive environment collides with the implicit right of another other child to a functioning classroom. "This student's behavior is very disruptive," a teacher in a southern Wisconsin elementary school writes in an addendum to an elementary-age child's IEP. "Teaching time is being lost, sometimes as much as a half-hour at a stretch. The other children become very frightened and some cry and others get stomachaches."

Mead says that in these cases such a student should indeed be considered for an alternative placement. "It's just as illegal to say that every child should be in a regular ed classroom," she explains, "as it is to say that every child should be segregated."

A similarly disruptive student without an IEP, though, could be moved without parental consent and with little fanfare to a different setting for the benefit of the class. The child referred to in the above instance can be moved only if it can be documented that the move would be in his or her best interest.

"It is essential for school administrators to keep in mind that least restrictive environments are based on the educational needs of the individual and NOT the collective needs of the school," writes researcher Jennifer McDonough in her 1998 white paper, "A Special Education Primer for School Administrators."

The reason for this seeming inconsistency should be very clear: If not for the LRE protection and the legal recourse it provides, school districts could deal





with the “inconvenience” of meeting special ed students’ needs by citing the classroom as an inappropriate environment and barring the door. And indeed, according to various lawsuits, they already have done so. In a National Association for Down Syndrome survey conducted in 2000, parents reported that LRE barriers to placing their children in regular ed classrooms were the biggest problem they faced when dealing with public school districts.

The third acronym of interest is what some people feel is a personalized exemption special ed students get from some forms of school discipline. In the state of Wisconsin, students can be legally suspended from school for a variety of reasons and legally expelled for others. This is true for regular ed students and special ed students. But it’s only true for special ed students if the infraction is not an MSD, or, in the words of the law, “a manifestation of the student’s disability.” Further, the law presumes that every infraction is indeed a function of a student’s disability, unless proven otherwise.

“Creating that presumption is consistent with the way we approach other issues in the law,” says Mead. “We have always said that when we’re on the fence we’re going to make a mistake in favor of the individual and not in favor of increasing government authority.”

Nevertheless, a very small number of high-profile MSD rulings—a high school student with disabilities in Virginia was not expelled for possessing marijuana while regular ed students are routinely suspended or expelled for identical transgressions—are among the reasons various advocacy groups are pushing Congress to amend this aspect of IDEA in this next reauthorization. Another reason is a simple misunderstanding. This legal provision applies largely only to long-term suspensions and expulsions and offers no additional protection to special ed students if a weapon is involved in the need for disciplinary action. Yet there’s a ground-level culture in some districts in which a special ed child is mistakenly assumed to be “labeled and untouchable,” i.e., immune

“There was absolutely no way I could focus on being the instructional leader within the building. Instead, my job was about what kind of case we could present,” says a former principal who was involved in a legal mediation process.

from ordinary school discipline. There is not, in fact, any such legal provision.

### SEE YOU IN COURT

The ground where the arguments are joined is, of course, the IEP. Whether people feel that an IEP is a special ed student’s road map to success or to far less, nobody denies that it also serves an underlying purpose: It’s the document of record when disagreements over a student’s placement or progress wind up in a state hearing examiner’s office or in court.

“What does the IEP say?” is the first question asked, because most of the 171 issues involving IDEA complaints that DPI addressed in 2002 revolved around the IEP—whether it was properly constructed and properly followed. Placement, individualized instruction, and protection from school discipline are really the only issues parents can contest on behalf of their children, and all are documented in the IEP.

When parents do sue or file for a due process hearing, though, they are very likely to lose. School districts win most of these fights. There are, however, a lot of challenges on the part of parents—some of whom hire professional advocates to accompany them to IEP meetings—that don’t ever get to the point of a hearing. They don’t have to. School districts really don’t want to fight these battles. Not because some claims shouldn’t, necessarily, be contested, but because there are too many complaints, and fighting them is too time-consuming.

“We had an ED student who was hitting staff members and students in the face,” recalls the former middle school principal who spoke at the beginning of

this article. “So I took a stand that I felt backed up my teachers and was in the best interest of the school community overall. And that was that hitting wasn’t going to be allowed. The parents went out and got an attorney through an advocacy agency and we ended up with the threat of a due process hearing. My schedule then became: We’ve got to meet with the attorneys; we’ve got to find subs for the teachers who have been struck so they can go to depositions; I’ve got to interview all the students who’ve been hit. What it became was that there was absolutely no way I could focus on being the instructional leader within the building. Instead, my job was about what kind of case we could present. I can’t tell you the number of weeks we spent on that.”

Rather than fight in court, the district agreed to mediation. The student’s behavior was found to be a manifestation of her disability and she remained at the school, albeit with a new, full-time aide hired by the district to, in the words of the principal, “basically do nothing except figure out ways to satiate this student’s violent tendencies.”

Parents of special ed kids don’t want to fight some of the wars they get into, either. “It’s very challenging to go up against your school district,” says Judith Gran, a lawyer who chairs the national Council of Parents, Attorneys and Advocates. “It requires a lot of courage. There’s a tendency to exclude special ed kids from all the rich and wonderful things happening in regular education ... to say ‘let the special ed teacher handle them.’ I’ve been battling for a year and a half to get a school to allow a student to have access to the district’s reading specialist. ‘Let the special ed teacher do it’ is the attitude. Well,



this girl's disability is that she's recovering from a traumatic brain injury and she missed a lot of school and she's behind in reading. It's most appropriate that she get caught up with the regular reading specialist and that's what the law provides. But school districts have administrators and experts. They have authority. Most people find it painful to get locked in any kind of adversarial relationship, and I see it every time I represent a family at a due process hearing: how painful this is for them."

For the parents who do need to contest the fairness of their child's education, then, the IEP is all they've got. It's the result of substantive tests and meetings and it's something that everyone has agreed will be followed because it is what is in the child's best interest. To make matters worse for these parents, Gran says, there are attempts to amend IDEA to force them to pay the district's legal costs if they sue.

## WE'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BOAT

The National Council on Disability did a survey a couple of years ago. Its find-

ings? Not one state was fully in compliance with IDEA. Not even Wisconsin, which is routinely touted as a jewel in the national crown of public education. So that's one answer to the question of whether the pendulum has swung too far or not far enough: It hasn't swung as far as it could have.

Another answer is that it's not the biggest pendulum out there.

"Special ed is our canary in the coal mine," says Mead. "When the whole system is stressed, we notice it first in special ed. When there aren't enough teachers, the kids act up. When the teachers don't have the support they need, they burn out. When social services lose funding they tell the kids who need services to get them in school, and this further stresses the system."

Joanne Houston, the director of special education for the Wisconsin Education Association Council, agrees. "There are a lot of problems with the support and delivery of special education in Wisconsin," she says. "But the biggest problem we've got is that we, as a society, have to decide once and for all what it is we want schools to do. Is the purpose of schools to teach or is it to deliver medical and social services? And

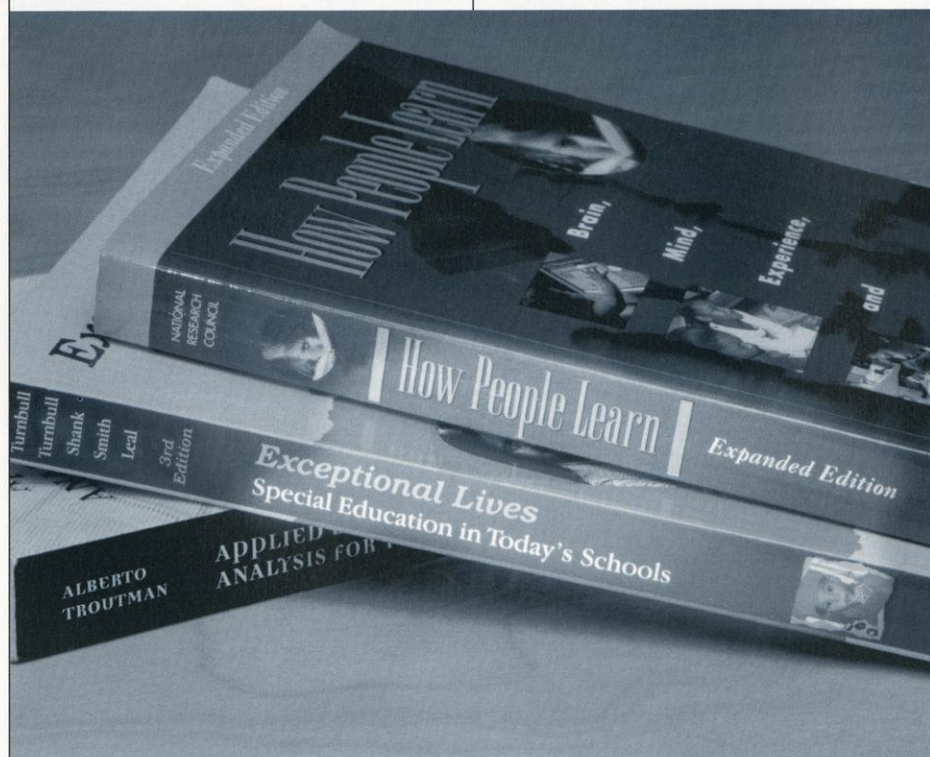
if it's both, then we as a society have to step up and fund that."

As attitude shifts and legislative amendments make their way through society and Congress, though, all involved are uncomfortable with IDEA's proximity to a slippery slope. Special ed advocates rightfully fear that entertaining any scale-back of the law's commendable resolve will lead to wholesale reversals in the field of special education. So do many parents, school administrators, and other observers, even those who say the system is seriously flawed.

"Do I think it's the best use of taxpayer money to spend \$50,000 a year to keep a child in school, even though he is medicated to the point of unconsciousness? No," says the former principal. "But would I rather do that than open the door and let who knows how many other kids get sucked out in the draft? Absolutely."

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a policy. \*

*Mary Feingold is a freelance journalist based in Madison. She has won awards for her writing on education, youth sports, and health care, including a first prize last year for education reporting from the Western Washington Society of Professional Journalists.*





# Water, Community, and the Arts

Our state lieutenant governor gave this talk at a forum last fall held by the Wisconsin Academy as part of the Year of Water/Waters of Wisconsin initiative.



BY LT. GOV. BARBARA LAWTON

I WAS INVITED TO SPEAK because of my roles as lieutenant governor, chairman of the Wisconsin Arts Board, a former student of environmental sciences, and a relentless advocate for greater civic engagement.

The latter is, for me, the bridge between water, the arts, and the path to a sustainable water future—and coincidentally, central to the title of this conference: *Water, Community, and the Arts*.

Professor Chris Whitcombe of Sweet Briar College constructed the website “Water in Art” to explore the mystery, science, and art of water: water as symbol and as representation of mood; water serving cults and belief in its sacred qualities; and water as source of divinity and muse for architects of aqueducts and sculptors of fountains.

He spotlights Leonardo da Vinci’s preoccupation with the paradox of water as an artist, scientist and hydrological engineer:

“Water is sometimes sharp and sometimes strong, sometimes acid and sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet and sometimes thick or thin, sometimes it is seen bringing hurt or pestilence, sometime health-giving, sometimes poisonous. It suffers change into as many natures as are the different places through which it passes. And as the mirror changes with the colour of its subject, so it alters with the nature of the place, becoming noisome, laxative, astringent, sulfurous, salty, incarnadined, mournful, raging,

angry, red, yellow, green, black, blue, greasy, fat or slim. Sometimes it starts a conflagration, sometimes it extinguishes one; is warm and is cold, carries away or sets down, hollows out or builds up, tears or establishes, fills or empties, raises itself or burrows down, speeds or is still; is the cause at times of life or death, or increase or privation, nourishes at times and at others does the contrary; at times has a tang, at times is without savor, sometimes submerging the valleys with great floods. In time and with water, everything changes.”

Our relationship with and understanding of water in Wisconsin embraces and exemplifies that sense of paradox and inevitable transformation:

- Once the ideal to site new industry, we now see waterfront property as an aesthetic asset, a lure for urban renewal.
- Essential to our agricultural sector, we preserve wetlands to grow wild rice and allow ditching, damming, and the diverting of navigable waters to grow cranberry crops; small family farms have long been a source of runoff pollution to rivers and streams, but increasingly big farms, even those with preventive technology, create increasingly devastating potential for pollution should that new tech fail.
- Water provides a habitat for food, but most fish caught in Wisconsin’s waters now require health warnings for toxins. Food from our waters has been the catalyst for examination of our attitudes on race and sovereign rights in spearfishing disputes.

- Our Native American friends set even higher standards than state government for water quality, constantly raising the bar as we learn to think long term—seven generations out were we to follow their lead.

- Wetlands used to be routinely filled in for new subdivisions and other growth; now we understand them not only as flood protection, but as nature’s kidneys and a necessary home to wildlife and fish.
- Concern for water quality built a new community of environmentalists, sportsmen, and Native Americans around the prospect of a mine in Crandon. Finally a team of Native American tribes bought the land rights to protect the water.

- Our sense of a finite water supply melted partisan affiliations away as people united to drive Perrier out of Wisconsin.

- Commerce counts on rivers to move products on barges, but we want to draw the line on how many hulls.

- Rivers have raised questions with our sense of freedom when nudity presents on its banks.

- Rivers throw past economic success in the path of the future (PCBs in the case of the Fox Valley), divide communities, and remind us of the change to a global economy when the address for the interlocutors in the clean-up conversation moves out of state and then on to other countries.

Water:

- We bridge it, ferry over it, and cruise it. We crowd it, clutter it, and coax it in new directions.



- We marvel at water's abundance and its power, and worry as it recedes and betrays its fragility.
- It is a source of power and wealth for states and nations.
- It is sustenance, continuity, connection, recreation.
- It is essence—to our bodies, to our economy in terms of adequate quality and supply—and the potability of water defines a civilized society.
- Water is abundant and scarce, free and for sale, a source of both peace and fear.

In Wisconsin, we boast philosophers and politicians who have led thinking about water, from Aldo Leopold and Jens Jensen to Gaylord Nelson. Recently an exhibit titled "Water: Identity through Place" was displayed in the gallery at the UW-Madison student union. Water has been the muse for many state artists, composers, and writers.

Bertolt Brecht said, "Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it." As we consider together today how to arrive at a sustainable water future, we must acknowledge the essential role art could and does play in driving public understanding of the questions we must resolve.

Art captures, expresses, and interprets contradictions and paradoxes of the history of our relationship with water. Through music, poems, literature, and visual images, we celebrate its beauty, study its nuances and our feelings about it, and argue new ideas.

Art brings science out of the lab, creates a new language for our conversation, bridges disciplines in instructive ways—it's value-added critical thinking.

And there's no more important moment than the present to build broader coalitions of people and bodies of thought to ensure enlightened stewardship of our most valuable resource. We could live without oil, but we can't live without water.

Shortages in other parts of the United States and elsewhere in the world draw a lot of lustful gazes to the Great Lakes. It's like having mounds of gold and silver right out in the open. We love to look at it, see the sun reflect off its contours, but we're now beginning to fret that

someone else will see it and like it and find a way to get it.

And we should worry. If communities can purchase Lake Michigan water, how do we prevent Arizona from piping Lake Superior south? If water is a commodity, who owns it?

This raises fundamental questions of public access and privatization, and there are important parallels between water and art. Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates, famously a patron of the arts, is buying up archives as fast as he can. Intellectual property rights shift from the artist/producer to the distributor. And we must ask ourselves, what are the principles of ownership here and who will have access? What is government's role in this?

Privatization ideology, arguments that the private sector can do anything better than government, has made too many of us cynical about public goods. Cynicism may be easy, and even chic, but it's costly and the price goes up daily. We can't abdicate our responsibility entirely to either government or the private sector, but must exercise our citizenship in that civic space in between, with full regard for the commonweal.

That place to be patrolled lies somewhere between voting and consuming, a place where all proxies are not yet relinquished to our representatives in the Capitol. That is the place where we convene the public, engage as many citizens as possible in the debate, nurture new ideas, and establish a voice in the decision-making process. That is the place where art builds a bridge to science, gives us new perspective, hammers reality into shape. That is the place where public policy should be forged among concerned citizens.

Whether we are talking water or the arts, it's nearly impossible to find anything under either heading that doesn't evoke power and politics, because both occupy a central place in the economy, now and in the future. Opposition to Perrier setting up for business in Wisconsin sprang not only from rejection of the idea of privatizing water through the bottling process, a rejection so strong it trumped the prospect of new jobs; it responded also to the dan-

gerous disregard for the purity of our tap water, a defining characteristic of a developed society.

The arts and humanities, too, are central to a healthy economy, both as the context that invites growth and as a business cluster in and of themselves. They also form the cultural infrastructure of a civil society; a democracy cannot flourish without them. They provide the creativity and spontaneity and sense of freedom necessary to fuel the ongoing struggle that is our democracy.

Just as the future of water can't be in the hands of bottlers, the future of arts and culture cannot be just linked to the destiny of the symphonies and museums and so forth, that are today in fiscal crisis. High art and rebellious art and amateur art all need the balancing support of government and community arts councils to withstand the pressure of commercial markets to conform.

Art and culture and water are core public goods essential to a healthy society and a strong democracy.

As we contemplate the thorny questions inherent in building a sustainable future for water in our state and nation, and as we ponder what will constitute sound public policy, remember the symbiosis between art and water. The arts fuel a democracy, define individual and diverse group identities, and are essential to cultivating an imagination that allows us to put ourselves in the place of others, to imagine a commonweal and dream a future. But without access to a plentiful supply of clean water, there is no future.

Our public education system stands perfectly positioned to marry the two and introduce a generation of new thinkers to their role in protecting both through interdisciplinary study of sciences, the arts, and citizenry. We all have the responsibility to respect Wisconsin's proud heritage in stewardship of our water, and to advocate for the long-term investments that will improve the legacy that bears our name. \*

*Barbara Lawton is Wisconsin's lieutenant governor and head of the Wisconsin Arts Board.*



# Arts across Wisconsin

Even during a drought of public funding, Wisconsin's rural communities are quietly remaking themselves as vibrant places to live, work, and play.

BY ANNE KATZ

"In terms of American democracy, the arts are for everyone. They are not reserved for the wealthy or for the well-endowed museum, or for the subsidized theater. As America emerges into a different understanding of her strength, it becomes clear that her strength is in the people, and that it lies in the places where people live. The people, if shown the way, can create art in and of themselves ... opportunities must exist in places they have never existed before."

Robert Gard, 1910-1992

Detail from a mural titled *A is for...*, by Connie and Tim Friesen, artists based in Mountain, Wisc., who involve communities around the state in their various projects.

Photo courtesy of Connie and Tim Friesen

All photos provided courtesy of the arts groups they represent, unless otherwise noted. We thank these organizations for use of their images.

**I** TRAVEL A LOT IN MY JOB AS DIRECTOR of a statewide arts service and advocacy organization, so I have a pretty good perspective on the economic, educational, and civic changes happening across Wisconsin.

The pressures on Wisconsin are intense, particularly in the small towns and rural areas that define Wisconsin. Traditional ways are making room for the new as these communities wrestle with the fragile balance between the past and the future.

Our state's economy is shifting from traditional agriculture and manufacturing to the "creative" and high-tech economies; our population is aging as we look for ways to stop the brain drain and keep our young people in the state; land-use pressures are fierce; and global influences, good and bad, are evident on our people and on our society as a whole.

These changes are having dramatic effects on the variety and scope of arts activity taking place in small towns and rural areas. In the past 30 years, arts programs, projects, and facilities have exploded beyond the limits of the metropolitan and suburban areas of Wisconsin to become a statewide cause for pride. Wisconsin's small towns are



# rural arts

Wisconsin's small towns are seeing a surge in the numbers of new and revitalized arts organizations, renovated arts facilities, and other artistic programs and activities.

seeing a surge in the numbers of new and revitalized arts organizations, renovated arts facilities, and other artistic programs and activities. Individual artists are flocking to small towns and rural areas; the many reasons include living and studio space at small-town prices, as well as an ability to find, and really get to know, like-minded people in a certain community.

By making the arts a more integral part of the community, these small

towns and rural areas hope to be rewarded with a more diverse arts scene, richer artistic offerings, an increased number of arts organizations, and artists who want to stay in the community and raise their children. An increased focus on the arts can result in more interesting and varied landscapes and built environments, improved educational outcomes for children, livelier towns and neighborhoods, and sustainable economic growth.

These positive changes are happening, although they have been tempered by reality in this new millennium. The recent state budget crises have meant reduced Wisconsin Arts Board funding for community projects and programs, although the cuts have not been as drastic as they could have been in these difficult times, thanks to outstanding grassroots advocacy and lobbying by arts supporters. Cuts on the state level, combined with diminishing city and county support, mean less public financial support overall for arts facilities, arts education, and community engagement and outreach programs. In addition, the downturn and slow recovery of the economy has meant a general reduction in corporate, foundation, and individual support of the arts.



Ashland's St. Esprit Revelry is an art parade organized by David Genzler and many volunteers.

Photo by Amy Kalmon



However, people in Wisconsin are nothing if not resilient and are facing these changes with enthusiasm and courage. Wisconsin has had a proud tradition of grassroots arts involvement from its earliest days as a state. Our progressive mindset and the Wisconsin Idea connected civic involvement, public education, access to the newest ideas, and fulfillment of creative potential for all of the state's citizens.

The UW-Extension's Office of Community Arts Development, led by Robert Gard, professor, folklorist, and author, laid a lot of groundwork in the middle part of the 20th century. The first artist-in-residence programs in the country were established by the College of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin, bringing renowned artists such as John Steuart Curry and Aaron Bohrod here to inspire—and to gain inspiration from—the people of the state. Bob Gard, known to the arts world as the “father of community development,” had a mission to help rural people find ways to express themselves, and tirelessly traveled the state to make this vision come alive. Gard and others involved in civic affairs believed that the arts played an integral role in making a community whole, and urged arts groups to work with athletic groups like football teams, churches, ethnic organizations, day care centers, senior centers, and other groups in the service of a healthy, whole community.

That philosophy continues and has been strengthened in the present day. The arts have always been close to the hearts of the people of Wisconsin. As our world changes rapidly around us, these people are finding ways to acknowledge and use the arts as vital components in education, business attraction and retention plans, and tourism opportunities.

In his influential 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Prof. Richard Florida of Carnegie-Mellon University writes that creativity and innovation will be the fundamental skills needed for success and growth as our country moves toward a “creative economy.” The presence of arts and cultural opportunities, he writes, make a community

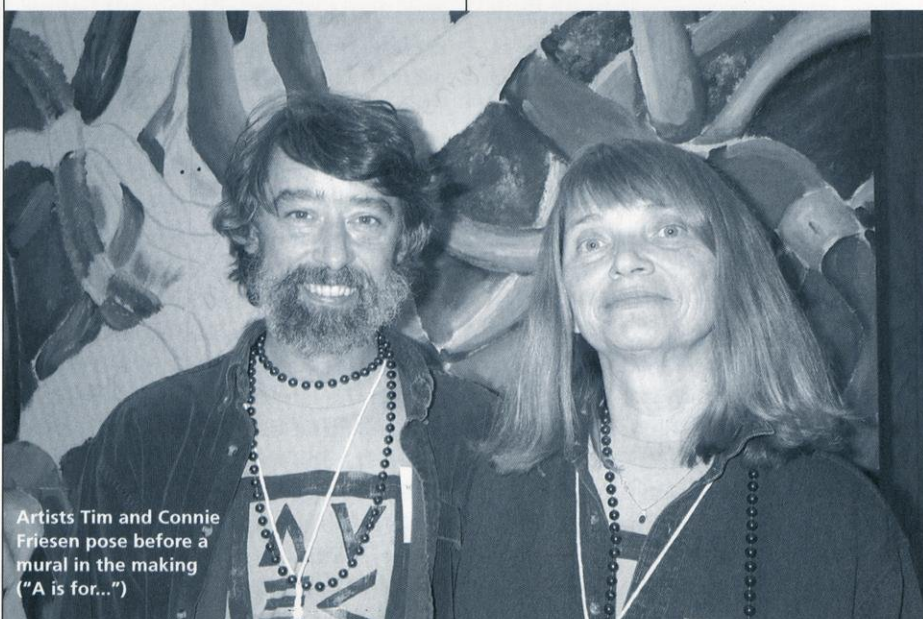
more attractive to the educated, creative workforce that communities need to flourish.

Business, political, and education leaders across the country see a growing link between a quality, diverse arts environment and a thriving economy. John Naisbitt, author of the books *Megatrends* and *Megatrends 2000*, says, “A vibrant arts community is critical when corporations decide where to locate and when people decide where to work.”

These ideas and trends are as relevant in a small town as they are in the

big city. The arts taking place in a small town are no different than those in a larger community, although there are technical and artistic differences between the metropolitan arts organization and the small-town volunteer community group. The passion that produces the artwork is the same and deserves the same level of respect.

In Wisconsin's small communities, the arts are more personal. Many of the people involved don't consider themselves artists or arts administrators, or think that they are “in the arts.” Those



Artists Tim and Connie Friesen pose before a mural in the making (“A is for...”)



A maypole dance at Folklore Village in Dodgeville. In the background is Farwell Hall, named after Folklore Village founder Jane Farwell.



Nearly 100 Wisconsin cities, towns, and rural communities have recently completed or are currently building or renovating arts and cultural facilities, representing more than \$500 million in private investments.

are terms that big-city people use. The rural folks are making things happen with their neighbors, producing community projects such as theatrical productions or festivals or school murals.

A recent economic impact survey of the arts by Americans for the Arts and the Wisconsin Arts Board showed that the state's nonprofit arts industry generates \$289.8 million in economic activity every year, including \$38 million in local and state tax revenues. The survey also found that Wisconsin's nonprofit arts industry supports nearly 9,500 full-time equivalent jobs.

(It pays to note here that the previous economic impact survey of Wisconsin's arts industry, released in April 1996, recognized the state's nonprofit arts organizations' \$112.9 million in expenditures, which supported more than 5,506 full-time jobs in the state.)

Nearly 100 Wisconsin cities, towns, and rural communities have recently completed or are currently in the midst of building or renovating arts and cultural facilities, representing more than

\$500 million in private investment and demonstrating state citizens' support for the arts. At least half of these facilities are attached to schools, most of them in the state's rural areas, making them educational and social centers used by the entire community.

Examples abound. There is the Opera House in Stoughton. This theater, built in 1901, was painstakingly restored to its former glory through a massive volunteer effort and was reopened to great fanfare on the 100th anniversary of its original opening. The River City Arts Project in Marinette has established a public art program as a major component in the city's downtown riverfront revitalization efforts. The Chippewa Valley Cultural Association in Chippewa Falls raised more than \$1 million locally, in an all-volunteer effort, to turn the former Catholic high school into the Heyde Center for the Arts. The Heyde Center, situated on a bluff overlooking the downtown, provides a stunning, accessible home for numerous local performers and visual artists and for com-

munity arts education and outreach programs.

I love to attend a summer evening outdoor performance at the Lucius Woods Performing Arts Center in Solon Springs, a town of 500 just outside Superior. Mary Giesen, a local resident, who with her husband, Frank, has been a driving force behind the establishment and success of the center, says, "Many small towns in Wisconsin have limited access to the arts. Lucius Woods Performing Arts Center offers Solon Springs and the Superior area much-needed arts stimulation and entertainment. The added benefits are bonding of the local population, and economic development as an outreach to nontraditional audiences."

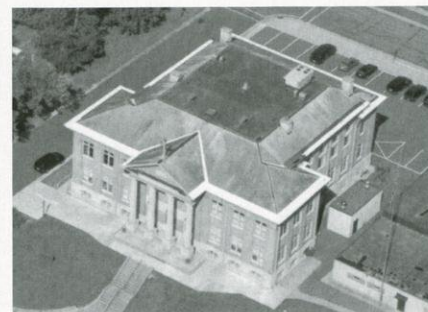
An old barn has been born again as the St. Croix ArtBarn in Osceola, on the far western edge of the state. Folklore Village Farm in Dodgeville makes the folk arts of Wisconsin and other places come alive. The Sandstrom School of the Arts on Madeline Island is an old farmhouse slowly being remade into a vibrant center used primarily by the 150 community members who live on the island year-round.

Cultural tourism, an expanding focus of Wisconsin's second-largest industry, is playing a major role in the growth of the arts on the rural landscape. Nationally, 65 percent of U.S. adult travelers (92.7 million) included a cultural, arts, heritage, or historic activity while on a trip of 50 miles or more, one-way. Visiting historic sites and museums, seeing live theater, and visiting art galleries are exciting activities for a growing number of travelers in small towns as well as in cities.

The Fall Art Tour in southwestern Wisconsin and the Dunn County Artists Tour in northwestern Wisconsin are two



The pride of Chippewa Falls: Area residents raised more than \$1 million locally to build the stunning Heyde Center for the Arts.





excellent examples of tourism that uses the arts to their best advantage. These events were begun by area artists who decided to take their destinies into their own hands, wanting to make their living as artists in their own communities and knowing that people hunger for that personal connection between artist and art devotee.

These artists and artisans, many with national reputations, open their studios for a weekend each year, allowing visitors a unique, behind-the-scenes view into how their work is created. Both tours draw thousands of visitors from across the Midwest, who, in addition to observing the artists and artisans at work, purchase artwork, stay at local hotels and inns, and eat in local restaurants.

Spring Green, a place where grassroots creativity and artistic expression have long flourished, was one of five Wisconsin communities involved in Robert Gard's "Arts and the Small Community" project in the mid-1960s. Spring Green has in recent years reinvigorated its arts scene, with the newly formed Spring Green Area Arts Coalition, a revitalized Taliesen, and the American Players Theatre as attributes. The Arts Coalition hosted the eighth Midwest Rural Arts Forum in October 2003, bringing nearly 100 arts activists to the community for a weekend of celebration of the arts in the rural Upper Midwest.

Arts education is a force for change in rural areas, playing a major role in the effort to develop creative thinkers, attract business, and keep young people in a community. The new arts centers being built around the state are providing students and community members more arts and educational opportunities than ever before.

The Wisconsin Rapids Performing Arts Center at Lincoln High School and the Verona Performing Arts Center are just two of the high school auditoriums that are transforming arts educational opportunities for small communities. These centers feature state-of-the-art technical capabilities, and each serves as the entire community's performing arts center for students and for productions from outside the community.

Visual artists Connie and Tim Friesen of Mountain work with students in the rural Suring School District and around the state to integrate the arts into education. They specialize in collaborative murals involving entire school districts and communities; their artists-in-residence programs usually end with students parading their artwork around the school and through town.

Connie Friesen notes, "As community artists who have worked within small rural communities, we have experienced firsthand the power of the arts. We see entire communities galvanized and united through the arts in a way that was formerly reserved for football games at the local school—such as community mural projects, school and community theater, art shows by student and local artists. These have a powerful impact not only on our cultural life but on our economy as well."

Her husband Tim adds, "This presence needs to be fed and encouraged within schools and towns so that this transforming power puts the 'unity' back into community."

Says Pat Guttenberg, director of the Council for the Performing Arts in Jefferson, which presents a season of local and touring artists in 15 rural communities in Jefferson County, "There is simply less access to quality artistic

performances in small towns. By presenting as many as 30 professional and amateur events each year for the past 27 years, we have brought the arts to people living in our rural area.

"We especially focus on young people, involving them and allowing them to experience live music, theater, and dance," she continues. "Over the years the council has provided culturally diverse experiences ranging from African dancing to Ecuadorian panpipes—and given children opportunities to be pirates, seagulls, and even mushrooms! We have enriched their lives and given them a lasting appreciation of the arts."

The Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation, based in the neighboring communities of Blanchardville and Hollandale in southwestern Wisconsin, oversees Grandview, the home of "outsider" artist Nick Engelbert, who created idiosyncratic statues and sculptures on the grounds of his farm from the 1930s through the 1950s.

Engelbert's passion to create art was not always appreciated by his neighbors in Hollandale during his lifetime, and after he died in 1962, it took another 20 or so years until the community finally began to take notice of his artwork as treasures for the community. The Kohler Foundation, which has a strong interest in "naïve" art and has funded the restora-

Students involved in a puppet construction workshop at the Northern Lakes Center for the Arts.





The small town of Amery (pop. 3,000) has designated a poet laureate. "You can have life in a community, but to have life abundantly, you need the arts," says mayor Harvey Stower.

tion of several such sites in Wisconsin, purchased Grandview and began cataloging Engelbert's works and restoring the house and grounds. Many of the crumbling statues were restored, others were recreated using original pieces, and a few were taken to the John Michael Kohler Art Center in Sheboygan. The house was restored as a museum with exhibits on the ground floor.

The PEC Foundation has established arts educational programs for the children of the school district. Foundation president Rick Rolfsmeyer says, "The arts are as critical to the quality of life in rural areas as they are in cities. But those of us in rural locales have fewer resources to begin with, so cuts in arts and arts-education funding are felt very profoundly.

"The PEC Foundation tries to develop programs in the arts that complement what schools can provide, as well as provide an array of arts-related courses

for adults and children who are not in our public schools," Rolfsmeyer continues. "We do that by using a resource that is obvious but often overlooked: our community."

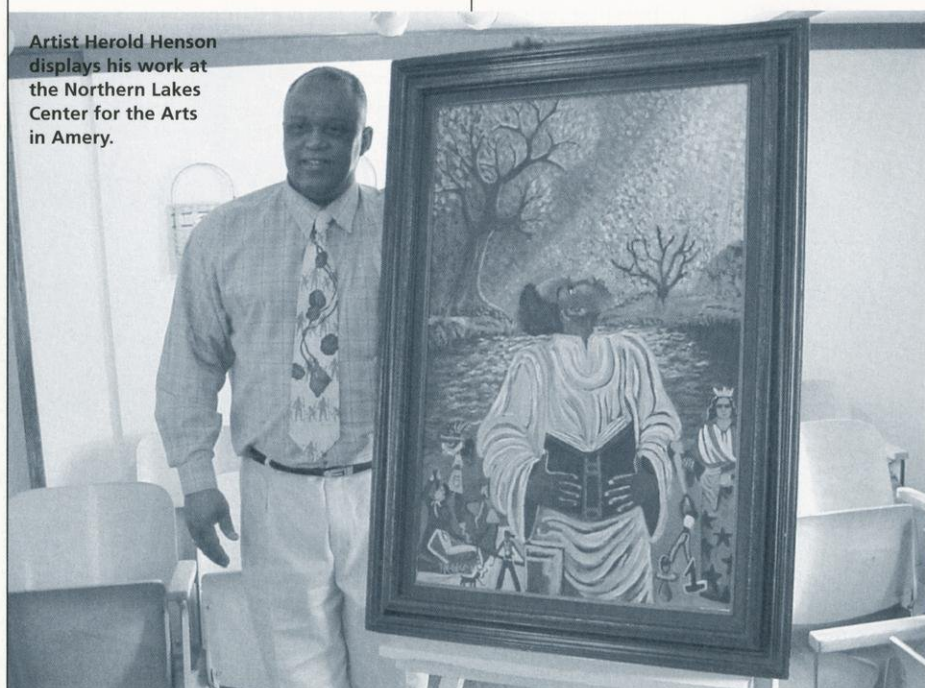
The arts in rural areas often touch on issues very close to home. The Northern Lakes Center for the Arts in Amery, a winner of the Governor's Award in the Arts, is a participant in "Animating Democracy." This is a project of the Americans for the Arts' Institute for Community Development and the Arts that fosters artistic activity to encourage civic dialogue on important contemporary issues. As part of the project, the Northern Lakes Center commissioned and produced a series of arts activities to frame community dialogues about issues of water use and pollution related to growth and development, use of farm chemicals, and recreational use of local rivers and lakes.

The city of Amery recently designated Northern Lakes Center founder and director LaMoine MacLaughlin as poet laureate of the city. Why would a town as small as Amery, population 3,000, have such a position? Harvey Stower, Amery's mayor, a former state legislator and a dedicated arts activist, says, "Designating a poet laureate for our small community has been very important. Our plan and hope for Amery is to maintain the vital spirit of our community in the face of tremendous change. We can achieve this when our residents are directly involved in artistic endeavors—in music, in drama, in the visual arts. You can have life in a community, but to have life abundantly, you need the arts."

This joyful attitude sums up the passion that inhabits the people who make theater, music, dance, or visual art happen in their small communities. They don't have to travel far distances to larger communities to be part of the arts. Their performances, exhibits, art classes, and festivals may offer different kinds of artistic experiences than those in the big city, but these experiences are authentic, personal, and relevant to the communities involved.

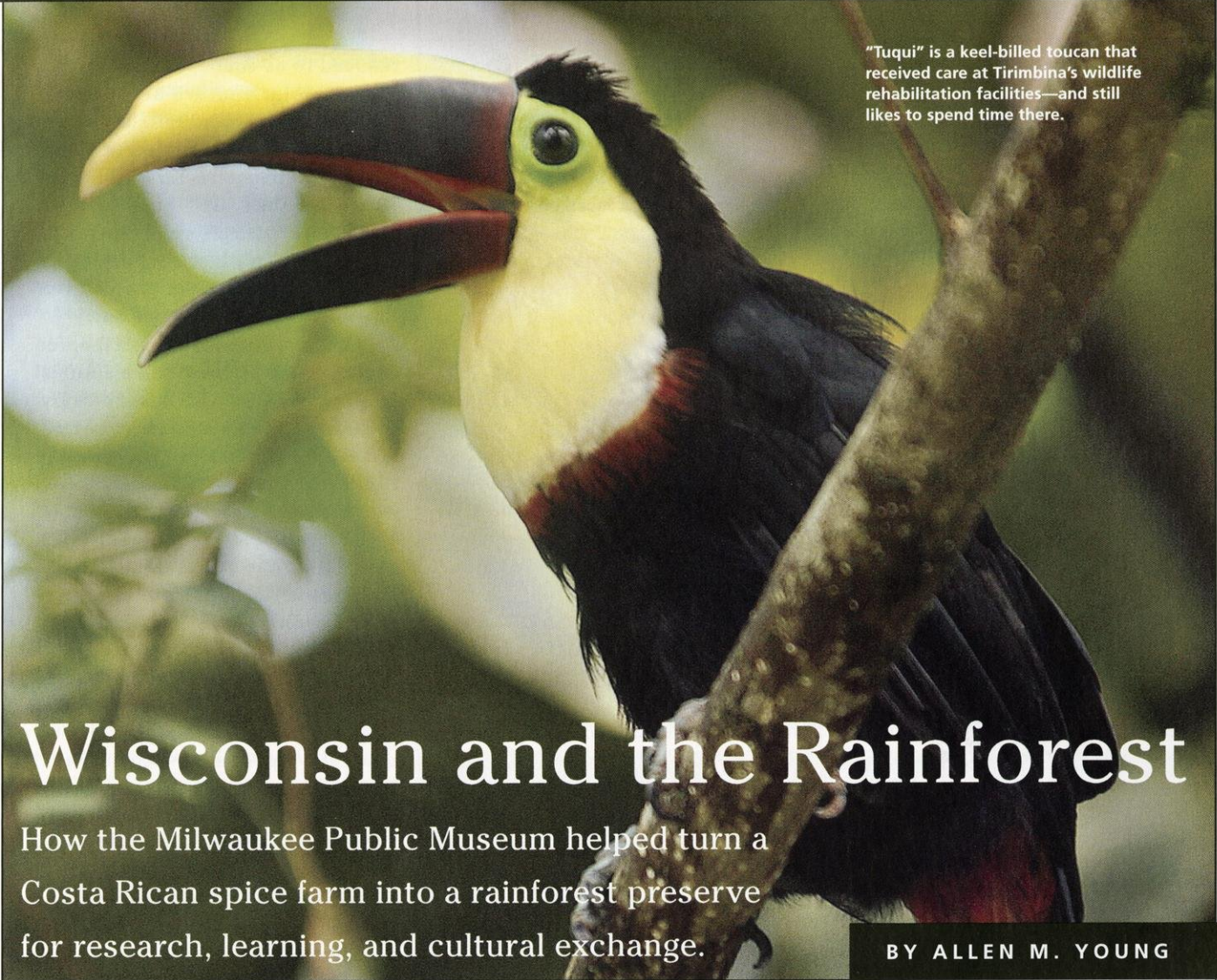
Without these people and the experiences they create, our small towns would not be the special places we have always appreciated in Wisconsin. The challenge before them is to keep those experiences authentic in the face of great odds. \*

Artist Herold Henson displays his work at the Northern Lakes Center for the Arts in Amery.



Anne Katz is executive director of the Wisconsin Assembly for Local Arts, a statewide arts service and advocacy organization. More information at [www.wisconsinarts.org](http://www.wisconsinarts.org)





"Tuqui" is a keel-billed toucan that received care at Tirimbina's wildlife rehabilitation facilities—and still likes to spend time there.

# Wisconsin and the Rainforest

How the Milwaukee Public Museum helped turn a Costa Rican spice farm into a rainforest preserve for research, learning, and cultural exchange.

BY ALLEN M. YOUNG

**A**S AN EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGIST with a strong interest in natural history and ecology, I tend to look at nonprofit institutions such as museums and nature reserves as complex, marvelous organisms embarking on long journeys. Just as with real organisms in nature and in human-dominated landscapes, these institutions must respond to perturbations in their environments in order to survive and flourish over time. Otherwise, the path ends with extinction.

Photos courtesy of the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Tirimbina Rainforest Center unless otherwise noted.

I have been fortunate enough to observe the transition of a tropical spice farm in northeastern Costa Rica into a unique environmental learning and research center, one whose epicenter remains vibrant and poised for new ventures. Why and how did "Finca La Tirimbina" (Tirimbina Farm) become the 800-acre Tirimbina Rainforest Center, a bustling center for preservation, education, and research? What is

its connection to Wisconsin, and what promise lies in a continuing partnership between organizations in these two very different parts of the world? The answers to these questions are historical as well as strongly rooted in the present and future.

Finca La Tirimbina was established sometime in the 1950s in the region of northeastern Costa Rica known as Sarapiquí (sah-rah-pick-EEE). The region



is carved out of four major river basins coming off the eastern slopes of the Barva volcano and contains some of the world's most beautiful tropical rainforests. One of the major rivers there is the Rio Sarapiquí. The region is home to several notable conservation areas, including the Tortuguero National Park, the northern section of the Braulio Carillo National Park, and the La Selva Biological Station of the Organization for Tropical Studies.

But by no means is Sarapiquí a region of pristine forests. Owing chiefly to the expansion of the banana industry, Sarapiquí today is a blossoming mosaic or patchwork of banana fields, small farms, and, save for the conservation areas, of small postage stamp parcels of tropical rainforest. Embedded in all of this, near the town of La Virgen, Heredia Province, is Finca La Tirimbina, once approximately two square miles of spice fields and forest at 220 meters above sea level and situated in the foothills of the eastern volcanic slopes. One border of the property is the Sarapiquí River, while an opposite border is about four miles from the renowned La Selva Biological Station.

## FIELDWORK IN THE TROPICS

While on the faculty of Lawrence University, I had grant support from the National Science Foundation to study the ecology of Costa Rican cicadas and a small grant from the Bache Fund of the National Academy of Sciences to study the behavior of *Morpho* butterfly caterpillars. The site that I chose for some of this field research was Finca La Tirimbina, at the invitation of J. Robert Hunter, a Ph.D. agronomist who, together with a small number of partners, had purchased the farm in the early 1960s from one of Costa Rica's most famous presidential families. At that time, Hunter was the first director of the Costa Rican Field Studies of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM). Lawrence was one of the Midwestern colleges with membership in the ACM consortium.

Up to 1990, the property actually consisted of three contiguous farms. The first, El Uno, was planted chiefly in cacao with an overstory of natural rubber. Cacao, of course, is the world's source of chocolate derived from the tree's seeds. It is also commonly

referred to as cocoa. The second, La Tigra, a joint venture between the Hunter company and Hershey Foods Corporation, was planted in cacao underneath thinned natural secondary forest. The third, La Tirimbina, was a spice farm located in forest-cleared hills, producing mainly black pepper, cinnamon, allspice, and vanilla, in a joint venture with the Coca-Cola Company.

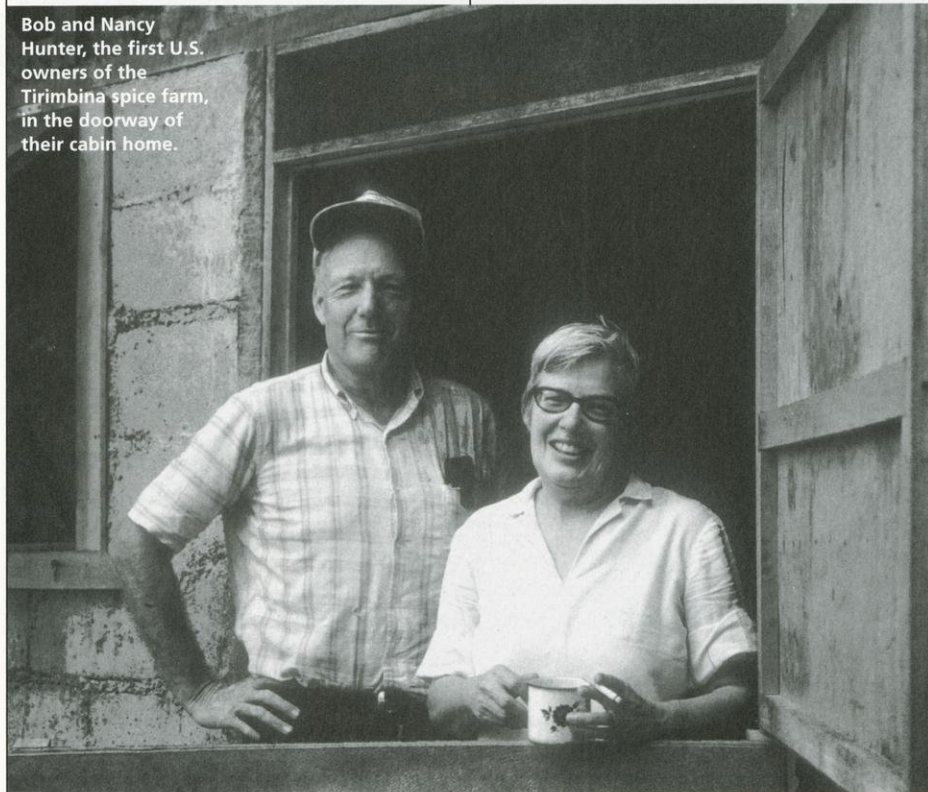
Of the approximately 1,500 acres encompassed by these three entities, roughly half remained in mixed primary-secondary tropical rainforest, more technically referred to as "premontane tropical wet forest" according to the famous Holdridge life zone classification system for tropical forests. The headquarters for the operation was the La Tirimbina farm, so named after a pretty creek that ran through the property.

Facilities-wise, this central area contained two structures: a "galeron" where crops were processed for shipping, and a smaller second building used as an office and my research headquarters. These buildings and the Hunters' cabin were located on the only flat land on the entire property, with the rest being rolling hills.

There were times when I had Lawrence students, usually one or two, helping me as research assistants. Tirelessly, we would engage in the typical drudgeries of tropical fieldwork: on hands and knees, scouring the rainforest floor in previously established quadrat plots, searching for the cast skins of cicadas. Rainy days, sunny days, it did not matter; the routine was the same. This was the way much of my life was between 1971 and 1975 at Tirimbina.

During that time I had also taken groups of Lawrence students on a tropical ecology field course I coordinated through the ACM program. There was no electricity at Tirimbina so we made good with candles and lanterns for night studies. In those years and for a good decade to follow, you reached the living quarters only by traversing a very rough road into the interior of the farm. But students and researchers did not mind this "trail of tears."

Bob and Nancy Hunter, the first U.S. owners of the Tirimbina spice farm, in the doorway of their cabin home.





Tirimbina as a spice farm and rainforest was Bob Hunter's goal of success. He was trained as an agronomist in sugar beet science at Michigan State and not as a farmer. Over a span of more than 20 years of toil, Hunter's dream of making Tirimbina a financial success would be, at best, a mixed reality of failures and some moderate success. But his contribution to Sarapiquí and other agricultural zones of Costa Rica would be his pioneering efforts to introduce spices as a commodity for both internal use and export. Hunter was a tinkerer and experimenter when it came to spice farming. He formed financial pacts not only with Hershey, but also with Coca-Cola for his vanilla studies and McCormick for black pepper. Tirimbina to him was his chance at success with farming spices, but he was also committed to undergraduate student education in tropical biology and a keen supporter of turning over Tirimbina to me for research. Literally many hundreds of students in the ACM program studied at Tirimbina with visiting faculty from the various colleges as well as with Hunter.

The Milwaukee Public Museum benefited greatly from my long-standing relationship with the Hunters, including their youngest son, Charlie, who would briefly take over operating the farm in the late 1980s after Bob and his wife Nancy retired to Madison. Aside from my ongoing use of the property for research, Hunter allowed the Museum to use the site as the study and staging area for the Museum's tropical rainforest exhibit gallery, which opened in November 1988. Without this infrastructural support in Costa Rica, the Museum might not have pulled off one of its most challenging and complex permanent exhibit galleries, which remains one of the most popular even after more than a decade.

The long-standing privilege of having a reliable place for research in Sarapiquí allowed me the opportunity to evolve my research program into new directions. The Tirimbina spice farm, with its abundance of many secondary forest habitats suitable for all kinds of insect studies, became the anchor for the bulk of my research. My early work at

Population studies of cicadas, which are plentiful and diverse at Tirimbina, were part of Allen Young's early research there.



Biologist/educators at Tirimbina help a young student find a colony of white tent bats.





Cloud Forest School director Rebecca Goertzel and some students.

Photo by Peter Quigley

## SCHOOL IN THE CLOUDS

The Tirimbina Rainforest Center is not the only  
Midwestern–Costa Rican connection.

BY PETER QUIGLEY

**M**onteverde is a long way from the U.S. Upper Midwest, home of researchers and educators Allan and Karen Masters. It's at the end of a long potholed dirt road in the northwestern Costa Rican mountains. When the road isn't washed out, it is a two-hour journey up from the fabled and underwhelming Pan-American Highway. You begin by leaving the sweltering coastal region and pass through sparsely populated, dry grassy hill country. By the time you reach the temperate and forested mountain communities of Monteverde and Santa Elena, the jarring trip has, depending on your interest in off-road driving, left you either exhausted or exhilarated.

When Allan and Karen Masters started coming here in the early 1980s, the road was worse and the trip even more of an adventure. They were ahead of a wave that has since followed. As environmental scientists they came here to do research for their Ph.D.s. The world then was just realizing that rainforests and these Costa Rican mountain cloud forests were more than a great place to harvest exotic lumber. They were home to unbelievable numbers of plants and animals. At all levels, from the forest floor to the treetops, systems of life were flourishing. In addition to this heretofore-unappreciated life in the forests, there were other treasures. Pharmaceutical, atmospheric, and climatological benefits were being discovered and scientifically confirmed for the whole planet.

The Masterses ended up staying, and along with other resident Americans, parents, and civic-minded locals, in 1991 they

founded the Cloud Forest School. A loan from the Nature Conservancy enabled them to purchase a 105-acre farm that included some buildings and a large parcel of cloud forest. Today the school serves more than 200 children, and Allan Masters is board president.

The school was intended to educate both Costa Ricans and the children of local Americans (including the Masterses' own young sons), but most important, the school's goal was to help save the cloud forest by training a future generation of Costa Rican leaders who would have the skills and desire to save this unique and valuable habitat. The school's founding principles consisted of providing an integrated, environmentally based curriculum, child-centered experiential instruction, and bilingual education.

From the beginning the school was unusual because its mode and goals, so bicultural and "New Age American," were intended largely for Costa Rican kids. It was also unusual because of its similarity to the Christian mission school concept. Like Christian mission schools, the Cloud Forest School sought to influence a developing society, but its calling was environ-

mentalism rather than religion. How could this environmental perspective work in a developing country?

Drawing Costa Ricans into the project was vital to the school's success, but it wasn't a sure thing. Not surprisingly, most of the local Ticos seek first and foremost to provide for their families. Generally their values and outlook are agrarian and culturally different from the affluent and idealistic Americans who were starting the school. The potential for a clash of perspectives was real.

In addition, the Cloud Forest School charged tuition. The local people, most of whom are relatively poor, can send their children to public school for free. Costa Rican public education is not only free but also arguably quite effective. UNESCO reports the country has a better than 95 percent literacy rate, one of the highest in Latin America and better than in Puerto Rico. On the basis of these economics, it would have been difficult to convince local families to spend scarce money to send their children to Cloud Forest when a good public education was available for free.

Burgeoning ecotourism in Monteverde helped provide a solution. That industry needs educated workers who are fluent in English. The pay for these jobs is substantially higher than pay for those who cannot interact with tourists. English fluency is the difference between being the hotel's desk clerk or its maid. It's the difference between owning a small business whose customers include affluent non-Costa Ricans or one serving only



lower-income local people. People view English skills as a way to succeed.

The school also found support from the growing middle class in Monteverde. Costa Rica's political stability, educational achievement, and long interaction with the United States and Europe has created an educated class in Costa Rica whose expectations for affluence and knowledge are comparable to those found in many American communities. Among the local Tico parents who send their children to the school are business owners, degreed professionals, and artists. These Costa Ricans are attracted to the school's method of experiential learning. The Costa Rican public schools produce good results, but most still favor a rote style of teaching with students sitting in rows of desks and copying off of blackboards.

For all these reasons, the school achieved resounding success in its goal to serve Costa Ricans. Costa Rican kids form 90 percent of the student body, and the chance to receive a bilingual education, in particular, motivates many Costa Rican families to make the financial investment. In many cases that sacrifice is touchingly heroic. Based on a family's income, the minimum tuition is about \$12 a month per child, yet according to Allan Masters, some of the families have more than one child in the school and a monthly income of only \$240.

In the dozen years since its founding, the school has gone from being a homegrown project to an accredited school with an international following. It has grown in enrollment, in funding, and as an idea. As each year has passed, the school has added a new grade. The highest grade now is 10th. In Costa Rica, high school goes through 11th grade. In what may be another innovation for the country, Allan Masters says the Cloud Forest School is going to design a high school program with a 12th grade devoted to vocational and college preparation.

Because of the constant increase in students and the urgent need for refining the high school program, Allan Masters is working on a strategic plan that takes the school to a new level. The school he and his wife Karen helped build is starting to realize its dreams, and all the founders are



White-faced monkeys, a common sight.  
Photo by Douglas W. Caves

wondering what their work offers by way of lessons for others.

The Masterses, the staff, and the board are always working on a more refined environmental curriculum. Allan Masters says the curriculum attempts to "teach students the complexities to help them seek the solutions." From the beginning the curriculum has been the school's own creation. There was little for them to copy, so it has always been a work in progress. Now they are trying to hone the environmental curriculum into a form that can be shared. The school already works with a constant influx of participating students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's environmental studies program as well as students from other colleges and universities. The board is also considering offering a professional certification program to educate teachers from abroad about the Cloud Forest School's environmental curriculum.

As unique as it has always been, the Cloud Forest School is now starting to see itself as a model outside of Monteverde and even Costa Rica. Born of Monteverde's social and economic change, it is trying to cause social and economic change beyond its own borders. Its future role in Costa Rica and the wider world is a story well worth watching. \*

*Peter Quigley is a freelance writer who has written features for the Wisconsin State Journal and other publications. He works as a financial consultant at a major brokerage firm in Madison.*

Tirimbina explored the life cycles and natural history of butterflies, in addition to population studies of cicadas.

In 1978, Hunter pointed out to me an interesting phenomenon of the cacao tree in the cacao farms at Tirimbina and most cacao farms in the wet tropics: while the pruned and maintained cacao trees produced large numbers of flowers at certain times of the year, typically only a small percentage of them produced the prized pods containing seeds, the world's source of chocolate. Was this because physiologically this was the limit of the tree, or because the required insect pollinators were scarce in the farm habitat and therefore ineffective in pollinating many flowers?

Thus began a new phase of field research for me, one that would last, in one form or another, until the present. Among other things, my work was able to illuminate a vital link between cacao groves and the rainforest: both are essential for the survival of tiny flies called midges that are the unique pollinators of cacao trees. If more habitat could be provided for more midges, more cacao tree blossoms would be pollinated. Subsequently, each tree would produce more cacao and less rainforest would need to be replaced by cacao trees. This research has initiated an innovative tropical cooperative where Costa Rican farmers can grow cacao in a sustainable system that is harmonious with the rainforest.

Currently the Museum has a research grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowing the Museum to work collaboratively with the UW-Madison forestry and wildlife conservation programs to study the biodiversity associated with abandoned cacao farms in Costa Rica and at Tirimbina specifically. Goals include discovering ways to rehabilitate these abandoned farms. This is a multiyear, long-term partnership between the Museum and UW-Madison.

One exciting and edible by-product of this initiative was the recent creation of a dark chocolate bar, Cacao de Vida—"cacao of life"—to call attention to efforts in sustainable agriculture and development that protects rainforest



biodiversity. Proceeds from Cacao de Vida, which may be purchased at Milwaukee Public Museum gift shops and other specialty shops, benefit the Museum's research, educational programs, and exhibits.

## WISCONSIN GETS A RAINFOREST CENTER

By the early 1990s, Bob and Nancy Hunter had retired to Madison, motivated in part by Bob's failing health and financial setbacks at Tirimbina. By 1993,

Bob had sold the farmed half of Tirimbina to a Costa Rican coffee grower who converted much of the land into an ornamental plant farm. Much of the cacao and spices were eliminated. The same coffee grower wanted to buy the forested half of Tirimbina as well, but Bob resisted.

It was at this time that Bob approached me to see if the Milwaukee Public Museum would buy this portion of Finca La Tirimbina. He wanted to see the remaining forest preserved and the property used for education and research. At the same time, Bob felt

pressure from others who had invested in Tirimbina and wanted to pay them off from the proceeds of the sale of the entire property.

Given the Museum's long history with Tirimbina, I was determined to rescue the remaining forest from surefire destruction. I drafted a "white paper" on the importance of tropical forest patches in Central America and made a case for the Museum to incorporate Tirimbina into its mission. I envisioned Tirimbina as a novel mechanism for expanding the Museum's role in original research and educational outreach, including hands-on field experiences. Other curators on the Museum's scientific staff, too, had interests in tropical research. I also saw the acquisition of the Tirimbina forest as a means for leveraging creative collaborations with other Wisconsin and U.S.-based institutions.

The asking price was \$250,000, and I knew I had a formidable task. Apart from me and a few others on the Museum staff, no one in Milwaukee or most of Wisconsin had ever heard of Tirimbina. The late John A. "Jack" Puelicher, then the recently retired chairman of the Marshall & Ilsley Corporation in Milwaukee, had been a friend and supporter of the Museum's zoology research, and eventually he was brought on board by our suggesting use and study of forest patches in Central America as refuges for migratory bird species from North America. Letters of support were provided by numerous prestigious scientists.

Jack agreed to put up half the purchase price and convinced Lynde B. Uihlein to donate the remaining funds needed to close the deal. But there was one caveat: Riveredge Nature Center in nearby Newburg, a leading environmental education center in southeastern Wisconsin, would be an equal partner and owner with the Museum. I had taught in Riveredge's EcoFocus adult courses and was familiar with their hands-on, interactive approach to teaching.

Thus was born a new nonprofit entity, the Tirimbina Rainforest Center, in January 1995. Joan Spector, a longtime teacher-naturalist volunteer at

The coatimundi, a predator/ scavenger much like the raccoon.



The stunning *Morpho peleides* butterfly, which Allen Young studied extensively while he was on the faculty of Lawrence University.



Riveredge Nature Center as well as a former board president, was appointed executive director. Tirimbina Rainforest Center is actually the U.S. entity that oversees its Costa Rican counterpart, Reserva Biologica Tirimbina.

A strong programmatic focus of Tirimbina Rainforest Center, largely inspired by the Riveredge Nature Center's model of hands-on, interactive field education, has been use of the forest for teaching at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Largely through the creative efforts of Mariamalia Araya, Tirimbina Rainforest Center's energetic director of education, there has been steady growth in these kinds of education programs for both Costa Rican students (especially in the La Virgen area) and Wisconsin students.

Cacao pods contain seeds that are the source of the world's chocolate.



Research assistants Hugo Alvarez and the UW's Sara Lerner working in one of Allen Young's cacao study plots at Tirimbina.





A UW-Milwaukee biology student collects samples for aquatic research with Tirimbina guide Jose Arce.



This 100-year-old chilamate tree is important in rainforest restoration. Its buttresses and roots create stability as they spread out in search of nutrients.

These activities continue to complement nicely the habitat preservation efforts spearheaded in large measure through the able oversight of the Tirimbina Rainforest Center's general manager, Carlos Chavarria. Through staff training and educational outreach to the general public living in the area, considerable efforts have been made to curb poaching and hunting of wildlife at Tirimbina. The results of these efforts have been positive.

The creation of Tirimbina Rainforest Center, especially due to local media coverage, encouraged a grassroots support effort from schools to donate funds to the entity. Large monetary donations to Tirimbina at its inception provided the catalyst to schools and other organizations to make modest donations, which collectively made a tremendous impact on early financial viability. Tirimbina Rainforest Center's current membership stands at about 1,400, and members receive its quarterly newsletter, *Tiempos*.

Additionally, volunteers chiefly from the Milwaukee area helped to map, clear, build, and mark trails that allow access into a small area of the forest, with the remaining portion kept undisturbed for habitat preservation and scientific research. Furthermore, its hands-on educational programs have attracted several thousand elementary, middle, and high school students, almost evenly split between Costa Rican and U.S. (chiefly Wisconsin) enrollments. Tirimbina Rainforest Center has also hosted classes for Wisconsin teachers and created a teacher exchange program between the two countries. In this program, Costa Rican teachers come to Wisconsin to study at Riveredge Nature Center and the Milwaukee Public Museum, and Wisconsin teachers study at Tirimbina Rainforest Center. A look at the Tirimbina Rainforest Center website (see info box below) shows an exciting array of educational programs for teachers and students alike, including everything from the studies of bats and birds to evolution in the rainforest, the fragility of ecosystems, natural history, and local culture.

Soon after its establishment, the Tirimbina Rainforest Center was



enriched by a serendipitous partnership with a new eco-lodge facility that was built along its border. The Centro Neotropico Sarapiquis, as it is called, has attracted large numbers of eco-tourists, with the Tirimbina forest as the lure. The expansion of Centro Neotropico Sarapiquis over the past several years has included the construction of a museum with a "Man and Nature" theme, an archaeological excavation, and expanded dormitory space for students. Tirimbina Rainforest Center programs can utilize Centro Neotropico Sarapiquis facilities, especially the education building and student dorm space.

### TIRIMBINA IN THE FUTURE

The main focus of the Tirimbina Rainforest Center up to the present, beyond the essential preservation of the forest, has been its strong commitment to local and international education. As a result, Tirimbina Rainforest Center has developed a strong, positive image in the Sarapiquí region and beyond.

A new challenge will be for the organization to attract a menu of high-quality scientific research. Aside from certain aspects of my cacao studies and a major forestry study, original research has been infrequent. Yet the facility and habitat hold vast potential for major research, including long-term monitoring studies. Data sets from small parcels of tropical forest can provide interesting comparisons for similar or identical data sets from larger tracts of forest. For the limited survey work done at Tirimbina, some fascinating discoveries have been made already, including discovery of a species of halictid bee new to science.

If research is to be strengthened and expanded at Tirimbina while at the same time maintaining and growing new educational initiatives such as distance learning, how can Milwaukee Public Museum, with its long-standing tradition of tropical studies, assist in the process? Tirimbina offers a unique opportunity for comparative studies with the large La Selva Biological Station at a lower elevation but close by. It would be helpful to upgrade the "guesthouse" on the back

side of the property into a bona fide field station suitable for the world's top scholars in tropical studies. Such a facility, outfitted with the latest technology, would be attractive and made affordable for researchers. An added plus would be expanding electricity at Tirimbina so that researchers would have the ability to recharge laptop computers and use other equipment germane to their studies.

These efforts in promoting research would synergize well with parallel efforts in education. In addition to the very effective interactive style of environmental education implemented at Tirimbina, the timing is appropriate for Milwaukee Public Museum to solidify both its research presence and its educational presence. Thus the future for Tirimbina Rainforest Center remains bright and clear. The facility can serve as a hub in Central America for a broad range of research initiatives for the international community of scientists as well as for regional scientists interested in the ecology of small patches of tropical rainforest.

These activities in turn can become part of the foundation for innovative educational programming and other initiatives. Milwaukee Public Museum envisions an international distance-learning program based at Tirimbina Rainforest Center. Live programs from Tirimbina Rainforest Center would be broadcast into K-12 schools throughout Wisconsin and be accessible in other states. This would include having students visit Tirimbina Rainforest Center and do real, hands-on research with working scientists. In this manner, the development and implementation of strong parallel tracks in research and education, with Milwaukee Public Museum's leadership, would allow Tirimbina Rainforest Center to continue on its magnificent journey as a vehicle for human enlightenment in many fields of academic endeavor.

Milwaukee Public Museum views Tirimbina Rainforest Center as an excellent resource for enriching its members, both individual and corporate, and involving them in the institution's ever-evolving mission to understand the

intertwined existence of human societies and the natural world.

The evolution of Tirimbina Rainforest Center and Reserva Biológica Tirimbina from a spice farm to an education and research center and biological reserve would not have been possible without the vision and support of a modern-day succession of Milwaukee Public Museum presidents and directors. Drs. Kenneth Starr, Barry Rosen, William Moynihan, Roger Bowen, and, at present, Michael Stafford have all fostered Tirimbina's growth and success. The enlightened leadership provided by the Museum thus far bodes well for Tirimbina Rainforest Center's journey into the future. \*

*Allen M. Young, Ph.D., is a zoologist and senior vice president of academic affairs with the Milwaukee Public Museum. He is also a Wisconsin Academy Fellow, so designated for his passion for environmental education and his leadership and vision in numerous projects, including his work in establishing the Tirimbina Rainforest Center in Costa Rica and the rainforest exhibit at Milwaukee Public Museum.*

### For more information and further reading:

*Sarapiquí Chronicle: A Naturalist in Costa Rica*, by Allen M. Young (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1991)

*The Chocolate Tree: A Natural History of Cacao*, by Allen M. Young (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1994)

#### Milwaukee Public Museum

800 West Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
414/278-2702  
[www.mpm.org](http://www.mpm.org)

#### Tirimbina Rainforest Center

4528 North Oakland Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211  
414/906-9080  
[www.tirimbina.org](http://www.tirimbina.org)





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# poetry

## contest winners

My approach to judging the poetry selections? As a general rule, and just like any other moving vehicle, poems ought to ascend from the page in a deliberate and mindful manner so as not to grind the gears and annoy the sensibilities. At the same time, I look for spontaneity and hair-thin glances of truth—moments in a poem that sneak up on the reader.

I don't like the "huge truth" or the "precious moment" genres. Furthermore, in this season of my life, I've heard and read all manner of polite poetry, bodacious poetry, and the sincere verse. Consequently, I have developed a simple desire for what I call the "signify by saying 'I'" voice in a poem. Make it real, make it strong, and make it you. And the rest of us will be in there somewhere, too.

—Denise Sweet, lead judge, *Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry contest

Our big congratulations to the three winners of the  
2004 *Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry contest:

**First Prize:** Rachel Azima, Madison  
John Lehman Poetry Award, \$500  
CD recording session at Abella Studios

**Second Prize:** Harriet Brown, Madison  
\$100 and a \$100 "Color It Green" gift certificate from McKay Nursery

**Third Prize:** Louisa Loveridge-Gallas, Milwaukee, \$50

**Honorable Mention:** Michael Kriesel, Aniwa

**Meet the poets at a reading and reception at Café Montmartre in  
Madison (127 E. Mifflin Street) on Friday, April 30, 7–9 p.m.**

Our great thanks to contest judges Cathryn Cofell, Judith Harway, and Rusty Russell and to our lead judge, Denise Sweet. Their time, experience, and passion for poetry made this contest possible. We also wish to thank John Lehman, the *Wisconsin Academy Review's* poetry editor and sponsor of this contest, for his devotion to the poets and poetry of Wisconsin. Finally, we wish to thank Abella Studios, McKay Nursery, and Café Montmartre for the extras that make the contest so special.

Our biggest thanks go to poets and poetry fans around the state for their support and enthusiasm. Thank you for once again making such a strong Wisconsin showing in time for April, National Poetry Month!

—Joan Fischer, editor

### POETRY CONTEST RUNNERS-UP

We congratulate our runners-up! These poets' work, as well as that of our honorable mention, will be published in the summer edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. They are presented here alphabetically.

F. J. Bergmann, Poynette  
Harriet Brown, Madison  
(also won second prize)  
Joan Wiese Johannes, Port Edwards  
John Kaufman, Wauwatosa  
Julie King, Racine

Jackie Langetieg, Madison  
Kay N. Sanders, Oshkosh  
Christopher Scalia, Madison  
Shoshauna Shy, Madison  
(for two poems)



## First Place

RACHEL AZIMA  
First Place  
Winner of the  
John Lehman Poetry Award



## Denise Sweet on "Haft-seen"

Here is an intelligent, careful, and observant eye at work; the poet bears witness at an "event" of which s/he is a part, without self-consciousness, without manipulation or forced sentiment. Powerfully adept, the language suggests layers upon layers of memory, experience, and self-examination. This is not a simple "poem as photo album"—"Haft-seen" is a poem hard at work. It enthralls and educates us, even as both the poet and poem become wiser in the final stanza. Remarkable. Just remarkable.

*Haft-seen*<sup>1</sup>

I was lucky, at that equinoctial moment  
when we would visit my grandparents  
and the *haft-seen* would be laid out  
by my grandmother's careful hands.  
I could wear the new dress we'd been saving,  
fresh as the *sabzi* that recalled  
the new green growth outdoors.

Next to the sprouts, the shine of *sekkeh*:  
coins to invite prosperity. The only  
daughter, and only granddaughter,  
profit waited for me, crisp  
bills of celebration. The goldfish flashed  
nearby, darting orange in the water.  
I never knew what happened to it afterwards.

*Seer* sat nearby on the table,  
garlic for health and protection. We never had  
*serkeh*, vinegar replacing the wine  
forbidden by Islam. We did have eggs  
my grandmother painted herself,  
harlequins compared to the Easter eggs I knew,  
doused purple and green in vinegar.

Often, in this house, my dad would peel  
green apples for us, glossy two-

colored strips lining a bowl. He loved  
anything sour, used to eat limes  
until the stinging juice ate back  
dissolving his front teeth. Today, red  
*seeb* rested on the table—but not for eating.

Beside these comfortable symbols, *senjed*—  
"The fruit of the mountain ash," says  
the dictionary. "A very small date,"  
says my grandmother. Hard to explain  
the sweet puzzling flesh of this fruit -  
little brown enigmas, like all the others  
flying past my ears undeciphered.

Even my mother, outsider by marriage,  
could make more sense of the words  
than I could—or can. The smoke of *sepan*  
fills here too. Seedy incense,  
fumes obscuring like the presence of  
the Qur'an, fallen with the *chador*  
over tradition. We light the candle

next to the seventh S of *somagh*,  
potent seasoning sealing the pattern.  
At this turning of the year,  
the flame flashes tribute to ancient faith:  
The eternal struggle won  
for just an instant  
when the egg stands on end.

<sup>1</sup> The *haft-seen* is a table laid out for *Norouz*, the Persian new year, which occurs at the vernal equinox. *Haft-seen* literally means "Seven S's," and refers to the seven symbolic items that start with the letter S. The tradition goes back to ancient times and is tied to the Zoroastrian roots of Persian culture.

by Rachel Azima



## In Memoriam: A. R. Ammons (1926–2001)

Walking, light-jacketed,  
the rhythmic brittle crisping  
affirming motion: against my face  
the breeze surprises. This air,  
too warm for February,  
bright as a feeling wholly awake,  
finer than light:  
there is no lyric for this,  
an atmosphere so clear  
it's as if there were nothing.

Moving through this odd clarity,  
I wonder what strange organisms  
work beneath my steps.  
It seems like something you would know—  
someone who uses a word like  
"coelenterates" had better be ready  
to give explanations. (And  
the sudden slide from transcendence  
to lowly detail wouldn't surprise you.)  
Now, it's hard to accept  
that mail no longer reaches you.  
I thought that (someday)  
I would send you some bad poetry,  
that you might dash off  
a humorous line or two to me.

Not too long ago  
you convinced me that  
poets aren't all pretentious,  
that you can talk normally and still  
talk poetry. On the brittle even page  
I hurried through the drafty spaces,  
frowned at the talk of entropy  
and interstitial seas. But:  
what difference a Southern drawl makes,  
filling in the gaps behind the typeface,  
the endless accretion of phrases.  
Left with these, it's hard not to wonder  
what else you would say.

Now, of anyone,  
you would be least likely  
to mind some abstraction,  
some talk of relationship  
in poetic families, or  
probing of the desire for meaning.  
And here, on this walk, the openings seem  
so vast, the air itself stepping aside.  
But I won't do it—  
except to say  
the sharpness of the line today  
where light contacts shadow  
on a pitted, angled rock,  
makes me almost certain that  
there is a fact to grasp: that  
this walk is ours.

by Rachel Azima

Rachel Azima grew up in Michigan and considers herself a confirmed Midwesterner. She is a Ph.D. student at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and did her undergraduate work at Vassar College. Her work has appeared in *Asian Quilt* and the *Vassar Spectator*, and her creative nonfiction essay "Ripples of Azure and Grey" is forthcoming in *Big Water: Women Write from the Freshwater Heart of North America* (Michigan State University Press). She lives in Madison with her fiancé, Douglas.

*Why I write poetry:*

"For me, poetry is about truth-telling: a poem may express just one of many possible truths, but I believe a good one always conveys something fundamental about the world as the poet sees it. It may be only a 'momentary stay against confusion,' but it works."



Second Place

HARRIET BROWN  
Second Place



### Denise Sweet on "Trip"

"Trip" left me envious and out of breath; one exquisite image after another, toppling over so effortlessly like a Slinky down a flight of steps. The cadence smooth and sleek, the development unfettered, and the final triplet—well, the poem arrives there right on time, just as the poet, somehow, promised. I usually am quite impatient with the "Here I go, traveling again" poem, but "Trip" succeeds in superb style—in a way that is about both spatial and chronological movement—all within a single moment, and before, literally, moving an inch.

## Trip

When I went out to the car on a winter morning  
frost covered the windshield and the side windows  
and the two mirrors I use to see into blind spots,

a shining layer of swirls and feathery curlings  
that reminded me of the alien arabesques  
I saw on a long-ago summer morning:

the hollow shafts of feathers woven along  
the skin of my arms and neck and belly, a line  
of radiant, deliberate stitches, each marked

with a bead of blood—hallucinations far more  
real than the wretched blur of being twenty  
and fucked-up and alone. For hours that morning

I stared into a mirror, admiring my naked  
self wrapped in the world's intricate patterns.  
And even then I knew (though I didn't know)

that under the drug's jazzed blanket I was the one  
who'd made the whole thing up. That was a power  
I wasn't ready for. So on a frigid morning

long into middle age and a thousand miles west  
I pressed the pedal and felt heat blossom from the dash,  
saw a slow cloud fog the windshield

from the bottom up, melting the delicate shapes  
into plain water. I watched the frost run in a quick,  
sad movement down the glass, such loveliness

poured reckless into the present's sieve.  
This time I knew exactly what I'd done.  
Around the car, snow whirled and flared

like white flakes in a shaken paperweight.  
There would be more making and unmaking,  
more ravishing patterns revealed and vanishing,

more nakedness—wild weather in the mirror  
of *I and world*, emerging for a flash and falling  
back into the radiant stuff we're made of.

by Harriet Brown



## Sleeping With Dragons

*Dragons don't sleep*, says the seven-year-old.  
I'm facedown on her bedroom floor,  
one cheek pressed to the rose-  
colored carpet, jerking awake  
each time she says my name  
like a commuter lapsing toward  
the future. The loll and seize  
get old fast. I want to be done with the day,  
its imaginary herds of bony horses.

The seven-year-old is killing Miss America.  
Meanwhile, there's drama in the fish tank—  
a snail clings to the inside of the air tube,  
its life a rushing flutter of bubbles,  
perpetual hurricane. Like drinking  
nothing but champagne, not knowing  
there's such a thing as water.

*My parents know all the stuff in school*  
says the seven-year-old in a falsetto.  
Then answers herself in a deeper voice:  
*Well, duh, they're parents.* Slack-jawed  
and drooling on her rug, I remember  
the brutal heat of her arrival,  
I anticipate surprise.

by Harriet Brown

Harriet Brown's poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry East*, and other literary magazines and have earned numerous awards and honors, including grand prize in the *Atlanta Review's* International Poetry Competition, several fellowships to Yaddo, and a New York state CAPS grant. Her chapbook, *The Promised Land*, was published in January by Parallel Press. Brown is also the author of *The Good-bye Window: A Year in the Life of a Day-Care Center* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) and several nonfiction books for children. She lives in Madison with her husband and two daughters, and she is the editor of *Wisconsin Trails* magazine.

*Why I write poetry:*

"I imagine that my reasons for writing are much the same as other writers': I write because I have to. Because I hear the music of a line in my head and I need to hear the rest of the song. I write to figure out what I think and how I feel about all the world's impossible and splendid experiences. I write, to paraphrase Faulker, for the pain—for both the feeling and the assuaging. I write to stay alive."



Third Place

LOUISA LOVERIDGE-GALLAS  
Third Place



### Denise Sweet on "The Smoothie"

Others might think "The Smoothie" a melancholic narrative, as I first did in quick reaction to its premise and the characters residing within. After a second reading, one recognizes both the boldness and the understatement working side by side in this piece. This poem deserves a slow reading, a slow comprehension, a mindful listening, and a respect for the poetic intention, whether conscious or unconscious, on the part of the writer. Consequently, I have thrown away all the attempts I've made to write about this business of helpless mortality or my lame attempts to imitate Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." In this careful handling of a story within a story, "The Smoothie" gives both caution and comfort to the reader. Suddenly, you realize.

## The Smoothie

"The golden years, ha!" she says, flat on her back, with a look. Rain and fog live in her bones, her knees buckle, the walker waits next to her bed like a taxi, cortisone creams soothe itching from days of bare skin on sheets, pillows flatten her hair until it points north like a lighthouse. So few calls—she forgets how to use the phone, her memory is a lost photograph she looks for in drawers. Eating, who cares. "There's just nothing that appeals." Not much taste or sense of direction. No more doing laundry. No more car. Funerals pile up like old hankies. Days drift—a cruise that never leaves port. Then her son walks into her room after work and all the lights go back on in her smile. This is the rabbit old age pulls out of the hat if you're lucky the alchemy of the ancient body—a good son who sticks around, the son who when he was half-way into this world, the Dr. said, "Sara, this baby—I really think it's a girl."

"O, no, you wait," she says flat on her back, with a look, "Just keep pulling, this one will have a tossel, you'll see, just like the other two." Half a century later, this son is handing her a cold glass with a straw that bends, "Hi Toots, **you gotta eat**—I have a smoothie here for you, a chocolate smoothie." "**Chocolate**," she says, "Why, when I was a little girl my Father would come home every day after work and say 'Saraleh, in velcun pocket. Which pocket. You pick.' And whichever pocket I chose, there were always Hershey kisses." She wipes her eyes—"What a good memory." Her son's eyes well up just like she does as if he's heard that old story for the first time. He adds a pillow behind her head, holds out the drink, positioning the straw, "Well, here you go, then, Ma See if this is as good as those kisses!" She flicks the straw away, sits up in a flash with surprising speed and drains that smoothie fast as a teenager goes for the phone.

by Louisa Loveridge-Gallas



## Hard time

"Will we ever get out of this Hell again to see the stars?"

*Dante's Inferno*

Last night your dreams buried you.  
The morning's fog comes on a ghastly  
moist paleness between darkness and day  
almost nowhere at the edge  
of nothing, nearly, yet not quite rain  
neither blue, almost grey, maybe brown,  
the color of a cheap dye job, vague,  
dismissive as the curtsy of a medieval  
lady in waiting; until it swells to swallow you  
taking you back to when you breathed  
underwater so you're hoping maybe  
you'll get lucky and this world between  
water and air will part for you  
like a widow might suddenly get over  
her grief; face it, you are lost.  
Tonight you will dream yourself alone  
in a strange part of town, not at all  
where you were headed, some curious  
cop asks: "*How the Hell did you  
end up here?*" You say, "*I'm at your  
mercy.*" All the street signs are in  
a distant language, slick with rain;  
he points behind you to a familiar  
ruthless set of steps up a mountain  
you recognize is back in the homeland  
where suddenly your Mother appears  
who in life had such a wretched voice,  
now she's singing opera to you like Eurydice  
at the top of her game. You figure  
if your Mother can sing with no  
previous experience, maybe you're in  
for some grace, too. The fog horn cries  
out again and again drawing you toward  
another grisly dawn, you try to get back  
to the melody of your Mother's song.  
She can't sing anymore, and now you're  
wide awake, still doing hard time.

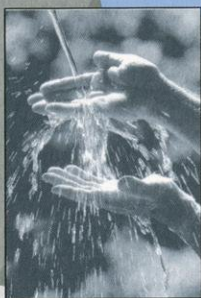
*by Louisa Loveridge-Gallas*

Louisa Loveridge-Gallas is a poet and counselor who lives in Milwaukee with her husband, Richard. She has been a member of the Wisconsin Arts Board Artist in Residence Program. Her book, *Revelations on Longing Street* (Earth Solutions Press, 1998) reflects her storytelling voice and longtime focus on live performance. Recording artist Claudia Schmidt includes Loveridge-Gallas' poems in concert and radio shows; most recently her poem "Basic Hygiene" is on Schmidt's spoken word CD, *Roads*. Featured appearances in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison include the Peck Pavilion Performing Arts Center and "Hotel Milwaukee Radio," WHAD.

*Why I write poetry:*

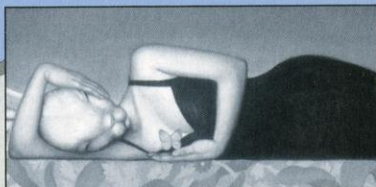
"I write poetry for pain relief and episodes of ecstasy, to look hard at our world yet still tickle the funny bone, for hope, survival, to connect with the community, and always in gratitude to language, imagination, and the inspiration of poets and musicians. I write poetry to try and stay awake, really awake, to pay attention, because ordinary details and deep mysteries come calling, and the words must respond."





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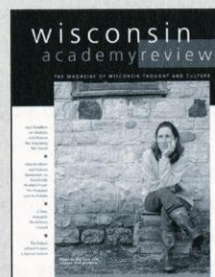
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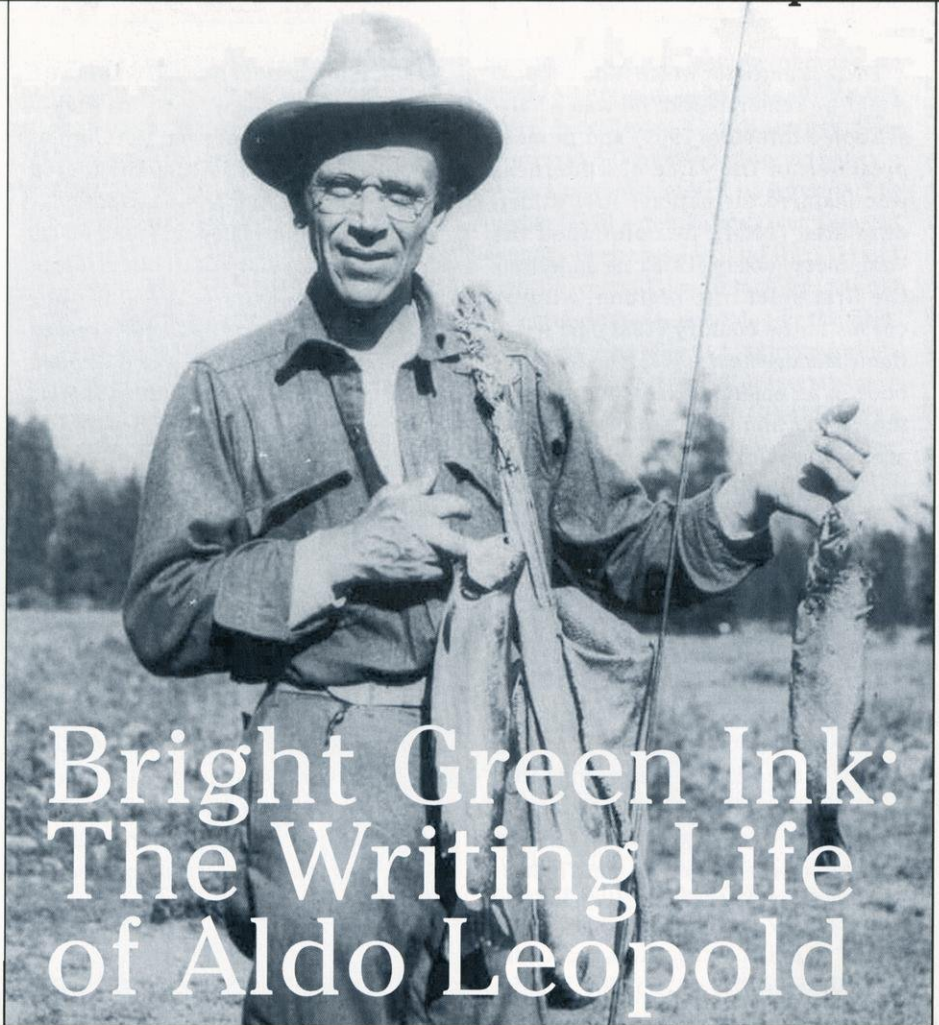
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Essay Award, 2002



# Bright Green Ink: The Writing Life of Aldo Leopold

BY INGA BRYNILDSON HAGGE

Aldo Leopold with fly-fishing rod and fish  
at Flathead River in Oregon, 1926.

All photos courtesy of the Aldo Leopold  
Foundation archives.

HERE IS NO SAND COUNTY, WISCONSIN. No matter, thousands of pilgrims come here each year in search of it. Their quest draws them up the shore of the Wisconsin River, 50 miles north of Madison, to a floodplain bristling with wild grass, scattered oaks and maples, and a sheltering open-armed white pine. Set among the trees is a rough, gray plank shack with a roofline resembling the handle of the Big Dipper. To these seekers it matters little that this shore is platted Sauk County. For them and for millions the world over this scrubby bottomland will forever remain the heart of the Sand County, and the small wooden building that started life as a chicken coop stands as a shrine, a green Mecca, the birthplace of the "land ethic" and the sacred haunt of the man some call the "prophet of the environmental movement," Aldo Leopold.



There is much for which Aldo Leopold might be remembered: he was a Yale-schooled forester (1909) and pioneer preacher for the value of wilderness who inspired the nation's first wilderness area (1924); he cofounded the Wilderness Society (1935); he undertook the first scientific regional wildlife census in the country (1931); he wrote *Game Management* (1933), the first textbook in an emerging field, and became the world's first professor of game management when he joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin in Madison (1933). For all these accomplishments he was respected in his day and is remembered in ours.

But these are not the reasons Aldo Leopold remains unburied by the sands of time. These are not the reasons thousands come to touch the whiskery grain of the weathered shack boards as holy relics. These are not the reasons they collect the sand from their sneakers in Ziploc bags when they "walk in the footsteps of Aldo Leopold," as their T-shirts proclaim. They come for the same

reason that Leopold himself was drawn to this riverside sandblow: "to seek—and still find ... meat from God." If not from God, then, from the khaki-clad prophet of the sands, Aldo Leopold.

The divine meat Leopold found on his sand farm nourished a collection of essays we now know as *A Sand County Almanac*. The original 1949 Oxford University Press edition was a slender, green linen-bound volume titled *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* that slowly but steadily sold about 20,000 copies. In 1970, Ballantine Books repackaged Leopold's words in paperback, adding eight essays from his *Round River* collection and publishing it under the simpler title *A Sand County Almanac*. The book was a match thrown on ready tinder. Stoked by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 and the moon-walking days of the late '60s that opened a God's-eye view of earth as a tiny blue oasis in an inky black void, the environmental movement spread like a fierce green wildfire across America.

Leopold's words calling for a new ethical relationship with land rose up from the dust of two decades. To the Earth Day generation at the vanguard of the environmental movement, *A Sand County Almanac* became Holy Scripture, the green Bible. A growing legion of environmentalists could quote chapter and verse from the Book of Leopold. By the 50th anniversary of the Almanac in 1999, sales had topped 1.5 million copies. Wallace Stegner wrote, "When this forming civilization assembles its Bible, its record of the physical and spiritual pilgrimage of the American people ... *A Sand County Almanac* will belong in it, one of the prophetic books, the utterance of an American Isaiah."

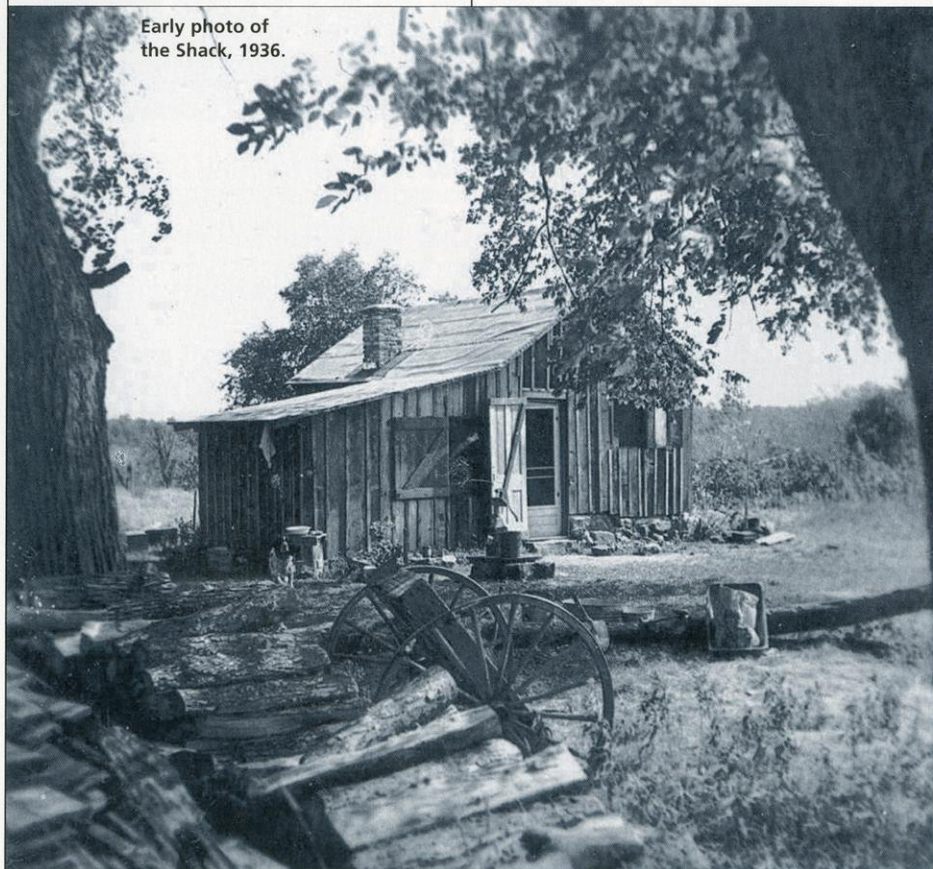
As an ecologist and nature writer, Leopold had stature among his peers in the first half of the 20th century. But in the last half-century, while the reputations and literary works of his contemporaries subsided, Aldo Leopold, pipe and walking stick in hand, stands out like a monadnock on the landscape of American conservation history, along with such pillars as Thoreau, Muir, Burroughs, Roosevelt, Pinchot, and Carson. For Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* is the capstone that resists the erosion of time and memory.

What do we know about Leopold the writer, and what keeps *A Sand County Almanac* an evergreen classic of American conservation literature?

Leopold was fond of saying to his word-weary university graduate students, "muddy thinking" makes "muddy writing." The springs of Leopold's own crystal-clear writing and thinking trace back to two boyhood writing "practices." When Leopold left his Burlington, Iowa, home for prep school in New Jersey, his mother, who wanted a classical education for her eldest son, bid him to "write us fully ... and often." He fulfilled his mother's wish with as many as four or five letters a week. Leopold's daughter, Nina Leopold Bradley, has called this flurry of hundreds of letters "his literary training ground" where, she says, "he learned to write by writing."

Years earlier, Leopold had begun another writing practice that was, perhaps, of more primary importance to

Early photo of the Shack, 1936.





the making of the *Almanac*. Around age 11, he began what became a compulsive lifelong practice of taking field notes. Casual observations of the comings and goings of birds grew into a passion for phenology, the careful study and recording of all things wild—annual cycles, blooming times, nestings, weather, numbers of geese, numbers of deer, numbers of Silphium. Leopold explained it this way: "... 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." With "notebook and stubby pencil" always at the ready, Leopold acted as nature's stenographer, and he became fluent in its wild native language and learned to read the stories the land had to tell.

From his mother, Leopold learned the ABCs of good writing; from his father, the alphabet of the land. He needed both to write the *Almanac*. Whether writing science or essays, for Leopold the starting point was clear-eyed field observation. He wrote, "Keeping records enhances the pleasure of the search and the chance of finding order and meaning in these events." So it follows that the first lesson of good nature writing is reading what nature has written on the land. As Leopold wryly observed, "Books on nature seldom mention wind; they are written behind stoves."

There is more windblown sand than smoke of a woodstove in the *Almanac*. He carried the philosophy of science before poetic metaphor into his writing, though he made allowance for early nature writers like Muir, Seton, and Darling, who "wrote before ecology had a name, before the science of animal behavior had been born, before the survival of faunas and floras had become a desperate problem."

Ecology had a name and a growing vocabulary by the time Leopold took his chair at UW-Madison. Through the writings of his contemporaries, Leopold learned the language of the ecologist and strengthened his sense of a moral responsibility to nature.

Events of his day also shaped the ideas gathered in the *Almanac*. In the 1930s, conservation was much on the minds of Americans who could taste the

soil of the Great Plains on their tongues and whose shirt collars were darkened with the smudge of the terrible black blizzards of the Dust Bowl. Wisconsin, too, was in the midst of a Dust Bowl, or more accurately, a Sand Blow. Pioneer surveyors of the Wisconsin Territory called the remnant bed of Glacial Lake Wisconsin in the belly of the territory "The District of the Sands." After a hundred years of "cow and plow" and slash and burn farming, the central sands proved unfit to sustain crops and heavy

Aldo Leopold in 1946.



grazing. One after another, sand farms were corned out, burned out, blown out, and left for dead.

In the blackest year of the Dust Bowl, 1935, Leopold bought himself a sand farm. The farm included the chicken-coop shack and 80 surrounding ill-used acres. (He later bought another 40.) The Leopold family—three sons and two daughters, Aldo and his wife, Estella—went to work shoveling manure, raising a roof, erecting a fireplace, and forever planting pines.

Grubbing on the land and chicken-coop accommodations are not the amenities most city dwellers value in a second home—not even in 1935. But

most city dwellers lack the perspective of Aldo Leopold. In his essay "Round River" he reflects, "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." In buying his blown-out sand farm, Leopold sought out the wound, and then set out with shovel and axe to heal it. Leopold was born in Iowa, schooled in the East, became a ranger in the national forests of the Southwest and a university professor in Madison, but it this Sauk County farm, his "backwash of the River Progress," that is forever linked with Aldo Leopold. For this depleted sand farm became the rustic tableau for *A Sand County Almanac*.

The portrait of Leopold the writer, painted by his students, family, and peers, is one of a self-conscious word-smith, a deliberate poet, a man aware of his gift for words, and who burned with a missionary's zeal to use them for the cause of nature. His foreword to *A Sand County Almanac* begins with the simple words, "There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot." Even as a teen, Leopold felt called to the front in the battle to preserve wildlife. When he read about the slaughter of ducks on the Mississippi, Leopold wrote home to his folks, "When my turn comes to have something to say and do against it and other related matters, I am sure nothing in my power will be lacking to the good cause."

Biographies of great people or ideas are written from the perspective of one who knows the end of the story; because of this, the story tends to include those facts that trace a straight and certain path toward the known destiny. It's tempting to do so in Leopold's case, beginning with the German name of his Iowa family home that translates to "look to the land." In truth, Leopold made some sharp turns in his thinking to arrive at the perspective of the familiar narrator of *A Sand County Almanac*: he was a Pinchot forester who learned to value wilderness; he helped eradicate mountain lions and wolves, then called for predator protection; he wrote mostly inside professional circles, but by the



late 1930s, he understood the need to enlighten private landowners and the general voting public. It is this zeal and this changed perspective that motivated Leopold to write the *Almanac*.

By 1941, when Leopold began penciling the essays that would become the *Almanac*, he already had a national reputation as a conservationist who could write a fine line. His textbook *Game Management* had become the standard in the field. His lifetime output exceeded 300 articles, from early musings and notes as a young forest ranger in the *Carson Pine Cone* to technical reports in

professional journals of forestry, wildlife, and ornithology. He gradually cast his net to a wider audience through such magazines as *Bird Lore*, *Audubon*, *Living Wilderness*, *American Forests*, *Wisconsin Agriculturalist and Farmer*, and the *Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin*.

Leopold was an insomniac, sometimes walking to campus as early as 4:30 a.m. to write in quiet predawn hours. His office was the former dining room of a worn Victorian house at 424 University Farm Place, which harbored the growing department of wildlife management (later, wildlife ecology). It was book-

lined, sunlit by a large bay window, and held wooden filing cabinets and a huge oak desk. The department secretary and students guarded Leopold's morning writing time by holding off appointments until after lunch. Leopold kept half a dozen yellow pencils sharpened on his desk that he used to write manuscripts in a distinct small, clear script on blue-lined yellow paper. He often started with an outline of lead sentences for sequential paragraphs, which he fleshed out into a first draft. After a quick edit, he handed the draft to his secretary to type. According to H. Albert Hochbaum,

Leopold and his wife, Estella, planting pines at the Shack, 1936.





who earned a Ph.D. under Leopold, once the manuscript was typed, "editing proceeded in bright green ink," with the editing-retyping cycle lasting for weeks or months before Leopold would "farm it out" to several graduate students and trusted colleagues for comment.

UW-Madison limnology professor Arthur Hasler was fond of recounting an afternoon visit with Leopold in his campus office. As the story goes, Hasler said to Leopold, "Aldo, I wish I could write as easily as you do; you put the rest of us to shame." According to Hasler, Leopold responded, "Art, it only looks easy. I rewrite everything 20 times."

In a book of recollections commemorating the centennial of Leopold's birth, his graduate students recount in pained unison "The Professor's" belief in multiple drafts. Hochbaum recalled Leopold explaining it this way:

"You have a long way to go before you can ask anybody to invest his time with this paper. You can't shift what should be your own hard work onto an editor. Look!" Half rising from his chair, he reached across to the far righthand corner of his desk. There was a large portfolio of embossed leather, hinged at the top, bulging with manuscripts, each in a separate compartment. "Here's where I put my stuff to simmer. It doesn't change in there, but I do. When I get an idea or a new slant or a fresh view, why hell, it's right there where I can grab it ... Think of it this way. In spite of all the advances of modern science, it still takes seven spinach waters to clean spinach for the pot; and for all my writing to this day, it still takes seven editings, sometimes seventeen, before I let it go off to press. Remember that. We're all in the same boat."

Leopold often called his portfolio of unfinished manuscripts his "cooler," and encouraged his students in the task of writing to "put it in the cooler," or give it a "cooling off period."

All of this simmering and cooling made for mighty rich prose. Leopold's

disliked puffed-up "college English" and favored simple words and homely metaphors. He was a word miser and had a Darwinian ethic as an editor: each word had to earn its keep to survive his green pen hovering overhead like a hawk. As a writer, Leopold was like the proprietor of a Wisconsin sugar bush who may boil 65 gallons of sap to jug a gallon of maple syrup. By word count, the *Almanac* is a slender volume; by thought count, it is a gold bar. The little yellow-edged paperback *A Sand County Almanac* never would have become a staple in the hiker's backpack if it had carried its weight in thoughts rather than words.

Leopold had the poet's gift of seeing the universal in the commonplace. His nature essays are deceptively simple parables bearing larger truths. One of the delights of an ecological education is reading *A Sand County Almanac* and panning for the golden meaning and history suspended in the swift flowing stream of Leopold's poetic words.

The late UW-Madison environmental studies professor Gretchen Schoff heard echoes of Robert Frost's poem "The Pasture" in Leopold's essay "January." Frost's poem has long been read as an invitation to readers to follow him on his poetic path: "I'm going out to clean the pasture spring; / ... I shan't be gone long.—You come too." In "January," which begins the *Almanac*, Leopold picks up the track of a skunk aroused by a January thaw: "I follow curious to deduce his state of mind and appetite, and destination if any." We "come too" and follow Leopold on his intellectual journey. At the end of the essay the tracks of Leopold's skunk disappear into a heap of driftwood. In the 19th century, John Burroughs wrote that for a writer to read Thoreau is "like eating onions—one must look out or the flavor will reach his own page." Since the emergence of *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, few nature writers, if any, escape the whiff of Leopold's meandering skunk. He reset the gold standard for nature writing. Nationally acclaimed nature writer Terry Tempest Williams confesses, "I can honestly say it is Aldo Leopold's

voice I hear whenever I put pen to paper in the name of wilderness."

In the last section of the book, "The Upshot," we find "The Land Ethic," which has been called Leopold's manifesto. "The Land Ethic" is where Leopold has been leading us from the first skunk track in "January." It is, at last, the intellectual and moral destination Leopold came to at the end of his life:

"An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence ... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land ... A land, ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction for individual responsibility for the health of the land ... A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

Leopold's "land ethic" is the heart of *A Sand County Almanac*, and the heart of America's environmental conscience. It is doubtful the book would have become the classic it is today without the land ethic.

Leopold did not live to see *A Sand County Almanac* in print. After being rejected by Alfred A. Knopf the previous autumn, Leopold received word by phone on April 14, 1948, that Oxford University Press would publish his collection of essays. One week later, on April 21, John Muir's birthday, Leopold disappeared into the smoke of a grass fire on land neighboring the shack property.

If Leopold could walk back out of the smoke and into a bookstore today, he wouldn't recognize the book that is now synonymous with his name. He had chosen *Great Possessions* for a title, but Oxford Press editors worried about confusion with Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Leopold's subtitle for the first section of the book, "A Sauk County Almanac," was reworked to sound "less provincial," creating—*A Sand County Almanac*.



If "The Land Ethic" is the heart of the *Almanac*, then "Thinking Like A Mountain" is its soul. In it, Leopold poetically and movingly laments the foolishness of state game managers who exterminate wolves in favor of deer at the expense of the natural community. "I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer."

Leopold was urged by his former graduate student, Albert Hochbaum, who had become his primary literary advisor on the *Almanac* essays, to share in the blame for predator eradication during his years as a forest ranger. Hochbaum wrote, "I think you'll have to admit you've got at least a drop of its blood on your hands." Leopold was reluctant to tip his hand for fear of "spoiling literary effects." Ultimately, Leopold saw the wisdom of Hochbaum's suggestion, and created the image that forever burns in the imagination of readers of the *Almanac*:

"In those days we never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack ... When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide rocks. We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain."

Leopold's old wolf lives in the American imagination as a symbol of utilitarian management of nature run roughshod over wild things. It is a symbol of what has been lost, and of what we stand to lose — the flickering green fire of the wild. Before the fierce green fire went cold in the eyes of the old wolf, an ember popped out of the flame and lit the heart of the young forester. Leopold stoked and fanned the ember through the rest of his life with his fierce love of wild things. The fire lights the words of the *Almanac* and touched a spark to the green wildfire of

the American environmental movement. Today, to read the *Almanac* is to draw close to the fire still burning in Leopold's words. This is why thousands yearly come to Leopold's sand county shack in the bottomlands of the Wisconsin River, or to the grainy pages of *A Sand County Almanac*: to stare into the fierce green fire and, like Leopold, to be transformed.

Aldo Leopold was a writer; nature was the deep well of bright green ink into which he dipped his pen. \*

*Inga Brynildson Hagge is proud to be a second-generation "Leopold ecologist" whose father and uncle studied with Prof. Leopold and were pioneer trout biologists for the Wisconsin Conservation Department—later the Department of Natural Resources.*

*After graduating from Leopold's department of wildlife ecology at UW-Madison, Hagge was a founder of DNR's endangered and nongame species program under the supervision of James B. Hale, a Leopold graduate student. In graduate school, she studied film, environmental sciences, and history and helped teach "Humanistic Perspectives on the Environment," which included A Sand County Almanac.*

*Hagge has written hundreds of natural history and science articles and publications and has won several writing and design awards.*

*She is an active member of Ascension Lutheran Church in Minocqua, where she occasionally teaches seminars on incorporating creation into Christian spiritual practice. She and her family live on a woodland lake that has been in her husband's family for five generations.*

*This essay won the "Rediscovering Wisconsin Writers" Essay Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. For more information about the Council for Wisconsin Writers, visit: [www.wisconsinwriters.org](http://www.wisconsinwriters.org)*

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The organizers of last October's Wisconsin Book Festival challenged 125 writers to produce a work of fiction in only 24 hours, with the guidelines that it have a maximum of 2,000 words and be based on this photograph by William Gedney. Gregg Williard produced the first-place story, which we are proud to publish in this issue.

# Let's Get Lost

BY GREGG WILLIARD

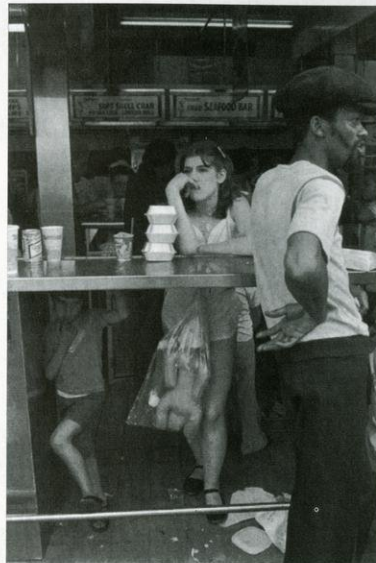
Gregg Williard  
First Place Winner

Wisconsin  
Book Festival  
24-Hour Fiction

The day my dad didn't show up for the last time and my mom lost it for the first (but not the last) time we were waiting for him at Nathan's over tough little fried clams and blue Italian ices that tasted green. I guess she called his job and he wasn't there, so my mom let a couple of guys she called "Mongos" walking by see she was pretty and young and had high-wirey legs and little feet in Chinese slippers before kissing them off to be with me.

It was Saturday because my dad always worked Saturdays. He was a social worker at an adult home for the mentally ill called Neptune Manor or Mermaid Manor or Surf Manor or Seacrest Manor; there was a whole string of manors lining the beach that my mom called Dementia Castles, or Coastal Defense Against an Invasion of Mental Hygiene from Outer Space, or like she'd say to my dad, "You seem so ill-manored today," which took me a few years to appreciate as a joke that wasn't, by that time, much funny anymore but very interesting, the way dead stuff in jars is interesting.

So she said, "Let's get lost," and I trailed her into Coney Island, which was, let's face it, a skankity, puke-and-gum-on-your-shoe scene, but we did the Cyclone and the Fascination and man, she was



ablaze. Not a laughing, happy blaze but serious fire. Black fire.

We rode everything and did everything, including lots of stuff that wasn't there: the Spinning Hellhole, the Rotating Wonderwheel, sure, but then there was the Herk-a-Jerk; the Rope-a-Dope-Grope; the Tweezer-Geezer; the Flim-Flam Dunk; the Bumper-Curruthers; Dante's Disco-Dip; Clown-Slap Park; Arcade of the Funny Butt Mirrors; House of the Seven Secretions; Guess the Weight of the Singing Flame; Kick a Pard, Any Pard!; How Many Needles in the Junky Jar?; Shoot Out the Lights Before the Tattoos Bark; Mace the Poultry Bag Game; Spin the Spinster Catherine's Wheel; Try Your Luck With the Dry Ice Wigs; Swallow a Penny and Beg the Bazooka; Stir the Chinese Answering Machine Riddle; Tattle on Tater, the Potato Hater; Read Your Fortune in Your Socks; and Can You Conk Little Sheeba's Shammy-Shimmy Shroud?

The weird thing was that the weirdness of my mom wasn't weird; weird was

that her Coney Island didn't satisfy me. Once back at Nathan's for more clams and ices, I started whining about the stuffed animal she'd "won" for me in Epilepsy Bingo. (Actually she'd lost so many times, and so sexily, that the Bob Barkers and the Mongos fell all over themselves like priests in a mystery cult trying to outdo each other's dowry to the virgin bride, and told mom she could pick any prize she wanted.)

But what she chose was a kind of hybrid lamb-donkey-embryo doll in a plastic bag. It was yellow and dirty looking. It had no corporate pedigree. I whined and cried under the table while she stacked Styrofoam containers into little zigzag pagoda towers. Whenever I looked up to appeal to mom or a higher truth I saw a roof of chewing gum and boogers instead of stars.

Finally she looked down. Her voice was icy and precise—an elocution lesson from some old movie.

"What do you want?"

I told her. I wanted something Disney, something Warner Brothers, something with a name, a label, something on commercials, in stores, in nice boxes. Something authentic. Something real.

Like she'd practiced it a zillion times, she twisted the end of the plastic bag around her hand until it had no slack, then stepped back, flung it over her shoulder and brought it down hard on my head. I think she said, "Wrong answer." That was when she started getting good and lost, and I got, after a long time, good and found. \*

*Gregg Williard is a writer and visual artist. He's currently at work on a novel and on an exhibit of imaginary machines. He regularly reads his fiction on Madison's WORT radio.*

*About the challenge of writing a story in only one day, Williard says, "Being spared the Terror of Freedom (beyond 24 hours) was actually a tremendous relief."*



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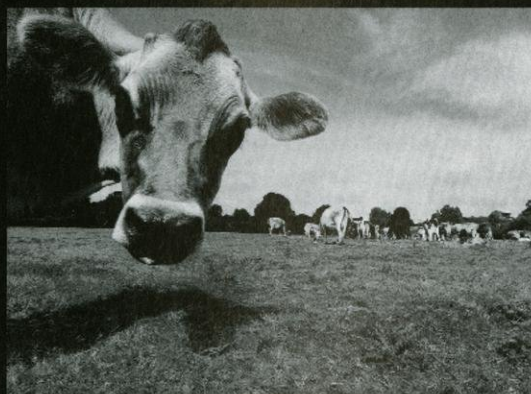
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# ANIMAL CONNECTIONS

In this edition of "In My Words," readers describe their experiences with nonhuman animals.

## Ode to Toad

Toads define the essence of an ungainly beauty.

Over the years, I've garnered many a strange look as I've waxed lyrical about the virtues of *Bufo americanus*—the standard American toad found in much of North America. Perhaps these non-believers have never stared into the black-and-gold eyes of this sublime creature. Granted, the anatomy of a toad can be supremely awkward: buggy eyes; dry, bumpy skin; strong, delicate limbs and toes propelling ample, squooshy bodies. But the toad's efficiency is unquestionable. Who would think that a creature the length of my index finger could elude me just by hopping away on those powerful legs? To watch a toad swimming is even better, as the toad glides effortlessly through the water with long, elegant strokes. And then there's eating—I've never yet seen a toad miss its prey with a deft flick of the tongue.

It's true that toads are not prime pet material in the conventional sense, but they are the pets with which I grew up. My brother was allergic to the hair of "normal" pets—or so our parents claimed (as an adult, my brother has been the doting owner of a series of cats). So Brian and I resorted to catching backyard toads as kids growing up near the Indiana/Kentucky border and later after our family's move to Michigan.

We devised a special indoor toad habitat we were convinced would cater to a toad's every desire. An emptied 10-gallon aquarium was lined with a thick, soft layer of peat moss. A few pleasingly smooth rocks functioned as toad Barcaloungers. A shallow water dish was provided to slake the toad's thirst, while meals were served al fresco and usually consisted of mealworms from a bait shop or whatever the toad could rustle up in our yard. Moving the large metal trashcans behind the house typically revealed an array of pill bugs and other delicacies.

Keeping toads defies common notions of pet ownership. For most people, the animal-owner relationship revolves around a reciprocal, express-



ible bond of affection. Those seeking this kind of emotional reward are simply not amphibian material. Frequently, even when you're handling them, toads seem only dimly aware of your presence. They don't come when you call them, warm your feet while you're sleeping, and most certainly won't fetch your morning paper, catch a Frisbee, or beg for a treat. Because they resist anthropomorphization, toads demand to be appreciated on their own terms. Odd as it may seem, therein lies their appeal and their quirky dignity.

While I still periodically wished for a "normal" pet as a child—meaning something you could walk on a leash or at least cuddle with—looking back, I'm glad to have grown up with toads. Decades after finding that first toad (Harold, about whom I wrote a book in crayon), I still find them truly beautiful creatures. Whenever I find one, my vocal joy puzzles those around me.

My brother hasn't given up the toad bug, either. Just a year or two ago, while visiting me in Wisconsin, he brought a toad he'd found near his Michigan home. We took it out in my yard to let it graze and catch fireflies for it. As the toad casually went about its business, my thirty-something brother leapt around, cupping lightning bugs in his hands so he could present them to the toad. You've got to admire the charisma of a three-inch amphibian that inspires so much devotion it turns a grown man into—how else to put it?—a toady.

*Jennifer Smith  
Madison*



## Whitewashed in Milwaukee

His old teeth are now white. Seeing Samson's teeth at the museum reminds me of the excited crowd that had gathered around him when he was the Milwaukee Zoo's famous silverback gorilla.

His cage looked like a big Italian bathroom with a tire swing hung in the center. The crowd watched each move, but short folks and kids had to work their way up to the front to watch. If Samson was just sitting there and the spider monkeys a few cages over were acting like a gymnastics team on a sugar high, the crowd would trickle away, making room for the serious ape-watchers. That's what happened one time when Dad took me to see Samson.

Dad leaned on a railing in the back of the crowd, saying, "I can see from here, you go up front." The Saturday crowd was dense, but Samson was sitting behind his tire, and the crazed spider monkeys drew from the substantial gorilla crowd. For the first time, all by myself, I got to watch from the front row.

Samson was huge; the sign said 660 pounds. As he sat before me in profile, he scratched and picked tidbits out of his fur with his blood-sausage fingers. It was a delicate maneuver. I watched him part his fur and fix his eyes to the thin line, find a minuscule speck, and then lick his fingers as if they were covered in chocolate frosting.

Samson looked up. He stared at an object behind me and raised up to glare over my head. I stood on the "no-standing-on-the-rail" rail and strained to match Samson's gaze. Dad was eating a big red apple, unaware that Samson had zeroed in on his snack. The crowd was a disorganized flurry, searching to see what had caught Samson's attention and mumbling to one another, "It's the guy with the apple." I spun my head back and forth trying to watch Dad and Samson.

Dad's eyes scanned the crowd and cage as he snacked. Samson caught him in his gaze just as Dad took another bite of his apple. The great silverback eyes bore down on my apple-eating Dad. Samson lunged, crashing both fists on the glass barrier again and again while the crowd screamed. Some ran. Everyone backed up at least a few steps. I jumped off the railing under the shadow of his mass. I looked up into his mouth and saw the dark points of his yellowed front teeth and fangs. His arm and chest muscles moved furiously

under his fur as he beat the glass and then his chest. He grunted and screeched.

He was wild. He was awesome. He pounded the glass four times, I think, but by the time we got home the number had increased to "at least 10." Sometimes in the retelling, the glass rattled in its casing or a crack started in an interior panel. You couldn't blame us for exaggerating. No words could re-create the glory and power we'd witnessed.

Two decades after his death, Samson's bleached white teeth smile pitifully from his white skull. His bones fail to draw a crowd as they stand diminutively beneath a gigantic baleen whale skeleton suspended from the ceiling. I recognize the brawny old beast by reading the placard near his metatarsals. Out of respect, I'd like to shroud what's left of his body. All I can do is close my eyes and reanimate the muscle, silver fur, and yellow teeth that made us stand, or run, in reverence.

*Amy Jenkins  
Wauwatosa*



## Dolly's the Name, Ownership Her Game

My cat Dolly has devoted her life to the study of this family and me in particular. That's 17 years—84 in cat years—of figuring out how to get what she wants. At first, she wisely ignored me. In my salad days, I was too preoccupied with family and career and, besides, my two daughters beat me at being soft touches.

They fed Dolly her Tender Vittles snack at 10 sharp every night, carried her up and down the steps for months after she'd been declawed, shined a flashlight on the floor so she could pounce and catch any elusive target.

We had rescued her from the shelter. At one year, she was no longer a kitten, and she had a hernia that made her belly hang to the floor. No one else would have taken her even though she



was (and still is) exceptionally pretty, with white fur and gray patches. Her white muzzle with gray swatches, her gray tweed hooded sweater, and her white paws like perfect kidskin gloves endeared her to us. She was named after our favorite frozen custard shop, not the Broadway show. We had it so wrong. Dolly is like the Dolly of musical fame: imperious, demanding, and always winning her way.

Now Dolly has settled for me as her one and only, my faithful presence winning her over after all these years. I, after all, did not grow up and leave the house.

She never speaks unless she has something to say. "Meow" and "meow" may look the same on paper, but each meow enunciated differently has a meaning. Her comments range from "Please sit down so I may jump up on your lap for some petting" to "You are so selfish, leaving me alone all day long without a thought to what I might do for amusement. How dare you!" (This spoken in an unpleasant long, piercing meow the minute I walk in the door.)

Then there's the "I need fresh water, and I need it out of the filtered tap, please." And the "I see the bottom of my food dish. Feed me." She also informs me when it's time for popcorn, her favorite evening snack, eaten on the arm of my La-Z-Boy, and making me look like a popcorn slob by the bits she leaves behind.

But the loudest is her rendition of "Only the Lonely," wailed to the accompaniment of a very bad guitar while standing at the bottom of the steps in the early morning before it is time for me to get up. I know she wants to sleep with me, but her snoring is almost as loud as her singing.

She doesn't always use meows to communicate. When I vacuum, she simply comes to where I am working and waits patiently for me to vacuum her, which is as good as a cat massage as far as Dolly is concerned. I dutifully give her a gentle cleaning, taking care around the ears.

After 17 years I think I understand my cat, but I am sure she understands me better. She has put all of her energy into learning my moods and habits. She knows when I am sick and when I am blue. She knows when I am approach-

able and when I am not. She knows what I'll do next even if I can't remember what that is. Dolly has my habits down pat, and if I should stray she will get me back on track by meowing exactly what I am to do.

*Candace A. Hennekens  
Fall Creek*



## Mule Rider No More

I had always loved horses and prided myself on being a good rider. As a teenager I had owned a purebred Arabian which I cared for and rode regularly. So I looked forward to my new job working on the East Coast "VisionQuest" wagon train, whose job description made it sound like I would be riding daily. (VisionQuest is an alternative treatment program for troubled teens.)

At first my routine on the train included trundling along in a van to help set up teepees at the day's campsite. After two months, I was disappointed to have ridden only a mule at the rear of the train once or twice. At this point, our star staff member, a young law student riding at the head of the train, was fatally injured when he cockily rode his horse up a hill in the wrong lane of traffic. During the week we were camped out awaiting messages from the hospital, I forgot my earlier disappointment.

After four months on the train, the director sent me out to Arizona with a "trail quest" for girls. We rode daily, but the horses and mules were as difficult as the girls we were working with. By evening I'd roll off my mount, exhausted and relieved that another day was finally over.

At the end of the two weeks we made it to Tucson, where we rode in a parade. The girls had behaved well and we rewarded them by taking them out on one last trail ride. As I approached the corral on that final day, I noted with distaste that only one mule remained: Bozo, the most stubborn beast VisionQuest owned.

As we headed out, I agreed to take up the rear of the line. Bozo and I fell further and further behind. The big oaf simply would not move, no matter how much I kicked and prodded. At one point he meandered into the sagebrush and down into an empty arroyo, where spiky cactus grew and who knew what reptiles lurked. I tried to rein him back out of the ditch, but he would not heed me.

Suddenly, out of a rock pile, a snake thrust its triangular head at us, hissing venomously. Bozo reared up and then started bucking. I held on for the first two or three bucks, but then I careened off his back and into the grove of cactus. To add insult to injury, the monstrous beast stepped on my back in his haste. I lay there prostrate, terrified and literally breathless. My one salvation was that the snake did not sink its fangs into my flesh.

Within a short time, though it seemed like forever, Karla, the other staff member, and a handful of girls were at my side. Karla asked if I could speak. I tried, but only a dribble of blood leaked out of my mouth. She told me that someone had gone for a Land Rover. My chest hurt so much that I couldn't take a deep breath. Fear caused my heart to pump harder, making breathing even more difficult. I wavered in and out of consciousness. "Try to breathe slowly and deeply," I remember her saying. "Don't panic."

Finally I heard men's voices. One was telling Karla that they would have to carry me a distance to the Land Rover. I steeled myself for the worst sensation yet. As they lifted me and carted me along, it felt like all my ribs were splintering apart. My breathing was more labored than ever. In the Land Rover, we rocked over the rough terrain, each bump rattling my bones. We waited an interminable time at the lodge until an ambulance arrived, whereupon paramedics loaded me in and we left for the hospital.

When I could speak, I asked one of the paramedics if I was going to die. He smiled and said he didn't think so, though my lung was probably punctured or at least indented. Did I have broken ribs? He was sure I had a few.



I lay thinking about the fun I'd had riding horses and how I might never do it again. Three weeks later I took a Greyhound bus back to Florida and was reunited with the wagon train. I had no desire to ride. I was perfectly satisfied to trundle along in a van and set up teepees at the campsite.

*Kirsten Johnson  
Madison*



## Poochie

I have never liked the color of her kitchen floor. It isn't gray, and couldn't be called silver. Maybe "dark concrete" would do it justice. Whatever the color, something changed my mind about it. I think it has something to do with finding my girlfriend's dog dead on it.

I was quite thirsty that day and stopped at my girlfriend's parents' home after a jog. I turned on the kitchen faucet and let the water run a few moments to grow cool. Those moments seemed quiet, and despite the dryness of my mouth, exceedingly peaceful. Poochie wasn't barking.

I left the water running, believing it would become cool once I returned from giving the hiding mutt a few conciliatory pets. I walked toward the living room expecting to find the dog behind the couch or under her favorite coffee table. But I made it no farther than the dining area. There on the tile floor, it looked as though someone had spilled a large bucket of fluffy gray, freshly popped popcorn.

There was a lot of quiet. I thought about how I had never liked Poochie. How sometimes I was afraid to pet her the same way a child is afraid to touch someone with a disease. I thought about how she liked to bark when I moved as slightly as shifting my leg or scratching my head. It made me curious to know what the world would be like if we barked at every observation. Throat lozenges would be popular.

In dog years, Poochie was far my elder. She deserved my respect. But I was troubled by having met Poochie at the point in her life when her joints were growing stiff and her fur was already gray. It was difficult for me to imagine Poochie as a charming, pet-able puppy. I had been told about her dark, appealing fur, but it didn't appear that way in any of the family's sun-filled, overexposed photographs. Poochie looked more like a shadow than a dog.

My girlfriend had grown up with Poochie, had hugged Poochie, and had told Poochie her secrets. Poochie never told them to anyone. They had used each other as pillows and Poochie was an audience for practicing speeches about presidents and volcanoes.

I was jealous of Poochie and those presidents the first time I visited my girlfriend's house. Poochie lay resting her head in my girlfriend's lap. After yawning, she walked proudly to my girlfriend's bedroom. She rewarded herself for the difficult jump up to the waterbed with a charming nap, the same jump and consequent nap that would take me weeks to achieve.

I looked at Poochie. She and I sat together thinking of what to do, the kitchen faucet still running lukewarm, neither of us coming up with any good ideas. Then I realized the dog had already come up with something, something magnanimous and selfless and resounding. The amount of grief Poochie had saved my girlfriend and her family by putting herself down, and by doing it when I would be the one to find her, was as brilliant a stroke of kindness as any dog has ever made.

The least I can do now, when I am invited to have a holiday dinner at my girlfriend's parents' house and take a seat at the dining room table, is to pick the chair that sits right where Poochie lay. Nobody can see beneath the table as my toes pet the Poochie-colored kitchen floor.

*Nicholas Waerzeggers  
Madison*

## Share Your Stories

We welcome your contribution to "In My Words." Stories should be no longer than 600 words. The next topics are:

**THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY**, deadline April 15 (summer issue—extended deadline!). Anything you wanted—a job, a person, an opportunity—that eluded you. Was it for the best, or is it something you still regret?

**ROOMMATES**, deadline June 1 (for the fall issue). They shared your secrets, stayed up all night talking, and left crumbs in the peanut butter jar (among other deplorable habits). Which roommate/s do you remember, and why? Did your relationship endure? All stories welcome, whether funny or painful.

**RESOLUTIONS**, deadline September 1 (winter issue). Is self-improvement possible without resolutions? Has a resolution ever changed your life?

E-mail submissions are greatly preferred. Please send them to:

[jfischer@wisconsinacademy.org](mailto:jfischer@wisconsinacademy.org) with the subject heading "In My Words." You may mail your submission to In My Words, Wisconsin Academy Review, 1922 University Avenue, Madison WI 53726.

We will contact selected authors; names may be withheld from publication on request. We regret that we cannot take phone inquiries or return submitted material.



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# The FBI, then and now

BY ATHAN THEOHARIS

THE DEVASTATING TERRORIST ATTACK of September 11, 2001, has caused many Americans to conclude that the nation confronts a unique crisis, one that requires unprecedented security initiatives. Without downplaying the magnitude of this terrorist attack—resulting in the deaths of 2,976 and billions of dollars in direct and indirect economic losses—this perception of uniqueness is myopic, indeed ahistorical. Americans had believed that they confronted a similar crisis during the early Cold War years, and had responded in ways that are instructive for today. Then, the fear was the possibility not simply of a Soviet atomic attack but of an omnipresent “subversive” adversary capable of recruiting American Communists and Communist dupes to threaten the nation’s security and liberties. These alarmist fears, for example, led elementary school officials to conduct regular air raid drills and instruct their students to “duck and cover” (hiding under their desks) in anticipation of a Soviet atomic attack.

Two other actions both taking place in this state, however, more fully capture this paranoia. The first involved a feigned Communist “coup” orchestrated by American Legionnaires in Mosinee on May 1, 1951, (May Day), for the purpose of exposing the citizenry to the brutal reality of Communist rule. The second occurred in Madison on July 4, 1951 when *Capital Times* reporter John Patrick Hunter solicited 112 residents to sign a petition (consisting of excerpts from the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights) he circulated in a city park. Only one signed this “petition” while 20 questioned whether Hunter was a Communist and others expressed their hesitancy to sign for fear they might lose their jobs.

In retrospect these actions seem comical, even absurd. Yet this overreaction was not inconsequential. For one by-product of this sense of unique crisis was the acceptance of proposed safeguards intended to curb a perceived omnipresent subversive threat—for example, by purging suspected Communists from federal employment, labor unions, universities and public schools, Hollywood, radio, and television—with the state of Indiana even requiring loyalty oaths to obtain a license to wrestle in the state. These were public actions—unknown to the public at the time, a more sinister threat to civil liberties stemmed from the actions of FBI officials.

Only in the 1970s and succeeding decades did we learn of the scope and purpose of FBI surveillance activities during the Cold War years. The public and Congress had at the time granted FBI officials broad discretion for the understood purpose of apprehending spies and saboteurs. At the time, the public did not realize that the FBI’s few publicized successes resulted less from expanded surveillance authority and were instead due either to luck (the defection of former Communists Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers) or a wartime military intelligence project (code-named Venona) under which Soviet consular messages sent between 1940 and 1948 had been intercepted and eventually deciphered, leading, for example, to the discovery of an atomic espionage ring led by Julius Rosenberg.

FBI investigations, moreover, were not confined to suspected spies and saboteurs but sought to anticipate those who might engage in espionage and thus monitored as well those whose sole crime stemmed from their ability to influence the popular culture—whether civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Illinois governor and Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, syndicated columnist Joseph Alsop, folk singer Pete Seeger, folk humorist John Henry Faulk, and actor Rock Hudson.

Furthermore, in their quest to anticipate and contain potential subversives, FBI officials authorized (but only after adopting safeguards to preclude discovery) “clearly illegal” investigative techniques (break-ins, bugs, wiretaps, mail openings); a formal program to “harass, disrupt, and discredit” radical activists (code-named COINTELPRO); and the purging of homosexuals from employment in the federal government, police agencies, and universities (under a code-named Sex Deviates program).

In 1946, moreover, FBI officials launched an “educational campaign” to “influence public opinion”—and in succeeding years leaked information (on the strict condition that the recipient not disclose the FBI’s assistance) to members of Congress (J. Parnell Thomas, Richard Nixon, Patrick McCarran, Joseph McCarthy), congressional committees (House Committee on Un-American Activities, Senate Internal Security Subcommittee), governors (under a code-named Responsibilities Program), and favored reporters and editors (Walter Trohan, Lyle Wilson, Don Whitehead, Fulton Oursler).

That we first learned of the scope of these abusive practices in the 1970s should have been instructive. Contemporary Americans—if intimidated by the likes of Senators McCarthy and McCarran and Congressmen Thomas and Nixon—understood the threat to civil liberties as posed by ambitious if unscrupulous politicians. In reality, the greater threat to civil liberties remained unknown to them, and unknowable because secret, since many believed that the magnitude of the crisis required granting FBI officials wide latitude to safeguard the nation from an adversary that operated in secret and whose objective was worldwide subversion. Our responses to September 11 (enactment of the USA Patriot Act, detention without charges of 1,200 alien residents, mindless high alerts) suggest that we have learned little from this past, and have once again succumbed to programmed fears and insecurities. \*

*Wisconsin Academy Fellow Athan Theoharis is a professor of history at Marquette University. His areas of research include the FBI, McCarthyism, and civil liberties.*

*For more information about the Fellows program, including how to nominate a Fellow, visit [www.wisconsinacademy.org](http://www.wisconsinacademy.org). Next nomination deadline: April 10.*



## A New Way of Giving

Our new gallery and traveling forum series give sponsors something new to hang their hats on (and their logos, too!)

"We've been around for 134 years—but this is the first time it's been easy to find us."

Can't deny that! Anyone who has ever struggled to find our building, which is set back from a secondary street and further hidden by trees, will recognize the truth of those words. They appear as a line of introduction in what will be the Wisconsin Academy's first-ever season playbill, which is now in draft form and will be sent to members this summer.

Much as we love our present location (it will remain home to our offices), we are giddy with the prospect of finally offering our members, exhibiting artists, forum presenters, and the public a much bigger, more accessible, and visually stunning venue.

The Overture Center for the Arts on State Street in downtown Madison, a half-block from the state Capitol, will serve as both a showcase and a springboard for Wisconsin Academy programs, which will continue to draw upon the state's most intriguing artists and thinkers.

We're feeling the excitement from those folks as well. The Wisconsin Academy Gallery, long regarded as a jewel by artists all over the state, consistently received about 70 entries a year for 11 available exhibit slots. Our call for the James Watrous Gallery in Overture brought in more than 200. And when we began seeking presenters for the monthly forum series, which we are now calling "Academy Evenings," we were honored to see how generously people responded with their time and enthusiasm.

The result? A beautiful lineup of events running from September 2004 through June 2005 in the James Watrous Gallery and the adjacent Wisconsin Studio, with a schedule for touring the forums to venues in greater Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. (We plan to start traveling the gallery shows during our second season.)

How to pay for all this? Much of the funding eventually will come from the Pleasant Rowland Great Performances Fund, a \$1.5 million matching grant that must be met by the end of 2006 (pledges made during that period may be paid after the deadline). Apart from that, gifts from individuals and foundation grants will continue to be our mainstay.

However, the visibility of our new location opens the doors to new kinds of support. Here we present "Sponsor a Program." The opportunities we describe are open to corporations, individuals, and other types of organizations who would like their gift to be visible in association with a particular program. Perhaps you have given to the Academy as an individual, but recognize that your company—or a company you know of—

may be an excellent fit for one of these opportunities. Please do contact us with any leads or connections. We are extremely grateful for any help our members can offer to support programs that enrich and benefit us all.

### SPONSOR A PROGRAM

Opportunities for support of the James Watrous Gallery and Academy Evenings:

#### James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy

The James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters will open in Madison's new Overture Center in September 2004 with an exciting schedule of exhibitions for the 2004–05 season. The gallery will continue the Wisconsin Academy Gallery's program of solo exhibitions of contemporary Wisconsin visual artists along with exhibits featuring artwork from Wisconsin collections and other special curated exhibitions. We estimate that up to 18,000 people will attend each exhibit. Selected exhibitions will tour to other venues in Wisconsin.

The James Watrous Gallery is the only noncommercial gallery in Wisconsin with the mission of focusing on work by state artists.



*The Paul Bunyan Murals (detail) by James Watrous (1934)*



## Sponsorship Opportunities

### Major Sponsors, \$10,000 and above

Major Sponsors will be highly visible on all materials related to the James Watrous Gallery during 2004–05. This includes:

- Acknowledgment as major sponsors on a donor board prominently displayed inside the entry to the James Watrous Gallery.
- Recognition with logo in all of our promotional materials in print and on our website, including print advertisements, our season playbill, and exhibition invitations.
- Recognition in the *Wisconsin Academy Review* (donor page).
- Acknowledgment in press releases and media outreach.
- Major sponsors can also choose to earmark their contribution toward sponsorship of a particular exhibition. They will then be highlighted in all promotional materials associated with that event.

### Supporting Sponsors, \$5,000 to \$10,000

Supporting Sponsors will be recognized in the following ways:

- Acknowledgment as a supporting sponsor on our donor board.
- Recognition in print in our season playbill, the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, and the Wisconsin Academy website.
- Supporting sponsors can also choose to earmark their gift to support a particular exhibition. They will then be highlighted in all promotional materials associated with that exhibition, including exhibition invitations, print advertisements, press releases, and other media outreach.

### Benefactor, \$1,000 to \$5,000

Benefactors can choose to support a particular exhibition or a special project, such as an exhibition catalog or artists' lecture series. Gifts can be cash or in-kind services, or a mix of the two. Contact us to discuss donor possibilities that highlight your interests and business capabilities. Benefactors will be recognized on our donor board.

For more information, please contact:

**Michael Strigel**, 608/263-1692, ext. 11  
mstrigel@wisconsinacademy.org

**Gail Kohl**, 608/263-1692 ext. 14  
gkohl@wisconsinacademy.org

Please note: We also have sponsorship opportunities for the *Wisconsin Academy Review*.

## Academy Evenings

Academy Evenings are enlightening, engaging forums for the public on all manner of topics, drawing on our state's rich resources of thought and culture. Presentations may be in the form of panel discussions, lectures, readings, or small performances. Think of neuroscientist Richard Davidson presenting his work on the science of happiness, social scientist Sister Esther Heffernan and ex-convicts discussing the benefits of art in prison, and novelist Margaret George reading from her latest work.

Academy Evenings will be held on a monthly basis in the Overture Center in Madison from September 2004 through May 2005. We will also hold six Academy Evenings with our partnering organizations in greater Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. In addition, we provide opportunities for sponsors to hold Academy Evenings at the venue of their choice in their communities.

Our founding sponsor for this program is the Pleasant Rowland Great Performances Fund.

## Sponsorship Opportunities

### Major sponsors, \$5,000 and above

Major sponsors will be recognized on all materials related to the Academy Evening programs, including:

- Recognition (with logo) in all of our promotional materials in print and on our website. This includes print advertisements, our season playbill, signage at each forum, and flyers and any other materials.
- Recognition in the *Wisconsin Academy Review*.
- Acknowledgment as a major sponsor on our donor board in the James Watrous Gallery.

### Supporting sponsors, \$1,000 to \$5,000

- Supporting sponsors will be recognized in the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, in our season playbill, on our flyers, and in signage at each forum.
- Acknowledgment as a supporting sponsor on our donor board in the gallery.

### Evening sponsors, \$500 to \$1,000

- Those who support one evening forum of their choice will be named in flyers, in the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, and in signage at that particular forum.
- Acknowledgment on our donor board in the gallery.



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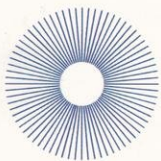


Picture in a puddle: A scene from Ashland's St. Esprit Revelry art parade.

Photograph titled *Rehearse the Revelry* by Amy Kalmon  
(reproduced here upside down)

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