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wisconsin academy review



CELEBRATING
50 YEARS

THE MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Be Happy Like a Monk!
Richard Davidson and
the Science of Serenity



Joseph J. Ellis on our
Feuding Founders
(Were Political Leaders
Really More Civil
Back Then?)



Raised on the Farm:
Michael Perry and
Readers on the Virtues
of Mucking Out



Europe on the Brink,
1930s: Candid Shots
from the Dictatorships



Ben Sidran
Finds His Bliss



Neuroscientist Richard Davidson
studies the connections between
our brains and our emotions.

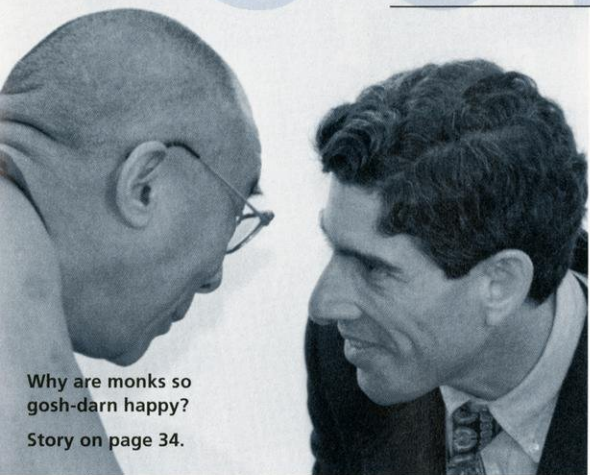
Price: \$5



contents

winter 2004

features



Why are monks so gosh-darn happy?
Story on page 34.

12 TAKING THEM DOWN FROM MOUNT RUSHMORE

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Joseph J. Ellis on our Founding Fathers and “the shrill, accusatory rhetoric” that marked political discourse in their day. Sound familiar? Interview with Ellis by Joan Fischer. This feature is part of the Wisconsin Cultural Coalition’s initiative, A More Perfect Union. More information on page 12.

18 FROM *FOUNDING BROTHERS*: THE SILENCE ON SLAVERY

An excerpt from Joseph J. Ellis’ book, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. Part of a statewide book discussion series called A More Perfect Union: Wisconsin Reads.

25 GALLERIA: EUROPE ON THE BRINK

In 1935, a young man named Theodore Morgan set sail for Europe, camera in hand, and captured vivid scenes from a world devastated by the Depression and overshadowed by Hitler and Stalin. With commentary by UW historian Stanley Payne.

34 THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Neuroscientist Richard Davidson is proving that our emotions can have a positive effect on our mental and physical well-being. His pioneering studies have involved bringing Buddhist monks, including the Dalai Lama, into his UW-Madison lab. Story by Michael Penn. Photos by Jeff Miller.

45 RAISED ON THE FARM: THE VIRTUES OF MUCKING OUT

Acclaimed author Michael Perry and other farm-bred readers on the trials and rewards of their upbringing.

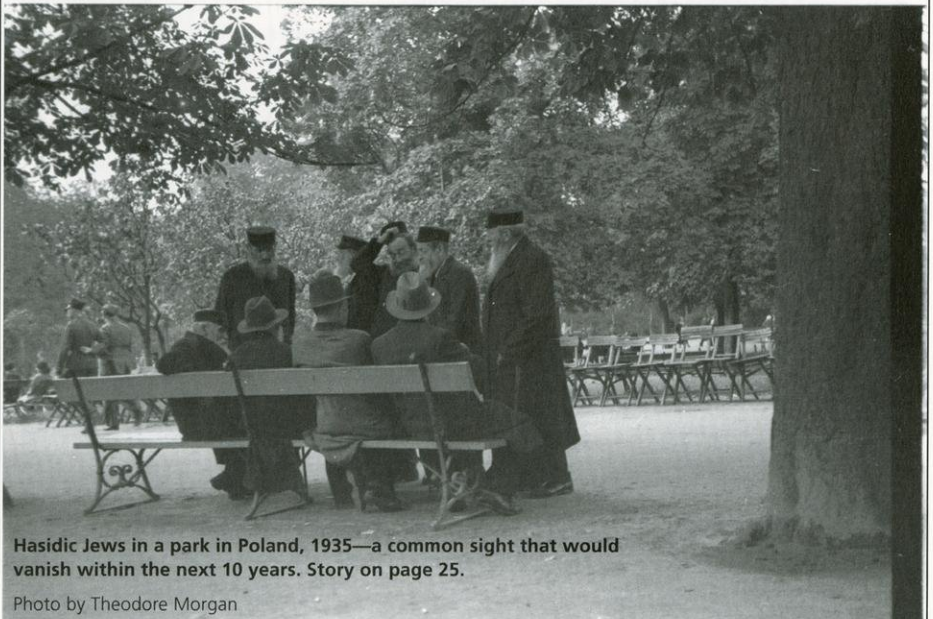
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Hasidic Jews in a park in Poland, 1935—a common sight that would vanish within the next 10 years. Story on page 25.

Photo by Theodore Morgan

contents

winter 2004

departments

3 EDITOR'S NOTES

4 UPFRONT

A Michael Feldman bobblehead, English-Spanish books made in Wisconsin, and the basics of creating a rain garden. Plus, works by winners of a statewide youth poetry contest.

40 SHORT STORY: HECHO IN MEXICO

Who's dumping whom? Third-place short story contest winner Jan Neudeck describes the hallucinatory breakup of a couple on vacation in Mexico.

53 POETRY

Poems by Margaret Benbow, Barbara Cranford, Max Gutmann, Michael Kreisel, Mitchell Metz, and Yvonne Yahnke.

59 INSIDE THE ACADEMY

Waters of Wisconsin will live on in the hands of good stewards throughout the state.

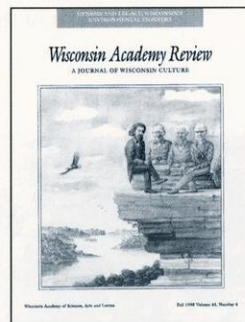
60 THE FELLOWS FORUM

Jazz musician Ben Sidran hits bottom and comes up wiser.

Past and Present

"It's hard in this state to draw a stark moral boundary between the human and the natural, because the two are so utterly entangled here ... and that seems to me to be the moral and political space that all human beings in fact inhabit, whether they recognize it or not. Wisconsin's middle landscape is thus an especially valuable terrain on which to confront the future of humanity on earth."

—William Cronon, Frederick Jackson Turner professor of history, geography, and environmental studies at UW-Madison, writing in the fall 1998 issue of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*.



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 24.



Yeehaw, it's a barn dance! Readers' stories on page 45.

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Our golden year



Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House, Walter J. Kohler, Jr. was in the state house, and Joe DiMaggio married Marilyn Monroe. Polio shots were given on a mass basis, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered school integration, and—attention, sports fans—Alan “The Horse” Ameche won the Heisman Trophy.

It was 1954, the year the *Wisconsin Academy Review* was born.

Let me be honest: she was an ugly baby by today's standards—only 8 ½ by 5 ½, and black-and-white with little artwork and tiny type.

But beauty was not the point; substance was. It's hard to name a significant Wisconsin thinker or artist whose work has not been examined in the *Review*. Often these subjects contributed to the *Review* themselves. A few examples: Gaylord Nelson, Ron Wallace, John Steuart Curry, Paul Carbone, Frederic Cassidy, John Wilde, Gerda Lerner, Reid Bryson, Ellen Kort, Hector DeLuca, and Lynne Cheney (yes, *that* Lynne Cheney, though what we published was only an excerpt from an NEH report).

We had powerhouse special editions such as the one highlighted on page 2, featuring articles by Carl Pope, Nina Leopold Bradley, and William Cronon on Wisconsin's environmental pioneers. Or a “new millennium” issue with pieces by Luna Leopold, Tommy Thompson, Tony Earl, and Katherine Lyall.

I have only been with the *Review* for four years, but already I can identify with my predecessor, Faith Miracle, who writes, “When I left the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, I was aware that I was giving up a privileged position. For almost 10 years I had been entrusted with contributions from some of the finest scholars and talents in the state as well as from writers and artists who were seeing their work in print for the first time. My memories are rich and rewarding.”

On behalf of the Wisconsin Academy, I'd like to thank all my predecessors—Walter Scott, Jack Arndt, Ruth Hine, L.G. Monthey, James Batt, Elizabeth Durbin, Patricia Powell, Faith Miracle, guest editor Art Hove, and Louise Robbins—for their hand in the *Review's* evolution, and for keeping this now-mature publication engaging and relevant over the decades.

ACTUALLY, WE'RE 134

Readers who are picking up the *Review* for the first time may

not know it's a spring chicken compared to the organization that publishes it. This year, the nonprofit Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters turns 134. That's way beyond a golden anniversary, but 2004 promises to be a golden year for the Wisconsin Academy nevertheless.

For some time we've been talking about our move to the new Overture Center for the Arts in downtown Madison. The James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters opens its doors there on Sunday, September 18. This will give Wisconsin artists a gem of a showcase—and the public a larger, more accessible, and more attractive art space than we have been able to offer thus far. Much like the *Review*, the gallery has served as both a venue for Wisconsin's leading artists and a springboard for artists early in their careers. Our opening exhibit will be a retrospective of the past 10 years of Wisconsin Academy shows, including works by T. L. Solien,

Tom Uttech, Warrington Colescott, and Dona Look. You'll hear more about this exhibit in the summer *Review*. And if you're an artist interested in an Overture show, please see our inside back cover—the search is on!

The gallery isn't all we'll have in Overture. In September we're launching a monthly forum series—presentations in the form of lectures, panel discussions, readings, and small performances—on a wide variety of topics. For this new program we thank Pleasant Rowland for her vision and generous support.

Have no fear that Overture will cause us to become Madison-centric. We plan to take our programs from Overture to communities around the state. We are working with venues in greater Milwaukee and the Fox Valley to start this fall,

and in years to come, we plan to add more locations to the mix.

What we hope to do in Overture is help shine a light on our state's most significant contributions to art, thought, and culture, and provide access to as many Wisconsin residents as possible. Our new logo, now on the upper right corner of the *Review* cover, gives that concept a visual image. The “rays” represent the 72 counties of Wisconsin. Shining a light and spreading it has been our task for 134 years. In this, our golden year, Overture will give us the chance to do it better.

We welcome your comments!

Joan Fischer
 jfischer@wisconsinacademy.org
 608/263-1692 ext. 16



The *Review* debut, 1954, with early Wisconsin Academy leaders on the cover.

SCHOOLS UP IN ARMS



Science comes alive with mentors from the field.

Photos courtesy of ARMS

Dolly Ledin expects to send at least a dozen adults back to grade school this semester. She is director of Adult Role Models in Science, or ARMS, a partnership of community volunteers, scientists, and teachers striving to make science meaningful to Madison elementary school students.

The program's goal is to expose kids to the variety of possibilities within the sciences and encourage them to pursue their individual interests.

"We show kids that science isn't restricted to those in white coats and glasses who blow things up," says Ledin, who runs the program from UW-Madison's Center for Biology Education. "We show them that science is asking questions and developing ways to answer those questions. Scientists do all sorts of interesting work, including bird-watching, counting insects, and watching the stars."

ARMS accomplishes this goal by working with UW-Madison and other local science agencies to place volunteers in Madison classrooms. They team up with teachers to enhance the science curriculum and bring science to life.

Whether it's studying hamster behavior, leading field trips through wetland ecosystems, or building Mars land rovers out of Legos, ARMS volunteers engage students in creative ways.

The program was founded in 1990 as a collaborative effort between the Center for Biology Education, Wisconsin Fast Plants, and the Downtown Madison Kiwanis service club. The group provided funding and volunteers to help Emerson

Elementary School create interactive science activities. According to Ledin, ARMS focuses on the needs of low-income students.

The initial success at Emerson enabled the program to reach out to other schools and expand its scope. Today volunteers work in seven Madison elementary schools, helping teachers conduct hands-on investigations, providing expertise on science topics, and mentoring students who need personal attention.

But children aren't the only ones who benefit. ARMS provides teachers with extra hands in the classroom and advice on how to involve and excite kids about science.

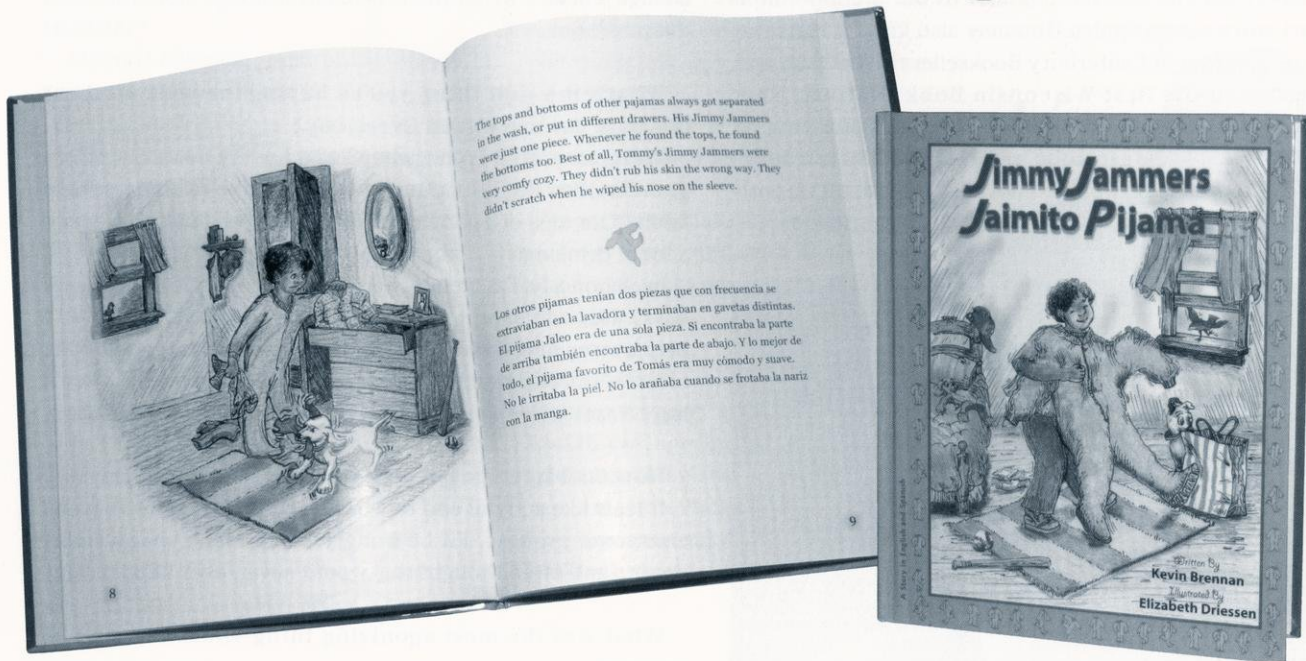
Ledin hopes the program will motivate scientists all over the state to pack up their lunch boxes and head back to elementary school. She looks forward to expanding ARMS to other communities and encourages other universities, parents, and community leaders to unite and share their love of science with children.

"Kids are natural scientists," says Ledin. "They're constantly questioning, wondering, and taking things apart to see how they work. We need to nurture this tendency and show them that this is what science is all about."

For more information on the ARMS program, contact Ledin at 608/222-4865. You can also visit ARMS on the web at www.wisc.edu/cbe/arms.

by John Pederson

Books Without Borders



I say pajamas, you say *pijama*—but Raven Tree Press says both. Based in Green Bay, Raven Tree Press is an independent book publisher specializing in bilingual English/Spanish books for children.

According to publisher Dawn Jeffers, the children's book market is flooded with bilingual books, but Raven Tree Press stands out by specializing in universal story lines and a range of diverse and striking artwork. Their books are not culturally specific, says Jeffers, but draw from such universal themes as friendship and diversity.

The company serves the growing number of bilingual households in the United States, notes Jeffers, and they are used equally among readers of English and Spanish. She says that the presence of English and Spanish text on the same page allows families to share the books at a deeper level. Parents and children can use the text they are most comfortable with or practice their second language.

The stories are brought to life through a wide variety of media, from acrylic paint to computer-enhanced illustration to crayon.

"We show kids that they don't need fancy paints to be artists," says author Kevin Brennan, whose book *Jimmy Jammers/Jaimito Pijama* is beautifully illustrated in pen, ink, and crayon by Elizabeth Driessen. The book highlights the priceless role of grandparents through a child's quest for new pajamas.

Raven Tree Press draws heavily on the talents of Wisconsin residents. Since 2001, the company has published the work of more than 13 local artists and illustrators.

Raven Tree is also spreading its wings outside Wisconsin. The company sells books nationwide and contracts authors from as far away as Britain and Spain.

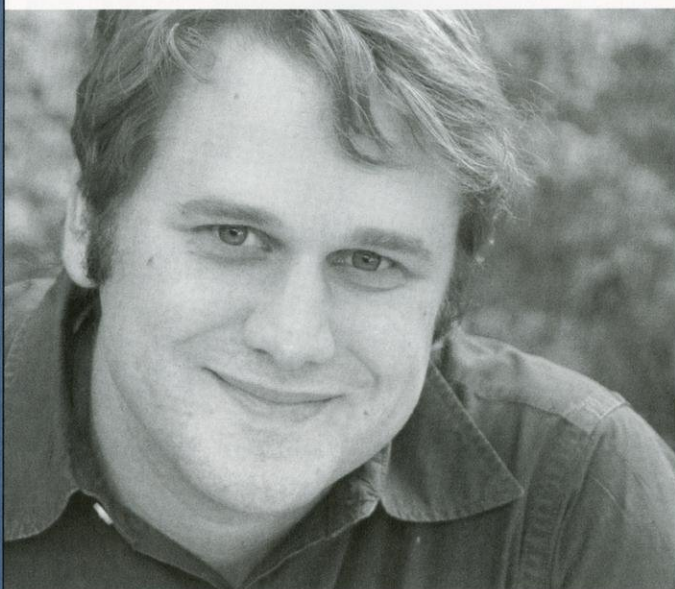
But according to Jeffers, Raven Tree still depends on local storytellers and illustrators. "If you have a story in you, we want to hear it," says Jeffers.

You can visit Raven Tree on the web at www.raventreepress.com.

By John Pederson

first sale!

You may remember Dean Bakopoulos as our literary editor and short story contest judge. You may also know him as the former books buyer at Canterbury Booksellers in Madison and the director of the first Wisconsin Book Festival. Now Bakopoulos is working on an MFA in creative writing at UW-Madison, but you can soon get to know him in a long-awaited dream role: newly minted novelist. We caught up with him a day after the news broke.



What's your book called and what's it about?

The title is *Please Don't Come Back from the Moon*, and it's about a group of young men dealing with the strange disappearance of their fathers against the backdrop of Detroit and its economic and social despair. Oh, and everybody drinks a lot.

Who's publishing it and when will it appear?

Farrar, Straus, & Giroux will publish the book in January 2005. They bought the book in a preempt, which means no other publisher saw it. I have no doubts that I am one lucky SOB, to be 28 years old and to sell my first novel to the first editor who reads it. My über-agent, Amy Williams, deserves all the credit for the deal.

How much are they paying you, sonny?

After taxes and commissions, the money gives me a year or two to be a full-time novelist. My wife and I nearly went broke this year, so I have some major debts to pay off, and then I plan to live as cheaply as possible and work as hard as possible for as long as possible. In the corporate world this is chump

change, but all a writer wants is to have enough money to write the next book.

What's the first thing you're buying for your mother? (Because you are a good Greek boy.)

My mom started crying when I told her my news. So did my grandmother. So did my dad. And sister. We're an emotional family. Our idea of a good time always involves crying. Oh, and a lot of drinking.

In all honesty, I'm blessed with a mother and a father (and in-laws) who will send whatever little extra cash they have to help a struggling novelist buy a new water heater or a new set of tires. I pretty much owe everybody the moon, but they'll have to settle for a signed copy of a novel about the moon.

How does it feel to get your very first book published?

It feels like a joyful end to what really was an agonizing and emotional process. I'll be honest: I had many, many, many doubts and often thought this would never, ever happen.

What was the most agonizing thing about the writing process?

I'm happy, happy, happy when I am at my desk and actually writing. I write pretty much every day for as long as I can. For me, the agony comes when I am away from the desk. I was constantly worried about money, constantly felt pressed for time, and constantly worried that I would never have the mental or physical energy to actually finish a novel. Still, most of all, I feel very, very blessed to be part of this old, old trade.

Note: *Please Don't Come Back from the Moon* was originally published as a short story in the literary journal *Zoetrope: All Story* in the summer 2001 edition. You can read it online at www.all-story.com

Heads-Up: Fiction-Heavy Summer

Look for fiction by rising stars in the summer issue of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, which will feature a piece by each graduate of the new MFA program at UW-Madison, including Bakopoulos, who is contributing the first chapter of his second novel (in progress), titled *The Book Buyer*.

Other authors slated for that issue include C. J. Hribal, whose book *The Company Car* will be published early in 2005 by Random House, and Tenaya Darlington, whose first novel, *Maybe Baby* (Little, Brown), appears in August.

Michael Feldman, Party Animal

YOU KNOW YOU'VE REALLY ARRIVED WHEN A PARTY GAME WITH A BOBBLEHEAD IS CREATED IN YOUR HONOR.

Michael Feldman, host of the public radio quiz show *Whad'ya Know?*, has reached such heights. Created by the Madison-based game company Out of the Box—makers of the award-winning game “Apples to Apples”—the “Whad'ya Know?” game has players draw cards bearing questions and multiple-choice answers similar to those posed on the show. Examples: How long does it take for people to start hating one another in space? (Answer: Eight to nine months.) Who first noted that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire? (Answer: Voltaire.)



Feldman sat still for a few questions about his latest achievement.

Should we see your bobblehead as the capstone of a rewarding career?

Not really—there's still no inflatable.

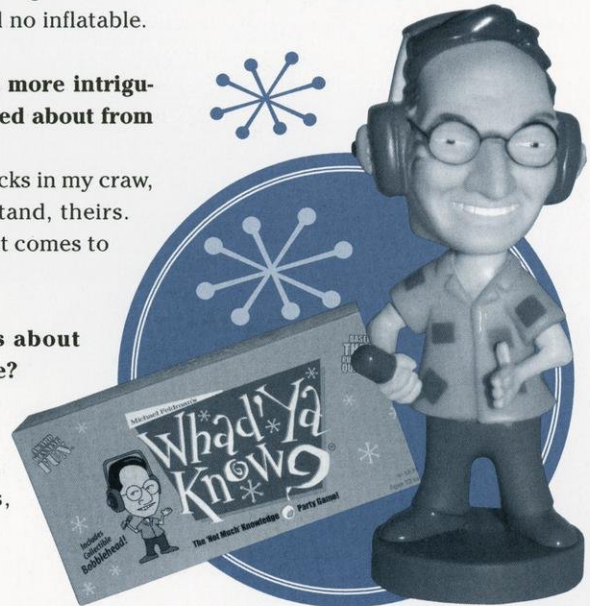
What are some of the more intriguing facts you have learned about from your show?

The sex life of snails sticks in my craw, and, from what I understand, theirs. Snails are no slugs when it comes to hedonism.

Any other comments about your life as a party game?

I wish college kids would stop doing shots every time Jim Packard [show announcer] says, “That's one right.”

The “Whad'ya Know?” game is available at toy and game stores throughout the state. You can also visit www.otb-games.com



Sing a Song of Poetry

Sheboygan composer Charyl Kneever's Zehfus created “PoetSongs: A Year in Poetry and Song” as a musical journey through a Wisconsin year based on texts by 12 poets from the 2002 *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. The composition, recorded in a debut performance at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, is now available on CD.

For each month, a narrator reads program notes that describe the music and how the poem inspired the composer, followed by the poem's author reading his or her work and an ensemble of voices and instruments performing the song. With all that is going on, the performance moves along at a good clip. Explanations of musical resources are succinct and beneficial to the listener.

The musical settings are as varied as the poems. They include such forms as a medieval chant, an art song, an Irish jig, a polka, blues tunes, a rock number, and even variations on our national anthem.

High spirits and comedy rule much of the opus. Seven of the 12 poems chosen made the audience laugh, and Zehfus has a knack for comedy. For Jack Jayne's “St. Pat's Day,” variations on the old jig tune “The Irish Washerwoman” send tenor and flute on a chase for “at least one emerald gene.” Jeff Poniewicz's “Super America Invades Polish America” ends up as a fast-paced polka that imagines the great Polish hero Kosciuszko,

sword in hand, leading the charge against Super America, while the store “charges” its customers. She set Harvey Taylor's November journey, “Getting Ready,” to a rock song for piano and drums, punctuated by brief quotes from Mozart's “The Magic Flute,” imploring the singers to “be truthful.”

Zehfus expresses her lyrical side for Barbara Houghton's “Spring Sonnet,” which trips from tree to tree, gathering sap, while geese return. Her song for Charlotte Cote's “Wolf Walk” captures the wild spirit of an encounter with a female wolf down to the concluding howl requested from the audience. The jaunty blues tune for voice, strings, and trumpet she wrote for “Blackberry Rain” (Jean Ross) lets us taste those fine and wet berries even after getting soaked in a downpour.

For readers whose taste in poetry runs to blood, sex, and death, this celebration will not do. While “Fourth of July Night” alludes to September 11 and Vietnam, the rest of the program is lyric and bounce with moments of poignancy, as “happy as the single seed hopping through space,” as C. X. Dillhunt's October poem puts it.

“PoetSongs: A Year in Poetry and Song” is available for \$10 from Charyl K. Zehfus, 1520 S. 21st St., Sheboygan, WI 53081.

by Richard Roe

An Empty House Full of History

Author Gertrude Stein once wrote, “In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is. That is what makes America what it is.”

No doubt fellow expatriate Wilhelm Dinesen would have agreed with that statement. In 1873, the Danish adventurer and trapper purchased a secluded house on Mole Lake to enjoy the simplicity and serenity of Wisconsin’s northern woods. He later returned to Denmark to father a daughter who would grow up to write one of the most admired works of the 20th century. The deteriorating structure has been empty for more than two decades, but thanks to a statewide restoration effort, it will continue to house a unique story with local roots and international intrigue.



It was built around 1860 to shelter mail carriers traveling between Fort Howard, near Green Bay, and Fort Wilkins in Copper Harbor, Michigan. Dinesen bought it 13 years later and named it Freydenlund, or “Grove of Joy.” He stayed at Mole Lake for more than a year with an Ojibwa housekeeper before returning to Denmark in 1874 to marry and raise his daughter, Karen. Karen would grow up to write *Out of Africa* and other works under the pseudonym, Isak Dinesen. After Dinesen’s return to Denmark, the house became a post office and the home of Ludwig Motzfeldt, the postmaster and first treasurer of Forest County.

Although the tranquility that Wilhelm Dinesen once enjoyed has been replaced by the din of State Highway 55, the stoic structure remains. The years have taken their toll on the Grove of Joy. However, the Dinesen House was recently designated as one of the 10 most endangered sites in the state by the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation. Since then, the Mole Lake Chippewa community has received a matching funds grant from the Jeffris Family Foundation in Janesville to begin restoration of the 143-year-old structure.

Except for the occasional tourist, the house will remain empty, leaving room for a story with roots in Wisconsin and relations to Denmark, Africa, and the big, wide world beyond.

by John Pederson

ALL ABOUT

IT’S NEVER TOO SOON TO THINK SPRING. And even if you don’t have much of a green thumb, here’s one kind of garden you might consider: a rain garden. Rain gardens—which are not your standard gardens, as you’ll read below—are all the rage among the environmentally aware because they replenish our groundwater supply.

Here are some rain garden basics from a person who recently started one: Shaili Pfeiffer, a hydrogeologist with the Wisconsin Academy’s Waters of Wisconsin initiative. But, as Pfeiffer notes, you do *not* need to be a water scientist to start a rain garden!

What is the purpose of a rain garden?

To reduce the amount of water that drains directly to the lakes through the storm sewer system. With a rain garden, you redirect your downspout into a depression (on the scale of 6 inches) in your yard that is typically planted with native flowering plants that can tolerate the increased moisture and also some drought periods. The water directed into the rain garden percolates through the soil and eventually reaches the water table way beneath the ground’s surface, helping to replenish our groundwater supply. Groundwater also feeds lakes and streams, but much more slowly and with sediment and other pollutants filtered out to create a more stable and high quality water supply to local surface water bodies.

After you put one in, every time it rains you get excited that you are helping in a small way with the water quality and flooding problems in your community.

What does the ideal rain garden look like? Does it attract birds or other critters—and what about mosquitoes?

Rain gardens, like any other well-planned garden, can be beautiful and designed with other goals in mind, depending on plant selection. For example, many of the native plants you can use attract butterflies. You can also plan the garden so that something is blooming from early spring through late fall, or plan on using flowers for cutting. Mosquitoes are a big concern when people think about rain gardens, but since I have installed my rain garden, I haven’t had any standing water in the depression. No standing water, no mosquitoes. It surprised me that there hasn’t been any standing water for any length of time; I expected the water to take an hour or two to infiltrate after the rainstorm. Other friends with rain gardens also say that they don’t get standing water.

RAIN GARDENS



Getting fancy: Sculptural rain gardens at the Valencia Lofts condominiums in Middleton.



Photos courtesy of Janet Silbernagel

How hard is it to start one? How do you do it?

You need to do a little bit of planning. The Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission (see website below) has a bunch of web links with information on how to make a rain garden and where to get help. But in general you want to choose a location that is 10 feet from your foundation—*very important*, so that you don't direct water into your basement!—with reasonable proximity to a downspout (so that you aren't moving water long distances), with an area about 10 percent of the roof area that will drain into the rain garden.



Try this at home: Shaili Pfeiffer's rain garden.

You should also know something about your soils. If they contain a lot of clay, water will infiltrate more slowly and you'll need a bigger area, probably up to 25 percent of the roof area.

You then remove sod (if it was lawn before). I used a sod lifter that I rented for \$8 for one day—it made the job a lot easier. It took me a couple of hours with help from the neighbor kids to take sod out of a 100-square-foot area. I then dug out about six wheelbarrowfuls of soil to create a depression. I used my garden hose to help figure out when it was level enough so that water would run evenly through the depression.

I am pretty familiar with prairie plants (since my garden is in full sun), so I knew what would look nice and do well with a lot of moisture in the depression. I drew out a map of where each plant would go and figured on one plant per square foot. Mostly I chose flowering plants with a few grasses since I like them, and I planted them in three or four plant clumps of the same kind. Some of the plants I got from dividing plants in other parts of the yard and some I bought from Bluestem Farms—native plant growers from Sauk County who sell at the Dane County Farmers Market. If you need help choosing plants, I would work with someone who sells primarily native plants and can help you find the right ones.

Where can one view inspiring examples of rain gardens?

Again, the Dane County Lakes and Watershed commission has a great web page with plenty of information and useful links, along with photos. Go to <http://www.co.dane.wi.us/commissions/lakes/raingarden.shtml>.

We are pleased to present the winners of a statewide youth poetry contest sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY), a nonprofit that fosters learning among many of our state's brightest students with a number of challenging, innovative programs. These young poets were the recipients of the Harlan O. Roberson Poetry Competition, an annual event.



For My Grandma, 1910-2003

By Emily Guenther, age 19, Pardeeville

you used to sit, perched
on the chair at the head of the room
slight, straight-white hair, so thin.
queenly, but with a smirk,
watching us tear into carefully wrapped gifts—
queenly but slight, but straight-white hair, but so thin.

to me, you had power.
you kept that house glittery with magic.
there was the bursting wardrobe in the attic,
thick with ancient, musty smells;
there was the candy dish, always running over.
out the back window, birds hovered with florescent wings,
mere feet of space and glass away.
drums of seasoned popcorn appeared from cabinets.
mirrors and perfect spotless glass
ornate, mysterious, familiar, lay in every corner.

it was all tied up in you.

you were such a little body.
it passed; i barely felt the jolt.
standing mere feet of space and tears
from the coffin, i felt the wind
whip raw cold around my ankles.

if only
i could tell you how, like the bite of that wind
you will be remembered
and forgotten
so honestly.



*By Alysse McCanna,
age 18, Appleton*

i am watching him,
as his hair quickly grays
and he succeeds in becoming
distinguished, not old.

he is poolside, skin glistening
with tanning lotion and red
from the hot Caribbean sun,
glasses on the end of his nose,
in a book.

he belongs here, under
the dark green leafy trees,
an island man in
white linen shirt
and panama hat.

his beard is growing thicker.

my mind compares him to
Hemingway
and i know that's not right,
that he's not quite that
suicidal
nor a womanizer,
although he does flirt with the
waitresses.

he confided that he enjoyed
being a bachelor for
two and a half years,
but with every new girlfriend
missed my childish company more.



The Fuchsia

By Annie Strother, age 16, Milwaukee

i remember looking out my
bedroom window after the
sun had set,
headlights thrown like water
over my ceiling and walls,
imagining that every car contained him,
that somewhere,
he was on his way home.

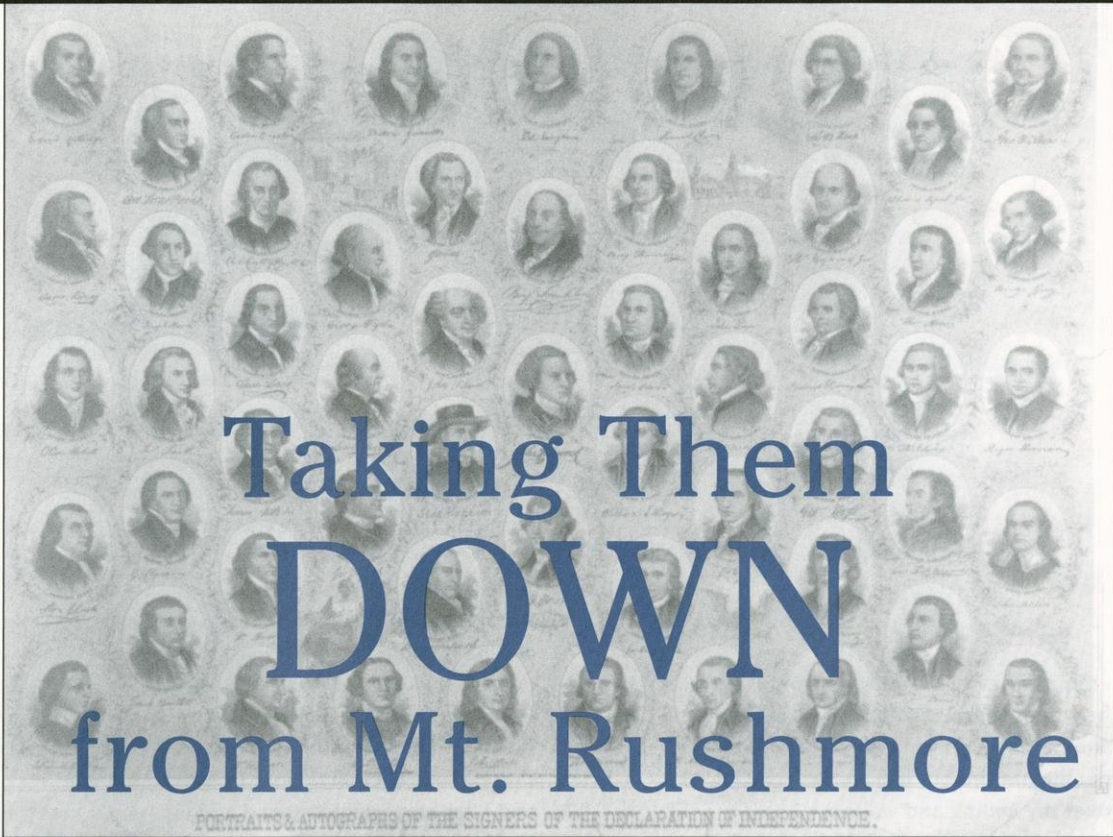
i remember how he looked
when he cried,
sitting on the edge of my bed,
seeming out of place
in the house
that was his.

it hasn't passed,
not all of it,
but it will soon enough,
and he will live on this island
until he dies,
dark shouldered,
aged with intelligence and experience,
like his red wine.

Today, I woke recalling childhood and its simple brightness.
Some days, I greeted the day without dressing, without toast.
I went outside instead, to wonder at fuchsias
and the color that they shed throughout the sunstreaked morning.
Every day, it was present, the fuchsia hues in honeyed invitation.
It seemed that I became them—
that I inhaled the color through open eyes.
On the terrible morning that I woke up to find the fuchsia gone,
I didn't understand its disappearance.
I blinked and slipped one ankle behind the other and
looked down the driveway, ignoring the crater in my chest.
The radiant decadence began to fade in me
and I kept my mouth closed and my hands at my sides.
Today, in my nostalgia, I went walking,
hoping to find the fuchsia and perhaps steal it,
with stretching in my arms and a heavy pot, for my room.
The day was shirted in sun like the mornings of my past
and I walked on the concrete sidewalks and along yellow lines
that looked soft under the blueberry ice cream sky.
I passed by homes that spoke of comfort
and children wrapped in bicycles until
I saw on a fit-to-be-a-gingerbread house a potted fuchsia
casting outlandish pink on a yard of playful children.
I turned to find that each house had a garden
that harbored fuchsia petals and that each
had some pail, truck, or unabashed holler.
But none of the homes were mine;
they did not house the squirrels in the shallow attic,
and applesauce on the stove in October,
the feathers pulled from my pillow
and dropped behind my bed.
I could not hang the fuchsias in my window;
they would not be where they belonged.
I wandered on to a park with a bronze fountain
of children paralyzed in gleeful splendor.
Sitting on a bench, I felt the kiss of shivering
and looked up to see a veil of gnatlike water.
In the fountain, I saw a rainbow that held,
somewhere between violets, reds and blues,
a fuchsia hue, responding water
blessed with color and sent in tiny, sacred packages.

Portraits and autographs
of the signers of the
Declaration of Independence

Courtesy of the
Library of Congress



PORTRAITS & AUTOGRAPHS OF THE SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

Taking Them DOWN from Mt. Rushmore

INTERVIEW BY JOAN FISCHER

A MORE PERFECT Union

The following interview and book excerpt appear as part of A More Perfect Union, an initiative to improve civil discourse and community involvement in politics led by Wisconsin's Cultural Coalition.*

As part of that initiative, the Wisconsin Humanities Council is conducting a statewide book discussion series called Wisconsin Reads. The upcoming selection is *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, by Joseph J. Ellis.

For information on discussion groups at libraries and other venues in your area as well as reading guides and other materials, go to www.wisconsinhumanities.org, or call 608/262-0706.

* Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, Wisconsin Arts Board, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Humanities Council, Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television, and UW Extension. More information on Portal Wisconsin at www.portalwisconsin.org

An interview with historian Joseph J. Ellis, whose book *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* offers a lively, warts-and-all look at the Founding Fathers, their world, and the challenges they faced in creating a nation.

“**M**ostly male, all white, this collection of public figures was hardly typical of the population as a whole; nor was it, on the other hand, a political elite like anything that existed in England or Europe ... Despite recent efforts to locate the title in the twentieth century, they comprised, by any informed and fair-minded standard, the greatest generation of political talent in American history.”

Thus writes historian Joseph J. Ellis in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000). But what makes Ellis' account so valuable is that it is not a hero-by-hero elegy of each Founding Father. Rather, the book

takes an honest look at how these highly fallible human beings lived, worked, and fought together as a collective, with all of their rivalries and imperfections.

We picture dignified figures in powder and wigs who spoke with textbook-ready eloquence and never raised their

voices above drawing room pitch. Writes Ellis: "The political dialogue within the highest echelon of the revolutionary generation was a decade-long shouting match."

In founding the nation, the Fathers were embarking on an uncertain path, Ellis notes—"an improvisational affair in which sheer chance, pure luck—both good and bad—and specific decisions made in the crucible of specific military and political crises determined the outcome."

In other words, in some ways those times were not so different from our own, and perhaps we can learn more from the greatest leaders of our past if we stop idealizing them.

Why "Founding Brothers" and not "Founding Fathers"? Does this change of a standard phrase signal a different approach to how we might think about the men who founded our nation?

I think I selected the title brothers rather than fathers because that's the way the men back then referred to themselves, as a band of brothers. And it also is a title that suggests I wanted to talk about these people who were not as aloof or distant from us as fathers are from their children, that they are on our level. Brothers have affection and they have rivalry, and that is very much part of what I saw in that cohort of prominent American leaders.

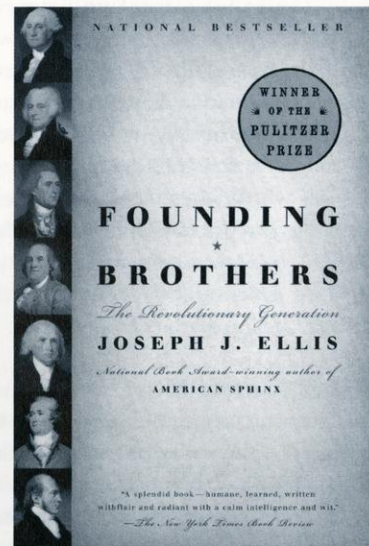
You write that "in terms of shrill accusatory rhetoric, flamboyant displays of ideological intransigence, intense personal rivalries, and hyperbolic claims of imminent catastrophe," the politics of the 1790s "has no equal in American history." But this description sounds so familiar! What differences and what similarities do you see in political discourse then and now?

It was similar, as you point out, in the very shrill and the very hyperbolic rhetoric people used. John Adams was accused of bringing a batch of prostitutes over on a boat from England so that he could satisfy his sexual appetites in the presidential mansion. Jefferson was accused of having relations with a slave, which turned out to be true. In the election of 1800, the president of Yale, Timothy Dwight, announced to the graduates that if they ever voted for Thomas Jefferson, he would revoke their degrees.

Part of the difference is that there were no rules at that time. Political parties hadn't come into existence in a formal way, and they were kind of making it up as they went along. There were also no rules for the press, and most of the mainstream press was more like the *National Enquirer* now than any reputable paper. And so there was a no-holds-barred quality to political debate and propaganda. I'm not being hyperbolic myself in describing the language and behavior of the political leaders back in the 1790s in those terms. And it usually surprises people who are not aware that these otherwise august characters like the Founding Fathers are engaged in this kind of really sharp-

edged and highly lethal political argument.

Finally, there was as yet no idea of what we would call a legitimate opposition. If you weren't a Federalist, and you were arguing against the Federalist Party, as the Republicans were, you were regarded as a traitor. And vice versa. There wasn't the sense of institutionalized rules of the game in place yet. As a result, it's a particularly boisterous and combustible moment.



Author Joseph J. Ellis

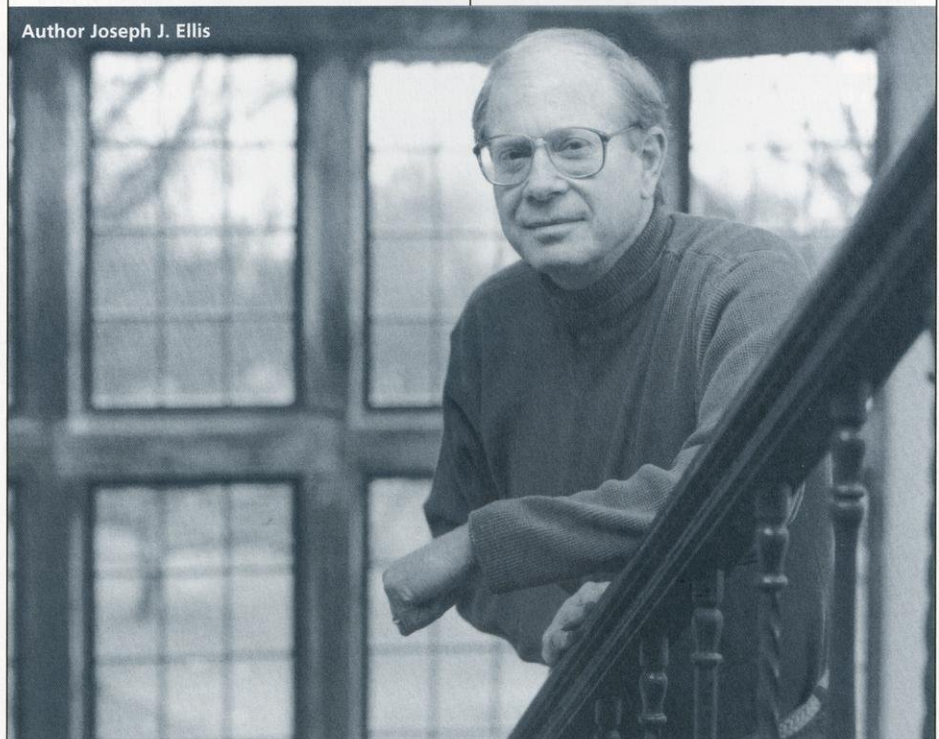


Photo courtesy of Random House

We have had over 200 years to come to think of ourselves as a single people. National identity is not something that forms quickly or easily, and we need to keep that in mind. It didn't happen that way with us.

You note that "the American people" did not yet exist in our founding days—indeed, that the primary purpose of the Constitution was to help form a people—and that a relatively small group of leading politicians who knew each other well and who were "America's first and in many respects its only natural aristocracy" wrote the documents that established our nation.

In other words, these leaders did not function in a context that we would today understand as a democracy. How were their challenges different from challenges facing leaders today?

Back in the late 18th century, the word "democracy" was an epithet. Nobody on either side of the political divide called themselves democrats. A democrat was somebody who believed in mob rule, who was an anarchist, or a disreputable appeaser of public opinion. Sometimes they would *accuse*

Thomas Jefferson of being a democrat, for example.

And at the same time, as an example, in 1776 when they're getting ready to write the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson writes back that he's really unhappy that he's in Philadelphia rather than in his own country. When he talked about his country, he meant Virginia. And Adams thought of himself as a Massachusetts man, and as a New Englander. Loyalties and allegiances were local and state. They hadn't reached any higher national identity. The term "United States" was a plural noun. The United States *are*, not the United States *is*. It really was going to take 30 or 40 years for this collection of state and regional identities to cohere into something that was a more legitimate nation. The point of the book is that the men I'm describing, the brothers, are the collection of leaders, and they really are a collective, that holds us

together until the laws and the overarching national allegiances can cohere.

It's a different time than now in the fundamental sense that we have had over 200 years to come to think of ourselves as a single people. I think it should help us understand places like Iraq or the Balkans, where the term Yugoslavia or the term Iraq refers to what really is a collection of different ethnic groups with different regional identities. The only force that held them together was the strong-armed rule of Tito, and the same in Iraq with Saddam Hussein. National identity is not something that forms quickly or easily, and we need to keep that in mind. It didn't happen that way with us.

Do we have any leaders today, or in recent history, that you feel rank with our Founding Brothers, or do we just not make 'em like we used to?

[laughs] I've been asked that question in different contexts and no matter what I say, people get upset. I think it was a unique moment in American history that is difficult to duplicate. What makes it unique was the critical character of the political challenge facing that generation. It was the greatest challenge in American history. I know there'll be students of the Civil War who would question that, but I think that the creation of the American nation and the defeat of Britain in the Revolutionary War were very improbable achievements. The likelihood of this nation defeating the leading military power in the world, and the likelihood of this collection of colonies coming together and staying together as a coherent nation was regarded as very, very low. And the notion that you could have a republic, a republican form of government, that worked over such a large and diffuse land mass and population was also unprecedented.

It was this crisis that created leadership. The greatest presidents in American history are Washington, Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, presidents who were there during great crises: the founding of the republic, the

Signing the Declaration of Independence.

Painting by John Trumbull courtesy of the Library of Congress



Civil War, the Depression, and the totalitarian threat of Germany and Japan. In some sense, maybe what I'm suggesting is that we're not facing any crisis that approximates what they faced, and therefore the need for political leadership is not as great. I don't think the terrorist threat rates on any reasonable scale as high as the Civil War or the American Revolution. In some sense we're a government of laws rather than of men, and we only get great leaders when we're really in difficult situations.

For which of the Founding Brothers did you end up feeling the most admiration, and why? Which particular characteristics do you value about each of them?

The person whom I have the greatest affection for is John Adams. If you read all the papers of all these folks, there is an honesty in Adams. You don't just get some rhetoric, you're getting a man who's really talking from the heart. He's the most candid of them all. He tells you not only what he's thinking, but what he's feeling at any moment. And in that sense he's a kind of window into the mentality of all of them, since they often concealed

It's a collection of leaders who don't kill each other off, but argue with each other. I think that makes the American Revolution really different.

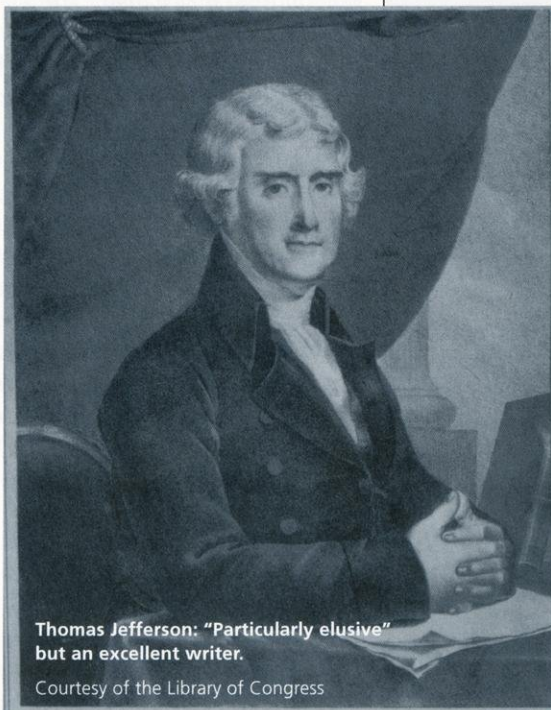
some of their deepest thoughts. Jefferson is particularly elusive. Washington is tough, too. He's a very close-to-the-vest kind of character.

What makes them fascinating is that there are different strengths in each of them. I think that Benjamin Franklin is the wisest. Alexander Hamilton is the smartest. If you gave an SAT test, he would get the highest score. I think that Washington is the greatest leader. Jefferson is the best writer. Madison is the best political tactician.

They are a diversity of talents, and that's what allows this collective to be so effective. The correspondence between Adams and Jefferson in the twilight days of their lives really is a marvelous example of this kind of phenomenon, namely, they recognize in the other man qualities that they don't have, and they in some ways *complete* each other when they're together. The American Revolution is a coming

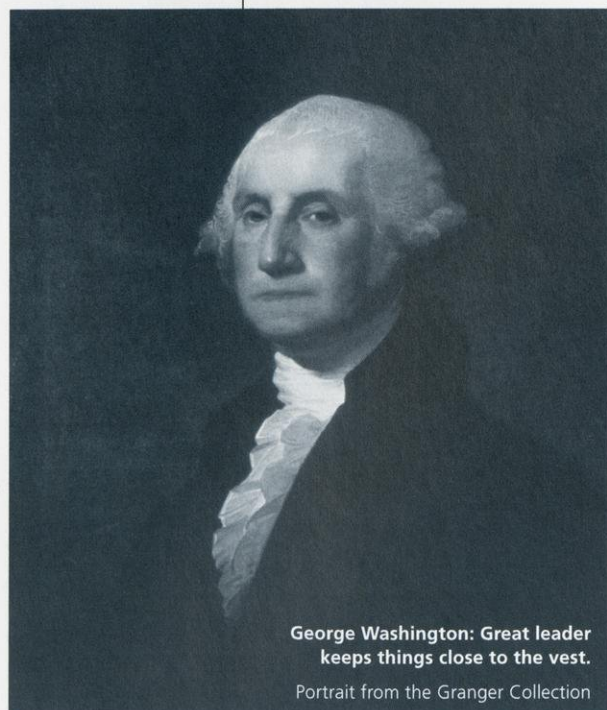
together of different attitudes and temperaments that work together to achieve a certain goal. No single person can possibly have all of those qualities, only a collection can. And in the end, while Washington is the first among equals, the American Revolution does not produce the equivalent of a Napoleon or a Stalin or a Mao. There's not a single person who ends up embodying the revolution and then, usually, liquidating his enemies. It's a collection of leaders who don't kill each other off, but who argue with each other. I think that makes the American Revolution really different.

That leads to a question related to our discussion about civil discourse as part of the A More Perfect Union initiative. How would you define civil discourse, and what do you feel are the biggest



Thomas Jefferson: "Particularly elusive" but an excellent writer.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



George Washington: Great leader keeps things close to the vest.

Portrait from the Granger Collection

The Founding Brothers postponed a direct debate about slavery because they knew it was the one issue that would destroy the infant republic at the moment of its birth.

barriers to it today? Were we closer to achieving it at any point in the past?

The term “civil discourse” didn’t exist back in the late 18th century. But if by civil discourse we mean honest discussion and debate about matters that relate to the nation and the needs of the people in a way that allows for possibilities and options to be clarified, that’s the one thing they managed to do as

well as or better than any other people at any time in history.

In part it was because pamphlets and the availability of reading material coming off presses were for the first time becoming possible. It’s also the case that the literacy rate in the United States was much higher than that in England or Europe. So it’s the first people to be literate and have in their

hands the material that could be read and talked about.

The American Revolution was a collective enterprise, not just the collective of leaders I’ve been talking about, but a mass movement. You couldn’t stay uninvolved in it because the clothes you wore, for example, were regarded as a political statement. They’re boycotting British goods and woolen goods, and if you’re wearing the clothes made from those goods, then you’re making a statement that you oppose the boycott. And if you end up using the stamps that the Stamp Act has required, they’ll come and tear your house down! So the level of involvement was higher. And while we obviously didn’t have television and radio and those kinds of national technologies available, based on the writing that has survived in the newspapers and private papers of these people, there was a level of intellectual engagement that I think we should continue to regard as an ideal toward which to aim.

It’s not that God smiled on them with some spiritual blessing, nor was there something special in the water back then. The historical conditions and the severity of the crisis *created* leadership.

In this edition we are running an excerpt from the chapter “The Silence,” which examines the debate about slavery. How did the need to get the Constitution ratified influence that debate?

In the Constitutional Convention, slavery was such an intractable subject that they decided not to face it directly, and to be ambiguous about what the Constitution said about slavery. The word “slavery” is never used in the Constitution. The word “slave” is never used. The term “black person” is never used; it’s “that species of property.” And the fact that there are these circumlocutions is the best evidence that they realized how wrong slavery is, and how, in the end, if they tried to resolve the slavery question directly at that moment, the union would fall apart. South Carolina and Georgia would walk out, or at least that’s what they threat-

John Adams: The most candid Founding Brother speaks from the head and the heart.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



ened to do. And so they postponed a direct debate about slavery because they knew it was the one issue that would destroy the infant republic at the moment of its birth.

Was there no other path the Founding Brothers might have taken?

If you're looking back with all the advantages of hindsight, the possibility for implementing some kind of gradual emancipation program was present in the 1780s and even into the 1790s. Once you get past that time, it's difficult because the numbers start to go up, the number of actual enslaved persons. That created cost problems. The gradual emancipation scheme would have entailed compensation to the owners. The best way to get that money is to sell western land that the government owns, and create some kind of endowment that would be used to compensate owners as they freed slaves over a long period of time.

The other problem is the presumption on the part of everybody advocating emancipation that, once freed, the black population would have to be moved to some other location, back to Africa or the Caribbean. That was going to cost a lot of money. There was no assumption that people of different colors could live together in the same society peacefully. There was some talk of a kind of homelands policy, moving the free black population to the west in the same way they eventually did to the Native Americans.

It's interesting. If in fact they had successfully adopted a gradual emancipation program, that would have meant we didn't have the Civil War. But it would also have meant that our current population would not have the same mix of African Americans in it, because the African American population now in the United States is descended by and large from those people who were enslaved, and they would have been sent back to Africa.

It [the abolition of slavery] didn't happen. And I think it's one of the great failures of the founding generation, but it's also a failure that we need to think

about and argue about. You can create other plausible scenarios, as I just did with regard to gradual emancipation, but essentially the leaders that I've focused on all recognized that slavery was wrong, that slavery was incompatible with the principles on which the American Revolution was based, and yet it was the one issue that, if you tried to address it directly, would destroy the nation at the moment of its birth. So it wasn't a moral failure on their part. They recognized the immorality. It was perhaps an unsolvable problem. Some problems have no political solution.

We don't like to think about that.

No. It's un-American.

You talked earlier about what defines civil discourse. What do you feel are the biggest barriers to civil discourse today?

I think that talk radio, as it currently exists, gives us a model of uncivil discourse, namely a kind of argumentative style that is rooted in demeaning and insulting people rather than taking seriously the ideas of people that you don't agree with, which is one of the central features of truly civil discourse. I think that the political process, the primary system, is driven by money and the needs of the media rather than by the engagement with ideas and programs that should be at the center of a real civil discourse. If you are a very thoughtful person and you want to run for national office, you'll find that being thoughtful is suicidal, that you won't get elected.

As a result, the technology and the media and the process of our politics make it very difficult to have an honest discussion on what is the environmentally correct policy on any issue, or on what constitutes a vital threat to American national security. I don't have a cure for these problems and these ills. When we do see real civil discourse, it's like what the Supreme Court said about pornography—we cannot define it, but

we know it when we see it. As I see it, I think that John McCain has been a kind of contrarian politician who speaks truth to power, who takes on established constituencies even when it's politically dangerous, like the issue of campaign finance reform. Whenever we see it, let's do as much as we possibly can to encourage it. *

*Joseph J. Ellis is a professor of history at Mount Holyoke College. His other books include **American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson** (winner of the National Book Award in 1997) and **Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams**. He currently is working on a biography of George Washington.*

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

Ellis in Wisconsin

Joseph J. Ellis will visit Wisconsin soon as part of the A More Perfect Union: Wisconsin Reads initiative. For more information, go to www.wisconsinhumanities.org, or call the Wisconsin Humanities Council at 608/262-0706.



The Silence on Slavery

The Founding Fathers' failure to force a decision on emancipation put off a confrontation that would culminate in the Civil War. This excerpt about the slavery debate in our nation's founding days is from a chapter called "The Silence" in *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* by Joseph J. Ellis.

BY JOSEPH J. ELLIS

Five generations of slaves on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862

Photo by Timothy H. O'Sullivan courtesy of the Library of Congress

REGARDING SLAVERY AND THE CONSTITUTION, WRITES ELLIS:

"Neither side got what it wanted in Philadelphia in 1787. The Constitution contained no provision that committed the newly created federal government to a policy of gradual emancipation, or in any clear sense placed slavery on the road to ultimate extinction. On the other hand, the Constitution contained no provisions that specifically sanctioned slavery as a permanent and protected institution south of the Potomac or anywhere else. The distinguishing feature of the document when it came to slavery was its evasiveness. It was neither a 'contract with abolition' nor a 'covenant with death,' but rather a prudent exercise in ambiguity. The circumlocutions required to place a chronological limit on the slave trade or to count slaves as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation in the House, all without ever using the forbidden word, capture the intentionally elusive ethos of the Constitution. The underlying reason for this calculated orchestration of noncommitment was obvious: Any clear resolution of the slavery question one way or the other rendered ratification of the Constitution virtually impossible."

Against this backdrop, Ellis offers the following portrayal of the Founding Brothers and the slavery debate in their time:

ONE PERSON STEPPED FORWARD to answer the challenge, unquestionably the oldest, probably the wisest, member of the revolutionary generation. (In point of fact, he was actually a member of the preceding generation, the grandfather among the fathers.) Benjamin Franklin was very old and very ill in March of 1790. He had been a fixture on the American scene for so long and had outlived so many contemporaries—he had once traded anecdotes with Cotton Mather and was a contemporary of Jonathan Edwards—that reports of his imminent departure lacked credibility; his last act seemed destined to go on forever; he was an American immortal. If a twentieth-century photographer had managed to commandeer a time machine and travel back to record the historic scenes in the revolutionary era, Franklin would have been present in almost every picture: in Philadelphia during the Continental Congress and the signing of the Declaration of Independence; in Paris to draft the wartime treaty with France and then almost single-handedly (assist to John Adams) conclude the peace treaty with Great Britain; in Philadelphia again for the Constitutional Convention and the signing of the Constitution. Even without the benefit of photography, Franklin's image—with its bemused smile, its bespectacled but twinkling eyes, its ever-bald head framed by gray hair flowing down to his shoulders—was more famous and familiar to the world than the face of any other American of the age.

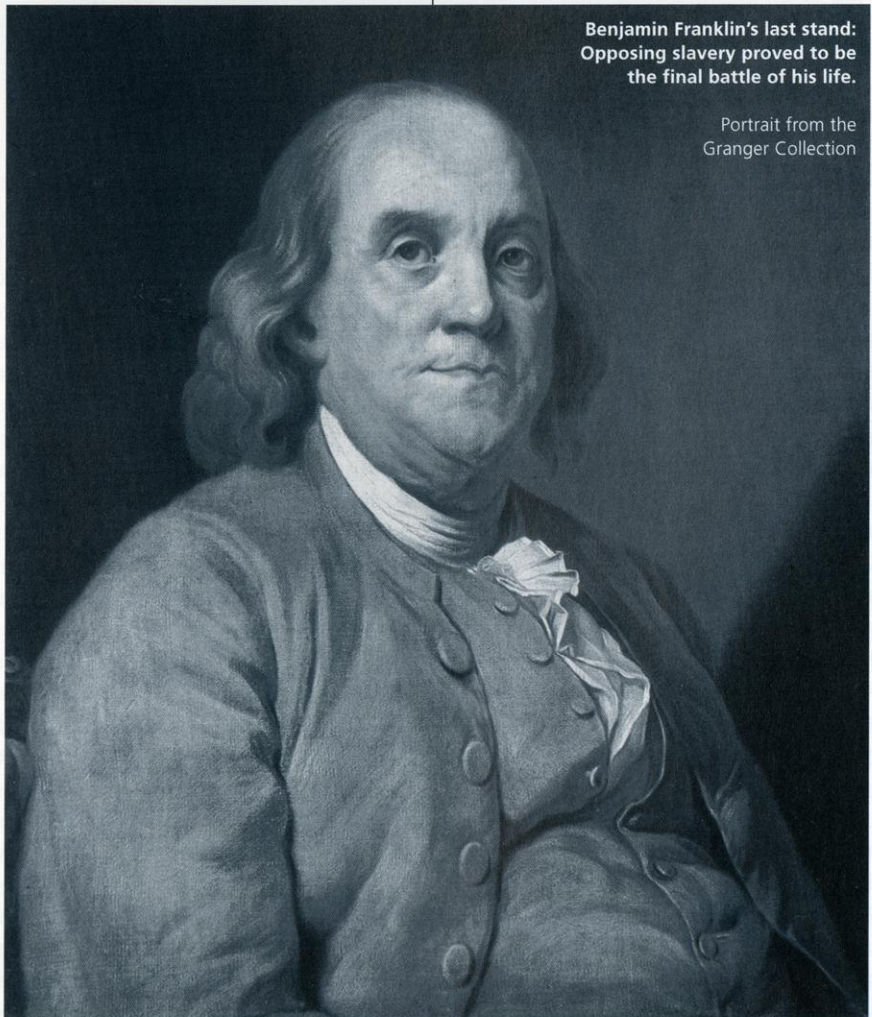
What Voltaire was to France, Franklin was to America, the symbol of mankind's triumphal arrival at modernity. (When the two great philosopher-kings embraced amid the assembled throngs of Paris, the scene created a sensation, as if the gods had landed on earth and declared the dawning of the Enlightenment.) The greatest American scientist, the most deft diplomat, the most accomplished prose stylist, the

What Voltaire was to France, Franklin was to America, the symbol of mankind's triumphal arrival at modernity. Franklin defied all the categories by inhabiting them all with such distinction and nonchalant grace.

sharpest wit, Franklin defied all the categories by inhabiting them all with such distinction and nonchalant grace. Over a century before Horatio Alger, he had invented the role and called it Poor Richard, the original self-taught, homespun American with an uncanny knack for showing up where history was headed and striking a folksy pose that then dramatized the moment forever: holding the kite as the lightning struck;

lounging alongside Jefferson and offering witty consolations as the Continental Congress edited out several of Jefferson's most cherished passages; wearing a coonskin cap for his portrait in Paris; remarking as the delegates signed the Constitution that, yes, the sun that was carved into the chair at the front of the room did now seem to be rising.¹

In addition to seeming eternal, ubiquitous, protean, and endlessly quotable,



Benjamin Franklin's last stand: Opposing slavery proved to be the final battle of his life.

Portrait from the Granger Collection

Franklin resumed his plea that slavery be declared incongruous with the revolutionary principles on which the nation was founded. He chose to make the anomaly of slavery the last piece of advice he would offer his country.

Franklin had the most sophisticated sense of timing among all the prominent statesmen of the revolutionary era. His forceful presence at the defining moment of 1776 had caused most observers to forget that, in truth, Franklin was a late-comer to the patriot cause, the man who had spent most of the 1760s in London attempting to obtain, of all things, a royal charter for Pennsylvania. He had actually lent his support to the Stamp Act in 1765 and lobbied for a position within the English government as late as 1771. But he had leapt back across the Atlantic and onto the American side of the imperial debate in the nick of time, a convert to the cause, who, by the dint of his international reputation, was quickly catapulted into the top echelon of the political leadership. Sent to France to negotiate a wartime alliance, he arrived in Paris just when the French ministry was ready to entertain such an idea. He remained in place long enough to lead the American delegation through the peace treaty with England, then relinquished his ministerial duties to Jefferson in 1784, just when all diplomatic initiatives on America's behalf in Europe bogged down and proved futile. (When asked if he was Franklin's replacement, Jefferson had allegedly replied that he was his successor, but that no one could replace him.) He arrived back in Philadelphia a conquering hero and in plenty of time to be selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.²

This gift of exquisite timing continued until the very end. In April of 1787, Franklin agreed to serve as the new president of the revitalized Pennsylvania Abolition Society and to make the anti-slavery cause the final project of his life. Almost sixty years earlier, in 1729, as a

young printer in Philadelphia, he had begun publishing Quaker tracts against slavery and the slave trade. Throughout the middle years of the century and into the revolutionary era, he had lent his support to Anthony Benezet and other Quaker abolitionists, and he had spoken out on occasion against the claim that blacks were innately inferior or that racial categories were immutable. Nevertheless, while his antislavery credentials were clear, at one point Franklin had owned a few household slaves himself, and he had never made slavery a priority target or thrown the full weight of his enormous prestige against it.

Starting in 1787, that changed. At the Constitutional Convention he intended to introduce a proposal calling for the inclusion of a statement of principle, condemning both the slave trade and slavery, thereby making it unequivocally clear that the founding document of the new American nation committed the government to eventual emancipation. But several northern delegates, along with at least one officer in the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, persuaded him to withdraw his proposal on the grounds that it put the fragile Sectional Compromise, and therefore the Constitution itself, at risk. The petition submitted to the First Congress under his signature, then, was essentially the same proposal he had wanted to introduce at the Convention. With the Constitution now ratified and the new federal government safely in place, Franklin resumed his plea that slavery be declared incongruous with the revolutionary principles on which the nation was founded. The man with the impeccable timing was choosing to make the

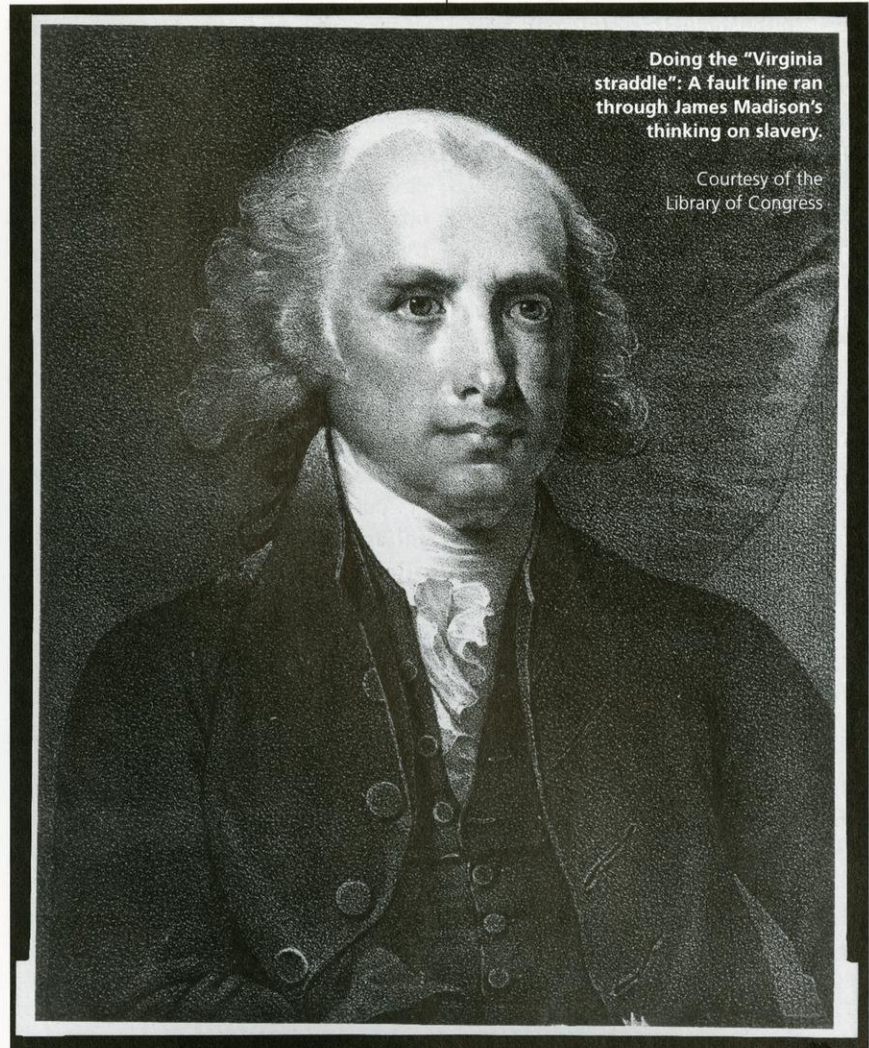
anomaly of slavery the last piece of advice he would offer his country.³

Though his health was declining rapidly, newspaper accounts of the proslavery speeches in the House roused him for one final appearance in print. Under the pseudonym "Historicus," he published a parody of the speech delivered by James Jackson of Georgia. It was a vintage Franklin performance, reminiscent of his bemused but devastating recommendations to the English government in 1770 about the surest means to take the decisive action guaranteed to destroy the British Empire. This time, he claimed to have noticed the eerie similarity between Jackson's speech on behalf of slavery and one delivered a century earlier by an Algerian pirate named Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim.

Surely the similarities were inadvertent, he suggested, since Jackson was obviously a virtuous man and thus incapable of plagiarism. But the arguments and the very language were identical, except that Jackson used Christianity to justify enslavement of the Africans, while the African used Islam to justify enslavement of Christians. "The Doctrine, that Plundering and Enslaving the Christians is unjust, is at best *problematical*," the Algerian had allegedly written, and when presented with a petition to cease capturing Europeans, he had argued to the divan of Algiers "that it is in the Interest of the State to continue the Practice; therefore let the Petition be rejected." All the same practical objections to ending slavery were also raised: "But who is to indemnify their Masters for the Loss? Will the State do it? Is our Treasury sufficient. . .? And if we set our Slaves free, what is to be done with them . . .? Our people will not pollute themselves by intermarrying with them." Franklin then had the Algerian argue that the enslaved Christians were "better off with us, rather than remain in Europe where they would only cut each other's throats in religious wars." Franklin's pointed parody was reprinted in several newspapers from Boston to Philadelphia, though nowhere south of the Potomac. It was his last public act. Three weeks later, on April 17, the founding grandfather finally went to his Maker.⁴

Prior to his passing, however, the great weight of Franklin's unequivocal endorsement made itself felt in the congressional debate and emboldened several northern representatives to answer the proslavery arguments of the Deep South with newfound courage. Franklin's reputation served as the catalyst in an exchange, as Smith of South Carolina attempted to discredit his views by observing that "even great men have their senile moments." This prompted rebuttals from the Pennsylvania delegation: "Instead of proving him superannuated," Franklin's antislavery views showed that "the qualities of his soul, as well as those of his mind, are yet in their vigour"; only Franklin still seemed able "to speak the language of America, and to call us back to our first principles"; critics of Franklin, it was suggested, only exposed the absurdity of the proslavery position, revealing clearly that "an advocate for slavery, in its fullest latitude, at this very stage of the world, and on the floor of the American Congress too, is a *phenomenon in politics*. . . . They defy, yea, mock all belief." William Scott of Pennsylvania, his blood also up in defense of Franklin, launched a frontal assault on the constitutional position of the Deep South: "I think it unsatisfactory to be told that there was an understanding between the northern and southern members, in the national convention"; the Constitution was a written document, not a series of unwritten understandings; where did it say anything at all about slavery? Who were these South Carolinians to instruct us on what Congress could and could not do? "I believe," concluded Scott, "if Congress should at any time be of the opinion that a state of slavery was a quality inadmissible in America, they would not be barred . . . of prohibiting this baneful quality." He went on for nearly an hour. It turned out to be the high-water mark of the antislavery effort in the House.⁵

In retrospect, Franklin's final gesture at leadership served to solidify his historic reputation as a man who possessed in his bones a feeling for the future. But in the crucible of the moment, another quite plausible definition of leadership was circulating in the upper reaches of the gov-



Doing the "Virginia straddle": A fault line ran through James Madison's thinking on slavery.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

ernment. John Adams, for example, though an outspoken enemy of slavery who could match his revolutionary credentials with anyone, concurred from his perch as presiding officer of the Senate when that body refused to permit the Quaker petitions to be heard. Alexander Hamilton, who was a founding member of the New York Manumission Society and a staunch antislavery advocate, also regretted the whole debate in the House, since it stymied his highest priority, which was approval of the financial plan. And George Washington, the supreme Founding Father, who had taken a personal vow never to purchase another slave and let it be known that it was his fondest wish "to see some plan adopted, by which slavery in this country may be abolished by slow, sure, and imperceptible degrees," also concurred that the ongoing debate in the House was an embarrassing and dangerous nuisance

that must be terminated. Jefferson probably agreed with this verdict, though his correspondence is characteristically quiet on the subject. The common version of leadership that bound this distinguished constellation together was a keen appreciation of the political threat that any direct consideration of slavery represented in the still-fragile American republic. And the man who stepped forward to implement this version of leadership was James Madison.⁶

If Franklin's great gift was an uncanny knack for levitating above political camps, operating at an altitude that permitted him to view the essential patterns and then comment with great irony and wit on the behavior of those groveling about on the ground, Madison's specialty was just the opposite. He lived in the details and worked his magic in the context of the moment, mobilizing those forces on the ground

more adroitly and with a more deft tactical proficiency than anyone else. Taken together, he and Franklin would have made a nearly unbeatable team. But in 1790, they were on different sides.

Madison's position on slavery captured the essence of what might be called "the Virginia straddle." On the one hand, he found the blatantly proslavery arguments "shamefully indecent" and described his colleagues from South Carolina and Georgia as "intemperate beyond all example and even decorum." Like most of his fellow Virginians, he wanted it known that he preferred an early end to the slave trade and regarded the institution of slavery "a deep-rooted abuse." He claimed to be genuinely embarrassed at the stridently proslavery rhetoric of the delegates from the Deep South and much more

comfortable on the high moral ground of his northern friends.⁷

But a fault line ran through the center of his thinking, a kind of mysterious region where ideas entered going in one direction but then emerged headed the opposite way. For example, when urged by Benjamin Rush, the Philadelphia physician and abolitionist, to support the Quaker petitions in the House, Madison responded, "Altho I feel the force of many of your remarks, I can not embrace the idea to which they lead." When pressed to explain the discrepancy between his hypothetical antislavery position and his actual dedication to self-imposed paralysis, he tended to offer several different answers. Sometimes it was a matter of his Virginia constituents: "Those from whom I derive my public station," he explained,

"are known by me to be greatly interested in that species of property, and to view the matter in that light." Sometimes it was a matter of timing: He concurred with the progressive segment of Virginia's planter class that "slavery is a Moral, and political Evil, and that Whoever brings forward in the Respective States, some General, rational and Liberal plan, for the Gradual Emancipation of Slaves, will deserve Well of his Country—yet I think it was very improper, at this time, to introduce it in Congress."⁸

Any effort to locate the core of Madison's position on slavery, therefore, misses the point, which is that there was no core, except perhaps the conviction that the whole subject was taboo. Like Jefferson and the other members of the Virginia dynasty, he regarded any explicit

**Slaves on Smith's Plantation,
Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862**

Photo by Timothy H. O'Sullivan
courtesy of the Library of Congress



defense of slavery in the mode of South Carolina and Georgia as a moral embarrassment. On the other hand, he regarded any effort to end slavery as premature, politically impractical, and counterproductive. As a result, he developed a way of talking and writing about the problem that might be considered "enlightened obfuscation." For example, consider the following Madisonian statement, written during the height of the debate in the House: "If this folly did not reproach the public councils, it ought to excite no regret in the patrons of Humanity & freedom. Nothing could hasten more the progress of these reflections & sentiments which are secretly undermining the institution which this mistaken zeal is laboring to secure agst. the most distant approach of danger." The convoluted syntax, multiple negatives, indefinite antecedents, and masterful circumlocutions of this statement defy comprehension. What begins as a denunciation of those defending slavery somehow doubles back on itself and ends up in worrisome confusion that the matter is being talked about at all. What is meant to sound like an antislavery argument transforms itself in midpassage into a verbal fog bank that descends over the entire subject like a cloud.⁹

In the midst of this willful confusion, one Madisonian conviction shone through with his more characteristic clarity—namely, that slavery was an explosive topic that must be removed from the political agenda of the new nation. It was taboo because it exposed the inherent contradictions of the Virginia position, which was much closer to the position of the Deep South than Madison wished to acknowledge, even to himself. And it was taboo because, more than any other controversy, it possessed the political potential to destroy the union. Franklin wanted to put slavery onto the national agenda, before it was too late to take decisive action in accord with the principles of the Revolution. Madison wanted to take slavery off the national agenda because he believed that decisive action would result in the destruction of either the Virginia planter class or the nation itself. (In the minds of

many Virginians, the two items were synonymous.) "The true policy of the Southern members," he explained to a fellow Virginian, "was to let the affair proceed with as little noise as possible." The misguided representation of the Deep South had spoiled that strategy. Now Madison resolved to seize the opportunity created by their threats of secession to put Congress on record as rejecting any constitutional right by the federal government to end slavery. It

was the South Carolina solution achieved in the Virginia style.¹⁰ *

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Notes

Renumbered from the book for the purposes of this excerpt

1. The great Franklin biography remains Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938). The best recent biography is Esmond Wright, *Franklin of Philadelphia* (Cambridge, 1986). For Franklin's contributions as a scientist, see I. Bernard Cohen, *Science and the Founding Fathers* (New York, 1995), 135–195. The classic effort to undermine Franklin's historical reputation is D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York, 1924), 15–27. On the changing images of Franklin, see Nian-Sheng Huang, *Benjamin Franklin in American Thought and Culture* (Philadelphia, 1994). A perceptive appraisal of Franklin's character emerges in Robert Middlekauf, *Benjamin Franklin and His Enemies* (Berkeley, 1996). And those scholarly sources are but the tip of the proverbial iceberg. For Jefferson's ranking of Franklin as next to Washington, with all others "on the second line," see Jefferson to William Carmichael, 12 August 1788, Boyd, vol. 13, 502.

2. For Franklin's early career in Pennsylvania politics, see William Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, 1964). For his English phase, see Verner W. Crane, *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press, 1758–1775* (Chapel Hill, 1950). For his Parisian phase, see Claude-Ann Lopez, *Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven, 1990).

3. *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 4 vols. (New Haven, 1937), vol. 3, 361, for Franklin's antislavery petition at the Constitutional Convention. Tench Coxe was the member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society who urged him to withdraw the petition on the grounds that "it would be a very improper season & place to hazard the Application" (quoted in Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 321).

4. Albert H. Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. (New York, 1907), vol. 10, 87–91.

5. *First Congress*, vol. 12, 809–810, 812–822, 825–827.

6. Of all the prominent statesmen who chose to regard silence as the highest form of leadership at this moment, Washington is the most intriguing, in part because he was the largest slave owner (over three hundred slaves lived on his several plantations), and in part because he, perhaps alone, possessed the stature to have altered the political context if he had chosen to do so. The Washington quotation is from Washington to John Mercer, 9 September 1786, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington*, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1931–1944), vol. 29, 5. See also Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (St. Louis, 1997). For a conversation with the editors of the modern edition of the Washington papers on this topic see Sarah Booth Conroy, *Washington Post*, February 16, 1998. Of course, Washington was the supreme example in the founding generation of what John Adams called "the gift of silence." In hindsight, this was one occasion when one could only have wished that the gift had failed him.

7. Madison to Edmund Randolph, 21 March 1790; Madison to Benjamin Rush, 20 March 1790, Rutland, vol. 13, 109–110.

8. Madison to Rush, 20 March 1790; Thomas Pleasants, Jr., to Madison, 10 July 1790; Madison to Robert Pleasants, 30 October 1791, Rutland, vol. 13, 109, 271, vol. 14, 117. See also McColey, *Slavery in Jeffersonian Virginia*, 182.

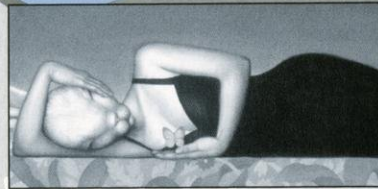
9. Madison to Rush, 20 March 1790, Rutland, vol. 13, 109. The shrewdest assessment of Madison's inherently equivocal thinking about slavery is McCoy, *The Last of the Fathers*, 217–322.

10. Madison to Randolph, 21 March 1790, Rutland, vol. 13, 110.

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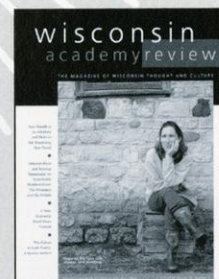
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Europe on the brink

IN THE YEAR 1935, a 25-year-old farm boy from Ohio did what in retrospect seems unimaginable: he traveled scot-free and unimpeded, camera in hand, through a Europe on the edge of destruction. Along the way, Theodore Morgan, who eventually became a professor of economics at UW–Madison, captured images that were icons of a soon-to-be-bygone world. His daughters recently unearthed the photos in the family basement and—luckily for our readers—decided to share them with the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. We offer our sincere thanks to the Morgan family for sharing this treasure.



PHOTOGRAPHS AND NOTES BY THEODORE MORGAN
HISTORICAL COMMENT BY STANLEY PAYNE

Theodore Morgan aboard the *Matilda Maersk*, 1935:

"I was beset by the notion that there was something fine to see over the distant hill. To be headed to Europe was marvelous. I had no idea Europe was on the brink of war."



German Criminal Police

On "German Criminal Police"

Theodore Morgan:

I photographed the boy on the left without permission. That bothered him; he was mollified when he found out that my German was awful and I was a foreigner. The soldier brought his friends to be photographed with him. They were proud of their uniforms. Perhaps they died a few years later on the plains of Russia.

I said, "I'd like to speak to someone who can tell me all about the Nazi Party." He took me to the local Nazi headquarters and introduced me to a slight, 40-ish man who had obviously been in the United States. Here I was, a foreigner, to be converted to the faith. He worked on his task. I thought that Nazism was a strange and lamentable sect.

Stanley Payne:

In Germany the ordinary police were divided into the traffic police, who handled the most routine functions, and the criminal police, who were responsible for criminal cases and were usually armed. Under the National Socialist regime, all criminal procedure became more rigorous, and a certain militarization in appearance developed. After the expansion of the SS as a special institution, SS units often recruited members of the ordinary and criminal police to guard concentration camps and form special death squads.

On "German Postman"

Theodore Morgan:

I suspect he had been through World War I. He was now earning a respectable living in the new Reich. Perhaps he was too old to be drafted into the army for the war four years ahead. I hope so.

Stanley Payne:

The German civil service was known throughout Europe for its discipline and efficiency. A postman of the age shown in this photograph



German Postman

would already have lived through two decades of a concatenation of crises from the mass suffering of World War I through the ignominy of defeat, post-war turmoil with attempted coups from right and left, the incredible hyperinflation of 1923 that made German currency worthless, and the massive crisis of the Great Depression. State employees served each successive German regime with the same care and obedience.



German Exhibit, with propaganda poster depicting "Hunger in Russia"

On "German Exhibit"

Stanley Payne:

The Hitler regime raised the function of political propaganda to a new height, employing all the modern media with unusual skill. Nothing was more fundamental than anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda, for the pledge to save Germany from Communization was a major source of the Nazi appeal. Establishment of the Hitler regime in 1933 coincided with the great government-induced famine that accompanied the height of agrarian collectivization in the Soviet Union. Nazi propaganda loved to contrast the speedy elimination of most unemployment in Germany, and the return of relative well-being for most citizens, with the ongoing "Hunger in Russia."

On "SA Propaganda Poster"

Stanley Payne:

The SA, or *Sturm Abteilung* (Storm Detachment), was the mass militia of the Nazi Party. During 1933–34 it grew to a membership of several million, and its radicalism became a danger to the stability of the Hitler regime itself. In the notorious "Blood Purge" of June 30, 1934, Hitler executed some of the top SA leaders and drastically downgraded its functions in favor of the more loyal and elitist SS. The SA nonetheless remained in existence with a smaller and more controlled membership, and continued to hold its own meetings, such as this general assembly and dance (literally "maneuver ball," in the SA's militarized language) of the Heidelberg unit, announced for the city hall on Saturday, August 31, 1935. Note also the exaggeratedly sharp, harsh features of the SA members depicted, typical of the style used by Nazi art to represent virile and dominant German males.

SA Propaganda Poster





Paris
Street
Musicians

On "Paris Street Musicians"

Stanley Payne:

The two decades between the wars are seen by some historians as the last era of "old Paris," the city that had made itself famous as the center of European culture during the preceding century. During the 1930s Paris retained many aspects of its traditional life, not the least of which was the common appearance of street musicians.

On "Paris Street Scene: Milking Goats"

Theodore Morgan:

The locals had no idea that they were worth photographing in their daily routines. No one offered me any goat's milk. It was too precious, and for sale.

Stanley Payne:

Though a great metropolis by the standards of the 1930s, Paris was then not entirely alien to some practices that are commonly associated with small towns and villages. It was home to petty entrepreneurs, peddlers, and craftsmen of all kinds, such as this vendor of fresh goat milk.

Paris Street Scene: Milking Goats



On "Paris Slum"**Theodore Morgan:**

In 1935, close to the pit of the Great Depression, surviving was difficult. To put a shack together from any plausible thing you could find loose was a kind of success. In the air was the conviction that something called capitalism was a lost cause. Maybe Lenin and Stalin had found a "future that works"?

Stanley Payne:

Paris had always been characterized by extreme social and economic contrasts, from the glamorous high life for which the city was famous to the most grinding poverty. These primitive shacks on the outskirts housed some of the city's poorest inhabitants, but others who lived in multistory slums in different districts may not have been much better off.



Paris Slum

On "Polish Cabbage Wagon"**Stanley Payne:**

In 1919 Poland became an independent and united country once more for the first time in a century and a half. That independence would last two decades, until the Nazi-Soviet conquest of 1939, to be followed by nearly a half-century of Soviet domination. Between the wars Poland faced manifold internal problems, among the most important of which was economic underdevelopment. Though progress was made in industry, agriculture lagged. As in Russia, cabbage was an important and inexpensive item in the national diet. Individual peddlers of the sort depicted were then a common feature in many European countries.

Polish Cabbage Wagon





Hasidic Men in the Park in Poland

On "Hasidic Men in the Park in Poland"

Theodore Morgan:

In a park near the old quarter of Warsaw, nine venerable friends discussed the state of the world, as they might have done day after day with increasing worry.

Stanley Payne:

Prior to 1939 Poland had proportionately the largest Jewish population in the world, amounting to approximately three million, or 10 percent of the total population. Most Polish Jews were bilingual in both Polish and Yiddish and maintained a rich and extensive Yiddish-language culture. They were also a highly diverse group, ranging from the extremely secular to members of the Hasidic sect shown in this photo. For much of the interwar period, there were even separate Jewish political parties. Some Polish Jews were wealthy financiers and manufacturers, but a sizable percentage lived in poverty. Virtually this entire society would be annihilated by Hitler during World War II, the ravages of the Holocaust becoming even more extreme in Poland than in most other German-occupied countries.

On "Banners of Soviet Leaders"

Stanley Payne:

Soviet Communists under Lenin, depicted here, were the first to mount modern propaganda posters on a genuine mass basis. The totalitarian cult of personality was developed in the Soviet Union even before it appeared in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, originating with the Lenin cult from 1919 on. As the founder of the Soviet Union, Lenin was eventually accorded the status of a secular god and object of worship. When he died in January 1924, a special tomb was constructed in Moscow's Red Square to house his mummified, artificially preserved corpse in an effort to achieve Communist immortality. It remains on display in the semi-democratic Russia of the 21st century. After the rise of Stalin, the new dictator did not replace the Lenin cult but instead incorporated it as a source of legitimacy for the Stalinist system. Massive photographs and poster depictions of the great leaders were proportionately even more common in the Soviet Union than in Italy and Germany.



Banners of Soviet Leaders

On "Soviet Assembly Line"**Stanley Payne:**

Marxism had promised to overcome the "alienation" of impersonal modern industrial labor, but Soviet economic planning expanded the functions of the assembly line in almost every conceivable economic activity, including those where it had not been known before. Expanded employment of women in such labors was also a prime feature of Soviet economic life.

On "Soviet Work Brigade"**Stanley Payne:**

State mobilization of all labor was fundamental to the Soviet regime. This was not merely a matter of state ownership of all industry and the state collectivization of agriculture, but involved the mobilization of much leisure time as well. In the cities, able-bodied citizens were required to contribute a certain amount of "volunteer" labor during their free days.



Soviet Assembly Line

Soviet Work Brigade





Flax workers in the Ukraine, near Kiev

**On "Flax Workers in the Ukraine"
Stanley Payne:**

At the time that these photos were taken, collectivization of agriculture had just been completed in the Soviet Union. The Soviet regime held that collectivization would introduce greater modernization and efficiency, but for many years this was hardly the case. Though mechanization of some agricultural functions advanced, many continued to be carried out in rather traditional ways, with intense employment of human workers. Traditionally much agricultural work in Russia had been done by women. Though the Soviet regime promised to emancipate women, in some ways the reverse was true, and in the years that followed the proportionate employment of women would only increase. Clothing styles also changed minimally, with the head kerchief remaining common for farm women. As before, flax production continued to be important in the Ukraine. *



Theodore Morgan pursued his interest in social conditions by becoming an economist specializing in development. He taught at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (1947-80), advised governments, taught in seven Asian and African countries, and wrote or edited eight books. He is now a professor emeritus and lives in Madison.

*Stanley G. Payne is Hilldale-Jaume Vicens Vives Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a corresponding member of the Real Academia Española de la Historia. He is the author of 15 books, mainly on the modern history of Spain and on the history of fascism, the most recent being **The Spanish Civil War, The Soviet Union Union, and Communism** (Yale, 2003).*

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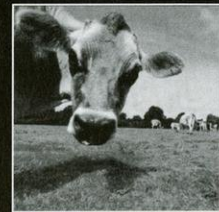
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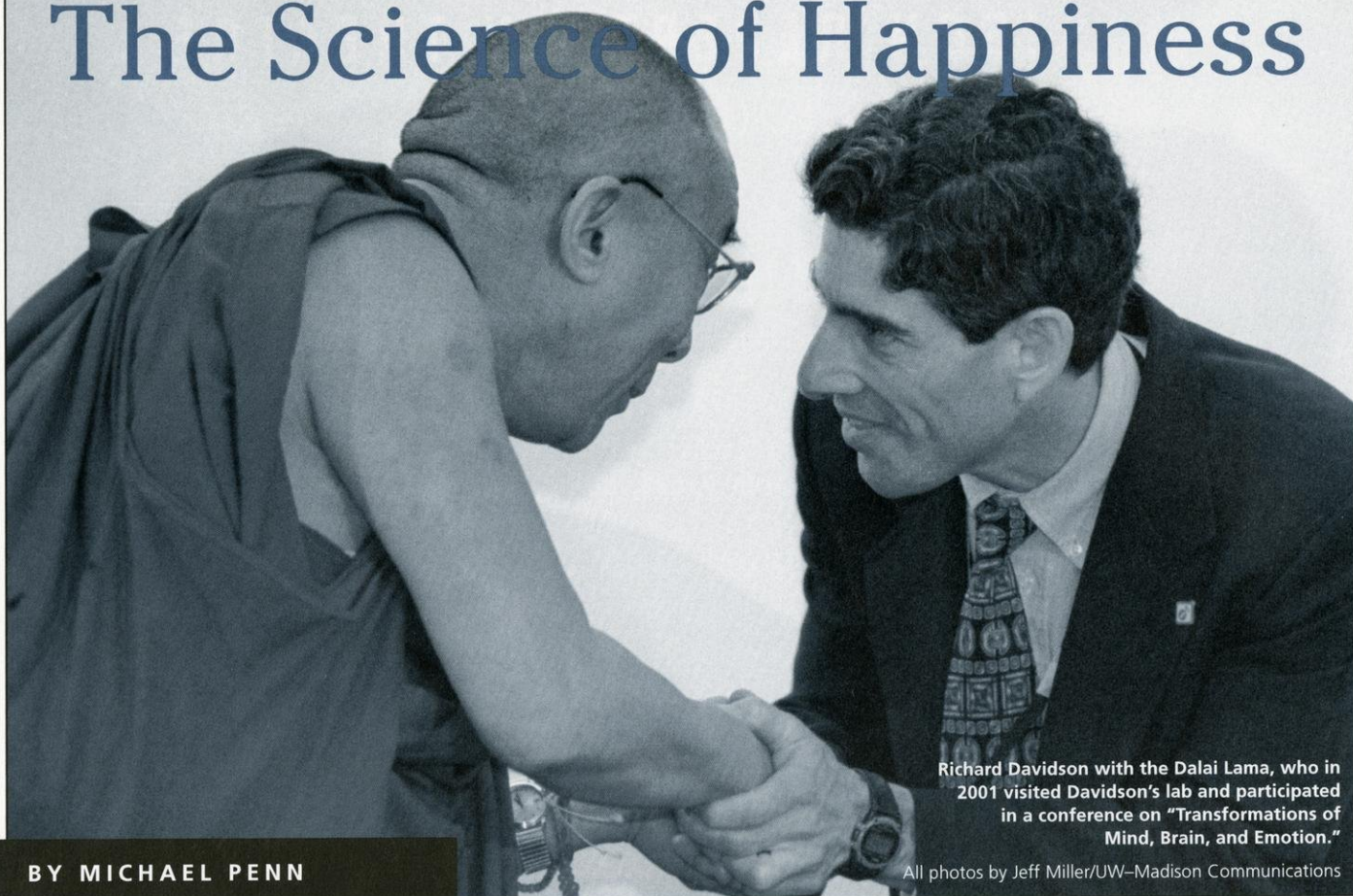
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The Science of Happiness



Richard Davidson with the Dalai Lama, who in 2001 visited Davidson's lab and participated in a conference on "Transformations of Mind, Brain, and Emotion."

All photos by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison Communications

BY MICHAEL PENN

Neuroscientist Richard Davidson is proving that we can harness our emotions to improve our mental and physical well-being. His groundbreaking discoveries have involved bringing Buddhist monks—including his good friend, the Dalai Lama—into his UW-Madison lab.

AT LEAST THREE TIMES A WEEK when the weather cooperates, Richard Davidson climbs onto the saddle of a sleek racing bike and heads to a path near his Madison home. He rides out of the city to a point where the road extends like a silvery thread across the prairies and cornfields of south-central Wisconsin, off toward not-so-distant places like Fitchburg and Mount Horeb. For many cyclists, this thin line of asphalt represents transportation or recreation. But to Davidson, it's something more. The destination he pedals toward is more ethereal—and much harder to reach—than Fitchburg.

He rides fast, with his legs churning in an unrelenting rhythm, zipping along at a pace that demands constant attention and reaction. He doesn't think about where he's going. He doesn't think about where he's been. He tries not to think at all.

And somewhere on that road he hits it: that perfect awareness of the here

and now, where everything else—the demands of being one of the nation's top neuroscientists, the pressing problems in his lab, the mounting piles of messages from journalists and others who want to talk to him—slips away and there is just the road, the bike, and the roaring wind in his ears.

Buddhists call this state mindfulness, a mental plain achieved through meditation, yoga, and other contemplative practices that seek to quiet the din of our brains in normal operating mode. For Davidson, a professor of psychology and psychiatry at the UW–Madison and a devotee of Buddhist philosophy, bicycling is a path to that moment—a way of exercising not only his body but also his mind. And both are in excellent condition. At 52, he is as trim and fit as people half his age, and he still cranks out 150 miles a week on his bike. As for his mind, the years of bending his own consciousness have shaped his work as a scientist in profound ways, helping to make him one of the most provocative researchers around today.

Davidson leads two UW–Madison labs—the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience and the W. M. Keck Laboratory for Functional Brain Imaging and Behavior—that have produced some of the most important new knowledge about a long-neglected aspect of human psychology: the role of emotion in the human experience. He and a small (but quickly expanding) group of colleagues have brought science to the cusp of understanding how emotions function in the brain, why some people suffer from depression and other social disorders, and how we may be able to harness our emotions to improve our mental and physical well-being.

“He really is a superstar,” colleague Kenneth Robbins, of the Medical College of Wisconsin, recently told one newspaper reporter. “He is one of the foremost researchers at this time.”

That hasn’t escaped notice. In the past few months, Davidson has been featured as part of a cover story in *Time*, interviewed by CNN and the BBC, and profiled in the *New York Times*. His phone number is in the Palm Pilot of just about every national science writer, and announcements from his lab often instigate an avalanche of interview requests. Everyone wants to talk to Richie, who’s affable, enthusiastic, and—as one might guess, given his insistence that people call him Richie—devoid of academic pretension.

All of these things have helped make emotions research the science of the

Learning to watch feelings like anger and frustration rise and subside in his own brain became like another objective means to study the topic. Meditation taught him to master his own black box.

moment. Conferences among scientists studying the subject, which used to attract a smattering of renegades, now draw wide public interest. This past fall Davidson went to Boston for one such meeting that registered 1,200 attendees—including his old friend and collaborator, the Dalai Lama.

In an interview shortly before he left for Boston, Davidson said the new attention is gratifying. “The field is clearly being taken seriously by some of the very top scientists in the world,” he says.

“SQUISHY” SCIENCE VINDICATED

It wasn’t always that way. Three decades ago, when Davidson was a gangly 24-year-old fresh out of Harvard, emotions were considered too squishy to be real science. Psychology, not far removed from the days of B. F. Skinner and his baby-in-the-box behavioral studies, was obsessed with the rational mind—“the last creature of God,” as Sir Francis Bacon once described it. Cognition was king; you could observe it and frame experiments around it. Emotions, on the other hand, seemed terribly subjective. How would you begin to study something as introspective as how someone feels?

Even before college, Davidson had begun to ponder that question. As a high school student in his native Brooklyn, he had volunteered a couple of nights a week at a sleep clinic, where he cleaned electrodes and monitored subjects as they slumbered in the name of science. He was enthralled by how the electroencephalograms (EEGs) that registered the subjects’ brain activity would light up as they drifted off. “You could see when they were dreaming,” he recalls. Here was an objective measure

of what goes on inside people’s heads, he thought—a tool to look inside the black box.

When he arrived in Cambridge in 1972, at the peak of the counterculture movement, he found a carnival of alternative practices and philosophies to feed a hungry mind. He experimented with biofeedback and dabbled in Eastern religions, and by 1973, his first year in Harvard’s graduate psychology program, he had begun to take classes in meditation. The practice suited him, both as a means of maintaining emotional balance as he toiled in his doctoral studies, and as an interesting foray into the potential of the human mind. Learning to watch feelings like anger and frustration rise and subside in his own brain became like another objective means to study the topic. Meditation taught him to master his own black box.

During his second year of graduate school, he left for a three-month-long journey through India and Sri Lanka, where he spent time in intensive meditation training. During those sessions, he would retreat to a meditation hall for 14 to 16 hours a day, maintaining complete silence and making eye contact only with his instructors. “It was among the hardest kinds of work that I’ve ever done,” he says. “I think anyone who has experienced something like that knows that to change the course of a mind that has been flowing in one direction for so many years is never easily accomplished.”

When he returned, however, he would take on a bigger challenge: changing a science that flowed, in his judgment, in the wrong direction.

At that time, it was believed that emotions arose in the brain’s limbic system, a group of structures in the middle of the brain that regulate visceral func-

tions like appetite, smell, and libido. Compared to the cortex—the thin layer of gray matter closest to the skull that is believed to be the center of rational thought and decisionmaking—the limbic system is relatively unevolved, a holdover from our mammalian ancestors. If you think of the human brain as being like a remodeled house, where the layers closer to the skull are newer and more advanced, the limbic system is an old wing. By classifying emotions there, it was as if psychologists were saying there's nothing particularly evolved about emotions, that they came and went with little effect on the uniquely human ability to reason.

Davidson didn't buy it. He had an intuition that emotions mattered much more, and were more closely inter-

woven with decisionmaking and other behaviors, than the vanguard believed. "I was convinced [emotion] was the key to everything important," he says.

But going against the mainstream had risks. People who studied emotions in those days were often dismissed as flaky and unscientific. Having an interest in meditation didn't dissuade the image. One Harvard professor intrigued by the topic used to sneak meditators into his lab in the middle of the night so that he could evaluate them without his colleagues thinking he'd gone nuts. Still, Davidson remained confident that emotions could be studied methodologically, without the touchy-feely introspection that the field scorned.

By the time he was hired onto the faculty at UW–Madison in 1984, he was

using EEGs to explore the role of the prefrontal cortex, a part of the brain directly behind the forehead, in transmitting emotions across the brain—studies that would help him reconfigure what science knew about the emotional geography of the brain. His data showed that positive and negative emotions arose in different parts of the brain: that emotions like joy and excitement triggered activity on the left side of the prefrontal cortex, while feelings like shyness and fear activated the right.

This was uncharted terrain, literally—but Davidson had mapped it with the accepted tools of neuroscience, something that helped the field regain footing in academic circles. "Richie is pretty unique in that he can speak to and contribute to behavioral science fields and neuroscience fields at the same time," says Molly Oliveri, chief of the behavioral science research branch of the National Institute of Mental Health, which has funded much of Davidson's work over the years. Oliveri says his ability to bridge those often separate realms has given the field momentum and coherence.

By the mid-'90s, Davidson and fellow UW–Madison professor Ned Kalin had formed the HealthEmotions Institute and were sponsoring the first annual symposium in the field. Grant money began flowing, and technology such as positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) evolved, offering clearer, more penetrating pictures of the brain. For the first time, scientists were able to see a brain in the process of getting emotional—to observe the specific pathways associated with different emotions.

Using these technologies, Davidson found that simple actions like seeing a smile or holding someone's hand triggered activity in the part of the brain associated with good feelings. Another study of children with autism traced abnormalities in the function of the amygdala, a small structure in the brain often associated with fear, that may be linked to some of the emotional reactions associated with the disease. He even pored over pictures of convicted murderers' brains and found possible

Davidson describes how this geodesic sensor net containing 256 electrodes picks up impulses from numerous parts of the brain when placed on a subject's head. Davidson's studies have been groundbreaking in charting the emotional geography of the brain.



malfunctions that may prevent them from controlling violent outbursts.

With work of such irrefutable power, the renegades found acceptance. In 1997, the American Psychological Society gave Davidson its highest honor and credited him as “a major force in re-establishing the importance of emotion in virtually all areas in the biobehavioral sciences.”

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

It’s now clear that emotions matter in many facets of the human experience. Life’s momentous decisions—where to live, whom to marry, whether to accept a particular job—aren’t made “on the point of cold, cognitive calculus,” says Davidson. In fact, patients who have abnormalities in the emotional circuitry of their brains often have trouble making such decisions. “It’s not that emotions are a luxury. They are required in order for successful decisionmaking to occur,” Davidson says. “You can’t think straight without emotions.”

Yet the quest to understand how those emotions work is still in its infancy, and so far, the answers lead mostly to more questions: how do emotions interact with and affect our cognitive processes? What role do they have in other bodily functions, such as our ability to ward off disease and heal from injury? Why are some people unable to control the emotions that sometimes rage inside their minds? For everything we now know, there is much more we don’t yet comprehend.

Advances on emotional disorders such as depression, for example, have been simultaneously exhilarating and frustrating. Scientists now have identified several specific mechanisms that fail to function in the brains of chronically depressed patients, but they have found few effective treatments that are capable of restoring balance. “Despite the progress that we’ve made, what’s more apparent to us as practicing scientists is the gaping holes and the distance that we still have to travel to really understand these things rigorously and mechanistically,” Davidson says.

With millions of people at the mercy of destructive emotions, the importance of understanding and controlling emotion dysfunction is obvious. What often gets overlooked, however, is the equally significant matter of positive emotions.

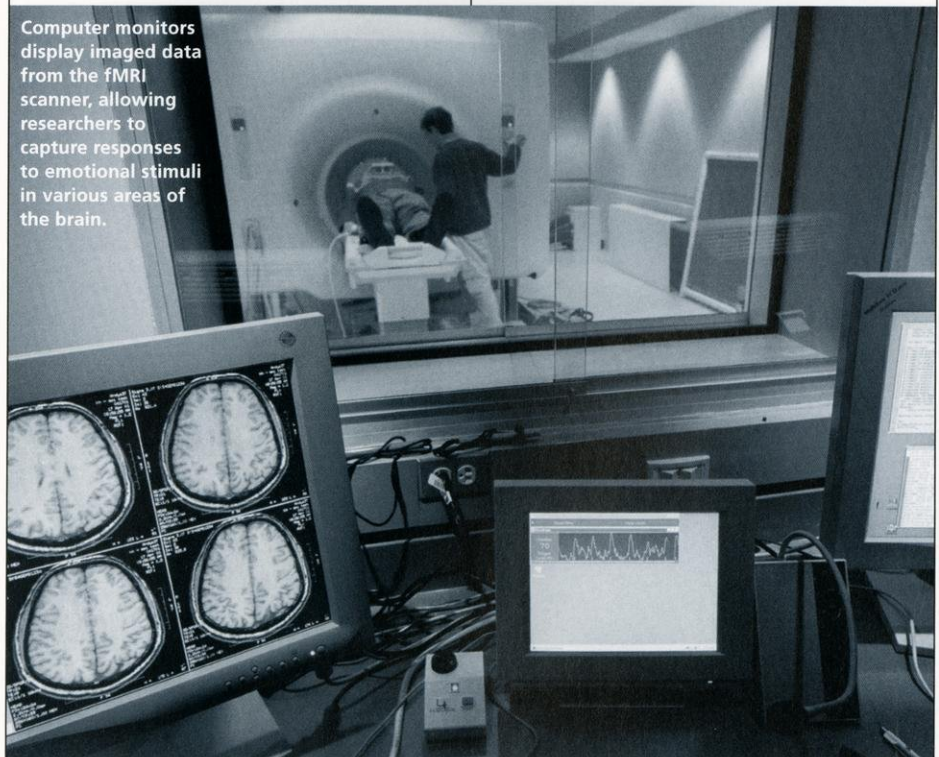
With millions of people at the mercy of destructive emotions, the importance of understanding and controlling emotion dysfunction is obvious. What often gets overlooked, however, is the equally significant matter of positive emotions. Even a relatively facile question like what it means to be happy represents a complex puzzle that’s only now beginning to fit together.

At the Keck imaging lab, on the first floor of UW–Madison’s Waisman Center, more than two dozen researchers—and several rooms full of high-end technology—are locked in that pursuit of happiness. Over the past few years, a parade of volunteers—young and old, healthy and sick, stressed and con-

tented—has filed into the lab to have their heads examined. While lying underneath the claustrophobic cowling of the fMRI scanner, they’re shown various stimuli, from pictures of car accidents to romantic movie clips, designed to trigger emotional responses in their brains. Researchers hope that these scans will illuminate more about how the structures associated with specific feelings work, and how those structures in turn affect other systems under the brain’s control.

One reason we seem to know more about fear than, say, compassion is simple: it’s easier to make people afraid than happy. “If you show someone a picture of an accident, you can produce a

Computer monitors display imaged data from the fMRI scanner, allowing researchers to capture responses to emotional stimuli in various areas of the brain.



Plasticity makes it possible for the brain to be trained, just as someone might train a muscle. Through rigorous, repeated exercise, it's possible to actually change the way your mind works.

really powerful reaction," says Michael Anderle, a Keck research assistant who oversees fMRI scanning. "But what do you show people to make them intensely happy? That's harder to observe." Davidson's team has arrived at some creative adaptations. In one test, they brought in cigarette smokers who hadn't had a puff in two days and scanned them two minutes before they could smoke again. In another, they showed new mothers pictures of their own children, hidden in a sequence of unrelated babies.

It may not sound surprising to learn, for instance, that mothers light up with almost narcotic-like happiness when they see their babies. But the implications are significant. One recent trial in Davidson's lab revealed that people who

experienced positive emotions more often and more deeply may have stronger immune systems, lending credence to the old folklore that in at least some cases people can think their way to good health. Although the work to understand that connection is still in its earliest stages, it suggests that good feelings may be more connected to successful living than we ever imagined—that at times it really may boil down to mind over matter.

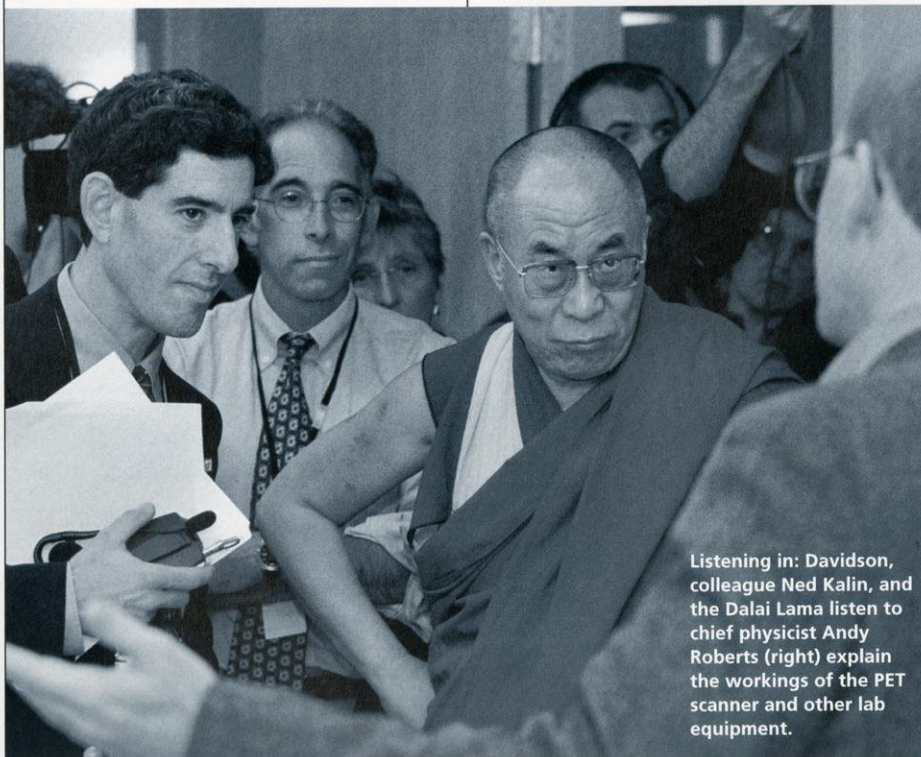
Exploring such mind-body interactions has turned Davidson back to his college days and the path he began following through meditation training. Although he has kept on with the practice in his personal life, he admits he shelved professional interest in it for

years. But that doesn't mean he wasn't aware of its potential.

One of the most amazing facets of the human brain is its plasticity, its ability to rewire itself based on experience. Plasticity makes it possible for the brain to be trained, just as someone might train a muscle; through rigorous, repeated exercise, it's possible to actually change the way your mind works. And meditation may be the epitome of a rigorous, repeated exercise. Found in many forms and in many religions, the contemplative practice has been used for more than two millennia as a way of training the mind to become more compassionate, less burdened by stress, and more focused on the present. It's always been in the back of Davidson's mind that meditation and similar practices might give to others what it had given him: a means of finding and keeping peace of mind.

In 1992, Davidson got a reason to return to studying meditation that he found "difficult to resist," he says. A fax arrived in his office from Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, inviting him to join a group of scientists in meetings with the exiled holy leader of Tibetan Buddhists. A few months later, he was on his way to India to interview monks about their mental training and hatch one of the most inspirational and fruitful collaborations of his career.

To the Dalai Lama, an insatiably curious follower of scientific advancement for decades, the connections between Buddhist philosophies and Western research were obvious. Both seek an end to human suffering, albeit by different routes, and he reasoned that tools from one tradition might prove useful applied to the other. Two years ago, at Davidson's invitation, he came to Madison to participate in a discussion of how science could study whether meditation, removed from its religious context, might be one of those useful tools. "Dr. Davidson tells me that the emergence of positive emotions may be due to this: Mindfulness meditation strengthens the neurological circuits that calm a part of the brain that acts as a trigger for fear and anger," the Dalai Lama wrote in the *New York Times* ear-



Listening in: Davidson, colleague Ned Kalin, and the Dalai Lama listen to chief physicist Andy Roberts (right) explain the workings of the PET scanner and other lab equipment.

lier this year. "This raises the possibility that we have a way to create a kind of buffer between the brain's violent impulses and our actions."

CHANNELING THE MONKS

On a spring day in 2001, another man in flowing robes made an extraordinary visit to the Keck lab. Matthieu Ricard, a French-born Buddhist monk, was escorted to a computer station, where he was fitted with a net-like cap of electrodes that recorded his brain activity as he looked at various images flashing on the screen. He was then led down the hall to a small room dominated by the gurney-like bed of the fMRI machine. Ricard slipped his shaved head underneath the scanner and, within a few moments, began meditating.

Lying underneath an fMRI scanner is hardly like a night at the Hilton. The machine—powered by a magnet strong enough to rip a hammer from a man's hand—is hard-edged and clinically cold. Technicians peer at subjects from an adjoining control room, and each scan is accompanied by a high-pitched whir like a Xerox copier on steroids. Yet none of this distracted Ricard, who had spent 20 years learning to pitch his mind beyond such distractions.

With the blessing of the Dalai Lama, five other trained monks have traveled from India and Tibet to allow Davidson to peer inside their heads, part of Davidson's newest and most distinctive exploration into the human mind. Although his research team is still crunching the results, Davidson is beginning to offer a few tidbits about what they're learning about these champion thinkers. One of the monks, the professor says, shows considerably higher levels of activity in the left prefrontal cortex, the home of happy thoughts, than anyone else the lab has observed.

What can these monks tell us? Perhaps, as Davidson has believed, that meditation can be a powerful tool for reshaping the mind in positive ways—ways that make us more patient and understanding and allow us to concentrate without being so easily distracted. William James, one of the early pioneers

of psychology, once suggested that people can't attend to a single object for more than three or four seconds, but the monks' ability to focus would seem to shatter that notion. One of the subjects meditated under the fMRI for four hours. When Davidson told them what Western science believed about the limits of attention, "the typical response that we get is laughter," he says.

Meditation does not seek to suppress or deaden the rich emotional experience of human life—only control it, Davidson says. And that's significant at a time when many people often become pawns to their momentary furies. "Emotions, particularly strong emotions, can hijack the mind; they kind of take us over," he says. "Emotion pushes us and pulls us in certain directions. Meditation doesn't diminish those emotions per se, but it loosens the grip emotion has."

When a driver cuts you off in traffic, for instance, no mental practice prevents you from feeling angry. But those who have learned to become aware of the emotional tides of their minds can watch that anger ebb and flow. "It doesn't take hold of you," says Davidson. "And you don't lash out."

Several studies have demonstrated that regular meditation can be effective in reducing stress. Davidson goes one link further, suggesting it can help make people both happier and healthier. In one small experiment, he and Jon Kabat-Zinn, a nationally known meditation expert who runs a stress-reduction clinic at the University of Massachusetts, taught the practice to 25 employees of Promega, a Madison biotechnology company. Before the training, most had heavy right-side activity and complained of high stress that seemed endemic in their industry. Yet after just this brief introduction to mindfulness training, participants had generally readjusted their minds toward more positive emotions. Many reported having more energy, and most felt re-energized to tackle their work. And here's the kicker: when he gave the participants flu shots to test how well their immune system activates in response to the weakened virus, not only did the meditators have better response, but those who medi-

tated more had higher levels of flu antibodies in their blood.

Thirty years ago, Davidson could not have imagined going public with such findings. But the ethos has changed. Meditation has gone mainstream, with best-selling books out on the subject and retreats cropping up everywhere from Palm Springs and the Catskills to suburban strip malls. In August, Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn, who has toured the nation leading well-attended retreats, taught the practice to 500 civil servants and about a dozen Madison police officers just a few blocks from Davidson's faculty office. Such growing acceptance has led the professor to feel that he "can sort of come out of the closet a little bit" with his projects. "And my colleagues hopefully won't think I've gone completely off the deep end," he adds.

An unfortunate side effect of all of the hullabaloo, however, is that with so much to do, there's less time for his own journey down that path to enlightenment. Although Davidson still meditates at home for a half-hour or so around five times a week, his practice isn't nearly as rigorous as it once was. But no one's too worried about Richie. "He may be the most left-frontally activated person I have ever met," longtime friend Daniel Goleman, author of the book *Destructive Emotions*, recently told *The Washington Post*.

Davidson was speeding along the road to happiness before many people even knew it existed, and the rest of us are still catching up to him. *

Award-winning writer Michael Penn is senior editor of On Wisconsin, the alumni magazine of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has written about Wisconsin people and places for the Chicago Tribune and other publications, and writes regularly for the Wisconsin Academy Review.

Hecho in Mexico



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

THIRD
PLACE

BY JAN NEUDECK
PHOTOS BY BILL BLANKENBURG

I WAKE TO THE SOUND OF A DOG'S overgrown toenails clattering on bare wood. The sound ripples between my shoulder blades. I raise myself just enough to see beyond the foot of the bed and there he is, standing in the open doorway, bristling orange fur, runty legs, making his cool-eyed assessment of my condition. I know I'm still alive because of the disappointment in his beady eyes. I know I'm conscious because of the pain in my gut that balls up and glows radioactive from the effort of raising myself

the least little bit. "Yeah, fuck you," I say to the mutt. Balls swinging, he does a quick about face and taps back down the flight of steps that connect my room to the dusty main street of Puerto-what-ever. The little boot-licking cross-breed will be hightailing it off to headquarters to file his report. I drop back on my flat sorry excuse for a pillow. I don't look at B. J.'s empty bed. One good thing: at least that sight doesn't send me spiraling anymore. The truck with the ban-shee engine wails up the dirt road

outside, the sun slants through the window, the heated-up odor of the town rises and drifts into my room . . . diesel fuel, cooking oil, dust, rotting fruit. Another day in my own private hell.

I've been stuck in this room for days—I've lost track of how long and suppose this is significant: it doesn't seem to matter much. Anyway, I'm flat on my back, on this miserable bed, helpless to my growing conclusions that my native nursemaids are poisoning me, so that the young one who's after my

would-be boyfriend can take my place and go back to Chicago with him, her warty mother thrown into the bargain and for all I know the orange dog and that quack Dr. Tomás and maybe even the little boy who comes and picks up my piss-pot every afternoon. For all I know they're all in on it. For all I know B. J. has already made arrangements to ship my carcass back to my mother in Bloomington, Indiana when the time comes. Or not. He doesn't even know my mother. (It's probably also significant that I've forgotten this small detail.) Maybe he's commissioned a hole to be dug somewhere on the edge of town. Some place where the locals bury stuff they're finished with. Dead *turistas*. Is it at all significant that this kind of thought no longer brings me to tears?

Maybe if I listed all the possibly significant things, I could get some overall assessment of where I am. Where I am in the sense of "here's where I am and here's what I need to do to get out of here." Treat it like one of those brain teasers. You're in the bottom of a well, standing in a foot of rising water, with a ping pong ball, a match, and an ounce of cheddar cheese—how do you get out? I was never good at those things, but I think that had more to do with the overly clever trick nature of those puzzles. There's no trick behind this. It's just simple straightforward facts. I'm sick in a foreign country with no apparent means of escape.

Why don't you leave the way you came, you ask. I'm a reasonable person who entertains all good questions and this is a good question. I got here on the back of a motorcycle, which isn't mine and even if it were, I have no clue as to how to drive the thing. Ride the thing. Whatever. So why doesn't the driver just drive you out, you query. Another excellent question. Innocent, thick perhaps (weren't you paying attention to the whole poisonous nursemaid thing?), but a question that needs to be answered before we can begin to get to any realistic solution. I haven't known B. J. long enough or bonded deeply enough, apparently, for him to feel any overwhelming sense of obligation or whatever it takes that makes one

human being stand by another even when the tide turns and that second human being gets deathly ill and has major diarrhea and puke fits and is no longer able to throw back her head and laugh or suck the dick of the first human being or whatever it was they used to do that made her seem a suitable traveling companion.

As long as we're on the subject of B. J. and the whole character thing, you should know that even though we came to Mexico on a motorcycle, it's not like we're some scary couple you'd avoid making eye contact with if you ran into them in a parking lot somewhere. It's this super respectable BMW motorcycle and B. J. and I are white bread, middle class professionals who kind of fell together and thought it'd be a cool adventure to travel to Mexico. B. J. stands for Bradley Jerome. Nerdy, or what? Not that nerdy equals morally upright, I just wanted to point out that any cool associated with riding a big motorcycle is all posture. He's an architect; I'm a photographer. He wanted to look at, I don't know, local ancient, indigenous architectural structures and I wanted to take a bunch of poignant black and white photos that could end up in some gallery and eventually a coffee table book.

We live in Chicago. Well, I live in Evanston, he lives in Rogers Park. We're in our late thirties, we've dated—deeply, superficially, and in between—and when we met, we were in the kind of what-the-hell-place. You know? You've done the dating thing backwards and forwards and you reach a point with this new person where you've got the preliminary stuff behind you (i.e., you're sleeping together and it's past the point of being the central activity) and the other crap is ahead of you. Like Problems with a capital P, Issues with a capital I, the Et cetera with a capital Et. So you realize that you're in the ever so fleeting Nirvana stage of relationship, and while you're there you ought to do some really fun thing that you never get to do because it's either too early or too late. So one night we said let's take a trip together. So we did. Only I got sick.

I kind of knew it wasn't going to last beyond Mexico and this trip. It was probably a question of who was going to dump who first when we got home. There were signs. Like when some renegade soldier types dressed up in camouflage and those straps of bullets stopped us at an impromptu road check on our second day and were clearly talking about me without looking at me in a particularly chilling way that makes you understand machismo with brand new insight and B. J. sort of imitated their style and at one point even jerked his thumb at me the way you would if you were referring to your dog who came up in the conversation. It was probably of early significance that I didn't challenge him on this slight. If he were keeper material I would've asked him what the hell was going on. As it was, I just thought, uh huh, this guy's an asshole and when this trip is finished, so are we.

I honestly don't remember if I suspected these gaps in his character before we left Chicago. Chicago seems about as far away as . . . my Aunt Loretta's basement where my cousins and I used to dance to tapes of Michael Jackson. Hell. Even my condo seems as far away as stuff from my childhood. This room dwarfs any memory of any other time and place. It's a stifling one-room walk-up overlooking a combination bumper-car/dance floor emporium. It's bumper cars until sunset when they turn on the colored lights that show up on my wall and bounce when there's a breeze. They rev up the music a couple of notches when the sun starts to go down and it's cha cha cha until three in the morning. It's pretty much the same music for bumper cars or dancing. I don't think either enterprise gets much in the way of business. It was late afternoon when we checked in and there was one kid circling the platform in a bumper car. One afternoon I actually heard squeals and a car crashing into another one, but usually it's just these makeshift bumper cars.

We were just looking for a place where I could lie flat. Get off the back of that fuckin' jackin', rackin' motorcycle and lie flat. Back then I didn't think it was anything more than just some south-of-

the-border diarrhetic episode. And maybe that's all it was to start out with before it got enhanced by Señora Crone and her charming daughter, Dolly. And, no, I haven't lived a life of suspicion and paranoia. Once I thought maybe my boyfriend was seeing Kathleen Gruberger behind my back and guess what? That turned out to be absolutely true. Still, that was high school and I don't tend to see the world as a hostile place. Except when it's hostile.

And here's the real deal: Dolly's welcome to him. One woman's tightwad, cold-hearted, prick unboyfriend is another's Prince Charming, her Señor Salvation. It's just that I don't want to die because of Dolly's fantasies about living with an American architect in a Rogers Park condo. And here's another significant factor, the fact that a mother and daughter team might possibly nudge some sick tourist closer to the edge, especially if they see some personal gain to be had—is that really so beyond reason? I don't think I just got a fever and started entertaining myself with some wild paranoid dreams. The whole thing pivots on B. J.—on his willingness to cut me loose. Done. On his willingness to appear open to Dolly's attentions. Done. I know this isn't exactly a critical analysis of the ping pong ball and the match or whatever, but intuition carries a certain amount of weight, doesn't it?

Character gaps are one thing, but I certainly didn't see B. J.'s darker side before this trip. Once when I stayed over at his place, he asked if I'd please remember to close the effin cupboards. He said it like that, effin, not fuckin. I thought he was a little bit of a crank, a little nerdy, but I certainly didn't see someone who'd look the other way while hellions fed me rat poison. Maybe it just takes opportunity to bring out parts of our character we never even knew existed. And maybe even now B. J. isn't racked with guilt, maybe he's convinced that I'm just sick, I'll get better, and he . . . he really didn't owe me anything and then he met the love of his life (Dolly) which we never pretended I was and . . . so it goes.

One day in Oaxaca I walked away from him to try to find a room. He was so passive. Two places said they were full and he decided we should drink some sangria before we hit the road for the next town. So I said something mildly derogatory and left him there with his pitcher of sangria and headed off—with no language skills, did I already mention this? Still. I found us a place and as I recall, he never said thanks.

Okay, you say, so the guy's a dick, why don't you at least ask him to fly you out of there? I did, and he said it would virtually be impossible to move me without going to another city to rent a car and that would take a couple of days and he wasn't sure he wanted to leave me alone that long. Mr. Concerned. But then somewhere along the way he dropped that act for one of

WINNING WORDS

Our lead judge, Mike Magnuson, on why he chose this story

This story makes me feel like I've done a bunch of stupid things and ended up where I shouldn't be and am wishing to hell I could take it all back and get a fresh, clean start in life. Sound familiar to you? Does to me.

martyred saint who's done everything he can, but has his limits. That was when he stopped coming back to the room at night. I think it was just a few days ago. When I asked him where he was, he said the Sanchezes put him up. Uh huh. He didn't want to disturb me. Puhlease. So I asked him again, and he said that Dr. Tomás said I was getting better now that my fever had broken and I just needed to be patient.

When you have suspected enemies, and I'm just going to call them that, there's a point where you have to decide if you're going to tip your hand that you know they're enemies, or hide the fact that you know. Given my weakened state, I've gone with pretending we're all one big happy family. I figure I have a

better chance of knowing if I'm just sick and a victim of my own fantasies or if I'm about to become one of the unexplained mysteries on those loud TV shows my mom and Aunt Loretta watch. The suspense is killing me. Ha. Get it?

Here they come. The dastardly duo: Señora Sausage and Señorita Tart. The señora drags up the steps, shuffle-thud, shuffle-thud, like she's got sacks of flour for feet. The señorita—B. J. says, call her Dolly, like I'm too ugly Americana to handle her real name—follows. Dolly, with the doe eyes and straining bosom—straining after B. J.—tries to make her step buoyant, she'll spend her life trying to deny her genetic heritage. The entire room shudders as they approach. Given the shoddy construction, it's entirely possible that the whole stair could break away from the side of the building, pitching the two of them and their foul plans off onto the hard concrete of the bumper car/dance hall.

The crone pauses in the doorway to catch her breath. She sniffs the air. A little muscle to the side of her mouth twitches and I'm so sensory deprived that I involuntarily imitate the twitch. They say nothing, just fall into their routine. It goes like this: Dolly carries the covered tray that rattles like she's got iced tea for eight, but it's just a glass of cloudy water, some brown bottles with eyedropper caps, a bowl of chicken-flavored mush, another bowl of water, and a strip of rough blue terry cloth. While the crone frowns at what I've deposited in the chamber pot—what does she expect? emeralds?—Dolly drips unmeasured amounts of gunk from the brown bottles into the glass of cloudy water, making it cloudier.

The old lady gives me a halfhearted sponge bath, hands me the glass of water which I'm supposed to drink. Then Dolly feeds me the gruel. That's it. Every day. They occasionally mutter something to each other, but nothing I can begin to understand. Of course without knowing the language, I don't try to talk or interpret anything except their expressions, which so far have said, "I hate her," and "Don't waste your energy, she's no contest for you," and "She stinks," and "I hate her," and "Why

doesn't she just die so we don't have to do this anymore?" and "I hate her."

Today's no different except that while I'm drinking the cloudy water we all hear a familiar tennis court scamper on the steps. B. J. I catch the old woman shoot Dolly a look, but I read nothing in it. Sometimes a look is just a look. B. J. stands in the doorway for a moment giving us all the opportunity to appreciate his tan, fit self. He doesn't look exactly like I remember him. He looks more like an exaggeration of himself; handsome, blissfully superficial, whitened teeth. I imagine a coffee table book of people's personas—not how they really are, but how they imagine themselves to be.

Dolly straightens her persona, arching a little, to give him the opportunity to appreciate her exotic, healthy self. She hands the glass to Mama and then goes to stand by B. J., completely into the role of damsel beside herself with yearning and adoration. The bosom outdoes itself straining. B. J. restrains himself from imploding in a fit of self-

adoration. How could I have not seen this? No. I've got to stop thinking I could've foreseen anything.

The crone feeds me. She blocks my view of B. J. and Dolly while they carry on a high speed whispered conversation that sounds mostly like "siss siss siss." The old lady shovels the gruel in faster than Dolly normally does and where Dolly has a faint gardenia scent, the crone's hands smell of onion. At one point the spoon clatters against my front teeth. Mamacita glares at me for having teeth, swipes at my mouth with the same terry cloth strip she washed me with, and rises. Mealtime's over.

She joins B. J. and Dolly and adds a few remarks to their conversation. She doesn't bother to whisper. At one point they all turn and look in my direction. I resist the very strong urge to look away and instead meet their gaze. I wish you could see them; they are the picture of conspiracy. If I could capture that moment on film, it would be exhibit A. They look away first, not always a sign of guilt, but hey. As the crone begins her

descent down the stairs, I ask B. J. if I can talk to him for a minute. My voice sounds shaky. Hearing it makes wires in my arms and legs snap loose. I push away the tiresome thought of what has become of me. He stands next to the bed, weight on one leg and asks what is it, without a shred of compassion or even curiosity. This is new. My breath comes from the top fraction of my lungs. It's the first time I've seen his face without any trace of conviviality. Any speeches I had (I had an angry one, a mournful one, and a cajoling one) evaporate. "Can you get me out of here?" is all I manage to croak. "How?" he asks, mildly impatient with what he has to endure. When I don't answer right away, he looks over to the door where Dolly is waiting with the tray. "I have to go," he says. "We'll talk about this later." He doesn't wait for my response, but joins Dolly and they scurry down the steps together.

They're playing a brass instrumental version of "The Girl from Ipanema" in the bumper car place. I can hear a



couple of cars crashing into each other. I follow the path of a crack in the opposite wall that looks faintly like the profile of a baby chick. A little bit of water leaks out of my eyes, runs down my temples into my greasy hair. I try to calculate how many days we've been gone. I think we were four days on the road before I got sick, and then I think I lost some days. Maybe we've been gone a total of ten days. We only had ten days of vacation. Shouldn't B. J. be worried about his job? Maybe he's gone native. Maybe he plans to set up shop locally, offer building plans to the locals. Once he said he should've been a lawyer. Maybe he's going to take a long distance course and sell legal advice to tourists. I'm sure there's a market for it.

I've recently discovered a half-awake/half-dream state where isolated, unrelated images come to me free of charge. Red canvas hightops walking on a gravel road; a perfectly clipped, pencil thin mustache; plastic wrap peeled off the top of a chocolate sheet cake. Today the images don't come. I'm fully awake when the boy comes for the chamber pot. He looks at me like a kid would look at a dead body. I stare back and he hurries out the door. Small pleasures.

It gets darker. There's an electric buzz, the colored lights show up on my wall, and the disk jockey starts his evening of bubbly commentary. It's time for people to do something that sounds like, "Byla, byla, byla." The first song of the evening is "La Bamba." The last song will be "Blue Spanish Eyes." I touch the outer wall next to my bed and feel the music's vibration in the plaster.

I ease my lower half sideways on the bed until my feet touch the floor. It's warm, as if a dog had been napping there. I slowly, slowly roll to a sitting position and look around the room which is even smaller and shabbier seen from an upright position. I stand, first crouched and then straighten bit by bit until I'm mostly upright, pressing my right side against the outer wall. The effort makes me pant, but the burning in my gut is dulled. I look back at my bed, half expecting to see a layer of skin, a shadow, my corporeal self . . . something significant. But it's just wrinkled white

sheets, a sweat-yellow outline showing where I'd been. With my foot, I drag a pair of B. J.'s shorts and a T-shirt out from under his bed; my things were never unpacked. I peel my limp T-shirt off inside out and pull on B. J.'s clothes, which takes three songs and leaves me sweaty and light-headed. I shuffle slowly to the door and stand there for a second leaning on the door frame. This is beginning to feel doable. Whatever this is.

There are only two couples slow-dancing down on the concrete. I'd always imagined that there were at least half a dozen. I have new appreciation for the image of a big crowded party the disk jockey manages to convey in his running schtick. I make my way down the stairs, leaning heavily on a rusty handrail that's semi-attached to the outside of the building. No one shouts at me, no one seems to notice or care that I'm leaving.

The dirt road is surprisingly soft and cool on my feet. A light breeze lifts the lower edges of my hair a little. It almost makes me feel giddy. I know it's too soon for me to indulge in giddiness. I head toward the darkness, away from the dance floor, away from the town. I take in deeper breaths. When I reach the edge of the pool of light, I glance back. The orange, runty dog is trotting my way, eyes straight ahead, ears up, determined. I look out toward the dark. There are a few stars in the distance. I'm pretty sure they're stars. I start walking. I think I hear the dog panting behind me, but I know it'd be a mistake to turn and look. I realize I left my camera on the bed. I can get another camera. I need to keep moving. *

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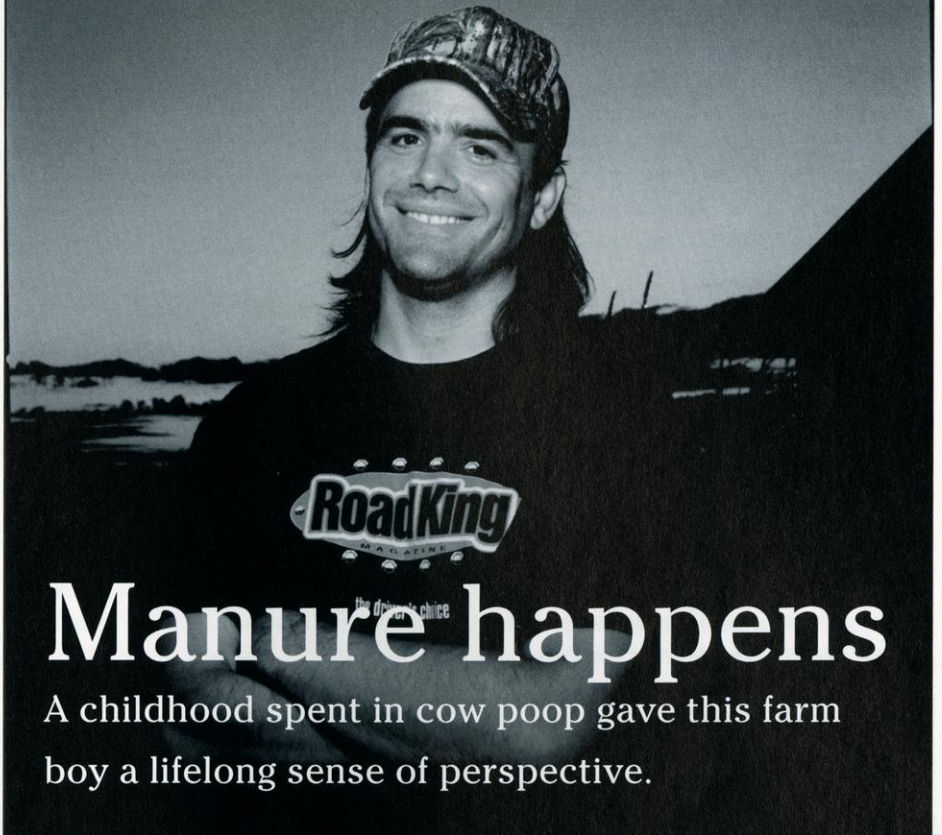
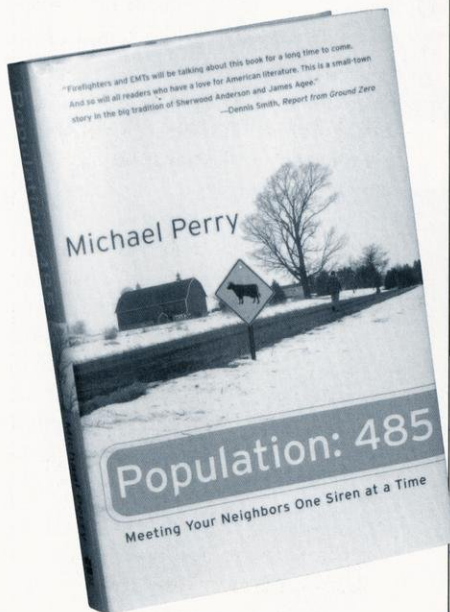
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This story concludes publication of our 2003 contest winners. Look for the first-place winner of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*/Harry W. Schwartz Bookshops Short Story Contest 2004 in the summer 2004 issue.



Manure happens

A childhood spent in cow poop gave this farm boy a lifelong sense of perspective.

BY MICHAEL PERRY

IN WHAT I HAVE COME TO COUNT AS MY EARLIEST MEMORY

(these things are never certain), I am backing away from a dog. It is a short-haired dog, a herding dog, and it has backed me down the dark end of a barn. The dog is likely just curious, but her eyes are steadfast, and she advances with her nose extended stiffly. There is no sound but the flat-footed scrape of my heels as I edge them behind me like curb feelers. Far away up the concrete walk, the barn door is an open rectangle of light, but the dog is yielding nothing.

I am a farm boy, but this is not my barn. It belongs to a farmer from our congregation. It is a summer Sunday, and his wife has invited us to dinner. Church is over, but I remain dressed like a little Mister: trousers, dress shoes, a clean shirt. The dog moves in, chesty and intent. I edge back again, and this time there is nothing beneath my heels. I tumble backward into the gutter. The dog spooks at the sudden movement,

dipping her haunches and flaring to one side, but shortly her nose is poking along the gutter edge above me. I can see whitewashed rafters.

The manure is mudbath soft and blackstrap dark. Above all, it smells sweet. It is not so deep that I am in any danger, but I am well over three-quarters marinated. I don't remember any panic or fear, perhaps because I had broken the spell of the dog, but I must

Despite my dedication, I found it impossible to cut the cow scent below levels detectable out of context. Beneath the English Leather the sweet note of dung did linger.

have called out, because my father appeared and pulled me from the muck. I was soon stripped of my togs and shivering under the garden hose. I assume the smell tarried well into the week.

It is a persistent scent. Years later in high school, I demonstrated a commitment to personal grooming so avid my peers saw fit to vote me Biggest Primper, Class of 1983. Despite my dedication, I found it impossible to cut the cow scent below levels detectable out of context. Beneath the English Leather the sweet note of dung did linger. I was one of those well-scrubbed small town boys who sat beside you at the basketball game, and upon removing a coat donned in a porch hung with chore clothes, released a layer of trapped air that rose warmly to your nose, and you thought, *farm kid*.

When you are raised on a dairy, manure is elemental. Lactation cycles wax and wane, but cows produce manure full-time. Once a day we ran the barn cleaner, a motorized device that drew heavy iron paddles along the gutter bottom. The cows stood with their rears to the gutter, but tended to undershoot. We used a wooden-handled scraper to clean up the misses. In winter, the firm, high-fiber pats scraped neatly, like ginger cookies off a baking tin. In spring, when the cows were on fresh grass and clover, the experience was more analogous to troweling prune smoothies.

Sometimes, if viscosity allowed, my brother and I went gutter surfing. We adopted a hang-ten stance, standing sideways in the channel, booted goof-balls being towed around the barn on a mile-an-hour hillbilly thrill ride, jumping off just before the manure passed through a hole in the wall and up an ele-

vated chute. At the apex of the chute, the paddles swung into open air, leaving the clods and straw to fall into the manure spreader parked below.

I often volunteered to spread the manure, as this meant I could drive the tractor through the fields rather than stay behind to sweep the walk and shake out fresh straw. The manure spreader was a simple and spectacular machine. I'd gauge the wind (spread manure *with* the wind and you will come home speckled), engage the power take-off, hit the throttle, and let 'er rip. The beaters flung the manure in a skyward arc. What you had was a portable sludge fountain. In the winter, I'd look back and see the wide brown stripe and feel like I was finger painting a 40-acre canvas. December through February, we never stowed the spreader in the shed until it had been scraped down fore and aft, the beaters flossed like so many snagged teeth. Too much residual manure would freeze up around the mechanisms, and the next time you engaged the power something snapped—a shear pin, a worm gear, the apron chain.

I can't say I miss the manure. I spent enough time on the wooden end of a pitchfork to view it primarily as something to be slung. Years of kneeling down to milk cows only to get smacked across the face with an excrement-drenched tail plume tempered my affection for the medium. As did having the bad luck to pass behind a cow just as she sneezed. The effect is jaw-dropping, although that would not be your optimal response.

I have a buddy who has watched his farm become a suburb. He gets hassled now when he runs his spreader. People object to the smell. Things change. I am not going to get elegiac. But I'm glad cow

manure is one of the trace elements of my existence. It inoculated me against everything to follow. Gave me an organic sense of calibration. Wherever I am, whatever I face, I think of me looking up and that dog looking down. What a delightful place to start. As children, my siblings and I crossed the pasture using cowpies as stepping-stones. We pressed through the crust with our bare feet and relished in the squish. Certain self-regarding health spas in New Mexico will charge you one house payment for equivalent pleasures. *

*Michael Perry is the author of **Population: 485—Meeting Your Neighbors One Siren at a Time** (HarperCollins, 2002, and just released in paperback), a memoir of his life as an emergency medical technician in New Auburn. (It was reviewed in the winter 2003 issue of the **Wisconsin Academy Review**). His work has appeared in **The New York Times Magazine**, **Esquire**, **Salon**, and **Men's Health**, among many other publications. He is a frequent guest on Wisconsin Public Television. For more information about Perry, visit his website, www.sneezingcow.com*

For this edition of
 “In My Words,” readers were asked to describe
 what growing up on a farm did for them or meant to them.

Family photo courtesy of
 Bill Blankenburg



IN MY WORDS

RAISED ON THE FARM

Barn Fires and Helping Hands

When I am asked to recall my life on a farm, I easily fade to childhood, and find that it is the hay barn that has gathered the most memories. Collectively, barns have a nostalgia that “haunts” in a nice way, even today. It was only when I was older and we lived in Chicago in a third-floor attic apartment (no elevators or television) that my mother would remind me how my older brother saved my life from a fire in the hay barn. The story took on some significance when I realized later in life what a good guy my brother actually was! After the burden of sibling rivalry ended, there was a lot to pass on about a boy with a heart of gold. He never talked to me much after we moved out of the country. His sadness was a reflection of a city life that did not fit either of us well.

I cannot pin a calendar date to when our rural fire department’s pumper made its way to the hay barn that shadowed a small bump of a house on what then was surrounded by prairie. My mother said that the roar of the fire and heat both deafened and scared her as she tried to find us. The sound did not carry all the way out to the cow barns where my father had taken up his early position. It was at that barn before dawn that both my father and mother introduced a pregnant cow to a mechanism known then as “calf chains.” My father was a man who had stumped around in the oldest neighborhood of Chicago, and had only been a visitor to the pens at the back of the stockyards. He had never even touched or milked a cow, much less become really handy at delivering them. But that day he persuaded that bellowing female to let him try. Because my father could not afford a hearing aid, he didn’t hear the screeching of the humans who were responding to the smoke gathering in and around the affected barn, which was on higher ground. He was so busy with the new calf birthing that he didn’t even light up a cigarette, he said later.

So, here you have this bellowing pregnant mother of a cow, a willing midwife, and a lot of chain. Add to that the dis-

turbance of a fire truck and a mother yelling at the top of her game at two children not tall enough to be seen in the July cornfields. It is a story so old that I didn't think it was part of my history now that I qualify more as an ancestor than a child. Anyway, my brother found me in the barn and took me by the wrist with both of his hands, and dragged me out the door, placing me underneath the protection of a dormant tractor. At this point in the story my mother chimed in with more facts, adding that my brother Ronny used much the same facial contortions as the comic greats, Laurel and Hardy, whose famous line was, "This is another fine mess you got me into, Ollie!"

My brother died when he was 42 years old and had small children of his own. Over the many years I have lived in Madison, I have bumped over the dusty roads that run parallel to the interrupted prairies of nearby Sauk County. On one such outing a few years ago, I came to a deserted barn and pulled alongside the road. I had to investigate this interesting relic, and turned into the dirt driveway and navigated the higher weeds with my older Honda. In the open deserted sanctuary of the hay mow of that barn, I settled into, if only briefly, another look into something that is a "has-been" in our society. I set aside all thoughts of the politics that endanger the farms, making them into corporations instead of a continuing tradition of family values that include harder work than most of us have ever known. I looked around that fall day and smelled the dried prairie grass, and then watched monarchs as they looked for the last of the milkweed leaves on which to deposit their remaining eggs. The lazy drone of a propeller overhead added to the unique moment. A passing truck going down the road let out the sound of a dog barking from an open window. It reminded me that we had to give up a sheepdog when we went to the city so that my dad could find a better-paying job. We had lived on a farm because it was the only available income in the years starting with 1940, for a man unable to go off to war.

The barn that I remember was part of a farm that had a lot of cows, and included a dog named Laddie who was

also part of our family. Boards and silo were components that lent themselves to metaphor not only representing a family that lived at that particular curve in the road. It went on to become well-known as a place where you could still find a helping hand.

*Elaine Barrett
Madison*



Almost Amish, Then and Now

I grew up "almost Amish" on a small family farm in southern Green Lake County during the 1940s and '50s in an area and a time that lagged behind the nation's general progress. I was born the year German prisoners of war came to pick canning factory sweet corn in our field across the road. Six years later I walked a half-mile down that same road to Oak Grove School, where eight grades occupied one big room and three of us (Marilyn, Betty, and I) accompanied each other through those grades until we graduated in 1958. The schoolhouse was surrounded on three sides with woods where we often constructed forts for use in mock warfare between the boys and the girls. One of my most vivid memories involves the curious recess time activity that found us digging trenches and caves in the soil next to the woods just for the joy of digging, to find salamanders and to hide away from all that book learning. I can still smell that cool, damp sandy soil. Most of what I remember of those days involves the world of nature rather than what may have transpired in the classroom. We must have learned something.

We grew up with a powerful connection to the land and probably with a very narrow cultural outlook. My parents had worked as domestic help for a wealthy family in Milwaukee during the Depression before buying the 80-acre farm with their saved pennies in 1939. They came back to a rural life with a somewhat broader view of life than many in the area, but we still grew up with prejudice and suspicion aplenty. Still current

in the 1940s was the scary notion that a caravan of Gypsies might come down the road in search of little children to spirit away. We were afflicted with the usual ethnic-based fantasies to explain the world's mysteries and our lack of money. City slickers seemed to have way more affluence and leisure than we did; they tended to play golf, the game my father called "cow pasture pool."

Farming was hard work and nature could seem indifferent to our wishes and desires; to be totally dependent on the land for your livelihood can produce another kind of narrow view. We hadn't heard of ecology or Henry David Thoreau, so corn was king and all else, weeds. Despite this, my father, with his somewhat broader view, purchased another small farm in the 1960s as a "hobby farm" where he could plant trees, dig ponds, and hunt for deer and pheasants. This is the farm we have inherited today, where my own little family wanders among Pa Berndt's now towering pine trees. We plant prairies and gardens and watch the bluebirds. Now the farm does not have to produce a living for us. With our city jobs to support us, we can go there for the experience of nature that inspires, teaches, and surprises. And, as I grew up to be an artist schooled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (and curator of the Wisconsin Academy Gallery), the farm's fields, woods, and water have provided the background for my adult visual musings on the mystery of life.

In the last 15 years or so the area just to the west of us has been settled by a large community of Amish people. So, even as roads are straightened for monster pickup trucks to speed unhindered, and plastic houses spring up in places they don't seem to belong, this slowed-down way of life has come to take over from a modern agribusiness that seems like a factory on the land. It provides an almost surreal contrast to the materialist frenzy of modern life. And it reminds me in some ways of my childhood days on the farm.

*Randall Berndt
Madison*



Farm and Family

I don't actually own any plants. Why bother? I'll only kill them. Besides, the view from my apartment is plenty green—lush, living woods separated from my black thumb by beige standard-issue carpeting, a wall, a balcony, and several yards of cleanly manicured and appropriately lit lawn (prominent enough to dissuade burglars, yet subdued enough not to disturb the ambiance). It is the ideal environment to relax with paper and coffee, but hell if I'll ever actually eat my breakfast out there. Eating outside seems awfully dirty to me, what with the bugs and leaves in your food and your napkin flying every which way. It's more like a battle than a meal, and why one would deliberately participate in such a stressful, messy balancing act is beyond me.

Raised on a farm? You'd never guess it.

This from the girl who could ride a horse by age three, who saw calf births and ran around on manure-packed dirt all day and collected bones she found and helped with the milking before she could write anything much beyond her own name with a backwards 'h.'

I still have scars on my knees from those days. I still remember the hey-who-kicked-me surprise of an electrified fence. Apparently I only needed to feel it once to never forget the slow-motion ballet necessary for easing successfully between and through those ominously plastic-ringed wires. I recently found myself maneuvering around them again on the farm of my youth, walking with the woman who lived there back when I was a toddler and she was a first-time grandmother. "Remember those picnics?" she laughed. I didn't. "We used to walk for hours out here, and you'd pack these picnic lunches you insisted on making yourself." Apparently some otherworldly delicacy known as radish sandwiches were involved, horrid things that my Gramma would eat long before she'd hurt my feelings.

Picnics? Outside? Me?

So what changed? Well, I certainly didn't know about bacteria in those

days. I probably didn't make the connection between the flies buzzing around my lunch and those buzzing around certain crusted corners of the barnyard, either.

The fact is, when you're five years old you just don't care about those things. You don't have to, and I think that was the point. I simply took it for granted that my grandmother or any of my other abundant family members would look out for me and care for me. They loved me, and I them, and it is this association with farm life above all that makes me smile, flies notwithstanding.

I will always respect country living and try to avoid it for the same reason: the superhuman (or insane, if you will) strength necessary for surviving off the land. Living on a farm as a child has instilled in me simultaneous awe and aversion for the hard, dangerous, never-ending work of the farm, but also a profound appreciation for family, always associated with hot cocoa after a day of sledding, the smell of turkey and sound of adult laughter around a table, and the sun rising slowly over the spreading mist on the hills, me eagerly anticipating a whole day to spend with people who love me so much they'll choke down my hideous childish cuisine with a smile—and laugh about it a decade and a half later.

These are beautiful memories, the results of unconditional familial love; not quite enough to make me want to eat outside or invest in a fern, but lovely all the same.

Rachel Campbell
Madison



Beneath My Bare Feet

When I see today's painted toenails, ankles adorned with jewelry or tattoos, toes ringed with silver things, it makes me think of my bare feet on an 80-acre Manitowoc County farm with Holsteins and Jerseys, chickens and turkeys, a bull, Hampshire hogs, rabbits, a Dalmatian, boundless barn cats and

occasionally a whistling swan when the low land flooded.

Our three-story clapboard set half a mile back from the main road housed eight children. My bedroom had neither heat nor air-conditioning and I can still feel those uncarpeted floors, icy in winter, sticky in summer. Downstairs in the kitchen, weathered linoleum gave a little when I stepped on it, left a footprint. I took the basement steps two at a time, coated with coal dust in winter, soft fungus in summer. Summer brought also a pool of rainbow oil on the garage floor from the old Hudson, great for stomping.

Outdoors I ran barefoot across the dandelion lawn to fetch a baseball from the stony cinder pile before my sister made it to the oak tree (second base). We played house inside spindly lilac bushes, stepped over ropy watermelon vines in the garden and picked beans for supper. Our sandbox was an old shed without walls—rough-hewn timbers, plenty of splinters. But my favorite was the creek where squishy mud oozed between my toes and bloodsuckers crawled up my calves. I stood still for the tingles, small love bites when my aliveness fed someone else.

In the granary, piles of oat hulls massaged feet and ankles. I played in that grain bin, my tan legs sinking like quicksand, climbing up, falling down, laughing in afternoon dust. In the mow, freshly cut alfalfa scratched my legs when I jumped from barn beams into the stacks. I ran barefoot between rows of cornstalks, the leaves sharp and cutting in hot September, the soil ironed smooth, a mudpack with few lines. In the cement silo, I once stepped on noisome silage, a slough of fermented juices and chopped stalks, and never did it again. At night in those years before Red Skelton, we kids played One O'Clock The Ghost Is Here, slipping and sliding on dewy lawn, more quack grass than tended turf, but who cared.

And then one day my grown-up sister came home from San Francisco in a tie-dyed dress and gold hoop earrings. I gawked at her entire get-up but especially at her feet—neither *in* nor *out of* round-toed oxfords, Mary Janes, or moccasins. A riddle of straps set her toes

free yet safe from thistles and gravel. It was the sandal, coming hard on the heels of the '60s. Her feet, along with an entire generation, had been liberated.

All that before treadmills and technologically correct shoes for workouts. You want a workout, Daddy said, unload the bales, stack them in the mow. I hear you, Daddy. And I hear too the slant of light between barn boards, each beam of dust sparkling in a time before mass production sacrificed variety and individual design, a time when we knew who we were without commentators and conspicuous consumption. A time when we were grounded, indubitably grounded.

*Kathryn Gahl
Two Rivers*



Nature's Teaching

"Patience. You just have to have patience." If I heard that once as a 13-year-old boy growing up on my parents' farm, I heard it a hundred times. What did I know of this philosophical platitude? What was its relevance in my life? I wanted to grow up. Now. Or better yet, yesterday. Waiting for things to happen, in the early '60s, was an excruciating experience. Outside of a trip to town once a week, the only thing really happening on a farm in summer for a newly minted teenager was twice-a-day milking and a summerlong, seemingly endless period of cutting and baling hay.

I don't remember ever being taught patience by anyone in my family. Advice, yes, but no discussion. There weren't any self-help messages from a bookstore shelf. Perhaps my family had hoped I would find patience on my own. Somewhere. Maybe they were just trying to make me aware of its potential if I kept my eyes open, realizing that they couldn't explain it themselves. But how to find it?

Nature taught me patience because nothing I could do would hurry spring or make it come sooner than it was ready to arrive. Nature is a continuous cycle and all of farming's activities occur within that cycle—the planting in spring, the nurturing and growing in summer, harvest in fall, and the watchful stillness of winter. Each season has its own rhythm and demands its own patience, each day a thinly sliced piece of the whole.

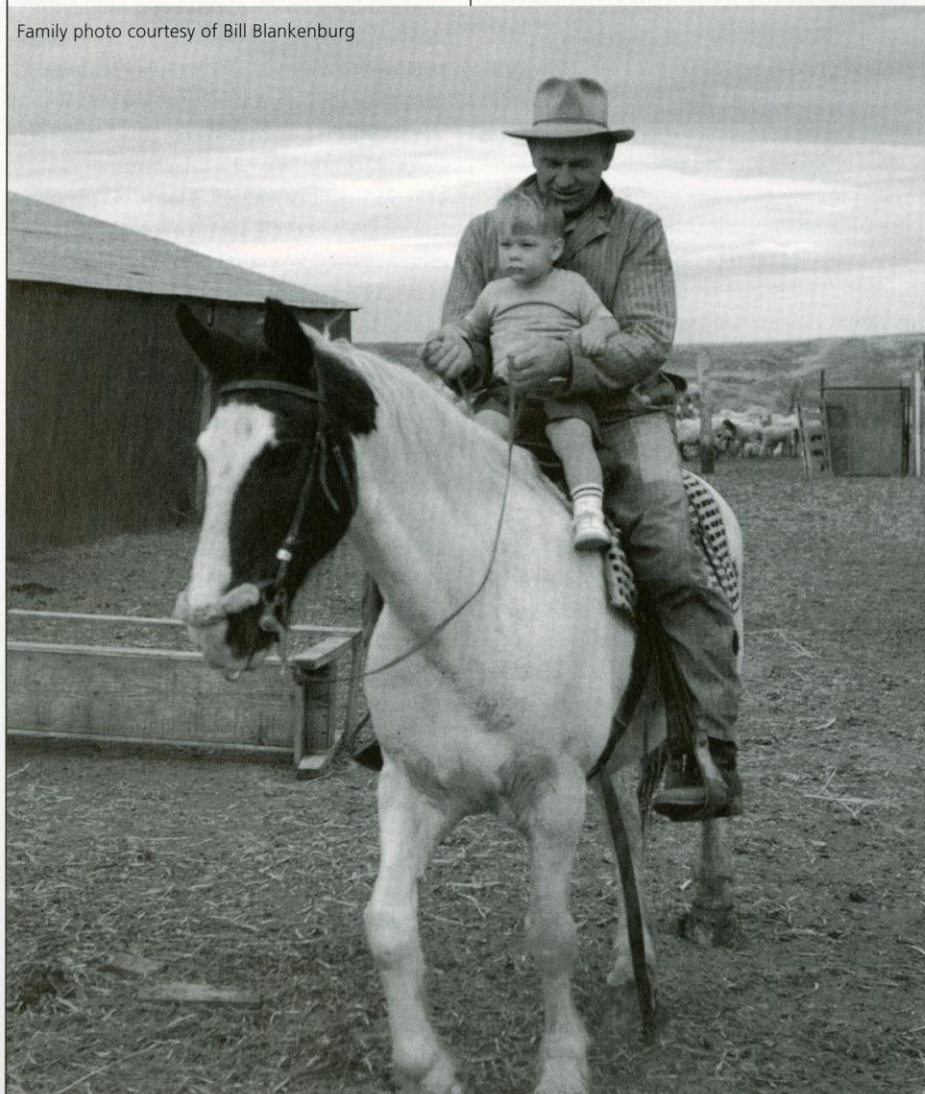
Nature taught me to wait whether I wanted to or not. There was no instant gratification when it took more than two weeks to till a 200-acre garden in the spring, working one field before starting the planting and seeding, then moving on to the next. Always waiting for the next rain. Then waiting for sunshine to coax the seeds to life.

The hay harvest proceeded with a patience of its own. One field cut, harvested, and stored before moving to the next. Fall's golden harvest continued until every last ear was stored away.

Winter cast a long spell with early sunsets and late mornings. The best I could do in waiting for winter's end was to mark the sun's northerly movement against the western horizon, and then wait. It was a watchful, hopeful anticipation of longer days that I knew would come, but the cool wind demanded that I be patient.

Farming is not immune from the increased speed of society. The pressure to keep one step ahead, to get more done faster, is not confined to urban areas. But when it was all said and done, the crops were planted, they grew, and were harvested. The milk and beef prices rose and fell. One year turned itself into another. While these things loomed large then, it all seems pretty

Family photo courtesy of Bill Blankenburg



inconsequential now. So what was the point of losing patience? All of this would still have happened whether I fretted about things needlessly or was able to step back and catch my breath.

How am I to instill patience in my own 13-year-old son, who is bombarded daily with a vast array of messages for instant satisfaction and who often wonders what planet his father is from when told that he should wait a bit? I must rely on what I have learned and use my own patience for this challenge, I think. Perhaps it's simply a matter of helping him plant and harvest a 200-acre garden. Not an easy task for sure, but one that can teach him the patience of a lifetime.

*Philip Hasheider
Sauk City*



Stony but Fertile Ground

I was born not on a farm, but rather in Milwaukee just before the war. My father had worked on a farm in his younger days and had always wanted to own one. When he located one for sale while vacationing in Door County, the die was cast. So in the summer of 1947, reluctantly I believe, my mother agreed and we were on our way to a place called Baileys Harbor, leaving behind my one married and two working older sisters. I don't remember the exact day or the move in a 1941 Chevy, being not quite six, but I have always counted it as one of the luckiest days of my life.

The farm was just 80 acres, but it was only a half-mile from a lake, and that meant fishing every day until dad decided that I was big enough to drive the tractor and feed the animals. Each spring, my mother insisted that I help get her bushels of dahlia and gladiola bulbs from our dank, bug-rich cellar and plant them. Each fall we dug and returned them to the darkness. In spite of my protests that "You can't eat the darn things!" I learned responsibility and also a love of growing things that I still practice on a much smaller scale.

I also had many opportunities to develop my mechanical skills. As a small boy, I spent great amounts of time dismantling such things as now-coveted wooden butter churns and bolting together various stray pieces of old metal to form planes, cannons, and assorted imaginary vehicles. I once saw similar pieces in a museum labeled as sculptures and only then realized that I have long neglected this apparently latent artistic talent. I was also fortunate because our machinery was not state-of-the-art and seemed always to break down when I used it. Those episodes taught me self-reliance, ingenuity, and perseverance, along with a questionable vocabulary. Unfortunately, the specific repair techniques did not transfer well, as binder twine and baling wire are in short supply in my present environment.

That training in animal husbandry, horticulture, and equipment repair gained growing up on a farm led me to my lifelong career and passion. Geology! That's right. Geology! The connection may not be apparent, but think about it. The farm was in northern Door County, where the bedrock is shallow and each fall and spring we plowed up another abundant crop of flagstones. I passed many hours picking them up and building our stone fences. That made for some pretty good solitary thinking time but, better than that, the bedrock is the Manistique Formation. Now the Manistique Formation has loads of silicified fossils, and I collected innumerable specimens of what I later would learn were corals, brachiopods, and cephalopods. This was fascinating stuff! They were beautiful. I diligently toted them home and, over the objections of my mother, arranged them in piles or in boxes on our porch. I even managed to sell a few to tourists who came to buy vegetables. Many of my high school friends also grew up picking stones, but I was the only one who enjoyed it.

I still hear the spring peepers and the call of the crows. I remember the smell of the nearby cedar swamp, the freshly baled hay, and, yes, even the manure. All of the sights, sounds, and experiences of the farm are with me still. They have formed in me an enduring sense of place

and the actual core of who I am. Who knows? If we had farmed less interesting, less fossiliferous land, I might still be there today working the soil.

*Ron Stieglitz
Green Bay*

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 March 1 (for the summer issue). 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.

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

Coming Together: Race in Wisconsin

Be more open-minded

Wisconsin Public Television (WPT), 4-H Youth Development and the Educational Communications Board are partners on a yearlong project to encourage statewide pre-teens and teens to think and act in a more diverse way.

The project:

- Recognizes that hate crimes can happen in Wisconsin, and have.
- Creates a brand-new diversity curriculum, designed by a panel of experts.
- Uses WPT broadcasts as a starting point for discussion among youth.
- Encourages pre-teens and teens to go back to their rural and suburban communities to be peer leaders and trainers in diversity.

wpt.org



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poetry

Holding I

Well I started for town this morning to get 10-10-10 because today Ray is going to till the garden but the live trap I borrowed for the woodchuck and wasn't even baited yet had a rabbit the fool thing just hopped into it but I don't eat rabbit and I couldn't shoot it in a cage and I wasn't about to let it go around here so I had to drive out along the marsh road with the trap and then I remembered we need an O-ring for the chain saw oil-cap and had to go back for the saw because I didn't know what size and as I drove in again a strange car followed me turned out it was the people who bought our A-frame 25 years ago from the people we sold it to 30 years ago and there was no way I could get away they heard over the grapevine Walt was dead (I kept it out of the paper not wanting a lot of people knowing I'm here in the woods alone now but of course it got out it's been over a year now) anyway those people are dumber than a box of rocks back then they tarted up our beautiful glass and Douglas fir butterfly with additions and cabinets and plumbing but I was stuck them wanting me to come see what they've done *now* and me in my mellow old age with the piss gone out of my vinegar not telling them what I thought of what I've already seen until they finally ran out of nice-nice and left but by then it was too late to get to town anyway before Ray would get here so I'll have to spot-fertilize after I get the rows planted and then I remembered I need him to help me put the gutters back up so there wouldn't be time today for cutting wood anyway so I just went out to sit on the south porch and rock and hear the peepers sing wishing Walt could listen to them too

by Barbara Cranford

Holding II

I wanted to take down the birdhouse the squirrel tore apart last spring trying to get the robin's eggs but then I'd have had to fix the ladder where two rungs broke when Albert who takes my trash to the dump when his truck works was going up to put a rope on the jack pine leaning over the shed so he could hitch his truck to it to pull it the other way while Mick from down the road took the chain saw to it but Mick cut the tree anyway and coming down it only skinned the shed and took off the hog wire trellis I put up for the grapes but the woodchuck mostly gets the grapes don't let anyone tell you chucks don't climb but I don't make jelly any more anyway and if I want to give them away I have to wash the bird poop off and explain to the young neighbors I have now about half-wild Beta grapes being pretty small with lots of seeds and not so sweet but hardy to 40 below and jell up quick and 40 years ago I didn't know Concord's are hardy here too and while I was hunting for a piece of one-inch pipe to run across the ladder legs a storm came up so what I had to do quick was to get the clothes off the line and pull the plugs against lightning because the last storm I didn't and lost both radios and the line out to the shed which was too light anyway to run the battery charger for the tractor which for some reason won't start on its own and with the rain came a lot of wind and that meant some more screen would rip off the back porch and I'd have to go to town again to see if they had got in the staples for my old staple gun because the last time they didn't have them or faucet washers for the bathroom where the fixtures are as old as I am and just as tired

by Barbara Cranford

*Barbara Cranford was born in Chicago, where she was an editor, poet, sculptor, and gallery owner. In her central Wisconsin woods, where she has lived since 1971, she gardens, sculpts, writes, and conducts an occasional workshop. She has published her poetry in such publications as **Free Verse**, **Neo-Victorian Cochlea**, the **North Coast Review**, the **Chicago Quarterly Review**, and the **Manhattan Literary Review**.*

The Devil Flies First Class

The devil flies first class.
The first to board, he takes
the aisle and stretches out.

He'll wander through the plane,
enjoying turbulence,
smiling at frightened children

and at the airplane food,
but likes to sit among
the other businessmen.

His miracles are minor:
The passenger beside him
will find the window stuck—

who wants to look at clouds?
He'll casually look through
the stewardess's blouse,

and make one teeny bottle
of freebie bourbon flow
the whole way back to Los Angeles.

by Max Gutmann

Meeting Women

Withhold the weight of your desire;
her face is a trap door,
no knowing if that sturdy smile will hold.

Pause on the edge, make sure your balance;
then, once you think you have it,
forget,
like that first time you managed to forget
the bicycle beneath you
and all the world streamed past your ears,
compressing to a tight, dry pea
the coming fall, so likely, but not certain.

by Max Gutmann

*Max Gutmann has contributed to **Light Quarterly**, **Cricket**, **The Formalist**, and a number of magazines with "Review" in their titles. His first book, **There Was a Young Girl from Verona: A Limerick Cycle Based on the Complete Dramatic Works of Shakespeare**, is just out from Doggerel Daze (www.ddaze.com).*

Sailor on a Greyhound

Riding home from boot camp I've got ten days leave
before Indianapolis and journalism school
I'm on my way from Great Lakes Illinois
to northern Wisconsin's gravel roads and woods
sitting with this girl who started out in Florida
the sunlight wants to live in her red hair
she says she's been riding so long
she can't feel her ass anymore
I tell her it's still there and we both laugh
trying to finish a 6-pack before it gets warm

I used to ride the bus a lot when I was in the Navy
I'd have a cigarette in every town we stopped at
talking to the driver and the other smokers
I used to love watching the Midwest go by
I'd read and sleep and daydream
sometimes think about my life
while I was in between places

twenty years later
the windows are tinted too dark
and you can't even open them
you can forget about having
a drink in the back of the bus
or a quick smoke in the john
I mourn a bit though I quit smoking years ago
and drinking quit me more than I quit drinking
riding from Wisconsin to New York to visit friends
I think about that sailor who survived himself
night falls and he's beside me
like a faint reflection in the window
riding on the waves of corn
that chase the moon that coin of dreams

by Michael Kriesel

*Michael Kriesel, 42, lives near Wausau, fooling around with zen and kabala. His reviews appear each issue in **Small Press Review**, and his poems have been in numerous small press and college journals, including **Chiron Review**, **Plainsongs**, **Free Lunch**, and **Nerve Cowboy**. His poems try to combine the blue collar themes of small press writing with the craftsmanship more often found in the academic community.*

Over Easy

You covered the table with newspapers
on which to serve me breakfast.
"I'm not your canary," I laughed.
"You're my everything," you purred
in your deep soap opera voice.

Bending to pour coffee into
a Mickey Mouse cup, you brushed
my ear with an early stubble
and for a while everything was a
carnival, Fantasia.

Now you are just a name in
the telephone directory, a number
I would never call. A memory that
comes back when I see yellow birds
caged.

by Yvonne Yahnke

*Yvonne Yahnke's poetry has appeared in most editions of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets' calendar. She is a member of Fireweed Press, which has published her two chapbooks. Yahnke's work has also appeared in **Isthmus** and **Over Fifty**, and is forthcoming in **HummingBird** and **Free Verse**.*

Male and Female

There are couples you know will get divorced.
 She always looks disgusted when she's with him,
 like Princess Leia chained to Jabba the Hutt.
 There are also couples riveted together with sublime
 love and trust no matter what. The ax murderer
 hobbled by chains in his orange jumpsuit
 sober for the first time in ten years
 looks to his fiery little wife as he's dragged from the courtroom
 and she leaps over chair backs
 must be restrained by four officers
 pounds the bailiff with her tiny fist
 and shouts shining-eyed to the husband reeking of bloodguilt,
 "I believe you, baby!"
 Weeping he shouts back, "Big hug!"

This is true love. There is also lust, which operates like a terrible gas
 which people breathe in and which makes them stupid.

John Heywood said in 1550:

"When candle be out, all cats be grey."

A Personals ad in *Isthmus* in 2002 says:

Looking for nudes. (signed) Hopeful

There is hopeless love. "Nothing is sadder than a glass of wine alone."

A girl trembling with nerve approaches her five-year crush,
 a co-worker who looks like Achilles, and at long last
 suggests going out for a drink. He replies formally,
 "No, thank you. Right now I'm seeing exquisite men."

There is tragic love, Dante Gabriel Rossetti berserk with grief.

He buries his only manuscript of new sonnets
 With the red-haired wife/suicide he adored.
 A few years later he thinks better of it
 and digs her up again, wrenching his book
 from those tresses of flame.

There are ringing pledges to the beloved. My favorite is
 Hawkeye's to Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans*
 as they're overrun by those who hate them to the bone.

He jumps straight into the waterfall
 brave red heart electric in the silver torrent
 and he shouts to her "Stay alive
 no matter what occurs! I will find you!"
 And, in the movie, he will.

by Margaret Benbow

Margaret Benbow's poems have appeared in Poetry, The Kenyon Review, The Georgia Review, and numerous other magazines and anthologies. Her collection Stalking Joy won the Walt McDonald First Book Award. Benbow also writes fiction, and this year was awarded a Wisconsin Arts Board Fellowship of \$8,000 for an excerpt from her novel, Boy Into Panther.

Righteous PB&Js

Corseted snug among elms and aromas,
Brownberry Bakery anchors Main Street—
A Victorian dowager with scented bosom
and front porch morals.

Saints in lycra shop its antiquated aisles,
plucking pumpernickels and caraways
with reverential hands for sandwiches
they can starve upon.

Olive loafs the creek behind the place,
catching crawdads and brown-bagging
her own damn manna—righteous pb&js
of wonder. She smells of rye and muck.

I scramble through the huckleberries,
butter her up and eat.

by Mitchell Metz

*Mitchell Metz graduated from Brown University, where he played football and wrote bad poetry. The football earned him All-Ivy recognition. The bad poetry, meanwhile, earned him the amorous attentions of female undergraduates with poor taste. Now he's bald, his degree irrelevant, and football just a morning ache in his shoulder. But his writing is getting better. His work has appeared or is pending in about 60 publications, including **The William and Mary Review**, **Mangrove**, and **Southern Poetry Review**.*

The Stewards of WOW

The many people around the state who were involved in the heavy labor of Waters of Wisconsin would probably agree: the whole initiative has been a little like giving birth and letting go.

Giving birth because many players were absorbed in the passion of doing important work collectively for a vital common cause: providing our state with a blueprint for keeping our waters healthy and plentiful now and in the future.

Letting go because, now that the blueprint has been created, it is time to hand the work over to organizations and individuals who are best suited to carry out its various components. The Waters of Wisconsin Report will continue to serve as the core of WOW, and, to a lesser degree, the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters will continue to serve as its convener.

But, thankfully, a number of groups have stepped forward to offer the best possible stewardship in keeping WOW alive. Here are some of the ways in which WOW will flourish:

IN WATER POLICY:

- At the highest level of state government, Gov. Jim Doyle—who accepted the Waters of Wisconsin Report in an Earth Day ceremony and promised to make ample use of it—has made a key component of WOW a cornerstone of his economic plan, Grow Wisconsin. Grow Wisconsin includes a provision for the Department of Natural Resources to develop a comprehensive state water policy starting in early 2004, working with the Wisconsin Academy and other groups. Says Grow Wisconsin, in language that has WOW all over it:

“The Department of Natural Resources is working to create a comprehensive state water policy to assess the current state of Wisconsin’s water resources and recommend ways to protect that water for the future. Clean water is critical to Wisconsin’s way of life. It is also an anchor of Wisconsin’s \$11.7 billion a year tourism industry that provides not only recreational opportunities, but also 280,000 full-time jobs—the third largest industry in Wisconsin.”

- Collection of data needed to formulate that policy is already under way. Professor Steve Born, a UW–Madison professor of urban and regional planning and a co-chair of the WOW steering committee, and Elisa Graffy, a water policy specialist with the U.S. Geological Survey, are working with a class of Born’s graduate students on a state water policy inventory project. Their intent is to create a preliminary inventory of state water policy in a web-accessible database that will be completed by January. It is intended to facilitate the work of a Water Policy Task Force proposed in the WOW Report and to enhance public access to water policy information.

IN K-12 EDUCATION:

- The Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE) at UW–Stevens Point and the Wisconsin Academy have met

with water educators from around the state to discuss current water education and the development of a comprehensive K–12 water resources education program. Such a program will focus on supporting existing water resource education curricula, working in a clearing-house capacity.

IN MONITORING:

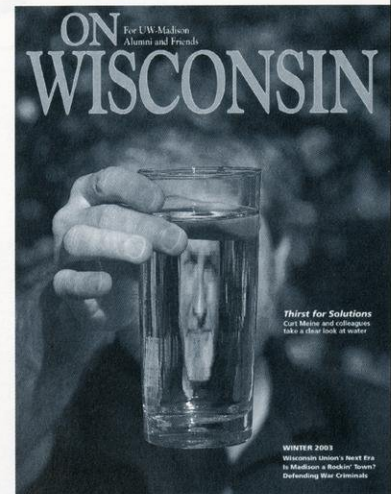
- A subcommittee of the interagency Groundwater Coordinating Committee is developing a groundwater monitoring strategy in accordance with recommendations by the Waters of Wisconsin Report, the Groundwater Summit 2001, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The strategy will be implemented as opportunities and money are available.

IN EDUCATION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC:

- The Year of Water has generated hundreds of events and activities throughout the state designed to celebrate our waters and educate the public about the challenges they face. Many of these activities will have lasting significance. One example is a special edition of the environmental newsletter, *EE News*, that is devoted almost entirely to water and includes resources for teachers and materials ready for classroom use. Other examples include a new website for access to Wisconsin’s vast water library created by the Aquatic Sciences Center at UW–Madison.

The success of Waters of Wisconsin thus far has rested largely on enthusiastic citizen participation. There, too, lies the future of WOW. The many hundreds of Wisconsin residents who were touched by WOW can continue to serve as its stewards. The broader vision and concrete recommendations of WOW will flourish if people and organizations support them, doing everything from participating in such efforts as volunteer monitoring and cleanups to making local legislators aware of your water concerns.

Please continue to draw upon your WOW connections—continue to care about our waters and act on their behalf. And if you need guidance, inspiration, or contacts for further action, please feel free to call upon the Wisconsin Academy. *



Serenity Now

A passage from Ben Sidran's memoir, *Ben Sidran: A Life in the Music*

BY BEN SIDRAN

The period of waiting for surgery was like living under water. I knew something very bad was happening to me and I was trying very hard to “live with it,” to understand it and adapt. I found comfort in spending time with our dog, Peaches. We went on long car rides together, and I loved seeing that it made him happy. It was just motion to him, the rush of wind in his face. He had no idea that I was driving the car, or, indeed, that the car was being driven. He had no concept of “driving,” and I realized that, like Peaches, I, too, was unaware of the many forces in my life, and that there was no way I could ever know what I couldn't know. I became acutely aware of small things, like the sunlight moving across the carpet. And then one day, in the midst of this ongoing descent into the unknown, driving nowhere with Peaches, I became profoundly happy.

We were stopped at a light, and as I watched the traffic passing in front of me, suddenly, it was clear to me that all the worrying I had been doing for so many years came to nothing. Like the fear of not having enough money: Did I have enough money to last three more months? Yes. Well, how did I know I was going to last three more months? Clearly, I did not. I thought of the old axiom, “If you have a problem and you can solve it, why worry? If you have a problem and you can't solve it, why worry?” I started laughing. Why worry indeed.

The extent to which we worry about the future makes it come true. There is no future except as it exists in our projections. Choosing to project a particular future causes it to come about because it solidifies the perception. All life is on the edge. On the “rim of the well,” as Lorca said. Retreat from the edge and you retreat from life itself. The thing to do is to find out as soon as possible what you do best (what you feel best doing), and do it every moment you can.

Why does the soul doubt itself so? Why must it be so blind to its own beauty and prefer the neurotic observances of others? Perhaps because it needs struggle to grow. That adversity is why we are here. And the soul will seek out adversity as a plant tropes to the sunlight. Perhaps only after an inner struggle can the soul give or accept love, unconditionally.



Over the years, more than a few well-intentioned people had given me the same heartfelt advice: stop trying to do so many different things and pick a “career”—be a piano player, be a producer, be a journalist, whatever—and focus on that. In the end, it turned out I wasn't exactly doing any of these things. I was working on self-transformation, and the playing, the writing, the producing were just fueling the process, providing the means of transportation, providing cover.

I thought of all my daily frustrations, and I saw clearly that you should never be disappointed or have a low opinion of yourself just because you are not everything you hope to be. Otherwise, what are hopes for?

My whole life had been a search for “higher understanding,” only to discover that there is no understanding higher than simply *being* and no greater way to be than a life in the music. For me, if life was a lesson, that was the teaching. Everything else, all the internal chatter—“I need something, I *need* something”—was just my way of trying to stave off the inevitable, to fill up the silences, to think my way past the unthinkable. Trying to avoid the fragility of life, in the end, I

discovered that fragility was all there is.

Then the light changed, and with Peaches at my side, I drove on, floating like a bubble in the wind, feeling light and completely at peace. *

Jazz musician Ben Sidran is a Wisconsin Academy Fellow and author of the memoir *Ben Sidran: A Life in the Music* (Taylor Trade Publishing, 2003). The passage above was reprinted from the book with the permission of Taylor Trade Publishing.

The Fellows Forum in each issue presents a piece by Fellows of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters—men and women of extraordinary accomplishment in their fields who are linked in a significant way to Wisconsin. Anybody can nominate a Fellow. Visit www.wisconsinacademy.org for more information, or call 608/263-1692 ext. 16.

A Statewide Call for Artists in Overture

ATTENTION, WISCONSIN ARTISTS!

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters is issuing a call for artists from all over the state to exhibit in its new gallery in the Overture Center in Madison named after artist and art historian James Watrous.

The James Watrous Gallery of the Wisconsin Academy opens in September 2004, offering Wisconsin artists a highly visible, state-of-the-art space on the third floor of the Overture Center, right beneath the building's landmark glass-topped dome. The Overture Center is located on State Street less than a block from the Capitol Square.

The curators invite professional Wisconsin artists working in all media to apply for exhibition opportunities. Artists selected from this call for entries will be offered exhibitions during the time period from March 2005 through June 2006. Most of the shows will be in the form of two solo exhibits running concurrently (but separately) in the James Watrous Gallery space. **Artists must be Wisconsin residents at the time of application.** Wisconsin Academy policy precludes showing student work.

Applications must be received by **January 31, 2004** to be considered. Artists will be notified in April 2004 of exhibition jury selections.

TO APPLY, artists should include eight slides of recent work, a resume, a short exhibition proposal, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of slides.



As Wisconsin States Into the Future (2001, etching)
by William Wiley

Created for the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Portfolio published by Andrew Balkin Editions, Madison

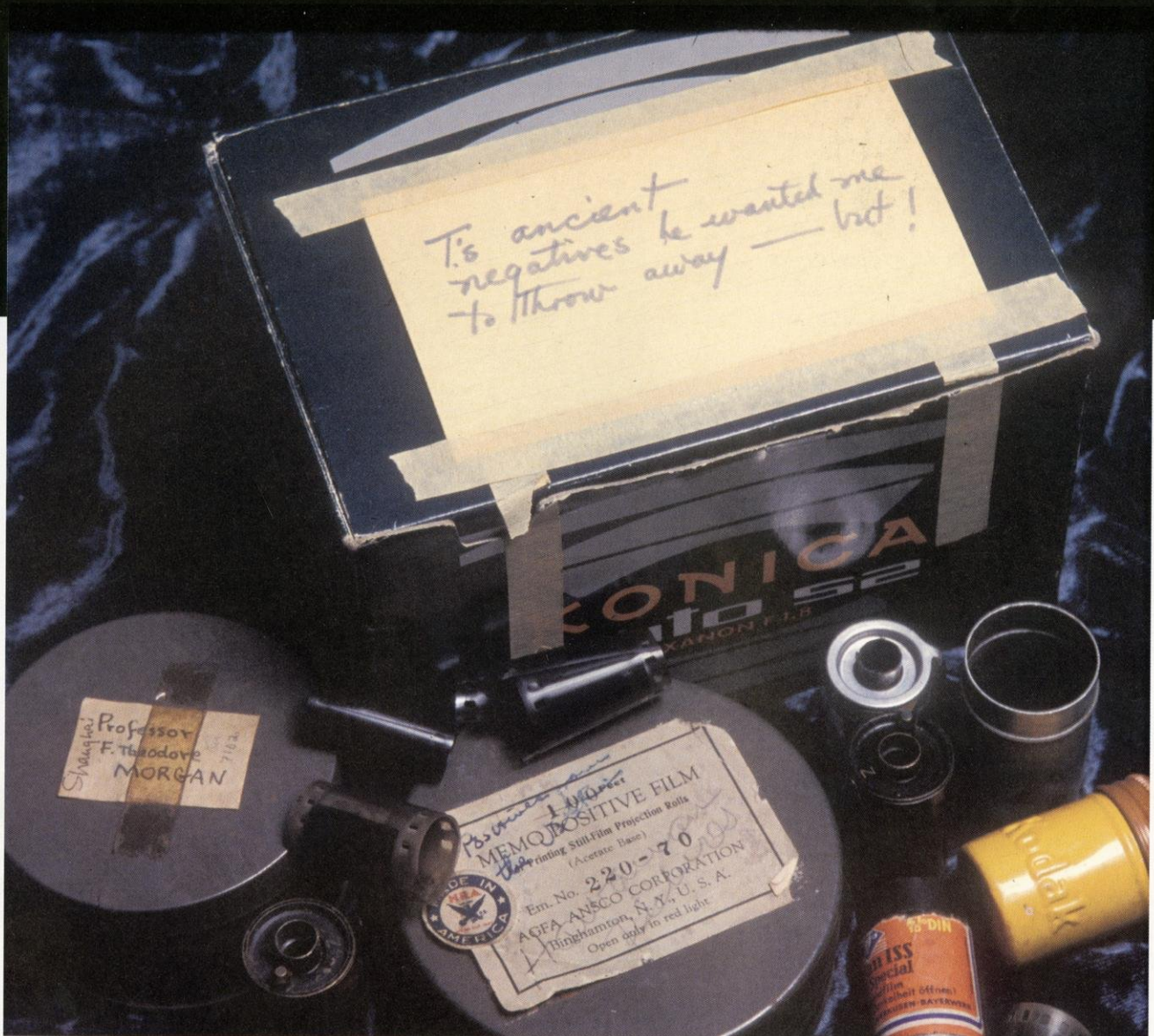


wisconsin academy
of sciences arts & letters

Please send your materials to:

James Watrous Gallery Selection
Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters
1922 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53726

If you have any questions, please contact gallery director Randall Berndt at 608/263-1692, ext. 25, e-mail rberndt@wisconsinacademy.org



Treasure in the basement: A daughter unearths her father's freewheeling photos from Europe under Hitler and Stalin.

Photo by Kenneth Van Sickle

Price: \$5

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