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wisconsin academy review

THE MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Jane Hamilton on Adultery and More in Her Surprising New Novel

■

Deborah Blum and Krishna Ramanujan on Genetically Modified Food: The Promises and the Pitfalls

■

A New, Statewide Short Story Contest

■

The Future of Sauk Prairie: A Special Section

Down on the farm with novelist Jane Hamilton.

Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters Fall 2000 Volume 46, Number 4

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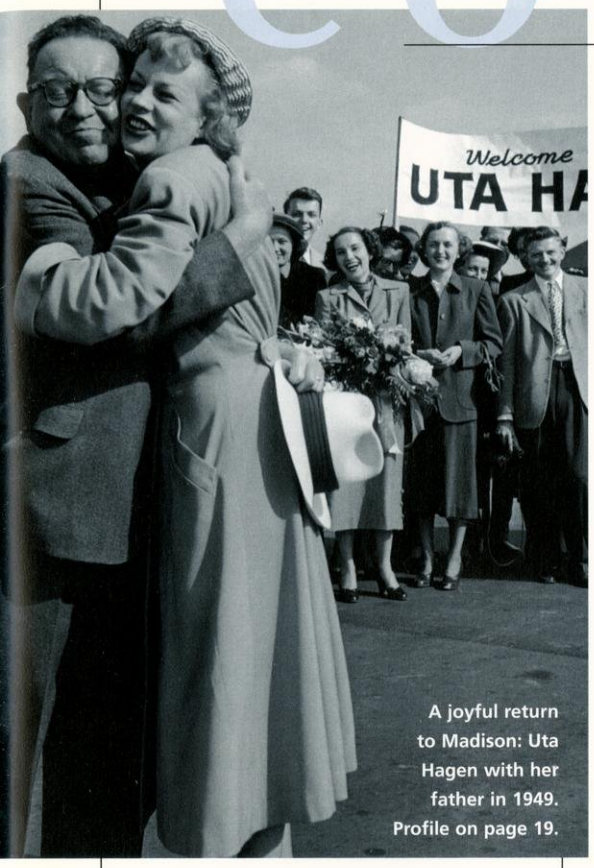
fall 2000



A joyful return to Madison: Uta Hagen with her father in 1949. Profile on page 19.

features

Sauk Prairie's future, page 24.

The redesign of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* was funded by a grant from the Norman Bassett Foundation. Many thanks.

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* (ISSN 0512-1175) is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 1922 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705. All correspondence, orders, manuscripts, and change-of-address information should be sent to this address. The *Wisconsin Academy Review* is distributed as a benefit of membership (annual cost: $50/regular, $40/seniors/students, with reduced fees for longer membership periods). For information call (608) 263-1692, or visit the Academy website: www.wisconsinacademy.org

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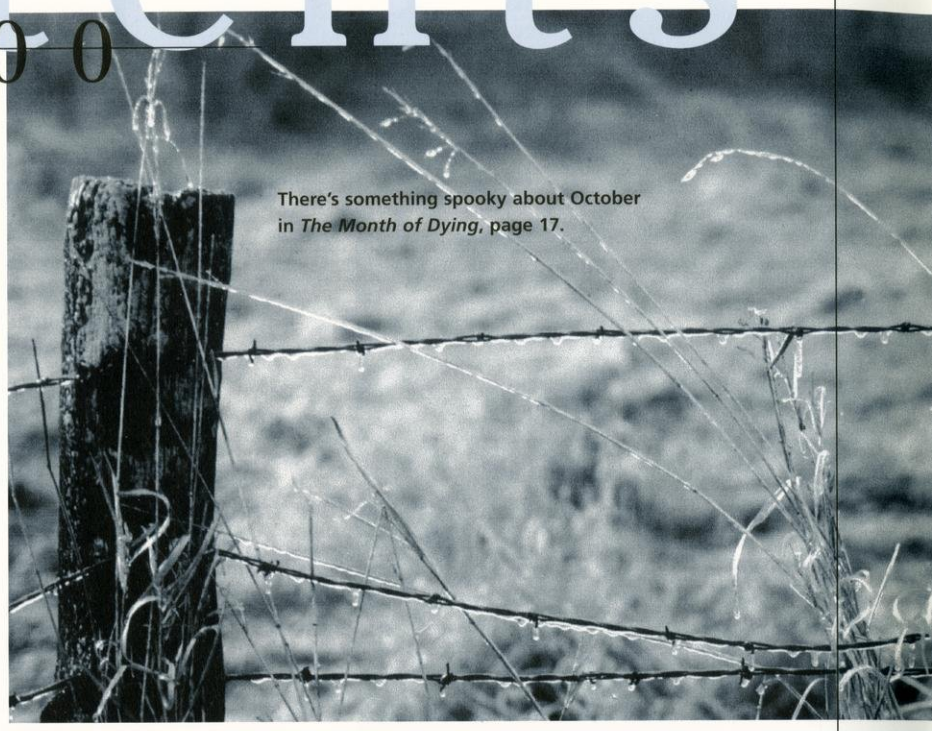

There's something spooky about October in *The Month of Dying,* page 17.

The Way We Were—and Are

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* debuted in the winter of 1954. Articles included "The 'Wisconsin Idea' and the Academy" by University of Wisconsin President E. B. Fred. "In these days of increasing specialization, I suspect that it does an entomologist good to talk to a Shakespearean scholar," he wrote. "And the Shakespearean scholar may well benefit from his talk with the entomologist." Fostering interdisciplinary discourse is still the Academy's mission. Read more about it on page 8.

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters is an independent, nonprofit membership organization. It was chartered by the state legislature in 1870 with the mission of gathering, sharing, and acting upon knowledge in the sciences and humanities for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin.

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The new *Review* debut

Yes, this really *is* the *Wisconsin Academy Review.* We hope you're as thrilled with the new look as we are. While we've kept the same title, we did change our tagline to "The Magazine of Wisconsin Thought and Culture." With this change we're calling attention to the special place the *Review* holds among Wisconsin publications.

It takes at least a village to revamp a magazine, so we'd like to thank some of the creative, generous people who made this possible:

The artsy folks: Bill Blankenburg, Christine McDermott, Ann Parker, John Urban, Zane Williams, and especially our new art director, Marcia Larson. Who says looks don't count? These people have delivered a clean, pleasing, provocative package. Special thanks to John for standing up to his knees in goat poop to shoot Jane Hamilton. Okay, I exaggerate. Up to his ankles.

Three gentlemen of letters: Dean Bakopoulos, John Lehman, and Gordon Weaver, who are in this for the long haul as our books, poetry, and fiction editors.

By way of introduction, we are letting John strut his stuff as a poet in this edition. And check out the review of Gordon's latest short story collection, *Long Odds,* on page 53.

You may also note that Dean, John, and Gordon play a pivotal role in our short story contest. Win $1,000! Be judged by A. Manette Ansay! Read more about it on page 9—and please help spread the word. Special thanks to Canterbury Booksellers, our first sponsor, for helping us get this contest off the ground.

Our contributing authors. We have some outstanding writers on board for this issue. Their articles, fiction, poetry, and book reviews speak for themselves.

Our trusty intern, Trina Laube, who wrote stories, took photos, and is hard at work on a statewide cultural events calendar now under construction on our website (www.wisconsinacademy.org). We hope that this three-month events overview will be of interest and use to our readers.

Our new editorial advisory committee. Journalist Paul DeMain, attorney and writer Teresa Elguezabal, science writer Paul Hayes, historian Art Hove, playwright Marie Kohler, and UW-Madison professor Nellie McKay have agreed to be the magazine's brain trust for the next two years. We look forward to their ideas and criticism.

Last but not least, the **Norman Bassett Foundation** gave us a grant for the redesign. Many thanks for their support.

ON TO CONTENT

What's this I hear about e-mail love?

From reading many anguished letters to Ann Landers, I know it is possible to start an affair without leaving your home. But I didn't quite believe in the pervasiveness of this phenomenon until two of our featured writers, Jane Hamilton and John Lehman, wrote about it completely independently.

It's an intriguing topic, and Hamilton makes the most of it in her latest novel, *Disobedience*, due out in October. A new Hamilton book is a happening not only in Wisconsin but across the nation. We are delighted to present an interview with her as well as a review and short passage from the book.

You'll also find a lot of prairie talk. At stake is Sauk Prairie's future after closure of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant. As our writers make clear, this landscape is not just a chunk of real estate, but an integral part of the community's soul. Mike Mossman provides a thoughtful overview of Sauk Prairie's history and the present debate, while the Ho-Chunk Nation and longtime resident Lola Huber provide more personal perspectives on the Prairie's meaning. Gail Lamberty's fairy tale captures the spirit of a true Prairie original, Dr. Evermor. And you're all invited to a real Prairie Party at the Village Booksmith bookstore in Baraboo (526 Oak Street, 608-355-1001) on Thursday, September 28, at 7 p.m. Meet the writers and photographers, drink some wine, and enjoy a stimulating discussion about Sauk Prairie's future.

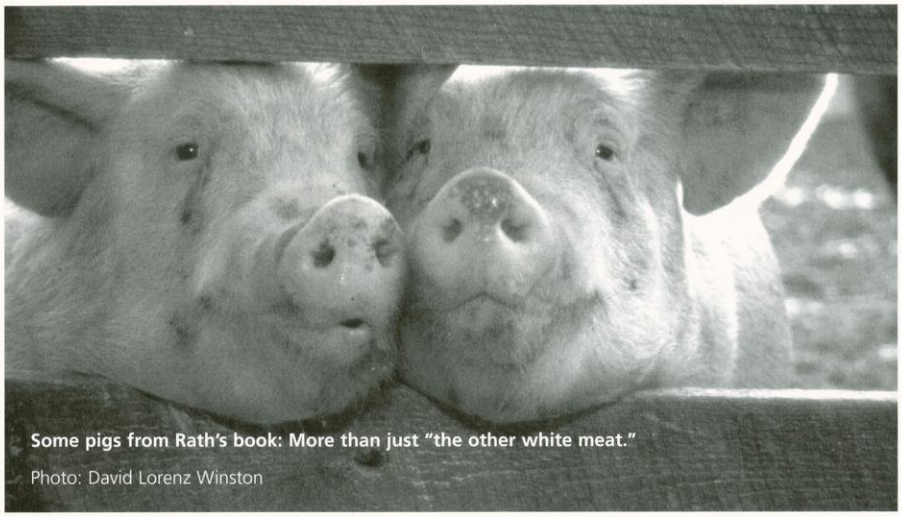
How about the future of our food? The Academy's November 3 conference on genetically modified food will take on that question. Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Deborah Blum and Krishna Ramanujan have written the ultimate conference primer. For more information, see www.wisconsinacademy.org/conference/.

Finally, all Academy members deserve a pat on the back. As you know, many of our programs involve discussion—lots and lots of it. The less chatty among us may wonder if all that talk produces tangible results. We're proud to say that it does. In case you missed the front-page *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* story on May 18, the Academy's Kettle Moraine Task Force can take credit for helping bring together two units of the Kettle Moraine State Forest—no small achievement. Read more about it on page 45.

Happy reading,

Joan Fischer
(608) 263-1692
joanfischer@facstaff.wisc.edu

HOG HEAVEN



Some pigs from Rath's book: More than just "the other white meat."
Photo: David Lorenz Winston

"A pig is a pal, who'll boost your morale,
Though mountains may topple and tilt."

—Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

Think of Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web.* Reflect upon Piglet in *Winnie-the-Pooh.* Contemplate Babe in two self-titled hit movies. What do these porkers have in common?

They're adorable, that's what. So it's not hard to understand why a respected poet like Sara Rath, of Elm Grove, Wisconsin—winner of the Wisconsin Library Association's Banta Award for her collection, *Remembering the Wilderness*—would write a gorgeous coffee table book entitled *The Complete Pig* (Voyageur Press, 2000), an entertaining collection of facts and stories about all things porcine.

The book was featured in the *Los Angeles Times*'s Lifestyle section right after its publication in June ("Eye-opening for those who think of the pig only as 'the other white meat,'" the paper said). That story prompted producers of the new *To Tell the Truth* to invite Rath on as a contestant and have celebrity panelists guess who is the true "hog historian." The show should air sometime this fall or winter. Rath has also been interviewed by an Italian television network.

Not surprisingly, book sales have soared like a pig, if only pigs could fly (and Rath does document that phenomenon). "I have been ambushed for requests for interviews. Then there's the TV angle. I have never experienced anything like this," says Rath.

What makes pigs so lovable?

"They look cuddly, for one thing—a pink piglet is so adorable and huggable," says Rath. "And then there's the connection we have through nursery rhymes as children—pigs are presented to us as our friends, very sweet and smartly dressed in little jackets and evading the sly wolf."

This is Rath's third literary trip to the barnyard, following the success of *About Cows* and *The Complete Cow.* Pick up *The Complete Pig* and learn such fun facts as the following:

* Modern-day Wall Street was named after a wall built there in 1653 to contain herds of free-roaming hogs bred by New York colonial farmers.
* The heaviest hog on record is Big Bill of Tennessee, at 2,552 pounds (and nine feet long).
* Other than humans, pigs are the only creatures that will consistently and willingly imbibe alcohol for purposes of scientific study.

All this pig talk begs the question: Which animal is next? "I have learned to never say never, but there are none in my plans at the moment, and I don't know how another animal could surpass *Cow* or *Pig,*" says Rath.

Still, Rath's publisher initially gave her a choice between horses and pigs. If *The Complete Pig* sales continue going hog-wild, your best bet may be on the horses.

who's who

Joe Riederer

Occupation: Middle-school science teacher, writer, and chicken farmer in Wisconsin Rapids.

Years in Wisconsin: 41.

Claim to fame: Juvenile Fiction of the Year for 1999 awarded by the Council for Wisconsin Writers for my book ***Restoration in the Barrens,*** the story of a thirteen-year-old orphan who is sent to live with foster parents in rural Wisconsin and finds solace in restoring a piece of prairie.

Currently working on: Next book and restoring a twenty-acre prairie.

I write for young adults because: This is the age group I know best. I have been teaching thirteen-year-olds since 1981 and have been acting like one since 1971.

My mission: To help kids see the value in our natural resources and to remind adults that kids are our most valuable natural resource.

What this state really needs is: To be as outspoken about the well-being of people as we are about deer-hunting and the Green Bay Packers.

To learn more about Riederer, see www.bigbluestempress.com

meet manette

Most avid contemporary fiction readers—not to mention Oprah Winfrey viewers—are familiar with A. Manette Ansay, who will serve as lead judge in our short story contest (she will read and rank six finalists). Her 1994 debut novel, *Vinegar Hill,* a hard-hitting story about a Wisconsin woman who breaks free from her family's stifling brand of Catholicism, propelled Ansay to stardom when it was chosen for the Oprah Book Club last year.

Ansay, 36, now lives in New York with her husband and a Doberman, but she grew up in Port Washington, Wisconsin , amid a huge clan that included sixty-seven cousins and more than one hundred second cousins. Her stories often are set in rural Wisconsin, the landscape she knows best. Earlier this year she returned for an extended period to hold the Women's Chair in Humanistic Studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee.

Ansay became a novelist somewhat by necessity. She began experiencing pain and weakness in her limbs as a teenager. Eventually she needed a wheelchair and braces to get around. "By the time I was 23, it was clear to me that I needed to find something I could do sitting down," she writes in her website autobiography (see www.amanetteansay.com). Her physical problem was originally misdiagnosed as multiple sclerosis; physicians now believe she has a rare genetic muscle disease with no clear prognosis. She started writing as a New Year's resolution on January 1, 1988.

For Ansay, every book is a battle. She must allow for her illness in her work schedule, accepting the fact that there are days when she cannot write. That challenge makes her output even more impressive. Her books include her latest novel, *Midnight Champagne* (a nominee for the National Book Critic's Circle Award); the novels *Sister* (winner of the Wisconsin Library Association's Banta Award and a *New York Times* Notable Book) and *River Angel* (another *New York Times* Notable Book); and an award-winning short story collection entitled *Read This and Tell Me What It Says.* She is currently working on a memoir called *Limbo* and on another novel.

Wisconsin-bred, globally acclaimed: Our lead judge, A. Manette Ansay.

Photo: Devon Cass/www.devoncass.com

Prairie Exhibit at Crane Foundation

***Sauk Prairie: A Vision for the Future,* by Victor Bakhtin, acrylic on panel, 1998.**

Courtesy of Virginia Metcalf and Mary Yeakel for the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie. Copyright by the International Crane Foundation.

The Academy's roving exhibit, *Rebirth of the Prairie: Aldo Leopold and Ecological Restoration,* has moved to the International Crane Foundation near Baraboo and will be on display there through October. In addition to the painting by Victor Bakhtin shown here, the exhibit includes many historic photographs of the prairie from various archives, including a shot of Aldo Leopold and his crew at a prairie burn and an oxen team breaking sod in the late 1800s. You can contact the International Crane Foundation at (608) 356-9462 for more information, or go to www. savingcranes.org.

Those wishing to see more of Bakhtin's work can attend his show at the Water Street Studio and Gallery (608 Water Street in Prairie du Sac), which recently hosted the Leopold exhibit. The Bakhtin exhibit is scheduled for late October. Call (608) 643-4355 (care of Bunch Engineering) for more information.

"Upfront" stories by Joan Fischer unless otherwise noted.

PEOPLE power

An innovative new program to put disadvantaged and minority kids on a professional track is spreading through Wisconsin.

The Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence—PEOPLE, for short—started in Milwaukee last year, even though it is a University of Wisconsin–Madison initiative. This year it debuted in Madison and Racine, and soon will start in Beloit. The program is part of Plan 2008, the university's comprehensive initiative to increase minority enrollment.

PEOPLE pairs middle-school students with professionals in several fields: architecture, biology, computer animation, newspaper publishing, space exploration, and transportation. Students can enter the program in sixth grade and stay with it until they graduate high school—and at that point they may be eligible for need- or merit-based tuition grants upon admission to UW-Madison.

Sarah Canon, a UW-Madison senior lecturer in landscape architecture, had her group of kids design a new entrance to the campus's Union South in a PEOPLE workshop this summer. Canon found the program challenging but rewarding. Never having worked with middle school students she was unsure what to expect, and found that keeping kids that age focused on the project was the biggest problem.

But the kids have no problem focusing on their futures. Jasmine Timmons, 12, a Sennett Middle School seventh-grader, already has her sights set on attending UW-Madison. She hopes to receive a scholarship after graduating from PEOPLE.

Fostering such dreams for minority students is a major goal of PEOPLE, says program assistant Cecilia Nepomuceno. "What we're trying to do with middle school students is not only make learning interesting, but also provide them with role models," Nepomuceno says. "We want to provide the training to think that they can do it."

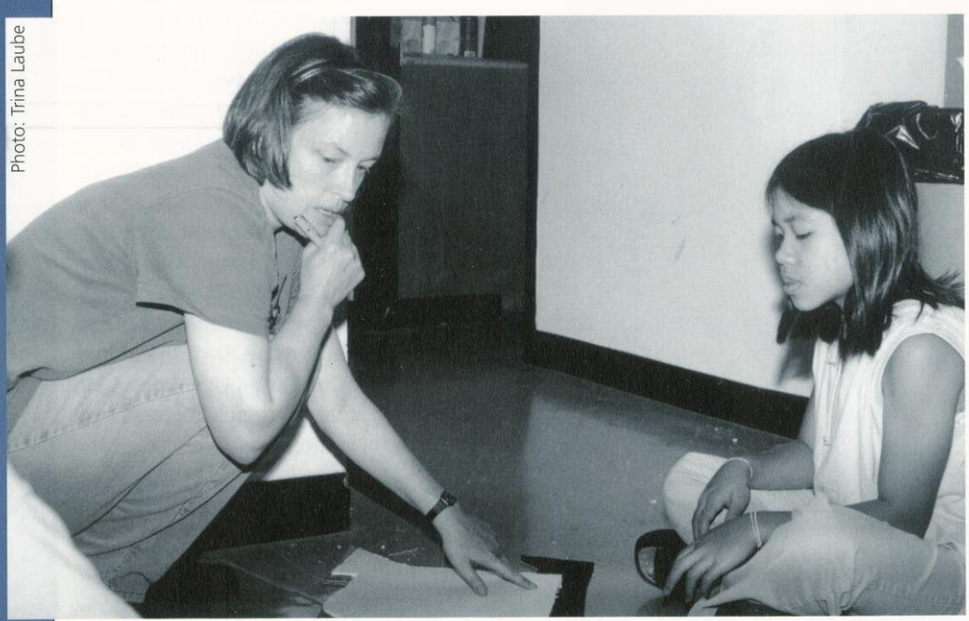
Throughout the school year, PEOPLE provides students with a "Saturday Academy" focusing on improving students' reading, writing, and problem solving in math and science.

Next year Canon may continue to teach some of the same students, while others may choose different fields. Whichever workshops students pick, it's the overall experience of the program that will benefit them the most.

"Having the experience of being here, they are already ahead of the game," Nepomuceno says.

by Trina Laube

Photo: Trina Laube



Building our future: UW-Madison instructor Sarah Canon teaches kids the nuts-and-bolts of architecture in the PEOPLE program.

Live Poets Society

May the year 2000 be remembered as a watershed for Wisconsin poetry. First, the state's largest poets' organization, the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with Marge Piercy holding a reading at the group's June bash in Green Lake. The party was also the scene of awards for the first WFOP Muse Poetry Prize for Excellence contest. The winners were: first place, Peter Sherrill, of Forestville; second place, Sue DeKelver, of Brussels; third place, Alice D'Alessio, of Madison. The Fellowship also issued a commemorative booklet about its history that is available at public libraries.

"It has been a wild and intense year for the Fellowship," says Appleton poet and WFOP secretary Cathryn Cofell. "Our organization has come so far in such a short period of time. From just a couple of people meeting and reading and chatting about poetry fifty years ago to an organization over four hundred strong and growing!"

Then Gov. Tommy G. Thompson, no particular poetry fan himself, gallantly decided that this state needs a poet laureate, with a winner to be announced this fall. Could it be that we're finally giving poetry the attention it deserves?

WFOP members are giddy at the prospect. "I am excited and gratified that Wisconsin is finally joining the majority—the other thirty-six states who have a state poet laureate," says the group's president, Sheryl Slocum.

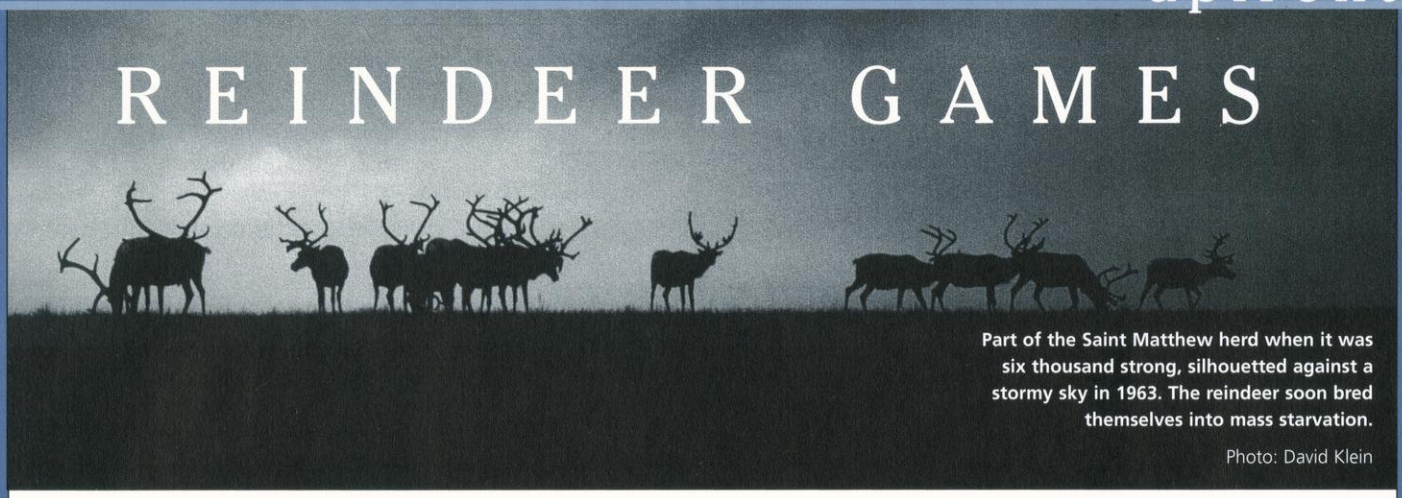
What does poetry do for people, anyway?

"Poetry keeps us sane and humane," says Slocum. "Its unusual combinations of words and sounds surprise us and express our hopes, fears, and passions."

When it comes to the future place of poetry in our society, Cathryn Cofell isn't afraid to dream big. "I have a line in a poem that goes, 'I want poets to make as much as basketball stars, but with much smaller feet,'" she notes. "Is that asking too much?"

The next big WFOP event is a fall conference in Middleton October 27–28. For more information, call Richard Roe at (608) 831-8947. Registration deadline is September 27.

REINDEER GAMES



Part of the Saint Matthew herd when it was six thousand strong, silhouetted against a stormy sky in 1963. The reindeer soon bred themselves into mass starvation.

Photo: David Klein

The Reindeer of Saint Matthew Island has the poetic, timeless sound of a wintery fairy tale—you can practically hear the sleigh bells ringing—but in fact the documentary by Middleton filmmaker George Allez, now in production, is a tragedy about humans wreaking havoc with the environment.

Saint Matthew Island lies in the Bering Sea and was acquired by the United States from Russia in 1867 as part of the Alaska Purchase. The 332-square-kilometer island is uninhabited, has no natural harbors, and lies off normal shipping routes. The island was made part of a national wildlife refuge shortly after the turn of the century, with spectacular cliffs providing nesting grounds for hundreds of thousands of a dozen species of seabirds. Polar bears once inhabited the island, but they were hunted to extinction by the end of the nineteenth century. Today the island's only mammals are arctic foxes and voles.

But for a brief time there were reindeer, brought onto the island to serve as an emergency food supply for a tiny U.S. military garrison stationed there during World War II. Twenty-nine reindeer were moved to Saint Matthew in 1944 from nearby Nunivak Island, part of a herd maintained by Inuits. Nearly a year later the war ended and the garrison was abandoned. The reindeer were left to their fate.

The first years must have been heavenly. The island was thickly covered with lichens called "reindeer moss," plants rich in nutrients. There were no predators. Reports about an alleged reindeer explosion somehow reached the mainland, and a young biologist named David Klein (now professor emeritus at the University of Alaska–Fairbanks) arrived on Saint Matthew in 1957 to check out the scene. He found 1,350 reindeer: fat, healthy animals with enormous antlers. Their population had multiplied nearly fifty times in thirteen years. Klein began a study of this reindeer Eden, noting the size of the herd, the physical condition of the animals—and the dwindling state of the island's vegetation.

The very last reindeer, who died "ancient, arthritic, and terribly alone." She was last seen in 1982.

Photo: A. Sowls, courtesy of David Klein

Already it was clear there would be trouble in paradise; Klein saw that the plants could not grow back quickly enough to sustain such rapid reindeer growth. The herd was already violating the island's carrying capacity, its ability to support life. For reindeer in domestic herds, that's 3.9 reindeer per square kilometer. The reindeer of Saint Matthew were at 4.1. Klein completed his observations and departed, and nature pursued its course.

When he returned six years later, in 1963, Klein found six thousand reindeer.

They were no longer so fat and healthy. There were only sixty fawns for every one hundred females, whereas in 1957 there had been seventy-five. Reindeer density had reached eighteen animals per square kilometer. Only scattered patches of lichen remained.

Klein returned to a catastrophe in 1966. Forty-two reindeer remained, and only one was male. Moreover, the lone male was aberrant and almost certainly sterile (there were no fawns). Bleached skeletons were everywhere, yet Klein found no evidence of parasites or disease. What had caused the spectacular crash?

A combination of starvation and a very harsh winter in 1963–1964, Klein concluded. The animals, weakened by lack of food, bedded down in the snow and never arose.

In 1971 an associate of Klein's flew over the island and took a photo of the surviving herd: fifteen females.

In 1982 a nature photographer visited Saint Matthew and found the very last reindeer. She was at least twenty-four years old, twice the normal life span of a reindeer, perhaps because she had been spared the stresses of pregnancy. In filmmaker George Allez's words, the photographer found her "ancient, arthritic, and terribly alone." The following year someone looked for her, but she had vanished.

"I see the story as a parable of the human condition," says Allez. "To some extent, the lessons of wildlife ecology can be applied to human society. The reindeer on Saint Matthew, multiplying without regard for the resources which sustain them, become a metaphor for humans on earth, exponentially doing much the same thing."

Meanwhile, on Saint Matthew, the lichen will once again grow thick.

Calling All Thinkers

THE ACADEMY WANTS YOU

Christine McDermott

The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters provides a gathering place where the thoughtful citizens of Wisconsin, from a wide range of disciplines, can discuss and act upon issues of public concern. Through our many programs and projects, we help create what Aldo Leopold called a "thinking community."

In 1870, Wisconsin's leaders from academia, business, and the arts petitioned the state legislature to charter the Wisconsin Academy with the mission of gathering, sharing, and acting upon knowledge in the sciences and humanities for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin. This remains the Academy's mission today. The Wisconsin Academy is an independent, nonprofit membership organization funded by grants, private endowments, and our members.

WHAT YOU'LL SUPPORT

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

- **The Intelligent Consumption Project** examines forest resource consumption and its effect on the environment. The project brings together a wide range of people in forestry nationwide—from loggers and environmentalists to representatives from business, agriculture, and academia—to formulate a viable consumption ethic.
- **The Wisconsin Idea at the Academy,** a new program, examines as its first project the integrity and quality of our state's water resources.
- **The Wisconsin Academy Gallery** is the only noncommercial gallery in the state to feature different Wisconsin artists every month, and reaches beyond established art circles to find them.
- **Fall Forums** take on topics of public interest. This year's conference, "Genetically Modified Food: Risks, Rewards, & Realities," brings in national and local experts to examine a global concern.
- **The Wisconsin Center for the Book,** affiliated with the Library of Congress, conducts many programs in support of literature and the book arts. Examples: "Wisconsin Authors Speak" brings writers to communities throughout the state. "Letters About Literature" invites young people to tell authors how a book has changed their lives.

WHAT YOU'LL GET

- The *Wisconsin Academy Review,* a quarterly magazine, is a free membership benefit.
- *Inside the Academy* is a quarterly newsletter about our programs and member activities.
- Discounts on Wisconsin Academy events.
- Invitations to gallery receptions, special events, conferences, and other activities.
- *Transactions,* an annual scholarly journal published by the Wisconsin Academy since 1870.
- A complimentary copy of Aldo Leopold's *Marshland Elegy* (while supply lasts).

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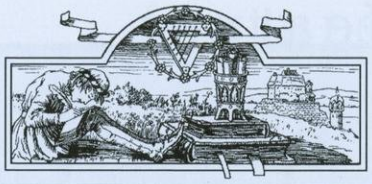

The Wisconsin Academy, the Wisconsin Center for the Book, and Wisconsin members of Book Sense, a league of "independent bookstores for independent minds," are pleased to present the *Wisconsin Academy Review*

SHORT STORY CONTEST

May our call for gifted writers ring throughout the state. Come out of your woods, your fields, your prairies, your coffeehouses, and deliver your best short story. We will declare three winning stories; each will be published in the *Wisconsin Academy Review,* starting with next summer's issue. Excited? So are we!

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 1, 2000

The Prizes

First place $1,000
Second place $500
Third place $250

Send Manuscripts to:

Short Story Contest
Wisconsin Academy of Sciences,
Arts and Letters
1922 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

Questions?

Please contact the Wisconsin Academy at (608) 263-1692, or e-mail: joanfischer@facstaff.wisc.edu (e-mail preferred).

The Judges, to include:

A. Manette Ansay, novelist

Dean Bakopoulos, contest coordinator

Raphael Kadushin, editor, University of Wisconsin Press

John Lehman, publisher, *Rosebud*

Gordon Weaver, president, Council for Wisconsin Writers

Laurel Yourke, author and creative writing instructor, UW-Madison Continuing Education

Devon Cass www.devoncass.com

Lead judge A. Manette Ansay, author of *Vinegar Hill* (an Oprah Book Club selection) and *Midnight Champagne*.

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The Rules

1. Authors must reside in Wisconsin.
2. Stories must be between 2,500 and 5,000 words in length.
3. Each story must be accompanied by a $12 entry fee payable to Wisconsin Academy Short Story Contest.
4. Writers may submit more than one entry, but each manuscript must be mailed in separately with its own cover letter (see Rule 8) and $12 entry fee.
5. Entries must be postmarked on or before **December 1.** Entries may be hand-delivered to the Wisconsin Academy (1922 University Avenue, Madison) by 4 p.m. on December 1.
6. Previously published stories (electronically or in print) are not eligible.
7. Each manuscript must be typed, double-spaced, in standard 10- or 12-point type. Each page must include the title of the story as a header. All pages must be numbered with both an individual page number and the total number of pages (e.g., The Smoker, page 1/15, The Smoker, page 2/15, The Smoker, page 3/15, etc.).
8. **The author's name may not appear anywhere on the manuscript itself.** The manuscript must be accompanied by a letter bearing the story title; the author's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (if available); and the story word count. Every contestant must be able to provide an electronic version of the story if needed, either on disk or via e-mail.
9. Keep a copy of your manuscript. Manuscripts will be recycled, not returned. Do not send an SASE.
10. Contest winners will be announced by the end of March.

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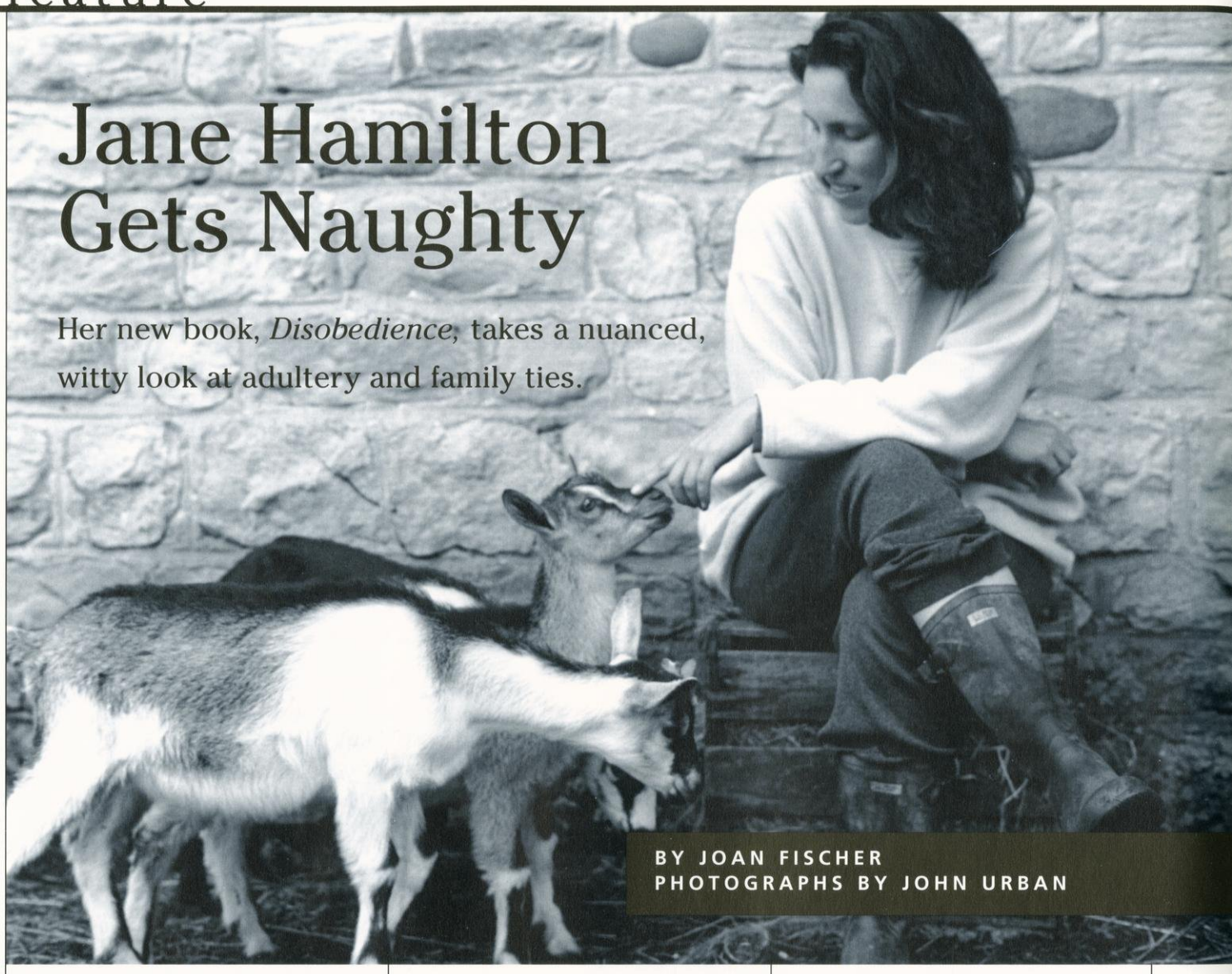
Jane Hamilton Gets Naughty

Her new book, *Disobedience,* takes a nuanced, witty look at adultery and family ties.



BY JOAN FISCHER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN URBAN

"IT'S JUST A SMALL BOOK," says Jane Hamilton almost apologetically when asked about her new novel, *Disobedience* (Doubleday), due out in October. At just over 300 pages, it's the shortest novel she's ever written, she explains; it is structurally less complex than her previous works, and it's told in a single narrative by one person.

Maybe it is a small book, but it certainly packs a wallop. *Disobedience* weaves keen observations about passion and family bonds into a deceptively simple story—which is entirely appropriate for a book that's built around deception.

The first line is coolly ominous: "Reading someone else's e-mail is a quiet, clean enterprise," says the novel's protagonist, Henry Shaw. He should know. As a computer-savvy teenager, he sets up his family with e-mail accounts and one day opens his mother's by mistake (he's named her "Liza38," a play on her name, Beth, plus her age). Aghast, he watches as his mother begins a torrid affair. How torrid? "Come to Tribbey, listen to my stories, take them off my back, make me right as rain, and do, above all, tear the buttons from my shirt again. I have sewn them on with heavy duty thread and when you arrive will add duct tape, for extra protection. Get them off me if you can. Kiss me, kiss me, I'm waiting," writes her lover, "Rpoll," from a (fictitious) Wisconsin village.

Should he tell his father? His mother? His mother's book club? (A group that appears throughout the book like a harpy chorus, dispensing questionable wisdom on all matters of identity and the heart.) Although Henry is torn to his core, and at seventeen has plenty of his own sexual "issues" to explore, the book never devolves into melodrama. For that the reader can thank a strong cast of fully realized characters and Hamilton's sharp-shooting wit. This book is hugely funny, a big surprise from a writer who's known for gut-wrenching domestic sagas. *The Book of Ruth* and *A Map of the World* put the reader through an emotional Cuisinart, graphically dealing with everything from a toddler drowning to a modern-day witch hunt to a family bloodbath. Her most recent novel, *The Short History of a Prince,* took a much gentler, quieter turn, but was not especially notable for humor. Here Hamilton really cuts loose.

Take Henry's sister, Elvira. At age thirteen, she is not only a fervent Civil War reenactor, but a cross-dressing, cross-

"Kiss me, kiss me, I'm waiting," writes her lover, "Rpoll," from a (fictitious) Wisconsin village.

gender reenactor who has memorized every move in every battle and is so stringent about authenticity that she'll pee on her uniform's brass buttons to give them just the right patina. Profoundly uncomfortable in her budding woman's body, Elvira buzzes her head and goes by the name of "Elvirnon" for reenactment purposes. She is so quirky, so believably adolescent and, above all, so fiercely herself that the reader can't help but be enchanted by and feel protective of her. It is a measure of Hamilton's power as a writer that the reader feels absolute horror when, at one point in the novel, Elvira is in grave danger.

Beth Shaw—a.k.a. Liza38, Mrs. Shaw, mother, Momster, and "Lizadiza"—is the great transgressor, the woman who strays: the literary sister of such figures as Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, and Hester Prynne. Sexually and spiritually unfulfilled by her husband, a high school history teacher who shares Elvira's reenactment fervor, she finds passion and adventure with Richard Polloco, an impoverished Ukrainian violinist (Beth is a professional pianist). At one point she thinks adultery is the right prescription: "Richard gives me exactly what I need, conversation and whimsy and passion and attention, and well fortified I can go home and be a good wife to Kevin," she e-mails a friend. "Kevin provides the foundation, the stability that allows me to be the fanciful lover to Richard. It goes something like that. If everyone stays in their places it works perfectly, subject, I realize, to blow up at any moment."

Call it a traditionally male division of labor. It's almost a relief, for a change, to see a woman compartmentalize her needs, fill them, and have a chance of escaping with about the same degree of punishment one might expect for a man (far less than the suffering meted out to her literary sisters). Hamilton makes Beth's tragedy palpable. She met her soul mate—the man she calls "the companion of my body, the guest of my heart"—at the "wrong season" of her life. When the inevitable blowup occurs from an unexpected source, Beth plays a powerful role in saving her family.

And then there's Henry, the bespectacled, ponytailed keeper of secrets, or, in his own words, "the heavyweight champion of depressed teenagehood." With this character, Hamilton serves up a Holden Caulfield for the twenty-first century: sensitive, astute, self-deprecating, and wise beyond his years, though much more knowledgeable about women than poor Holden ever was. He suffers from his mother's transgression—do any of us, at that age, want to know our parents as independent individuals, much less picture them having sex?—and is scarred by her betrayal. Henry tells this story nearly ten years after it happens, a device Hamilton uses to give him more perspective and understanding. We can forgive Hamilton for a slight anachronism: in order to look back that many years on the kind of "everybody has it" e-mail environment she describes, we'd have to be in around the year 2004 now. It's a technicality that doesn't matter.

The device does allow us to learn what becomes of Henry. He attends film school and for a time writes a biting column called "Ask Mr. Sensitive" for an alternative weekly newspaper (which Hamilton says is based on "Mr. Right" in Madison's *Isthmus*).

We also learn that Henry is somewhat "stuck" on his mother's experience and has commitment problems with women (though in one's mid-twenties it's hard to tell). Henry takes a dim view of marriage: "I expect, based on observation, that to have success in marriage, I'll have to commit blindly and remain blind. It is doubtful, I'd guess, that I'm going to enter into such a contract any time soon."

That's not surprising, given his experience. But despite its dead-on, battering portrayal of marriage, *Disobedience* offers a strong message of recovery as well. It is quite possible, the book implies, that Henry, an essentially loving character who seeks connection, will find strength amid his wounds and move on.

Trouble strikes

A passage from ***Disobedience***

Halfway through the party it was Richard Polloco who suggested they take a walk around the block. However, it was my mother who stopped at the alley crossing, who said to him, "The trouble is, there is a trouble." Her mouth was dry, her legs shaking.

"Trouble?"

"And it is," she said, "it is that I'd like very much to kiss you." She strung it out like that, with more than enough words.

Richard Polloco, in his ingenuous way, said, "*You* would like to kiss *me*?"

"Yes, yes, you see, I would."

They did that routine many times in the months to come. One of them would say, "The trouble is, there is a trouble."

"Trouble?"

"And it is that I'd very much like to kiss you."

And the other would say, with mock surprise, "You'd like to kiss me?"

"Yes, yes, you see, I would."

Thus began their private history, the gathering of sayings and jokes that belonged to them, that had no currency anywhere else. After the kiss Richard Polloco asked her to move closer to the light of the garage, so that he could see her better, so that he could watch while he kissed her. Hand in hand they moved solemnly and stood under the fixture of a brown one car garage. She lifted her face to him. She may have been flattered enough so that it didn't occur to her to avoid the light, in case someone else from Olivia Ann's party was also taking a stroll. They went from light to light, kissing, and after some time he said to her, "If we keep this up you might never again play the piano." I suspect he made that remark because of her ardor. The joke was not original but she laughed. She said wouldn't that be just too bad.

Talking with Jane

JANE HAMILTON PURSUES the literary life tucked away on an apple farm in rural Racine County. Questions about how anyone can be a serious writer so far removed from a literary "scene" quickly fade while winding down the roads to her farm, passing one idyllic countryside tableau after another. The landscape feels both soothing and protective. Hamilton's allowed to lead a private life there as well as a literary one, and the balance suits her well. When her children come home from school, she tells us—her daughter is thirteen, her son, fifteen—she morphs into a typical chauffeur mom.

For readers who are unfamiliar with her stunning career, here are the basics. Her first novel, *The Book of Ruth* (1988), won the prestigious PEN/Hemingway Foundation award for best first novel and was selected by the Oprah Book Club. Her second novel, *A Map of the World* (1994), was also an Oprah book and recently was made into a major motion picture. *The Short History of a Prince* (1998), her third novel, made perhaps less of a commercial splash than her first two works but is still considered a critical and popular success.

Hamilton sat down with us one humid summer day on a break from correcting the final proofs of her latest novel, *Disobedience*.

What intrigues you about this whole Civil War reenactment phenomenon? Have you ever witnessed one?

Hamilton: Yes, I've gone to them. Ultimately, when I knew I was going to write about a reenactor, I read Tony Horowitz's book, *Confederates in the Attic,* which is all about reenactors, and then I went to several. And I went to the reenactment at Shiloh. But I have some friends and distant relations who are into it. And it's quite a thing.

When I knew you were coming, I was sort of looking back because truly I have no memory of how it all began or where anything comes from, so I was trying to inform myself. And I remembered that I'd written a short story about Henry and his sister. That was in 1996. And she is a reenactor in that story. So I must have been thinking about it well before then, too.

And you saw the one at Shiloh, which is so important in the book.

There was one at Shiloh a couple of years ago that marked an anniversary. I did not go to that one, and apparently it just rained buckets and ten thousand people came and it was a swamp. But I went to the living history that they do every year. That's not a mega-event. It was so interesting. Shiloh is in the middle of nowhere, it's not commercial and it's very well maintained. You can easily imagine how the place looked over a hundred years ago. Also, the hard-core reenactors are very serious about authenticity and being true to the period and getting into the moment.

Is it true, as you say in the book, that there are more than three hundred documented cases of female soldiers who passed as men in the Civil War?

All of that is true. There's a famous woman, I think she lived in Illinois, and she was not discovered as an imposter until she was in her seventies and she had to go to the hospital for something. She had maintained that persona all along. It's hard to fathom how they did that, how a woman could keep the disguise up, with breasts, menstruation, not to mention PMS.

Where did the germ of this story come from?

I was on a panel several years ago, I think the topic was women in literature. The moderator at one point said, "All women novelists write about adultery, why is that?" I don't remember what the answer was. No one, as I recall, knew what to say. The question stuck with me. Is it true, I thought, and does it matter if it's true, and why is adultery such an interesting subject?

I love schoolgirl stories, where there's the naughty or spirited or sensitive girl who disobeys and then learns something about the ways of the world or becomes more sorrowful or whatever. And I think adultery in a way is the grown-up version of that, for women. It's a way to claim your own spirit and have an adventure, or reclaim who you were before you had a husband and children.

So, anyway, I just got intrigued by that whole notion, and thought, what would I write about if I was going to write an adultery story? And then, not what if the husband finds out, but what if the son finds out? One thing sort of led to the next.

And then there has to be a conflict between the husband and wife, and what better conflict than the child, the bad girl? I don't think I thought this out as rationally as I'm telling you, but that's as best as I can reconstruct it.

Women authors frequently write about *men's* adultery. In your book, the woman is the unfaithful one, and she initiates the affair. Was there anything besides the panel that made you want to explore this topic?

The Quotable Henry Shaw

Observations by Hamilton's fictitious teen

On his parents' marriage:

Using an addition, or perhaps subtraction that did not follow the usual properties, I could figure that the four of us added up to the Shaws, but my mother and father were a one plus one that equaled zero. They were wrong as a pair, I could see that; they'd begun for misguided reasons—they had no real foundation, nothing solid to stand on for all these years, nothing beneath their feet but quaggy muck.

On divorce:

When well mannered, usually liberally educated parents get divorced they are usually quick to assure their children that the split had nothing to do with them, that Mom and Dad had insurmountable problems with one another, etcetera. Any child worth his salt knows that this is a load of horseshit. Parents get divorced because they cannot stand to have one more family dinner together.

On his mother's book club:

I sometimes thought of the nine of them sitting on the floor, Indian style, around the coffee table, as a coven, although technically a coven has thirteen members. All the candles in the house were on the table, lighting their faces, casting shadows. There was often a murmur, a building of their voices until out of the babble came a fact, a truth, an imperative. Yes, they all agreed that holy matrimony went on far too long. Women tended to get married before they knew themselves, before they'd made contact with their inviolate selves. Another fact: it takes ages, years and years, to train a man to be even moderately sensitive, and to equip him with the expertise to carry out ordinary household tasks. By the time all the information has been dispensed and processed, the trainer is worn out.

On his mother's affair:

I was seventeen and did not know very much although I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. I thought that if I'd been a pet I would have barked and barked at my mistress's heels, trying to keep her from drinking the poisoned water, keeping her from danger. In those days, my heart, I guess it was, sank more or less every day. I was no longer a boy, not yet a man, nowhere near as industrious as a dog. I had nothing in me then but useless sorrow.

Well, I'm forty-two, all my friends have had their midlife crises, and I could have had mine any number of times. I've heard lots of good stories from all manner of people. And I don't know if women have always been as adventuresome as my generation is, but certainly I think it's a myth that the man is always the one who strays.

Isn't "disobedience" a rather mild term for adultery?

There's an A. A. Milne poem called *Disobedience*. It begins: James James/ Morrison Morrison/Weatherby George Dupree/Took great/Care of his Mother/ Though he was only three./ James James/Said to his Mother,/ "Mother," he said, said he;/"You must never go down to the end of the town, if/you don't go down with me."

I took it from that. There are, I think, two instances where Henry sort of quotes from it, when he says, "My mother could get up to Tribbey and be back in time for tea"—something like that.

So that's where the title comes from. And yes, I guess it is sort of mild.

Does that relate back to what you were saying about women using adultery as a way to reclaim or take a stand for themselves?

Yes, it does. I do think that. And Beth certainly thinks so. I think that's why it's very distressing to Henry. You don't really want to think of your mommy as an independent person. She's there only to serve you, the child, for all time.

How did you come up with Elvira?

I've known girls like her, who want to be boys. Building character doesn't happen overnight, for me it takes a long time for the details to accrue and add up. She's sort of a compilation. In many ways, my writing is rooted in my real life. I don't think I could have written this book if I didn't have firsthand experience being a parent, knowing how wonderful and challenging each stage of a child's life is. Elvira is a composite of various girls I've known throughout the years, and then she became herself as I worked on her.

The humor in this book is so much more pronounced than in your previous novels. How did that happen? Had you been suppressing your humor before?

The other books are funny in a quieter way. *Short History* amused me a lot. They all had their funny bits. I guess my short stories, which I haven't written many of, have been funnier. I don't know, each book has evolved and the humor, more or less, has come as part of the package.

And part of the characters? Part of Henry?

There's his take on these middle-aged women, and what can you do but... (*laughs*)

The book group!

I hope I don't get into trouble for the book group . . . I have a son, and he's not very interested in my life and times, as it should be, but I've often thought, if there were a young person who was sensitive and *listening*, they would just think we were all idiots, you know?

You're in a book group, I take it?

No, I'm not . . . What I meant about not getting into trouble with book groups was that they have been very generous to me and have read my books. But I sort of think that if you're a serious book group, you know that I'm not writing about that kind of group. And if you're the kind of book group that doesn't really read or pay attention to the book, you already know that about yourselves.

Which of these characters are particularly dear to you?

Oh, it would be Henry. Partly because I spent a lot of time with him, so there's just the affection of a long-term friendship.

I think you've just answered my next question, which was whether these characters feel real to you.

Yes, they do. They're very good company. And in terms of the humor part, Henry amused me for several years. That's worth a lot. People often say, "Isn't it lonely, being by yourself all day?" Actually, writing is the least lonely thing I can think to do.

You explore gender roles in this book pretty extensively. You did in *The Short History of a Prince* as well, with the gay male protagonist. What about that theme attracts you, why do you think it's important?

I'm interested, and I've become more interested as I get older, in the limits of convention and the ways in which people bust out of their roles, and what the cost is. And the whole dynamic of being a parent, and having these expectations for your children, and of course the children don't turn out in any way you expect. And that need in a family, for all the characters, really, to keep within the confines of the family—but they also have the need to bust out of it.

The whole gender issue with Elvira seemed like one of the more dramatic ways in which a girl can disappoint her mother.

And Henry kind of flirts with his feminine side, too.

He does. He's certainly a sensitive male, and is not judgmental of anybody in terms of their gender. One of my editors asked me, "So, is Henry going to have really screwed-up relationships with women for the rest of his life?" (*laughs*)

And what did you say?

I don't know. "You know as much about it as I do. Probably."

In the book a male and a female character have two completely different views of, and explanations for, an act of violence against a woman that they both witnessed. Are men and women really that far apart?

I've always maintained that we're more alike than we think. Even people of the same gender can perceive a scene completely differently. But probably in this case it is because of their gender. And I also think that the male observer has very deep feelings for the woman being violated, and part of it is denial at work. He doesn't want her to be hurt.

Moving away from the book now. You ended up in Wisconsin more or less by accident—you fell in love with a friend of your cousin's on your way to an editing job in New York and pretty much jumped ship. Does it feel like home now?

Yes, it does. It was good for me not to get to New York. Also, I got rejected by the graduate schools I'd applied to. Again, I think it was very good for me at that time in my life *not* to go to a place where everyone was aspiring to be a writer. Just out of college I wrote for myself and read a lot. There's nothing to do here at night. I went about reading and writing and figuring out the forms in my own bubble, without any self-consciousness, without anxiety about being published or having readers.

And it's still good for you?

It is, it is. I think it would be very distracting to live in a big city, there are just so many wonderful things to do. I lead a quiet life and I like to get in bed at nine o'clock and read. And also I'm lucky enough so that I can go places when I need to get an infusion of culture. I go to Chicago, and I have a lot of friends from high school and college who live in New York. My sister lives in Boston. And Madison. Madison is great. When I say "culture," I mean going to an interesting movie, too.

Do you play an active role on the farm?

I used to be full-time, but I'm not even part-time anymore. Every now and then I'll go to the Farmers' Market, which is wonderful. Our stand is Ela Orchard on the Square. My husband and his partner have been going since the second year of the Market, which is now twenty-

seven or -eight years. That really has been a pure pleasure. But I don't help out the way I used to. If there is a crisis I'll put on a picking bag and go out and pick, but in everyday life my time and energy go to writing and keeping the family afloat.

So what's your routine like as a writer/mom?

Public schools are a wonderful thing. When my children go to school, those are my work hours, so it's basically 7:30 to 3. And sometimes when I'm in a real crunch or at a certain part of the process it's helpful to go away, put my head down and sketch out the book or cut it or work on the last paragraph. So I've often gone to the Ragdale Foundation, which is a place outside of Chicago where writers and painters can do their work. It's a sublime place. Someone makes dinner for you and you just do your work. But most of the time I work at home. In that routine, at three o'clock everyone comes home. I'm in the chauffeur years, so the driving begins. We don't have sidewalks here and there are no close neighbors, so to go see a friend requires a drive. And my son works at the library and my daughter's into horses and there are piano lessons...

Does this book feel like a new turn for you?

No, I feel that it's part of a continuum. The first short stories I wrote were about adolescence. I really love that stage in life, because you feel all-powerful, but you also know you're vulnerable and powerless. I couldn't have written this book without writing about Walter in *The Short History,* couldn't have done *Short History* without *A Map of the World,* and all the way back to the first short story I wrote, when I was in high school.

the month of dying

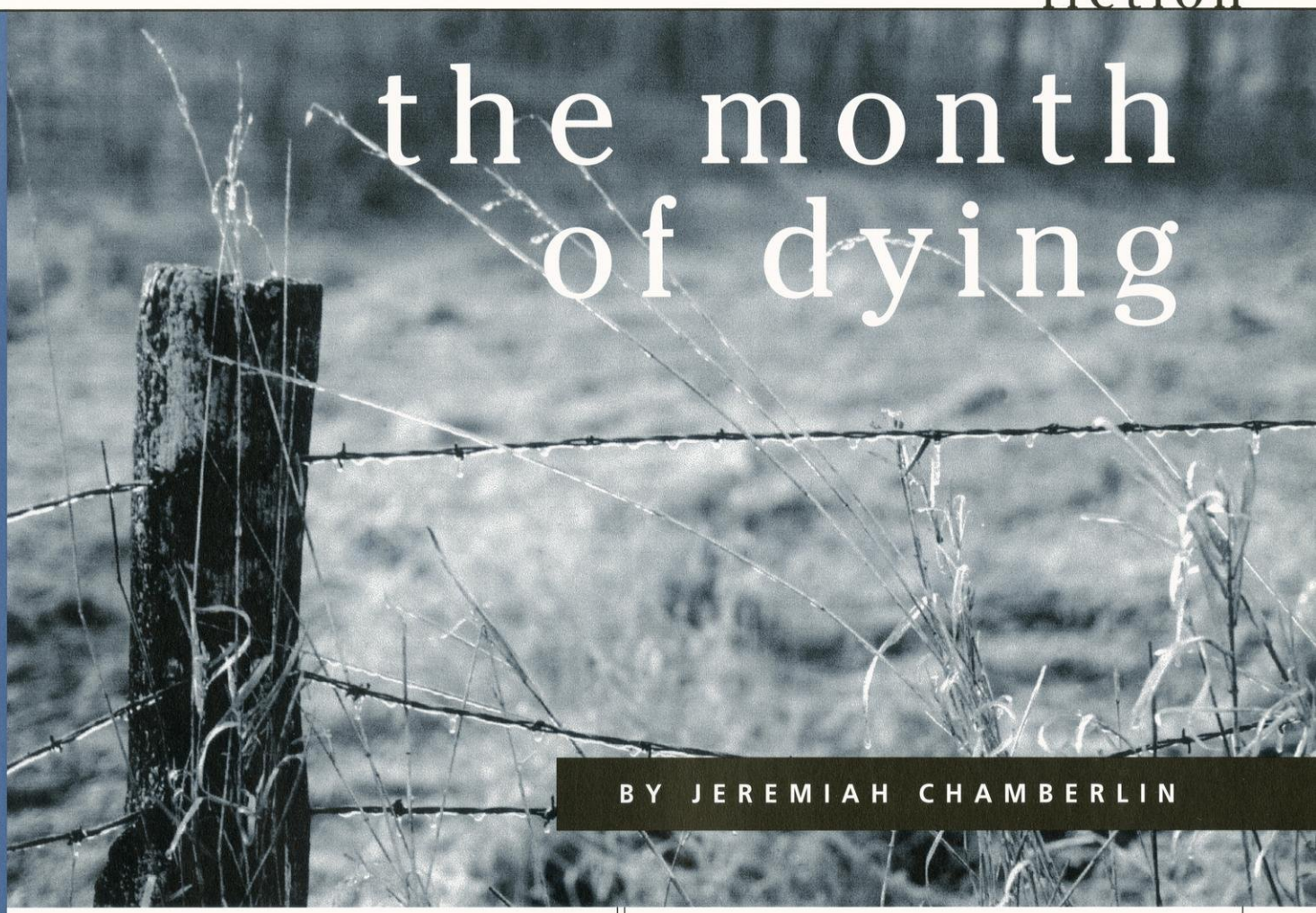


Photo: William Blankenburg

BY JEREMIAH CHAMBERLIN

OCTOBER HAS BECOME THE MONTH of dying in my family. My great-grandmother brought us this new season, though she was not supposed to be the first to go. Everyone in my family had expected great-grandfather Lowell, with his thick hearing aids, to die before her. Even as kids during our trips south to Midland, my brother and I had been reminded that this might be the last time we saw our great-grandfather alive. We were expected to behave like adults. And though we honestly tried to practice sitting politely in the back of the car, to keep our hands in our laps, we invariably found each other's bodies with our fists.

But my family has never been good at predictions. Years passed and my great-grandfather only retreated further into his brown polyester pants and his thin blue shirts. The only change seemed to be that my parents had to talk a bit louder when they asked him to retell one of his stories. My brother and I listened in our flowered chairs, learning the histories of names and places we shared, nodding and smiling at our cues. But what we were truly waiting for was to be excused to play in the basement. Our freedom there was marked by the soft ring of sleigh bells nailed on the dry leather strap to the back of the door of my great-grandfather's study. These were the bells he'd hung around the neck of his mare Gusty when he courted my great-grandmother during the winter of 1919. I imagined them young, sitting in the sleigh while the snow fell, the newness of their hands meeting under the quilts draped over their laps. I had seen this same tenderness upstairs, perfected over a lifetime, as they sat close on the small tan couch, his hand resting lightly on her knee.

Years later it was Lowell who woke up after seventy-five years of shared mornings, suddenly alone. When we drove down to Midland I was guiltily relieved that I was no longer the only kid in my high school who hadn't been to a funeral. I wore my tight-throated tie feeling not the fear of the unfamiliar, but the curious pull of the new. I wanted to suck in age the way I sucked in whiskey and cigarettes at halftime in the school parking lot.

My brother and I sat in the third row of wood-backed pews with the hymnals at our feet, hands in our laps. We watched our first funeral running through its liturgy as if we were at a Saturday mati-

I thought over and over that if I had a gun, if only I had a gun, I could sight in on whatever was out there and I wouldn't have to feel so afraid.

nee. The church had seen my family's beginnings—baptisms and confirmations, my parents' wedding, and the weddings of both my father's sisters. Now the endings had begun, my great-grandmother's coffin center stage, the priest's soliloquy rising and twisting, deftly sidestepping death in his praise to life and God. I stared over the second row of relatives buffering me from the front where the immediate family was ordered. My great-grandfather sat on the aisle, his translucent white hair thin over his skull. Beside him was my grandfather with his broad shoulders, my grandmother with her permed curls, and then my parents, uncomfortable in the front row, so close to the shiny coffin.

A year to the day after my great-grandmother's death, my great-grandfather walked down the steep stairs to his study. The basement was always comfortably cool even when the heat of August had baked the small backyard flat and brown. He apologized at each summer visit for the lawn, regretfully acknowledging that he no longer could keep it up and the neighborhood children who had once accepted crisp five-dollar bills to mow and weed had all grown up and away. He left a note that tenth day of October, though my grandfather never let anyone read it. This much the family knew: that my great-grandfather hefted the twelve-gauge shotgun with the ivy-engraved stock and rested it snugly on his brass belt buckle. I could not imagine the way his thin body must have crumpled around the sharp crack of the barrel.

Back in our third-row pew again my brother and I played our silent parts. The hymnals still slept at our feet and the hardwood once again bit into our thighs and backs. The priest's words blended into a low dull hum. The only change I could discern was the front row's shift. It was now my grandfather who sat at the aisle in his father's seat. When I realized this I felt a sweaty panic flush my face. Suddenly the only things separating my own father from the repetitive liturgy of the priest were his parents.

I felt at that moment that I too should be obligated to take my place in the front row, to join the family. But as I was just about to stand, I became suddenly afraid. I was terrified that if I moved, if I didn't stare straight ahead, I might catch a glimpse of death coming down the aisle. It was the same fear I had when I walked the half-mile home through the woods at night from our neighbor's house. Each time I forced myself never to look back, never to run, because showing the world you are afraid means admitting that you believe whatever is out there might catch up with you. As I walked as fast as I could without breaking into a run, I thought over and over that if I had a gun, if only I had a gun, I could sight in on whatever was out there and I wouldn't have to feel so afraid.

Some friends held a reception after the funeral only a few blocks away from my great-grandparents' house on Goodman Street. There were delicate curls of honey-baked ham on toothpicks, thin slices of cheese, and plates of dry Ritz crackers. While my relatives talked in small circles I stepped outside. My grandfather stood at the base of the three cement steps that led up to the front door and silently smoked. As I came down to join him, he placed his heavy hand on my shoulder and I waited for him to speak. Instead, his hand tightened and his voice choked. My father was walking up the sidewalk toward us with the long barrel of a gun sticking out from a faded flowered sheet. I could not see the ivy-engraved stock, but I knew by the way he held the gun like a child in his arms that it was my great-grandfather's. My grandfather pushed away from me like a racehorse at the gate.

"You didn't. You didn't go down there, Matthew," my grandfather said. My father stopped and pulled the gun closer to his chest.

"I'm taking it," he said. "He promised me. It's the first gun I ever shot. I'm taking it." They squared themselves like boxers on the sidewalk and though I could not see their eyes I knew that the horrible exchange was of a son staring down his father. I felt ashamed, as though I were witnessing something that I had no business seeing. I turned back inside and drifted between the circles of relatives, keeping my eyes on the food on my white paper plate.

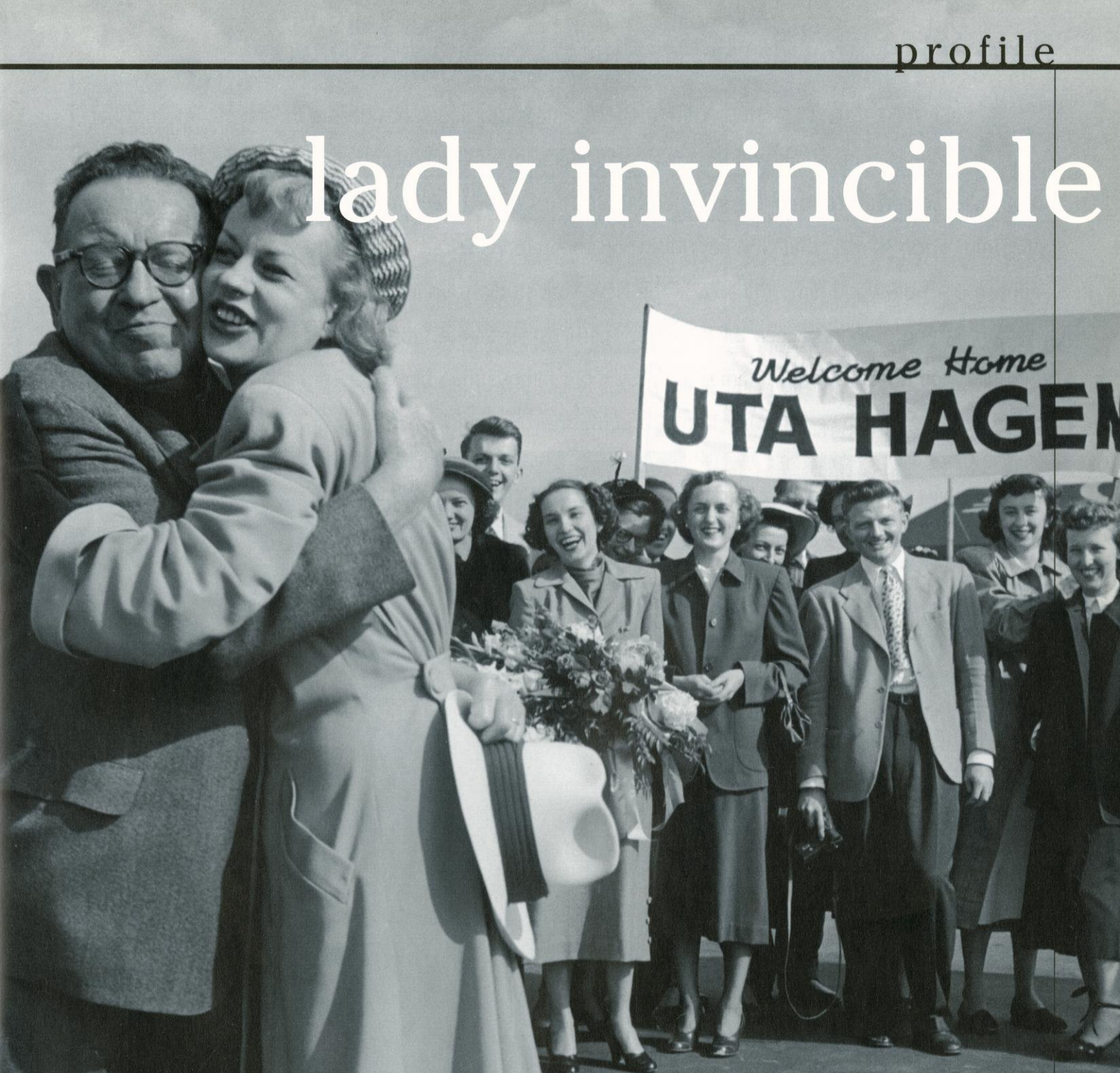
My family approached the next fall with trepidation. Even away from home for the first time I could sense the tension in my parents' voices across the taut phone line when I asked about the family. As the month began to wind itself in like a fishing line I thought that perhaps we might make it through, but then my mother called to tell me that her stubborn father had had to be admitted to the hospital for meningitis because he hadn't sought early treatment. I felt the inevitable cycle that we had been drawn into solidifying and tightening. My mother had instructed us as children that the world worked in trinities, and with this third death, I felt as though our future had been nailed down.

After the funeral, while my relatives eyed one another uneasily, not wanting to see who was next, I headed to the coatroom. I wanted to escape to the cold October air, finish another year on the gray stone steps by myself. My mother was there, huddled in the last row of coats, sobbing. I touched her shoulder and she looked up at me with bright red eyes. She grabbed my arms with such strength that I wanted to cry out but was too terrified. She began shaking me, shaking me with her lips pulled back and her teeth clenched together. And when she opened her mouth all she could say was, "Say my daddy believed in Jesus. Say my daddy believed in Jesus."

Now, as the October days drop off the calendar, my family unconsciously holds its breath. We wait until the opening of deer season in the second week of November just to be sure. Somehow it feels safer with rifles in our hands. As if we might catch a glimpse of fate along the tree line. As if we might be able to sight in on the very vision of death coming across the corn stubble to the edge of the forest where we wait. When I close my eyes and listen I hear my father say, "Let him wander in a hundred yards, seventy-five, fifty, until you can see him breathe. Then push the crosshairs into his chest like a branding iron, open his body with a fist full of shells, and you'll see him dropping, dropping like the first snow." ▼▼

Jeremiah Chamberlin graduated from the creative writing program at the University of Michigan in 1997, where his fiction received the Arthur Miller Fiction Award, the Kasdan Scholarship in creative writing, and the June and Avery Hopwood Award for Fiction. His stories have also placed in national fiction contests in ***Glimmer Train, The American Literary Review,*** *and the University of Alaska's* ***Explorations.*** *He now lives in Madison, where he is co-manager of Canterbury Booksellers. He is completing a collection of short fiction and working on his first novel. This is his first published story.*

lady invincible



UTA HAGEN, ONE OF AMERICA'S PREMIER STAGE ACTRESSES, IS STILL DOING WHAT SHE DOES BEST: ACTING, TEACHING, AND SPEAKING HER MIND.

A joyful reunion in Madison: Uta Hagen with her father, Oskar Hagen, in 1949.

Photo courtesy of Uta Hagen.

BY S.A. MILES

AT AGE EIGHTY-ONE, German-born actress Uta Hagen has been a theater star most of her life, starring on and off Broadway and operating a famous acting studio. She was Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* Georgie in *The Country Girl,* and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*—roles that won her Hollywood counterparts Oscars as best actress (Hagen herself didn't appear in a Hollywood film until 1972). The New York studio founded by her second husband, the late Herbert Berghof, has long been the setting for perhaps her greatest role: teacher of a cast of thousands, including young actors whose names are now more famous than her own. They include Jack Lemmon, Jason Robards, Geraldine Page, Lily Tomlin, and Matthew Broderick.

But Hagen first cultivated her own acting skills in Madison behind the footlights of the Bascom Theater, appearing in productions of the long-defunct University of Wisconsin High School and in summer stock productions of the Wisconsin Players. Hagen left Madison in 1937, after only one semester at the UW, and quickly ensconced herself on stages large and small, appearing in almost a dozen shows before she turned twenty. In December 1944 she returned as a stage star with her husband, Jose Ferrer, and the great Paul Robeson. They performed two sold-out performances of *Othello*, their stage success from Broadway.

Uta Hagen (shown here with her always-present dog G.B.) spoke to the Wisconsin Academy's Minerva Society last spring. Hagen was named the Minerva Society's first laureate in a ceremony held at Ten Chimneys, the former residence of her friends Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

Photo: Michael Goodman

THE MOOR IN MADISON

By then *Othello* had secured a place in the history of the American stage. *Othello* was booked into Broadway's Schubert Theater in 1943 and set a record for the longest run of a Shakespeare drama, with 295 performances. When it closed, capacity crowds were still energizing matinee and evening performances, but road contracts had been signed and remote cities awaited its arrival.

For a small city like Madison, home to one of the production's co-stars, a mail-order ticket scheme had to be devised; even then, some 3,500 orders were refunded. The day before the show, *The Capital Times* reported that all copies of *Othello* had been checked out of public libraries.

Two performances were arranged at the recently constructed Wisconsin Union Theater, a spacious 1,300-seat venue not yet completed when Hagen had left Madison. After each performance, Hagen greeted friends, family, former classmates, and her many fans backstage, extending a long

moment's glory that had seen repeated curtain calls and even tears.

The day after her performances, amid larger headlines reporting Tokyo bombing raids and strategic gains of American forces on the European stage, Hagen's homecoming was reported as front page news. "A sort of rhapsodic homecoming reverie," declared *The Capital Times,* calling the performances "one of the major events in the annals of Madison's theatrical history." "The acclaim *Othello* won here," the paper asserted, "has seldom been equaled."

Hagen returned to Madison again in 1949 on the eve of perhaps her greatest breakthrough yet. A year earlier she had spelled Jessica Tandy in the role of Blanche DuBois during the original run of Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize–winning *A Streetcar Named Desire.* She then performed the role for nine months opposite Anthony Quinn in the touring production. Now Hagen was to succeed Tandy in the long-running Broadway production. Having originally worked out the play during a six-week period in her Washington Square apartment, and never having seen Tandy's portrayal—so as not to "drift, even unconsciously, into the pattern set by [Tandy]"—Hagen made the part her own. Said Harold V. Cohen in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:* "It is the kind of performance acting textbooks can be built around."

The textbook would not come for nearly twenty-five years, but Hagen had by this time assumed a second professional role: as instructor. In 1947 she met the actor Herbert Berghof, who founded an acting school that same year. Hagen began teaching at HB Studios (Herbert Berghof Studios), taking her responsibilities very seriously.

The *Streetcar* National Company was booked into the Union Theater for a three-night stand in May 1949. Hagen had long felt an urgency about returning to Madison. Now, with the Broadway role awaiting her, this second homecoming took on a special importance. These were to be Hagen's last road company performances before returning to New York.

Her flight landed at Madison's Municipal Airport on a cool Sunday afternoon. A crowd of about twenty-five, including her father, Professor Oskar Hagen, had turned out to greet her. "Welcome Home Uta Hagen," read a banner in the background as a *Wisconsin State Journal* photographer captured a tender embrace between father and daughter.

The opening night performance was passionately received by a sell-out crowd, and the critical encomiums echoed past praise of her performance. "A characterization brilliant and frightening," said the *Cardinal.* "Truly memorable" said *The Capital Times.* Following the performance, Hagen and her father shared bows and the cast gave Hagen a silver box inscribed "We all love you." "That did it," she later recalled in a *New York Times Magazine* article. "I cried for three days straight."

Going a little crazy as Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, with George Grizzard as Nick. A career of riveting performances earned Hagen a Tony Award for lifetime achievement last year.

Photo courtesy of Uta Hagen.

After the engagement, Hagen returned to New York, where she played the part of Blanche DuBois eight times a week for two years—without a vacation.

WHEN SHE WAS SMALL

Uta Hagen came to live in Madison with her family at age six. Her father, Dr. Oskar F. L. Hagen, was by then established as both an artist and an academic, teaching, lecturing, and authoring scholarly texts on art history; composing music; and serving as organizer and chief director of the Goettingen Handel festivals in Germany. Dr. Hagen was brought here to establish the UW–Madison art history department, which he served as chairman for twenty-two years. His devotion to his work and the arts was absolute and inexhaustible. Uta Hagen's mother, Thyra Amalie Hagen, a native of Flensburg, Germany, was a renowned soprano who performed frequently around the country. She continued her career in Madison, playing the role of Marguerite in the Goethe drama *Faust* (not the Gounod opera) in a production directed by and co-starring her husband. When it opened at the old Bascom Theater in March 1928, another show was added by popular demand.

These performances likely left an impression on eight-year-old Uta (in fact, she later produced the show at HB Studios), as did a trip her family took to Germany when she was nine. There she saw the actress Elisabeth Bergner portray Joan of Arc in George Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan,* a role she would herself play on Broadway. Having decided at the age of six to become an actress, she was entranced by the performance and spoke about the experience many years later.

Being part of such a gifted, charismatic family inevitably set Hagen somewhat apart from her peers.

"I never stopped being strange to my schoolmates," Hagen recalled in the aforementioned *New York Times Magazine* piece. "I played the piano, my father played the violin, and my mother didn't play bridge. It was an insuperable chasm."

As the daughter of a university professor, Hagen attended the University of Wisconsin High School, an "alternative" school that had opened in 1911 at State Street and Gilman. A campus location was established a few years later. With its emphasis on the arts, the school seemed uniquely suited to Hagen. She became involved in drama, glee club, and on the forensics team, where she won awards.

But drama was clearly her calling. In her senior year annual, the largely ironic "Vocational Placement Record" soberly predicted "Professional Actress" for Hagen. She gave show-stealing performances all through high school. With her senior year came her most notable stage role, as the princess in Robert Sherwood's *The Queen's Husband.* "Uta Hagen displayed a remarkable talent for intelligent character composition," the *Cardinal* reviewer staidly put it before speculating, presciently, that the young actress would "someday reach the heights."

Such summer stock productions as Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* gave Hagen, still in high school, the opportunity to perform on stage with UW drama students (as well as with her brother, Holger, who played her brother on stage, too). But being a UW drama student proved less seductive than the chance to fulfill her classmates' lofty predictions. In 1937, after only one semester, Hagen left for New York.

"When I was seventeen years old and wanted to go out on my own, my mother said, 'Go,'" Hagen recalled in a *Wall Street Journal* story. "My mother in particular had a wild desire that human beings should be free."

Uta Hagen as Blanche and Anthony Quinn as Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* 1949.

Photo courtesy of the Wisconsin Union Theater.

Photo courtesy of Uta Hagen.

The glam days of theater: Uta Hagen (far left) out on the town with Peter Lorre (far right) and friends.

THEATER AS DISNEYLAND

Sixty-three years after she left the University of Wisconsin, Uta Hagen returned to Madison last May to accept an honorary doctorate and give commencement addresses. With her usual candor, she told graduating students: "The only advice I can give you is from my experience. Don't want to get rich. The pursuit of money today is revolting."

That sort of advice is not at all surprising coming from someone who has lived in the same Manhattan apartment since 1949. The acting school she runs is a bargain. Her chief criticism of the contemporary American theater, particularly Broadway, is that it has become too expensive to operate a theater, to produce a show, to pay the performers. "Actors get too much money," she protests cynically.

Those costs, of course, affect ticket prices and, consequently, the type of audiences who come to see live theater. In her view, the theater has become "an elite luxury, or much worse than that, Disneyland. It becomes cheesy—crappy musicals that aren't worth anyone's time. This is what makes a horrendous amount of money," she noted during her spring visit to Madison. As long ago as 1962 she said this: "All the worry [on Broadway] is about commercial failure—and never whether it might or might not be artistically satisfying." Today her attitude has only sharpened. "I don't want to be marketable. I find it shameful," she says.

Still, she finds reasons for encouragement. Though the theater is in flux and hopelessly mired in mediocrity and high costs, Hagen feels that the situation is not as bleak as it was ten years ago. "There is gradual growing of respect for off-Broadway. Ten years ago there was only Broadway, and off-Broadway was thought of as a far-distant second citizen or third cousin who didn't matter. I think they realized that almost everything that has any importance on Broadway has been developed off-Broadway or in the regional theaters."

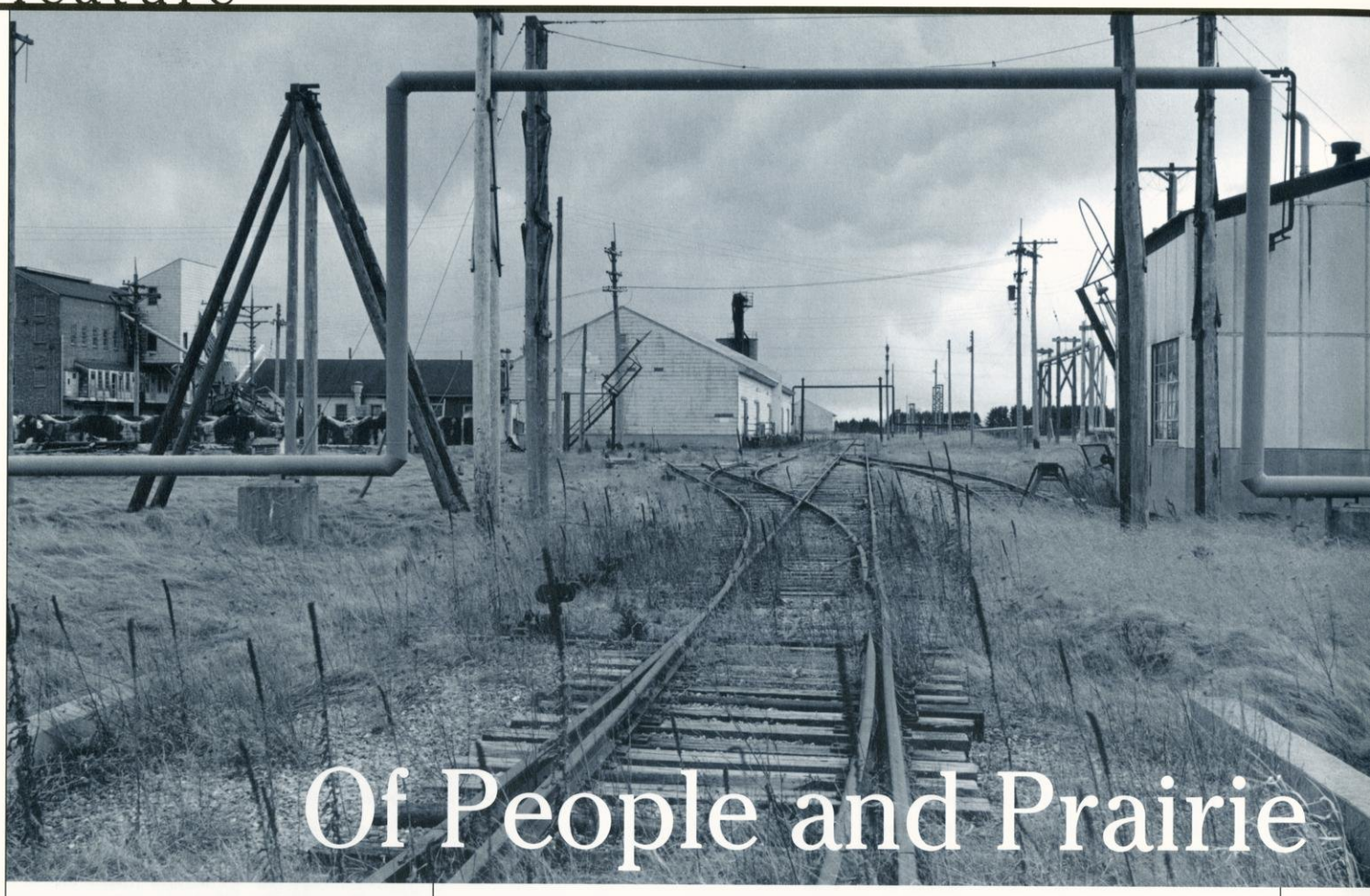
Off-Broadway has been the setting of two of her recent successes—though she hastens to add that she has always worked off-Broadway. She won great acclaim for her role in the 1995 production, *Mrs. Klein,* and last year's *Collected Stories* earned her the distinction as the "Number One actress on or off Broadway for the 1998-99 season," according to *The New York Times* arts critic Vincent Canby.

But as she has aged, meaningful roles have not been easy to find—nor have they ever been. "It was always difficult when I was younger, because a lot of great plays don't come along and not enough people do revivals of great plays. There are a million parts I should have played—in Shakespeare, in Ibsen, et cetera—that were not done enough because in this country we don't do enough classics. As I get older, obviously, because of age, the roles are more and more limited . . . At my age it is very difficult to find, and I've just happened to luck out the last few years." This summer Hagen, who turned eighty-one in June, performed at the Stratford Festival in Canada.

During her spring trip to Madison, Hagen was named first laureate of the Wisconsin Academy's Minerva Society at a special reception at Ten Chimneys in Genesee Depot, the lavish (and authentically preserved) former residence of the distinguished actors Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt. Upon receiving a special plaque that read "One of the finest actresses to grace the American stage," Hagen commented wistfully, "This would mean so much to my father."

She spoke again about her parents in a recent phone interview. "My father and my mother were the main influences in my life," she said. "Everything that I believe, that I've done with my life, all came from them." ▼

S. A. Miles is a freelance writer in Madison. He writes about theater and film.



Of People and Prairie

Feeding the war machine: Trains brought in raw materials and left with ready-to-use propellant.

"Southwest Sector of Plant," photo by Zane Williams.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE with Sauk Prairie now that the Badger Army Ammunition Plant is closing? The Prairie's fate has spawned an emotional political debate.

BY MIKE MOSSMAN

A traveler driving on Highway 12 south from Baraboo passes small farm fields and forests of the Baraboo Hills, descends the Sauk Hill, and breaks upon the Sauk Prairie stretching toward the distant Wisconsin River bluffs. Spread over this fertile plain are curious patterns of oddly shaped buildings with beige walls and green roofs, some heavily clad in timbered barricades. Continuing down the road, the traveler passes four miles of chain-link fence with a heavily guarded entrance, a massive powerhouse, and two army tanks with their guns pointed over the highway. Between the fence and highway are strips of restored prairie and farm fields separated regularly by clumps of old overgrown shade trees and lilacs, where it seems farmsteads should stand. How the traveler reacts to this scene is a measure of his or her knowledge of local history; of the traveler's memories of the Great Depression, the Nazi threat, and the Vietnam War; and his or her feelings about national defense, family farms, industrial expansion, ecological restoration, pollution—and a community's ability to control its own destiny.

This is the Badger Army Ammunition Plant, a 7,354-acre defense facility built in

1942 to produce propellant for the small arms, cannons, and rockets needed to fight World War II. Originally meant to last the one war, it has endured over three, producing more than a billion tons of propellant for World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars. After 1975 it lay quietly poised against the Red Menace, but after the Soviet Union finally fell under its own weight, the U.S. government decided it was time to close the plant, along with many others like it, for good.

In fall of 1997, the announcement of the plant's imminent closure created a confused discussion in the Sauk Prairie community about the future ownership and uses of the property. Could it be returned to the eighty farm families who had been displaced in 1942? Or to the Ho-Chunk Nation, which had ceded the land under typically coercive circumstances a century earlier? Should private businesses be allowed to take advantage of the existing infrastructure to develop industrial, commercial, or business parks? What about the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, whose nearby facilities rely on crop and pasture land leased from the Army? Could the site—given its extent, public ownership, and broad connection to Devils Lake State Park—provide needed green space for the burgeoning population of south-central Wisconsin? What about restoring some of the endangered prairie and oak savanna that had once characterized the southern half of the state? What needs to be done to clean the soil and ground water, contaminated by years of on-site disposal of chemicals and other materials? How does a community weigh the relative economic and social effects of tourism, industry, and agriculture?

Hurried attempts at consensus devolved into arguments that pitted farm against factory, village against rural township, public property against private land ownership, federal government against residents, outsiders against locals. Such divisive terms as "tree-hugger," "bureaucrat," "land grabber," and, simply, "developer" crept into discussion. One resident cautioned, "We're acting like a family that has been given a great inheritance. And instead of sitting down and deciding how best to invest it for the long-term benefit of the whole family, everyone tries to grab as much of it as possible, and the family falls apart."

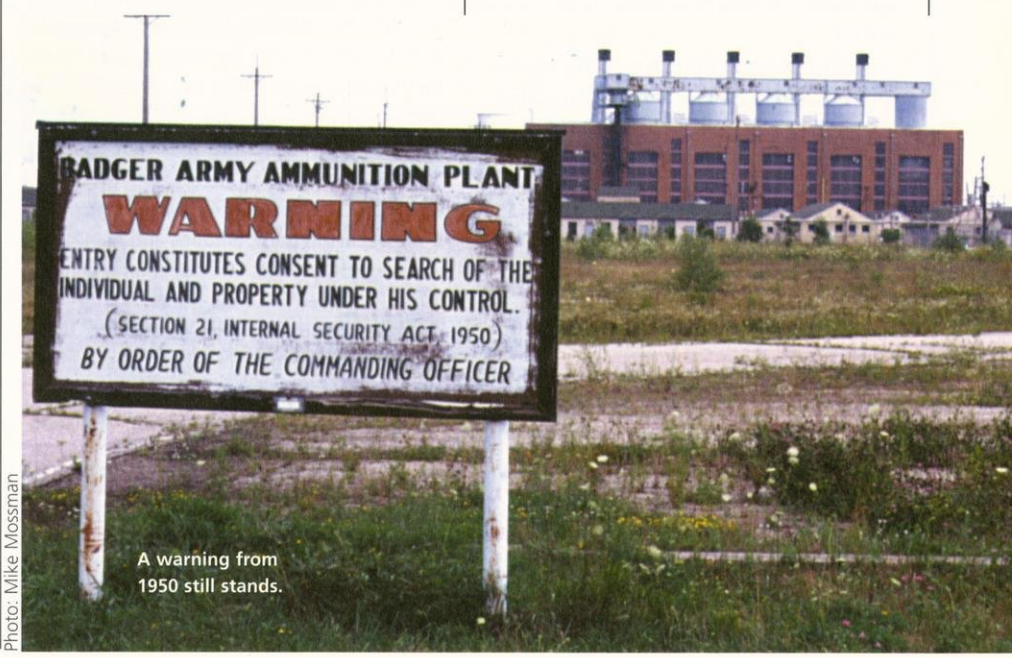
The metaphor was especially appropriate because, like many a family that is unable to dialogue, the community struggled with the effects of old, unfinished business. Perhaps only after bringing some closure to these issues will the "family" be ready to face a new chapter in its history. It is a good time to recall the history of this site, and its place in our collective memory.

AN ANCIENT LANDSCAPE

The early history of Badger is in its rocks and landforms. The tract's north edge rests high on the hard, quartzite flank of the Baraboo Hills, on the backside of the South Bluff of Devils Lake. Here in 1942, excavations for the plant's water reservoirs exposed fascinating details of the rocky beaches that existed some five hundred million years ago, when the Hills were a ring of subtropical islands being slowly inundated by a shallow, turbulent sea and its sediments. Today pink boulders rounded by the surf are held tight within the yellow and gray sand where they finally came to rest, some pocked by the percussion of smaller rocks upon them. The sand, too, has turned to stone.

The bulk of Badger lies below this rim. From north to south runs a low ridge, marking the western terminus of the Laurentide Ice Sheet, which stood here for centuries about seventeen thousand years ago. The glaciated eastern half of the tract is rolling, and pitted with pothole ponds where the thick layer of boulders, gravel, and silt deposited by the ice sheet subsided over buried chunks of melting ice. Extending westward from the terminal moraine is a very gently sloping, flat outwash plain formed by the fine gravel and silt that washed out of the constantly melting margin of the ice. Silt-laden winds cascaded from the margin, polishing the extremely resistant quartzite boulders that lie in place today near the reservoirs. As the glacier receded, Glacial Lake Merrimac formed between it and the moraine; it eventually broke through its morainal dam, leaving a distinctive breach and channel.

With the glacier's retreat, the Sauk Prairie area progressed from a tundra-like ecosystem to boreal forest, and various periods dominated by pine, oak, and grassland. By the time of Euro-American exploration during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, it was a microcosm of the prairie-savanna-woodland landscape that separated the prairies of the Great Plains from the forests of the East, and that characterized much of the midcontinent from present-day Minnesota and Michigan to Arkansas. It was an ecosystem shaped by the interaction of geology, topography, soils, and climate as well as by fire and browsing by elk, deer, and bison. The records of the land surveyors of the early 1840s left a good record of the pattern just as Euro-Americans began to settle here and change the landscape forever: the fourteen-thousand-acre tallgrass Sauk Prairie on the deep-soiled outwash plain; savanna with its scattered oaks spreading limbs broadly over grasses and forbs on the rolling moraine and river bluffs; and oak woodland with trees more thickly scattered, but still maintained by ground fires, on the thin, cool, rocky soils of the south face of the Baraboo Hills.



A warning from 1950 still stands.

Photo: Mike Mossman

This prairie, surrounded by savannas and woodland, was described in various historical sources as "myriads of flowers of every shape, shade, and color, and the luxuriant grasses . . . a handsome picture set in a beautiful frame." The park-like savannas were "pleasant groves, beautiful beyond description."

Native Americans had lived in the area for some ten thousand years, beginning at about the time the glacier was melting away, as evidenced by remains in local rock shelters and other habitation sites, and by the presence of effigy and burial mounds within and outside the Badger Plant. In the mid–seventeenhundreds, white explorers traveling the Wisconsin River found a large Sauk village where Sauk City and Prairie du Sac now stand. Here, on the south part of the prairie, the "Sackies . . . raise large quantities of Indian Corn, squashes, mellons, & tobacco; they raise sufficient to supply themselves and sell vast quantities to the traders," observed one settler.

Soon thereafter the Prairie was within the territory of the Ho-Chunk Nation, whose ancestors, according to tribal memory, had built the ancient mounds. Ho-Chunk villages were located farther north and south, along the Baraboo and Wisconsin Rivers, but in 1837 their entire territory was ceded. Ho-Chunks withdrew unwillingly to foreign reservations west of the Mississippi. Many walked back repeatedly to their ancestral home until the U.S. government allowed individuals to homestead, mostly in the area between Baraboo and Black River Falls. Some revisited the Sauk Prairie regularly until the turn of the century.

Meanwhile, the Prairie was being repopulated by immigrants from eastern states, Germany, Switzerland, and elsewhere. They broke the thick prairie sod with teams of oxen, cut the savanna oaks, and grubbed their roots. They introduced exotic grains, grasses, and livestock. And as hard work and the rich soil yielded bountiful harvests, the prairie and savanna developed into a gridwork of prosperous farms. With the cessation of wildfire, the few tracts of savanna not plowed or grazed became woods, and the Baraboo Hills woodland began its gradual succession to a closed-canopy forest.

WAR HITS THE PRAIRIE

The summer breezes of 1941, wafting the fields of hay, pasture, corn, and oats, had an ominous edge. Despite the nation's isolationism and distrust of the military left in the wake of World War I, a war with Germany seemed imminent. Rumors spread that an ammunition plant was to be built in the Sauk Prairie area. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor the following December, there was little to be said against it, regardless of the community's prominent German heritage and attempts to have the plant built on less populated, less productive land in Adams County. But national destiny disintegrated a second Sauk Prairie community, and like the first event, it was hard. Many farmers were insulted with unfair offers of compensation for farms that embodied the hopes and toil of several generations. Some found themselves in the difficult position of having to sue the government for more money when the national psyche was one of sacrifice for the war effort. Like the Ho-Chunk before them, some families did not want to leave their homes for any price, and when the time came to move in March of 1942, auctions occurred daily, families and neighbors went separate ways, and one man had to be forcibly carried from his home.

Who owns this land? The Badger Army Ammunition Plant encompasses some fourteen hundred buildings on 7,300-plus acres.

Photo: Mike Mossman

At the same time that farmsteads were being razed, a phenomenal construction effort began, involving a round-the-clock work force that peaked at twelve thousand in August of 1942. For a great many people, the Depression ended. Workers and their families flocked from near and far, overloading local hospitals, schools, and businesses, and lodging wherever possible: spare rooms and outbuildings, the Devils Lake CCC camp, an Army trailer park, and the newly constructed barracks at Badger Village near the plant. This village featured a progressive public school (now the site of Dr. Evermor's scrap sculpture park), community center, post office, and twenty-four-hour daycare. Hundreds of production buildings were constructed, and by the following February, the first propellant was produced.

LIFE AT THE POWDER PLANT

So began the fifty-eight-year relationship between the Badger Ordnance Works—later renamed Badger Army Ammunition Plant—and the natural and cultural communities that surrounded it. Tens of thousands of people worked here during the three wars and the standby periods in between. Of those families remaining in the area in 1942, most would have at least one member working at the plant sooner or later, sometimes spanning two or three generations. New families came for the work and stayed, and as time went on new ones were formed by the union of young workers who met there. Much of the community benefited economically from the increased demand for retail goods and services. Several contractors—now long-standing in the community—got their start by landing army subcontracts in 1942, or by building homes or roads. Badger Village provided homes for UW families on the GI Bill after World War II (including future governors Reynolds and Dreyfus and future U.S. Senator William Proxmire) and was eventually sold for private housing and businesses. Jobs for skilled and unskilled

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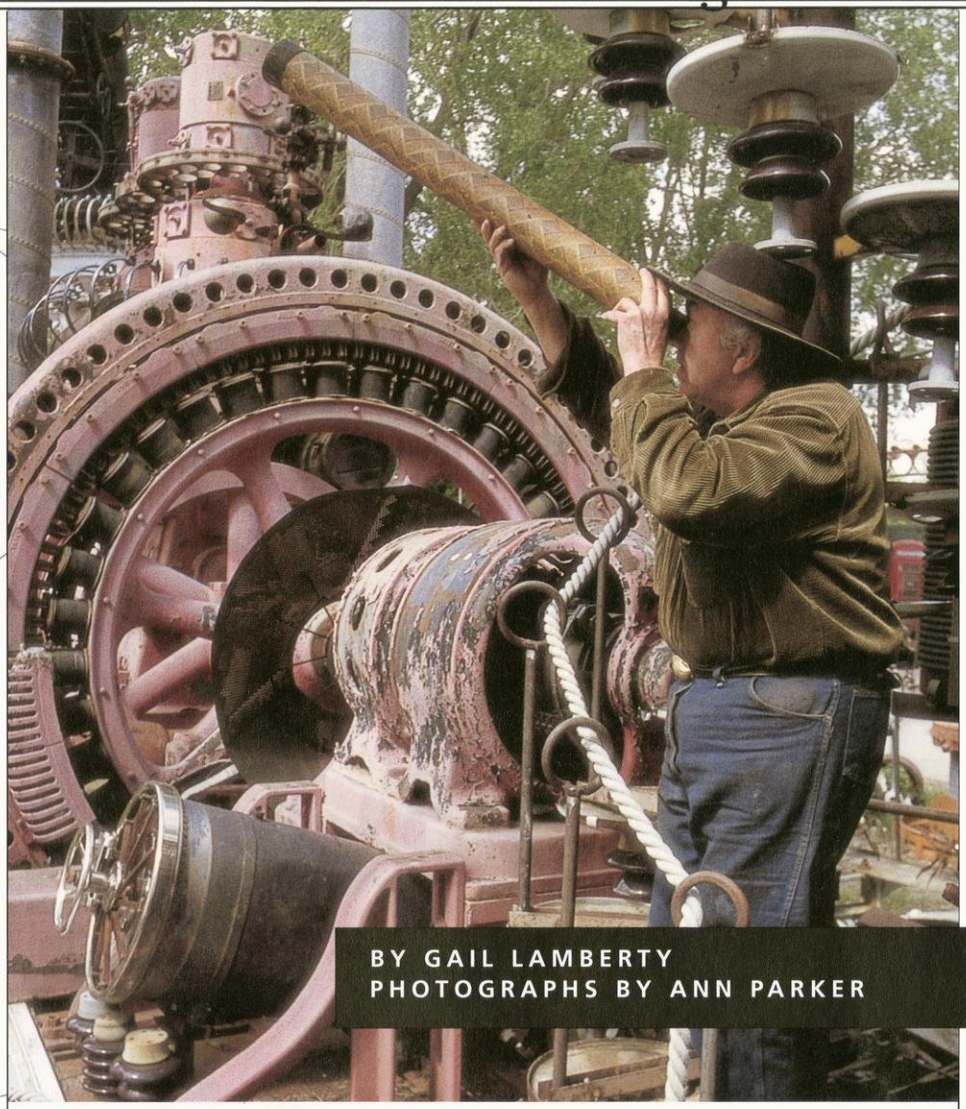
the land of evermor



BY GAIL LAMBERTY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANN PARKER

Dr. Evermor with the *Forevertron,* the piece that started it all in 1983. The *Forevertron* is certified by *The Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's largest scrap metal sculpture, weighing in at four hundred tons, writer Gail Lamberty notes. Says Wisconsin "outsider art" expert Ann Parker: "Evermor is one of the only people in the world who has created not only an environment, but a myth and story about the environment."

A welding torch becomes a magic wand in the hand of outsider/ visionary artist Dr. Evermor. In a former life, Tom Every used that torch to dismantle breweries, cheese factories, warehouses, water towers, woolen mills, and other industrial discards. After decades of demolition, a new persona emerged: Dr. Evermor (Doctor of Delight, with a Ph.D. in Perfectly Happy Diversions, awarded from the University of Experience). Now the salvaged scrap from the Industrial Age forms the fins, feathers, and flesh of fantasy creatures populating his seven-acre art park. The sculpture site on Highway 12 (five miles south of Baraboo, across from the Badger Army Ammunition Plant and behind Delaney's Surplus) was recently recognized by *USA Today* as No. 3 in the Top Ten U.S. Roadside Attractions and was featured in *Fantasy Worlds,* an international publication of art environments around the world. You can also catch Dr. Evermor on www.roadsideamerica.com ("Your online guide to offbeat attractions"), which declares: "Oft imitated by 'Outside Art'-wannabes, none have seriously challenged the Doctor's ingenious conglomeration."

Dr. Evermor welcomes visitors personally most weekends from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. He is constantly adding to his fantasy park. And serious plans are afoot to have the *Forevertron,* his pièce de résistance, moved across Highway 12 to the Badger Army Ammunition Plant as a national monument to the munitions workers of America.

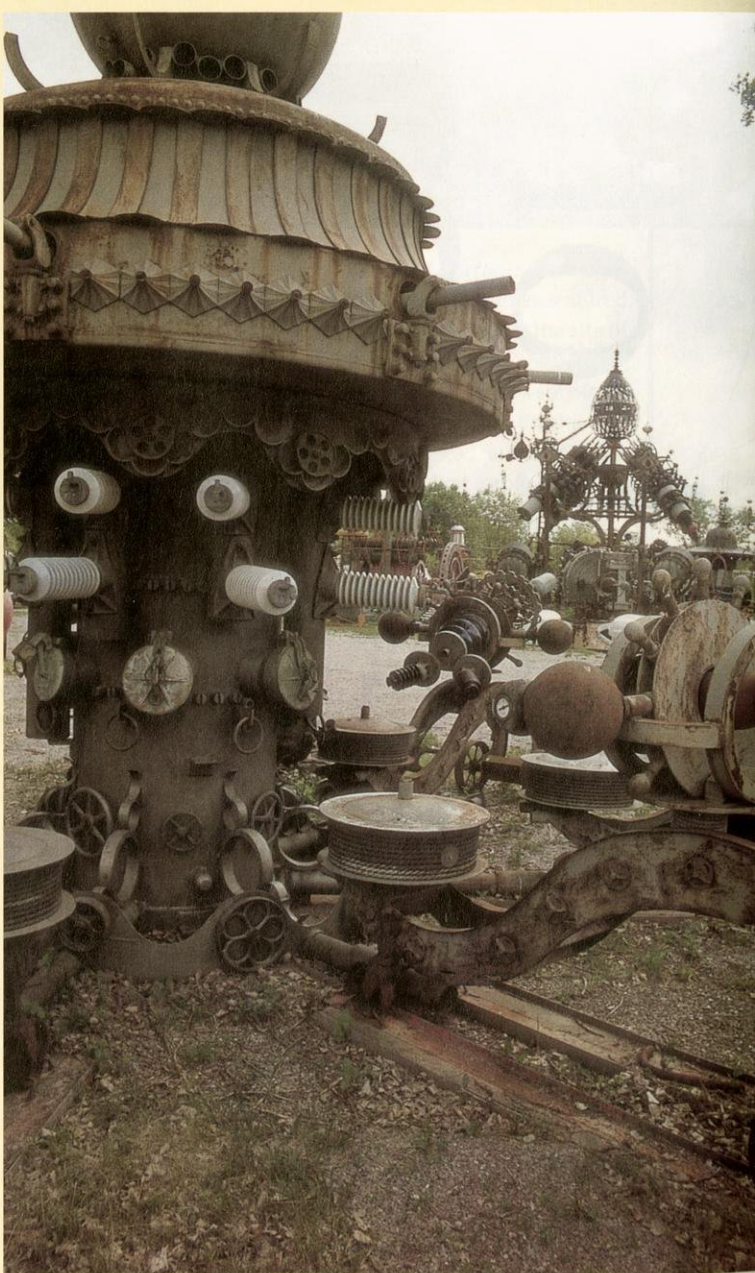
Dr. Evermor's Prairie Party

A Merry Prairie Fairy Tale

Alice took tea with a Mad Hatter and a March Hare. Harry Potter traveled on a train from Platform Nine and Three Quarters. But Dr. Evermor plans a tea party and a trip more spectacular than Alice or Harry could ever match.

At the foot of the Baraboo Bluffs, where children of Badger Ordnance workers once played schoolyard games, rises a new playground for the youngsters and the not-so-youngsters of today. The Land of Evermor, a world of myth and magic, fantasy and frolic, invites both the fiercely faithful and the cynically skeptic to the Prairie Party to be scheduled very soon.

Dr. Evermor immigrated to the Wisconsin prairie from Eggington, England, not so long ago. As many newcomers do, he carried his dream not packed in a suitcase but packaged in his head, heart, and hands. His vision to journey back to the heavenly home of his Creator in a time-travel machine will soon become reality. His dream has been transformed into technique and technology, with mechanisms in place and pre-blastoff festivity plans nearly complete.



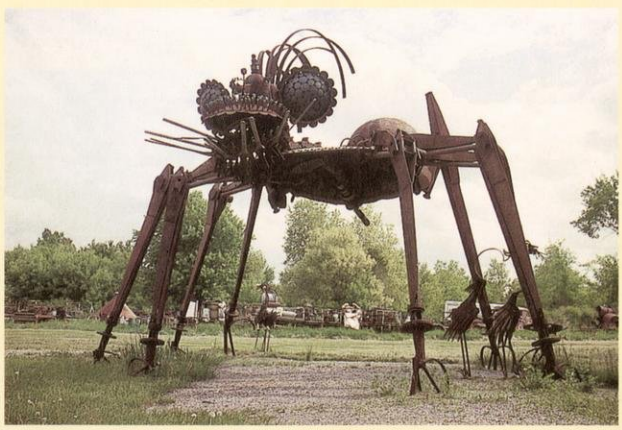
View of the *Over Lord Master Control,* (left) and the *Forevertron* (background, right) which will blast Dr. Evermor up to the heavens after catching lightning.

The mechanical-magic-heavenly-transport machine, the *Forevertron,* has been built to exacting engineering specifications. The *Forevertron's* spiral staircase awaits the footsteps of the Good Doctor. He'll cross the bridge and enter the *Glass Ball in Copper Egg* for his final journey home. The *Over Lord Master Control* is primed to reach out and catch that one critical lightning flash that will marry celestial electrical energy to Industrial Age innovation. This union will create the magnetic force beam powering the egg capsule to the edge of the universe. In case any onlookers lose their smiles and show a grim face, one of seven cannon birds at the lower level of the *Over Lord Master Control* will target them for a "Love Laser" blast and leave them wearing a perpetual smile.

Creatures and critters of whim and whimsy populate the land of Evermor to inspire and assist the Doctor in his work. Cool cats, laughing lizards, barnacle butterflies, flying fish, and sunshade spiders such as *Arachna Artie* will join the revelry for the Prairie Party. *Seven Singing & Dancing Dragons* (now under construction) are on the journey to the Land of Evermor and have requested that blastoff be delayed until their arrival late this fall.

The Doctor's ancestral English courtesy inspired him to invite friends to share the great event. Replies from across the globe fill the *Butterfly Mail Box* daily.

The Butterfly Mail Box **attracts butterflies upon butterflies—the wings are also shaped like butterflies. The butterfly's jaw drops so that mail can actually be delivered (visitors from around the world leave fan mail fairly routinely).**



Arachna Artie **is a nineteen-foot-tall spider. His legs were once balance beams from scales that were used to weigh trucks. He has eight legs, just like a real spider.**

Prince Albert and Queen Victoria have reserved the place of honor in the *Royal Teahouse* atop the east side of the *Forevertron.* Scads of skeptic scoffers have reserved the *Perch for the High Priest of Non Believers* attached to the *Doubting Thomas Telescope* at the west end of the *Forevertron.* Victorian gazebo teahouses surround the *Forevertron* for ground-level, front-row viewing. While reservations are not required, many have already picked their place at the party.

Gracious hospitality will be the order of the day. Popcorn will explode from the *Olfactory* while gourmet delicacies roasted to perfection will be served from the *Epicurean*. Desserts created by the *Wizard of Wonder* will be offered to all.

The *Royal Teahouse* is specially reserved for Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. Prince Albert is a spiritual brother to Dr. Evermor as he had an inventive spirit and was interested in the technology of his era. As you would expect, the stairway is formed in the shape of lilypads for the royals' delicate feet.

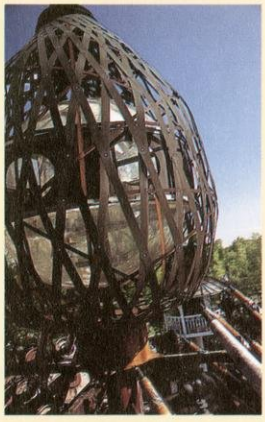
The *Doubting Thomas Telescope* is about thirty feet long and made out of brass, copper and steel. It has seven extensions, and monitor controls made of pieces from the Baraboo woolen mill.

The *Olfactory Popcorn Popper* is set inside an elevator cage that bounces around and moves when you pick up your popcorn. There are working popcorn machines inside.

No need to be calorie conscious in the Land of Evermor, because the *Gravatron* will "de-water" the Doctor just before blastoff to get rid of those extra pounds. All in attendance are invited to join in the calorie cast-off. The waiting line for the *Gravatron* is already forming. Frolic, fun, food, and friendship are the menu of the Prairie Party.

The *Billabong Bird* is made from farm machinery parts that once turned the prairie into crop soil. The Kindschi family provided the parts. The bird was inspired and named by one of the Doctor's cousins, a farmer from New Zealand who recently came to visit.

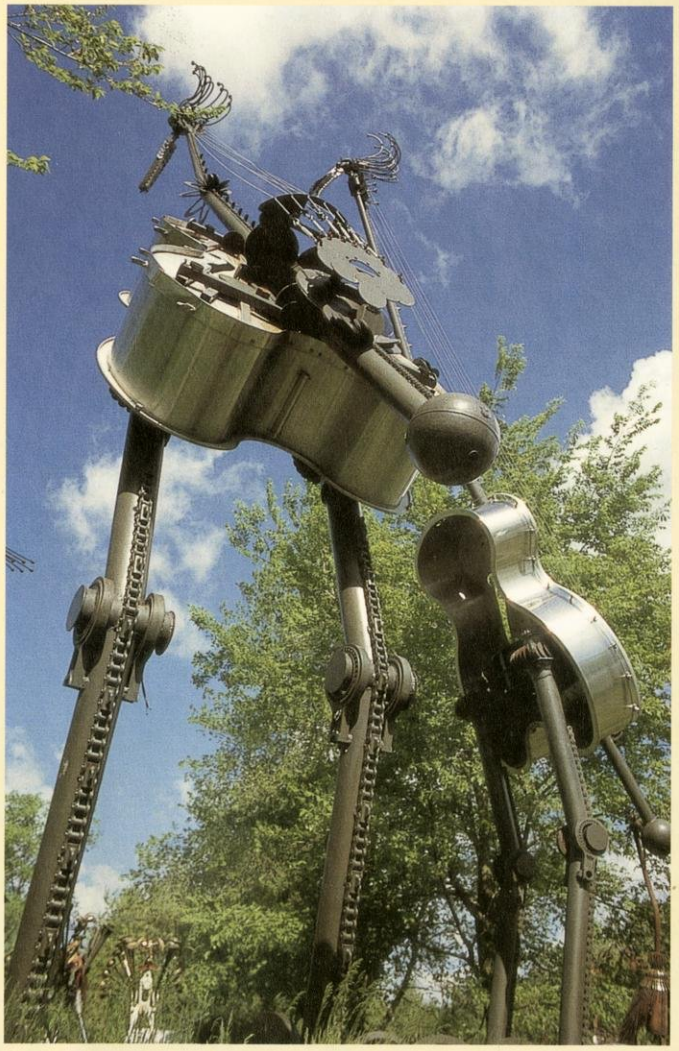
The *Celestial Listening Ear* is made out of a speaker from an old theater in Beloit. You can sit behind it to track a trajectory through astrological reference points. The chair is a former dentist's chair. There are two telescopes connected to the celestial listening ear, so that two people can take information from different planets.



Glass Ball in Copper Egg. Before the glass ball was incorporated into the space capsule, it was a sign for a Mars Hamburger Stand in Green Bay. The copper egg came from the Parker Pen company in Janesville.

But what party would be complete without music? Music never heard on this earthly realm will serenade the sky. *The Bird Band* is in rehearsal right now. One hundred and one wind and percussion birds follow the baton of the *Director Bird* while the *Bass Fiddle Birds* tower over the trumpet and tuba bird sections.

Doctor Evermor is musing about Prairie Party preparation while waiting for the *Seven Singing and Dancing Dragons* to arrive from Tibet. The Mad Hatter and Harry Potter have already confirmed their attendance, requesting Teahouse Number Two. You are welcome to visit the *Bird Band* and other inhabitants in the Land of Evermor before blastoff. In the Land of Evermor, the doors are always open.



The *Bird Band* has two bass fiddle birds, forty feet tall, which the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore would like to purchase, says Lamberty. For now, Evermor says he will not part with them. The tanks they are made of were once used in therapy for burn and polio patients, Lamberty notes.

Author Gail Lamberty, who bears the title "Princess of Power," is the secretary of the Evermor Foundation. She is known as a grassroots rural arts activist. In celebration of Wisconsin's Sesquicentennial, she resurrected ***Fighting Bob,*** *a play about Belle and Bob La Follette, in a rural antique theater in Prairie du Sac that had not featured a show in seventy-five years. Her involvement with the Doctor's work emerged from a sense of appreciation for a place where folks from ages five to eighty-five consistently walk around wearing smiles and no frowns.*

Photographer Ann Parker is an art teacher, printmaker, and photographer based in Baraboo. She has photographed the environments of many self-taught Wisconsin artists (and wrote the piece on outsider art in the summer issue of the ***Wisconsin Academy Review****). She is completing a book on visionary artists in Wisconsin that is slated for publication later this year.*

(continued from page 26)

workers at Badger kept the wolf from many a Sauk County door and fostered a broader shift from agriculture and tourism to light industry.

There were other effects as well. Residential growth brought its own set of inevitable complexities. And under federal ownership, the land was beyond local control and contributed nothing directly to the tax rolls. Although safety was paramount at the plant, people were killed or injured. Pollution from the coal-fired steam plant and acid plant left a brown haze over the prairie and killed trees and lichens in natural areas of the nearby Baraboo Hills. Chemicals, dumped and burned in the days before we collectively knew better, contaminated the soil and neighboring wells. During the Vietnam War, the same place that had once helped save the world from oppression symbolized for some citizens the very opposite. Former residents of the Prairie could not be buried in the cemeteries taken over by the plant, where some wives, husbands, and babies who died before 1942 lay forever alone beside vacant plots.

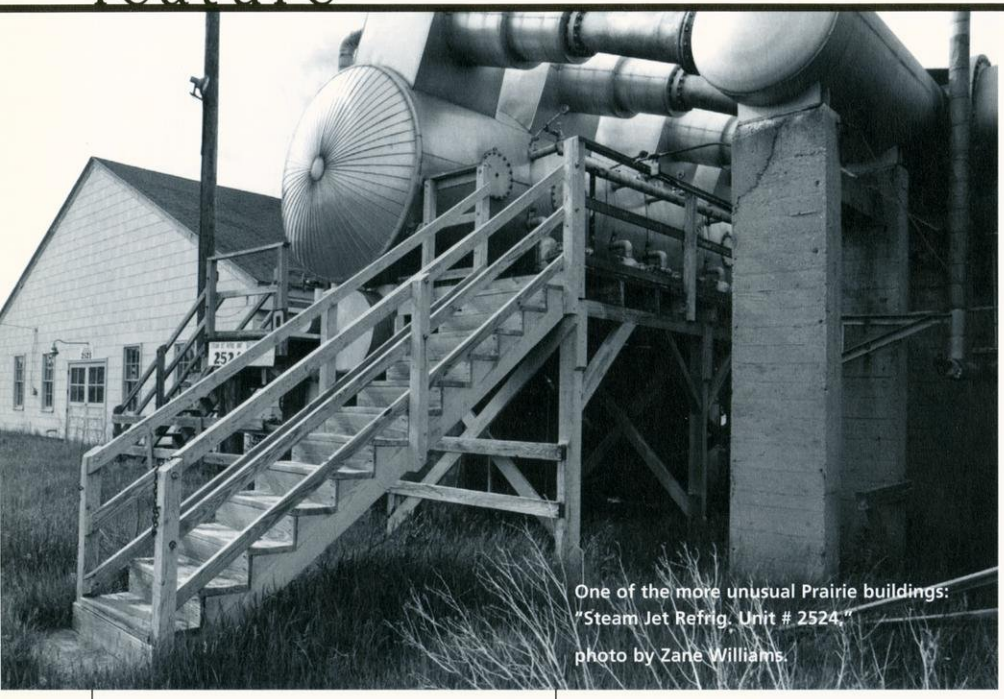
Oddly, despite Badger's metamorphosis, one feature besides the tidy cemeteries persisted as an invaluable relic of the 1940s rural landscape. After the war, Midwestern agriculture evolved from one dominated by hay and pasture to one supporting feedlots. Prairie wildlife that adjusted to nineteenth-century agriculture found it increasingly difficult to live among clean fields of corn and soybeans and frequently cut alfalfa in which birds hadn't time to rear a brood between harvests. Add to this the loss of habitat from urban sprawl and the succession of abandoned farm fields to shrubs and trees, and the calamitous postwar decline of grassland wildlife is not surprising. At Badger, some twenty-five hundred acres are leased for grazing in order to generate income and deter succession, while additional fields are kept in grassy hay and cut only after the nesting season. Consequently, the site is a haven for such birds as bobwhite quail, meadowlarks, bobolinks, and upland sandpipers—even among many of the buildings—in stark contrast to its surroundings. Restoration efforts by the army and private and agency cooperators expands this grassland annually.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Although Badger has not produced gunpowder for twenty-five years, it remains an active place. The nearby U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center uses about thirteen hundred acres to research nutrient flow and other aspects of dairy farming. Several buildings are leased for private storage and small business. A small sewage treatment plant serves Badger and private homes in the former Badger Village. A multimillion-dollar facility cleans contaminated ground water, while affected soil is being removed, landfilled and capped. A skeleton staff of about seventy oversees security, administration, cleanup, salvage, maintenance, and land-management activities.

But since maintenance was curtailed three years ago, much of Badger is decaying. With each storm, more shingles and sections of siding fall. Steam pipes and escape chutes collapse. Salvage operations leave gaping holes in shells of buildings. Nature regains its dominion as trees grow from cracks in the soil-filled barricades, grapevines creep into former production rooms, and weeds reclaim parking lots

Nature takes over: Trees busting through "Rest House 6804-8," photo by Zane Williams.



One of the more unusual Prairie buildings: "Steam Jet Refrig. Unit # 2524." photo by Zane Williams.

once busy with cars and buses from an eighty-mile radius. Engineers and maintenance workers watch their old friend failing.

Congress has approved closure of Badger, and active measures will soon be taken to create a new future here, but what will it be? Some say industry and commercial uses have a place, if only temporarily. Others argue vehemently that this belongs in the existing industrial parks attached to nearby cities and villages. There are good arguments and potential for agriculture, ecological restoration, a Ho-Chunk bison herd, recreation of various sorts, research and educational facilities, and historic preservation. At first glance there seems to be room on 7,354 acres for a little of something to please everyone. But can a recreation area thrive beside an acid plant, or a bison herd beside beef and dairy cattle? How would historic preservation meld with ecological restoration, or agriculture and research with public use? How will any sort of increased human use be kept from encouraging residential and commercial development in the nearby Baraboo Hills and prime Sauk Prairie farmland? What are the special opportunities presented here that might be lost by parcelization or by trying to please too many masters?

These are the questions that the newly created Reuse Committee, sponsored by local, county, state, and federal agencies, will have to tackle. One of the few certainties of the situation is that no satisfactory outcome will result from viewing Badger as a piece of real estate waiting to be molded to the desires of particular interest groups. Rather, we would be wise to understand that this place represents a reservoir of natural and human history, not just for the Sauk Prairie but for the nation. The emotional tone of people discussing its future belies their connection with it. They have in some way resulted from this land, and the community is intertwined with it.

Inherent in many arguments is the need to reconcile past events: the Ho-Chunks' loss of home, the breach of trust felt acutely by displaced farm families. There are people who deeply miss the lost chance to be part of a natural landscape and all its fantastic processes, or the rich array of wildlife that once shared the world with farm kids. Some miss the patriotic commonality engendered by World War II, others the passion of the antiwar movement, and for neither group are the Vietnam War years reconciled. Some recent workers wonder about their careful efforts to maintain Badger for the good of our country, given the feeding frenzy over its remains. What we do with the Badger land can bring closure to some of these issues, if we think about it symbolically. This will do more for posterity than any amount of political posturing and financial fretting.

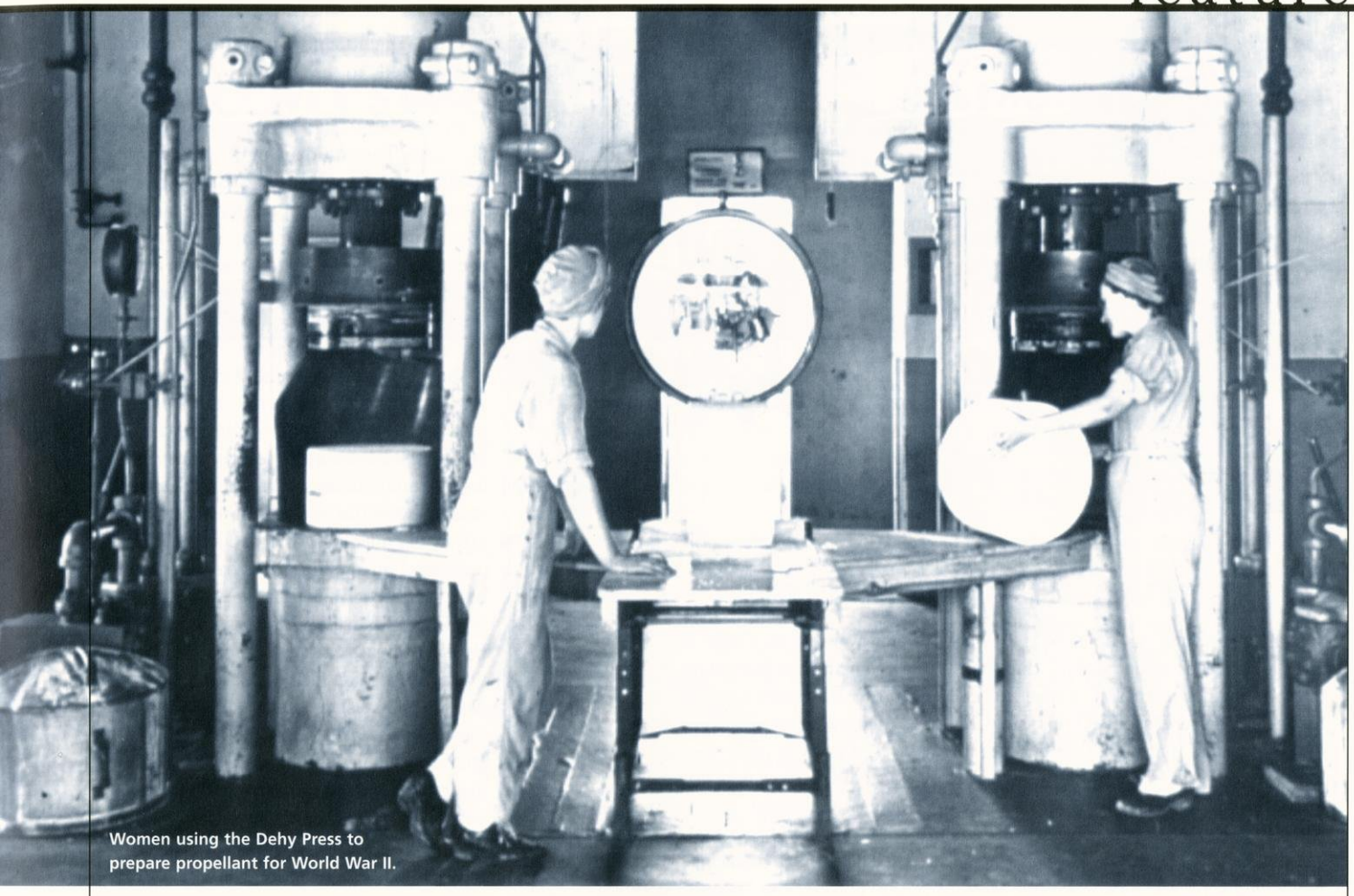
The special opportunities to integrate place, culture, nature, and history are unique here. To satisfy these needs within the area's natural and sociopolitical landscape will be challenging, but should not be daunting. Ideally the process will be valuable on its own and produce a better understanding of this place called Badger, and the Sauk community as a whole. With this we can hope that the phoenix rising from the ashes of this twentieth-century war machine is one that will provide for our children and honor their ancestors.

Mike Mossman is a wildlife biologist with a special interest in human and natural history. He grew up in Baraboo and lives in Sauk County, where he has studied wildlife of the Baraboo Hills, the Badger Plant, and surrounding areas. He is chair of the Badger History Group, serves on the Badger Reuse Committee, and was project director for the video documentary, ***Powder to the People.***

Readers with questions or comments about the future uses of BAAP should contact the Sauk County Office of Planning and Zoning, 505 Broadway, Baraboo 53913, (608) 355-3285.

All readers are cordially invited to a Prairie Party at the Village Booksmith bookstore in Baraboo (526 Oak Street, 608-355-1001) on Thursday, September 28 at 7 p.m. to celebrate the publication of the *Wisconsin Academy Review's* Sauk Prairie package. There will be wine, cheese, and discussion with the authors and photographers about Sauk Prairie's future.

The Badger History Group, which provided much of the material for this feature, is a team of local historians and educators who are dedicated to the identification, preservation, and interpretation of the history of the BAAP area. Its current and recent projects include interviews with former residents and workers, archival and on-site research, and the video documentary ***Powder to the People*** (co-produced with Dave Erickson, Wisconsin Public Television, and the Wisconsin Humanities Council). Other projects include the exhibit **Rebirth of the Prairie** (with the Wisconsin Academy and the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie—the exhibit is now on display at the International Crane Foundation; see page 5), the lecture series "Exploring the Natural and Cultural History of the Sauk Prairie" (with CCCSP and the Water Street Gallery in Prairie du Sac), and an upcoming book on the site's history.



Women using the Dehy Press to prepare propellant for World War II.

Courtesy of the Badger History Group

badger worker's daughter

NO, IT WASN'T BUTCHER HOLLER. But like the coal mines of old, the Badger Army Ammunition Plant provided many families with a gritty livelihood—and a deep-seated sense of place and identity.

BY LOLA HUBER

Now that the Badger Army Ammunition Plant is decommissioning, we are watching the decay and demolition going on. We listen to the pros and cons of its purpose, its demise, and its future land disposition, but most of all, we hear the voices of the people, the ones displaced, the ones who made the powder and the ones who want the land.

It is in talking with the displaced farmers and former workers, in touring their previous homesteads and workplaces with them, that we learn of their emotions about working on or leaving the seven thousand-plus acres of Badger. These interviews triggered memories of an earlier day, some with heartbreak and others with fondness.

It is in these memories that my story of Badger, as I saw it, begins and plays out over the years. In the first operation of 1942, I was about to start my junior year in high school up in northern Wisconsin. Dad announced that he hoped to take a position as a carpenter in building a powder plant near Baraboo. His plea to our mother was "Pay is seventy-five cents an hour."

For us seven O'Brien kids, it sounded like an adventure. Not so for our mother. She

Courtesy of the Badger History Group

Badger workers during the Vietnam era celebrating a "safety award," a monthly competition based on the results of safety inspections and the number and type of injuries.

visualized packing up household belongings, leaving her aging parents, and going into the unknown. Finding a place to call home in a new land seemed impossible. My mother insisted that there be a building for her to make into a home for her little brood after traveling two hundred and fifty miles with a truckload of family possessions and a car filled with her four teenage daughters, two young sons, and a two-year-old baby.

Dad found half of a big old farmhouse a few miles out of Baraboo. We were lucky in view of some who were living in converted garages, chicken coops, or sheds. We arrived at our "new diggins" as Dad called it, in the middle of a Saturday night. Mom ordered that beds be made up. The rest would wait till morning. And so it went.

Monday morning Dad went by bus to Badger as a carpenter. Mom loaded her "cherubs" into the car and enrolled five kids into the local schools.

As soon as Hercules opened the first Smokeless Powder Line, my older sister, Marti, joined the powder-making at Badger. She shared not only a room with me, but a bed as well. Sleeping with her was like hanging out at the hospital on surgery day. The smell of ether never left her. It was on her clothes, in her hair, and even on her breath.

The rest of us in the family saw the powder plant as a way of life. We became accustomed to shift work, meals at all hours, someone sleeping during the day, people leaving for work in the middle of the night, and having only Mom at our school activities. To earn spending money, I took a job as a waitress in a cafe after school. In the evening before leaving for home, it was my job to help pack lunches for many of the Badger workers who lived alone.

The powder plant seemed a mysterious place. We viewed it as prison-like, with high fences all around, guard shacks atop stilt framework. We saw buildings that looked all alike, smoke billowing from the stacks at the powerhouse, guards standing at the gates. Streetlights in rows and rows like a big city. Ominous steam pipes networked as far as the eye could see.

The nearby towns were crowded. The schools overflowed with unfamiliar faces. Teachers did their best to cope with the influx. All we wanted or needed was rationed, scarce, or impossible to get. Everything went into the war effort, including food, gasoline, tires, cars, and clothing. We stood in long lines to buy whatever we could: pepper, coffee, canned fruit and vegetables, hardware, shoes, fabric, and even spools of thread and nylon stockings.

Churches were standing room only. People stood in lines two blocks long to get into the movies. No one ventured far. We walked or rode bikes two miles to school. Workers walked miles to catch buses to go to Badger.

Upon my high school graduation in 1944, Dad was still making powder at Badger. Marti left the powder plant and joined the Women's Army Corps. I chose to take an office position with the company that built the small houses at the south end of Badger Village. About the time the houses were finished, the war ended. Badger went into standby. The little houses were dismantled and moved to a campus in northern Wisconsin.

By the 1960s, I had been married twenty-five years and my daughters were grown. Badger became active again for the Vietnam conflict, as it had for the Korean War before it. It was time for me to try my secretarial skills at Badger. It became a relationship until the layoffs in 1975. We were doing what we thought would help settle the strife and turmoil on the opposite side of the world by sending ammunition to the servicemen.

It was a different kind of job. Now I went behind the fences. I was searched for smoking materials more often than I liked and worked with the latest equipment, but in creaky old buildings with static-free floors. I cultivated friendships in an environment unlike any other business.

We were transported in army-type vehicles to our jobs and remained there through the day. The rest of the powder plant lingered as a mystery. We stayed in our areas as safety was number one. Until 1972, I was a clerk in the inspection department office before transferring to the ballistics laboratory as a secretary. It was a special time cultivating friendships and doing a job that we saw as important to the war effort.

Now, with the powder plant's demise, it is a sad commentary on all that has happened over the past six decades. The displaced farmers and we former workers have left a little piece of ourselves out there. Memories are all we have left. To see a museum of this unique place dedicated to all of us would give us a chance to revisit an important time in our lives.

Lola Huber, a member of the Badger History Group since its inception, still lives only four miles from Badger and has a view of the powder plant every day. For almost four years she has written weekly columns for the ***Sauk Prairie Eagle*** *newspaper in Sauk City (column title: "Whatever Lola Wants to Write, Lola Gets to Write"). She is also a member of the Rough Writers writing group, edits for the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society, and teaches creative writing to children in the August Derleth Workshop. She likes to travel, sew, and spend time with her family, which will soon include her first great-grandchild.*

The Mysterious Rusty

Who drew those beautiful women on the walls of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant?

BY LOLA HUBER

Courtesy of Michael Cody

The aim of the Badger History Group is to collect and preserve the history of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant. Many stories have been unearthed as we've interviewed former landowners and employees. But here's one that was, without a doubt, one of the most interesting.

In the process of touring plant buildings, we discovered a series of drawings on the walls of Dehy Building No. 5500. These drawings are of attractive young ladies with hairstyles reminiscent of the 1940s. It was believed that the artist probably worked at Badger in the first operation and was likely a man who admired the ladies and had knowledge of human anatomy. Hair was long, with waves at the shoulders and sides swept up into curls, a style of that time. Some of the ladies were brunette, some blond, usually grouped in pairs. Each drawing was signed "Rusty."

So, the question, "Did you know Rusty?" cropped up quite frequently as the Badger History Group conducted interviews of former workers. To no avail. No one seemed to know the artist. An article was put into the *Wisconsin State Journal* on the chance that a reader might see it and make contact. At the Badger History Group Workers Reunion in August 1999, a poster was shown to the visitors with photos of the drawings and a plea for information. Of the nearly 400 people at the reunion, no one recalled Rusty.

Since the drawings were reminiscent of the first powder plant operation, it was thought that Rusty could be eighty or even ninety years old. Questions and conclusions were numerous. Was "Rusty" a nickname for Russell, or did he have reddish brown hair? Where did he come from? Where did he live? All that was really known was that Rusty was a talented artist with an eye for pretty ladies who were probably his coworkers.

After the reunion, I received a call from my daughter, Jan Vorndran. She said, "Mom, I think I have a good prospect for another of your interviews of Badger workers. A woman named Carol Marshall stops at my shop from time to time and said her father-in-law, Reven Marshall, who is ninety-two, worked at Badger in all three operations and has some drawings of powder plant days."

Could this be our graffiti artist? With a name like Reven, could he have used the alias "Rusty"? An appointment with Reven Marshall was arranged. With video cameraman Robert France, we visited Marshall at his home in Madison. He had many tales to tell of his days at Badger.

At the close of the interview, I showed him the poster from the reunion and asked, "Reven, are you Rusty?" He looked at me for a few seconds. As a big grin crossed his face, he said, "No. No way. I'm not Rusty! Rusty was a woman!"

From Reven, we learned that Rusty not only was a woman, but was in her forties at the time she worked at the powder plant in the Vietnam operation in the late 1960s. Why, then, would she draw women from the 1940s? Reven believed that Rusty drew pictures of herself as she might have looked in the 1940s. He said that Rusty's real name was Mary Catherine Spears, she was from Arena, that she not only worked at Badger, but ran a fast food restaurant and in summer had a vegetable and fruit stand. He recalled that sometimes he bought sweet corn and watermelon at her stand. He said that Mary Spears died in 1990 at age sixty-five, twenty-one years after she had worked at Badger.

Reven brought out a weathered black notebook. "Here are some of Rusty's drawings I picked off the floor in the Dehy House." Inside, on tattered black pages, were dozens of drawings done on the backs of little two-by-four-inch manila powder tags. "Every day I'd find these. Tossed them into the wastebasket for a long time. Then one day I decided they were too good to throw away, so I saved them and started this scrapbook." It seems that in the process of making powder, there were minutes between batches, during which time Mary Spears drew pictures of lovely ladies, animals, and scenery on the discarded tags and the beautiful ladies on the walls.

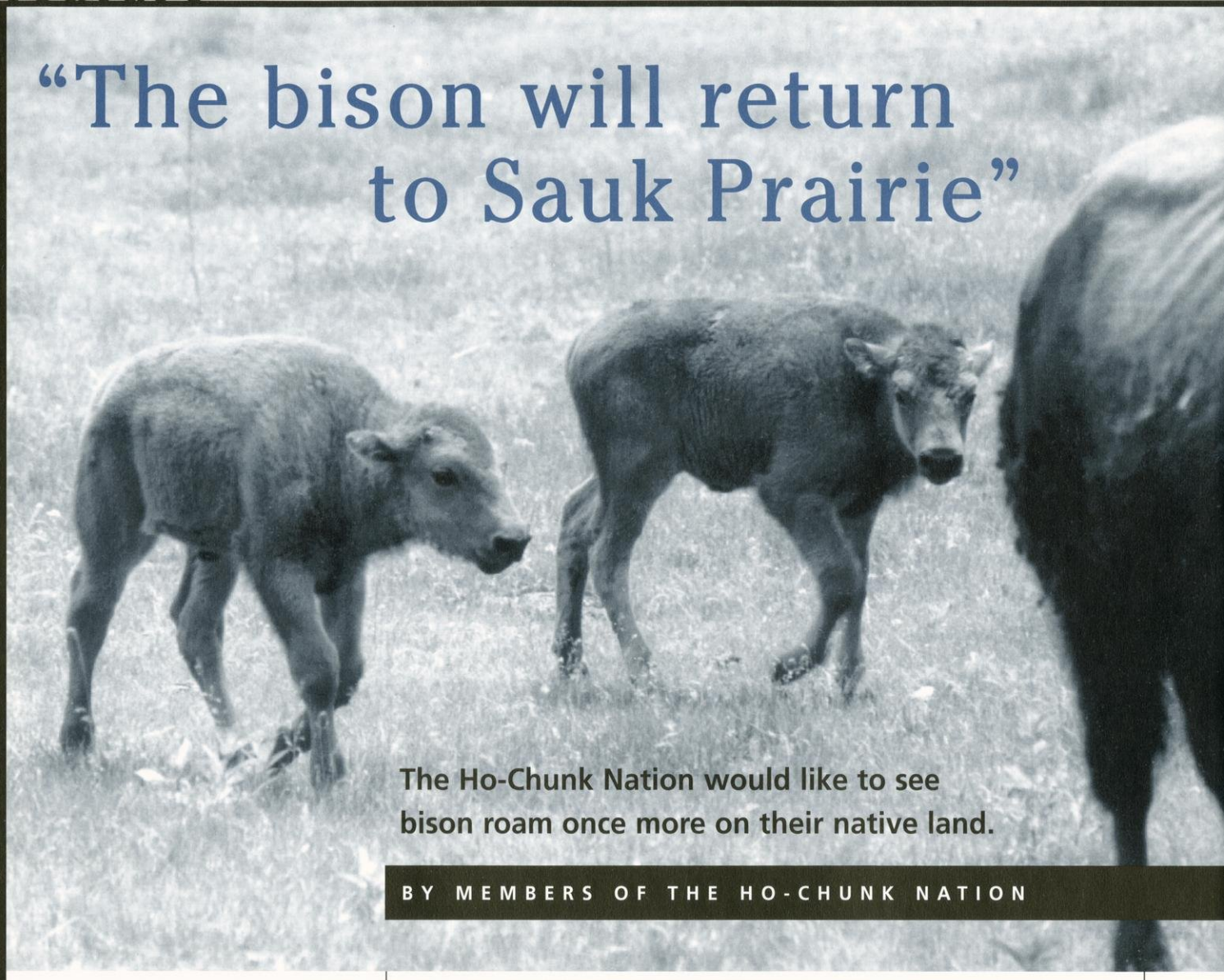
Badger History Group member Tammy Kochaver went to Arena and through her father found members of Mary Spears's family. She went to the home of Rusty's daughter, Jane Dailey, and asked if she recognized the pictures from the *Wisconsin State Journal.* Jane said, "Those are my mother's drawings."

In an interview with Jane and her father, Charles Spears, we learned that Mary Spears had worked at Badger from 1966 until 1969 when she quit after the death of her son in an automobile accident. The family never heard her called "Rusty" but thought she used that name because, as Jane said, "Mom always taught us not to write on the walls." Jane brought out photos of her mother taken during the 1940s. It was easy to see she was her own model for the drawings.

So the mystery of Rusty's drawings on the walls of the Dehy House and on the powder tags in Reven's scrapbook has been solved. The story and the drawings will become an integral part of the Badger History Group archives and future museum.

On another day, the Badger History Group invited Jane Dailey, Charles Spears, and several relatives to visit Badger and view the drawings on the walls. It was a time of mixed emotions, a time of touching a piece of a lady who was so special in their lives, during a time in her life that was not a part of theirs. Little did Rusty know the impact her few years at Badger would have on the future. No matter what happens to Badger, Mary Catherine Spears's drawings in the name of "Rusty" will live on.

"The bison will return to Sauk Prairie"



The Ho-Chunk Nation would like to see bison roam once more on their native land.

BY MEMBERS OF THE HO-CHUNK NATION

New bison calves on Ho-Chunk land at Muscoda, 1997.

Photo courtesty of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

THE ABORIGINAL TERRITORY of the Ho-Chunk people, formerly known as the Wisconsin Winnebago Tribe, once covered several million acres and extended throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Long before the arrival of European Americans, the Ho-Chunk people inhabited Sauk Prairie, the fourteen hundred acres situated between the Baraboo Bluffs and the Wisconsin River. Ho-Chunk villages on Sauk Prairie were surrounded by a variety of wildlife, including elk, bison, moose, lynx, bear, and wolves. As European immigrants moved west, Ho-Chunks were forcibly removed through treaties with the United States government, and the habitat for the abundant wildlife became farmland.

A major portion of Sauk Prairie was turned into the Badger Army Ammunition Plant in 1942, creating an industrial center where once prairie grasses had swayed in the wind. After almost twenty-five years of inactivity, the federal government has now declared the Badger Army Ammunition Plant "surplus." Negotiations are underway with the state of Wisconsin, the Ho-Chunk Nation, local communities, and conservation groups for the transfer of the land for non-industrial uses and to remediate the existing environmental contamination.

The Ho-Chunk Nation is working cooperatively with federal, state, and local officials and groups to acquire a portion of the land comprising the Badger Army Ammunition Plant with the intent of reintroducing bison and restoring prairie grasses—plans compatible with those of many local groups and neighboring property owners.

The Ho-Chunk Nation is committed to protecting and enhancing natural resources on the Nation's lands. Several years ago, the Nation acquired a 639-acre farm comprised of ancestral land along the Wisconsin River near Muscoda in Richland County, the site of the remnants of an important mound group. After the farm was purchased, the Nation investigated several uses for the property. The high rate of diabetes and heart disease among Tribal members led to research on the health benefits of a natural diet, one more closely resembling the diet of Ho-Chunk ancestors.

The desire to substitute buffalo meat for beef led to the Nation's involvement with the Inter-Tribal Bison Cooperative, a nonprofit venture whose goal is to help Indian tribes establish their own bison herds. Today, the Ho-Chunk Nation's Muscoda Bison Ranch and Farm is home to eighty-three bison, and bison meat is served regularly at traditional feasts as well as at the Nation's elder meal sites in Black River Falls, Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, Nekoosa, and Wittenberg.

Shortly after the Muscoda property was acquired, the Ho-Chunk Nation joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Circle of Flight Program, enabling the Nation to operate resource management programs, including the restoration of approximately one hundred acres of the Muscoda land to natural prairie. In addition, the Nation works to provide quality forage for grazing by the Tribe's bison and to improve the native habitat.

The Nation's demand for bison meat has outgrown the capacity of the Muscoda land. Given recent trends in the health consciousness of consumers, the Nation is also considering selling this healthier source of protein to the general public as a means of economic diversification. In order to maintain a healthy breeding environment without overgrazing the land (recommended at a minimum of four acres per animal), the Nation would like to acquire another large contiguous parcel of land that will allow for herd expansion.

Though the Nation does not intend to place bison there, a model program for the Ho-Chunk Nation's cooperation with government and private groups is currently underway at the former La Farge Dam site in Vernon County, Wisconsin. The Kickapoo Valley Reserve, covering approximately 8,500 acres, is a nature reserve jointly owned and managed by the state of Wisconsin through the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Being a good neighbor is an important part of the Ho-Chunk Nation's philosophy—a commitment to working cooperatively with our neighbors for the greater good that stems from traditional teachings of honor and respect for all the creatures of Mother Earth. Every part of the earth is sacred to Ho-Chunk people—from the smallest humming insect to the great bald eagle, from the little babbling brook to the mighty Mississippi, from the sandy shore to the majestic bluff, we are all brothers and sisters. As such, it is our inherent duty to protect the environment—clean air, clean groundwater, and healthy ecological systems.

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Every venture the Ho-Chunk Nation undertakes has one primary objective—to improve the lives of our people. After decades of physical and spiritual impoverishment, the Ho-Chunk Nation now has an opportunity to be a good neighbor while at the same time promoting the physical health of our people, preserving a significant part of our history, revitalizing our cultural heritage, renewing our spirit, and restoring the ecology of part of our ancestral home in Sauk Prairie. The Ho-Chunk Nation looks forward to the day when we can say with certainty and with pride: *"The bison will return to Sauk Prairie."*

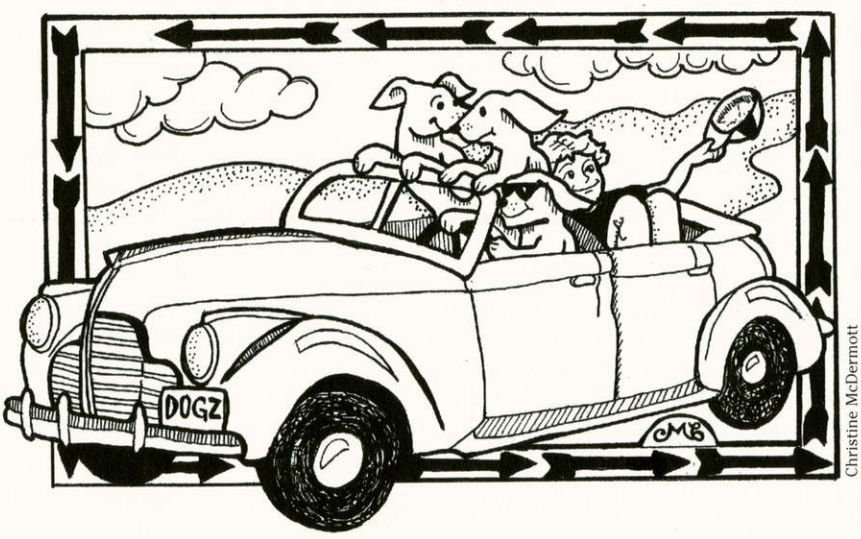
About the Ho-Chunk Nation: *The Wisconsin Winnebago Nation was acknowledged as a federally recognized tribe in 1963 pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. With a formal recognition of its new Constitution on November 1, 1994 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Tribe's name legally changed to the Ho-Chunk Nation. Currently, about six thousand people are enrolled tribal members. The Ho-Chunk Nation does not have a typical reservation land base, and the majority of the tribal population resides within a fourteen-county service area in west-central Wisconsin and the urban areas of Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; and Chicago, Illinois.*

poetry

3 Big Dogs in a Convertible

We're driving
down the Interstate
at seventy miles an hour,
the air . . . crisp,
cloudless and clear
except for one
sinister tear
wiggling its way
up the windshield.

The dog in back
is moving to the front,
the one in front is
moving to the back,
and a third
who was in front
then moved to the back
is now
sitting in my lap.



Christine McDermott

We're skiing
down the highway
through an ocean of rain
three heads of dogs
wedged
between windshield and dash.
There should be four dogs
in this car
and I, blinded and wet,
in bed
at home
with the cat.

But the wall of clouds
brightens from behind
and opens
like a movie theater curtain.
I honk the horn.
We howl in delight.
There's more to life than
petty cares–
we're four guys in a car
cruising for girls.

I feel so happy,
I climb in back
and let the Labrador drive.

by John Lehman

Richard Brautigan Saves Our Lives

On a day when, despite my pleas,
my wife decides she will leave, she
then uncovers a string of e-mails
I have sent to a (well) not so secret
female friend and she, this Jamie
Lee Curtis of my life, becomes
the murderous Glenn Close toward
Fatal Attraction's harried end. Oh,
desperate, pitiful man, I see myself
reach up toward a book of (ha ha)
poetry on a shelf and read out loud
some lines whose truth (Can you
believe this?) stops us in our tracks:
For fear you'll be alone/you do so
many things/that aren't you at all.
And Richard Brautigan, that lonely
poet, who killed himself because
no one bought his work, brings us
and our love back to life.

by John Lehman

John Lehman is founder and publisher of *Rosebud Magazine,* the fifth-largest literary magazine in the United States. His fourth book of poetry, *Cutting Grass after Dark,* is due out this winter from Salmon Run Press. He has had two-dozen poems published in national magazines and been nominated three times for the Pushcart Award. He is an original member of the Governor's Poet Laureate Advisory Committee and is a book reviewer/feature writer for several Wisconsin publications. As of this issue, he is also poetry editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review.*

To Begin a Poem

you need only a scrap,
just one loose page
torn off the maps
that lead to treasure,

you need to hear the far-off cry—
echo of the child wandering
through the tangled woods,
waiting
for you to find a pattern
in the spill of crumbs
at your feet.
Come to her rescue
with a generous heart,
lean to her voice and listen
to her story:
This is how I came to be lost.

by Andrea Potos

Madison poet Andrea Potos has had her work published in *CALYX Journal, Wisconsin Review,* and in the anthology *At Our Core: Women Writing About Power* (Papier Mache Press). A chapbook of her poems entitled *The Perfect Day* was published by UW-Madison's Parallel Press. Most recently her work appeared in *Jane's Stories II: An Anthology of Midwestern Women* (Wild Dove Press) and in the anthology *Essential Love: Poems of Mothers and Fathers, Daughters and Sons* (Grayson Books).

For a Child on Her Own

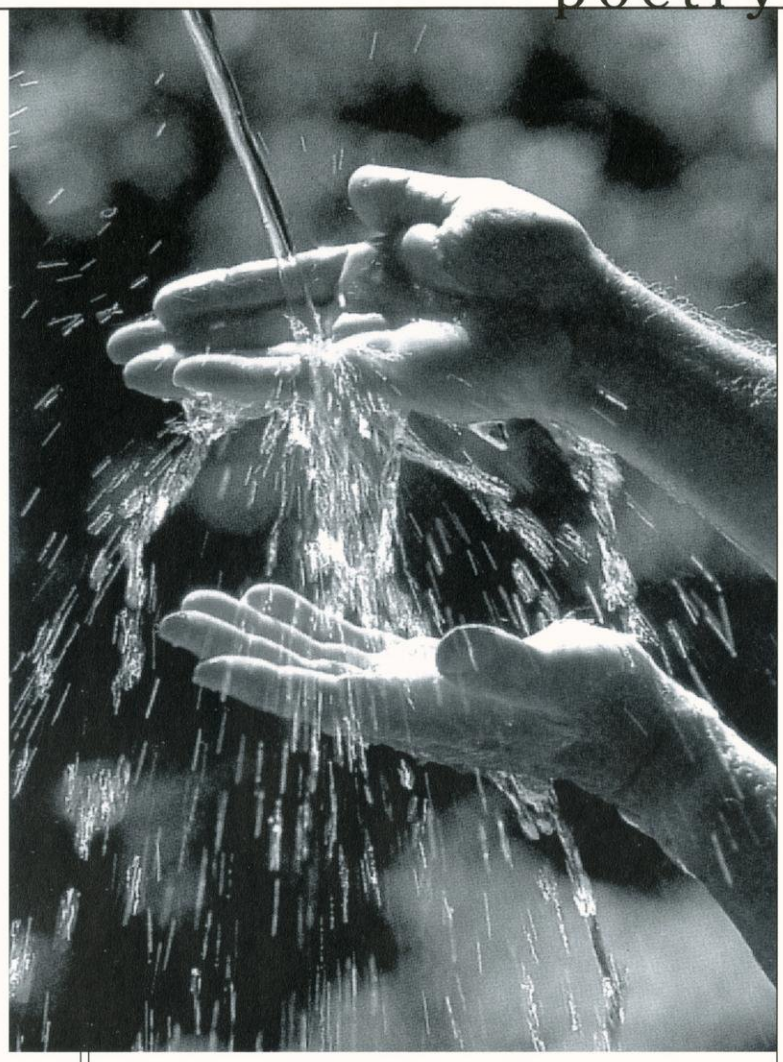
Christine rides the Empire Builder.
By now she's crossed Minnesota
And in the dawn watches the great plains
Of Dakota unfold as if they were the palm
Of a hand extended, inviting her to dance.

Back before her first step
I carried her in a pack on my back
To lull her to sleep by the rhythm of my walk
Not knowing how that set her
To face another direction.

I followed Lincoln Creek, a city stream
Up toward its source, saw rusted hubcaps
Resist like rocks the spring flood water.
She woke to trees nodding their heads:
This way to the open water, yes, yes, yes.

by Margaret Rozga

Margaret Rozga has had poems published in the *Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Calendar, The Blue Mesa Review, Frontiers,* and *Writing for Our Lives.* She teaches at the University of Wisconsin–Waukesha and performs with a group of four other poets called The Sparks. Their recently released CD is called *News, Weather and Sports.*



How My Face Welcomed My Hands

Never make a spark near a car battery
that's charging. I did this once
while testing a small light bulb. Just as

the bulb proved good I vanished
because sound took up all the space
there was. My eyes came back first:

a placid morning mist hung in the shop
but my slowly forming brain knew
it was acid. My hand holding the wire

materialized above the jagged battery case
that looked like wrecks of little skyscrapers.
All over my coat that later fell apart

there were shining droplets. Bits of black
plastic fell out of my beard. My other hand
that now could move felt a wetness

on my face, a slight bite, a tingle. I found
my legs in a wild jangle and ran, holding
the glasses that saved my eyes, to get

water, I'm running for water, to
splash water, simple water, how my face
welcomes my hands cupping water.

by R. Virgil (Ron) Ellis

The Girls Blow Bubbles

that drift over the pond. A few
touch the water.

One or two bounce and skim,
the girls' breath inside.

Riding the water
they leave the lightest wake.

Before you know it they halve:
each becomes a dome.

Such breasts must break:
their water color swirls.

That's a bitter taste for the fish,
said their mother. Not for long,

said her father, both of them
smiling at the girls.

by R. Virgil (Ron) Ellis

R. Virgil (Ron) Ellis lives near Cambridge, Wisconsin. He has most recently placed poems with *Switched-on Gutenberg, Fiction International, WordWrights, New Works Review, new digressions, Recursive Angel, 2River View, The Wolf Head Quarterly, The Lucid Stone*, and *Mississippi Review Web.*

two forests united

Here's how the Academy helped make it happen.

BY PAUL G. HAYES

An effort that began five years ago during the 125th anniversary of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters resulted in broad state support to protect the glaciated landscape lying between the north and south units of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. What has become known as the Mid-Kettle Moraine project has been given high priority in the Stewardship 2000 program, under which a minimum of $28.5 million a year for the next ten years will be spent on land acquisition throughout Wisconsin.

Forty years of work on the green belt created the north and south units of the state forest as two of Wisconsin's most used recreation areas. The forty-mile gap between the units in Washington and Waukesha counties resulted from rising land prices and some local opposition. Urban sprawl, highway development, and gravel mining were constant threats to those remnants of the great Wisconsin glacier.

The genesis of the Mid-Kettle Moraine project came in a speech by Henry S. Reuss, a former congressman from Milwaukee and a Fellow of the Academy, at an Academy banquet in June 1995 in Madison. He declared that a 1930s dream of Wisconsin conservationists that a green belt be preserved from northern Sheboygan County through Walworth County should be revived.

Ody J. Fish, then president-elect of the Academy, listened intently in the audience. A meeting between Reuss and Fish resulted in the formation of the Academy's Kettle Moraine Task Force, co-chaired by Reuss and Fish. Its twelve other members included some Academy stars in ecology, education, geology, biology, science, law, and communications.

Meeting in Madison, the task force polished its first report in April 1996. It specified steps to link the north and south units using the Ice Age Trail, which follows the Kettle Moraine ridge, as its backbone. Major glacial features between the two state forests were already protected, including Pike Lake State Park, Holy Hill and Loew's Lake in Washington County, and Hartland Marsh and Lapham Peak State Park in Waukesha County. The report recommended their expansion. Copies of the report were sent to legislators, local officials, and movers and shakers within the corridor. As part of its Spring 1997 Annual Conference, the Wisconsin Academy hosted a day-long symposium on the project, attended by more than two hundred people.

Fish and Reuss asked George Meyer, secretary of the state Department of Natural Resources, to have his department coordinate the work of private and public agencies. Meyer thought the concept was good, but he hesitated to commit the DNR without a mandate from either the governor or the Wisconsin legislature.

He got both. Governor Tommy G. Thompson provided support in a letter to Fish and Reuss in April 1996. Throughout much of 1997, members of the task force worked to shepherd Joint Resolution 48 through to passage, which was achieved with overwhelming approval of both the Senate and Assembly on January 13, 1998.

Without being actively solicited by the Kettle Moraine Task Force, an effective environmental organization called 1000 Friends of Wisconsin adopted the Mid-Kettle Moraine as a high priority. David Cieslewicz, director of 1000 Friends, provided notable support for Joint Resolution 48.

Armed with a clear mandate, Meyer asked Gloria McCutcheon, the DNR's Southeast Regional Director in Milwaukee, to take the lead. In turn, she appointed Donald W. Tills, land program manager of the district, to advance the Mid-Kettle Moraine project. Tills arranged roundtable discussions among DNR officials and other interested parties in southeastern Wisconsin.

Later in 1998, the Academy's Kettle Moraine Task Force issued a second report. Noting the good results achieved by the initial report, the second report outlined measures available to local units of government in protecting the green belt corridor.

For citizen input, the DNR relies on its newly formed partner groups representing major river basins, and I was invited to present the case of the Mid-Kettle Moraine to the partner groups of the Fox River, the Milwaukee River and the Sheboygan River basins.

In a memo to the Board of Natural Resources in February, Secretary Meyer outlined the DNR's Mid-Kettle Moraine policy. It called for new efforts to expand the north and south units of the Kettle Moraine State Forest and the Ice Age Trail corridor, and on critical natural areas within the corridor as identified by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

Among other measures, it encouraged local governments to identify and protect through zoning outstanding glacial features, and to incorporate such features into new "Smart Growth" plans required of all local governments within the next ten years.

The DNR has retained Paulette Harder, a longtime state employee now in semiretirement, to coordinate the Mid-Kettle Moraine project among local governments and citizen groups in southeastern Wisconsin. Harder is visiting each town board in the corridor and hopes to convene a conference of all players this winter.

In the meantime, the Mid-Kettle Moraine is being stitched together like a quilt by the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, Waukesha and Washington County parks departments, the Cedar Lake Conservation Foundation, the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, the Waukesha County Land Trust, and town and village governments in the corridor.

Paul G. Hayes retired in 1995 as a science writer for the old ***Milwaukee Journal.*** *He is Vice President for Letters of the Wisconsin Academy and serves as a third co-chair of its Kettle Moraine Task Force.*

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD 101

The solution to world hunger? Genetic engineering of crops (shown here at biotech giant Monsanto's Agracetus Campus in Middleton) may mean disease-resistant, vitamin-enriched food for all. Opponents point to potentially damaging, long-term effects on people and the environment.

Photo: John Urban

ARE GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD PRODUCTS a godsend or a form of "Frankenfood"? This article will prime you for the Academy's conference, "Genetically Modified Food: Risks, Rewards & Realities," on November 3 in Madison. Warning: There are no easy answers.

BY KRISHNA RAMANUJAN AND DEBORAH BLUM

Peter Joyce thought he had cooked up a sizzling idea when he first got into the high-tech potato business. But this year, nobody is buying what Joyce's company, Small Potatoes, Inc., has to sell.

His Madison company researches and licenses a gene for creating genetically modified (GM) potatoes that both are edible and contain some immunity to late blight fungus, the fungus made famous by the Irish potato famine. Certain wild potatoes, it turns out, carry some natural resistance to the spud-killing blight. The catch is that wild potatoes produce high levels of glycoalkaloids, which are drop for drop more toxic than strychnine. By changing a gene, Joyce wants to lower the levels of these toxins. Plant breeders may one day use a genetically altered and benign plant to breed a conventional tuber that survives late blight but won't kill the French fry lovers of the world.

In May 1999, Joyce was near closing a deal with a Dutch company, AVEBE, that was interested in glycoalkaloid-reduced starch potatoes for adhesives rather than food. The company wanted to sell its potato waste by-product as animal feed, and needed a waste stream safe for animals. Since 1985, the adhesive manufacturers had themselves been researching ways to lower glycoalkaloid levels in potatoes. Joyce's gene looked like a promising solution. Unfortunately, a 1999 moratorium imposed by European Union environmental ministers put the brakes on planting and approval of new GM products in countries throughout Europe. The moratorium effectively ended AVEBE's research. In addition, Joyce's deal with the Dutch company collapsed.

With such companies as Frito-Lay Inc., McDonald's, and the world's largest French fries supplier, McCain Foods, also avoiding GM potatoes, nobody wants to take a chance on licensing the gene under development at Small Potatoes, Inc. "Genetic engineering of potatoes is on its deathbed," Joyce says.

Joyce's dilemma—developing GM crops that can't be sold—is just one of many brought on by the winds of trouble and conflict sweeping through the world of genetic engineering. For every pro there is a con; for the limitless number of promises the nascent technology can make, an equal number of hypothetical disasters follow. Uncertainties about our new abilities to redesign plants, and questions regarding the inviolability of nature and the profanity of humans, have led to riots and arrests around the world. Seattle looked like Beirut when the World Trade Organization attempted its meetings in late 1999. In Scotland over the past few years, police have routinely arrested protestors for pulling out experimental GM crops at the Scottish Agricultural College. Over the last year, University of California campuses at Berkeley and Davis have also had test crops vandalized. There's been talk of surrounding fields with barbed wire fencing.

If one considers genetically modified foods a fighting issue—and many do—then the battles are being fought on many fronts. Policymakers, businesspeople, scientists, and environmentalists are all slinging fighting words. While Monsanto, the huge agricultural biotechnology firm, calls itself a "life sciences company" and includes the words "food, health, hope" in its logo, the company's opponents have nicknamed the new edibles "Frankenfoods," a clever reference to Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein*. Shelley's grotesque fable ultimately makes the point that humans, compared to gods, are imperfect creators.

Proponents of agricultural biotechnology celebrate the potentials for better crop yields, less work on the farm, nutritional boosting of crops, and fewer pesticides. At the same time, some scientists and environmentalists fear that GM crops will contaminate the genes of wild plants or harm populations of insects other than the ones farmers intend to control. Critics also point to the unknown effects of GM foods on human health. Do we know enough about how organisms will respond when foreign genes are introduced into their makeups? Do we understand the impacts of eating substances, or combinations of substances, people have never eaten before? Such questions, and many others, remain unanswered.

Controversies rage in such places as Europe, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Mexico, and Canada over the science, economics, policy, and ethics surrounding GM foods, and these voices are getting louder in the United States. In every one of these arenas, the intentions of large businesses and research and development organizations grate against the ideals and fears of some scientists, environmentalists and concerned citizens.

THE REVOLUTION IS HERE

For all practical purposes, if biotechnology is allowed to progress unhindered, the world is on the brink of an agricultural revolution. Just consider that in six years since the first GM whole food—the 1994 'FlavrSavr' tomato—was approved for commercial sale, an estimated sixty to seventy percent of all foods currently produced in the United States contain GM ingredients. One can be pretty sure that most everyone in America has eaten some form of an altered food over the last few years without even knowing it.

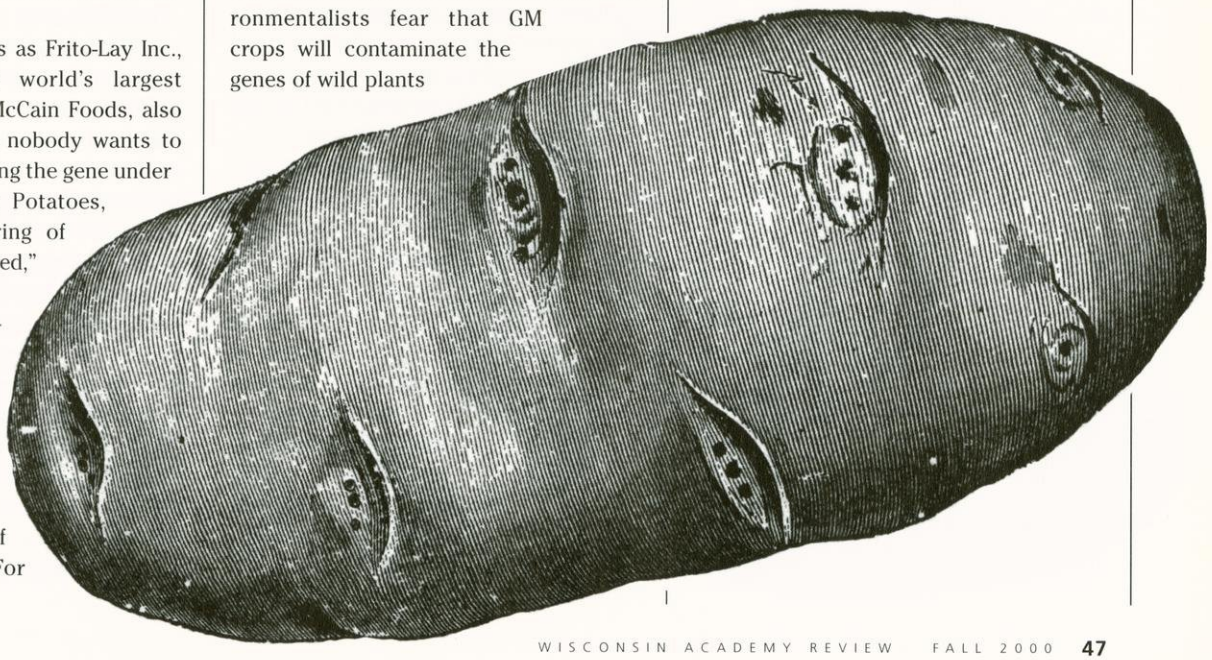


Photo: Trina Laube

Masters of the wonder spuds: Peter Joyce, left, owner and president of Small Potatoes, Inc., and scientist Eric Eikenberry, right, with their blight-resistant potato culture in hand. Joyce sees the relatively loose U.S. regulations for genetically modified food products as an "island of common sense in a world of nonsense."

The last agricultural revolution, the green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s that introduced chemicals into large-scale agricultural production, has left its stamp on the world in the form of increased crop yields as well as environmental degradation and human health concerns. With agricultural genetic engineering, the potential gains and losses are immeasurably higher.

"The issue is highly polarized," says Jeffrey Smith, vice president of marketing communications at Genetics ID, Inc., a company that serves both sides of the debate in identifying genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in foods and agricultural products, and certifying foods as non-GMOs. "Biotech companies on the one side claim this is the greatest revolution in the history of food production, which they say can feed our expanding populations," notes Smith, "whereas consumer and environmental groups and many scientists argue that this is the most dangerous global experiment ever conducted, which they say may result in widespread disease and ecological damage."

Humans have been altering crops through plant breeding for thousands of years. In fact, almost all plants sold in grocery stores in the United States have been changed to a greater or lesser degree from their ancient wild relatives. Classical plant breeding and laws of nature require parent plants to be closely related to get an offspring out of the deal. In what some see as a bizarre leap over natural laws, genetic engineering can now isolate a specific attribute, like the antifreeze properties found in an arctic flounder, and transfer such cold resistance into a salmon or a strawberry. Thus, agricultural scientists have a very powerful and reportedly accurate way of taking a desired trait from one species and transferring it to another.

Plants can be genetically engineered in many ways. One method, for example, employs a disease-causing bacterium, *Agrobacterium tumefaciens,* to do what it does naturally; that is, inject its own DNA fragments into plant cells, causing the plant to make proteins the bacteria uses as a nutrient. Genetic engineers substitute the bacterium's disease-causing agents with genes coding for qualities that people want to exploit, such as herbicide resistance. Then, scientists use plant cell culture techniques to grow those cells into plants. The *Agrobacterium* tactic doesn't work for soybeans and corn. For such cases, a microprojectile bombardment (or "gene gun") method shoots tiny DNA-coated metal particles into plant cells.

Equipping plants with pest and herbicide resistance, disease resistance (like Joyce's potatoes), cold tolerance, drought and salinity tolerance, nutritional benefits, and even biopharmaceutical qualities promises to make farming a whole new field. According to a *Chronicle for Higher Education* article published this spring, most of the benefits from GM foods are hypothetical, because many products are in development. "The best stuff is yet to come," notes Ray Bresson, a Purdue University researcher who studies drought tolerance in GM crops, in that article.

Biotechnology companies, among others, talk about the coming advances to human health. Research is underway for engineering plants spiked with vaccines that people could eat for immunizations. A new GM rice called Golden Rice produces beta carotene (a precursor to vitamin A), and could become part of a third world staple that reduces blindness caused by Vitamin A deficiency. In May of this year, inventors of Golden Rice signed a deal with an Anglo-Swedish company, AstraZeneca. Through the deal, the "life sciences" company will produce the rice while gaining the rights to sell it commercially in the developed world. In turn, the inventors will give farmers in China, India, and other rice-dependent nations free access to the grain.

Despite these claims of boosted nutrition, real health fears arise over mixing genes of species and then eating the product. One oft-cited example of potential problems involves allergens cropping up in unsuspected places. In the early 1990s, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., an Iowa-based company, engineered a soybean spliced with a protein from Brazil nuts. Before the item went to market, a scientist at the University of Nebraska realized that people allergic to Brazil nuts could have serious, even fatal, reactions to the bean. The project was thrown out. Critics of GM foods are wary of just these kinds of inadvertent health disasters.

ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS

The debates really heat up around the subject of environmental impact. As one might expect, those in favor of genetic engineering applaud the new technology's eco-friendly applications—including the possible reduction of chemicals needed for planting vast monocultures.

Two of the most widespread uses of genetic engineering in crops are for herbicide- and insect-resistant crops. This year, herbicide-resistant soybeans accounted for fifty-two percent of all soybean plantings nationwide. Twenty-three percent of all corn planted in the United States was either herbicide- or insect-resistant, according to national estimates.

For years organic farmers have used a soil bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)* in their fight against insects. Now, agricultural scientists have introduced *Bt* genes into corn, cotton, and potato plants. One advantage of *Bt* over chemical insecticides is that the latter kills all insects, whereas *Bt* can target specific classes of insects, such as the European corn borer that infests corn. Also, *Bt* is only effective once an herbivorous insect ingests it. A protein within *Bt* binds to epithelial cells in the insect's midgut, causes pores to develop, and eventually kills the host. The same protein is unstable in the acid soup of a vertebrate gut and is therefore not considered toxic to humans.

Farmers have widely used herbicide-resistant crops over the past few years. Monsanto sells Roundup herbicide, called a "broadspectrum" herbicide for its ability to broadly kill. Conveniently, the same company also sells Roundup-resistant seeds. The farmer may plant an entire crop of soybeans, and then simply spray the field at the right time to keep weeds at bay. Though the truth of the claim is hotly disputed—numerous university studies have shown that Roundup Ready Soybeans yield less than non-GM varieties—such companies as Monsanto boast that the seed and herbicide combination increases yields while reducing the amount of pesticide required.

Peter Joyce's experimental potato potentially offers a different way to reduce chemical use. Potatoes are so susceptible to late blight fungus that conventional farmers regularly spray their fields with fungicides once the rains begin, most years in July. According to a University of Wisconsin study, "Wisconsin Vegetable Disease Field Trials, 1999," by W. R. Stevenson and R. V. James, a conservative spraying of late blight fungicide over the course of a growing season may cost a farmer anywhere from $31 to $148 an acre based on the type of fungicide used. For one hundred acres of potatoes we're talking at least $3,000 to $15,000 each season. Those figures are just for the chemicals and don't include the added costs of hiring workers to carry out ten to fifteen sprayings.

In spite of such claims, critics of GM foods are unimpressed. Rather than awe, they find the potentials terrifying. Imagine a world where almost all agricultural crops are genetically engineered. Now imagine the mayhem if these ever-prevalent crops began pollinating closely related weeds, or if they created selection pressures for weeds and pests to become resistant to chemicals. Organic farmers, for example, use *Bt* sparingly when needed, but *Bt* crops put out the stuff steadily over the plant's entire lifespan. This kind of exposure gives pests constant pressure to adapt, thereby rendering ineffective one of the few tools organic farmers have for insistent insects.

A few studies have captured public attention, and critics of GM foods and the international media seized on them. One Cornell University laboratory study, published in the spring of 1999, fed monarch caterpillars milkweed coated with *Bt* corn pollen. Half the caterpillars died. But researchers at Guelph University found the Cornell laboratory study failed to show how toxic pollen reacted in the field. Research that followed suggested that in the wild the threat to monarch larvae was minimal at the edges of cornfields due to wind and rain dispersion, and the fact that *Bt* degrades rapidly in sunlight. Similarly, a University of Illinois study published this year in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found *Bt* corn pollen in the wild posed no threats to black swallowtail butterflies. Still, the initial laboratory findings and the persecution of innocent monarch caterpillars have remained in the minds of many.

Pollen drift can also create problems for organic farmers, or conventional farmers trying to avoid GM crops. In Hudson, Wisconsin, Charles Walker's organic corn chip company, Terra Prima, had its name splashed across international headlines late in 1998, after reporters for a German

magazine randomly pulled various food items off a grocery store shelf and tested them for genetic modification. In spite of an organic classification that forbids genetic modification, a bag of Terra Prima's Apache Tortilla Chips showed traces of *Bt* corn.

The company had its own tests conducted on samples of corn saved from the contaminated production run. The precise tests pointed out the culprit, right down to the brand of GM corn whose genes had mixed with Walker's chips. As it turned out, pollen from a crop of Novartis *Bt* corn planted more than a quarter-mile away had cross-pollinated a small corner of a field in southern Texas, where Terra Prima buys its organic corn. Terra Prima, which also produces the chips for Newman's Own organic brand, recalled and destroyed an entire lot of eighty-five to ninety thousand bags of chips, amounting to a net loss of $200,000.

In the strange and confusing world of agricultural biotechnology, no official requirements exist for an American company to verify whether its foods contain genetic modification. Now Walker's company independently tests the corn it buys by sending samples to Genetic ID in Fairfield, Iowa.

"This is strictly a market thing," Walker says of the need for tests. "There are no liability rules around this."

PRESSURE FROM ABROAD

The largest regulatory force in the United States has come from consumer-driven market forces, most of which originate abroad. As a result of labeling restrictions, moratoriums, and outright consumer boycotts abroad, many local growers are thinking twice about planting crops that have been commercially banned elsewhere. Surveys from the National Agricultural Statistics Service show that plantings of GM crops are down this year as compared to last. While GM corn amounted to an even third of the total corn planted in the United States in 1999, national estimates for this year are down to about a quarter of the overall U.S. crop. Soybeans, too, are down from fifty-seven percent of the total in 1999 to fifty-two percent of plantings this year.

At the same time, the U.S. government heavily favors biotechnology and has yet to propose any major inhibiting regulations on the industry. Some opponents point out close links between many of Monsanto's high-ranking executives and their former prominent posts in government. In addition, the government itself is invested in biotechnology research. For example, the USDA, one of the agencies (along with the FDA and the EPA) that regulates GM products, also researches genetic engineering. Remember Joyce's gene for GM potatoes? The USDA created it. What's more, along with supporting Joyce's company with a small business research grant, the USDA may make money from the gene. The department of agriculture owns the patent and stands to collect royalties if Joyce ever licenses it.

Aside from the promise of another American mega-industry to buoy the U.S. economy, the government's lax stance on regulation is also based on science that fails to show definitively that GM foods are risky.

One greatly debated study involved the effects of GM potatoes on rats. Released to the media in 1998 before eventual publication in *Lancet* in 1999, the study examined rats that were fed potatoes engineered with a gene for snowdrop flower lectin. Results showed significant changes to the rats' guts and organ sizes (including the brain), and immune system damage. While the study grabbed public attention, scientists found it highly flawed. The scientists who created the lectin-enhanced potato complained the spuds were designed to test the technology and were never intended for consumption. Some said the study proved only that rats don't naturally eat potatoes. Others suggested that natural toxins in the potatoes were the cause of the rats' problems.

"The symptoms he found were similar to glycoalkaloid symptoms," says Peter Joyce, noting that the study had no control or measurement of glycoalkaloid levels in the potatoes the rats were fed.

Since the studies haven't yet pointed to evidence of real threats, the U.S. government announced on May 3 that labeling GM foods was not necessary. No proof exists that they are dangerous to health, federal officials declared. In other words, so far, no one appears to have gotten sick.

Since 1992, FDA policy states that a special review is needed only if GM foods are shown to be "significantly different" from ordinary foods. These days, companies conduct their own scientific tests on the products they sell, thereby deciding health issues on the public's behalf regardless of any obvious bias.

Most other countries around the world are not so permissive when it comes to biotechnology. In January of this year, the European Commission passed strict labeling regulations. Other countries aim to follow. Still, the most compelling statement against genetic engineering comes from regular people making choices at checkout stands around the world. Some feel such consumers may have the power to dry up the research by making it economically unviable.

Ultimately, the strange new world of agricultural biotechnology has everyone uncertain of the future. Members of each side of the debate seem to question their own fate. Charles Walker, who is "philosophically opposed" to genetic engineering, sees the profusion of GM crops as inevitable given the track record of big businesses getting what they want.

"I see this technology as a tool for the large seed companies to dominate the business," Walker says. "It's worse than Microsoft. I would be willing to venture that within twenty to thirty years all foods will be genetically modified."

At the same time, from Peter Joyce's point of view the full range of this miracle technology may never be realized.

"In general, I see the U.S. government regulations as an island of common sense in a world of nonsense," Joyce says. "I just hope they hold their nerve. If the U.S. folds and quits, then it is all over." ▼

Krishna Ramanujan was raised in Chicago, in a small town in Minnesota, and in India. He is finishing a master's degree in journalism at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He also writes for ***The Capital Times****, a Madison daily.*

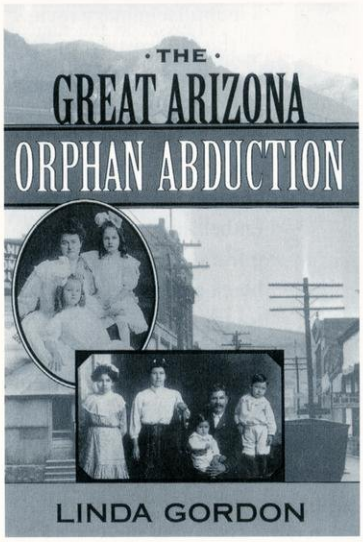
Deborah Blum is a Pulitzer Prize–winning science writer and professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She is the author of several books, including ***Sex on the Brain,*** *a 1997* ***New York Times*** *Notable Book. She is currently working on a biography of UW-Madison psychologist Harry Harlow.*

The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction

by Linda Gordon

Harvard University Press, 1999, 480 pages

REVIEW BY AMANDA OKOPSKI



The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction begins with a quote from "Auguries of Innocence" by William Blake: "To see the world in a grain of sand. . ." It is extremely fitting that Linda Gordon, until recently a UW-Madison professor of history, begins this detailed and evocative exploration of an act of vigilantism in a turn-of-the-century Arizona mining community with such a quote. This book is a triumph because Gordon shows us, layer by layer, that one can see the complexities of race, class, gender, values, belief systems, economics, and industry played out in a single incident in history, a "grain of sand"; in this case, the Great Arizona Orphan Abduction.

On October 1, 1904, an "orphan train" came to Clifton-Morenci, twin copper mining towns in the Arizona territory. Orphan trains were not uncommon at this time; children would be "rescued" from the streets of New York by (primarily Protestant) child-saving organizations and shipped en masse to western towns, where newspaper ads advised prospective foster parents to look over the available children at the station. Often these children were not orphans at all—poverty had forced many parents to leave children alone during the workday. Child rescue leagues at times were, in effect, removing children from poor families with the righteous claim that the children were being neglected and needed better care.

This particular train carried forty orphans, aged two to six, from the New York Foundling Hospital; three nuns of the Sisters of Charity who ran the home; and one male child placement officer. Unlike many other Protestant orphan train operations of the day, each child on this train already had a foster family lined up in Clifton and Morenci. All of the adopting families had been interviewed and recommended by the local priest, a Frenchman named Mandin, and were selected solely from his congregation. These were mainly Irish Catholic children, from a Catholic institution, and were to be placed with Catholic families. The practicing Catholics in Clifton-Morenci were Mexican, and the children, although they were considered in New York to be "Irish," not "Anglo," upon arrival in Arizona territory were now "Anglo"—or white.

At the train station in Clifton-Morenci the priest and many foster parents showed up to meet the train. But so did many curious onlookers—Anglo-Protestant women. Out of curiosity, many of them followed the priest, sisters, orphans, and foster parents to the church, where they saw the blond-haired, blue-eyed children being handed over to Mexican families. Some Anglo women expressed preferences as to which child they wanted to take home, not understanding that the placements had already been made. When it was made known that these white children were being adopted by Mexican parents, the white Protestant population of Clifton-Morenci revolted. A posse fueled by racial prejudice began to go through town, "rescuing" the white children from their Mexican foster families.

What follows is a sad and compelling story that Gordon sets up and explores from every angle. This book is a multifaceted jewel. Gordon deftly turns the story one way and shows us what is reflected; then she tilts it slightly, exposing another face, another layer.

Again and again, Gordon brushes away false assumptions, uncovering possible motives for the actions taken (building her case impressively through her exhaustive research). Brilliantly, Gordon goes beyond the simple idea of what actually happened. She focuses, too, on actions not taken, decisions not made. In doing this, she leads the reader to a greater understanding of the forces at work.

Gordon manages a very thorough exploration of every facet of the Clifton-Morenci society—the Mexican people, Mexican women, Anglo women, the copper industry and its company towns, the strike of 1903 that divided Anglos and Mexicans, and, of course, the orphan trade. By looking at a seemingly small event in our nation's history, Gordon delves into the construction of racial systems, class barriers, and labor relations in the early part of the twentieth century. She also raises some very provocative questions about the sources of racism in our culture (noting that the Anglo orphan-rescuers believed their motives were right), and in doing so provides not only a wonderful book of history, but a provocative look at how racial prejudice has developed and, sadly, continued through the decades.

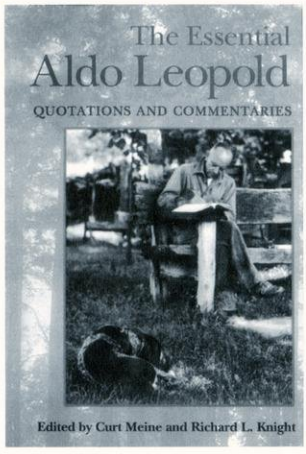
Amanda Okopski holds degrees in art and writing from Edgewood College. She is the publications editor for the Wisconsin Humanities Council in Madison.

The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations And Commentaries

edited by Curt Meine and Richard L. Knight

University of Wisconsin Press, 1999, 362 pages

REVIEW BY HARVEY M. JACOBS



During spring of the year 2000 we celebrated thirty years of Earth Day. Earth Day marks a beginning of the modern environmental movement, a period in which the environment has pushed itself into public consciousness and become a necessary and serious factor in discussions ranging from economic development to public health, national security, and global sustainability.

Last year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *A Sand County Almanac,* the most

widely known work of Aldo Leopold. Many of the activists who contributed to the creation of Earth Day and have built it from a singular event to an international movement draw their inspiration from Leopold's work. I teach environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and long ago I lost count of the number of prospective graduate students—the professional managers, activists, and scholars of the next generation—who arrive at my door motivated by the vision and practical action of Aldo Leopold.

In this volume the two editors have done something different in the field of Leopold scholarship. They have culled through Leopold's writings and given us snippets—sentences, paragraphs—of his words, organized around twenty-one subjects (chapters). Presented in three parts (under the headings of conservation science and practice, conservation policy, and conservation and culture), the chapters are wide-ranging, as was Leopold himself—and that is exactly the point. They treat everything from outdoor recreation (a chapter written by coeditor Richard L. Knight), biodiversity, and ecological restoration to advocacy, economics, education, aesthetics, ethics, and "Leopold's voice," his approach to prose (a chapter written by coeditor Curt Meine). Each chapter is prefaced by a short essay by a prominent scholar, conservation manager or activist in the field of the chapter.

What these chapters show so clearly is how truly visionary Leopold was: how he understood the very essence of conservation (environmentalism) and the key issues at its core. Today, promoters of market-based environmentalism are engaged in a multifaceted effort to undo many of the environmental policies, programs, and laws of the last thirty years. To them, Leopold would note, as Eric Freyfogle does in his introductory essay on private land, that self-interest in land management can be "bogus individualism," and that "a system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided." Yet at the same time, Leopold was skeptical of an overreliance on government and governmental action.

The end result—an absolute delight! The volume is highly accessible. This is the kind of book you want to have lying around (not stuffed away on a shelf), so you can pick it up, flip it open, and read a few words to center yourself and renew your sense of purpose and direction. We owe the editors, the contributing chapter scholars, and the publisher a heartfelt thank-you. Together they have created a wonderful tribute to Aldo Leopold, his lifetime of work, and his enduring legacy and relevance for conservation and the environment well into this new century.

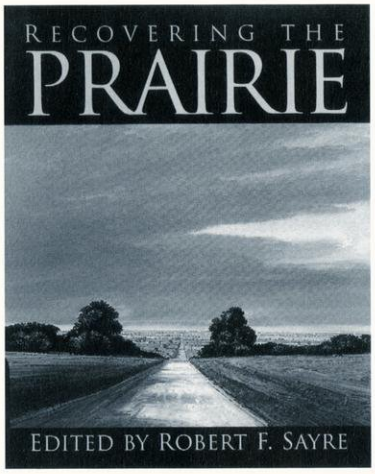
Harvey M. Jacobs is a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he holds a joint appointment with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and the Institute for Environmental Studies and currently serves as director of the Land Tenure Center.

Recovering the Prairie

edited by Robert F. Sayre

University of Wisconsin Press, 1999, 224 pages

REVIEW BY DAVE EGAN



Recovering the Prairie is a multidisciplinary review of the Midwestern prairie as a regional metaphor for political action, architectural and landscape design, literature, art, and conservation activities. Embellished with contemporary paintings and black-and-white photographs of the prairie landscape, it features essays by regional writers who explore and explain the creative ways in which people have given meaning to the prairie landscape they inhabit.

Born out of a 1996 exhibit and symposium at the University of Iowa—"Plain Pictures: Images of the American Prairie"—the discussion ranges broadly, covering topics as seemingly unrelated as Walt Whitman's use of prairie features in *Leaves of Grass* and other writings to Wes Jackson's prairie-based "natural systems agriculture" initiative. For the most part it is a comfortable reading about the prairie as a medium of expression—past, present, and future. I found the writings enlightening but largely nonconfrontational in either a political or intellectual sense.

Tom Lutz's "Cosmopolitan Vistas: Willa Cather, Hamlin Garland and the Literary Value of Regionalism" is by far the most provocative, and yet the most reflective, chapter. Lutz points out, as did historian William Cronon in *Nature's Metropolis*, the inseparable ties between city and country, between the region and the nation. However, Lutz pushes this idea further, arguing that regionalist philosophies or feelings must not deny the cosmopolitan nature of our modern world. On the contrary, he suggests, "This globalism should be embraced rather than disguised. Whatever regional commitments we have are the result, as they were for the literary regionalists, of thinking globally. It is not the prairie that reconciles us; it is, as Alexandra Bergson [of Willa Cather's *O Pioneers*] says, the world."

Pauline Drobney's essay ("The Phoenix People of Sod Corn Country") is a refreshingly introspective account of someone who grew up amid the corn and soybean fields of northwestern Iowa and now works as an ecologist at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, where an 8,600-acre prairie and savanna restoration is underway. Likewise, I thought Curt Meine's essay, "Reimagining the Prairie: Aldo Leopold and the Origins of Prairie Restoration," offers important lessons about how participation in prairie restoration can help develop a future that honors both human and other-than-human entities.

Subtle in tone, this book is an important addition to the growing literature about places and placemaking—and the tensions and paradoxes involved therein. Moreover, the addition of paintings and photographs of the prairie brings this notion of placemaking to the readers in ways that words can only suggest. Robert Sayre and the

University of Wisconsin Press should be commended for having the vision and resolve to make this part of the book a reality. The depictions of the ecology and economy of the agrarian Midwest found in these works are by themselves worth the price of the book.

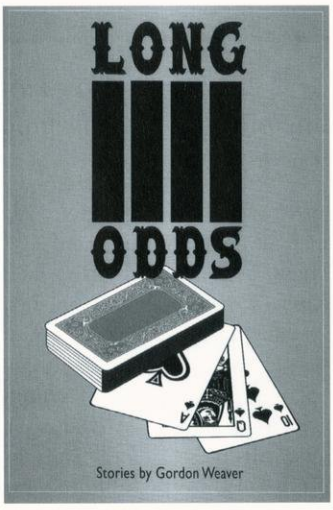
Dave Egan is one of the editors of the UW–Madison Arboretum's international publication, ***Ecological Restoration.*** *He has been with the publication since 1989 and serves as the journal's book review editor. He is also involved in prairie restoration and management projects around the Madison metropolitan area.*

Long Odds

by Gordon Weaver

University of Missouri Press, 2000, 194 pages

REVIEW BY DEAN BAKOPOULOS



In *Long Odds,* the new collection of short stories from Gordon Weaver, a UW-Milwaukee adjunct professor of English, the stakes are high for the male protagonists.

From a con man gone New Age to a part-time college English professor who can't stay in one place, from an upper-class Bostonian forced to return to rural Mississippi and bury his dead brother to a father feverishly building a Christmas light display for his blind daughter, these are men at the end of their ropes—morally, spiritually, and emotionally—and at the center of a world that continues to defeat and baffle them. None of these characters really come off as winners, but, remarkably, one can't help rooting for them as they attempt to avoid *complete* defeat.

It is that motif that links all the stories in this collection: these characters continue to live in and observe the world around them, but somewhere, for reasons large or small, the world has ceased to make any sense. They must, then, continue living an existence that hovers on the edge, or just over the edge, of sanity.

Weaver's stories are not plot driven. As a fiction writer, his greatest strength is his ability to spin a variety of pungent, searing, and honest voices. Most of his stories are told in the first person (or a very close third person) and are carried along by voice, that is, by the tone and mood set up by the character's narrative. Indeed, as a spinner of various voices, Weaver calls to mind many of today's great Southern writers, such as Barry Hannah or Padgett Powell, with his ability to drive a story simply by the dissonant hum of his character's ramblings.

For example, one of the best stories in the collection, "Viewed from Lanta & Wally's" is simply the meditations of an eccentric man who camps out day after day at his favorite diner. Still, it comes across as a full, complete, and eerily sad story of a man baffled by his fellow men. Another story, "The Divorced Men's Mall Walkers Club," brilliantly moves from a nearly absurd chronicle of divorced men gathering each morning in an upscale shopping mall to a moving and tender meditation on the nature of loneliness and emptiness.

The stories in *Long Odds* range from comic irony to gritty realism, proof that Weaver is a flexible and multitalented writer who is quite deserving of a wider audience. Weaver is a surprising writer, one who can take the rawest and meanest of human voices and make them believable and real and tender.

Workers and Unions in Wisconsin: A Labor History Anthology

by Darryl Holter

State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1999, 284 pages

REVIEW BY DEAN BAKOPOULOS

The forty-hour work week. The eight-hour day. Health benefits, sick days and vacation, overtime pay. All these things we take for granted in the workplace are the victories of the labor movement, a movement often glossed over in high school and college textbooks, and too easily forgotten by much of today's white-collar workforce.

Workers and Unions in Wisconsin should be required reading not only for all Wisconsin students, but for all Wisconsin workers. This anthology is an amazing collection of history, primary sources, and first-person accounts of Wisconsin's labor movement, one that properly illustrates the immense and far-reaching social reforms that Wisconsin unions brought to this state and to the entire nation.

Wisconsin's labor heritage is rich. The state was a leader in such reforms as workers' compensation and unemployment insurance. UW–Madison, under the direction of economics professor John R. Commons, was the first university to seriously look at the history and sociology of labor.

This beautifully presented, information-packed book is a wonderful introduction to Wisconsin's labor movement. From the earliest unions in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to the great sit-down strikes in Milwaukee in the late 1930s, and from the rural union movements of the logging industry to the more recent victories of labor in Madison, everything is covered intelligently and told in an interesting manner.

The book also deftly illustrates how the labor movement was linked to such social movements as civil rights and gender equality.

In short, this is a long overdue chronicle of Wisconsin's rich heritage of social reform and a testimony to one of Wisconsin's key contributions to the nation's history.

Dean Bakopoulos worked as a journalist in Detroit while attending the creative writing program at the University of Michigan, where he was the recipient of the Hopwood Writing Award and Cowden Fellowship in Fiction. He has since received a scholarship to the Breadloaf Writers Conference, and his fiction, nonfiction and criticism have appeared in ***Worth, The Progressive, The Miami Herald, Prism International*** *and in other magazines and newspapers. He is now the head buyer for Canterbury Booksellers, an independent bookstore in Madison, and books editor for the* ***Wisconsin Academy Review.***

a civil rights roundup

A fresh crop of books with Wisconsin ties focus on various aspects of civil rights.

BY DEAN BAKOPOULOS

Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy

by Steven Kantrowitz

University of North Carolina Press, 2000

In *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy,* Steven Kantrowitz, an assistant professor of history at UW–Madison, chronicles the sadly influential life of "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, a South Carolina white supremacist who became governor of South Carolina and a U.S. senator. Tillman prided himself on "reform," a harrowing version of it, in which he justified such practices as lynching. Kantrowitz does a remarkable job telling Tillman's story and shedding light on the man who used his intelligence and leadership skills to preach racial prejudice in the violent world of the Jim Crow South. What Kantrowitz brilliantly shows is that Tillman's program of hate was more than just misguided and ignorant prejudice; instead, Tillman's political program was a strategic and deliberate plan of white supremacy, one that continues to cast a long, dark shadow on American civil rights.

Prisoners in Paradise: American Women in the Wartime South Pacific

by Theresa Kaminski

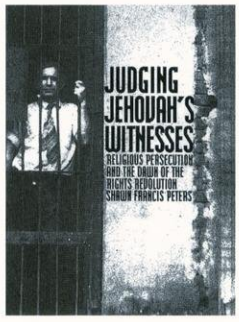
University Press of Kansas, 2000

UW–Stevens Point professor Theresa Kaminski chronicles a group of World War II POWs in the skillfully written *Prisoners in Paradise: American Women in the Wartime South Pacific.* This extensively researched study portrays the fascinating lives and awesome courage of the thousands of female POWs in the South Pacific. These POWs were American civilian woman who were in the Philippines—nurses, teachers, military wives, missionaries, and even some spies—and ended up in Japanese prison camps. Kaminski draws on letters, diaries, and interviews to depict women who found themselves in completely new situations and rose to the occasion, fighting to keep their families together and to persevere under arduous and frightening circumstances. A truly enveloping narrative about a fascinating footnote of World War II.

Judging Jehovah's Witnesses: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution

by Shawn Francis Peters

University Press of Kansas, 2000



A good piece of nonfiction first must uncover a shred of history that has been overlooked too long. Shawn Francis Peters of UW–Madison's School of Journalism and Mass Communication does just that in his compelling new book, *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution.* While the civil rights violations against Japanese Americans during World War II have been well documented, Peters tells a long overlooked chapter of America's homefront policies during that time. This is the sad but true story of the thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses who were intimidated, beaten, and imprisoned during World War II. The book begins with the story of William Gobitas, whose children refused to salute the flag at school (that gesture is against the Jehovah's Witness religion). What started out as one isolated incident went to the U.S. Supreme Court and became the foundation for the struggle for individual religious freedom. This, of course, became a dominant theme in the Supreme Court in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown

by Louise S. Robbins

University of Oklahoma Press, 2000

Louise Robbins, director of the School of Library and Information Sciences at UW–Madison, has been receiving national acclaim for her book *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown,* the inspiring tale of a librarian in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. In 1950, Ruth Brown lost her job as public librarian under the allegation that she was circulating subversive materials. The real reason? Brown was fired because of her involvement in the fledgling civil rights movement, in a group called the Congress of Racial Equality. Taking this seemingly small, albeit unjust and repressive, local event, Robbins deftly illustrates how this injustice exemplified a McCarthy-era America, one in which free speech and civil liberties were precariously trampled on under the guise of national security. *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown* makes a compelling case for increased vigilance in a system that all too often has erred on the side of intolerance and suppression of civil rights.

Frugal–but generous

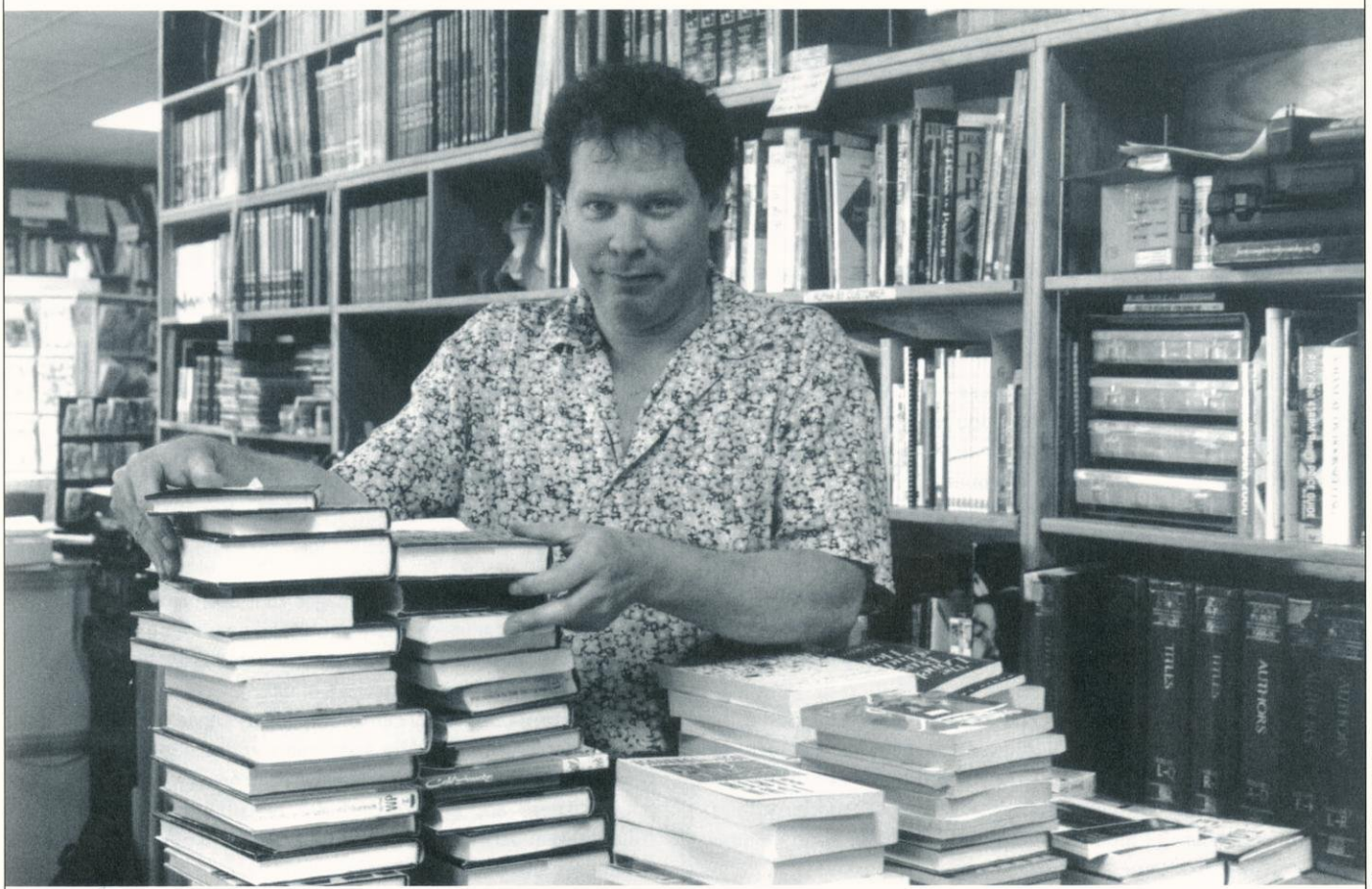


Photo: Trina Laube

Frugal Muse's Andy Gaylor has so many books he can give some away.

Andy Gaylor is a bookstore owner who doesn't mind spending some time in jail—as long as it means spreading his passion for books. Gaylor, owner of Frugal Muse Books in Madison, recently donated about one thousand paperback books to the maximum security prison in Boscobel. The prison required that the donation, ranging from mysteries and popular fiction to references, consist only of paperbacks because hardcovers could be used as weapons.

Gaylor, along with James Gollata, director of the UW–Richland Center's Miller Memorial Library, personally delivered the books to the Supermax. The two also donated more than seven hundred books to the Viola Public Library in northeastern Richland County, which serves patrons in the five-county Southwest Wisconsin Library System. Gaylor has made donations to various other libraries and organizations as well.

Gaylor and Gollata are on the board of the Wisconsin Center for the Book, which is affiliated with the Library of Congress and has many programs in support of literature.

Gaylor hopes to continue expanding the donation project.

"This is just the beginning," Gaylor says. "We'd like to formalize the project and make it really extensive, involving the participation of lots of bookstores." Gaylor hopes that individuals, too, will donate books. A number of people who heard about the donation project have approached Gollata. "It just fosters generosity," Gollata says.

There are two Frugal Muse stores in Madison, as well as a booth at Monona's Broadway Antiques Mall. Frugal Muse offers new and used books, videos, CDs, DVDs, and computer software for people to buy, sell, or trade. Prices of all merchandise are reduced by at least twenty-five percent.

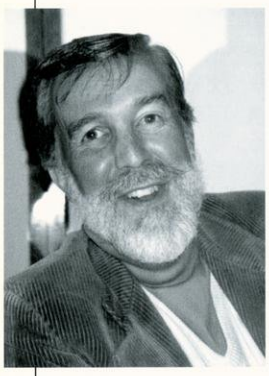
Gaylor and his partners have hit on a winning formula. This summer they opened another store in Darien, Illinois.

The key to success is to do most of the work yourself and treat customers well, Gaylor says, covered in sawdust from the bookshelves he's building for the new store. Gaylor's the kind of guy who keeps a plate of cookies next to the cash register and greets many customers by name. Often he sets aside books he thinks may interest a particular customer. "We've made a real effort to emphasize that Frugal Muse is literally a handmade, homegrown, locally owned bookstore," says Gaylor.

And one that does good things. You can call Gaylor at (608) 833-8668 for more information about donating books.

by Trina Laube

The Wisconsin Academy Goes to the Movies!



For Father's Day this year, my then-fifteen-year-old (and now sixteen-year-old) son Taylor took me to see the movie *Gladiator* (it was a great show!), and then we went out for a hamburger and chocolate shake at Culver's (home of the best burger and shake in Wisconsin). As you might imagine, we had a wonderful time until I spoiled it by starting to ruminate on what deeper meanings we could find in the movie. Parents are so dumb. However, I curbed my observations, returned to a discussion of which part of the gore I liked best, and thus saved the evening.

However, I was not to be denied. So I simply saved my thoughts for my next "Back Page" and will therefore inflict my ramblings on you.

The movie was a compelling and, yes, I will admit, bloodthirsty presentation of life in imperial Rome. While I am not a student of ancient history, I did think that the movie gave a masterful presentation of the intrigue, individual integrity, treachery, and manipulation of the mob that were the staples of good government in imperial Rome.

I have often thought that the history of the Roman Empire was the one history course (beyond American history) that should be required in our schools. We as Americans are the direct spiritual descendants of Rome and have many lessons to learn from Rome's rise, triumph, arrogance, and gradual but inevitable decline.

However, what really caught my attention in the movie was the relationship of the mob to the emperor, both of whom were at the Coliseum at the same time to watch the spectacle of human beings being goaded to kill each other. The mob and the legitimate government. The presence of the mob.

How often have we seen in our lifetime and in our study of history the energy of an unthinking mob unleashed and directed by unscrupulous leaders, producing results of unspeakable sadness and regret? Leaders throughout the ages have encouraged the mob to focus on emotional issues in order to divert their attention from the harder and more complex issues that do not lend themselves to a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" vote by the crowd in the Coliseum.

So, as I am often wont to say, what does all of this have to do with the Wisconsin Academy today?

We, you, the membership, the Wisconsin Academy, are all part of that bulwark in society that calls for careful and thoughtful analysis of the issues of the day, as opposed to mindless mob action. The thoughtful citizen is always part of a distinct minority in any culture, and it is our challenge to build the Academy so that it becomes a strong and influential presence for rational thought both in Wisconsin and nationwide.

As part of the Academy's historical advocacy for knowledge and critical thinking, the Academy will soon be providing a home for the National Telemedia Council (NTC). NTC is both a national and international organization, with affiliates all across the nation and the world, dedicated to the premise that the citizenry can be educated to view critically all of the information that is presented visually—whether in the movies, on television, in videos, or on digitized whatevers.

Increasingly, I find that the images that are provided through these media are focused on "the mob" and do nothing but attempt to reduce to an even lower common denominator those strands of communication that connect all of us.

NTC is not a program of censorship in any sense; it is a program of long-standing (more than sixty years) commitment to intelligent and critical viewing of images that are presented to the public. There are many wonderful possibilities for program collaboration between the Academy and NTC in our mutual effort to support and develop critical thinking.

It is with pleasure that I welcome Marieli Rowe, executive director of NTC, to an office at the Academy and say that the possibilities for collaboration with her are most exciting. Welcome, Marieli!

In closing, I want to again thank the members of the Academy for your ongoing support. It is only because the Academy is important to you, and supported by you, that we are able to embark on these kinds of collaborations. Many thanks!

Always there will be the uninformed and easily influenced. How exciting it is to be part of the Wisconsin Academy, which is dedicated to just the opposite. As always, I welcome your comments and criticisms and can be reached at the phone number and e-mail address below.

All the best,

Robert G. Lange, Executive Director
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