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wisconsin academy review

THE MAGAZINE OF WISCONSIN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

The Soul of the Dells:
Bennett v. Bartlett

■
Prize Fiction:
Our Statewide
Short Story
Contest Winner

■
Clearing Your Head:
A Writer's Retreat
in Door County

■
Winning the Wetlands:
A Wisconsin
Environmental
Success Story

■
Painting the Prairie:
An Artist's
"Visual Poetry"

Price: \$5



Lost in the beauty of Devil's Lake:
Paul Herr, founder of Nature Safaris,
shows tourists wonders beyond
water parks.

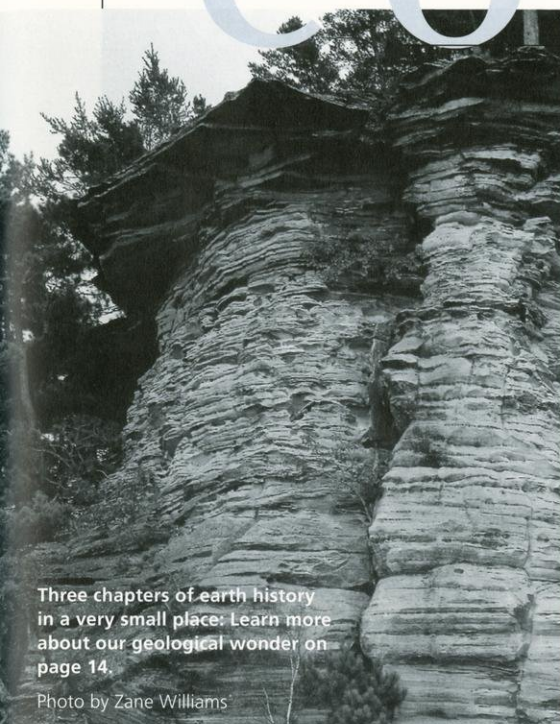
Photo by Klaus Opperman

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features



Three chapters of earth history in a very small place: Learn more about our geological wonder on page 14.

Photo by Zane Williams

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By Robert G. Lange.

Past and Present

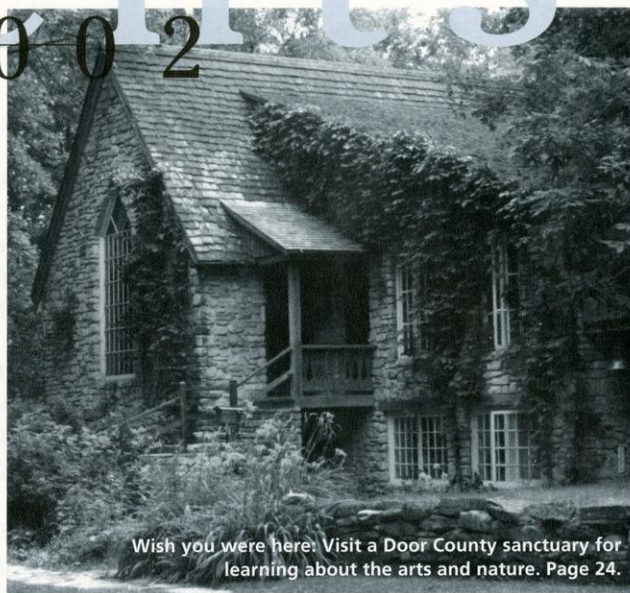
"He felt that every youngster in the state should have an opportunity for the highest quality of higher education to the very limit of his capacity, and often told of 'late blooming' students he knew who 'would have been washed out under any standard admissions procedure,' but instead developed at the University into great men and women."

—A description of UW President Conrad Elvehjem's commitment to higher education for all, written on the occasion of his death 40 years ago (*Wisconsin Academy Review*, summer 1962).

The Wisconsin Academy is committed to lifelong learning for everyone. Read more about us on page 11.

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

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



Wish you were here: Visit a Door County sanctuary for learning about the arts and nature. Page 24.

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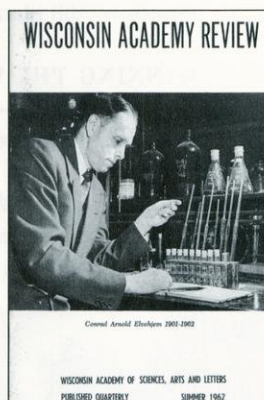
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The *Wisconsin Academy Review* wishes to thank Bruce Jacobs for his generous support.

Tell us your stories



I have always been a sucker for books or movies that celebrate the transforming power of a good teacher. *Stand and Deliver*, *To Sir, With Love*, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, *Dead Poets Society*—they make me get all farklempt in about two seconds flat. I think that's because, despite the usual excesses of the genre—the tears streaming and violins swelling as Lulu sings about crayons and per-

fume—we all know that teachers can and do change lives. And many of us have been lucky enough to experience that transforming power ourselves.

It's no surprise that the new book *The Right Words at the Right Time* (Marlo Thomas, Atria Books), in which various notables recount how one person's insight changed their lives, pays all due respect to teachers. Jimmy Carter credits a Miss Julia Coleman for pushing all the kids to read, write, and play music far beyond the requirements of rural schooling (she had Carter reading *War and Peace* at age 12). "She made us all feel that we were special whether we would never leave the cotton farm or instead go on to be president of the United States," writes Carter, who ended up quoting Miss Julia in his inaugural address. Tom Brokaw tells of an eminent political science professor whose tough-love dismissal of a partying Brokaw pulled him back on the right track.

Much closer to home—think Waukesha in the year 2002—consider the story on page 8 about math tutor Lee Schmidt and failing student Ryan Ramlow. My guess is that Schmidt will remain a hero and a guiding light in Ramlow's life forever.

My own "Sir" was Bill Edison, my teacher in fourth and sixth grades. Rumor had it that Mr. Edison was the renegade son of a millionaire business family. Certainly this would have been in keeping with his "question the establishment" take on life (this was San Francisco in the late '60s, early '70s). Mr. Edison was a pioneer of what came to be regarded, stereotypically, as "hippie teacher" techniques. He had us put desks in a circle so that we could relate to each other, and was the first teacher in the school to add a huge sofa to the classroom.

More important, he drew us—mainly sheltered middle-class children—into our very turbulent times. Our school was blocks away from San Francisco State University, where the antiwar protests grew so violent that for a time we were not allowed to walk past campus; he helped us understand what the protests were all about. When an oil spill damaged an area beach, we helped swab gummed-up seagulls with mineral oil. He was deeply concerned with civil rights, and had us not only discuss a made-for-grownups PBS series on the subject, but

also conducted the famous "blue-eyed" experiment to teach us how it felt to experience prejudice. (He executed this experiment, which called for discriminating against blue-eyed classmates, with the utmost care.) And we spent several days "living off the land" on his acres in Mendocino, which included baking whole-grain bread with a couple who lived there, under the gaze of their infant son, Om.

I am no paragon of social conscience—like most people, I am a work in progress—but whatever core sense of social justice I do possess, I credit very much to Mr. Edison. That is quite a gift, and one for which I am forever grateful.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

For some time I've been pondering how to get readers more involved in the *Review*. And it dawned on me that people who don't write fiction or poetry might be eager to share a personal story. I found a good model for this in an excellent magazine called *The Sun* (see www.thesunmagazine.org for more information). In a series called "Readers Write," people submit their experiences on such topics as "The Kitchen Table" and "Visiting Relatives." Because the topics are wide open to individual interpretation, the pieces are unpredictable and fascinating to read.

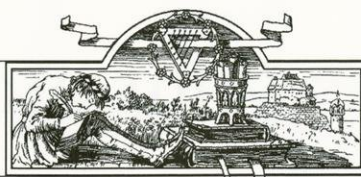
In the interest of providing a similar forum for Wisconsin, I invite all *Review* readers to submit anecdotes for a series we will call "In My Words." Maximum length is 800 words. The topic for our winter issue, which appears at the end of December, is "Turning Point." That can include experiences with teachers, jobs, a partner or friend, your health, a realization—anything goes, as long as it represents a turning point in your life. Deadline: September 1. The topic for the spring issue, which appears at the end of March 2003, is "Off the Beaten Path." Deadline: December 1. This can be about any experience that took you out of your normal realm.

Please submit your typewritten or clearly printed piece, including your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail, in an envelope marked "In My Words," addressed to the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, 1922 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53726—or, better, e-mail your submissions to joanfischer@wisc.edu. Please do not call regarding submissions; we will contact you if we intend to use a piece (and show you an edited version for approval). Based on your responses over a couple of issues, we'll see how this idea goes. My hope is that you'll make it fly!

Happy reading (and writing!),

Joan Fischer

SHORT STORY



CONTEST 2002

TROUBLED YOUTH

Our short story contest didn't specify a theme, but all three winners told their stories from the viewpoint of a young person trying to make sense of a mysterious or dangerous world. Although they have a youthful protagonist in common, the stories offer rich and diverse portraits of what it means to be young and struggling for a sense of place and identity. One lead character is a 12-year-old longing to penetrate his father's secret society; another is a teen in love with an edgy, rock-crazed Goth; another is a young Native American boy trying to gain footing in the transient world of migrant farm workers.

These were the stories that rose to the top among 122 entries in the *Wisconsin Academy Review* Short Story Contest 2002. We are pleased to present the first-place story, "Knights of Pythagoras," in this issue. Our second- and third-place winners will appear in the fall and winter issues respectively.

Here are brief bios of our winning authors:

Jon Walton



Bob Wake won first prize (\$500) for "Knights of Pythagoras." Wake, 47, received his master of arts degree in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1982. He lived in Madison from 1979 to 1994 and worked in a variety of jobs, including two years as the host of WORT-FM's fabled morning talk show, *The Breakfast Special*. Wake works as a teaching assistant in the field of special education. He lives in Cambridge with his wife, Kate McGinnity, and their 5-year-old son, Augie. Wake's work has appeared in *The Madison Review* and *Rosebud*. In 1997, Wake published a collection of his fiction, *Caffeine and Other Stories*, available from CBR Press. His short story "The Sacred Grove" two years ago won first place in *Madison Magazine's* annual fiction contest. His story "Visiting" was recently included in *The Best of Rosebud*.

"I've been a reader for as long as I can remember," says Wake. "I have the deepest respect for books and for writers. Literature brings coherence to my life. My own writing is born of a similar desire: to uncover the elusive patterns and shapes that seem to hide behind our shared emotions and experiences. Storytelling has proven itself an essential human activity. Narratives are magical to me. I'm a slow writer, but the hard work is never more rewarding than when a story comes mysteriously into focus after a long period of what can feel like a hopeless enterprise. If writing has taught me anything, it's taught me the

patience to weather the course—all courses—and to have faith in the often baffling vagaries of the creative process."



Jeff Esterholm won second prize (\$250) for "The Maureen Bogg Sessions," the story of a 14-year-old boy whose fascination with an older teenage girl leads to rituals on the night shores of Lake Superior paying tribute to dead rock stars. Esterholm lives in Verona with his wife and two teenage sons, and works as a training program designer on staff with the

UW-Oshkosh/Center for Career Development and Employability Training (CCDET).

Of his writing career, Esterholm says, "One day while eating lunch in the gym at Central Junior High, Superior, Wisconsin, circa 1970, I realized that I was never going to be a rock star and so hit upon the only other viable career option: I would become a writer. I had been reading a lot of Kerouac and Brautigan at the time and thought if those guys can do it, I surely can. Eight years later, a small magazine in Ohio called *Starwind* published my first short story. I could do it. In subsequent years, my fiction has appeared in such magazines as *Acorn Whistle*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Planet Detroit*, *Rag Mag*, *Thema*, and *Cross Timbers Review*. I began writing or thinking about writing at what may or may not have been a very young age—and for altogether dubious reasons—but this work of writing has burrowed itself into my life. While most times the process is just work, there is next to nothing that compares to the feeling of when the words flow."



Mark Turcotte won third prize (\$100) for "The Tractor Man," the story of a young Indian boy in need of kindness and security in a turbulent family. Turcotte is the author of three poetry collections, including *The Feathered Heart* (1998), and his newest, *Exploding Chippewas*, which has just been released by Northwestern University Press.

Three times nominated for the Pushcart Prize, his work has most recently appeared in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Laurel Review*, *Prairie Schooner* and *TriQuarterly*. Turcotte was selected as a 1999 Literary Fellow by the Wisconsin Arts Board and is the recipient of a 2001-02 Lannan Foundation Literary Completion Grant. "The Tractor Man" is his first work of fiction since 1977, and is a chapter from a novel

in progress. A member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, Turcotte lives in Fish Creek with his wife, artist Kathleen Presnell, and their son, Ezra.

"For me writing is just as natural as speaking, and it has always been part of what I do," says Turcotte. "Even in the years when I tried my hardest *not* to be a writer, I always ended up alone somewhere with a pen and a blank page. Writing simply allows me to more fully be myself."

All three authors will read their winning stories to the public in a special event at the Wisconsin Book Festival in Madison on **Saturday, October 12**. We will provide details on our website and in our publications as the date approaches.

We would like to express our thanks to contest judges Abby Frucht, C. J. Hribal, Gordon Weaver, Laurel Yourke, and Rosemary Zurlo-Cuva, and to our judge/contest coordinator Dean Bakopoulos, who is books editor of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* and director of the Wisconsin Book Festival.

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* Short Story Contest 2002 was sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for the Book and by the following Wisconsin members of Book Sense, a league of independent booksellers:

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The Reader's Loft, *De Pere*
The University Book Store, *Madison*

We thank these booksellers for their generous support of Wisconsin writers.

HONORS FOR HRIBAL

Congratulations to C. J. Hribal, first-place winner of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* Short Story Contest 2001, for his story "Morton and Lilly, Dredge and Fill," which appeared in last summer's edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. That story won Hribal the Larry and Eleanor Sternig Short Fiction Award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers for the best work published by a Wisconsin writer anywhere in the nation last year.

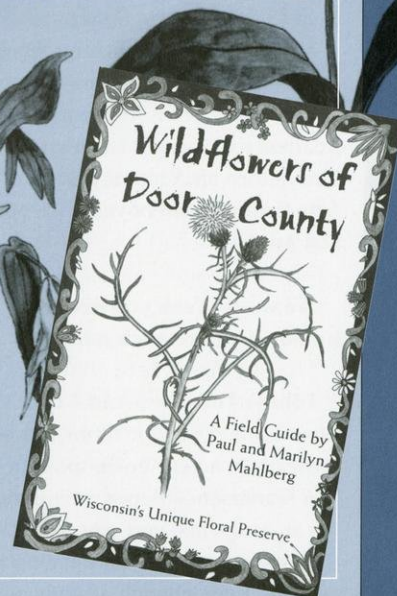


Name That Flower

Anyone who's visited Door County in the summer knows it is rich and diverse in wildflowers. Rare is the person who can actually name them! If you have always wanted to know the difference between your yellow trout-lily and your perfoliate bellwort—or even make easy calls, such as spotting the bottle-gentian, the swamp-rose, or the showy goat's-beard—now there's a book for you.

Wildflowers of Door County (Indiana University Press, \$18.95), by husband-and-wife team Paul and Marilyn Mahlberg, features nearly 400 flower watercolors by Marilyn, grouped by color for easy identification. Paul Mahlberg, a retired

Indiana University biology professor, wrote the text. The two live in Baileys Harbor every summer, so they know their subject well. Herbarium specimens collected for the project will be donated to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and book royalties will go to the Door County Land Trust. Try packing this guide along for a fun, easy-to-follow tour of one of the state's most beautiful floral preserves.



Our Man in Hollywood

Milwaukee-bred movie director/writer/producer Jim Abrahams maintains strong Wisconsin ties. Recently he has turned his attention from comedy to medical research advocacy.

First there was *Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977) and then there was *Airplane!* (1980), which was voted one of the top 10 comedies of all time by the American Film Institute. These Hollywood hits launched three cheeseheads from Milwaukee on a comedic tear that included *The Naked Gun* series and *Ruthless People*, and made Jim Abrahams and the Zucker brothers (Jerry and David) synonymous with wacky, irreverent pop culture parody.

In recent years Abrahams has turned from show business to health care advocacy, a move prompted by the severe medical problems experienced by his youngest child, Charlie, now 10, who has epilepsy. As an infant he began having grand mal seizures and was put on numerous rounds of heavy-duty medication, and at 17 months he had brain surgery. Nothing helped. Abrahams was told his son would end up severely retarded from the constant battery of medication and seizures.

Abrahams frantically began doing research of his own and stumbled on what turned out to be a miracle cure: a high-fat or "ketogenic" diet. Within a day of starting the diet Charlie's seizures were gone, says Abrahams, and within a month he had been weaned off all drugs. Today Charlie is still on the diet and doing fine.

Abrahams now devotes himself to increasing public awareness of the diet and to supporting medical research. He made a TV movie about the treatment called *First Do No Harm* (1997), starring Meryl Streep, and founded the Charlie Foundation to Help Cure Pediatric Epilepsy.

Abrahams retains strong Wisconsin ties through numerous relatives and by spending every summer in his cabin in Eagle River. This year Abrahams is serving as the Wisconsin Academy's Minerva Laureate, and gave a talk about his life in film before an Academy audience at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan. We spoke with him from his home in Los Angeles.

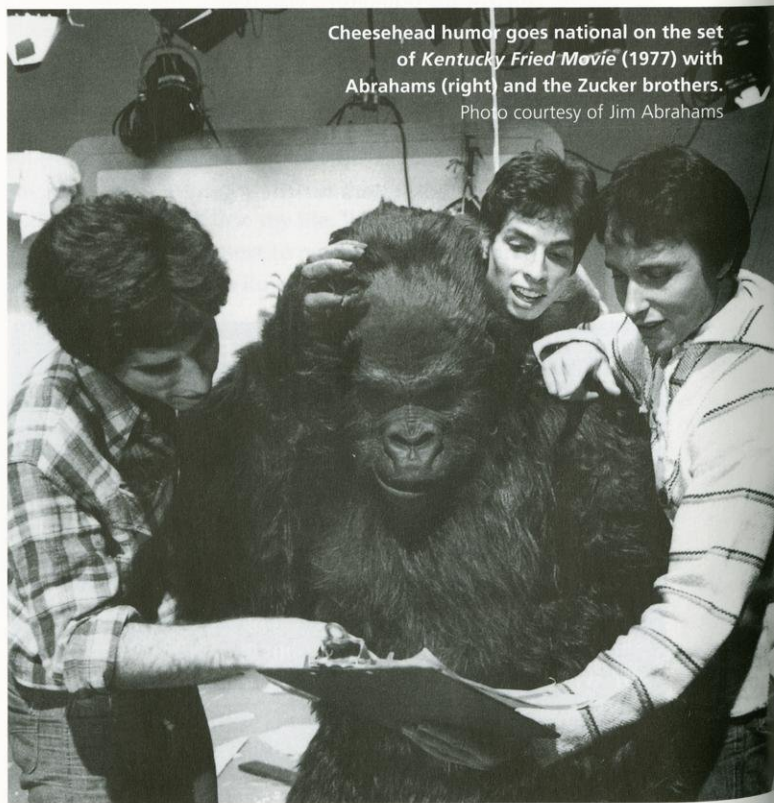
We want to ask you about the grand tradition of Wisconsin humor. Is there such a thing?

I think there is. And I don't know that it's exclusive to Wisconsin, it may be more of a Midwestern thing. I think if you grow up in a very cosmopolitan area—Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco—there's a tendency to think you're living where it's at. And when you grow up in Wisconsin, there's not that tendency. As a result, you develop a self-effacing sense of humor, you can have a laugh at your own expense. The comedies I've

worked on really grow out of that self-effacing sense of humor: it's Robert Stack, Leslie Nielsen, or Charlie Sheen sending themselves up at their own expense. It's a very endearing quality, and my experience is that it is more prevalent in the Midwest than in Los Angeles.

What influenced your sense of humor as you were growing up in Milwaukee?

Certainly, Woody Allen. But the main influence was 1950s and 1960s television. Everything was literally and figuratively in black and white: *The FBI*, with the good guys and the bad guys; *Father Knows Best*—the way TV back then portrayed life. David, Jerry, and I grew up with the suspicion that that's not exactly how life was. We would compare *Father Knows Best* with our own homes, or compare Quinn Martin shows with real life, and we could see that those shows were not an accurate portrayal of life or the justice system. We realized that we didn't have to take it seriously.



Cheesehead humor goes national on the set of *Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977) with Abrahams (right) and the Zucker brothers. Photo courtesy of Jim Abrahams

Which comedic efforts from Wisconsin have particularly warmed your heart?

The Onion. I'm stunned at how consistently fabulous the writing is over the years. It never fails to make me laugh. It's not just the headlines. As the articles go on, once they sink their teeth in, they keep it going. I marvel at their writing.

Why do you come back here in the summer?

I always thought the best part of my youth was spending summers in Eagle River. We all just counted the days until summer. And I always thought that if I could pull it off, we would have a place on the same lake in Eagle River that I spent my summers on. My kids have had the same response to it. They start counting the days at Christmas. It's one of the few things in life—except for jet skis—that really hasn't changed much, it's how I remember it when I was a kid. And it's been even better for my children than it was for me because the difference between Eagle River and Los Angeles is more than a few thousand miles—it's a point of view, a value system, a lifestyle—it's everything.

In recent years you've turned from the movie business to focus on medical research in epilepsy, a condition your son Charlie lives with. Why were you moved to action?

I found out that the way Western medicine butchered Charlie was something I shouldn't take personally, because that's the way Western medicine treats kids with seizures. The diet that saved him should have been given to us the first time we walked into a neurologist's office. These folks wouldn't tell us something they all knew about. To them, he was one more kid on the assembly line.

So I established The Charlie Foundation, made the TV movie, and started getting out publicity on the ketogenic diet. Much of what I do now is work with researchers on why and how it works. The diet could then be simplified, or taken in a pill form. Nobody knows what makes a seizure start, stop, or continue. They don't even know why the drugs work when they work.

All of this has changed my emphasis in life, at least for the time being.

Have you been following the debate about stem cell research, which holds great promise for various neurological conditions? What's your opinion on that kind of research?

Full speed ahead. There's a fear it will go too far, and maybe it will, but when you think of the huge positives I would hope that our president will open the doors even wider.

Literary Spring Green

Dozens of readers and writers will gather under the pines at Hilltop near Spring Green on September 14 to converse with novelist Jane Hamilton and poet Ron Wallace about putting ideas into words and bringing characters to life. Think of the event as a kickoff to the inaugural Wisconsin Book Festival, which will celebrate literature a month later with a Madison-based gala.

The Spring Green Literary Festival celebrates its fifth anniversary this year—half a decade of bringing authors to beautiful Wyoming Valley in Iowa County for readings and small group discussions. Past guest authors have included Wisconsin poet laureate Ellen Kort, farmer-essayist Justin Isherwood, children's author Nancy Willard, Door County writer Norbert Blei, Native American poet Diane Glancy, and short story writer Rosina Lippi. Participants come to Hilltop, a rustic and lushly landscaped former girls' camp near Taliesin, from all over Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and other states.

Jane Hamilton



Events kick off Friday, September 13, at the unique Hillside Theater on Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin estate, with author readings and a champagne and cake reception. Authors from previous literary festivals may be among other honored guests.

On Saturday, September 14, participants will listen to talks and readings in the morning by Hamilton and Wallace, followed by lunch, book signings, musical diversions, discussion groups, and another round of anniversary celebration at the close of the festival. There will be a tour of the Hilltop grounds and possibly a guided tour of the Taliesin grounds as well.

Jane Hamilton, who lives on an apple orchard in Rochester, Wisconsin, is the author of four novels, including the international bestseller *A Map of the World* and *The Short History of a Prince*, which won the Heartland Prize for Fiction and will be the featured selection for the literary festival. Ron Wallace, an English professor and head of the creative writing programs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (and who is also a Wisconsin Academy Fellow), has published several books of poetry, including *Time's Fancy* and *The Makings of Happiness*, as well as a short story collection, *Quick Bright Things*.

For more detailed information, call 608/588-3725 or check portalwisconsin.org.

by Judith Ettenhofer

WAUKESHA RULES!

Waukesha West High School this year won the United States Academic Decathlon—the first national win ever for a Wisconsin high school—with a C student as their star player.

By Duane Stein, team coach, Waukesha West academic decathlon team

It is a daunting task. Every year, 125 or more Wisconsin public and private schools line up to compete in the United States Academic Decathlon competition, which ultimately tests students in seven different subject areas, plus challenges their mettle in prepared and impromptu speaking, personal interview, and essay.

Rosters are picked in the preceding spring so that the team can start studying when school opens in fall. The competition carries into March if your school is one of the 14 teams that make it to the state competition in Madison, and for another month if your team goes national.

The beauty of academic decathlon is that the nine-member team is not made up of the highest grade point averages in the school. Rather, the team must consist of three A students (GPA 4.0–3.75), three B students (GPA 3.74–3.0), and three C students (GPA 2.99–0.0). To be successful, these students must not only study hard, but also coalesce nine diverse personalities and skill levels into a team that shares the common goal of researching, learning, and teaching each other.

And teach each other they do. The Waukesha West academic decathlon team meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 7 to 9 p.m., with more

and longer sessions as the competition approaches.

Given those stringent demands and the media image of “self-involved, pleasure-seeking American teenagers,” one wouldn’t expect students to line up for academic decathlon. But line up they do at Waukesha West; every year 85 of them compete to be a member. A decathlete at West earns the same status as the starting quarterback on the football team or the point guard of the basketball team. Decathletes are admired for their brainpower, their success, and their work ethic.

Because of the students’ dedication, Waukesha West has experienced some notable success. It is the only public school in Wisconsin to have qualified for state every year. However, even though we finished second more times than any other position, we had never won state.

This year magic happened. Not only did we finally beat our nemesis, a private school from across town, to earn the state title, we went to the nationals in Phoenix and shocked the nation by

winning. The first school outside of Texas and California to win in decathlon’s 21-year history, we were also the first “rookie” team to win a national title, the first Division II team to win—and the first team to have a C student finish with the highest overall score.

Magical, mystical, and mythical are all appropriate adjectives to describe Waukesha West’s academic decathlon experience. The overwhelming question is “How did it happen?”

There are many factors, including a talented C squad; a team in which all members pushed the others forward—the C’s pushing the B’s, the B’s pushing the A’s; and volunteers who spent much time working with the decathletes.

And they had one very special mentor, Lee Schmidt, a recently retired math teacher who has worked with Waukesha decathlon teams, including this one, for the last 16 years. Lee now spends part of the year in the Southwest, and when he realized that Waukesha had a shot at the nationals in

Stand and deliver: The Waukesha West academic decathlon team and supporters.

Back row on tractor, left to right: Adam Siegel, Kathryn Long, librarian Barb Stein, Nicole Chartier, Scott Wilcox, Nathan Edwards, Brian Kyle, Jonathan Lindsley, Steve Moon (alternate), team coach Duane Stein. **Sitting in front row:** Jacob Kowalski (left), Ryan Ramlow. **Standing in front of tractor, from left:** Chris Schrader (alternate) and speech coach Chris Beck.

Photos by Lee Schmidt



Phoenix, he told the decathletes he would meet them there and "teach them math in the desert."

He meant it. The students spent time camping with Lee, learning math among the saguaros as a break from their sessions in hotel rooms. Lee's speech at the decathlon celebration ceremony in Waukesha in May—attended by Gov. Scott McCallum and many other officials—was so heartfelt, and revealed so much about his love and understanding for those kids, that he had much of the audience weeping.

If you think teachers can't change lives, consider Lee's relationship with Ryan Ramlow, the 1.83 GPA who had not passed a math class since eighth grade but ended up being our star player. Unlike the rest of the world, Lee was not surprised by Ryan's performance. "His growth, from the first tentative 'I've never been good with math' to the confidence with which he now does some of the hardest stuff, is a sign of real talent," said Lee during the grueling prep work.

Lee finally made math "click" for Ryan. In an interview with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Ryan said: "I really didn't get math at all. The symbols were just completely and totally meaningless to me, and it was just a total mystery ... But then Mr. Schmidt ... he just loves math and the decathlon so much that he sat me down and we just talked it through for a good couple of hours,

just going over the concepts. And he taught me math from the ground up. It just makes me feel so good inside to know that I can learn, and I can do something that I never thought I could before."

I can't think of a better description of the decathlon's value, or of a more rewarding experience than all of us had at Waukesha West this year.



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2002
SEASON SCHEDULE

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JOHN BECKER QUARTET,
THE TONY CASTAÑEDA LATIN
JAZZ QUARTET

AUGUST 14TH
DOUG BROWN AND MICHELLE DUVALL,
MADISALSA

SEPTEMBER 4TH
RAY RIDEOUT
QUARTET,
BEN SIDRAN AND SPECIAL GUEST

AUGUST 21ST
LESLEY BYERS AND THE JAZZ CATS,
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AT THE
STATE STREET
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MILWAUKEE ARTS GO WEST

A new, state-of-the-art center for the visual and performing arts in greater Milwaukee aims not only to bring downtown arts groups out to the fast-growing western suburbs, but also to provide an important bridge between those arts groups and area schools.

The Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts in Brookfield, which has its dedication ceremony in June, has tenant partnerships with the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, the Milwaukee Ballet—and the Elmbrook School District, whose students will learn, rehearse, and perform there.

Studies and reports from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and the United Performing Arts Fund indicate that the future of the arts organizations depends on collaboration and education. Those

two elements lie at the heart of the Wilson Center, notes executive director Judith Smith. "By creating programs that provide accessibility to arts educational opportunities and activities—whether they are classes, festivals, performances, or events—we are enhancing the growth of the arts in this region."

The facility, located in Mitchell Park East, includes such features as a 600-seat auditorium and performance hall and an Education Wing with studios for music, rehearsal space, and performances.

Artistic flourishes include a 40-foot-high sculpted limestone fireplace in the foyer, colorful handmade ceramic tiles representing the arts and nature, and a chandelier decorated with hand-blown glass birds. Granite boulders lead to the main entrance, and cast concrete sculptures resembling tree stumps serve as benches for visitors.

You can learn more about the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts at www.wilson-center.com, or by calling 262/796-9800.



Birds-of-glass chandelier:
Flock, by Steven F. Feren

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

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More balance, please

It has been a new experience to pick up a magazine dedicated to science and find that it is politicized—both in the content of specific articles and through one-sided coverage of issues. This has not gone unnoticed by readers. For example, in an editorial from the April 2002 *Scientific American* the editors write that some readers “claim the magazine has become more politicized in recent years.” It is not hard to sense the bias in article coverage and editorials in *Science* on issues such as global warming. Editors may justify this trend by pointing out that fuzzy science and the social sciences are also considered to be legitimate sciences. This argument, however, does not support unilateral coverage of matters vital to the public welfare.

In an article in the *Wisconsin Academy Review* on technology education (fall 1985), I wrote of the importance of the social elements and of values judgments in the uses of technology. I was careful to point out that technology most often involves choices among alternatives. There may be various technical solutions to social-technological problems and associated values dilemmas, each with its own consequences for the public. It is important, therefore, that citizens be fully informed by the media, particularly science and technology media.

I have thought of this in a wider scope on reading the last several issues of the *Review*. Editor Joan Fischer is to be commended for her fine work with the magazine. It has been disappointing to me, however, to find elements of my concerns over bias or lack of full coverage in some articles. Granted that the Academy is of arts and letters as well as science and its license is broader, but this may make it even more imperative that all sides of articles on social-technical issues be included.

The Academy is unique among state academies in its recognition and promotion of synergy of the sciences, arts, and letters. It has pioneered in developing new modes for science education. It has touched many Wisconsin organizations for plants, birds, and animals. Its support for the arts is widely known and valued. The *Review* is an outstanding

journal. Under the leadership of Bob Lange the Academy is engaging the public in vital issues such as water resource management. For the most part these accomplishments are non-controversial. As the Academy enters into issues of the social sciences or where the hard sciences are still mushy and incomplete, or even public policy, there will be strong views, many of them opposing, but equally important to get them before the public. Thus I believe to the extent that the Academy sponsors forums, articles, or other forms of public education on such matters, every effort needs to be made to provide full and balanced review.

James R. Johnson
Wisconsin Academy Fellow
Naples, Florida

Philosophers to Haney: Mind your logic!

Like James Haney (“Consider Job Loss,” spring issue) we want a clean environment, fuel-efficient cars, an economically healthy Wisconsin, and environmental policy informed by sound science. Judging from Haney’s warnings about proposed increases in the CAFE standard, we are less sure that Haney shares our commitment to sound reasoning. For example, we hear from Haney that the auto industry is already working hard toward CAFE’s aims, investing “billions [in] breakthrough technologies” that have already led to “improve[d] fuel efficiency, and increase[d] safety.” Increased CAFE standards must be a good thing, then, no? Well, no, at least according to Haney. He says that the fuel efficiency we’d get by increasing the CAFE standards will decrease vehicle sales and increase highway injuries and deaths!

Observant readers scratch their heads at this point, but the reasoning gets worse. Imported oil accounted for 35 percent of the oil consumed in the U.S. in 1974. Now it’s 50 percent, despite the doubling of fuel economy in the same period. Haney’s conclusion? Increased fuel efficiency does not reduce foreign oil dependence. This sort

of statistical misadventure is the bane of introductory statistics courses (where it even has a name, the *base rate fallacy*). Here is the critical question: how dependent would we be *without* the increases in fuel economy we’ve had since 1974? Well beyond 50 percent, we conjecture. The moral: an increase in dependence doesn’t imply the ineffectiveness of increases in fuel economy.

This is the sort of muddled thinking we sometimes find in college freshmen. Sophomores usually outgrow it.

Then there’s the nearly comical rhetoric one might call *argument by repetition*. Apparently unable to give evidence for his claim that CAFE increases lead to job losses (Haney prefers the evocative term “kill jobs”), Haney resorts to repeating the assertion 11 times in two pages. Don’t be fooled, though—sound reasoning (not to mention sound science and intellectual honesty) partakes in evidence, not mere repetition. Of course, there is Haney’s assertion (itself offered without citation or reference) that vehicle sales decline 5 percent for every 10 MPG increase in fuel efficiency. Could this be true? Probably not, for such a relation between fuel economy and vehicle sales suggests a fanciful (indeed, absurd) program to lower unemployment, boost our economy, and clean the environment: lower MPG ratings by 50 percent! Even better, 75 percent! Haney can inform Detroit; we will gladly let him take credit for the idea.

Haney’s commentary, peppered as it is with the usual array of anti-conservation mottoes (witness references to “sound science” and “job loss,” cautions against government mandates, and unconvincing endorsement of environmental well-being), is meant to turn opinion against increased CAFE standards by sounding a panic about lost jobs and highway deaths. Our point? Haney’s reasoning toward this conclusion is poor, to say the least. That does not amount to an argument *for* increasing the CAFE standard. What that means is that no one, whether friend or foe of increasing the CAFE standard, should be persuaded on the basis of anything Haney says.

From the point of view of clear thinking, Haney's commentary is a non-starter. But commentaries like this do real damage. People who think seriously about our relation to the environment learn quickly that the issues are extraordinarily complicated and do not reduce to handy dualisms like "us vs. them," "economy and jobs vs. environment," or "industry vs. conservation," such as Haney offers. That is the very reason why it is essential to think clearly toward *reasoned* positions on things like the CAFE standard. In perpetrating the "us vs. them" mentality, Haney not only manages to reason poorly, he obscures the pressing need for good reasoning. And none of us can afford the price of forgoing good reasoning.

**Michael Nelson
Gary Hardcastle**
Department of Philosophy
UW-Stevens Point

You missed us!

Editor's Note: The letter below describes the Sand County Foundation's community-based conservation efforts, which were not included in our feature on community-based conservation in the spring Wisconsin Academy Review. We are pleased to present their story here.

Sand County Foundation, headquartered in Wisconsin, is partnering with landholders in Africa and the U.S. to develop, deploy, and sustain meaningful incentives for successful community-based wildlife management. As a conservation tool, community-based wildlife management enables local landholders to develop wildlife as a livelihood and land use option.

Lessons from African and U.S. wildlife conservation successes and failures are important to pass across the Atlantic. We can learn from each other. And because it is critical to the success of wildlife conservation on working landscapes to build from ethics, science, and incentives, the Community Based Conservation Network (CBCN)[®] was created by Sand County Foundation. Initiating landholders include those of

the Kinzua Quality Deer Cooperative, Pennsylvania, as well as villages near South Luangwa National Park, Zambia.

Several of CBCN's landholders were featured in the documentary *Conservation Pathfinders: Blueprints for the Land* on Wisconsin Public Television on Earth Day 2002. This showed difficulties and opportunities facing landholders who are improving land use by greater economic reliance on sustainable wildlife management in Colorado, Arizona, Zambia, and even dictator-oppressed Zimbabwe.

One conservation professional featured in the documentary is Brian Child, a Rhodes Scholar and native Zimbabwean, who is a driving force in helping landholders in Zambia improve their lands for wildlife and to reap material rewards from their investments. Basic permanent threats to wildlife there, with some echoes of Aldo Leopold's historic concerns, are "the plow and the cow"—in other words, land use conversion, not poaching. In Zambia villagers bear costs, including crop loss and human deaths, to maintain wildlife that produces benefits across the globe, but they rarely receive benefits meaningful to themselves. He emphasizes: "This is not sustainable."

CBCN invigorates spirit and resolve among citizen landholders who are poor, with no experience in democratic decision-making, and for whom wildlife represents both material and aesthetic assets. Technical support, training in negotiating and managing contracts, assistance in conducting sustainable ecological inventory, and enhancing outreach and communication with peers are among the benefits of membership in the CBCN.

Citizens in a Lupande Game Management Area village, Zambia, or among Maasai villages in northern Tanzania, may double annual family income through wildlife utilization in nonconsumptive and/or hunting uses. Participating villages hire their own game scouts to reduce poaching and tax themselves to pay the wages. In Senna village among the Maasai, where hunting is not permitted, village adults have

voted to use all photo safari revenues to construct two schools.

Likewise, in the U.S., the White Mountain Apaches of Arizona have built the most trophy-rich native elk herd in the world. Proceeds from their guided hunts are used to enhance vegetation and soil in their own ponderosa pine forests, and, in a recent tribal decision, to reintroduce the Mexican gray wolf. Jobs and revenues from wildlife enhance human life in their large part of eastern Arizona.

Sand County Foundation's integrating role in this network comes from a land ethic of Aldo Leopold, the necessity of good science put to use for better land health, combined with incentives, material and otherwise, to reinforce better land use on working landscapes.

As a vision for the CBCN, it would be hard to find a better expression than this portion of Aldo Leopold's writings from the 1930s: "When land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land; when both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation. When one or the other grows poorer, we do not."

The challenge of realizing this vision in working landscapes is daunting, for if wildlife cannot practically be integrated into African or North American rural land use, conservation at the landscape and ecosystem level will have little chance of success. Thus the task facing partners collaborating in the CBCN is to provide a framework of positive incentives and enabling policies for local wildlife stewardship that will, in turn, inspire communities of landholders elsewhere to do the same.

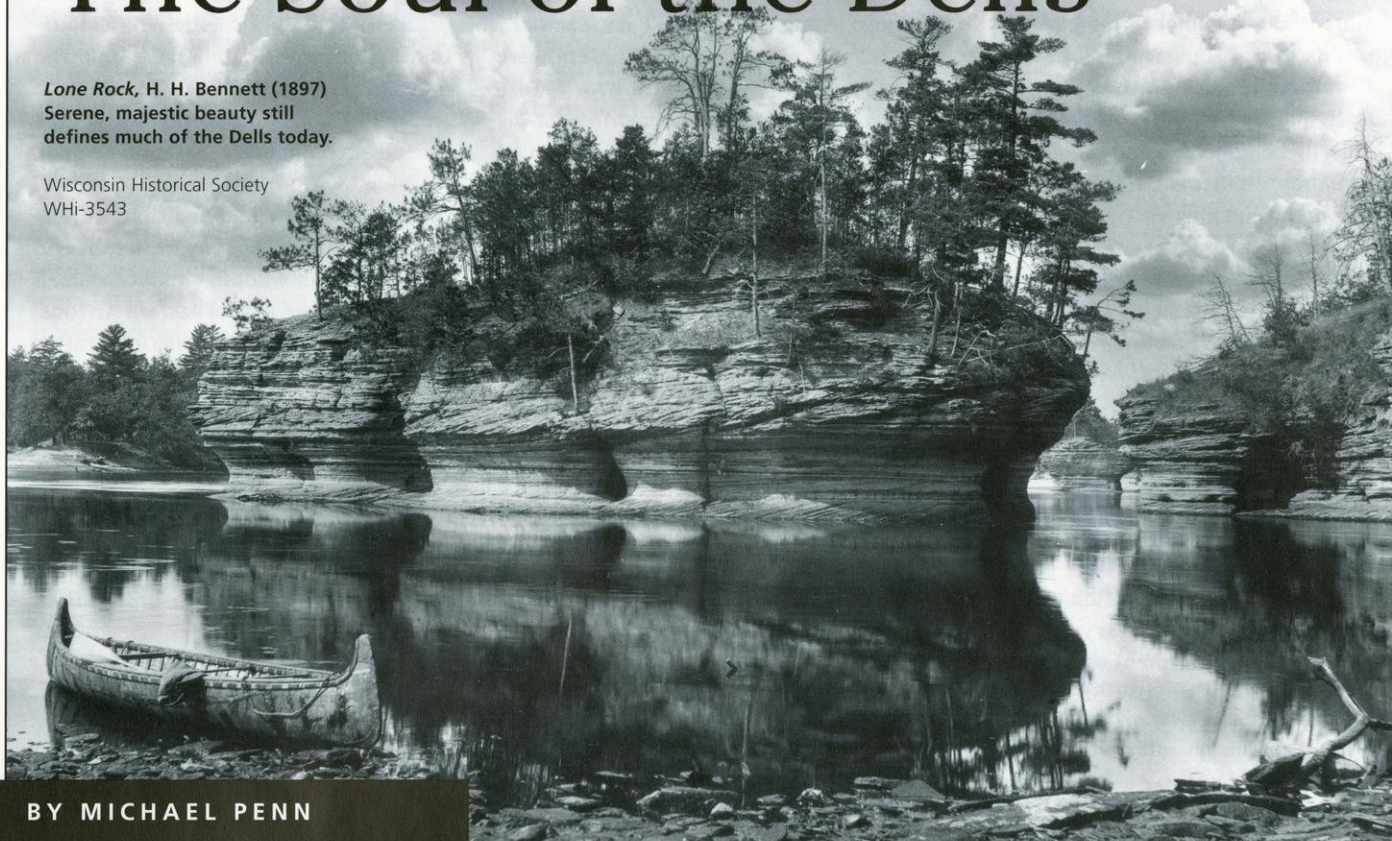
**Brent Haglund
Fred Nelson**
Sand County Foundation
Madison

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* welcomes your comments. Please send letters to the Editor, 1922 University Avenue, Madison WI 53726, by e-mail to joanfischer@wisc.edu or by fax to 608/265-3039. Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

The Soul of the Dells

Lone Rock, H. H. Bennett (1897)
Serene, majestic beauty still
defines much of the Dells today.

Wisconsin Historical Society
WHI-3543



BY MICHAEL PENN

One of Wisconsin's most beautiful and geologically important landscapes is also one of its biggest eyesores. How did the Dells become such a mass of contradictions—and how can we protect the region in future development?

NEARLY A HALF-BILLION YEARS AGO, Wisconsin Dells was a beach town. The land mass that became Wisconsin wasn't then the hinterland we know today, but the sandy bottom of a shallow tropical ocean. The Baraboo Hills, which jutted from the sea as islands, straddled the equator, where they were targets for periodic hurricanes and tropical storms. Sixty-foot waves crashed about, tossing giant, quartzite boulders around like marbles and giving the scuttling trilobites that populated the sea a ride on what was the region's original water park.

It took most of five hundred million years for the forces of nature to gently drift our continent into its present position, ridding the Dells of its watery milieu. It took but a few human generations to re-create it. Today, the waves are generated by machines, the surf is fed by miles of plumbing, the Hurricane is a thrill ride, and scuttling trilobites have been replaced by scuttling 10-year-

olds. And a beach town the Dells is, once more.

The Dells, that strange town of motley attractions, sprawling hotels, and water-based entertainment, seems today to belong not to Wisconsin, but to a post-modern fantasy world where the North Woods meet Coney Island. Parts of the Dells, particularly its old downtown river district, feel like Atlantic City, full

of T-shirt shops and places to buy cotton candy, the air thick with the smell of batter. Other Dells sites have all the high-tech polish of a junior Vegas. As in all good beach towns, there is the constant presence of water, some 16 million gallons of it filling the area's myriad pools and wet attractions. Waterfalls, tidal waves, lazy rivers, and rapids—features that nature rather inconveniently spreads across the planet—are all handily found within a day-trippable space.

But the Dells is also a paradox of contrasting values and styles. The human-made fantasy world of water parks and thrill rides has helped make it the Midwest's most popular family destination, drawing 2.5 million visitors annually. But there's also an inclusiveness about the Dells, an anything-goes spirit that gives the city an eclectic feel that defies classification. In recent years, things to see and do there have included a Russian space station, a chasm-leaping golden retriever, a giant house made of Styrofoam, an active volcano, a huge replica of the Trojan horse, and a fleet of amphibious troop transports left over from World War II. What's more, despite its proliferation of manufactured attractions, it's still a stunningly beautiful place, where vestiges of its historic evolutions have been pristinely restored. The majestic sandstone cliffs that line the Wisconsin River still offer much the same vistas now as they did 10,000 years ago, when the Paleo-Indians first arrived. The lands, protected from development initially by Dells entrepreneur George Crandall and now owned by the state, represent sacred ground, and they're likely to be saved forever.

Within an hour's meander from the Dells are Devil's Lake State Park, the state's most visited, and some say most spectacular, park; the pink quartzite ledges of the Baraboo Hills, one of the world's oldest mountain ranges; and stretches of restored and preserved Wisconsin prairie. The great dichotomy of the Dells is that, while it is one of man's biggest fabrications, it's also perched squarely in the midst of nature's best work.

The yin and yang of the Dells shows up in the ambivalence Wisconsinites feel

toward it, usually mixing disgust and a sort of grudging fondness. Many state natives saw the Dells first through the eyes of children, and some have never seen it otherwise. "I think it's important to remember that the Dells is basically built for children," says Paul Herr, who runs Time Travel Geologic Tours near Devil's Lake. "A lot of people in Wisconsin are embarrassed by the Dells, and sometimes so am I, but it's really for kids, not adults."

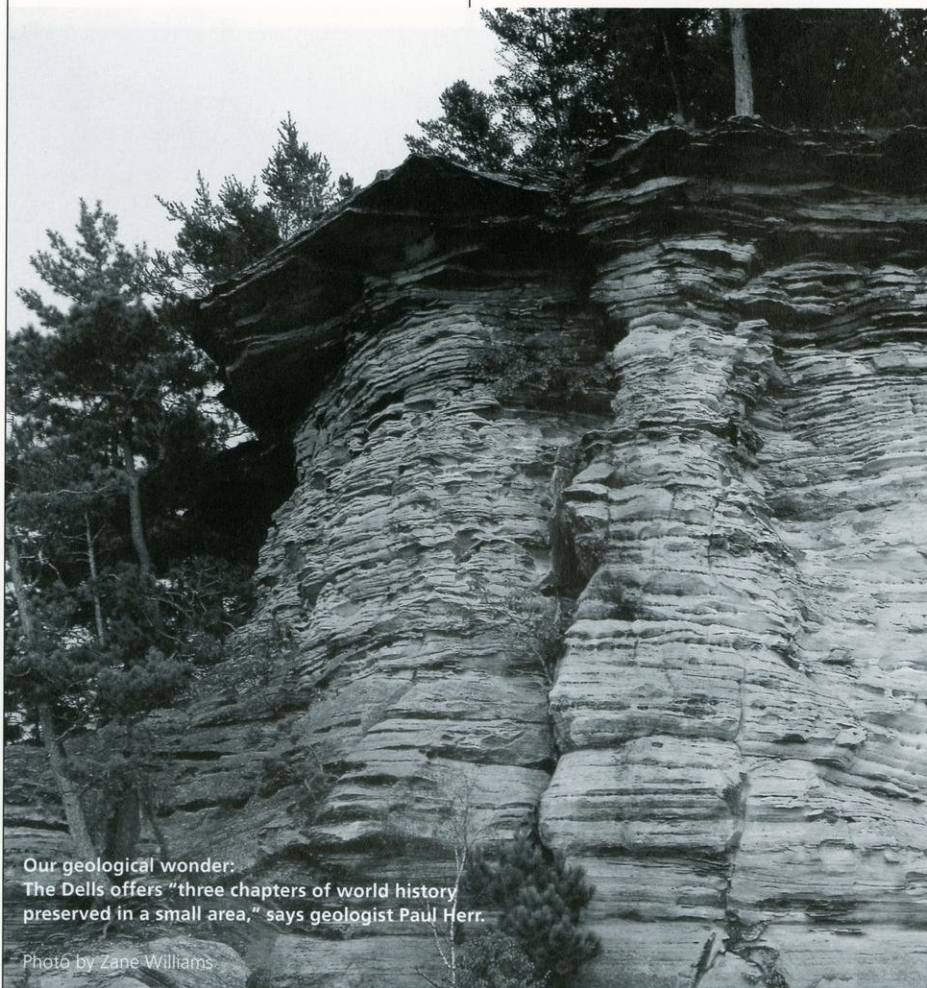
Like its primary denizens, the Dells has all the qualities of an 8-year-old—rambunctious, wild, thrill-seeking, and probably too innocent to deal with harshly. But while 8-year-olds move on to new diversions, the Dells seems entrenched in its hedonism. Its perpetual adolescence wears thin over time. We look with chagrin as Dells developers flatten hills and push out farther along Highway 12 to erect new monuments of entertainment. Like concerned

parents, we wring our hands and wonder: Won't the Dells ever grow up?

OUR OWN GRAND CANYON

Few people understand the contradictions of the Dells better than Paul Herr. As a boy, he collected rubber tomahawks and woven belts there, and he often takes his two young children to visit. Like many Wisconsin parents, he understands the innocent symbolism of the touristy gewgaws for sale along Broadway, the Dells' main drag. The Dells are a rite of passage, part of a truly Midwestern upbringing.

But when Herr went back to the Dells region as an adult with a degree in geology, he was interested in other souvenirs: crumbly pieces of sandstone, shards of ancient quartzite, and long-buried fossils. Geologists may get as excited as children about going to the region around Wisconsin Dells. As Herr



Our geological wonder:
The Dells offers "three chapters of world history
preserved in a small area," says geologist Paul Herr.

Photo by Zane Williams

is fond of telling people who take his tours, "I can convince anybody that Devil's Lake is every bit as interesting as the Grand Canyon."

In Devil's Lake, the attraction is the thick layer of quartzite, believed to be 2 billion years old and, over that time, remarkably unchanged. There's also plenty of evidence of the region's oceanic past—fossils in and around Baraboo, hardened residue of beaches, and percussion marks from long-ago tropical storms. A bonus is the ample evidence of the most-recent Ice Age, when a cataclysmic flood of melted glacier shot toward a tiny breach in the moraine just south of Wisconsin Dells and carved the ribbon-like gorge that now sets the course of the Wisconsin River.

"This is one of the best places in the world to learn about our planet because you have three chapters of world history preserved in a small area," Herr says. Each year, hundreds of geology students and professors descend on the

Dells to see it for themselves. Some, Herr says, come away surprised. "They say, 'I expected to see cows in Wisconsin, not world-class geology.'"

Herr began Time Travel to share the exhilaration geologists feel when touring places like Devil's Lake and the Upper Dells. Five years ago, he established a schedule of daily tours, hiring student geologists to help him lead people on forays into the region's geological past. Although he didn't expect to be trampled by crowds of Dells tourists yearning to be taught geology, he had good reason to believe that his operation would at least stay afloat. Nature, after all, has everything to do with why the Dells became a tourist destination in the first place.

Lumber-boat pilots first began ferrying locals in the 1840s from the tiny town of Kilbourn City (later renamed Wisconsin Dells) up the river to see the sandstone rock formations. By the 1870s, captains Abe Wood and George

Crandall had put steamboats on the river, paving the way for more than a century of river-gawking that continues today. Around that same time, Henry Hamilton Bennett began making pictures around the Dells with his hand-made stop-action camera. As Bennett explored the hidden canyons and glens of the river valley, he captured the unique beauty of the region in images that were distributed throughout the nation. His photographs helped swell a wave of tourism that hasn't ebbed since.

Today's Wisconsin Dells, however, has evolved considerably from Bennett's day. Although the beauty is much the same, it's become hidden by layers of distraction. The riverfront that captivated Bennett now literally sits below a carnival of water parks, entertainment centers, and bellowing billboards. Nature hasn't taken a back seat in the Dells; it's been shoved in the trunk.

While most Dells veterans still think of the river as the Dells' heart and soul,

Dell Queen entering the Narrows.
H. H. Bennett
The Dell Queen entering the Narrows
via Devil's Elbow as Hattie and
Nellie Bennett look on.
Wisconsin Historical Society
WHI-3544



water parks are now its nervous system. At least 20 have been constructed in the past two decades, making the Dells, according to *Aquatics International*, the premier water park destination in the country. Bonnie Sierlecki, of the Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau, admits that the appeal of these new facilities has taken attention away from the original source of fascination. "When people think about the Dells now, they may think about the attractions and forget about the natural beauty," she says. Although she says tourism officials have worked hard to maintain a balanced perspective, the beauty of the area is probably more afterthought now than the motivation that it was in Bennett's era.

That makes life difficult for people like Herr, who are the modern-day inheritors of Bennett's legacy. During Time Travel's first year in business, Herr and his student guides set up a ticket booth on Broadway, hoping to

Taken widely, the Dells region looks less like an eyesore and more like a landscape brimming with examples of promising ecotourism.

woo passersby away from the fudge shop and T-shirt scene and onto one of his tours. "It was awful," he says. "My student guides said they would quit if I made them do it again."

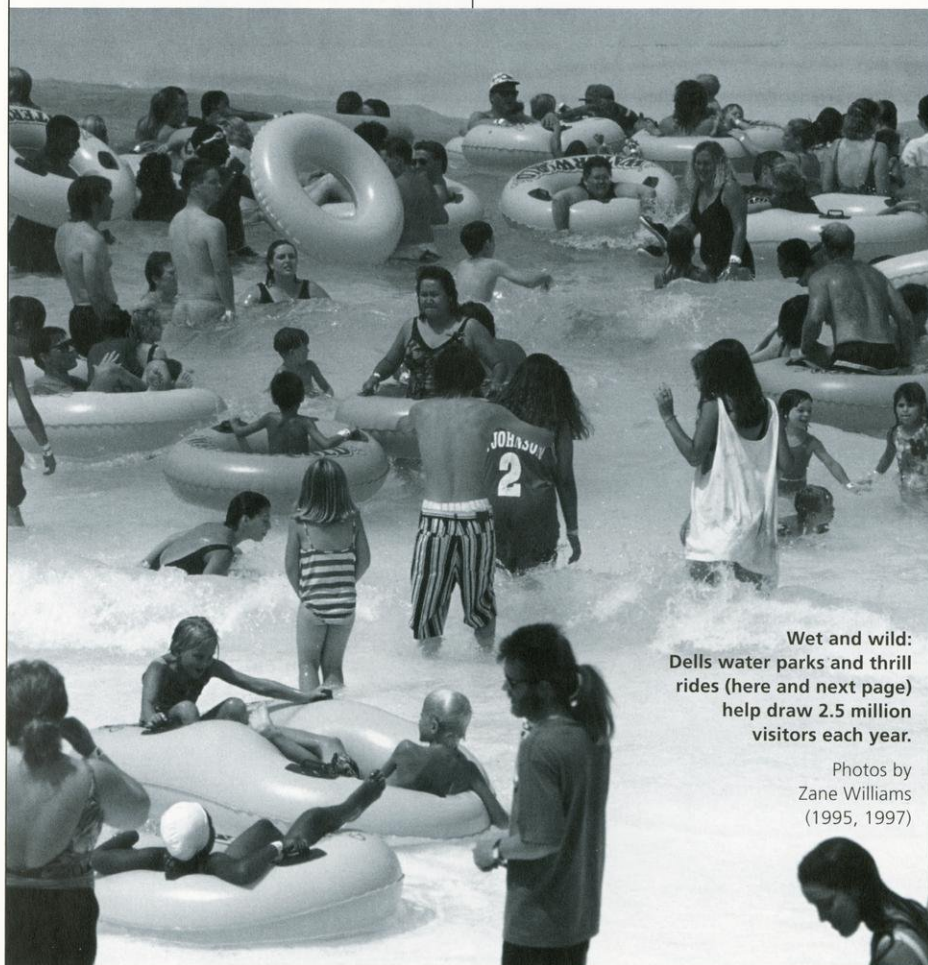
Herr changed the sign on his booth from the eggheady "Geological Tours" to a more alluring "Nature Safaris." Business doubled, but he still didn't bring in enough customers to warrant a full schedule. "At best, I was barely making ends meet," he says. Last fall, he discontinued the daily tours, although he says his group tour operation, which caters to school groups, motorcoach tourists, and conference attendees, is thriving.

A similar story is playing out at the Broadway site of Bennett's old studio, which in June 2000 reopened as the state's ninth official historical site. Maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society, the new H. H. Bennett Studio and History Center features an interactive display of Bennett's work and original equipment, along with other artifacts of Dells history and tourism. The site has won much critical acclaim since it opened—one reporter called it "pound for pound the best attraction in the Dells." But Jim Temmer, who helped design the center and until last year served as its director, says making it on Broadway has been a challenge.

Housed in two brick storefront buildings—one of which was Bennett's original studio—the museum is surrounded by a moccasin store and an old-time portrait gallery. Amid the chaos of ads and iconography of the surrounding stores, it doesn't leap from the street. Possibly because of that, the center didn't draw in the number of visitors it had projected during its first full year of operation. Temmer says walk-in business was disappointing. "When people walk down the street here, it's almost as if they put blinders on," he says. Herr remembers that dazed, overstimulated look from the year he spent on Broadway. "We called them Dells zombies," he says.

Increasingly, those zombies find haven at the huge hotels, complete with food, entertainment, and two-season (indoor and outdoor) water rides. Sprawl has pushed these one-stop megasites out farther from the old main drag, so that not all Dells tourists make it down to the river anymore. There's no incentive to wander.

"I would talk to people at these big hotels and ask them where they'd been in the Dells. They would look at me and say, 'We've been here,'" says Herr. "And you can understand that. If you're



Wet and wild:
Dells water parks and thrill
rides (here and next page)
help draw 2.5 million
visitors each year.

Photos by
Zane Williams
(1995, 1997)

paying \$250 a night for a room at these places, you want to make sure you get your money's worth."

But Dale Williams, who succeeded Temmer as director of the Bennett site this spring, says Dells officials are working hard to keep the river and old downtown from becoming afterthoughts. "We still have the boats on the river; we still have the ducks," he says. "The river is still the backbone of the community. We're in a great position, being right downtown."

Three years ago, the city's former mayor launched a smart-growth plan that not only seeks to curtail overdevelopment on the edge of the Dells, but also puts some energy back into the town's core. A river district has been created to help preserve and restore the stretches of Broadway that have grown weary over the years, and plans are to put new standards on signage, reducing the sensory assault and uncovering the historic storefront facades.

Meanwhile, handfuls of Dells visitors are still seeking options that don't involve bungee cords or boogie boards. New boat-tour operators are coming to the Dells, indicating that the market is still ripe for natural tours. (It should be noted that one of the new boats is a high-speed hydrofoil. Nature in the Dells does often come with an adrenaline chaser.) And elk ranchers Nancy and Charlie Fochs recently joined the lineup of Dells attractions, opening their ranch to public tours. The couple say they were convinced to give tourism a shot because so many people kept climbing over their fences to observe the velvet-tipped herd.

Taken widely, the Dells region looks less like an eyesore and more like a landscape brimming with examples of promising ecotourism. Downstream in Sauk Prairie, eagle watching has grown to the point that town leaders now regard it as a vital part of the community's identity and financial stability. One recent study

illustrated that the town draws in \$750,000 in revenue from visiting eagle watchers. "I think it's shown that there are good ways you can link preservation with tourism," says Jeb Barzen, director of field ecology for the International Crane Foundation (ICF), who participated in the study.

Barzen's employer, Baraboo's ICF, is another success story, drawing around 30,000 visitors each year to learn about cranes and their natural habitats. The Dells paradox strikes again: it's unlikely that ICF would be the hit it is without Dells tourists.

The foresight of people like George Crandall and the members of the Nature Conservancy, who have bought large chunks of land in and around the Baraboo Hills, have left the treats of the region significantly intact. Redevelopment plans for the Badger Army Ammunition Plant at the Baraboo Hills' southern edge appear headed for a compromise that could add more nature trails, prairie restorations, parkland, and even proposed lands for buffalo grazing.

"I don't know of many places in the Midwest with as great a variety of natural areas in such a small region," says Barzen. "There's a tremendous abundance of things that people really like and want to see here. There's a lot of potential for future development.

"It's all just a matter of how it gets done," Barzen continues. "I think in the Dells you see an example of the best and worst of that. We can learn a lot from what happened there."

THE KITSCH AND THE PITCH

Inside Bennett's studio, you can learn how he took the famous photograph of his son leaping over the chasm at Stand Rock—and then you can try the leap yourself. If you can convince yourself you're sailing over a gaping gorge instead of berber, you can taste some of the thrill and danger captured by Bennett's lens. In such small ways, the history center nods to where it is, providing the "tainment" part of "infotainment" in tasteful doses.

"You have to hustle history in the same way that you have to hustle com-



mercial activities," says Williams, who previously worked with Baraboo's Circus World Museum. "You have to entertain people. But I think they can start to appreciate the beauty and significance of the area."

And in that way, the Bennett studio honors the oldest tradition on the riverfront. The Dells—former ocean floor, glacial kingdom, and whistle-stop weekender—has perfected the art of adapting to changing climates and tastes. Few places have such a storied history of hucksters, buskers, showmen, and entrepreneurs who have spun visions and dreams of the ultimate travel experience and made them come true. Dells consumers have always had a soft spot for good kitsch, but they may value even more a good pitch.

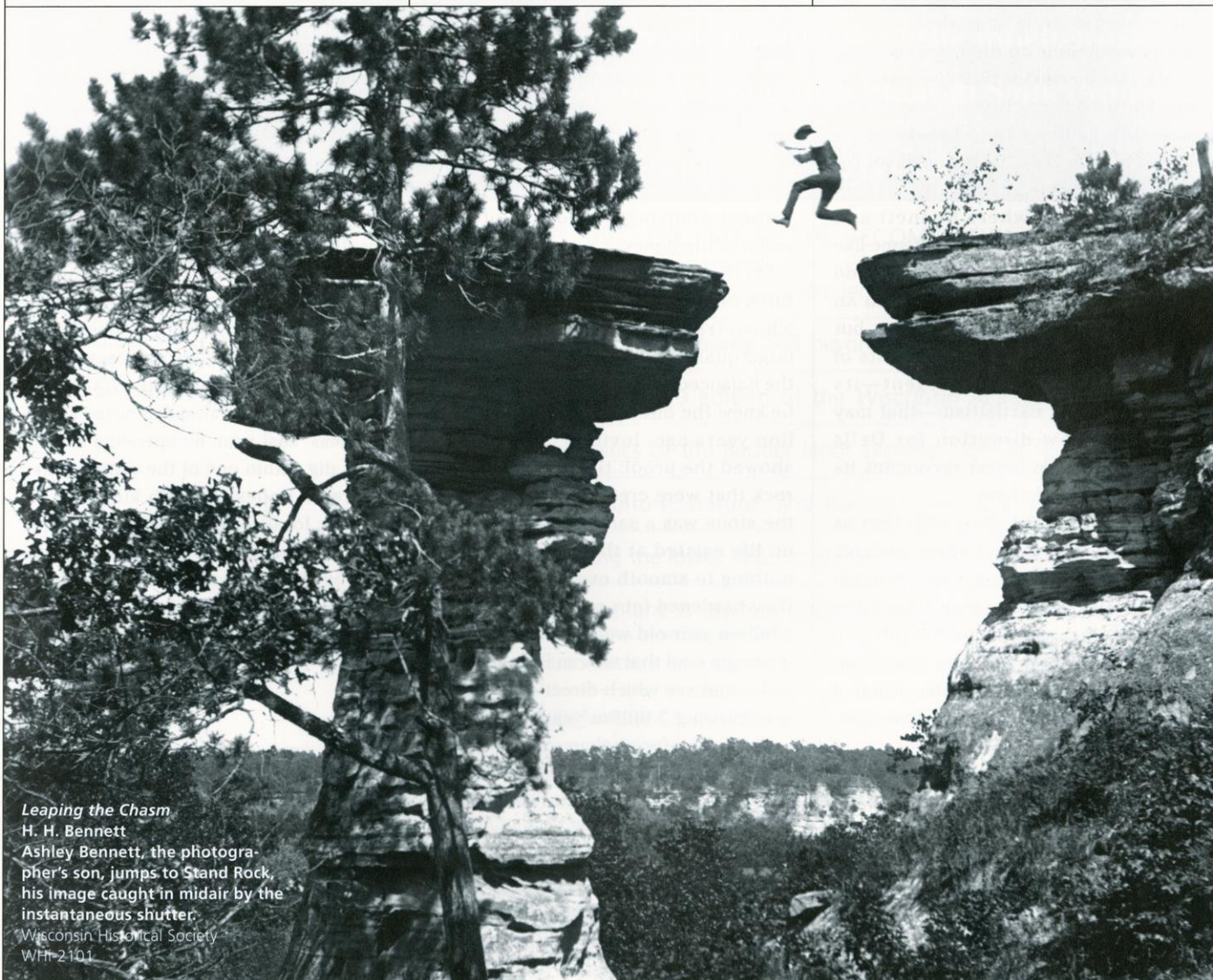
Although Bennett, for example, is often portrayed as Wisconsin's Ansel Adams, the enterprising photographer had just as much P. T. Barnum in him. He loved selling the Dells almost as much as he loved living there.

Bennett had the keen eye of a marketer, always prescient of new ways to advance his business. One of the early pioneers in stereoscopic photography, Bennett made some 200 of the distinctive multilayered images during his years wandering the Dells. But he didn't do it for artistic kicks. He was well aware that viewing stereoscopes was popular in certain segments of Victorian society. He is said to have sold more than 20,000 of his stereoscopic images in 1874 alone.

He knew that his portrayals of stirring beauty would entice many to want to

see the Dells for themselves, and it was no mere convenience that led him to set up his studio near the boat dock. As riverboats filled with passengers from Chicago, Detroit, and Milwaukee, Bennett snapped pictures, which he developed in his studio while the boats were touring. Once the tourists came back, Bennett was there to sell them souvenir pictures, a tactic now employed by virtually every cruise ship in operation.

Bennett's crown as the Dells' chief pitchman would later be inherited by the irrepressible Tommy Bartlett, a radio announcer turned water-ski show promoter who moved Dells tourism in a new direction. Many blame Bartlett for the overspun mess the Dells is today—but, whether you love him or hate him,



Leaping the Chasm

H. H. Bennett

Ashley Bennett, the photographer's son, jumps to Stand Rock, his image caught in midair by the instantaneous shutter.

Wisconsin Historical Society
WHI-2101

Although H. H. Bennett is often portrayed as Wisconsin's Ansel Adams, the enterprising photographer had just as much P. T. Barnum in him. He loved selling the Dells almost as much as he loved living there.

no one denies his influence. Bartlett's contributions to the Dells go well beyond his famous air-and-water attraction (later to be followed by Robot World and the Russian space station exhibit). One of Bartlett's early marketing gimmicks was to have his employees sneak out during his water shows and paste Tommy Bartlett bumper stickers to every car in the parking lot. The guy knew how to draw an audience—and keep one. When he died in 1998—fittingly, just days after the big Labor Day weekend that each year marks the sunset of summer tourism—he left a Mir-sized hole in the commercial soul of Wisconsin Dells.

Who picks up where Bennett and Bartlett left off? It could be someone like Paul Herr, who has all the qualities to do the job. Herr may not have been an instant hit with his Nature Safaris, but he intriguingly integrates elements of the Dells' past and present—its Bennettism and Bartlettism—that may presage a new direction for Dells tourism, one that better reconciles its inherent contradictions.

Recently, I tagged along with Herr as he led a group of Ripon College students through Devil's Lake State Park. Although future Dells travelers won't have the chance to hear Herr give his pitch in person (unless they're part of a group tour), he presents one possible vision of the future of Dells tourism. In this case, it's a future enveloped in its past.

In the parking lot of a scuba shop on the north side of Devil's Lake, Herr gathered the group around his zebra-painted van and said he was about to take them to a place as captivating as the Grand Canyon. The line is a Herr favorite, one he's used on university professors, retirees, curious tourists, bored 10-year-

olds, and many others. It's an expression not only of the spectacular beauty to come, but of his bubbling enthusiasm for the land and its lessons.

Herr delivers what he calls a "tour with an attitude." He passionately believes that geology is interesting—or that, in the words of one Ripon student, "rocks rock"—and his tour is a two-hour whirlwind of energy and vivid imagery, delivered as Herr scampers up rocky trails to stunning overlooks. There is, in the tradition of Bennett, an appreciation for the great beauty of the surroundings, and our place in it. And there are plenty of nods to Bartlett—wisecracks, jokes, puns—enough to add to the experience without plunging too deeply into the realm of the hokey.

On the tour, Herr painted sharp pictures of worlds that seem remote, but whose traces are all around us. At a large quartzite boulder at the base of the Balanced Rock Trail, he bragged that he knew the direction of the wind 2 billion years ago. Inviting doubters, he showed the proof: tiny grooves in the rock that were created at a time when the stone was a sandy beach. Because no life existed at the time, there was nothing to smooth over the ripples as they hardened into rock, giving Herr a 2-billion-year-old weathervane. "I think it's really cool that we can look at a rock today and see which direction the wind was blowing 2 billion years ago," Herr said, playing for applause. "I think that deserves a few, 'Ooohs,' don't you?"

At the top of the trail, on a rocky outcrop overlooking Devil's Lake, Herr ended his tour with the message he wanted so fervently for Dells tourists to hear. He calls it the gift of the big picture. "When viewed from the 5 billion-year history of our planet, your personal

problems don't seem so significant," he told the group. "They will not be important in two years, much less 2 billion years. From the geologic perspective, your lifetime is an instant in time. What do you want to do with this instant—waste it worrying about silly problems, or treasure each tick of the clock?"

Later, I asked Herr if he felt bad about not making Nature Safaris a hit with the water park crowd. "I'm not down about it," he said. "I gave it my best shot." This, I knew from Herr's sermon on the mount, was the optimism inherent to geology. Geologists understand the meaning of constructs like millions and billions of years, and they're always studying the seemingly impossible, like the 10,000-mile transportation of a continent. You can't blame them for believing that they can move mountains. They know it happens all the time.

In the years he shuttled the water park crowd off to see the original thing, Herr never once heard from someone that the trip was a waste of time. The idea "almost worked," he says, somewhat wistfully. He couldn't convince enough people to take a look at his new vision—despite it being the oldest one you'll find in the Dells. He didn't move the mountain, but he reminded us what all geologists know—that anything is possible if you have sufficient time and pressure.

Herr isn't dwelling on what went wrong. In fact, he's already started a new business. Last year, he opened a staged fossil dig within one of the water parks, where he hopes to teach kids how to look for fossils—and maybe sneak in a few plugs for getting out into the wild land beyond the poolside. "I figure if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," he says.

*Michael Penn is senior editor of **On Wisconsin**, the alumni magazine of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has written about Wisconsin places for the **Chicago Tribune** and other publications.*

Dreaming of Badger: The Inside Story

An update on the future of the much-storied
Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Sauk Prairie.

BY CURT MEINE AND MIKE MOSSMAN

View from the Nitrator House. Nitroglycerin produced here trickled down the rubber-lined wooden trough along the walkway, to be used in the manufacture of ball powder and rocket propellant.

Photo by Greg Conniff

SINCE 1997, THE FATE OF THE DECOMMISSIONED Badger Army Ammunition Plant has preoccupied concerned citizens and elected officials in Sauk County and beyond. As noted in a special feature package in the fall 2000 edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, the unique characteristics of the Badger lands provide “special opportunities to integrate place, culture, nature, and history.” Sitting at the base of the Baraboo Hills, along the lower Wisconsin River, and in the basin of the former Sauk Prairie, the plant is layered deep in geological, ecological, Native American, Euro-American, agricultural, military, and industrial history. Its 7,354 acres contain much of Wisconsin’s experience as a place and a people. The drama of Badger’s reuse, still unfolding, adds yet another layer to this much-storied land.

Most Wisconsin citizens, if they know Badger at all, know it only as a vast passing landscape of dilapidated infrastructure along U.S. Highway 12 between

Baraboo and Madison. Even nearby residents of Sauk Prairie, many of whom farmed Badger soils or worked Badger machines in past decades, have been

separated—physically and metaphorically—by Badger’s perimeter chain-link fence. Now a new exhibit, “Inside the Fence: Reclaiming History at the Badger Army Ammunition Plant,” offers viewers a chance to pass through the fence and see Badger through the lenses of some of Wisconsin’s most accomplished photographers. Organized by the Badger History Group, “Inside the Fence” has been four years in the making, and draws upon not only original images but the Badger Plant’s own extensive photo archives as well. Now on display at the River Arts Center in Prairie du Sac, the exhibit will move this summer to the Wisconsin Historical Society Museum in Madison, where it will be accompanied by several public presentations on Badger’s history and future. The Badger History Group has also sponsored a newly published, in-depth history of the site, from its prairie origins through the Vietnam era, written by Wisconsin’s Michael Goc and entitled *Powder, People*

and Place: Badger Ordnance Works and the Sauk Prairie (New Past Press, Inc.).

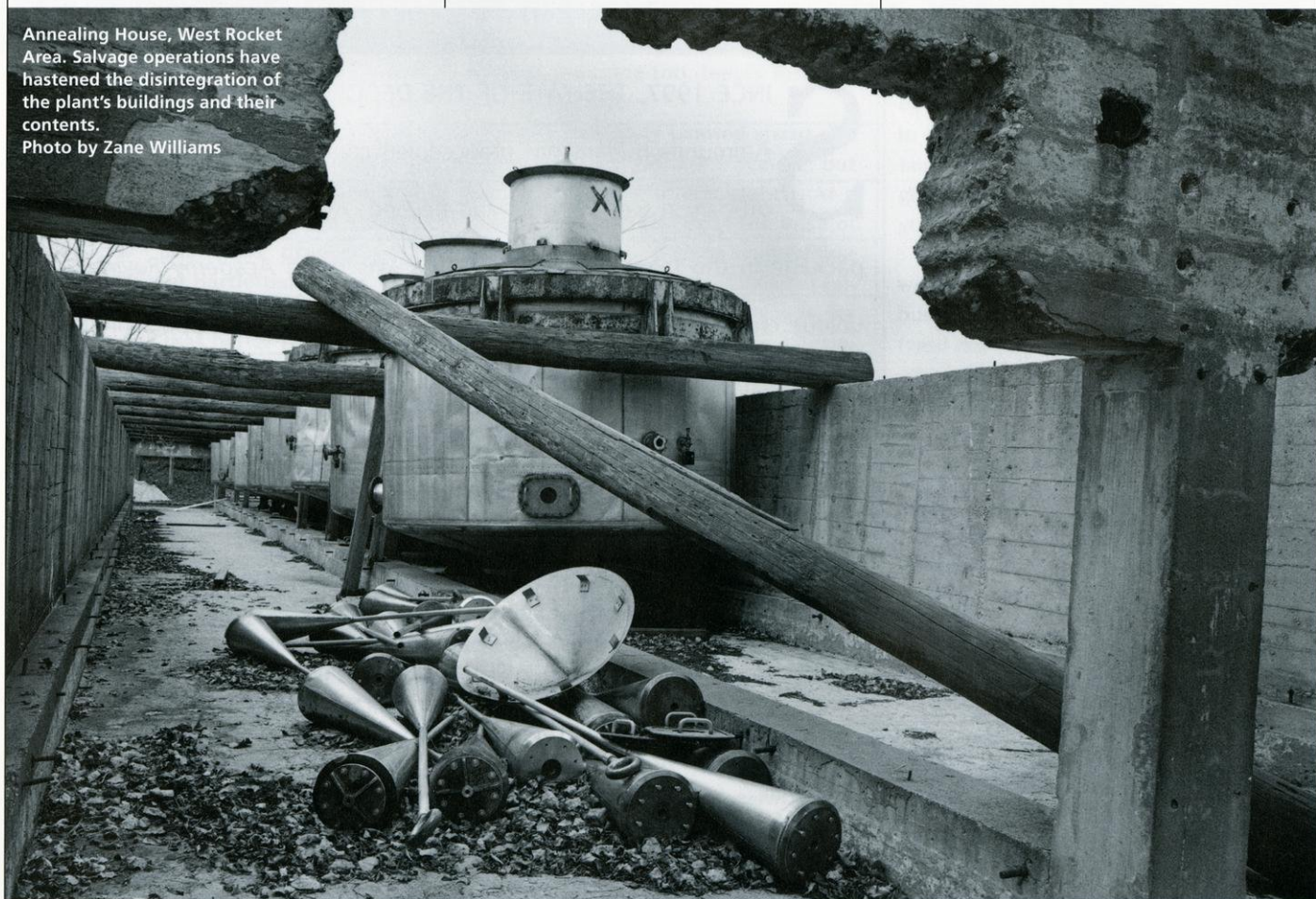
The exhibit and book exemplify the critical role that cultural expression has assumed in reimagining Badger and working through the complex politics of its reuse. The potential for creative reuse has stimulated a predictably intense community discussion. But that discussion has occurred not only in official meetings, but also on stage, in schoolrooms and lecture halls, in gallery spaces, along trails, in prairie fields, under oak canopies, on terminal moraines. As contentious as the debate over Badger’s future has sometimes been, it has been moderated through a grassroots commitment to telling Badger’s stories from the inside out.

So what has happened in that debate, and what does Badger’s future look like?

In the summer of 2000, Sauk County, with assistance from the office of Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, established a 21-member Badger Reuse

Committee (BRC) and charged it with the task of coming to consensus. Over a period of nine months, through a series of 17 public committee meetings and numerous other working group meetings, the diverse voices of the BRC crafted a final report that outlines a future for Badger built on its unique qualities. The report, and the consensus it represents, rests on a set of clearly defined shared values, including the importance of keeping the Badger property whole; assurance of complete and timely environmental cleanup; the potential of Badger for education, research, recreation, and ecological restoration; and the desire to reuse Badger in a manner that reconciles past conflicts. The Sauk County Board of Supervisors formally endorsed the BRC’s plan in May 2001. The plan has since garnered support as well from a broad spectrum of local governments; businesses; and community, faith-based, environmental, and conservation organizations.

Annealing House, West Rocket Area. Salvage operations have hastened the disintegration of the plant’s buildings and their contents.
Photo by Zane Williams



Yet no one party to the consensus has sole authority or even responsibility to adhere to the BRC plan. Carrying forward the vision for a new Badger has depended on old-fashioned virtues: trust, patience, flexibility, and perseverance. The task of implementation has fallen to the Badger Intergovernmental Group (BIG), which includes representatives from the *five* levels of government involved in forging Badger's future: the U.S. federal government, the Ho-Chunk tribal government, the state of Wisconsin, Sauk County, and the two affected local townships (Merrimac and Sumpter). Meeting since September 2001, the BIG parties have labored to work out a general land-use plan, a land-ownership "footprint," a joint memorandum of understanding, and the outline of a collaborative management board—all in keeping with the values and elements of the BRC plan. The efforts of the BIG, if successful, will result in an unprecedented agreement to balance varied institutional needs with community interests, while realizing Badger's special opportunities. As of this writing, the BIG representatives continue to consult with one another, and with other Badger stakeholders, to work out details.

So what may we expect of Badger's next incarnation? As of this writing, in June 2002, it appears that the Badger lands eventually will be transferred, in roughly equal measure, to the Ho-Chunk Nation (through the U.S. Bureau of

Indian Affairs); the U.S. Department of Agriculture (which operates its Dairy Forage Research Center on a portion of the property); and the state of Wisconsin. These entities, serving together with community representatives on a management board, will work toward harmonizing varied uses of the land: protection and restoration of the site's natural communities and important cultural features; promotion of sustainable agriculture through ongoing research and demonstration; development of low-impact recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, and wildlife viewing; and realization of Badger's unparalleled educational opportunities. Cleanup and remediation of Badger's contaminated sites and groundwater will continue to be the responsibility of the U.S. Army and is likely to continue for at least another decade. Although much of Badger's existing infrastructure will need to be removed, there is already an active program (organized by the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory in Madison) to examine the potential for deconstruction and reuse of the building materials, on site and off. The best of the buildings can be maintained and converted to support future uses, including establishment of an administrative, educational, and interpretive center. In all of these efforts, the involvement of the local communities will be encouraged—and required.

The exhibit "Inside the Fence: Reclaiming History at the Badger Army Ammunition Plant" is on display through June 29 at the River Arts Center at the Sauk Prairie High School. Display hours are 3–6 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays, and from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. It will be displayed at the Wisconsin Historical Society Museum in Madison from July 13 to October 12. For more information, call 608/264-6555.

Badger has a long history as contested territory, as a place where forces originating far beyond its production lines, its fence lines, and its Sauk Prairie setting have often placed its inhabitants in conflict with one another. Through the conversion process of the last few years, the many players now on the scene at Badger are seeking to turn a new page and write a new story—not by ignoring that history, but by reclaiming it and transforming it. As they prepare to receive the Badger lands into their stewardship, we stand on the verge of a unique achievement. Badger may again serve as a local, state, national, and tribal resource, and as an example of people overcoming inherited tensions to pursue a common cause.

Curt Meine is director of conservation programs at the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters and president of the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance. Mike Mossman is a wildlife research biologist with the Department of Natural Resources and past chairperson of the Badger History Group. Mossman wrote an article about the Badger Army Ammunition Plant that appeared in the fall 2000 edition of the Wisconsin Academy Review.

*For more information about Michael Goc's book, **Powder, People and Place: Badger Ordnance Works and the Sauk Prairie**, call 608/356-1001.*



Finishing Area, C-Line Smokeless Powder. Nature reclaims an escape chute and heavily barricaded production building. Photo by David Heberlein

A Creative Retreat

The Clearing in Door County offers instruction, companionship—and just enough solitude for creative reflection.



BY RONNIE HESS

Situated at the tip of Door County, The Clearing has a 130-acre wooded campus with stone cottages, stone circles or gathering areas, and a schoolhouse and a main lodge (pictured here) designed by noted landscape architect Jens Jensen. But the essential “clearing” is to be found within, says our author.

Photos courtesy of The Clearing

DRIVING UP TO DOOR COUNTY for a midsummer week of poetry writing at The Clearing, I realize I have no idea what I am in for. I have decided to take a workshop entitled “Poetry: Reaching In, Reaching Out” with Wisconsin’s first poet laureate, Ellen Kort, almost on a whim. Several months back, a friend of mine had recommended The Clearing after a workshop with poet Norbert Blei. I had heard about the place for years and been intrigued enough to survey the roster of classes. With two weeks of vacation, one of which was to be spent working out at a spa in California, I had decided another few days of quiet contemplation might provide a nice balance—not for me the mind/body split.

I had taken poetry classes before—in the early 1990s with UW–Madison professors and poets Ron Wallace and Roberta Hill, and 20 years before that with Alan Shapiro and Diane Middlebrook at Stanford University, where I spent a year on a fellowship.

And I’d written poems on and off ever since I was a teenager growing up in New York City. But I had never given poetry a great deal of my time. I wondered what a week would be like.

“Poetry is a natural process of marking your journey along the path and dis-

covering a self you have yet to meet and the self you already know," The Clearing's brochure had said about Kort's workshop. It described poetry as a way to tap one's wellspring of energy and creativity. The course, The Clearing went on to explain, would be supportive and honor words, rhythms, and life experiences. It said to just bring a notebook and a favorite pen.

But as I make my way up the highway from Madison I start to feel edgy. What if I get writer's block? What if the poems are truly dreadful? What if everyone else's efforts are better than mine? I try to tell myself to view the week as a voyage of discovery and not to be too hard on myself.

Actually, The Clearing bills itself as a "school of discovery," and for good reason. Founded in Ellison Bay in 1935 by the Danish-born landscape architect Jens Jensen, it offers classes that emphasize direct experience with nature, creative expression, contemplation, and personal growth. Jensen, who bought the property in 1919 as a summer home, had dreamed of establishing a retreat for people looking to take a break from the stresses of everyday living to renew their connection to the environment and, by extension, themselves. For Jensen believed that an understanding of a person's "regional ecology" and culture is essential to "clear thinking." Yes, there is a "clearing," or meadow on the property—about 130 acres tucked deep into the woods and on a high bluff overlooking the shores of Green Bay—but it's just part of the overall experience. The essential "clearing" is to be found within.

A few more words about Jensen—he is considered one of America's most important landscape designers and environmental preservationists. Not only did he create many distinctive features in Chicago's parks and nearby private estates, but he also achieved renown for his work establishing the Illinois State Parks system and the Cook County Forest Preserves. At The Clearing, Jensen's aesthetic is ever in evidence—there are several stone circles or gathering areas, and the "campus" of stone cottages, a main

"There is nothing too small to write about," says instructor Ellen Kort. "I want to prove to you that you can write about very ordinary things in your life."

lodge, and a schoolhouse form an aesthetic whole. The main campus buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. After Jensen's death in 1951, friends, with substantial financial help from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, maintained The Clearing. It became an independent, nonprofit organization in 1987.

By the time I check in and settle into my cabin—equipped with built-in desks, bookshelves, and, very important, good reading light—it's time for dinner, served family style, at the main lodge, followed by an orientation and slideshow at the schoolhouse.

OPENING UP

We introduce ourselves. There are about 35 students—mostly women, mostly over 40, and mostly from the Midwest. Half have signed up for the poetry workshop, another half for an oil painting class taught by Frankie Johnson, a Lake Zurich, Illinois, artist who, unlike Kort, has taught at The Clearing before. (During "high season," from May through October, The Clearing offers weeklong classes focusing on nature studies, fine arts, skilled crafts, and the humanities. Weekend classes comprise the program the rest of the year.) Two of the painting students, with a humorous bent, identify themselves as "Claude Monet" and "Mary Cassatt." The poets don't dare.

We break into groups. While the painters set up easels and canvases, the poetry class follows Kort's first instructions to fill Styrofoam cups with water and to pour them, one by one, into a common bowl. Kort asks us to think of a body of water close to where we live. As we pour, we begin to tell our stories—of growing up along lakes and oceans, of living close or far from home. At first, it's a bit too much for me—too "touchy

feely." I'm not ready to share my history with strangers, but I keep this to myself.

Kort wants us to open up not just to the group but to ourselves, to take risks with ideas and emotions, with images, language, and ultimately our poetry. She reassures us it's okay if we become blocked or don't write great poems. Everything in time, she says. In any case, she tells us, she has exercises to help unblock us, exercises she's developed for getting over those moments when even she's been stuck.

One student asks, "What's a poem?" "You know it when you write it," Kort replies. We begin quoting Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and Archibald MacLeish, who, one student says, advised, "A poem shouldn't mean but be." Class over, I walk back to my cabin in the dark along a lighted footpath, and after a little light reading—there is no television or radio, and only one telephone in the lodge and schoolhouse—I turn in.

The first sentence of Ellen Kort's biography tells you she's from Appleton and is Wisconsin's poet laureate. But it's the last line that suggests who she really is.



It reads, "She celebrates poetry by using glow-in-the-dark chalk to write poems on city sidewalks."

From the moment she walks into a classroom, wearing bubble-gum pink running shoes and a pin in the shape of a turtle—her totem—you know Kort is a woman not bound by convention. She's an adventurous woman who looks for the unusual, who doesn't take the obvious for granted, and who doesn't hold back, even when you ask her about her tattoo—it's of a fly on her upper left arm.

Born in Glenwood City, Wisconsin, in 1936, and raised in Menomonie, Kort graduated from high school and married before she was 20 (she's now divorced), hoping to go to art school later on. The mother of six children and the grandmother of four, Kort turned to poetry when her marriage was failing—her husband had forbidden her to write—taking as many poetry classes as she could. Meanwhile she pursued a career in advertising and as an assistant manager and talk show host at WHBY, a radio station in Appleton. She is the author of a dozen books, including children's books and a cookbook as well as poetry. Her most recent effort, published by Howell Press, is a book about women quilters entitled *Wisconsin Women and their Quilts: Stories in the Stitches*.

Kort's poems don't necessarily go by the book. Her verse figures in the architecture of Milwaukee's Midwest Express Center, Green Bay's Botanical Gardens, and Appleton's Fox River Mall. She has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Pablo Neruda Literary Prize for Poetry. The *Wisconsin Academy Review* has praised her, describing her poems as "resonant with Wisconsin country sounds and images, and her readers are blessed with poetry that explores not only her past but the past of us all."

Kort gets us going right away Monday morning. In the first exercise, she turns a routine "getting to know you" session into poetry by asking us to make lists of the things we have in common. We go around the room—eyeglasses, gray hair, children or grandchildren, education, jobs, hobbies, pets. Some of us are published poets. A few of us have never

written a line. The exercise brings us together and breaks the ice. We laugh as we realize we all, or almost all, wear "sensible shoes."

The morning defines Kort's teaching technique. She stresses the need to pay attention to detail, of showing, not telling. Everyone shares experiences, including Kort. And we read poems—

GETTING CLEAR

Writing classes at The Clearing this summer and fall include:

"Poetry: Reaching In, Reaching Out," Ellen Kort, July 14–20

"Writing Fiction for Children and Young Adults," Julia Pferdehirt, July 21–27

"Journal Paths," Darlene Cole, July 28–August 3

"Life-Story Writing," Jerry Apps, August 11–17

"Adventures in Writing," Barbara Fitz Vroman, August 18–24

"Writing as an Act of Discovery," Solace Holtz, August 25–31

"The Story Only You Can Tell: Innovative Methods for Autobiography, Biography and Memoir," John Lehman (*Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry editor), September 11

"Writers' Boot Camp," Judy Bridges, September 29–October 5

"Getting Inside the Poem," Norbert Blei, October 19

For more information, see www.theclearing.org or call The Clearing at 920/854-4088.

ours, hers, and those of other poets. Within a few hours, we have written poems that ostensibly deal with how we got to The Clearing but actually discuss themes ranging from the love of language and literature to losing one's emotional compass to falling ill or having to cope with the death of close friends.

"We have all been wounded," Kort says, "we all have that in common." She goes on to say that we can heal the wounds with poetry, but that the process takes courage. She reveals that

her son Chris died at the age of 28 in a boating accident on Green Bay several years ago. For a long time after his death, Kort says she couldn't write, turning instead to sculpting with clay and driftwood, creating what she calls poetry in her hands. And "grief dolls," more than 50 of them, which Kort has exhibited. She also taught writing workshops to cancer victims, at-risk children, and battered women. "I know that by giving out you get back," Kort later tells me.

WRITE ABOUT LAUNDRY

The talk turns to keeping a journal, of becoming aware of our dreams. "Okay, I'm getting off the soap box," Kort says, and we take a break. Later, after dinner, just before sundown, we gather around a stone circle for a poetry-slam of sorts, reciting poems and playing Indian flutes.

My days begin to take on a gentle oneness. I wake up early, at sunrise, and go for morning walks. Sometimes Mike Schneider, The Clearing's executive director, or Erik Rinkleff, the resident landscape architect, leads the walks. Sometimes a small group from class and Kort go alone. One day we catch glimpses of a doe and her fawn out strolling; on another morning we see dew shimmering in a field full of spiderwebs. In between classes, I look around and listen. Words come to me and, remarkably, I write.

Each morning, Kort lights a slow-burning candle to signal the beginning of class. Each evening, she blows it out. On her table there also are art objects she has brought with her for inspiration: a turtle skull from the Bahamas, and two pieces of sculpture from New Mexico—a bear fired with horsehair, and a woman so hunched over you can scarcely see her face. And there is also Fred, a stuffed hand puppet shaped like a crow, with an orange beak and feet, and big eyes. Squeeze him and he actually caws. We joke that he is saying, "That's a crappy poem." Kort tosses him into a corner of the classroom. "Find a symbol of your own for a critic," she tells us. It is another of her understated lessons laced with humor. You need to know when to take Fred or leave him, when

he's on target or cruelly off-base. As we begin to critique one another's poems, Kort establishes key ground rules. She urges us to be gentle and constructive, to understand that, for sentimental reasons, some people may be reluctant to change something, and to respect our choices. She gives us the option of refusing a critique.

Over the next several days there are more exercises as Kort encourages us to bring out poems, no matter how seemingly pedestrian their subject. Cleaning house, doing the laundry. "There is nothing too small to write about," she says. "I want to prove to you that you can write about very ordinary things in your life."

Kort is as likely to make a point reading us poems by sixth-graders from one of her classes as those by Pablo Neruda or U.S. poet laureate Billy Collins. She's determined that poetry be accessible to as many people as possible. As state poet laureate, she's hell-bent on taking poetry as far as she can go—to schools and colleges, community groups, even orchestra halls around the state. "I find it hard to say no these days," Kort says. In between her travels, Kort teaches at UW–Green Bay, where she is an adjunct professor. She also teaches poetry at a charter school in Appleton and at the UW–Fox Valley campus.

The days go by quickly. We write "fill-in-the-blank" poems where we borrow

One day we catch glimpses of a doe and her fawn out strolling; on another morning we see dew shimmering in a field full of spider webs. In between classes, I look around and listen. Words come to me and, remarkably, I write.

every other line from a published poet's poem, inserting our own stanzas in between. The idea is to give us a jump-start if we're stuck. We read newspaper articles and take words and phrases from them, writing them into our own work. We put our poems on postcards to send home to friends. Kort has already stamped the cards, so we're committed to sending them, even if only to ourselves. We write poems using repetition, poems built around giving advice, poems crafted as memos, as maps. On Thursday, the only day most of us venture away from The Clearing, we visit a nearby art gallery. The gallery has welcomed us almost extravagantly, opening its doors to us early. We have the place to ourselves while we write poems about the exhibit of Native American painting and sculpture.

As we near the end of the week, Kort gives us practical advice on how to revise and edit our poems, on how to decide when to "send them out" for possible publication in journals and maga-

zines. She also has other lessons to teach us, encouraging us to collaborate with other artists, to recognize the importance of a supportive environment, to seek it out. At our last class, Kort takes the vessel of water we filled Monday morning, goes outside, and pours it back into the earth. We are in a circle, holding hands, saying prayers, making wishes, wondering not a little about what will happen when we go home. Many of us hug one another as we say good-bye. That night, at a farewell party at the schoolhouse, the painters display their paintings and we read from our work. We give Kort a few presents of appreciation, including a basket of stones, each bearing one of our names.

Setting off down the highway Saturday morning, I realize that in five days I have written well over a dozen poems, more than I have managed to produce in as many years. I am not quite sure if they're good, bad, or indifferent, but it doesn't matter. I feel productive, focused, and happy. I am high for weeks.

Ronnie Hess is director of communications in the Office of International Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She is a freelance writer who contributes frequently to regional magazines.



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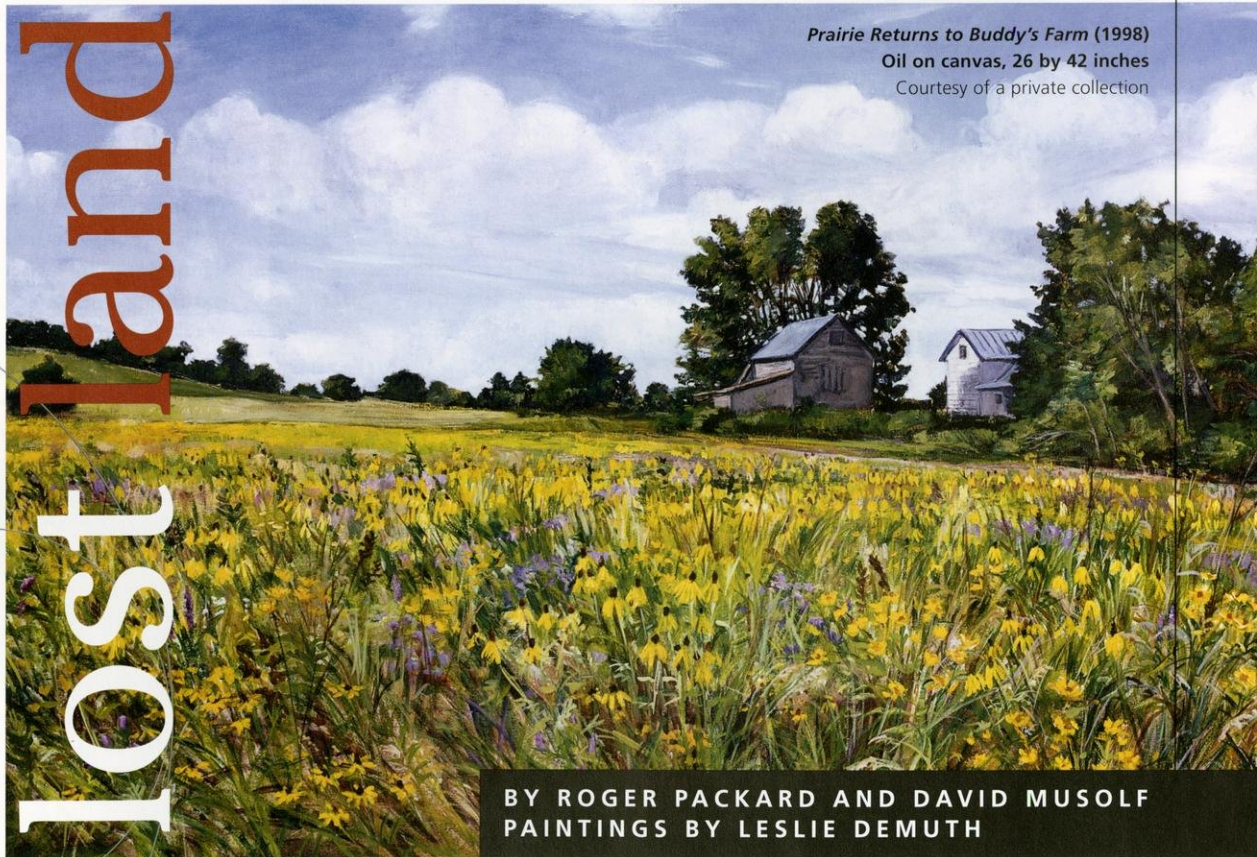
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WISCONSIN PUBLIC TELEVISION



Picture a lost landscape

FOR A WISCONSIN PAINTER INTERESTED IN LANDSCAPES, the 21st century looks to be a challenging time. Our classic rural landscape of pastures, cornfields, woodlots, grand red barns, and humble white farmhouses is rapidly yielding to an aesthetic “wasteland” (not to mention a biological wasteland) of factory farms and trophy homes. But while most of us can still summon a mental picture of small-farm rural Wisconsin, imagining what our landscape looked like before European settlement is not so easy. For us, it is a vision that developed gradually as we began to make management decisions on our worn-out farm in a corner of northwest Jefferson County known as Faville Grove. After a few false starts, the developing vision would lead to the establishment of a 357-acre Madison Audubon Society sanctuary named Faville Grove Sanctuary—and would give a talented landscape artist named Leslie DeMuth subject matter for her canvas.

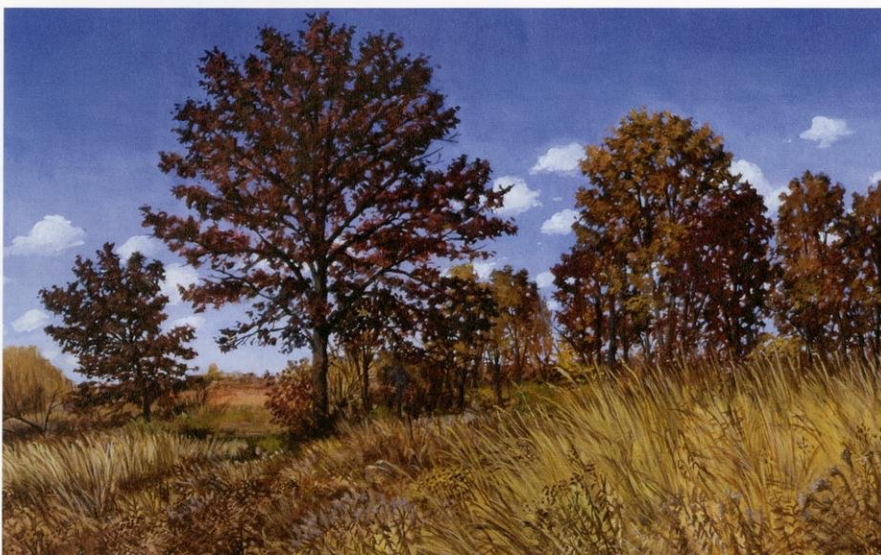


Prairie Returns to Buddy's Farm (1998)
Oil on canvas, 26 by 42 inches
Courtesy of a private collection

BY ROGER PACKARD AND DAVID MUSOLF
PAINTINGS BY LESLIE DEMUTH

Leslie DeMuth's prairie paintings are an artistic tribute to a signature Wisconsin landscape—and to an ambitious restoration project in Jefferson County.

Day Begins, October Marsh (1999)
Oil on canvas, 20 by 48 inches



Red Oaks, Blue Sky (2000)
Oil on canvas, 26 by 42 inches

During our first years on the farm, we focused our attention on the farmstead and cropland. When not making a living in Madison, we made hay, cropped the fields, gardened, raised chickens, geese, and goats, built a house, and repaired old farm buildings. Beyond the farm fields, on the steep former pastures and in the woods on the ridge top, our management “plan” was to “let it go back to nature.” Later we would come to understand that this plan generally results in letting it go to invasive species.

Our first intentional effort to alter the landscape was inspired in 1984 by the state’s woodland tax law. In exchange for planting 5,000 state-grown white pine seedlings on an eroded west-facing slope, the state would reduce our property taxes to a mere \$1.25 per acre. Such a deal! Here was an opportunity to create a shady, cool haven for wildlife, prevent soil erosion, protect the water table, and save money to boot. But by the early 1990s, as the trees shaded out the surrounding grass and began their adolescent growth spurt, with the shapely evergreens coalescing into a single dark mass on the hillside, we finally began to see what was rapidly disappearing from our view.

In the fall of 1993, a class studying restoration ecology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison adopted our

A VISUAL POEM OF THANKFULNESS

BY LESLIE DEMUTH

The paintings on these pages were all created on the Faville Grove Sanctuary in Jefferson County, land that is now being restored to its native habitat. When I first began my paintings, I knew little about prairie and native habitat restoration and its value. My interest was in the beauty of the landscape, the aging farm buildings, and the combination of woods, fields, and wetlands that I found there. As a painter of the landscape, my task is to capture the wonder of what I see, the light on the land, the color of an autumn leaf, or the line that is created by a blade of grass. From David Musolf and Roger Packard I learned of the many native plant species, the animals that inhabit them, and the dedication and vision required to restore them. Their work seeks to preserve an endangered and ever more rare place. My landscape painting is a visual poem of thankfulness for the natural world. I have painted these evolving farmlands through the seasons, often at the edges of the day. Behind these paintings of this specific place and time is the friendship that developed between David and Roger and my husband and me, and my appreciation of what they have done with their vision for this land.

(detail) *August Dawn* (2001)
Oil on canvas, 24 by 60 inches





farm and the adjacent Diedrich-Alexander Wildlife Area for its class project. At the same time, we purchased more land when the county declared Buddy, our elderly bachelor neighbor to the north, incompetent and ordered the sale of his farm. We ranged farther. Together with the class and alone we saw the countryside from new perspectives. We climbed a knoll where we could see over a wall of brush and for the first time laid eyes on the full expanse of Buddy's marsh: 100 acres of sedge and sphagnum with an island of tamaracks. Buck Island, as it is known locally, rises in the middle, its concentric rings of winterberry and leatherleaf anchoring it to the surrounding wetland.

Concentric rings! Not the right angles we are accustomed to imposing on the landscape. If we are to understand the landscape as it existed before federal surveyors laid their square grid on it, we learned that we must think beyond managing this square field or that rectangular woodlot. We must understand how plant and animal species naturally find their place in the landscape. And in our area, this means understanding how fire behaves in the landscape.

Fire flows with the wind, which in Wisconsin generally means from west to east. It flows faster and hotter uphill; slower and cooler downhill. Fire burns low through the thin vegetation on rocky ridge tops and slows to a crawl in the fallen leaves of fire-resistant oaks. It races across level, rich soils with lush vegetation. It slows, stops, or leaps with the wind when its feet get soggy. It is these characteristics of fire that determine its frequency and intensity at any point in the

Prairie Returns to Buddy's Farm, Autumn (1998)
Oil on canvas, 26 by 42 inches
Courtesy of William Kowaleski

January Hills (2001)
Oil on board, 10 by 36 inches





Prairie Field, July (2000)
Oil on canvas, 30 by 24 inches

landscape, and the frequency and intensity of fire, in turn, strongly influence the distribution of plant communities.

So picture, if you will, a varied, rolling, glacial landscape, its edges softened by fire; its textures defined by fire. Picture a landscape where hundreds of plant species have evolved to coexist, each assemblage of plants thriving in its own corner of the landscape; each with a succession of blooms from spring through late fall; each with its raucous cohort of birds, mammals, amphibians, and insects. Picture a November wetland landscape where the fires rarely reach with smoky-gold tamaracks and blazing red winterberry. Imagine a June landscape where the green of the prairie meets open water at the marsh edge. Imagine a scattering of bur and white oaks casting their shade on west-facing slopes where, hundreds of years earlier, a few tough saplings outgrew the top-killing fires during a series of wet years when the fires failed to jump the marsh.

Picture the gravelly top of the recessional moraine on a bright, breezy April morning, covered with diminutive pasque flowers—or “windflowers,” as an elderly friend called them, growing so thick that as a girl she and a friend filled their aprons with the blossoms, only to have them wilt before reaching home with their ephemeral treasure. Imagine an open wood of red and white oaks on the east, downwind slope of the moraine, the sun-dappled floor home to spring ephemerals and fall asters alike. Continuing east, imagine the prairie leveling out and opening up again, dipping briefly into the Blackbird Pond, the Cole Pond, the Snake Marsh, and other unnamed wet pockets. Picture the prairie rising up to savanna-covered knolls before dropping finally to the

Looking West, January (2001)
 Oil on board, 10 by 12 inches
 Courtesy of David Musolf and Roger Packard



broad flat floodplain of the Crawfish River: a vast, dazzling display of blooms from May through October, home to prairie chickens, upland sandpipers, prairie crayfish and massasauga rattlesnakes, to mention only a few.

We eagerly await the day when our flammable pine trees can be cut for paper pulp to make way for the return of short grass prairie, seedling oaks, fire, and grassland birds. In the meantime, we are advancing our broader dream, having joined forces with the Madison Audubon Society, with various branches of the state and federal governments, with neighboring landowners, with student interns and countless volunteers, and, of course, with an energetic artist, to create the Faville Grove Sanctuary. Madison Audubon has begun adding key pieces to the sanctuary, including acquisition of land on the Crawfish River adjacent to the Faville Prairie State Natural Area, one of only two unplowed remnants of the once great Crawfish Prairie. And we continue the hard work of bringing the vision of a former landscape to life again: controlling invasive species, planting natives, and reintroducing the defining force of fire.

Leslie DeMuth's paintings of the landscape we are working to restore capture a sense of the splendor of that vision. We hope that her work will inspire others to help protect and restore our magnificent Wisconsin landscape.



End of the Season (2001)
 Oil on canvas, 26 by 48 inches



Prairie Edge, January (2001)
Oil on board, 10 by 12 inches

David Musolf and Roger Packard live on their Jefferson County farm-turned-sanctuary in the passive solar and wood-heated home they designed and built themselves. In addition to ecological restoration, they are interested in historic preservation, maintain a large vegetable garden, and keep a small flock of chickens. Musolf grew up in Madison, where he also attended the university and completed a bachelor's degree in zoology before serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in northeastern Brazil. He returned to the UW to study Portuguese and currently serves as UW-Madison's secretary of the faculty. Packard escaped to Wisconsin from the Chicago suburbs. He worked on a dairy farm near Black River Falls for two years after completing his bachelor's degree in biology at Grinnell College in Iowa. He later earned his master's degree in food microbiology from UW-Madison and is presently the administrator for the UW department of chemical engineering.

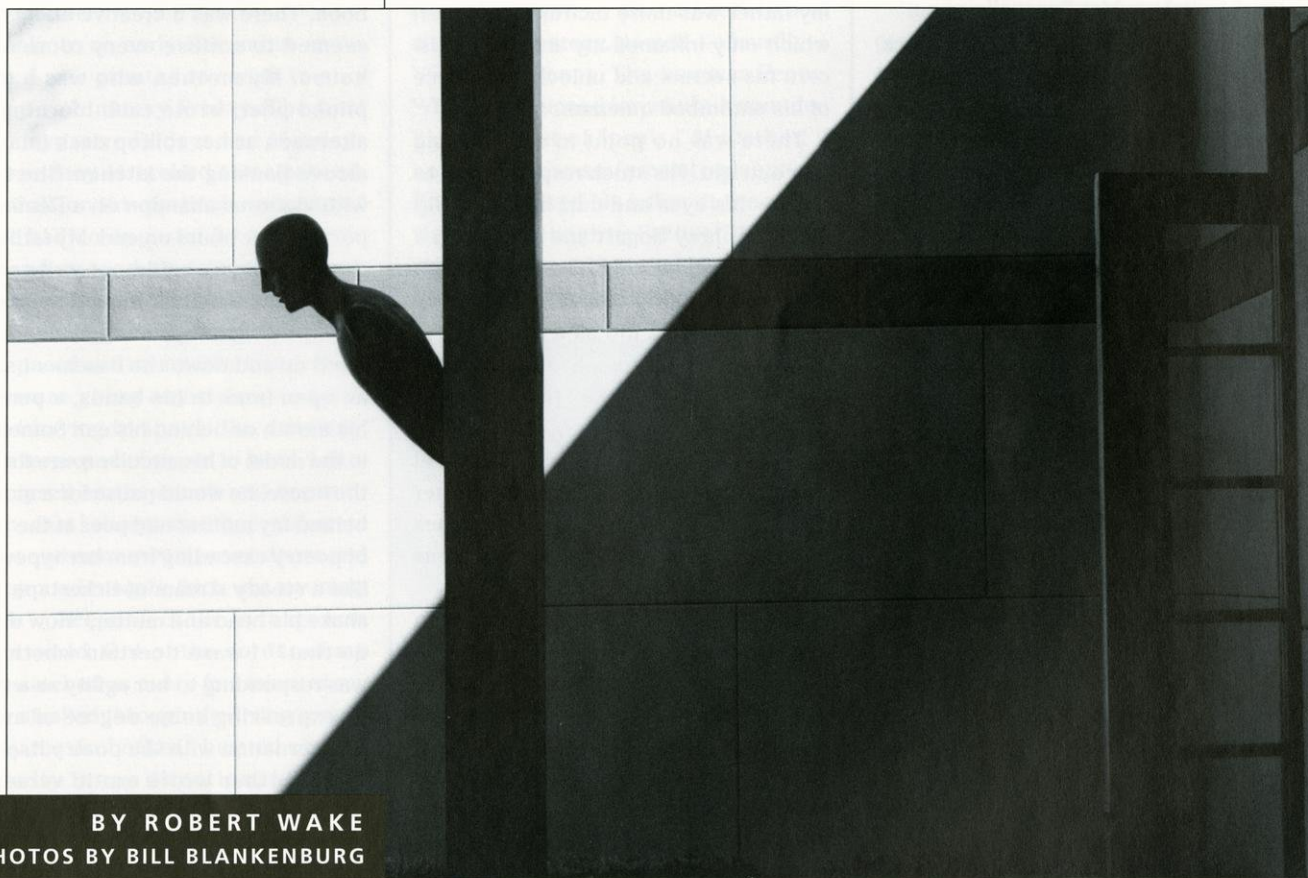
Leslie DeMuth lives in Dane County with her husband, Steve, who shares her love of nature and prairies. DeMuth's art includes paintings of the coastal Upper Peninsula of Michigan, historic architecture of the East Coast, and island paintings of Maine as well as numerous gardens in the Midwest and New England. She received her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1981 and has exhibited on the East Coast and the Midwest. She is represented by Edgewood Orchard Galleries of Door County and enjoys teaching art part-time to the students of Columbus Elementary School in Columbus.

LESLEY DEMUTH
1952, born in Madison, Wisconsin

WISCONSIN
ACADEMY
REVIEW
SHORT STORY
CONTEST
WINNER

FIRST
PLACE

Knights of Pythagoras



BY ROBERT WAKE
PHOTOS BY BILL BLANKENBURG

Photo by Jon Walton



Editor's Note: "Knights of Pythagoras" is a work of fiction, with no relation to any real organization bearing that name.

CASHIERS AT THE STORE SHRUGGED THEIR SHOULDERS with disinterest if I asked what the Knights of Pythagoras did upstairs on Sunday nights. The Pythagorean lecture hall was located on the third floor of the Ben Franklin Five-and-Dime. Everyone knew the lecture hall was there, but no one talked about it. When I was twelve years old, my father gained a position of prominence with the Knights. There was a brief notice printed in *The Saukfield Sentinel*:

Jeffrey Corcoran, a college professor and author of *Charles Brockden Brown and the Gothic Abyss*, has been elected Finance Minister for Wisconsin's southeast chapter of the Knights of Pythagoras. He was preceded in the post by Everett Dooley, a Shrewsville pharmacist, who passed away last month. Professor Corcoran resides in Saukfield with his wife Sandra and their son Miles.

On Sunday evenings at seven o'clock, the Knights of Pythagoras gathered downtown for their weekly meeting. I ached with curiosity and longing when my father headed out the front door of our house. He spent much of the day secluded in the basement, where he immersed himself in mathematical meditations and eerie experiments with flickering UV lamps. My sole access to him on Sundays was the woodsy hint of pipe tobacco that lingered in the air as if he had disappeared in a puff of smoke.

My father wasn't entirely strict about keeping his Pythagorean vow of meeting-day silence. He sometimes burst forth with an off-key *a cappella* rendition of "Nature's Way," a peculiar song about death and ecology from his favorite rock 'n' roll album, *Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus*. But he nevertheless remained aloof, his attention directed toward the numerical symmetry of the universe rather than my limitless desire for baseball or the intricate gluing of model airplanes. At six o'clock my mother prepared dinner. Because he fasted on Sunday, my father never joined us at the table. Instead, he went about the business of showering and dressing for his meeting. He collected his notes and his stack of books and put everything into two overstuffed briefcases that were as bulky and inelegant as airport luggage.

Before leaving the house, he would walk around the dining room table and kiss my mother and me goodnight. We invariably were asleep in bed when he returned home in the wee hours. If he was in a rare expansive mood, he'd grip my shoulder and offer a few departing

words of caution or encouragement, usually along the lines of, "Try to be more attentive to the vegetables on your plate." My parents were vegetarians, or vegans to be precise, a lifestyle choice that didn't annoy me until I discovered cheeseburgers and Slim Jims in the third grade. It was more or less allowed that I could eat meat at school or at friends' houses. Pizza wasn't pizza without pepperoni or sausage. We didn't talk about it. We didn't talk about a lot of things. After he was elected Finance Minister, my father was more taciturn than ever, which only inflamed my anxiety to discern his secrets and unlock the source of his entombed quietism.

There was no point in questioning him outright. His stock response was to narrow his eyes and curl his upper lip like Humphrey Bogart and say, "I run a numbers racket, kid." Then he'd laugh uproariously and tousle my hair. My father had a real job as a professor of English at Milwaukee's Samuel Whittles College. But not the year I turned twelve. He'd taken a sabbatical in order to finish writing a book about Nathaniel Hawthorne. More than that, my father had grown disenchanted with the times we lived in, weary of student rebellions and strident New Left politics.

The Army Math Research Center in Madison was bombed by a radical anti-war faction in August 1970. It happened late on a Sunday night when the building was presumed empty. A night-owl physicist was killed in the explosion. My father's ire was palpable. "You can't blame the misuse of science for the idiocy of war," he said to anyone who would listen to him. He took to arguing vociferously with students at Samuel Whittles. I once saw him nearly come to blows. My mother and I had driven into Milwaukee to pick him up on campus. We found him quarreling toe-to-toe with a semicircle of students in front of the liberal arts building. His height was imposing, but he was such a wafer-thin man at forty-three that he looked frail as bamboo. "The world is a prison!" he was saying, and then his voice cracked with a melodramatic flourish: "The key is where you least expect it." A couple of the students were laughing. There was

one woman raising her fist at my father and saying, "You don't get it." "No, *you* don't get it," my father replied. Back and forth it went, escalating stupidly. My mother leaned hard on the car horn and the noise blared like an air-raid siren. The students converging on my father suddenly dropped their books and backpacks and everyone ducked as if tear gas canisters were flying over the trees.

I was hard-pressed to leave for school each morning during the year my father was home working on his Hawthorne book. There was a creative energy that seemed to suffuse every room of the house. My mother, who was a disciplined poet, wrote each morning and afternoon at her rolltop desk in a snug alcove flanking the kitchen. She typed with vigorous abandon on a Remington portable for hours on end. My father, on the other hand, could not write sitting still for any length of time. He restlessly paced the hallways and rooms, or pattered up and down the basement stairs, an open book in his hands, a pencil in his mouth or behind his ear. Sometimes in the midst of his circular route through the house, he would pause for a moment behind my mother and peer at the pages of poetry cascading from her typewriter like a steady stream of tickertape. He'd shake his head and mutter, "How do you do that?" I wasn't certain whether he was responding to her agility as a typist or expressing some degree of awe or consternation with the poetry itself.

My mother wrote erotic verses for obscure soft-core pornography magazines like *Passion Flower* and *Eros Unlimited*. I was five years old when genital biology was casually demystified and explained to me by my father. The information was conveyed in a footnote-like aside during a backyard disquisition on the crossbreeding of pepper plants. By the time I was twelve, I was so inured to the explicitness of my mother's poems that I took the world of adult sexuality for granted the way a farm boy accepts the banal omnipresence of rutting livestock. Not that I'd ever witnessed a Freudian "primal scene" of my parents making love. I recall one strange family ritual: the sublime silliness of my parents chasing one another through

the house, both of them naked except for the underwear adorning their heads like exotic bird plumage. I remember laughing and laughing. Was this madcap rushing around in fact a prelude to some antic sexual olympiad that played itself out once I was down the block headed for school? I assumed that on some level they engaged in the behavior outlined so graphically—and alliteratively—in my mother's poetry, but it was nothing that enchanted or bewitched me. The only hidden mysteries of the world were Pythagorean.

Thanks to an early November snowstorm, I was granted my wish to stay home one blustery Friday. The best snow days were Fridays and Mondays because they stretched the weekend. Best of all, on this particular occasion, I at last had an opportunity to observe firsthand my parents in thrall to their respective muses. The morning began much as I might have expected: my father paced and my mother typed. None of us were going anywhere, so I was spared having to shovel the driveway. With a large pad of paper in hand, I situated myself on the couch and began to sketch what I always sketched: elaborate castles and mazes with secret doors and underground tunnels. Such was my imaginative conception of the Pythagorean netherworld. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched as every few minutes my father strolled through the living room.

"Pay me no bother," he said absently in my direction, his eyes focused on the book he was holding. After an hour of this, I wandered into the kitchen, where my father was dumping fresh ground coffee into the Mr. Coffee. My parents drank oceans of coffee, day and night. "Writers need to stay alert," my mother liked to say.

The Mr. Coffee gurgled, sizzled, and spit. My father stood plaintively by the kitchen window and watched the blizzard swirling outside. After a moment, he turned to me and said, "Shall I read you a story?"

"A story?" I said.

"As soon as the coffee's ready," said my father. "I'll read you some Hawthorne."

The smile froze on my face. I tried not to let him see my disappointment. Had he said, "I'll read you some Pythagoras," my prayers would have been answered. It was not to be. I was treated to a robust oral interpretation of something titled "The Snow Image," a Frosty-the-Snowman knockoff about a snow-girl invited into a family's home on a winter's day. Under the father's misguided benevolence, the snow-girl is left to "warm" herself by the stove. Of course she ends up as a puddle on the floor. There were also a brother and sister in the story, named—absurdly—Violet and Peony. The boy was Peony. When pronounced forcefully, it sounded like a variant of "penis." My father, if nothing else, was a forceful pronouncer. Peony chastised his father at the end of the tale. "Naughty Father!" the boy exclaimed, just like a whiny neighbor boy I knew at the time, Kevin Simmons,

who never failed to scold me if he detected moral flaws in my behavior. I could never say "shit" or "goddammit" around Kevin, or take a pee behind a bush or a tree, without him reading the riot act and threatening to snitch on me.

My father smiled benignly after finishing his recitation of "The Snow Image." He rose from the couch with an empty coffee cup in his hand and said, "Did you enjoy the story?"

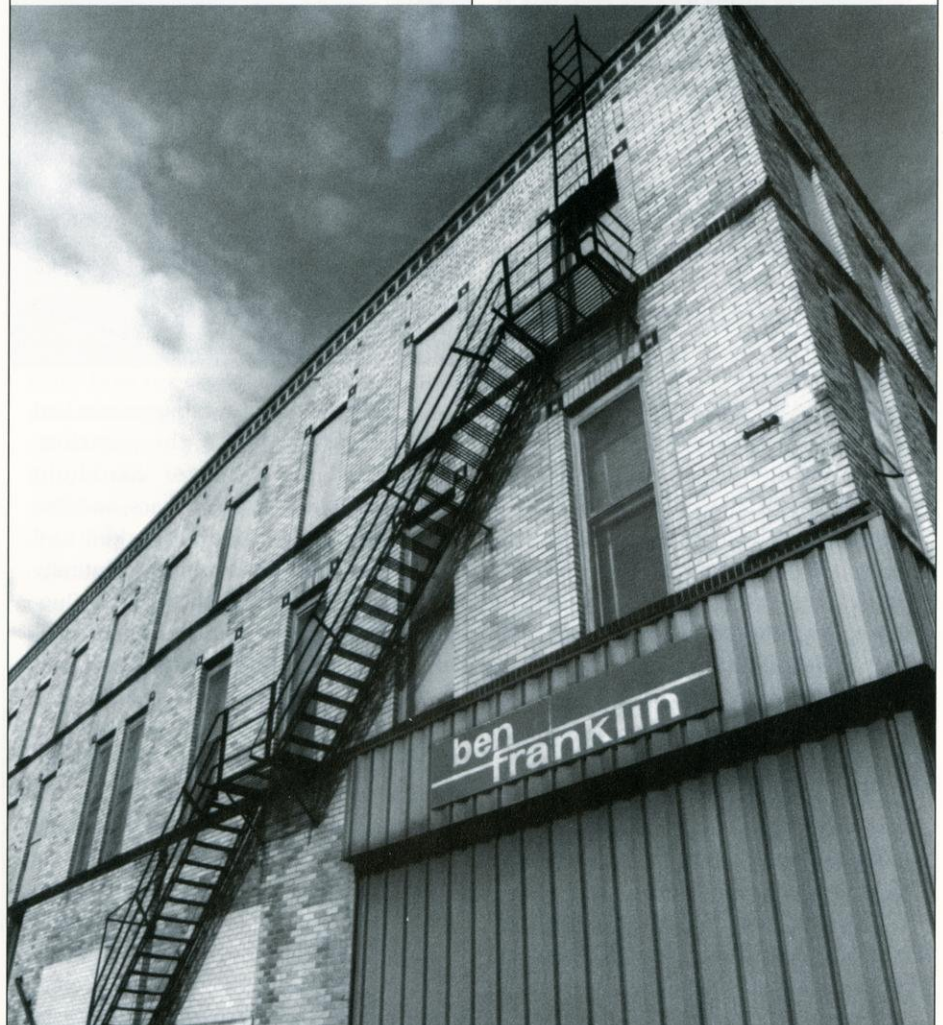
"Not so much," I said. "I mean, it's a kid's story."

"It's an allegory," said my father, "concerning the arrogance of philanthropic charity, a theme later explored by Herman Melville in his dark satiric novel, *The Confidence-Man*."

"It's a kid's story."

My father's eyebrows raised slightly, but he said nothing.

"I've read Nathaniel Hawthorne's grown-up stuff, you know," I said



earnestly. "I've read the freaky story about the guy walking in the woods and finding out everybody in town is a devil worshiper."

A leaden stillness fell upon the room, punctured only by the staccato tapping of my mother's typewriter in the kitchen and the muffled scrape of a snowplow somewhere in the neighborhood.

"You may read whatever you like," my father said finally, his mouth tightening with implacable firmness. "But let's get something straight. 'Young Goodman Brown' isn't about devil worshipers. Once again, it's an allegory."

"Yeah, but—"

"It's a story about loss of faith," he continued. "It's not about devils, it's about despair. If you think it's just a titillating piece of horror fiction, you would be mistaken."

Not unexpectedly, it was suggested that I shovel the driveway. The chore was forestalled, thankfully, by the difficulty of locating my winter boots. Since this was the first snowstorm of the year, my boots were still mothballed somewhere in the attic or basement or buried beneath bric-a-brac in the front hall closet. Neither of my parents were consistent from year to year in their seasonal storage habits, especially in regards to my weather-beaten apparel. And they certainly weren't interested just then in scavenging to find my boots, not when my mother's typewriter was in overdrive and I had made the mistake of offending my father's literary sensibilities. So I dawdled, even after I spied a trove of boots behind the furnace, where I thought it best to leave them undisturbed.

The telephone rang as I headed back up the basement stairs. I stopped to listen. My father answered the phone. I heard, "Hello, Tom," and after a moment, "Is that my responsibility?" And then, "I'll take care of it." I climbed the last few steps and walked into the kitchen.

"It's the skylight on the roof of Ben Franklin," my father was saying to my mother. "Tom Keller thinks it needs to be cleared of snow."

"Oh, yes," my mother said, her voice edged with sarcasm. "Sounds like a job for the Finance Minister."

"The glass cracked last winter, Sandy."

"Good luck finding your boots," said my mother, and she resumed typing.

I didn't have to think twice before blurting: "Our boots are downstairs behind the furnace. Can I come with you to Ben Franklin?"

When my father and I left the house, armed with our broom and shovel, it was midafternoon and the falling snow had slowed to intermittent gusts of glistening powder. Undulated drifts and towering embankments brought a dizzying newness and unfamiliarity to the neighborhood. We walked in the freshly plowed street. My father explained that he'd been entrusted with clearing the skylight because we lived only four blocks from Ben Franklin. "Proximity breeds mischief," he said to me. The town was so quiet that the crunch of our footsteps seemed like the only sound in the world.

WINNING WORDS

Lead judge Abby Frucht on why she chose this story

The mark of any good writer is to make of the smallest moment one of dimension and suspense. In "Knights of Pythagoras," the simple act of sweeping snow off a skylight leads to a discovery more profound than simply the revelation of what lies in the room below.

Most of the downtown businesses had closed early due to the weather. Leeman's Shoe Store, Saukfield Hardware, the two corner bars, and Ben Franklin itself, were all locked and deserted. Three establishments dutifully remained open and radiated with fluorescent life behind frost-limned windows: the post office, the bank, and Sylvia's Diner. Sylvia's was a holy shrine to hot coffee and meatloaf every day from six a.m. to eight p.m. regardless of meteorological calamity or national holidays. The diner shut down midday on Christmas and Thanksgiving after a lunchtime menu of turkey and mashed potatoes slathered in homemade gravy.

I followed my father through the snow to the Five-and-Dime's side entrance beneath the raised transom of a rickety

fire escape. A black iron door was marked "No Admittance." It was a door I knew well. I stopped and examined it often on my way to and from school. The paint was chipped on either side of the oval lock where my penknife was wont to slip. I never learned where my father hid his personal key, which wasn't looped on the same ring with his car and house and university keys.

"The snow will be deep on the roof," he said, turning his back toward me as he unlocked the door. Then he propelled me inside along with the broom and the shovel. The door slammed with an echoless thud. A bare lightbulb illuminated a bronze plaque on the wall next to the stairwell:

Knights of Pythagoras

Wisconsin Lodge 16

Est. 1922 A.D., Saukfield, Wis.

Chartered & Accredited

The Pythagorean Society

Est. 531 B.C., Kroton, Greece

I knew instinctively that there was a locked accordion gate at the top of the stairs. And another locked door behind the gate. In countless midnight dreams I'd rattled the gate until it crashed open and then I pounded frantically upon the door. Sometimes the dreams ended there; at other times, the rusted hinges creaked and the door gave way and I was greeted by whomever I'd seen earlier that night in an old horror movie on television, usually Boris Karloff or Vincent Price.

We didn't climb the stairs on that November afternoon. My father led me to a service elevator whose damp red doors slithered open from the top and the bottom like a bruised eyelid. On the upper door was a porthole window embedded with a honeycomb mesh of chicken wire, just like the six larger panes of glass on the rooftop skylight. We braced ourselves as the elevator began its lumbering ascent. Midway through the ride I was overcome with a feeling of shame for my crime of the previous winter. But I said nothing. Lost in a mute reverie of remorse, I let go of the snow shovel and the broom. They clattered with an awful sound across the ele-

vator's corrugated metal floor. My father jumped. "Be careful!" he admonished.

The elevator groaned to a stop and opened on a drab windowless corridor carpeted with a worn pattern of geometric designs. There was only one doorway in sight. Stenciled on the wall were the words "Fire Exit." My father had to push hard with his shoulder until the door budged against the weight of snow on the other side. Daylight streamed into the murky hallway and blinded me for a moment. Handing the shovel to my father, I held the door ajar while he cleared a small section of the tarpaper roof. Then he took a chrome cigarette urn that stood next to the elevator and used it to prop open the exit. "This door automatically locks from the inside," he said. "If we're shut out, we'll have to climb down the fire escape."

I had scaled the fire escape during a nighttime snowstorm the year before. It was remarkably easy to hoist myself from the sidewalk to the transom grate and then quickly climb the three flights to the roof. I certainly wasn't the first kid to have done so. And maybe I wasn't the first kid to have broken two of the skylight windows. The panes were loose and the glazing was deteriorated or absent altogether. I was straining to see something—anything—of the darkened meeting hall below. Everything was blackness and shadows because it was a weeknight and the Knights of Pythagoras weren't in session. My boots slipped. I barely heard the noise. The shattering was *sotto voce* like the snap, crackle, pop of Rice Krispies. I scurried back down the fire escape with a departing prayer that the accumulating snow would bury any evidence of my tracks.

My father now was shoveling a path toward the skylight. I stood several feet behind him and listlessly swept with the broom. Beyond the edge of the roof were the varicose branches of enormous oak trees looming over housetops and crowding the neighborhood sky. Farther to the east I glimpsed a white eternity of frozen farmland shimmering like a forbidden Arctic sea. Not wishing to appear anxious or preoccupied, I broached what I thought was an innocuous topic of conversation. "Is it true," I asked my father,

"that no two snowflakes are alike in the whole wide world?"

At first he seemed not to have heard me. He hefted several more good-sized shovelfuls, which brought him closer to the skylight's A-frame outlined beneath the snow.

"Is it true?" I asked again. "About snowflakes not being alike?"

My father stopped and turned toward me. He leaned against the handle of the shovel and caught his breath. Billows of frosted air plumed from his mouth. His cheeks were brick red.

"I think your question is misdirected," he said.

"You mean I should ask someone else?"

"No," he said. "I mean you're wasting your time thinking about such things. Why contemplate disharmony and otherness?"

"Otherness?"

"Snowflakes are crystal formations," said my father. "Their intricacy is part of nature's harmonic design. If you see nothing in the world but disproportion and inequality—believe me—you will one day fracture your psyche. Would it be so easy to slaughter women and children in Vietnam if we didn't persist in thinking of Asians as alien to our sense of humanity?"

Setting down his shovel, my father used his gloved hands to knock drifting snow from the skylight until the six windows emerged like jeweled archeological treasures. Then he said, "Bring the broom here, Miles."

Snow was falling with renewed intensity. Somewhere behind low gunmetal clouds the sun was setting. As I cautiously swept, I noticed that the two broken panes from last year had been replaced and the edges newly glazed. More surprising was the soft glow of light emanating from the other side of the windows. Dropping to my knees, I rubbed the glass with my mittens and tried mightily to detect something tangible in the gloom.

"Go ahead," said my father. "Tell me what you see."

A small lamp shone atop a lectern like distant starlight. There was a classroom blackboard and a chalk diagram of

dotted lines and arrows and what looked like drawings of seeds or seed pods. My eyes roved like a madman's. There were meaningless words block-lettered in a foreign language: VER-SUCHE ÜBER PFLANZENHYBRIDEN. Then I saw the tall plants sprouting on either side of the lectern.

"I see corn," I said to my father. "Stalks of corn."

"Not just any corn," he said. "You're looking at hybrid seed corn maximized for strength and abundance. Nature has a key with which we can unlock the organic soul of the vegetable world."

"The vegetable world?"

"Botanical energy surrounds us, Miles, whether it's hibernating, germinating, pollinating, rotting or mulching. Life and death are synergetic. We mustn't exalt or fear one at the expense of the other. Do you know who the prophet of hybrid seed corn was?"

The only thing I could think to say was, "Benjamin Franklin?"

My father's laughter reverberated in every direction and merged with the tumbling snowflakes. "No," he said, still chuckling. "Not that Franklin was a slouch, mind you."

I tried to join in the joke by replying, "You mean he had good posture?"

Perhaps my timing was off. My father's smile faded and he again took on a professorial air: "What I mean, Miles, is Benjamin Franklin had a lot on the ball when it came to agricultural curiosity and acumen. For example, he introduced the kohlrabi plant to American soil. Kohlrabi is a kind of long-stemmed European cabbage."

He knelt beside me and solemnly met my eyes. "The prophet of hybrid seed corn was Henry A. Wallace," he said. "He ran for president of the United States in 1948. I was twenty-one years old. I'm proud to say I voted for him."

"Was he a Pythagorean?" I asked.

"The Red-baiters called him a Communist," said my father. "And the spineless liberals called him a corn-fed mystic. But you know what? He died of Lou Gehrig's disease in 1965. Is there anything more all-American than Lou Gehrig's disease?"

I turned away from my father and once more pressed my nose against the icy skylight window. Last year's splintered sacrifice deserved greater recompense than a shabby barnyard exhibit in a sepulchral room. Vegetables! There was no escaping them. Never had the veiled arcana of adulthood seemed so nakedly insignificant and devalued to me. As my father pulled me harshly to my feet, I could feel my guilt dissolving into resentment.

"You've been on this roof before," he said.

With the conviction of my bitterness, I told him no.

❖❖❖❖

I was sixteen years old when my father's book on Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Effigies of Concealment*, was published. I got around to reading it when I was twenty-nine and taking a stab at graduate school. My father didn't live to witness my drunken struggles with English lit at the University of Wisconsin. I eventually was rewarded—on the fourth or fifth try—with some sort of terminal master's degree that expressly forbade me from continuing further with my studies. The half-baked fantasies I entertained for a doctoral candidacy were thus quashed. My mother called it a blessing in disguise. "Brick walls," she told me, "are best appreciated when you're constrained from banging your head against them." On those not infrequent nights when I plied my self-pitying belly with liquor I tended to agree with her assessment.

Once I was liberated from competing with my father on academic grounds, I was able to piece together the late-blooming semblance of a modest life and career for myself. When I seriously opened *Effigies of Concealment*, it was out of print and my father was dead from heart failure at the age of fifty-six. I used to see his book cited occasionally in critical editions of Hawthorne's work. My father wrote in an overheated psychoanalytical prose style that has fallen out of fashion. An unresolved Oedipal

complex was forever found lurking behind Hawthorne's narrative strategies, along with obsessional themes of patricide, incest, masturbation, and masochism. Into this lurid hothouse atmosphere my father also squeezed an idiosyncratic agrarian mysticism and swathes of undigested lumpen Marxism. The material was tied tenuously together with adumbrative block quotations from sociopolitical thinkers like Herbert Marcuse.

A degree of curiosity concerning Hawthorne was bred into me like a curse or a cattle brand: I was named at birth for Miles Coverdale, the hapless narrator of Hawthorne's 1852 novel, *The Blithedale Romance*. My father loved many books, but this was clearly his all-time sentimental favorite. He couldn't understand why it wasn't taken up and embraced by the counterculture of the 1960s and '70s. After all, it's a satirically fictionalized account of the Brook Farm commune in Massachusetts that Hawthorne joined for several months in 1841. A small group of artists, intellectuals, and social reformers banded together to till the soil, shovel manure, and dream dreams of brotherhood surrounded by the bucolic New England countryside.

The novel's comic ruefulness bubbles up from Coverdale's dyspeptic personality. He's flawed and peevish, alienated and self-deluding. Worse, he's a Peeping Tom. My father wrote: "Miles Coverdale is a busybody whose gaze is like that of a voyeuristic schoolboy at a skylight window." Was it sympathy on my father's part, or scorn, or mere whim that inspired him to bring my youthful indiscretion into retroactive alignment with my neurotic namesake?

"I don't think it's a reference to you, dear," my mother said when I showed her the passage one morning as I was leaving for work. "My guess is that your father was commenting in general terms about schoolboys and voyeurism."

Perhaps she's right.

The Knights of Pythagoras dwindled and disbanded without a trace sometime during the 1980s. The skylight

remains intact. It offers today a soporific view of an empty storage room. I sneak an occasional afternoon cigarette on the rooftop and conjure fitful holograms of my father's face. His distracted smile nearly sharpens into focus when I say it out loud: I've been promoted to manager of the Ben Franklin Five-and-Dime.

For more on author Robert Wake, please see biographical information in the Upfront section of the magazine (page 4).

SHORT STORY CONTEST 2002 SPONSORS

The Wisconsin Academy Review Short Story Contest 2002 was sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for the Book and by the following Wisconsin members of Book Sense, a national league of independent booksellers:

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their generous support of
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Look for our second-place story, "The Maureen Bogg Sessions," in the fall edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*.

Bones



BY KIM CHINQUEE

PHOTO BY BILL BLANKENBURG

GRANDFATHER SUTTON DIED OF HEART FAILURE. Genetics, they said. I went to the wake, where I touched his cold hand.

Then my mother left my father. He was never around. Mother and I moved to a suburb, somewhere closer to Milwaukee. Father went to California. He didn't come back, but never said why.

Mother and I went to Christmas dinner. Aunt Peggy fussed about backaches, groaning as she rose from Grandma Sutton's kitchen chair. She

chuckled, saying if she didn't have so much weight to carry, she wouldn't have any complaints. Uncle Jim gave himself a shot of insulin. Cousin Cherie talked

about her most recent gall bladder attack. So did Aunt Laura. Ran in the family, they said. We ate meatballs, and mashed potatoes. Stuffing, chicken, and tater-tot casserole. Then pecan and pumpkin pies. I had chicken, even though I was trying to be a vegetarian. Then everyone went for seconds.

Mother said her in-laws didn't like her because of her weight. After the divorce, she went from size 46 to 30. Then there was a standstill. She tried Phen-Phen, Jenny Craig, the Protein Diet, saying nothing worked. She told me never to get fat. I was fourteen. And five feet, six inches, 131 pounds.

I was dating Sean. After six months, we talked about sex, but I wasn't ready. We came close a few times, but I always chickened out. Then he stopped calling. I would still see Sean at parties and when I went to the beach with my friends. He wore his tapioca-colored shorts, the ones he wore the first time he kissed me. I would dream of his brown baby eyes, that curly dark hair.

Mother worked for a mortgage company. After work, she hung out with her friends. Then she brought men home, but I couldn't remember their names.

Father's parents were stick-figure thin. Father was, too. But I didn't see those grandparents anymore. They said I should have kept my parents together.

I went to the beach with Gretchen and Amy. It smelled like fresh fish. We wore bikinis as we lay in the sun. The elastic of my striped suit pinched my skin. My friends told me I wasn't fat, but I never believed them. We talked about plans: who was having parties, the clothes we would buy, about boys and having sex. We splashed in the cold water, getting each other wet.

Mother tried the Cabbage Soup Diet. Her clothes got loose. Men noticed her. Ken, Jim, Ted, and Charles. Whoever.

Father called from California. He was planning a trip to Europe, he said, to buy expensive wine.

When I was little, Mother used to rock me in her chair. Headaches made me cry. Mother would comfort me as I rested my head on her large breast. She smelled like baby powder. She ran her big manicured hands through my brown curls, humming until I fell asleep.

I took the bus to the public library, where I read about calories, obesity, food, and weight loss: A BMI is a basic metabolic index: a person's weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. One inch is 2.54 centimeters, and one pound is 0.45359237 kilograms. Doing nothing in one hour, the average person will burn one calorie for every kilogram of weight (2.2 kilograms per pound). A person's weight times 16 is the number of calories she needs per day.

My BMI was 21.1. The recommended BMI is from 18.5 to 24.9. Anything over 25 is overweight, and over 30 is obese.

I noticed fat people everywhere. Skinny people, too.

Mother stopped cooking. She was on a new diet. (The Grapefruit one, I think.) She was always in the kitchen when she was with my father.

Mother bought new glasses: the small, round pointy kind. Then she dyed her hair blonde, bought expensive brand-name clothes, wore the trendy shades of makeup: kinds with names like Chardonnay and Moonlit Rose, the ones the newest models were wearing in the Revlon ads. She looked different every time I saw her, which wasn't very often.

She and Michael laughed downstairs in her basement bedroom. Their noise echoed everywhere.

At first, the pounds dropped fast. In three weeks, I went from 131 to 120. I was within my recommended BMI, but I wanted that extra edge. My Guess jeans were baggy, but I still felt fat. With the money Father sent and the lunch money Mother seldom gave me, I took the bus to the mall, buying the latest styles: blouses, skirts, and brand-name pants. I resisted my hunger. When school started again, my classmates told me I looked like Mr. Bones, the skeleton from biology class. Sean noticed me and told me I looked great.

Father used to call Mother fatso at the dinner table.

According to the Weight Control Information Network, from the National Institute of Health, "Obesity occurs when a person's caloric intake exceeds the amount of energy she burns. In one study of adults who were adopted as children, researchers found that the subjects' adult weights were closer to their biological parents' weights than their adoptive parents'. The environment provided by the adoptive family apparently had less influence on the development of obesity than the person's genetic makeup."

I was cold, but getting popular. People, even the stuck-up ones, said I looked great in my new clothes. I made the cheerleading squad, chanting for Sean, Spartans' wide receiver. I went to parties with Gretchen, Amy, and my other cheerleading friends, where we drank Bud Light Ice that Amy's older sister bought. My friends slept at my house so we could stay out late. Mother was always out late, too.



Sometimes I didn't eat for days. Especially after going to parties with my friends. One can of Bud Light Ice has 96 calories.

Mother tried Dexatrim and Weight Watchers. Slim Fast. Saying she just hadn't lost enough.

I hit 115. I did sit-ups in my room. In my dresser mirror, I examined my face, reminded that it was baby-like, not like the *Seventeen* models. My blue eyes were small compared to my round face and big lips. I was starting to look more like my mother. I applied makeup, trying new tricks to look good, putting pink blush high on my cheeks and rows of black eyeliner around my eyes, extending the line just a bit. I brushed my long brown curls, arranging them in different ways, examining each look. I pinched the skin of my cheeks, thinking that, no matter what, my face was still fat.

I started passing out. After Mother heard me fall down the stairs, she took me to Dr. Zunker, telling him she wanted a pregnancy test. I was still a virgin—I tested negative, but Mother insisted I go on the pill. I got the prescription to make her happy, even though I never took it.

One stick of a Kit-Kat has 120 calories, six grams of fat. A Quaker unsalted rice cake has 35 calories, zero grams of fat. One Chips Ahoy granola bar has 120 calories with four-and-a-half grams of fat. Three thousand calories equal one pound of fat.

My bones started showing. While lying flat on my back, I could balance a yardstick over my pelvic bones. I learned that in order to avoid passing out, I needed to get up slowly, and when you stand up too fast, the blood rushes

to your head and makes you hit the floor.

I read the *Vegetarian Times: Beginner's Guide*, only reading meatless recipes, examining ingredients and calorie content. Lentil and Golden Squash Pot Pie: 337 calories per serving, 15 grams of fat. Couscous Tabbouleh, 210 calories, five grams of fat. I fed myself through the words and pictures on the page.

Mother said, never get fat. Never overindulge. Never give in to your cravings. And when you do eat, take small, delicate bites.

Thanksgiving dinner. Laura and Cherie talked about getting their gall bladders removed. I pushed Aunt Peggy in her wheelchair. Jim pricked his finger for a glucose level. I smelled sweet potatoes and pies, and my stomach growled. I spread my food thin on my plate, and took small bites, rearranging the potatoes, mixing them with peas and corn to make it look like I'd eaten more than I really had. When Grandma Sutton asked me why I didn't want any turkey, I told her I was a vegetarian. On the way home, Mother said she never knew. She complained about having eaten too much, but said at least she hadn't gained back the weight that she'd lost.

At a keg party, at someone's house whose parents were out of town, I celebrated my fifteenth birthday. Sean talked to me, telling me I was looking really good these days, that he wanted me back. We left the party, and went to the nearest parking lot, where we made out in his car—he blasted the heat, making the windows get steamy. His breath was like fire. As he kissed my ear, he suggested we do it, so we crawled in the back seat, where he slid on a condom, and then slid off my jeans,

moving in me like quicksand. I lay in the back, staring at that church steeple while he tore me up inside. When I told him it hurt, he moved even faster, making me bleed. When he was done he held me tight, then told me he loved me. His arms made me warm. When he drove me home, he smiled, wishing me a happy birthday, saying he'd call. I told Gretchen and Amy, who were flirting with the possibility of being non-virgins.



Father called from Europe, telling me how great it was.

Mother stopped asking about sex. She told me I looked good, thin. I wore extra clothes to keep myself warm. My stomach growled. I ate as little as I could get away with, doing sit-ups in my room. Jumping jacks too. I examined my reflection in the mirror, pinching my cheeks.

I was the bridesmaid for a distant cousin's wedding. I zipped the bride's white gown while she held in her stomach. At church, I walked down the aisle with a boy named Pete. After the ceremony, I leaned on him, and he asked me for a kiss. I told him I was taken. Then everyone ate chicken, while I peeled the frosting from my cake. At the reception, I caught the bouquet.

I slept in. Mother didn't know—she left for work early. I walked to school, missing my first class, Home Economics. I didn't want to learn about sewing, gardening, or any of that stuff anyway. The kind of stuff Mother used to do. When I finally woke up, I went to the school office, where the fat secretary gave me late slips and detentions. I served them during lunch hours, resting my head on



the desk and waking up when the bell rang.

I stepped on the scale—100. I waited for Sean to call. But he never did.

I completely avoided foods with fat. According to Joyce Vedral's *The Fat Burning Workout*, "If your diet consists of 40 percent fat, as does the average American's, you are fat—even if you are not overweight. And chances are you feel fat, too, and not just to the touch. You feel sluggish—not as energetic as you would feel if your body were comprised of a higher percentage of muscle."

Mother laughed with Fred, Charles, Tim, and Phil. I didn't know all their names, but I didn't care. Their colognes lingered, invading the kitchen where the refrigerator took up space.

I was 95, and light, almost free—light-headed meant light-hearted. Sean talked to me at another party, apologizing for the last time. He loved me this way, he said. I followed his lead—I felt safe and warm in his arms. He touched me, saying he'd call.

Calories burned per 20 minutes: stair machine, 260. Running, 220. Cross-country skiing, 220. Swimming, 210. Rope jumping, 200. Aerobic dance, 200. Race walking, 160. Bicycle riding, 140. Walking, 110.

I was hungry, but ignored the rumbling in my stomach, reminding myself how good it felt when my jeans were loose around my waist. I shivered, remembering to hang on to something when I got up.

A three-fourth cup of garden rotini has 210 calories, one gram of fat. A two-third cup of penne rigate has 210 calories, one gram of fat. Three ounces of firm tofu has 50 calories, two-and-a-half

grams of fat. One slice Country Hearth whole wheat bread equals 100 calories, and one-and-a-half grams of fat.

Christmas time. I went to holiday parties and my relatives watched me eat. Grandma Sutton waddled, struggling to carry her extra weight. She told me to put something in that tummy. Mother didn't say anything, just that she'd overeaten. With each spoonful, I felt inches of fat growing on my thighs.

I saw Mr. Bones in biology class, wondering if I really looked like him, what it would be like to be him.

I cheered, now for basketball games. Gretchen and Amy too. I was on the top of the mound. I did cartwheels, calculating the calories I burned as I kicked my legs. Sean was a Spartans forward—he dribbled the ball, then took a shot, scoring with his big hands. I yelled, "Way to go, Sean!" But he didn't hear me. Mom worked, then went out with her friends. Father sent money, but forgot to call.

Naked, I stood in front of the mirror, squeezing the skin on my thighs and feeling the fat beneath it.

I visited my grandfather's gravesite, asking him how it felt. If heaven was really as good as they say.

I opened the refrigerator door. It was cold and empty inside.

Sean talked to me at a party, saying he wanted to get back together. I thought I might be delirious from the Bud Light Ice. Sean was out of condoms, but we still had sex. I subtracted the calories as I thrust my hips. He said "I love you," pulling out. Then said he'd call, but didn't. I built up my courage, calling him—his mother said he wasn't around.

I hit 89. I told no one as I ignored my pangs of hunger.

According to Ken Sprague's *The Gold's Gym Book of Weight Training*, "There's no getting around the fact that vanity is endemic to our collective American personality—why else would you care so much about how you look? Yes, you could rationalize paying attention to your appearance as a social necessity."

I heard Mother downstairs with Frank or Ken or whoever. She came upstairs in a lacy black bra and pink flowered panties, her skin hanging. She smiled. She seemed happy.

At Easter Sunday dinner, people ate. I said I didn't feel well.

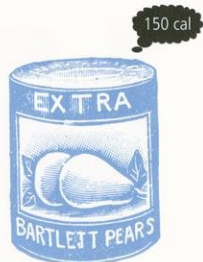
One-fourth cup of Uncle Ben's long grain rice has 150 calories, zero grams of fat. One-fourth cup of Florida Gold orange juice has 110 calories, zero grams of fat.

I saw Sean in the hallways at school. He said hi, but kept on walking.

Mother got a call from vice principal Jep. He told her I'd been late nearly every day since the New Year. I had 22 detentions. The next step was suspension. Mother took me to Dr. Zunker, not asking if I was pregnant. He told me to gain weight. I lied and said I would.

Practicing for the upcoming season, I cheered, burning calories. My blue skirt was loose, my pom-poms were heavy, but I liked that weak feeling—it reminded me of my power. Gretchen and Amy asked if I was okay. Using my cheerleading voice, I told them everything was fine.

People stared. I was cold and my cheeks were hollow. I went to my cousin's baptismal feast, where I avoided the ham and turkey and Grandma Sutton tried to make me eat apple pie. I ate some to prove a point. Peggy talked about her back surgery. Uncle Jim talked about his recent dia-



betic diagnosis. I went home and did sit-ups, jumped rope, and looked in the mirror. I ate nothing for the next three days.

Mr. Jep called Mother a second time. I was suspended for being late again. Mother took me back to Dr. Zunker, who referred me to a diet therapist named Judy, who was fat and told me to eat five small meals a day. Then I saw a blue-eyed, gray-haired therapist named Dorothy, who told me to tell her about myself. As I talked, she put an open palm over her chest, asking me how I felt inside. When I said I didn't know, she grilled me, asking me again. Then I started to cry.

Never, ever get fat.

Sean stopped talking to me at parties, didn't even want sex—he told Gretchen he was afraid he'd break my bones. I told Gretchen he didn't matter anymore, even though he did.

Mother took me out for meals. First to Yuki's, then China King. The next week it was Planet Hollywood, the Rain Forest, or who even knew. She watched me eat. When I looked up, she smiled.

I felt guilty for every bite I took, weighing myself every two hours even though Dorothy told me not to. With every inch of flesh that returned came the achy feeling that my world would cave in.

Mother said she was sorry. I looked at her, at the fat rolls in her arms. She took off her glasses and tears rolled down her face. My eyes got watery, making my black eyeliner run.

Father called, saying life was great.

The scale said 95. I wondered if Father was right.

I went to a family reunion where people sat at picnic tables. Kids ran in circles, playing tag. I fed my cousin milk

from a bottle. Back pain, gall bladder attacks, heart failure, diabetes. High blood pressure. People ate potato salad, cole slaw and ham sandwiches, then complained about being overweight. I wondered if I was as thin as everybody said.

Grandmother Sutton had a stroke. Said soon she'd be meeting her husband.

Mother laughed downstairs with Ted, Mack, Sam. Father forgot to call. Sean ignored me. Fat Judy told me what to eat. I talked to Dorothy and cried.

Never get fat. You need to gain weight.

I went to the beach with Gretchen and Amy. We wore bikinis and compared tan lines, resting on towels, soaking in sun. I looked at their thin bodies and high cheekbones, noticing how pretty they were. Thinking, how happy they must feel! We rubbed tanning oil, making ourselves shine. I told them they looked good. They said I did, too. I smiled, massaging the lotion onto my body, thinking of how nice they were, trying to make me feel so good. Sean walked by, so I got up, and without looking back, I ran for the water, splashing, and then diving, getting wet and cold, the water stinging my eyes and forming beads that stuck to my skin. I came up for air, gasping for breath and went underwater again, trying to stay under as long as I could.

I got to 105. My jeans were tight around my waist, but I wasn't always cold and I didn't always feel like passing out. I tried to tell myself that I was getting healthy.

I read more books about food and health and fitness. Vegetarianism.

I went to Grandmother's funeral. Genetics, they said. The family lolled

around, heads hanging low. I looked at my grandmother's gentle face, and I thought about her love and kindness. I thought about the things in life that really mattered. Mother touched Grandmother's hand, then squeezed my cold grip, warming it. We turned away and sat on a hard pew, watching all the others as they gazed down at the corpse. Then the pastor rose to the pulpit, where he talked about things bigger than life, bigger than the things we could control. I thought about my skinny body, and I prayed. I looked at my mother, and I wanted to tell her that I would be OK, but tears kept running down my face. She kissed me on my cheek and told me that she loved me. For a long time, we stared ahead in silence, just taking in the air.

*Kim Chinquee grew up in Wisconsin and received her M.A. in creative writing from the University of Southern Mississippi. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in **Noon, North Dakota Quarterly, Denver Quarterly, The Chattahoochee Review, The South Carolina Review, The Arkansas Review, The Black Mountain Review, Karamu, Anthology, War Literature and the Arts, Pindeldyboz**, and other publications. She is the recipient of a Henfield Transatlantic Review Award. Chinquee lives in Champaign, Illinois.*



120 cal



20 cal



200 cal



120 cal



5 cal

"I'm so glad that I could choose another 10."

—Wisconsin Poet Laureate Ellen Kort, lead judge of the *Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry contest, on the difficulty of selecting only three winners.

The 10 poems that follow are the runners-up in the *Wisconsin Academy Review* poetry contest, which drew 359 submissions. In the spring issue we published work by the three contest winners. Now it is time to honor our runners-up. Congratulations to each of these fine poets.

Writing a poem about September 11

is as easy as
watching the neighbor woman
pin a dozen diapers
to the backyard clothesline
the day after she dropped a rose
and a tight fist of dirt
on her child's grave

By Mariann Ritzer

*Mariann Ritzer, of Hartland, has published two chapbooks of poetry—**An Evening on Mildred Street** (CrossRoads Press) and **How to Fall Out of Love** (Wolfsong)—and a short fiction chapbook, **Once I Loved Him Madly** (CrossRoads Press). She teaches seminars on creative writing at Waukesha County Technical College.*

"...Live in the bloom of the moment."
—Henry David Thoreau

In the Bloom of the Moment

This is not the life she imagined
after fifty-eight years of marriage.
They should be off on some cruise to Alaska
watching ice cleave into the ocean,
eyes fixed in silent awe on whales migrating to Mexico
their massive tails gracefully slicing through the icy ocean.
Instead she visits her husband of nearly six decades
at the home where residents pace the floor
randomly trying to remember who, what, or where.
She brings foil covered kisses, hidden in her purse,
and to his eyes this wonderful stranger
carefully peels each delightful, chocolate morsel
pops them, one by one, into his mouth.
"Mmmmmmm," he says, "That's such good candy."
Every day she repeats her visits, bringing him kisses.
Every day he smacks with delight of the newness
of such good candy. Envious residents watch,
one in a loud whisper tells the group
"how sweet—she comes every day."
Gradually, walkers line up, join the concealed audience
at the far end of the room, fixated on the unfolding
of foil after foil. "Mmmmm" they hum in unison,
twenty pairs of eyes watch with the same grace
as whales diving, tails descending,
following their instincts.

By Annette L. Gruneth

Annette L. Gruneth lives and works in Green Bay. She is marketing director for a health system and writes poetry from the boardroom to the laundry room to make sense of the world we live in; plus, the muse makes her write because poetry is everywhere waiting to be written. Her poems have appeared in Wisconsin Fellowship of Poetry calendars, in **Fox Cry**, **Fox Cry Review**, **The Door Voice**, and **Touchstone**, among other publications. She was recognized in "Muse" and "Triad" contests with WFOP, and has read her poetry on Wisconsin Public Radio's "Higher Ground."

Under Suspicion

For Pablo Neruda

The poet fingers the hem of green-skirted cabbages,
swaps earthy stories with full-bellied onions
under cover of straw awnings in the market stalls,
while uniformed detachments patrol the plaza.

He sits silently at the bedside of a potato
brought blinking into the light
from its dusty exile, mute
in its final moments of interrogation.

In the cantina, shielded from the siesta sun,
he lingers long at table communing
with a dry zinfandel, coaxing confessions
from a helmeted artichoke.

He records these stories in small notebooks
in a hand pinched and measured, guarded
like an ancient family recipe,
smuggled in the bottom of a shopping basket
to a floodlit cellar, pressed
on foolscap and flung into the streets.

By William T. McConnell

William T. McConnell works in communications for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a national student organization headquartered in Madison. He began writing poetry seriously while attending a "Write by the Lake" writers' workshop at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1999. In the fall of 2001, his poem "Why We's Called the Flower Power" won second prize in the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets contest. McConnell is drawn to poetry's oral tradition and enjoys listening to and reading poetry aloud.

"How Would Jesus Drive?"

—painted on a truck, Ohio Turnpike

Well, there would be no road rage, that's for sure.
Smoothly shifting down the entrance ramps,
never hogging the passing lane or driving
twenty miles with his left blinker on,
he would wave joyfully to kids in passing cars,
he would leave clear dry road behind
even in the worst sleet storm or blizzard.

In truth, he would be a bit of a pain in the butt,
lingering forever at intersections, letting others
go first, stopping motorists to alert them
to better driving techniques, announcing
to the big-rig drivers at the truckstop
that they should all abandon their loads
immediately, pile in his van for the long haul
to salvation—

leaving those eighteen-wheelers
with emptied cabs in the parking lot,
rumbling as they spew diesel exhaust
into the sinful air, all their cargoes
of milk or oranges slowly going bad.

By David Graham

*David Graham is a professor of English at Ripon College. He also serves as poetry editor of the online journal **Blue Moon Review** and as poet in residence at the Robert Frost Place in Franconia, New Hampshire. His poems have appeared in six book collections, and he co-edited an essay anthology called **After Confession: Poetry as Autobiography** (Graywolf Press).*

When asked why he writes poetry, Graham replied: "Robert Frost once remarked, in a playful mood, that he wanted to see if he could make his poems sound different from each other; that his poetry was a form of game or mental exercise. W. H. Auden, on the other hand, emphasized the serious, exploratory nature of poetry when he defined it as 'the clear expression of mixed emotions.' I write poetry for both those reasons, and more."

Upland Apples

Where black bears forage the blackberry break
 and wild roses run through sandy soil,
 soil reddened with iron—
 iron in the blossom and in the bud—
 where rivers chisel sandstone beds and tumble
 down ledges, spilling over falls,
 falling, falling in an endless rush,
 past leaning river birches undercut
 by the same water that nourishes them,
 where at dusk a rust-red sun sets treetops ablaze
 and fields of clover perfume the air,
 there you will find them,
 the wild apples,
 branches sagging with their weight of fruit,
 hidden among cedar, fir, pine, and birch,
 deep in the haunts of the whitetail.

Unseen, a bear crashes the underbrush.
 Hawk on the wing and raven in the oak.
 And you, alone, roaming an upland wood,
 crossing meadows of lupine and tansy,
 yarrow, hawkweed, daisy, and mallow,
 skirting the forest edge
 until the inevitable chance discovery.
 It is an older tree, lightning-struck,
 moss on the bark, thriving on neglect.
 Pick an apple. Inspect the jade-green skin
 flamed with red, a sunset in your hand.
 Now taste the wild September fruit,
 tempered by night frost and autumn moon,
 flavor more astonishing than northern wildflowers
 to a southern soul.
 Taste and realize
 that though we mortals devour the apple,
 it is the apple that prevails.

By Timothy Walsh

*Timothy Walsh's poems and short stories have appeared in various literary journals and magazines, including **Midwest Quarterly**, the **Milwaukee Journal Sunday Magazine**, **West Wind Review**, the **Wisconsin Academy Review**, and others. He is also the author of a book of literary criticism, **The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature** (Southern Illinois University Press, 1999) and of a recently completed novel "which he hopes will soon see the light of day." Walsh is director of the cross-college advising service at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

Volunteer Fire Department

Siren wails summon from town
Clerks, cashiers, bartenders and car salesmen.
They're joined by a clutch of area farmers,
And everyone's up now at the Corey Wilhelms' place
Where a smouldery leaf and rubbish pile
Got wind of its own importance and skylarked hot
Toward too-dry grasses on the ridge
By Corey's old hen house.

Everything's snuffed pronto.
Elapsed time from first alert
To put-out: 15 minutes.

Still, everyone stays an hour,
Fussing the chrome parts of the pumper,
Stomping cold embers in tribal time-wasting.

When they leave they've
Saved Corey's corn sheller that never worked right ever,
Seen pictures of Justin Hobart's brand new baby,
And re-talked a poker round at the station house
Three weeks ago, after EMS training.

It's been a good fire.

By Richard Swanson

*Richard Swanson lives in Madison but spends a lot of time out in Muscoda "and a brush-fire there one day prompted the poem. I write poetry for the delight of word-play, sneaking around subversively in the world of everyday speech." In addition to poetry, Swanson has written **Events of the Day**, a novel of the late '60s loosely based on the bombing of Sterling Hall. He will soon have poems published in **Hummingbird** and **TriQuarterly**.*

On My Son Leaving Home

All these years they have gathered in our house,
the first smooth stones resembling valentines
plucked from piles along Lake Michigan shoreline.

Later we searched north where Superior offered up
her infants, cold, glistening, and later still, Agate Beach
south of Bolinas strung thin hearts riddled with holes,

A sign, we believed, of my sister dying three thousand miles
cross country—and the two you stowed in pants pockets
from the mountains of Nicaragua, grey as sky,

as her eyes. Only a few weeks ago you tumbled red jasper
onto the kitchen countertop: *I brought you rocks, Mom!*
one perfectly heart-shaped, veined with quartz

where cracks considered coming home. Our house
brims with heartrock as I marked our mother-son time
stone by stone, heaped on the concrete hearth, lining dusty

windowsills, coffee table knick-knacks, paperweights.
My first-born crossing away to the West Coast might be named
rock-too-heavy-to-carry—what I feel as you pull out the drive,

a passenger in your father's red Intrepid; there's Amtrak to catch
to the ocean and all those books and boulders. Watching you
I remember as I rub a smooth pebble picked from the lily bed—

all small triangles of stone we call heart were once one
monolith of being, seamless as a mother's love.
This fragment I hold is warm as birth-water, a reminder

how you and I, each in our own awkwardness and wonder,
break like rock, like wave, like heart, into the whole.

By Sara Parrell

*Sara Parrell lives in Madison but grew up in the Wisconsin River valley and began writing poems "to make sense of her world as a 30-something-year-old mother and nurse." Her work has appeared in the **Roundriver Current**, and she frequently has done readings in and around Madison. "I write to connect my spiritual and earthly lives, to mark my passages," she says. "Writing is my practice, like breathing, to quiet my mind and experience the natural world and my human relationships as fully as I can."*

The Glass Box

No one knows how ordinary
a story this was, in 1920, in the gentle Midwest
where people are neighborly. That's what we say—
"Well, they were always good neighbors."

So one day the father took the girl on a walk.
She was six, she pretended she was marching and had to raise
her knees above the grass tips that dipped and lifted,
above the wild smear of lilies.

They walked holding hands, the father
prodding the girl to hurry so gently
even she hardly noticed as they climbed a hill
and she said, "I forgot my hat," and he answered,

"We'll get there soon, where it's cooler."
But they weren't there soon. The grass,
the sun on the grass, the sun on her head
began to take up every part of her mind

like a room with too much furniture,
too many people, not enough food.
She changed the rules. She didn't have
to lift her knees. She just had to keep walking.

Then they were in the woods
where it *was* cool and at first she couldn't see.
But she felt, as if she saw,
the sweat traveling the small of her back.

Nowadays
there are records. We are supposed to know
that a child was born at a particular
hospital, that a child lives at an address.

He stopped. He said,

"Stay here. Wait for me."
The child standing and waiting
then sitting, waiting—
the leaf shadow causing her features to shift

from her own face to that of another—
is not the end of the story.
Because a man who lived in the same town
and had always been a good neighbor

found her,
carried her home
and his wife put calamine on the bites.
She became someone else's daughter

and lived there
until she was a grown woman
with hopes she clipped
like loose threads in a hem.

Yes, some days on the road, she passed
the man who had been her father.
There was always the trouble of what
to do with their eyes.

By Anne-Marie Cusac

Anne-Marie Cusac's poetry has appeared in *TriQuarterly*, the *American Scholar*, *Provincetown Arts*, the *Madison Review*, the *Texas Observer*, and other journals. Her published poems have twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, including in 2002. The recipient of a Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University and a Wisconsin Arts Board Artist Fellowship Award, Cusac is now the managing editor of the *Progressive* magazine. Her book of poems, *The Mean Days*, was published by Tia Chucha Press in 2001. Cusac lives in Madison.

Afterward

I keep forgetting what I'm doing

a doctor's appointment slides by
while I listen to planes overhead
that never were so loud
before. We have
a stranger living in our house
our elbows are raw
from bumping into him into stairwells,
in laundry room and over cooking pots. We trip
on his luggage,
choke on his sour breath, watch fall colors
dim in smoky pall.

He orchestrates
the carnival of noisy dreams
at night, pushing the buttons
turning the crank,

steering us through his House of Horrors.
All we want to do is remember
what we were doing before
and do it again: plant the bergamot
reschedule the doctor,
visualize skylines whole, unbleeding.
The stranger doesn't say he's here to stay.
We know.

By Alice D'Alessio

Alice D'Alessio lives in Madison and writes: "My poetry focuses on people interactions and environmental issues. Like many poets, I try to depict the ironies of the human condition in fresh and meaningful ways. I write because I love language, and because it gives me satisfaction to capture a moment, event, thought, and then to relive it each time I reread the poem! If it also touches someone else, I am pleased many times over."

Memorial for Allen Ginsberg

It takes a bicycle to get to Ginsberg nowadays,
old, bearded with rust, growing sixty years in William Burroughs' garden.
A skeleton, a rattle of ribby steel,
sway-framed,
its seat spiking up, daring
"ride me."
And it has no brakes.

By Rebecca Conn

Rebecca Conn is an undergraduate at UW-Stevens Point, where she is pursuing a double major in art and English. Her poetry has been printed in several local publications over the past few years, and she intends to practice both her poetry and her visual art her whole life.

Winning the Wetlands

A Wisconsin environmental success story

BY CHARLIE LUTHIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN WETLANDS ASSOCIATION

Wisconsin wetlands were left vulnerable to development and other uses by a U.S. Supreme Court decision early last year.

Photos courtesy of Wisconsin Wetlands Association

ALTHOUGH MANY CITIZENS HAVE LOST FAITH in the democratic process, here is a story that illustrates that the fundamental tenets of democracy are alive and well in Wisconsin. An extraordinary showing of citizen interest, support, and swift actions last year saved our state's rich and diverse wetlands from potential demise. This is one of those exemplary success stories that should be recalled every time anyone questions whether individual voices can really make a difference in the current political atmosphere.

WETLANDS UNDER ATTACK

The story begins on January 9, 2001. I had just returned to the Wisconsin Wetlands Association office following a nice holiday break and was planning my calendar of activities for the coming weeks. On that day a reporter called me from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* asking my opinion about the U.S. Supreme Court decision pertaining to

wetlands. My response was simple: "What court decision?" It was nothing that I had heard about or anticipated. But that date was a very dark one for wetlands across the country, and that unfortunate Supreme Court decision would consume every day of my life for the next four months.

The court case involved the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County

(SWANCC), a group of municipalities in northeastern Illinois, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the federal agency with authority to regulate the filling of wetlands under the national Clean Water Act of 1972. SWANCC wanted to use a property containing a number of shallow ponds and wetlands and an abandoned gravel quarry for a landfill, and they applied for and were denied a fill permit by the Corps. The Corps' ruling was repeatedly challenged and appealed in court by SWANCC until it landed in the Supreme Court.

On a split of 5-4 (the identical split between the same judges that had won George W. Bush the presidency a few weeks earlier), the high Court overruled the Corps, determining that the Corps does not have regulatory jurisdiction over "isolated, non-navigable, intrastate" wetlands under the Clean Water Act and the subsequent Migratory Bird Rule of 1986. The Corps had argued that the ponds and gravel quarry were important habitat to migratory birds, especially waterfowl. The Supreme Court ruled that these "isolated" wetlands—those not somehow directly connected to a navigable waterway—were no longer protected under our federal laws.

In Wisconsin, following the Supreme Court ruling the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) quickly produced figures concluding that more than one million acres of our state's wetlands became vulnerable to development and other detrimental fill activities as a result of the SWANCC decision, since the state's jurisdiction was directly tied to federal jurisdiction. In Wisconsin these wetlands include kettles and prairie ponds, depressional wetlands of the Lake Michigan "swell and swale" region, and many of our northern bogs. This single decision, therefore, represented the worst threat to our state's wetlands in 30 years, since passage of the federal Clean Water Act.

Prior to the SWANCC decision, all of the state's wetlands were protected by a "double filter" permitting system. The first filter was the Clean Water Act's "Section 404" permit process, administered through the Army Corps of Engineers. The second, and finer, filter

Public outcry over the lost protection of wetlands was enormous and unprecedented in recent Wisconsin conservation history.

had been the state water quality certification process for wetlands established in 1991 as administrative rule NR 103 and managed by the DNR. NR 103 has been extraordinarily effective at stopping wetland destruction in the state. Permitted wetland filling decreased by more than 75 percent after the 1991 rules were put into place, dropping from more than 1,000 acres per year to approximately 250 acres per year (most of these wetland acres are filled by the state's Department of Transportation). The SWANCC decision in effect punched a large hole in the two filters, resulting in both federal and state authority over insolated wetlands falling through the regulatory gap.

THE STATEHOUSE RESPONSE

The state senate, recognizing the gravity of the situation, responded very quickly to the Supreme Court ruling. Within weeks of the decision, language to plug the gap was drafted and a hearing was called by the Senate's Environment Committee. Leading the wetlands charge were senators Jim Baumgart (D-Sheboygan, chair of the committee) and Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay). On February 13, just a month after the SWANCC decision, senate bill (SB) 37—a simple but effective "status quo" wetland protection bill—was passed by the senate on a strongly bipartisan vote of 27-6.

SB 37 was sent to the Assembly Environment Committee, chaired by Representative Neal Kedzie (R-Elkhorn). Several meetings were held to discuss modest language changes, and we thought that the assembly was well on its way to taking similar swift action as the senate. Unfortunately, that was not the case. SB 37 languished in the Assembly Environment Committee for five weeks without even a hearing. An effort to pull the bill out of committee after 31 days and

have the full assembly vote on it failed on straight party lines. Wetlands, alas, had become a political football.

The lobbyists for the development and agricultural interests (home builders, realtors, Wisconsin Farm Bureau, and other agricultural interests) saw the SWANCC decision as an opportunity to weaken state wetland regulations for their constituent members through new legislation. They complain that the protection afforded our wetlands under NR 103 since 1991 has been too restrictive. They wanted a change, and they were able to convince assembly Republican leaders to stall SB 37 until it could be reworked.

In the meantime, recognizing that SB 37 was going nowhere, the senate passed a simple moratorium on wetland fill that would endure until the legislature passed a meaningful wetland protection bill. The assembly response was to craft their own—weaker—moratorium bill that would have been effective for only a few weeks and ended in the middle of construction season. It became obvious that the assembly moratorium bill was a smokescreen to cover up its inactivity on SB 37. Neither moratorium bill was ever passed due to the stalemate created by partisan politics.

Subsequently, the Assembly Environment Committee held hearings on several draft bills of their own creation, ignoring SB 37 altogether. These bills were significantly weaker than SB 37 and included many of the proposed revisions to wetland policy that the agricultural and development community desired. The Wisconsin Wetlands Association repeatedly went on record opposing the assembly wetland bills, and it became clear that they were part of a deliberate political stall tactic thwarting good wetland protection.

THE FILLING BEGINS

Immediately after the Supreme Court ruling in early January, several individuals around the state falsely interpreted the decision to apply to all wetlands and began to fill their own wetland sites. These several wetland fill activities were halted by DNR regulatory staff in areas that were clearly unaffected by the SWANCC decision.

Except for the isolated situations just mentioned, there was little or no wetland filling until early March. Developers decided to hold off on projects pending the final interpretations of the Supreme Court's ruling by lawyers from the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers in Washington. Since the decision came just days before the change in the Bush administration, new political appointees at all levels of federal government, including in the Corps of Engineers and EPA, were deliberately slow to interpret the implications of the SWANCC case.

While some of our state legislators were posturing and stalling, wetlands began to be filled even before the snow melted. On March 19, we received photos of the first wetland fill resulting from SWANCC—0.7 acres filled to construct a new Menard's store in Peshtigo. Shortly thereafter, letters from the regional Army Corps office responding to permit requests to fill wetlands indicated that they no longer had jurisdic-

tion over isolated wetlands, and no permits were necessary. From late March until early May, when the new law was finally enacted, the Corps issued more than 40 letters of "non-jurisdiction" for wetland fill projects that would have impacted more than 100 total acres of wetlands in Wisconsin. The state was experiencing, on average, "a wetland a day" passing through the regulatory gap created by the Supreme Court decision.

A PUBLIC OUTCRY

It is widely recognized that wetland loss affects the entire cross-section of our populace, from hunting and fishing interests to municipalities that would lose flood protection if more wetlands were destroyed. Wetlands benefit us all, providing habitat for wildlife and game fish, recreational opportunities, water-cleansing functions, and a whole host of other economic and aesthetic values.

Widespread support of citizens and organizations that had an interest in restoring protection to our wetlands was apparent. Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) and several other state organizations kept other groups and the statewide media informed about what was happening at the Capitol. Stories and photos of wetlands being filled were shared with the state's newspapers. WWA and the Sierra Club initiated a massive postcard campaign to citizens in targeted assembly districts.

More than 40,000 postcards were sent or delivered to citizens throughout the state asking them to take action. The fate of our state's wetlands was in the forefront just as cranes, blackbirds, terns, and bitterns began returning to their wetland nesting grounds.

Public outcry over the lost protection of wetlands was enormous and unprecedented in recent Wisconsin conservation history. Thousands of citizen responses—letters, phone calls, faxes, e-mails—poured in to legislators and to the governor. Eventually more than 70 national, state, and local organizations with a combined statewide membership of more than 320,000 people signed a letter calling on the legislature to pass SB 37 to restore status quo protection to our wetlands. Support came from diverse influential groups, including the Wisconsin Association of Lakes; Trout Unlimited; Wisconsin Waterfowl Association; Ducks Unlimited; Wisconsin Wildlife Federation; Defenders of Wildlife; River Alliance of Wisconsin; 1000 Friends of Wisconsin; and many other state and local organizations. Of significance in this effort was the united support of the traditional "conservation" community—hunters and anglers—with the "environmental" community. Even biking and hiking associations, outing clubs, and church congregations added their voices to the chorus crying for wetland protection.

Significant further support came during the traditional Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearings held around the state in early April. A strongly worded wetland protection resolution passed in 58 of 60 counties where it had been introduced, and with a favorable vote of more than 91 percent. The message to our legislators from thousands of Wisconsin conservationists was clear: "Protect our vulnerable wetlands—now!"

ENTER THE GOVERNOR

Gov. Scott McCallum, even as then-lieutenant governor, issued a statement expressing his concern over the loss of protection for the wetlands of the state and sharing his commitment to restor-



Doing the right thing: A new state wetland protection law was passed unanimously in both houses. Gov. Scott McCallum signed the bill last May.

ing that protection. As the discussions heated up among legislators and public pressure increased, McCallum called a small delegation of individuals together in the confines of his office to seek a reasonable solution to the wetland crisis.

McCallum indicated that he would support a compromise bill worked out by the environmental and development community and that he would ask the Legislature to do likewise. Representatives of the Wisconsin Realtors Association met repeatedly with a team from Wisconsin Wetlands Association (including our hired lobbyist, Sean Dilweg) and the governor's staff over a two-week period to discuss possible options and alternatives for acceptable language of the bill. Simultaneously, leaders from the assembly and senate were meeting independently to develop their version of a compromise bill. Eventually, the two versions converged, thanks to the constant communication facilitated by Sean Dilweg. A reasonable compromise bill was crafted that met with the approval of the realtors, DNR, legislators from both houses, and the conservation and environmental community.

The compromise bill (draft 8 of the governor's bill) was finally completed in the evening of Monday, April 30. The following morning, Tuesday, May 1, McCallum called a special session of the legislature to address the bill. That same afternoon, the senate held a brief hearing and passed the bill on a vote of 33-0. Two days later, the assembly followed suit and passed the bill on a vote of 94-0. On Monday, May 7, McCallum held a press conference and signing ceremony of "2001 Wisconsin Act 6," the new wetland protection law for Wisconsin. The law became effective at midnight that night.

The upshot of the new law is: jurisdiction over isolated wetlands that was lost by the federal government was given to the state of Wisconsin. The Corps still retains jurisdiction over all other (nonisolated) wetlands. With the new law, protection has been restored to all wetlands in the state, and every wetland fill project is still reviewed by the DNR under NR 103, the wetland water-quality standards for wetlands.

With the new law, protection has been restored to all wetlands in the state, and every wetland fill project is still reviewed by the DNR.

Several modest concessions were made to the development community. These concessions tended to be more procedural than substantive. For example, a time limit of 120 days for issuing a decision on wetland permits was imposed on the DNR following receipt of a completed permit. Previously, there was no time limit on permit decisions. All exemptions that previously applied under federal jurisdiction also apply to the new state law.

In another concession, in cases of small wetland projects (less than one acre) that can demonstrate a need for public safety, a local government or a state or federal transportation agency can request the waiver of the "practicable alternatives" step in the permitting process. This step is often the most time-consuming and difficult. The request for waiver of this step can be challenged by any citizen, a request for public hearing can be made, and the decision to waive the alternatives test can be challenged in court. This mechanism is a safeguard to ensure that no project can be proposed and pushed through in the name of public safety that may have significant deleterious effects on a wetland without public input. The concession recognizes that there are legitimate projects where a degraded wetland may need to be filled in the name of public safety.

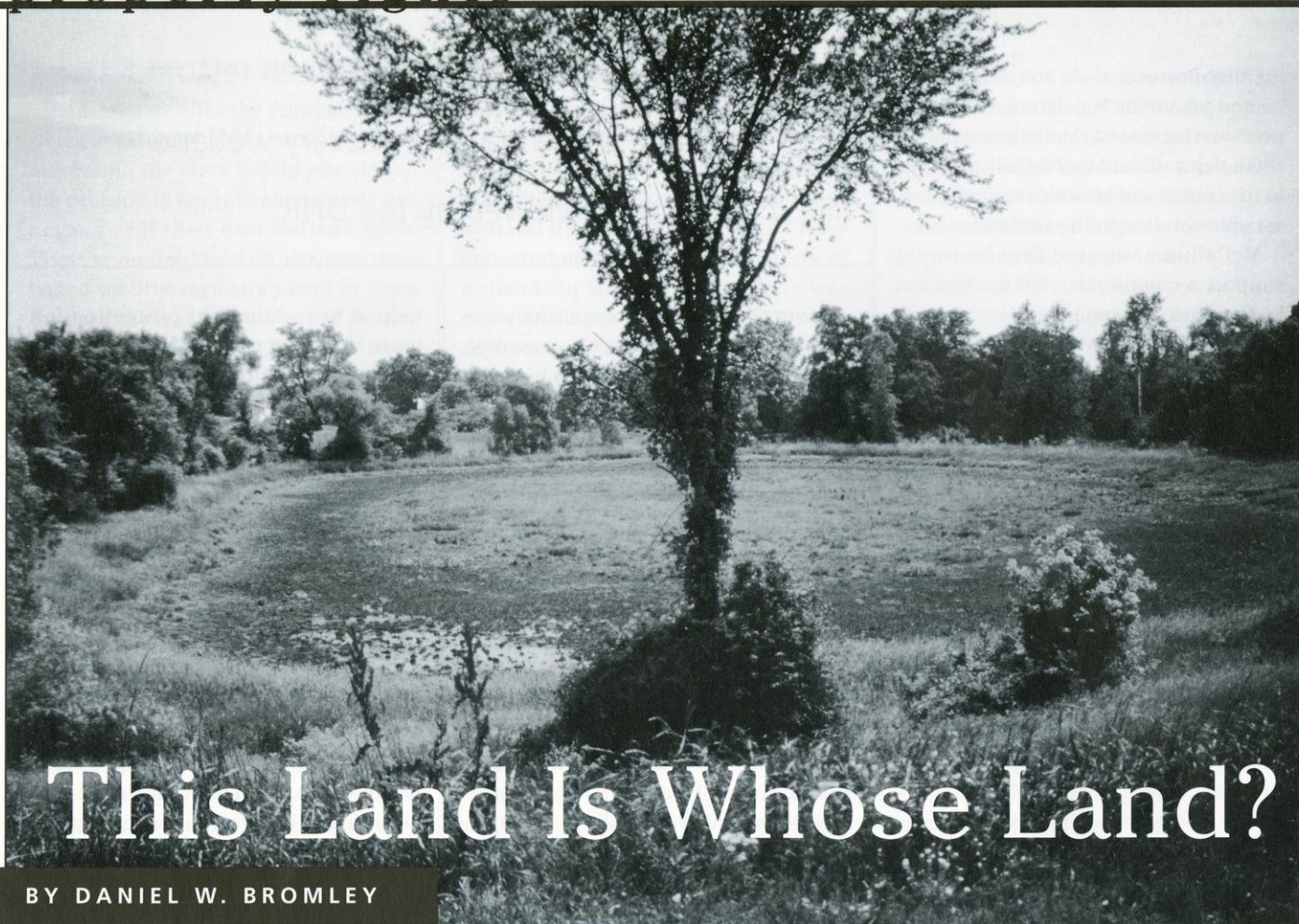
In the new law, the DNR is given guidance on how to investigate suspected violations of isolated wetland fills. Furthermore, a legislative council study of all existing wetland laws is authorized to evaluate the whole suite of laws together.

The speedy passage of this new law confirms that citizens of Wisconsin hold their wetland heritage dear, and that the democratic process really works. The many thousands of voices raised in alarm over loss of wetland protection

helped to reclaim that protection for more than one million wetland acres. Wisconsin was the first state in the nation to pass a wetland protection law in response to the SWANCC decision, and that was completed exactly four months to the day following the Supreme Court ruling. The new governor, Scott McCallum, identified the wetlands law as one of his most important accomplishments in 2001.

Other parts of the country have not been so fortunate. The Supreme Court's decision on the SWANCC case has had significant ramifications throughout the nation. Millions of acres of important shallow isolated wetlands are no longer given federal protection, including the countless thousands of prairie potholes in the Dakotas, conifer bogs in the various northern states, and the unique isolated cypress stand swamps of our southern states. Although some states have found ways to "fill the gap" of protection lost by this decision, there is still widespread uncertainty about the future of many of the state's isolated wetlands. More than a year after the SWANCC decision, Wisconsin is still the only state to have passed a new law that gives the state jurisdiction over wetlands where jurisdiction was lost by the federal government.

Charlie Luthin is executive director of Wisconsin Wetlands Association, a private nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to protecting, restoring, and enjoying wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based education, advocacy, and action. You can find more information at: www.wiscwetlands.org



This Land Is Whose Land?

BY DANIEL W. BROMLEY

Wetlands provide an interesting example of "private rights versus public good" in property rights.

Photo by Art Kitchen
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

LAND HAS BEEN IN THE NEWS LATELY, particularly if it is often under water. In January 2001 the U.S. Supreme Court stripped jurisdiction over isolated wetlands from the federal government and left their protection up to the individual states. According to the decision,

the Clean Water Act—the law under which federal regulations had been promulgated—had granted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdiction over the filling of wetlands only when those wetlands are associated with navigable waters. The Supreme Court's ruling meant that wetlands not part of a navigable water system were suddenly exposed to the threat of destruction under the relentless march of what, these days, is called "development." Soon thereafter, on May 8, 2001, Wisconsin became the first state in the union to remedy this unwelcome exposure when a new law went into effect allowing the state of Wisconsin, through

the Department of Natural Resources, to protect approximately 1 million acres of sedge meadows, shallow marshes, and seasonal wetlands. Early Republican opposition to the law was soon overwhelmed by clear evidence that the citizens of Wisconsin wanted immediate protection of these valuable areas. The new law was soon passed with unanimous support in both the senate and assembly. These wetland areas comprise essential amphibian and waterfowl habitat, and they provide storage for seasonal floodwater.

The regulation of wetlands may seem like mundane stuff in a time of possible energy shortages, unstable gasoline

prices, chronic wasting disease in Wisconsin's deer herd, and other environmental issues. Appearance aside, the fate of wetlands is of fundamental importance to wildlife in Wisconsin, and to such migratory birds as ducks, geese, and cranes. More than half of America's wetlands have been destroyed since the European conquest, so there are major national efforts to protect those that remain.

When a landowner decides to fill or drain wetlands, that intention is usually based on the presumption that private property bestows the freedom to undertake any actions thought desirable by the owner. A companion presumption is that if this desired action is precluded by a regulation, compensation must be forthcoming. The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, "...nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Despite these twin presumptions, legal reality is quite different.

Zoning is an accepted reach of community interests and standards into the imagined sanctity of ownership. In addition to zoning that brings physical separation of dissimilar activities (residential, commercial, industrial), most cities have guidelines for the maintenance and appearance of buildings, and there are substantial fines when owners allow structures to fall into a state of decrepitude. If ownership entailed complete autonomy for the owner, these arrangements could not exist. And these very regulations serve the valuable purpose of stabilizing property values. It is here that regulations tend to unite both progressives and conservatives—the former find that these arrangements allow for the community to have some influence on evolving norms of building design and public spaces, while the latter find that these arrangements protect property values and make the investment climate more predictable. The lesson here is that a market economy is a manifestation of social norms that define acceptable realms of autonomous behavior. The legal foundations of a market economy are a social construction, and those

The fictitious nature of land as a commodity is apparent when we realize that Native Americans hold a very different conception of land. To Europeans, land "belongs to" us. To Native Americans, people "belong to" land.

legal arrangements bend and adapt under new scarcities and new priorities.

But landowners will invariably seek to undertake actions that others find threatening, annoying, or outrageous. If regulations prevent the realization of such plans, isn't that a "taking"? Doesn't the Fifth Amendment provide assurance that just compensation will be forthcoming if government "takes" private property for public use?

The continuing legal battle over "takings" is precisely concerned with the extent to which a landowner is at liberty to use land and associated buildings as he or she may wish. Of course if the state of Wisconsin requires a piece of Black Acres for construction of a highway, then the owners of Black Acres will be compensated at fair market value for the fact that some land was taken for public use. While these dealings are often unpleasant for the owners of such land, the controversy here is usually tame in comparison with the other way in which government action affects landowners. When the regulatory arm of government reaches onto land, sparks will often fly. One example of this is when regulations exist to prevent the draining and filling of wetlands.

A Wisconsin case is of some significance in the effort to protect wetlands. In the early 1970s a landowner wished to drain wetlands on the shore of Lake Noquebay, but Marinette County refused to issue a permit. The owners sued the county, and when the case reached the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the court ruled that a landowner does not have the right to drain wetlands so as to construct a dwelling—nor was compensation required for that inability. The court ruled that:

The changing of wetlands and swamps to the damage of the general public by upsetting the natural environ-

ment and the natural relationship is not a reasonable use of that land which is protected from police power regulation ... filling a swamp not otherwise commercially usable is not in and of itself an existing use, which is prevented, but rather is the preparation for some future use which is not indigenous to a swamp. Too much stress is laid on the right of an owner to change commercially valueless land when that change does damage to the rights of the public... The Justs argued their property has been severely depreciated in value. But this depreciation of value is not based on the use of the land in its natural state but on what the land would be worth if it could be filled and used for the location of a dwelling. While loss of value is to be considered in determining whether a restriction is a constructive taking, value based upon changing the character of the land at the expense of harm to public rights is not an essential factor or controlling [*Just v. Marinette County*, 1972].

We see the court reminding the owner that nothing was taken. The Justs owned a large wetland, and after their inability to destroy it they still owned a large wetland—only their dream of destroying it for the sake of constructing a dwelling was denied. In addition, the county's purse, consisting solely of tax payments from its citizens, should not be exposed to the burden of reimbursing a landowner for a dream denied.

Notice that the job of the courts is to balance competing property claims. And in that balancing, the courts find where the more compelling property interests lie. In *Just v. Marinette County* the more compelling interest was in preventing a landowner from acting so as to harm water quality and thereby damage the interests of those with an interest in

ecosystem integrity. If the Justs were free to drain the wetlands, those with an interest in wetlands and lake quality would have had to bear unwanted costs; if the Justs were enjoined (as they were) then it is they who bear the unwanted costs of a dream denied. More important, if the court had ordered Marinette County to compensate the Justs for their inability to destroy the wetlands, it would have implied that they had a right to impose costs on others and could only be enjoined if their loss was compensated.

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

It is easy to cast this problem as one of a single landowner (in this case the Justs) versus the “heavy hand of government.” To do so would be a mistake. The denial to the Justs was motivated and justified by the larger good to all citizens. Hence, land-use conflicts are really triadic—the owner, all others adversely affected by what the owner does (or wishes to do), and the courts that must ultimately arbitrate these conflicts. We see that ownership is a social concept rather than an individual concept. The idea of the ownership (and implied control) of land requires social recognition and acceptance of the important distinction between what is internal and what is external to us. We are called

homo sapiens for a reason—our capacity for discernment (sapience). One central notion of sapience is to comprehend the distinction between the internal and the external. The concepts of “me” and “I” are the essence of the internal. Similarly, the concepts of “you” and “them” convey the essence of things external to us. Our language affirms this demarcationist perception of what it means to be human. We may notice that slavery, and wives being the “property” of their husbands, are unfortunate legacies of this internal-external idea. After all, when one “owns” a slave—or a wife—this is one way of acknowledging that one person (slave owner, husband) has managed to take something external (slave, wife) and make it internal. To own is to control, and to control is to internalize something that is otherwise external. A slave or a wife is clearly something outside of oneself, and so when ownership and control become socially accepted ideas, those external things become, by definition, internalized.

We see this fundamental distinction in the contrasting ways that different societies deal with land. People of European descent have, over the millennia, created a concept of ownership and control of land that regards land as a commodity—something to be bought and sold. In economics we refer to this as the “commodity fiction.” The fictitious

nature of land as a commodity is apparent when we realize that Native Americans hold a very different conception of land. When a Native American says to us, “We do not own land—would you own your mother?” they are affirming the commodity fiction concerning land. To Europeans, land “belongs to” us. To Native Americans, people “belong to” land. The idea of belonging to captures the essence of ownership and control. As our European ancestors (and now we) would say: “This land belongs to her.” The Native American would say, “She belongs to this land.”

European immigration to the New World destroyed native cultures, and therefore most of us find nothing odd about saying that land belongs to us. Indeed, some among us may observe how very strange it is to hear a Native American say that she belongs to the land. We are reminded, if we would but reflect, of the extent to which ownership is a social construct. In the dominant American culture, it is common to believe this land is my land, or that land is your land. The interesting conflicts arise when it is the same piece of land that is being talked about in this way.

THIS LAND IS MY LAND

European conceptions of land seemed to fit easily into the New World. After all, our immigrant ancestors did not see any of the customary accouterments of the European idea of ownership—fences, hedges, barns, fine stone houses—upon the land. “Aha, the land belongs to no one! Let us take it, then, and improve it, and it shall become ours.” The Homestead Act ratified the idea that because land was not owned as our ancestors understood that notion, it was available for us to take. Manifest Destiny held tragic implications for the Native Americans who happened to get in the way of the grand idea that this land was suddenly my land.

The English philosopher John Locke shaped much of what Americans believe about land. The Lockean myth has it that the earth—God’s Commons—was given to humans with the obligation that we appropriate it for the fulfillment of



Photo courtesy of Wisconsin Wetlands Association

our needs. The purpose of nature is to satisfy our production and consumption needs. That is what nature is for. Locke's views on the ownership of land were no doubt much influenced by a comfortable existence made possible by his generous patron, the first Earl of Shaftsbury—one of England's largest landowners. The several virtues of owning land, and lots of it, could not possibly have escaped Locke's notice. And so Lockean possession is the dominant idea of land in America.

But to return to the fundamental logical problem, how does one justify the internalization of something that is so obviously external? That is, how can one explain the basis upon which something external to humans—land—can become internal, and by that very act become subject to the will of one person (the "owner")? Aristotle thought land should belong to those who would put it to good use—a classic consequentialist position. Christian theology insisted that land should belong to the righteous. Locke offered a third alternative—land should belong to those who would mix their labor with it and "improve" it. We see that the Lockean notion of ownership rewards conquest. Land should belong to those who subdue it—subjugate it to their dominion. Having justified how one gets control and possession of land, Locke then had a nice idea, one that was much influenced by the political turmoil in England at the time. Ownership of land would be the guarantor of liberty against a tyrannical government. In American political mythology, it would be difficult indeed to deny the staying power of this idea. The ownership of land would stand as the ultimate protection against an oppressive state. Never mind the irony of grounding liberty on ownership of something that is in fixed supply and hence available only to those immigrants who got here first and terrorized those already here—the Native Americans. What about the liberty of those who came later, or those who cannot afford to own land? Is liberty only for those fortunate enough to own land?

WHOSE LAND IS IT?

It may be noticed that the Lockean idea of land is a very solitary one indeed. In Lockean terms, the isolated act of but one person, mixing some labor with some land, is sufficient to cause that land to become the possession of that single person. Once land is so acquired, it becomes the obligation of the state to protect that newly acquired possession against the claims of all others. From this idea, those who now own will insist that the primary role of government is to protect property rights.

But a moment's reflection exposes the precarious footing upon which this idea stands. The idea is fragile precisely because the Lockean idea of land is predicated on the proposition: this is mine! Those who claim as much, and then expect the government to defend their claim against all others in the political unit, are asking for extraordinary protection. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant offered a quite different idea of the matter. To Kant, ownership was not something that a single individual could declare for himself (or herself). Instead, ownership arose from the mutual consent of a civil society (a "bürgerliche Gesellschaft") offering assurance that "yes, that is yours." To Kant, ownership required this social ratification because it was only on such grounds that one could justify the internalization (ownership) of something (land or other objects) that was so clearly external to the individual.

Despite the Lockean legacy in America, the Kantian approach is apparent in takings decisions by the Supreme Court. In one case the Court will appear as if it is protecting property rights by ordering government compensation for a particular regulatory stricture. In another case the Court will find that the regulation was reasonable and no compensation is called for. Some regard this behavior as inconsistent. Endless law review articles will dissect such decisions in the hope of discovering whether or not the current justices believe in protecting property rights. However, such queries start from a flawed premise. To ask such questions is to presume that property rights exist

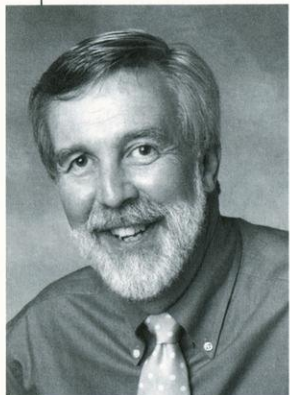
a priori. If property rights indeed had that a priori content, then it is interesting to ask whether particular decisions result in their protection.

However, property rights are not protected because they are, a priori, property rights. Rather, those settings and circumstances that gain protection by the Supreme Court acquire, by virtue of that protection, the status of property rights. A property right is not the cause of protection but rather its effect. In this light, the protection of wetlands on private property becomes a plausible candidate for noncompensable regulation. Such action does not constitute a "taking" of private property for public use or benefit. We see that the discretion open to those who own land is less than the myth of private property in America would have us believe. For some who own land this may be unwelcome news. In reality, this turns out to be the very best protection that landowners could hope for.

First, this approach protects each of us from the egregious plans and schemes of inconsiderate neighbors who might otherwise undertake bizarre actions of profound implications—both economic and social—for us. Second, it allows the system of private property to bend somewhat before the winds of change. A system that cannot bend inevitably breaks, and that is the last thing any of us could want. Recall that the specific nature of property rights requires the implicit consent of everyone. If that consent begins to erode, trouble lies not too far down the road.

*Daniel W. Bromley is Anderson-Bascom Professor, department of agricultural and applied economics, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since 1974, Bromley has been editor of **Land Economics**, a scholarly journal founded at the UW-Madison in 1924 by Richard T. Ely. He originally prepared this article for a public forum held by the Wisconsin Academy titled "Private Rights, Public Good: The Bill of Rights in Our Lives."*

Read Like a Fellow



The only good thing about getting sick with pneumonia last winter was that I got some uninterrupted time to read my Christmas books. Jay Winek's Civil War history *April 1865: The Month That Saved America*, Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (for at least the third time!), Antonia Fraser's *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*, and Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*—all excellent, I thought, and books that I can wholeheartedly recommend to others.

With the summer reading season upon us, I decided to ask what the Fellows of the Wisconsin Academy, who are among our state's brightest and most accomplished citizens, have on their nightstands. Their suggestions proved to be insightful and wide-ranging. It is with great pleasure that I share the first annual "Wisconsin Academy Fellows Recommended Reading List."

Not surprisingly, the Middle East and Afghanistan were popular topics. Sister Esther Heffernan, the distinguished social scientist and criminologist, recommends Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*: "I have pushed far enough into their rather dense analysis to discover that in those days immediately after the attacks [of September 11th], they provided me with some critical insights."

Dr. Alfred Bader, Renaissance man of science and arts, gave as his selection the novel *A Perfect Peace* by the Israeli author Amos Oz. Says Bader: "I cannot think of a timelier book to read during the horrendous struggle in the Middle East."

Wood engraving artist Ray Gloeckler recommends Benjamin R. Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*. Watercolorist Lee Weiss, speaking on behalf of her book group "The Culture Vultures," recommends the novel *Map of Love*, by Ahdaf Soueif. Says Weiss: "This book is filled with insights about contemporary Egypt and the Middle East; a revelation."

However, many topics besides the Middle East surfaced as well, from art and anthropology to fiction, history, and poetry.

Ron Wallace, American poet/writer extraordinaire, had this to say about Oprah-snobber Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections*: "It is arguably—as one enthusiastic reviewer put it—the first great novel of the 21st century. By turns hilarious and heart-breaking in its depiction of the meltdown of a Midwestern family, *The Corrections* grabs you from the first page and won't let go. Its evocation of the family patriarch succumbing to Parkinson's dementia is, by itself, enough to make the book a masterpiece of observation of the human heart and soul."

Reverend Francis P. Prucha, theologian and scholar, cast his vote in the realm of American history with Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*. "I enjoyed it

immensely and recommend it highly. It is a sprightly account of the development of American pragmatism by following the careers of Oliver Wendell Homes Jr., William James, Charles S. Pierce, and John Dewey."

James R. Johnson, retired 3M executive, cited two books: *Vital Dust: Life as a Cosmic Imperative* by Christian De Duve—"An important but, I fear, little-read book by a Nobel Laureate on the origins of life and the mind"—and *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life*, by Jacques Barzun: "A multitude of short commentaries on the people and times of the past 500 years as they have molded our own times."

Nancy Lurie, curator of anthropology with the Milwaukee Public Museum, gave a ringing endorsement of reading mysteries at bedtime "to relax" and then recommended Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*. "Pollan's thesis is that we tend to overlook the interplay of plants and people in ways that we take for granted in plants' relationships with other animals... He details four cases, including the apple and the real role of Johnny Appleseed, which was to make hard cider available to pioneers, and how the so-called War on Drugs fostered the development of far more potent and harder forms of marijuana than would occur in nature."

Catherine Cleary, a lawyer, civic leader, and role model for today's professional women, writes: "Ever since I bought my cottage in 1957 and a friend gave me a bird feeder, I've thought of myself as an amateur birdwatcher. After reading and enjoying Leonard Nathan's *Diary of a Left-Handed Birdwatcher*, I realize I probably don't qualify even as an amateur (alas)."

Painter John Wilde enjoyed Toby Olsen's *The Woman Who Escaped From Shame*, a Pen Faulkner award winner, which he described as "a fine tale mixing fantasy with detailed realism."

And painter Warrington Colescott heartily recommends *Francis Bacon, a Retrospective*, a show catalog of essays about the English painter and photographs "of his unbelievably wretched, chaotic working studio. A riveting volume for anyone in need of a dose of depression."

Many thanks to the Fellows for sharing these weighty picks. We actually received many more responses than I could fit into this column, so we are posting a complete list on our website, www.wisconsinacademy.org. I wish you all happy (summer or any time!) reading.

All the best,

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



The racy side of the Dells.

Photo by Zane Williams (1992)

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