Animal mind reader  THE BIOLOGY OF MAMMALIAN CONSCIOUSNESS  ALSO: SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW  AN EXCERPT FROM WE NEVER NEW EXACTLY WHERE  DISPATCHES FROM THE LOST COUNTRY OF MAUI BY PETER CHILSON
Making electric power reliable everywhere

Providing reliable power for an entire nation presents a big challenge. For nearly two decades, the newly independent Republic of Georgia faced frequent countrywide blackouts from difficulties caused by extreme temperatures, rugged terrain, and aging infrastructure. Everyday services, such as elevators, air-conditioning, refrigeration, and life-saving medical services, were unreliable. This country’s utility, Georgian State Electrosystem (GSE), needed an affordable solution to build flexibility into their system.

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Small Towns You Should Visit :: I’ve been very fortunate to have visited many of the world’s great cities. Buenos Aires, Boston, Kiev, Merida, Bangkok, Paris, Even Seattle.

Regardless of having seen Paris et al., I still always feel a thrill of anticipation passing the city limits sign of a small town, and I’ve encountered a lot of them while pursuing stories for this magazine over the last decade: Sunnyside, Neah Bay, Waterville, South Bend, Marblemount, Starbuck, Winona, and others equally euphonious. How did the town come to be? What are its people like? What surprises might wait in its architecture, history, cafés, or whimsy?

The deep red door on the little white church in Prosser. The experimental jet plane hanging from the ceiling of the café in Waterville. The wonderful camarones al diablo in Sunnyside. The windmill garden in Electric City.

Consider my latest adventure. After driving a couple of hours, I stop in Wilbur at Billy Burgers for an order of onion rings. While waiting, I get to talking with a gentleman somewhat older than I. His grandson, who is actually from Lind, attends WSU. He loves to hunt, says his grandfather. When he arrived on campus, he figured he’d show up at a shoot sponsored by the gun club. And amazed everyone by consistently shooting 25s. At least that’s what his grandfather says.

Later in Pepper Jack’s Bar and Grill in Grand Coulee, I ask the server (who is not the least bit ironic, nor does she think I need to know her name) what kind of wine they have. Cabernet, chardonnay, white zinfandel. Turns out the cab goes pretty well with the walleye (“best fish you ever tasted”), the canned green beans aren’t bad with a little Tabasco, and the French fries are truly the best I’ve had in a long while. Once the family next to me leaves, I have the place to myself.

The walls are filled with photos of dam construction and history, and the décor is frozen somewhere around 1963. The town outside the window is absolutely dead on a Thursday evening in early March.

But Grand Coulee was not always so still. If you listen carefully, you can just hear the shouts, music, and laughter of the town’s infamous B Street that grew up around the Grand Coulee dam construction. And much fainter, the music of children playing as their parents fish for salmon on the undammed Columbia.

Despite my best efforts, there are many Washington small towns that I have not yet visited. Aeneas, Irulin, Climax, Springfield, Yacolt. There is much to learn about and to report on these small towns sprinkled across the Washington landscape. And not just the towns, but also the spaces between, the dark spaces below as you fly east over the state at night.

Dark, but hardly empty. How full those spaces are, old ranches, native fishing spots, and of course the landscape itself, the biological, evolutionary, geological stories everywhere, illuminating the shortness of our time, the shallowness of our focus and understanding.

Tim Steury, Editor

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Florence “Flossie” Wager ’54

Flossie was my aunt, and looking for a name of a park I couldn’t recall, I Googled her and found your article. It was so fantastic and really captured her essence; your description of her smile brought a vivid image to my mind. It’s been very sad without her. She was my role model and encouraged me to go back to school (WSUV 2006–2008 English) and to pursue my master degree at Antioch University. It graduated in December. Flossie lived long enough to know I’d be graduating. But passed before I actually did. I was one of those kids she “borrowed,” and there was never a dull moment when she was around. Her mother, Amy, who lived to be 105, had the same attitude and genes. all on Wager woman hope we get the same luck. I’m not sure I’ll be footing on an inner tube down the Lewis River in my 60’s like Flossie, but I hope to continue on with some of her great work.

Thanks for reminding me how amazing Aunt Flossie was.

Chris Grenell

Vancouver

Flossie Wager’s work with Vancouver parks was honored at the Winter 2009 issue of Washington State Magazine. Florence Wager ’54 – Vancouver park activist without peer.

How Washington Tastes

Enjoyed your article on “How Washington Tastes” re apples. I have tried all of them. One stands out way above the others. It’s the Jonagold! So this is what a Jonagold is supposed to taste like! What the hell are they doing to those poor apples in the supermarkets? I picked several boxes of Jonagolds around the end of October and finished off the last one in mid January. They tasted the same till the end. The texture of the flesh had softened a bit but who cares with flavor like that.

My theory was that when the apple industry comes out with the so called “Next Big Thing” it sends the apple out to the world in its fresh picked state to get toooked. Then the storage scenario begins. By that I mean fresh apples never get to the store anymore. I think they are picked too early as the Jonagold i pick are not so good when picked early. Only apples out of prolonged storage are supplied until so one buys them anymore.

I wonder how long before the Honeycrisp goes bland? This I’ll be tripling the boxes of Jonagolds I buy.

I hope they fix this someday. Meanwhile I am planting Braeburns and Jonagolds.

Robert Walder

Seattle

The Australian will tell you about it quickly. Actually, they can use nice apples there too. We lived in Sydney for seven years and enjoyed it. Fresh fruits and vegetables are absolutely the best. Worth your time sending some horticulturalists to Australia to see the fruit and vegetables stands all over the place.

Mark Welsh ’82 ’85

My two daughters are graduates of WSU. They give me their Washington State Magazine and I look forward to reading it. The Spring 2013 issue has an article called “The Apple meets Cougar Gold” by Tim Ivory that interests me greatly. I am a big fan of Apples and Cougar Gold.

I believe the Granny Smith to be the best apple out there so that gives you an idea of where my tastes lie. Of course it is not a great keeper so it is ready found at the local stores. Fordecades I ate an apple with lunch every day starting with the Granny Smith, then Pink Lady, and Braeburn most recently.

The Pink Lady was good for a few years before the flavor dropped off and I switched over to the Rebaurn, which was also good for a few years until its flavor dropped off. I tried a few other apples that were along the tart side of the flavor but they had a blandness to them so I quit buying apples. One of those trial and error apples was the Jonagold.

Recently I discovered an apple orchard nearby that is on recently acquired State Land that is being allowed to revert back to forest. There are at least 45 varieties of apples (most have tags) and I
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Why aren’t plants more sick than they are?

by Brian Clark

Why are plants immune to most of the diseases surrounding them in the environment? Lee Hadwiger, Washington State University professor of plant pathology, has been wrestling with this question most of his career.

Were it not for a commonplace but mysterious trait called non-host resistance (NHR), plants would be constantly attacked by fungi, bacteria, and other pathogens swarming in the air, soil, and bodies. For the most part, plants are immune to those challenges because NHR gives them their most robust and durable immunity to the myriad pathogens challenging them.

In the January issue of *Phytopathology*, Hadwiger and his colleague, USDA Agricultural Research Service plant pathologist James Polashock, offer new insight into the mechanism triggering the NHR response in plants.

“Iinnate immunity has to be triggered by something,” Hadwiger says, “but we are only now gaining some insight on how signaling occurs at the molecular level.”

Hadwiger and Polashock show that fungal DNase enzymes trigger the NHR response in a variety of plant species. They further theorize that these fungal DNase genes appear to provide an unlimited source of components for developing transgenic resistance in all transformable plants.

DNase is the generic term for a wide variety of enzymes that catalyze changes in DNA molecules. Hadwiger explains that DNases from fungal mitochondria have a small peptide molecule that enables them to move through plant cell membranes and thus induce expression of NHR in the plant. Hadwiger and Polashock demonstrated that when a plant encounters a fungal DNase purified in the lab, the NHR response is triggered.

Hadwiger and Polashock used baker’s yeast, a relatively innocuous fungus not known to cause disease, to trigger the NHR response in a pea plant. Hadwiger and students in his laboratory had previously induced this defense response by transferring a fungal DNase gene to tobacco. The tobacco plants then expressed the NHR response to a known tobacco pathogen.

“The potential positive impact of this for agriculture would be a reduction in the use of fungicides,” Hadwiger says. Currently, disease resistance genes are typically introduced into commercially important plants through conventional breeding techniques. But, Hadwiger says, conventional breeding targets races of specific diseases and the introduced immunity may last only
about seven years before the fungus evolves and overcomes the plant's resistance. The natural NHR resistance would be overwhelmed by celiac disease, an autoimmune response triggered by gluten proteins found in grains like wheat, barley, and rye. His symptoms got worse while he was backpacking in Germany, a land of great bread and beer, and his body was withering away, his weight dropping to 138 pounds. He felt lousy. He had a hunch that he might have celiac disease, an autoimmune reaction to certain gluten proteins found in grains like wheat, barley, and rye. His symptoms got worse while he was backpacking in Germany, a land of great bread and beer, and he confirmed his suspicion: he had the disease.

“When I was diagnosed, my ability to absorb nutrients had stopped,” says Wildung. “It was eating, I don’t know, well over 5,000 calories a day and losing weight.”

Back in Pullman, where he is senior scientific assistant in the WSU Genomics Core Lab, he ended up deciphering genetic codes of wheat that the lab of Dietlin von Wettstein is investigating to develop a grain that celiac patients can safely eat. As it happens, the lab is making one of the greatest progress in the world on the problem.

In an advance that American has edge over the case, with more diagnosed each year as awareness goes into the bloodstream. In addition to weight loss, symptoms can include diarrhea, a distended abdomen, anemia, and anemia. There’s no treatment other than a complete abstinence from gluten-containing grains.
Vila, now a Washington State University professor of criminal justice and criminology at the Spokane campus, has been a member of the drill team in Los Angeles, where he landed at the Spokane campus, had been a Marine in the 1980s. He joined the police department in Los Angeles, when he landed at the Spokane campus, had been a Marine in the 1980s. His experiences with police training experts?

For all of this to work, Vila says, it takes people willing to put in the time and effort. "It's not about the money, it's about the investment of more than money. "It's not about the number of hands-on days, it's about the number of days that people spend learning and developing culturally appropriate training methods."

"Our role wasn't to encourage American policing experts to train others who were assisting the former U.S. troops and contractors training police and military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. When we wrote the book, Iraq and Afghanistan were in the forefront and we were concerned about how the ideas of the lessons learned in such a different setting could be applied to somewhere other than Micronesia," he says. He found the storytelling approach helped him understand various cultures and find ways to connect to his hosts' cultures. Vila's six years on the island taught him something else: Don't treat cops as trainees, he says. Instead, treat them as trainees without the guise of being a cop. "I'd be walking down the road talking to one of my cops about procedures or training, and I'd have to remind him to think about the training."

"When we first arrived at Kosrae, they didn't understand that the cops he taught on Palau, Truk, and the other islands were there to serve as police and eager to learn. Vila's WSU research work now focuses on sleep and fatigue among police officers and infantry troops in counter-insurgency operations, but he hopes his experiences with police in Micronesia 30 years ago can help U.S. troops and contractors training police and military forces around the world.

"We usually have about 50,000 participations verse in intramurals—about 600 different people play every year, and 3,500-4,000 people play each semester," says University Recreation Programming Director Joanne Greene '02 MBA. "We've increased WSU's reputation for intramural sports, and WSU has consistently non-awards for marketing from the collegiate recreation associations NHERA. "We're always ranked pretty highly for the size of the school and the percentage of people who play," says Shaw. "The next part, students love it."

"We're really lucky that we're in Pullman because we have the best intramural program anywhere," says Greene. "We have the best intramural program anywhere. They might complain about that one night, that one call, and then the games come back and play all of our sports against," he says.

"The staff encourages those more vocal students to become officials themselves. "We have people that are used to competing on their own teams and we bring them in and they do pretty well," says Greene. "They might complain about that one night, that one call, and then the games come back and play all of our sports against," he says.

"We have the best intramural program anywhere. They might complain about that one night, that one call, and then the games come back and play all of our sports against," he says. After a hiatus during World War II, the sports program started with the Athletic Association of Washington Agricultural College in 1894, when faculty and students at WSU's living groups for overall points across the sports. The staff encourages those more vocal students to become officials themselves. "We have people that are used to competing on their own teams and we bring them in and they do pretty well," says Greene. "They might complain about that one night, that one call, and then the games come back and play all of our sports against," he says.

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Juice Grapes

by Tim Steary

I should point out right up front that I haven’t tried unfermented grape juice in a long, long time. In fact, the last time I had it may have been as a teenager during communion at our texting church, where grape juice was “wine.”

So it’s intriguing now decades later how familiar the taste is as I sip a glass of Concord grape juice. The most likely reason—isn’t it—isn’t it—of that total is grown in Washington, almost entirely in the Yakima Valley.

In contrast to eastern growers, Washington juice growers have no such worry. “Any given year, I’d say less than five percent of the acreage gets shipped elsewhere for bottling and further processing,” says Bardwell. Although Michigan and New York also grow Concords for processing, says Joan Davenport, a rodent scientist at the USDA Pressor research station.

Davenport, the chief viticulturist for the National Grape cooperative operation in Grandview, National Grape, which owns Welch’s, produces about 60 percent of the country’s Concord crop. Bardwell says that 45-50 percent of that total is grown in Washington, almost entirely in the Yakima Valley.

In season is not guaranteed. York get much higher rainfall, getting that rain at the right time of year choice but to irrigate, says Davenport. Although Michigan and New York also grow Concords for processing, says Joan Davenport, a rodent scientist at the USDA Pressor research station.

He says disease is almost nonexistent among Washington juice grapes.

In spite of how much Concords like the Yakima Valley, the grape actually originated in the east, near Concord, Massachusetts. In fact, the original Concord vine, planted in 1849, is still alive.

Ephraim Wales Bull planted seeds from the wild grapes around his home. He evaluated more than 22,000 seedlings before he was satisfied having developed the perfect grape.

Although the Concord is primarily the native Vitis labrusca in origin, it is believed to have some European Vitis vinifera in its gene pool, likely hybridised during Bull’s search. Bull’s grape was first in the Boston Horticultural Exhibitions in 1853 and was introduced to the market the next year. Thomas Brannwold Welch developed the first Concord grape juice in 1860.

New in Washington, the Concord arrived at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ron Irvine and Walt Clore’s The Wine Project reports that Concords were first planted in 1904 near Outlook. However, Bardwell says that during harvest last fall, a grower near Zillah told him that the two-acre block they were standing in was planted in 1902.

Chew, a horticulturist at the Prowser research station known to many as the “father of Washington wine,” launched his grape research with the planting of seven vinifera varieties and 20 labrusca hybrids. In 1969, Ernest and Julio Gallo purchased 4,000 tons of Washington Concords to ship to California to make its famous Cold Duck.

As recently as the 1980s, says Bardwell, Mille Fruit in Prosser, where he worked at the time, made a product from Concords that went to Gallo.

Washington acreage is down from nearly 26,000 acres just a few years ago, a decline in spite of good prices and an actual juice shortage, says Bardwell.

Wine grape acreage has now surpassed juice grapes in Washington. Even though wine grape prices are on average about four times the price of juice grapes, because of the high expense of inputs and labor for wine grapes, a juice grape grower in a good year can earn nearly as much as he or she would for wine grapes.

Some of the declining acreage can be attributed to older or low-producing vines being taken out of production. They are not being replaced acre for acre with new plantings, as establishment costs are so high. Irrigation and trellis systems can cost anywhere from $4,000 to $8,000 per acre.

Then you wait three years before you get a decent crop,” says Bardwell. “If your return on investment extends out there a long ways.

Even when long-established growers consider expanding, they put pencil to paper,” and apples and cherries might make more sense. “What, hey, everything is high,” he says. “And you get a crop the first year, with not nearly as high an establishment cost.”

On the nutrition front, let’s leave it at the fact that juice made from grapes with nothing else added is very good for you. Besides other nutrients, grape juice is very high in potassium. In the form of potassium tartrate, is both a pain and a byproduct in processing. The crystals build up in the bottom of tanks and can clog filters. But cleaned from the tanks, the potassium tartrate is refined and used in, among other things, cosmetics and cream of tartar.

Despite the high establishment costs, however, Concords provide a steady market and are relatively easy to grow. Once the grapes are established, irrigation, fertilizer, and labor are about the only inputs. Having grazed the valley landscape for over a century, they will not soon disappear. Meanwhile, perhaps now I’ll go back and revisit the peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Craig Bardwell ’84. Concord grapes—primarily a Vitis labrusca (fox grape) cultivar. Ephraim Bull with his original Concord grapevine, which still survives. Courtesy NGWI.
developing a subject that for some Americans is an obsession and for others taboo. You wrote the book six years ago. Is it still relevant? Yes. I talk about it with journalists frequently. Now in the wake of the massacre in Newtown, many people inside and outside the United States are trying to understand what is happening in America.

What prompted the book? Two things. The first was a dinner with an old friend who is a Vietnam veteran. He said whenever he gets mad at the government he goes out and buys a gun. I realized that guns have become a form of political expression. And then I wondered, “What are guns saying?” And the second, I was thrown out of the Moscow [‘illegal’] gun show. I had been working on a photography project, shooting pictures of the West. The guns showed a kind of good opportunity. But when I got out my camera, I was escorted out really fast. I wanted to talk about guns. Since the event was held at the public fairgrounds, I checked with the city attorney and was allowed to shoot before the event. I learned that women are seen as gun grabbers. In divorce, or through restraining orders, guns are taken away. Are all guns shown the same? No. In different communities they vary tremendously. In some small towns there were people selling fudge and historical calendars and had booths where they showed their collections. At bigger gun shows, there were huge discount gun markets. Many shows have racist, sexist, and neo-Nazi book exhibits.

They began to see civil rights as civil ists, and “gun rights” emerged as a language to fight their vision of America threatened by crime. Why are guns often a taboo subject? Many people don’t like to talk about guns. Most households in the United States do not have a gun of any kind. These Americans don’t want to read about guns. Many women, including my daughter, don’t want to own a gun. They don’t want guns in their homes. But women who don’t have guns also need to be part of the conversation. It’s also an issue for urban, low-income, and minority communities. The NRA advocated for decades to promote good laws to restrict gun sales and make gun manufacturers liable if they sell to gun stores known to have tie with criminals. But anyone who wants to talk about gun regulation is labeled a “gun grabber,” even if they’re gun owners themselves. The national conversation must include everyone.

What motivates gun culture? The fear of crime has motivated a lot of gun sales and beliefs. For decades the criminal justice system has fostered the idea that any restriction on firearms would be a shift from protecting gun rights to talking about guns, even though emotions are still high. At the end of the day after finishing this book, I wondered, “What is it for industry? Guns are durable goods. They don’t wear out like a pair of jeans. To keep selling them you have to find different methods—new products, improved technology, more exciting advertising. Even movies can be used to get the purchasing of particular guns. Certain handguns and military-style weapons become cool. The problem for industry is that the market needs to keep expanding. Somehow, I’d like to see some gun manufacturers say enough, we’re not going to sell certain firearms to the civilian market. But that will never happen.

Should people own guns? The question becomes gun ownership, but what are the limits for civilian guns? To me it’s an urgent question because guns are technological machines that continue to become ever more lethal. Large magazines that make it possible to fire a large amount of bullets in a very short period of time do not belong in the domestic market no matter how thrilling they are to fire. In the gun rights world, some gun owners think that any restrictions limit their political freedoms. We are in the absurd situation where police and military are under strict command when they engage their weapons, but some civilians are forgoing all oversight at all. The question is what kind of authority are we going to allow?

In anything changing? After Newtown, Americans are now much more open to talking about guns, even though emotions are still high. We are asking what can we live with within a society. At the end of the day after finishing this book, this issue concerns me even more. There should be a shift from protecting guns rights to talking about how to make communities safe without arming everybody. There are other ways to make communities secure by addressing the big issues of jobs, housing, and education. Even smaller communities face crimes like drug dealing, domestic violence, and drugs. Any community with high unemployment and an alternative drug economy with easy access to guns will have a high rate of homicides. No matter where in the world it is. There’s no way to fix this by arming ourselves. Asking ourselves to arm ourselves is a way to avoid the real solutions. It interferes with our ability to create public policy that really develops security for our communities. We even need simple things in cities like streetlights, safe parks, and places where kids can go and play. Security cannot work for a living wage. We need to invest in people, not guns.

How has the book been received? It has been harshed and praised on the Internet and in reviews. The debate online is already and often very violent. I have also been invited to talk about my book on radio and television and give readings at places like Harvard Medical School and the National Press Club. Intense debate about my book will often disappear until there’s another mass shooting. I find that quite unsettling. I never expected to write a book whose relevance is clear when people die. I would encourage everyone to go to a gun show in their community or nearby. There are 4,000 gun shows every year in the United States. Go look at the book exhibits. See what booths are there. Become part of the conversation. This is your community, too.
18

Soldiering on
by Hannelore Sudermann

The newest landmark on the WSU Tri-Cities campus is a sculpture of an open book with pages floating up from it to the sky. The bronze, titled Storze, is a statement for the military veterans who come to study at Tri-Cities.

What better way to show that there’s a place for them? And what better way to show the community that we’re here?” asks Erick Flieger, the campus Vet Corps representative and one of around 130 military veterans attending WSU Tri-Cities last semester.

In the two years since campus leaders pledged to become a veteran-supportive campus, the school has increased its resources to accommodate veteran students and their families. At 8 percent of the student body, a disproportionately high number of students on campus are veterans.

Flieger transferred to WSU after two years of community college and 12 years in the military. School is a means of transitioning to civilian life. For him that meant moving his family to the community where he could pursue a degree in engineering. And for him and many others, it required redefining himself without the structure and stresses of his military past.

At minimum, you’re the odd one in a class full of 18- to 22-year-olds, says Flieger: “You feel like the old guy.”

Moreover, it can be confusing. These veteran students have come out of a strict and disciplined environment. They have been deployed abroad, lived in combat environments, and now they’re trying to concentrate in classes where the students around them don’t see as focused chatting, sending texts, checking their emails.

Some veterans have significant hearing loss. In a room full of ambient noise, it becomes hard to concentrate, hard to hear the instructor, he says. An auditory management class can be an issue. So can post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. “Simply put, stress for a veteran is different than stress for a regular student,” he says.

For many combat veterans “the adjustment to the collegiate setting has been a challenge,” says Janice Kusch ’05 PhD, who works for the VITAL (Veterans Integration To Academic Leadership) program. “Student veterans already have an extraordinary amount of life experience,” says Kusch, who manages the VITAL program. But they struggle with adapting to new roles, relating to their classmates, and coping with challenges like disrupted sleep patterns, which can lead to a host of issues, including difficulty concentrating and anxiety.

Through VITAL, clinical psychologist Steve Malone runs a one-on-one outpatient clinic to help students who may be having issues like stress, difficulty adjusting, anxiety, and PTSD. Malone also works with the University’s Access Center to meet the specific needs of the veteran students who may have injuries or disabilities. He also helps them find resources in the greater community and liaise with the VA hospital in Walla Walla if the student requires medical treatment. VITAL also offers a professional counseling component. And one unexpected benefit, says Flieger, is that Malone can be an advocate for the veteran students with the University. He can recommend things like smaller classes and greater resources from the perspective of a mental health professional, adding weight to the veteran students’ requests.

The WSU Tri-Cities Veterans Center, near Malone’s office, offers tables for studying and a sofa to hangout, and headquarters for Veterans & Allies, students club for veterans and friends. Through efforts like pizza parties, community charity events, and workshops on things like how to transform your military résumé to a civilian skills-based résumé, the students can bond and build relationships with their community.

Through the Vet Corps program sponsored by the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, students can use the center to meet up with classmates having similar challenges. After living and working in a system with discipline, orders, and schedules, it is hard to self-direct in a lower environment, says Flieger. Last fall he started a study-buddy program. “It’s like battle buddies,” he says, referring to the practice of assigning soldiers a partner in combat. “It’s connecting veterans with other veterans in the classroom.” The practice decreases stress, and provides the students a backup when it comes to notes, understanding the material, and preparing for exams. “We see benefits, with responsibility and accountability to buddies. They check up on each other,” he says.

Another layer of support brings in veteran tutors. Sometimes it can be discouraging to try to find help at the general tutoring center, says Flieger. “This just makes it easier for them to get help with their classes from someone who knows what they’re going through.”

As word gets out that the Tri-Cities campus is supportive of veterans, Flieger expects more will be drawn to study there. For him, the lure included out of living in a larger community where his wife might find a job, and a small campus with small classes.

It’s a small enough community that everyone can feel a part of special projects, like the Xeriscape sculpture, which was dedicated last October.

The veteran students spent three years fundraising and collecting to build the monument and commissioned Tri-Cities artist Tom McClelland ’87 MFA to create it. The floating pages contain selected personal stories from the former soldiers, a tribute to all those touched by military service.

“The students built it to show they’re not alone,” says Flieger, “that there’s a connection to campus and to other veterans.”

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LAST JULY, an international group of scientists with “neuro” in their titles convened in Cambridge, England, to give good weight to a radical idea. The conference participants, including the theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, sat through some 15 presentations and closed the day by endorsing 612 precisely struck words that, in effect, said many of our fellow animals, including all mammals and birds, also have consciousness.

It’s an underwhelming notion taken on faith by those who commune with pets or embrace the fight for animal rights. But scientists hold to a tougher standard than the baleful look in a dog’s eyes. The question of animal consciousness has bedeviled them for centuries and drawn speculations from the likes of Charles Darwin and Nobel laureate Francis Crick, the Cambridge conference’s namesake.

Now an accomplished core of scientists cited the next best thing to a smoking gun—“the weight of evidence”—to say, “humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness.” When it comes to the anatomy, chemistry, and physiology of our brains and the way they play into our consciousness, they said, we are not alone.

The keynote speaker that day was Jaak Panksepp, a proper, white-bearded figure with an accent that seems to blend his native Estonia and the New Jersey of his youth. The words the scientists endorsed could have easily come from his pen; as it was, roughly half had. The flag they were planting, while largely unnoticed by the outside world, was for Panksepp a career milestone, following several decades and countless hours documenting the nexus of activated brain regions, an animal’s behavior, and its attendant emotions.

At the start of his career, that third element, the animal’s emotional life, was terra incognita to psychologists, particularly the behaviorists who dominated the field.

“The ‘emotions’ are excellent examples of the fictional causes to which we commonly attribute behavior,” said B.F. Skinner.

“Because subjective phenomena cannot be observed objectively in animals, it is idle to claim or deny their existence,” said Niko Tinbergen, who won the Nobel Prize for work on animal behavior.

But Panksepp, WSU’s Bailey Endowed Chair of Animal Well-Being Science, helped pioneer a new field of affective neuroscience. In the process he helped map out seven core emotional systems that lie deep in our brains. A stickler for language, he capitalized the systems, lest they be confused with their ordinary uses: SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE, SADNESS, and PLAY. For millions of years, these affects, or feelings, have guided animals to find food, fight off enemies, avoid predators, reproduce, raise young, cling to caregivers, and engage with others.

“These are our tools for living and they have consciousness as part of the endowment,” he says one morning in his McCoy Hall office, a two-room lair crowded with books, papers, and artistic prints of animals.

“Feelings are useful. They help us survive. If they can’t help us survive, then by evolutionary theory they wouldn’t be there. But why people still debate, ‘Do other animals have feelings?’ is crazy because feelings are a very primitive form of survival.”

Every good feeling, he adds, “tells you that you are on the probable path of survival. Every bad feeling anticipates the probability of destruction.” Perhaps as much as any scientist could—“there are only 24 hours in a day”—Panksepp has observed and documented the emotions on display in hundreds of experiments with chickens, rats, guinea pigs, cats, dogs, and other animals. In perhaps his most well-known experiment, he found that rats emit hypersonic chirps akin to laughter when they are tickled. The work earned Panksepp the nickname “the rat tickler.” More to the point, Panksepp calls it “the first validated indicator of social joy that we’ve ever had in animal science.”

His work inspires a litany of ramifications beyond the already impressive notion of animal consciousness, which Panksepp calls the “capacity to have experience.” It has philosophical implications, not only for how we should treat animals, but whether we have free will and where we might search for the meaning of life. It suggests that our most basic
values are biological in nature. That we’ve been encoded to anticipate the future. That our fundamental consciousness is thought and feeling, heart and head. That we’re innately optimistic. That some of our most vexing psychological problems, like depression, might be addressed through these emotional systems.

Panksepp himself has seen the raw power of the emotions he has fathomed. Twice, he’d cleared through the up-at-4 a.m. existential fear that comes with a cancer diagnosis, including one that gave him less than a year to live. He’s endured the crushing grief of a lost child. Perhaps more than anything, he’s personalized the life of a seeking animal, pushing with enthusiasm over the prospect of new discovery.

Panksepp spent his senior year at Pitt powering through psychology courses and went to the University of Massachusetts for graduate studies in clinical psychology. The program was more focused on “behavioral modification” than treatments of specific emotional disorders, as mid-50s therapies often attempted to change maladaptive behaviors through structured learning.

“Emotions weren’t even talked about,” says Panksepp. “There might be anxiety disorders, but that was a behavioral problem, being scared of spiders or something.”

But he got a Veterans Administration traineeship outside mainstream clinical psychology, seeing a range of medical issues at a local veterans hospital. He landed in an electromyography lab, at the time the best way to get close to the human brain. Plooting surges of electricity in general brain regions, it was like a low-enolution limb, “Calliope’s videotape, compared to the Bubble.”

The chief of the lab, Arnold Trebuch, asked Panksepp what he wanted to do.

“I’m really interested in emotion,” said Panksepp.

“At that moment I got the very best advice I’ve ever gotten in my career,” he recalls, “which is, ‘Well, just do it.’ I knew what he was saying. ‘We’ve got the resources. That’s not my interest but if it’s your interest, do it.’ That’s the way education should be. Students should be allowed to ask the questions they really want to ask, which is much harder these days. It’s much more regimented.”

He had at his disposal rooms full of surplus electronics: relays, resistors, transistors, vacuum tubes. Remember: He had originally majored in electrical engineering. A lab tech, high school dropout, and World War II vet who had picked up surgery secondhand taught Panksepp how to precisely place electrodes into a rat’s brain.

“After that, it was do it myself,” he says.

In one of his first experiments, Panksepp stimulated a rat’s medial prefrontal cortex and found the rat showed no signs of distress. As Panksepp says, “There weren’t even indications that the rat was going downhill and was going to die.”

Panksepp himself has seen the raw power of the emotions he has fathomed. Twice, he’d cleared through the up-at-4 a.m. existential fear that comes with a cancer diagnosis, including one that gave him less than a year to live. He’s endured the crushing grief of a lost child. Perhaps more than anything, he’s personalized the life of a seeking animal, pushing with enthusiasm over the prospect of new discovery.
The hypersonic chirps of tickled rats, says Panksepp, are the “first validated indicator of social joy” in animal science.

In an interview last year with the magazine Discover, the editor, without necessarily disagreeing, said it was “too hot to handle.”

Panksepp was disappointed, but not necessarily daunted. Turning to guinea pigs, his lab demonstrated connections between the brain’s ancient periaqueductal gray, the medial thalamus, and the basal ganglia and separation calls. In 1982, he laid out four affective systems—EXPECTANCY/SEEKING, FEAR, RAGE, and PANIC—in an article titled “Toward a general psychobiological theory of emotions.”

PLAY was just around the corner as he studied rats gamboling about in various contexts: alone, with family, after being separated certain lengths of time, bouncing, touching, jumping on one another, wrestling, often in front of cameras used to tease out measurable behaviors.

In one experiment, he removed their neocortex, the most recently evolved part of the brain. They continued to play, showing that the PLAY system, like the other core emotions, is a primitive process embedded deep in the ancient parts of the brain. But it also gave a long way to develop a sophisticated, social animal. It’s not all fun and games.

One day at Bowling Green, then-president Brian Kustron asked if rats might somehow be vocalizing during play. He and Panksepp set up equipment to listen for it and soon detected playful chirps well above the range of human hearing, at 55 kilohertz. They later found that, after about 20 minutes of play, the positive chirps were outnumbered by negative, 22-kilohertz “complaints.”

“If we’re taking real play away from our kids, what do we have?” he asks. “We don’t have fully socialized children. We also don’t have the benefits in the brain, and we know play activates all kinds of genes up in the cortex. That brain area is not needed for play but play programs the cortex. And the children will have a terrible desire to play. What do we call that desire? At least in some of the kids it’s ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.”

Panksepp’s work took a more positive turn, so to speak, when he joined the faculty of Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 1972 and turned to the relatively upbeat CARE, PANIC, and PLAY systems. CARE is essential for raising offspring, a sort of built-in Spock manual. Rearing techniques and results will vary, but the drive to care will be there, particularly in females. And as Panksepp learned from some of his earliest work on bonding, measured by separation-distress or PANIC calls, CARE is backed by brain opiates. He administered tiny doses of opiates to dogs, guinea pigs, and chickens and recorded some of the most robust effects described in the research literature.

The persistence of SEEKING, reasons Panksepp, is an indication that evolution itself, the driving force behind these emotional innovations, is optimistic. “The positive emotions carry life forward,” he says. “It’s the negative emotions that have to deal with crises. So our basic nature biologically is positive. Think that’s true. Think about it. If the negative emotions were prevalent, we’d be overwhelmed constantly from the outside.”

Panksepp’s thinking on this extends to humans.

“If we’re taking real play away from our kids, what do we have?” he asks. “We don’t have fully socialized children. We also don’t have the benefits in the brain, and we know play activates all kinds of genes up in the cortex. That brain area is not needed for play but play programs the cortex. And the children will have a terrible desire to play. What do we call that desire? At least in some of the kids it’s ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.”

LATE IN HIS TENURE at Bowling Green, Panksepp was rounding out his list of seven affective systems, adding LUST, as in sexual excitement, and CARE, or nurturance. Around the same time, trauma returned to his life.

On Good Friday in 1991, a car driven by his 16-year-old daughter was broadsided at an intersection by a drunk driver. She and three friends were killed.

Panksepp writes about the moment in his recent book, The Archaeology of Mind (Norton, 2012), bringing a personal perspective to a chapter on the GREED/PANIC systems. “That night, I cried for the first time since I was a child,” he writes. “For a long while I experienced deep grief and depressive sadness with...
little hope of resolution. It did not help, indeed it perplexed my mind, that this was happening to me, as I was a neuroscientist who was trying to empirically illuminate the ancient brain mechanisms of separation distress, one of the major emotional sources of our earliest social bonds.”

Panksepp softened his “descent into darkness” with antidepressants, but in limited doses, fearing the drugs could cause long-term changes in his brain chemistry. For the most part, he says, he avoided chronic depression through the love and care of his wife, the poet Anesa Miller, and friends.

Other people might someday get help for depression thanks to other Panksepp efforts and insights. Two years ago, he and graduate student Jason Wright ’09 reported in Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews that they induced depression-like behavior—lower high-frequency chirps, eating less, exploiting less—in rats who received electrical stimulations in the dorsal periaqueductal gray. The midbrain area controls perceptions of pain and the fight-or-flight response, as well as emotions of grief, panic, and social loss.

Panksepp and Wright wrote that similar effects could pinpoint the brain systems and chemistries underlying depression and lead to more effective medicines. The study was funded by the Hope for Depression Research Foundation, where Panksepp was a research co-director.

In a six-year stint at Northwestern University after Bowling Green, he helped with the development of GLYX-13, a fast-acting antidepressant now in Phase II clinical trials. The GLXY molecule is probably amplifying positive feelings of brain regions that are chronically underactive and get downgraded in depression.

SEEKING is the thing that you want in a healthy mind,” says Panksepp. “And depression is unseeking. People describe that they no longer have the enthusiasm to do things, and they also describe a special negative feeling, a psychological pain. We thought that this PANIC system has less to do with emotions than with the neural processes, emotions, and consciousness. And that was the first experiment I did at the VA hospital.”

The outcomes of his long-fought scientific battles have been more mixed. “Over more than four decades, he has authored or co-authored more than 400 papers. His h-index, a measure of productivity and impact, is higher than most every other WSU scientist and comparable to members of the National Academy of Sciences. Douglas Watt, a colleague at the Boston University School of Medicine, calls Panksepp “brilliant and groundbreaking” and a “seminal publication” on emotion and the brain.

Writing in the journal Consciousness and Cognition, Watt notes that science has struggled to establish tests to characterize the links between neural processes, emotions, and consciousness.

“Although this question gets much explicit and even at times rather hot debating,” Watt says, “there are few hypotheses generated that lead directly to testable predictions, and Panksepp has done a great service in outlining some here.”

Three years ago, Paul Sheldon Davies, a philosophy professor at the College of William and Mary, compared Panksepp to Darwin, “the nineteenth century’s most audacious naturalist of the mammalian mind,” Davies wrote, adding: “his discoveries and innovations in affective neuroscience are changing our knowledge of the minds of all known living things.”

“My field still says you cannot study the mind of an animal,” Panksepp says one afternoon. “And I said you can in the emotional realm, because we can ask whether the actual brain circuits are rewards and punishments. And that was the first experiment I did at the VA hospital.”

From then until now, he followed that fundamental question: What is the biological underpinning of an emotion? The techniques have improved. Science will bring more refinements. But for the first time, says Panksepp, science has a “rather thorough understanding of the primal network structures of emotional life” and the animal world’s shared foundation of affective consciousness.

“In this day, Panksepp will talk freely about scientific disagreements large and small but in a nearly objective, rancor-free way. He understands he is working in an inherently conservative area of science filled with skeptics. Still, he’s chided by scientists moved more by the weight of history and their own idiosyncratic points of view than the weight of evidence.”

“Simply saying animals have emotional feelings puts you into the radical camp where no one wants to be because they have the conviction that they’re on the right side,” he says. “Certainly I always thought I was on the right side. The times are moving with me.”
SOMETHING Old SOMETHING New

A history of hospitality

by Hannelore Sudermann
WASHINGTON STATE has a $16.4 billion travel and tourism industry, according to the Washington Tourism Alliance, making it the fourth largest industry which includes restaurants, hotels, and motels, employs about 330,000 Washington workers.

Like Schroader, many of the Washington State University students who graduate with a hospitality business management degree go straight from Pullman to a management job in the industry, says Nancy Swanger, director of WSU’s School of Hospitality Business Management. One reason for that is the rigorous business training in finance, business law, economic statistics, and accounting.

“Every wedding needs something old,” says Dana Schroader ’07, catering sales manager, Fairmont Olympic in Seattle. Schroader’s job as the hotel’s catering sales manager, or more simply, wedding coordinator, touches on many components of the field of hospitality, including the lodging of the family and guests, planning and coordinating the cocktails and meals, and running the event itself with its waiters, bartenders, and musicians. And she gets to do it in the heart of a city that she loves in a spectacular setting. The job is not what she imagined when she was working after classes at Pullman’s Holiday Inn Express and Finesse Grill to gain experience and pay for college. “It’s better,” she says.

The program requires 1,000 hours of industry or internship experience to compare to the theoretical things they have learned in class,” says Swanger. “And recruiters want experience.”

But that’s just a part of it. As the concept of hospitality grows and changes, the school is adapting, too. It must, to prepare its students for an ever-changing industry.

Back in 1932, when Washington State College introduced its hospitality program, no one had yet imagined an airport hotel, a drive-through restaurant, a convention center, or the boom of international travel. According to old program paperwork, the hospitality degree was founded simply for the purpose of “training men in hotel operations and women in dietetics.”

Georgia Petheram Tucker ’33, now 102, was a student in Pullman when the Washington State College introduced a limited curriculum in hotel management. “Possibly no single action involving curricular expansion ever brought [WSC President] Holland more praise from the College’s constituency than did this one, as compliments continued to reach him from year to year,” according to the book E.O. Holland and the State College of Washington. The Spokane-born girl found more than a major. She found a role shaping a young industry.

Tucker’s degree led her to housekeeping and dining services work in Spokane, Boise, San Francisco, and Los Angeles and a 42-year career with Westin Hotels. Her jobs in housekeeping and later as Westin’s corporate food director included menu creation, staff training, and developing food service plans. As she grew in her career, her focus grew from simply cleaning rooms and coordinating schedules to managing issues of health and safety, staff diversity, and working with unions. “She really professionalized housekeeping in hotels,” says Swanger.

“She is such an amazing person,” says Swanger. “The toilet paper ended folded into a triangle is her most amusing legacy.” It’s called the ‘Tucker point.”

After retiring, Tucker worked as an industry consultant and wrote The Science of Housekeeping and The Professional Housekeeper, which for years were used for training industry-wide.

As the years passed, the Washington State program grew. A page tucked in with the hospitality program’s archival materials from the 1940s shows how the school recruited new students. “Our graduates have the advantage of stepping out of college into a new and uncrowded field… rapid advancements are assured on securing a position, for the men now actively engaged in the work have nothing but the school of hard knocks as a teacher.”

In 1942, the program was temporarily halted because of war. It started up again in 1946, but recast as a training program for hotel, motel, and union personnel administration and institutional purchasing, and was later enhanced to include the law of innkeeping and tourism.

Jerry Burtenshaw ’56, who enrolled in 1952, says it wasn’t all numbers and textbooks. He’ll never forget the interactive class in how to break down a pig carcass. It made sense back then, he says, because it was valuable to know the process for anyone wanting to go into...
Before graduation, McGinnis went to Hawaii for a vacation and stayed for a job at Westin Hotel’s resort in Waikiki. He became front office manager; was transferred, and started to climb the corporate ladder. “People think of hospitality as just minimum wage and tip jobs,” he says. “But where else can you start out as a bellman or dishwasher and move up to general manager?” There are many rags to riches stories within hospitality.

Eventually, McGinnis went to work for Westin’s development group and had a role on a number of projects including the Westin Tokyo. In 1997, after 11 years in development, he left the company and stepped into one of the most interesting resort projects to take place in Washington in the last 20 years: the Alderbrook Resort.

The property was only the first step, says McGinnis, pointing to an aerial photograph of the site. The overhaul involved moving a half-mile of the highway back into the hillside. Then it required taking down some buildings, restoring others, and building new elements to harmonize the architecture of the entire place—which included 21 small cabins from the 1940s. It had been operated as a funky old inn, says McGinnis. “It was in rough shape.”

Once the sale was complete, “I got in the car with my construction manager and my designer and said we’re going on a road trip,” says McGinnis. “We went to the Salish, Semiahmoo, Skamania, and the Salishan, all the S’s.” He wanted his team to see each Northwest resort and pick the brains of the owners and operators to “understand what it required to be successful.”

The Alderbrook project included new kitchens, meeting rooms, a spa, a bar, waterfront dining, a ballroom, and repairs to the marina. At the same time it protected the saltwater shoreline as well as the fresh-water streams that run through the site. It enhanced the Northwest vibe with elements like peeled wood posts in the lobby, pine floors, fireplaces, works from artists of the Skokomish tribe, and inviting furniture.

The whole idea was to create the feel of an old family beach house—only in the hands of a new tech-friendly generation, says McGinnis. That in itself was a good notion, since a number of long-established Northwest families have their beach retreats nearby.

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More recently, alumni like McGinnis, who now leads the board of advisors for the hospitality program, encouraged Swanger to push the curriculum to include hotel development. A class debuted last spring bringing hospitality students together with students in architecture and construction management to learn first-hand from developers and designers the process of siting and building a new property. They learned about siting projects from representatives of Marriott, land use and design planning from architects Degen & Degen, budget from hotel developer Larry Culver ’64, and revenue projections from the company that manages the Salish Lodge.

Hospitality students today are still grounded in those original subjects of management and food service, but they’re also learning how to build hotels, run senior living campuses, address changing consumer behaviors, and work in an international setting.

“I think that business foundation helps us right away,” says Sarah Carter ’05, who works with Schroader at the Fairmont Olympic. When Carter came to the hotel in 2007, her job was to coordinate events; running events like small corporate board meetings and large conferences.

Since they are trained in so many areas of the business, graduates like Carter can adapt quickly, moving from one area of the business to another, says Swanger. Carter says her time abroad through the program at César Ritz was probably the best part of her degree. “You really learn how to work with other cultures and overcome language barriers,” she says. “Our industry is definitely global.” Carter also credits the industry classes, the help in knowing what to put on her resume, how to dress for her job, how to interview, and how to adapt. “The professionalism they taught us, that really gave us an edge.”

Food alone offers so many opportunities. Under the guidance of faculty and alumni advisors, the culinary program has been enhanced to reflect the growing focus on food in the travel and hospitality industry. The school now has a commercial kitchen, and is using local produce and expertise in training students in the essentials of cuisine.

The school also recently added a degree in wine business management. Given that there are now nearly 700 wineries in the state, it’s time, says Swanger.

As hospitality is growing in new and unexpected directions, the school is working to respond. Cruise lines are bringing a new wave of tourists into our region, and they’re spending extra days in our hotels and exploring our cities and landmarks. And the state now has more than 30 casinos, many of them with accompanying hotels, restaurants, and entertainment stages. Those are more opportunities for exploration and training, says Swanger.

The school is already diving into the new senior living operations around the state. Much more than senior apartments and cafeterias, they offer restaurant-style dining, housekeeping and linen services, outings for shopping or cultural events, even a concierge. The people who plan, coordinate, and manage these places use the same skills WSU’s hospitality students learn on campus, says Swanger. In 2011, WSU offered its first course in senior living management, tapping into several industry experts from around the state to help teach the course.
WAITING FOR THE RAIN

In the impassable Dogon highlands of Mali, the storm of war is coming.

by Peter Chilson

The town of Bandiagara, population 12,000, sits on a plateau of smooth sandstone bluffs, grass, acacia, and palm trees that end at an astounding complex of cliffs so high and abrupt that any of them on a dusty day can surprise a traveler as if a piece of the globe has suddenly broken away. Bandiagara’s dirt homes, shellacked with mud stucco, bear the red tinged of this land’s iron-rich soil, farmed for centuries by the Dogon people and roamed by Falani and Toucouleur hunters. Horns stand along wide dirt streets used for driving cattle and sheep to market, and at dawn and dusk buildings glow under a dusty sun. A few miles east of town, the cliffs drop 1,000 feet, growing sheerly in and out of the plateau along a 100-mile front, running from the south to the northeast like the edge of a saw. For over a thousand years, the cliffs have been a natural highway for one tribe or another, most recently the Dogon, a few hundred of whom came here 700 years ago to flee the Mali Empire’s embrace of Islam.

This history means more now that Bandiagara—once popular with European and American trekkers—is settling into a new role as border post and garrison town facing al Qaeda-affiliated jihadi groups spread across Mali’s vast Saharan north. France and its allies, namely the United States, call northern Mali a jihadi “safe haven” that threatens the West. As a result, a U.N.-supported multinational African attack on northern Mali is moving closer to reality. U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney repeatedly cited Mali in his October foreign-policy debate with President Barack Obama. But the jihadi takeover in the north, now six months old, carries a touch of bitter irony in a country’s crisis for Washington State University English Professor Peter Chilson happened to be in Mali in March 2012 when a military coup ended the country’s two decades as a model democracy. Within days, the Malian army in the troubadour northern part of the country collapsed. As a result, Tuareg and Islamist fighters claimed 60 percent of the country, creating a safe haven for al Qaeda and other Islamist forces and threatening West African stability and European security.

Since the coup and collapse of the north, Chilson has been reporting on the country’s crisis for Foreign Policy magazine and, in a rather remarkable publishing feat, producing a fast-track e-book, We Never Knew Exactly Where: Dispatches from the Lost Country of Mali, which was published in December by Foreign Policy and the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting.

Chilson’s relationship with Africa began with his Peace Corps assignment teaching junior high school English in Bouza, Niger. Since then, he estimates he has spent six years of his life there, traveling, writing, and researching the history of Mali and other West African countries.

In this new book, Chilson means to show what has taken its look repeatedly in the label and the northern Sahara: “The land is so big and so unique. The other reason, and maybe it’s not all that surprising, is that the people who live there are so resilient.” Over lunch recently, Chilson elaborated on the draw of the area, noting the “feeling of being in a vastly different place.”

On top of that area’s uniqueness, however, “Mali is very open,” he says. “You can enter a village and present yourself, looking for a place to stay, and they’ll welcome you with open arms. It’s a unique place in Africa. It’s what makes this war so tragic.”

Chilson’s book and his articles for Foreign Policy, one of which we reprint here, are an absorbing blend of history and current affairs, lending unique insight on an unexpectedly troubled country and an unfolding and disturbing conflict of culture.

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stranded in a village cut off by monsoon rains during a cholera outbreak. “Terrible,” he told me. “A dozen people died.” Then he plucked a mango off the dashboard, bit into it, and peeled back the skin with his teeth, all with one hand on the wheel and another hymn spraying from his lips.

I’d been in Bandiagara a dozen times over the past 25 years. Here and across Mali, soldiers have always kept a low profile, in my experience. My tensest encounter in this town had been to fend off a pesky cliff “guide” who kept shouting “hakuna matata,” the Swahili words for “no problem” immortalized in Disney’s The Lion King. Mali, even under the army dictatorship that endured nearly three decades until 1991, has never embraced military culture like other African countries. Malian’s army, in the words of a Western diplomat I met in Bamako, the Malian capital, “was never a military of soldiers. Most are farmers putting in the time for a paycheck.”

The army, stressed by the growing Tuareg rebellion in the north, took back control this year in a March coup ending 22 years of democracy. Since the coup, however, the army, true to the diplomat’s words, has ruled without the careful and endless checkposts that define other African military governments. In the streets of Bandiagara and Bamako, soldiers generally keep to themselves, though there is evidence that the army command structure is in decay. In October, on a remote road near the border with Mauritania, Malian soldiers shot to death 16 unarmed Muslims traveling from Mauritania to Bamako for a conference. The attack was apparently unprovoked.

But in May, Bandiagara looked like a military camp, expecting an invasion at any moment. Isaac drove slowly across the town square, where an armored vehicle with a cannon and crew of soldiers occupied the concrete center island protected by sandbags. As we turned down another road, Isaac slowed the car and fixed his eyes on a large gun mounted in the back of a parked pickup truck. A soldier was standing behind the gun at the ready. “Now that is very serious,” he said, shaking his head with a broad smile and both hands on the wheel. “We aren’t used to seeing the army out in the open like this.” His mood lightened as if the sight encouraged him. Later he said, “I can see you tell by December, Mali’s nightmare will be over. Our soldiers will take the north.”

“I really?” I said, upstaging, trying to keep the doubt out of my voice. “I’m certain of it.”

Isaac’s hope for action is not baseless, though it likely won’t happen in December. On November 11, leaders of the Economic Community of West African States settled on a military plan to retake northern Mali with 3,300 soldiers, mainly from Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The plan awaits U.N. Security Council approval, which means action is very serious,” he said, shaking his head with a broad smile and both hands on the wheel. “We aren’t used to seeing the army out in the open like this.” His mood lightened as if the sight encouraged him. Later he said, “I can see

But the Islamists who now control northern Mali are Salafists, who live by a strict reading of the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammed. They discourage icons and music because such things distract worshippers from devotion to God. In April, the jihadists began destroying the Sufi mosques and mausoleums of Timbuktu and other northern Malian towns, but Malians are inured to mass destruction. In this atmosphere, the fall of the Touareg Empire, the Dogon have thrived. Today they number about half a million.

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Raid Gaor, a few bars normally marked by neat placards advertising Heineken, Carlsberg, and Coca-Cola, but the signs were now gone. The hotels had closed. Tourism on the Bandiagara plateau had taken off in recent years. But now schools, too, had shut down. Shops were open, but without signs or any hint of the sale of alcohol or wave, three jihad groups—Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine, and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa—arrived in force. By June they’d forced the Tuareg nationalist rebellion underground and its leaders into exile. This is the situation Mali, including Bandiagara, faces today.

For days I’d been gently pressing Isaac on what the jihadists in the north might mean for him and his parents, who lived in a village a few hours’ drive east of Bandiagara, off the plateau. But he kept changing the subject. Now, as we drove through Bandiagara, where everywhere we were reminded of war, I decided to be blunt: “You know, they’re talking about sharia law in Timbuktu and across the north,” I said. “Doesn’t that worry you?” Isaac never got cross, but he looked at me as if I’d accused him of something. “Of course we’re worried,” he said.

I realized neither Isaac nor his family had foreseen a drastic change in Mali’s Islamic power structure. Events in the north occurred so fast and unfolded in this region in the early 20th century with the short-lived rise of jihadi Islam.

After a few minutes of silence Isaac said, “We must have to move the family.”

“But where?”

“Maybe Mopti or Bamako. We don’t know. My sister wants my parents to live with her.” Isaac’s sister lived in Mopti, the regional capital.

“That might be a good idea,” I said. “Until things calm down.”

From the looks of things in Bandiagara, however, that calm might be a long time coming. Soldiers stood guard behind sandbags all about town. Government agencies and aid organizations had removed identifying plaques, hoping to escape notice of rebel looters, and many offices were shuttered. The people of Bandiagara, like most of Mali, are Muslims of a tolerant persuasion. Mali is a Sunni Muslim country, known for its Sufi traditions guarded by the Quran while recognizing mystical worship that gives individuals room to define their spiritual pathway by personal experience and revelation, including through music and poetry. In Timbuktu and other northern Malian towns, Sufi saints are enshrined in mausoleums. In this atmosphere, the fall of the Touareg Empire, the Dogon have thrived. Today they number about half a million.

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sweet drinks. I wondered whether the people of Bandiagara knew something the rest of us didn’t, as if they carried
history with them instinctively.

Just a few miles from here, in 1846, in the village of Hamdallaye, Umar Tall died during a broad uprising of Tuaregs, Arabs, Fulanis, and Hamburas against his Touloukre forces. He fell not in battle, but in the explosion of a gunpowder cache. According to one historian, when Umar Tall’s soldiers conquered new territory, he ordered them to bring before him any he would smash to pieces with an iron mace. After his death, Tikali Tall, his nephew, moved the Toucouleur capital to higher ground here in Bandiagara, where it remained as capital until the French conquered what they would call the colony of French Sudan, today known as Mali.

Tall is in Mali a little like what Jefferson Davis, leader of the Confederacy, is to the United States: a vaguely familiar name to many, a total unknown to most, but a frightening reminder of a past that has left unsettled business for a few others.

Take my friend, Isaac. He grew up in a Dogon village below the plateau and went to high school in Bandiagara. He knows all about Umar Tall and the jihad threat. He speaks three languages, French, Bambara, and his native Dogon, as well as a little Tamashek, the language of the Tuareg. Together we spoke French and he promised to take me into the cliff villages to talk to people about what had happened to Mali and about the jihad threat.

“The Dogon country cannot be invaded,” he said. “We are a good defense against the rebels. We won't show you.”

Isaac was telling me this as we drove through town, drawing looks from soldiers and townspeople. No one in Bandiagara had seen anyone like me since January, when the rebellion in the north broke out and foreign evacuates. Sitting beside Isaac, I wore simple clothing to be less conspicuous, a short-sleeve shirt and a ball cap. We stopped at the offices of an American evangelical aid group Isaac had once worked for, where he picked up the keys to the guesthouse where we would sleep. The offices were in a villa surrounded by high concrete walls and shaded by eucalyptus trees that grew inside the compound. As we entered, Isaac’s old colleagues greeted him warmly but in haste. They were busy hanging up files and office supplies, the framework of rural health and literacy programs Isaac had helped build. Some files would be trucked to Bamako and the rest burned. Outside in the dirt street a large pile of paper burned silently, flames whipped by a hot wind. A man kept returning from the field with a cardboard box full of paper to dump on the fire, trying to erase evidence of the agency’s presence. “We can’t take any chances,” he said to me.

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AT THE GUESTHOUSE, a small two-room mud building, we ate dinner in the cramped courtyard around a kerosene lamp in plastic deck chairs. The electricity had been out. Dinner was white rice with salty tomato sauce and tough goat meat we bought from a woman who ran a roadside food stall in town. She also sold yams in tomato sauce and spaghetti. Stone-faced, she stared at me as we waited for her to spoon up our food. She kept glancing at me as she and Isaac spoke in Dogon.

“What were you talking about?” I asked later. “That woman looked at me as if I were the enemy.”

“She wanted to know what you are doing here, and I told her you are a tourist,” he said to me. “She said she did not believe me, but she told me that I was brave to bring you here, whoever you are.”

We both laughed a little nervously.

Near dawn on May 9 we drove into the cliff country, about 10 miles northeast of Bandiagara to a village called Begnemato, to meet a friend of Isaac, Daniel Andoulé. He was a Dogon farmer and self-styled historian; Isaac told me the Dogon built the village on a shelf partly down the cliffs far enough back from the cliff face that it cannot be seen from the plain or from the plateau above the village. The Dogon, according to Andoulé, had been there for 600 years, hiding from slave raiders and jihadis—Umar Tall’s men. We crossed the plateau, sometimes clinging the cliffs, following an old track the French built in the 1930s across impossibly rocky ground, slashed by streams shallow and deep. We passed troops of women portaging baskets of dirt scooped from dry riverbeds for reinforcing fields eroded by wind.

Finally, at about 9 a.m., in brilliant heat, Isaac parked the Land Cruiser in the thin shade of a rare acacia tree a few yards from the cliff. Standing on the edge, we could look down and see Begnemato in the distance. I picked my way down the cliffs on a cradle, well-worn stone staircases Isaac walked with a swift agility that amazed me for his size. I carried a daypack with peanuts, mangoes and water for us both, stepping down while holding the rock face on my left and looking away from successive drop-offs on my right, a few dozen feet here and 300 feet there. The path descended about 400 feet to a broad sandy field pleasantly shaded by palm trees. A half-mile away we could see cone-shaped mud granaries and a long concrete school building. The Malian flag flew from a pole beside it. We walked across the field and past the school, which was closed, and into a village built of rock slabs broken from the cliffs and roofed made of thatch from grass or dried millet and corn stalks. A group of police teenage boys escorted us. One boy said, “We saw you coming from the top of the cliff.”

Isaac beamed and nudged me at the boy’s words. “You see!” he said. “It is hard to surprise a Dogon village.”

Andoulé was, be guessed, about 70. He stood tall, with a large shaven head dimpled like a grapefruit, a barrel chest, and a thin gray beard. He wore khaki shorts and a homemade tunic of woven cotton over the large frame of a man who’s once been much stronger, more muscular, used to physical work in the fields or breaking rock to repair homes. He still had large thighs, though his arms were thinner. “I don’t go to the fields anymore,” he said. “I let my son do that.”

He’d worked with Isaac on understanding Begnemato’s religious demographics, information Isaac used for the thesis he wrote for his rural sociology degree. Isaac found that 600 people of Muslim, animist, and Christian background lived in the village. They lived in separate neighborhoods. Andoulé was Catholic. “We’ve always lived in peace with each other,” he told me. “It is the Dogon way to impose our customs on others.”

Andoulé led us to a shaded veranda on the roof of his home. We sat on mats and ate rice in tomato sauce. In a mix of French and Dogon, with Isaac helping to translate. Andoulé talked of the Dogon struggle with
Fulani herders who grazed their animals, mainly goats and cows, on Dogon farmland on the Seno-Gondo plain below the cliffs. "We've had terrible fights," he said, "but that has not happened in a few years."

The point of our visit was to talk about food, drought, and war. Begnemato sits in central Mali, in the east of Mopti province, where staples like millet and rice sell for six times what they did a year ago. Andoulé blames their food problems on the fighting in the north and last year’s poor rains. The rains have been better this year—the drought broke over the summer, after I left Mali—but aid agencies have reported persistent food shortages across the Sahel because the rains have been spotty, and for other reasons. The previous year’s drought had depleted village seed stocks, and the conflict in northern Mali has either cut off many farmers from their fields or frightened them away. Mali, along with the rest of the West African Sahel, from Senegal to Chad, is under the strain of a food crisis that has put 15 million people at risk of starvation.

"We have not known starvation in a long time," Andoulé said. "Even in the bad years [the droughts of the 1970s and mid-1980s], we were able to survive with the money tourists brought us. But we have had only three or four foreign visitors here in the past year. The French and Americans are afraid of being kidnapped."

I swallowed hard.

When I asked whether he feared the Islamists, Andoulé laughed. "I am much more afraid of drought." Then he said, "Let me show you something."

He walked Isaac and me outside the village and across a broad, solid mass of sandstone, part of the shelf on which the village had been built hundreds of years ago. We hiked up a sandy pathway to a rock ledge above the village, right on the cliff face looking out over the Seno Gondo plain far below. By now it was nearly 1 p.m., and the flat, sandy expanse below us was shrouded in thin dust. I’d seen pictures of the Seno Gondo as a lovely green savanna, lightly forested with acacia and palm trees, but now it looked like solid desert, nothing but sand with a few trees.

"Les rebels," Andoulé began in French, switching to Dogon as he pointed across the plain, "they would have to come up into these cliffs." He turned to Isaac and me. He was smiling, sure of his security in the cliffs. "They do not know this country. No one knows this country like the Dogon. We have pathways through these cliffs that no one knows about but us. The rebels cannot travel up into here. Our army knows that. There are Dogon officers in the army. No one has ever attacked us and succeeded."

In the distance we could see a dense and narrow dust plume, rising like a geyser. "Dust devil," I said.

"Maybe," Isaac said, "or a rebel pickup truck."
Three Great Ways to Belong to One Great Organization.

There are over twice as many members of the WSU Alumni Association (WSUAA) today than there were just a few short years ago. They joined to support student scholarships, take advantage of all the incredible member benefits, and connect with other Cougars. We extend our thanks to all the alumni, students, friends, faculty, and staff whose membership has helped the WSUAA claim its rightful place among the finest and fastest-growing alumni associations in the country. We salute our Annual, Life, and now Platinum Life Members.

New: Platinum Life Membership.

Platinum Life Membership is the newest way to belong to the WSUAA. It was suggested by and created for Cougs who want to help the WSUAA do even more for WSU. Platinum Life Members enjoy all the same great benefits and services as Annual and Life Members, plus a growing suite of extras.

If you have not yet joined, or you are a current member interested in one of the other membership types, please sign up today. Your membership—regardless of which type—is vital to the continued success of the WSUAA and WSU.

Sarita Jane McCaw

1950s

Distinction for Community Partnership.

Marion Smock McCaw is a Washington State College scientist, William Harper Spillman named her in 1938 for her research on how to increase the number of abandoned homesteads and homesteads separated from their land to become communitie.

Richard Fulton

1960s

Honorary membership to the Water Environment Federation. He is a past president of the organization and has been a long career in water quality.

Richard Fulton

1970s

Professor Emeritus of the Booth School of Public Administration at the University of Washington, an attorney, and public service.

Cheri Brennan

1980s

The Palouse has been much kinder to the Zakarison family since they settled here in 1935.

Eric Zakarison

2000s

Eric Zakarison and Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison—their three Belgian mares—at their farm north of Pullman.
Sheryl came to the Palouse by a route even more circuitous than the Zakarisons. Born in Texas, her family moved to Tacoma. She began preparing for her life in agriculture in the 1970s on an Idaho kibbutz. “I really liked what I was doing and wanted to continue doing it,” she says. So she came to Pullman to study agronomy.

Kilbourn is another attribute that occupations Eric and Sheryl’s conversation.

Resilience for Sheryl means training young people. “I’m a huge fan of WSU programs working on the farm. A philosophy major whose father farmed dryland wheat near Pullman, her love for Eric’s family originally farmed, he has focused on Eastern philosophy, from which he has drawn the notion of ‘right livelihood.’ Which he has brought back to the Palouse.

The Zakarisons have also opened some of their land to graduate students conducting research on quinoa and a long-term project on organic farming.

They see the Palouse, its agriculture and a reemerging small farming culture, and the university as part of a dynamic system into which they will continue to invest as long as they can.

In 2013, as a chance for academics affine with the University of Northern British Columbia Community College, Leslie (Shelman) Salatina (’97), managing director of the Global Ethics (at the National Cancer Institute Research Computing Environment, or NCI RE), accepted the Federal Government Research Computing Environment of the Year of the Global Ethics (at the National Cancer Institute Research Computing Environment, or NCI RE), accepted the Federal Government Research Computing Environment of the Year award for his role in developing a cloud-based research computing platform.

Jeffery W. Fiedler (’84) has been named chief executive officer/managing director at the Minneapolis’ agency Ogilvy Brand Marketing.

The home Cuba (’88) now heads the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Bill Marler (‘92 Pre Law, Econ.) recently made the food-borne weeds: The Daily’s list of the 10 Most Powerful People in Food, joining the ranks of chefs, writers, food industry leaders, and activists. Marler, a food safety advocate, has a low profile in Seattle and represents citizens from around the country with extremely varying views on food-borne illness.

Debbie Vannucci (’92 Educ.), an Edward Jones Financial Advisor in the Seattle area, has led the last 30 years of the company, the Jones Financial Companies LLC. She is the first woman to ever receive a $1 million in sales award and has associations across the United States and Canada to join her in her philanthropic pursuits.

John Mingis (’83 B.Eng. Hort.) has been appointed chairman and president of F.W. Woolworth, Inc., and will serve as F.W. Woolworth’s representative in the United States.

Debbie Minnis (’95 B.S. Educ.) has been hired by video game entertainment company MachineGames in Los Angeles as vice president of strategic partnerships. She will focus on developing partnerships with broad-based and culture-driven to discover and support Machinima content.

Patrick Pearce (’82 F.Ind. Sci.) has joined the Employment Law Practice Group at the Seattle office of Ogletree Deakins Wallace, PLLC.

John Gilder (’88 A.B.), a former Spokesman-Review board of the Palouse region, has repeated the success of his 2002 book, “The Things that Matter,” which has been translated into 15 languages.

Mike Huntton (’91 M.P.P. Pol. Sci.) in the Palouse office of Ogletree Deakins Wallace, PLLC.

The Palouse region’s agriculture is one of the most boring thing ever,” she says, they built a new company-wide technology platform, “the Blue Footprints,” filled with small, elegant handwriting. Lists, books,” she says. Some are digital; hers is paper blue footprints around campus to stir interest.

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“Running with a mission” by Haenleod Sudrasmn Nike World Headquarters’ in its own, unique style.

Nike, a visit to the well-groomed grounds just south of Portland starts in the parking area with sounds of children from the outdoor play field the children develop just south.

A walk into the campus meanders from four-story office buildings named for great athletes and coaches, and then past goose on grass and a group of women doing jumping jacks and stretches on a platform in front of Lake Neko before starting their run.

The plaza connects to a cafeteria, one of six eateries on the property, where Marci Montana loves the gloriety of State Fair food. There’s a food truck that offers Indian food, a hot dog stand, and a miniature burger joint.

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The Palouse region’s agriculture is one of the most boring thing ever,” she says, they built a new company-wide technology platform, “the Blue Footprints,” filled with small, elegant handwriting. Lists, books,” she says. Some are digital; hers is paper blue footprints around campus to stir interest.
A former professional athlete and she gets to work for the company as a contractor, leaving her full-time job to put all her energies into a job came open, Steele Hoover encouraged "That's what WSU gives you," she says. When Steele Hoover was a fellow alum and asked for a meeting. “She let me pick her brain back to their student days at Washington State College in the 1940s and another has any intend of retiring to a recliner. Val, 89, ran the local YWCA and then represented the area in the State House of Representatives for 12 years, ending in 2002. Dan, 91, is a past chairman of the Clark County Democratic Central Committee and has been active in the party whenever he wasn’t working for the federal government. "You and I wear the same,” says Marsch Manning, district woman of the Washington State Democratic Central Committee. “They have something going on every day.” Among the Ogden’s major accomplishments is an unwavering support of the WSU Vancouver campus. As a state lawmaker, Val Ogden put funding for open and expand the campus in the Salmon Creek area on the north side of Vancouver, which is where they became involved in their political science and served in the U.S. Army at the close of World War II. He returned to campus to attend a class and meet Val Ogden as she was wrapping up her degree in sociology. They married that December. When Dan and Val became active in something, they become very involved,” says, Jennifer Miltenberger. As director of development and alumni relations for the Vancouver campus, she has long been valued by Val Ogden’s energy. "They can run circles around all of us. "I feel like I’ve come full circle,” she says. "Now I work for an athletic company doing what I’ve always wanted to do. How awesome is that!”

Wallace Craig


Alexander Scholler (’12 Sport Media) is the director of professional placement for the Ladies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Bria Staufer (’12) was named a second-round pick at Cape Fear CC, the same elementary school she attended as a girl growing up as a Washington dairymaid.

Nearby 70 years after receiving their own degrees, the Ogdens find yourself when the discussion turns to higher education and the shifting of college costs from state funding to students. “What we’re doing is erecting a barrier to higher education,” Dan Ogden says, “and that’s not in the interest of society at all.” The couple met in Pullman in 1946. Dan Ogden had already completed a degree in political science and served in the U.S. Army at the close of World War II. He returned to campus to visit a friend and met Val Murmann as she was wrapping up her degree in sociology. They married that December.

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On timing and taste
by Eric Sorensen
Greg Blanchard is making dinner for 224. From the cramped confines of the CUB kitchen, he and his staff have just a few hours to create three different types of food that will be served to hungry people waiting. Blanchard is preternaturally calm, bent over a stainless steel cutting board, slicing strawberries to go on top of a dozen fruit- and whipped-cream-topped cupcakes for guests who don’t want the strawberry. For now, he has a single focus, that being the right-sized strawberry. “You have to make sure you know where you are going,” he says, “because you don’t want the shortcake.” For now, he has a single focus, that being the right-sized strawberry.

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Tracking WSM

“...what people want,” he says. “They want it simple and elegant. And they want it to taste good. That’s what people want,” he says. “They want it to be good because I’m not going to eat it.”

The transformation has been personal, too. “I used to weigh 280 pounds,” he says. “That’s what people want,” he says. “They want it simple and elegant. And they want it to taste good. That’s what people want,” he says. “They want it to be good because I’m not going to eat it.”

To be sure, he knows a few tricks. To save time, he says, “I used to weigh 280 pounds,” he says. “That’s what people want,” he says. “They want it simple and elegant. And they want it to taste good. That’s what people want,” he says. “They want it to be good because I’m not going to eat it.”

Frequent sightings of the new Cougar license plates all around Washington prove that the new plates has paid off. Since the release of the crimson-colored plates with the WSU Cougar logo in January 2012, more than 7200 alumni and friends have purchased them. There have been almost 17,000 first time WSU plate holders, 4,200 and counting.

That’s good news for Cougar fans and even better news for students. The new plates have generated more than $10,600 in new scholarships.

While many sport letters and numbers assigned by the state, a number of couples and fans have doubled up on their school spirit by ordering personalized plates to reinforce the WSU theme. Among them: COUGG2, TELGCO, COUGUP, WAZUFAN, UGFRBN, WSUGIRL, and COUG RV.

Jeff Goetz, a long time Pullman resident and Cougar football season ticket holder, went with “AERRG.” It’s a subtle reference to football Coach Mike Leach urging the players to act like pirates by being fierce and working as a team, the “Pirates of the Palouse.” But it’s not too subtle. “I get comments all the time,” says Goetz. “Most people immediately understand it’s a pirate thing from Leach.”

When it comes to declaring school affinity, the Cougars still dominate. The new crimson plates, combined with the earlier WSU version, number more than twice as many as the state’s next highest selling collegiate plate, bringing a total of 16,572 WSE plates on Washington’s roads.

For information about getting your own crimson Cougar plate, visit the WSU Alumni website, alumni.wsu.edu/license, or the Washington State Department of Licensing.
We Are the Bus by James McLean ’74
Review by Sandrine Saudemont: This small book of poetry plays on themes of reminiscence, travel, and the blifs of simple things like being a boy with a Racket Box full of fireworks. This collection of 42 poems won the 2011 XJ Kennedy Poetry Prize.

If McKean transports us to some lively places, Fishing on the Sandy River, climbing up the dune of St. Peter’s Barrika in Rome, floating on Puget Sound in a boat of hand-sawn cedar planks, even into his first car, a ’56 Buick. The title poem is about a bus ride in Costa Rica, from Montevidoe to San Jose, from the perspective of the driver whose family helps him along the three-hour route. “...from cloud forests...”

Chicago, Barcelona Connections by Greg Duncan ’85
Review by Eric Sooreen: The Latin-themed recording is one of the great subgenres of jazz, going back at least as far as Duke Ellington’s “Caravan” and running through the likes of dizzy gillespie’s “mambo” and the gilbert/igel collaboration that brought “from Japan” to his “conduits across the land.” Greg Duncan is stepping up with his own contribution, marching an Illinois arts council grant and Kickstarter funding to bring us an exploration of flamenco’s home from the Chicago-based trumpeter and flagships player’s years performing in Spain. Rhythm is king as the nine songs—four written by duncan, and almost all arranged by him—incorporate five of the more common flamenco forms: rumba, tango, buleria, taurilla, and sevillana. The playing is superb, too, adventurous but discrete, making this record a whole body experience.

Blasphemy: New and Selected Stories by Sherman Alexie ’94
Review by John Stanweir: Most writers’ volumes of “new and selected” stories add only two or three new pieces to twenty or thirty old ones. More than half of Sherman Alexie’s Blasphemy is new, however, including a few lengthy stories. The success of Alexie’s teen novel The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian has cost the deaths of too many of its readers in the interior Northwest will know the settings of these stories, even if they have never seen the Spokane reservation. WSM is mentioned in the longest story, “The Search Engine,” in which Corliss is a literature student, the rare indigenous student who strives to rise above, knowing that, even as “a middle-class Indian, she seemed destined for a minimum-wage life of waiting tables or changing oil.” She takes a bus to Seattle, where she tracks down Harlan Atwater, a Spokane poet who published his lone book in 1972, when whites briefly romanticized both poetry and Indians. Atwater traded his fame for literary obscenity, but Corliss, still clinging to her own obscurity, loves the WSM library’s copy of his book on the poetry shelf of a used library’s copy. In it McKean transports us to some lovely places, Fishing on the Sandy River, climbing up the dune of St. Peter’s Barrika in Rome, floating on Puget Sound in a boat of hand-sawn cedar planks, even into his first car, a ’56 Buick. The title is about a bus ride in Costa Rica, from Montevidoe to San Jose, from the perspective of the driver whose family helps him along the three-hour route. “...from cloud forests...”

McKean features people, too, among them his mother and father, his wife, a childhood neighbor, and a 13-year-old who calls their home but never speaks. In “My Mother-In-Law Arms Herself,” he explores the experiences of uncertainty and aging of a family member who sleeps with guns beneath her pillow. But those too have been stolen for her safety and by the author. These poems are varied, like a box of cigarettes, each one a different shape and flavor and best enjoyed one at a time...
Having wrapped up my business in Grand Coulee and Nespelem, it occurred to me that in all my travels around the state, I had never driven State Route 155 from Grand Coulee to Coulee City. I always opted in the past for the quicker 174 to Walla Walla. Taking that road less traveled may not have changed my life, but it certainly added to it. First, the whimsy of Emil Gehlke’s creations in the Garden of the Wind just a couple of miles down the road from the dam. “I wanted to make something pretty for the young people to see,” said Gehlke, who died in 1979. “We throw away too much. I like to show that practically any object can be reused.” And then, the sublimity of Grand Coulee, even drowned, shrouded in fog on a late winter day.
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