

ETHOS

Fall 2013 Volume 6 Issue 1

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

A glimpse of a veiled country through a photographer's lens

PLUS: STAYING ALIVE & FREE // THE DARK DESCENT // THE MECCA OF MOUNTAINS

FREE



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EDITOR'S NOTE



Reclining in my seat on the flight home from the Make Progress National Summit in Washington D.C., it occurred to me that nobody really told me when “real life” begins. In high school my friends and I would half-joke that real life would start soon after we donned our black satin graduation robes as fresh-faced 18-year-olds. Again, now as a senior at the University of Oregon, I nervously joke with my friends that real life is only one year away, after we robe up and walk together for perhaps the last time. These half-hearted jokes mask my unrelenting paranoia of graduating, of “real life” finally beginning.

At the end of my sophomore year in college, I was stricken with the sickness of “real life” scratching at my ankles. In my fear and confusion, I was pining for relief. I eased that apprehension by finding my calling in the School of Journalism and Communication and, specifically, *Ethos Magazine*.

Ethos' community of budding young professionals is proof that students are capable of accomplishing truly amazing feats.

From scratch, our staff captures the essence of cultural diversity in stories such as *Cuba: A Changing Culture* (page 14) and *The Mystery of Mount Shasta* (page 20), highlighting real and modern tales from enigmatic individuals around the world.

Alive & Free (page 24) explores approaching gang violence as a public health issue, while *Britain's Captive Audience* (page 8) tells the story of a man whose focus is on rehabilitating inmates by enriching their lives with targeted radio produced entirely by inmates.

On my flight back to Eugene, after accepting Generation Progress' award for the country's Best Overall Publication 2012-2013 on behalf of *Ethos Magazine* at their national summit, real life slapped me directly in the face. Every student, and each staff member of *Ethos*, who asks when “real life” will begin, needs to ponder no longer. Life is what we make it, how we craft it, and we must not simply wait for it to begin.

Make life begin. Take risks. Put in the work. *Ethos Magazine* provides the nuts and bolts experiences that our staff and alumni use to blossom into successful professionals in the world of journalism. As you'll see by the remarkable stories within this issue, real life begins as soon as we stop chasing the future—and start living in the now.

Conner Gordon
Editor in Chief

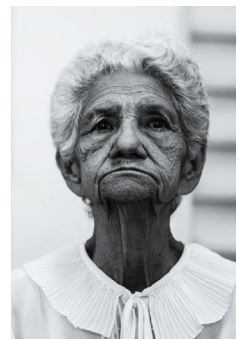


Photo Editor Andrew Seng
captured Ofelia Montalbo
during a psycho ballet exercise
in Havana, Cuba.

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BELOW FROM ABOVE AND FROM THE FRONT AND BACK THE FACTS

ETHOS

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Congratulations to the *Ethos* staff, both past and present, for its award-winning work. For its previous issues, *Ethos* received multiple awards from the Associated Collegiate Press and Columbia Scholastic Press Association, including its first Digital Magazine Silver Crown and two Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence Awards. Generation Progress named *Ethos* Best Overall Publication in 2012-2013.

BRITAIN'S CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

Phil Maguire discusses the rehabilitating power of Britain's National Prison Radio Association.



In the heart of the United Kingdom's Brixton Prison, an old, looming brick building in south London, cell-lined hallways intersect to form the operational headquarters and studio of National Prison Radio (NPR). NPR is the latest and most expansive incarnation of prison radio in Britain, which was originally founded in 1994 as a way to prevent nighttime loneliness and self-harm among the men at Her Majesty's Feltham Prison in west London. It remains the world's only national prison radio network, transmitting 24/7 via satellite to the "vast majority" of television sets in the cells of the 88,000 prisoners in England and Wales. Aided by eight radio producers formerly employed by the publicly-funded British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and directed by the warm, sharply dressed Phil Maguire, NPR's content is written and recorded by a group of prisoners trained in radio production. Despite winning awards from the Sony Radio Academy every year since 2009 and being named London's Station of the Year at the 2012 Radio Academy Nations and Regions Awards, NPR is broadcasted only within the walls of British prisons.

Ben Stone: What kind of shows air on your station?

Phil Maguire: We have the NPR book club, so we have a book that is serialized over a month and every night you can tune in and listen to a chapter. Then, at the end of the month, we have a book club discussion program where prisoners that have read the book get together and talk about it. We had *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, which is a World War II concentration camp story that is very, very tough and dramatic. What we

tend to avoid is crime fiction. We don't want explicit details of complicated crimes being talked about on the radio.

There's our request show, our most popular show, where prisoners write to us, because they've not got access to the Internet or to text messaging. We take those letters and produce a two-hour daily request show where we just play songs that people have requested. We had one woman write in—she was in prison, she made a really good friend in prison, they were both recovering heroin addicts. One of them was released, and within a couple of days she was dead from a heroine overdose. So the surviving friend who was still in prison wrote to us to tell us how lost and bereft she was, but really, it was a warning call to any other prisoners. You can go to prison, you can stop taking your drugs, your tolerance level drops, you get out of prison, you go take your normal dose, but your normal dose is now a deadly dose. I think she requested one of her friend's favorite songs, and said, 'Could we dedicate this song to the memory of my friend?'

BS: Does the fact that you broadcast to a tightly controlled population affect the way you produce your shows?

PM: Almost by osmosis, we know what our audience wants, because our audience [members] are our presenters and our producers. [Our listeners are] all prisoners. Not only do we know they've all got that in common, but we know what time they get up, go to bed, get out of their cell, have their lunch. So we can focus our content really tightly on things that are relevant to them and their experience.

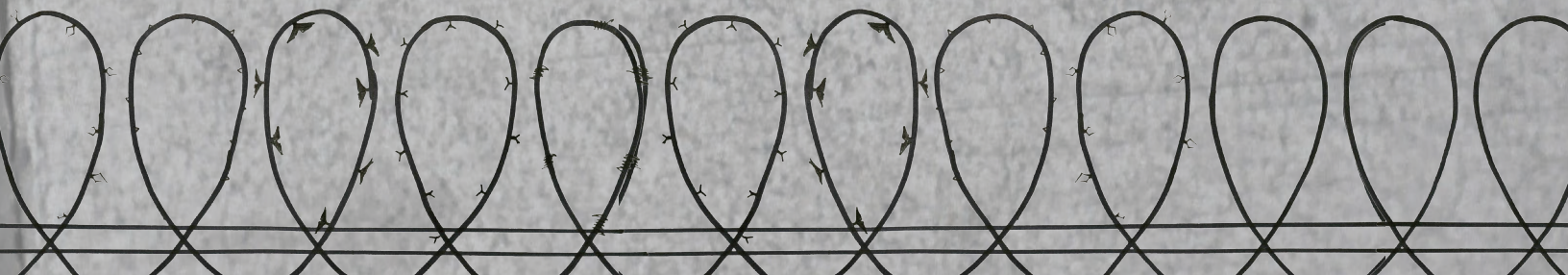




PHOTO COURTESY OF PHIL MAGUIRE

ABOVE: Prisoners are hard at work producing their next broadcast for inmates all over the United Kingdom.

BS: Because you often work with prisoners who are serving short sentences, do you have a high turnover rate on your staff?

PM: It's always great when we find out that somebody's successfully been released; that they're doing well on the outside, but occasionally it's very difficult for us. At best, we have the same group for three months, and it feels quite stable. Then sometimes within the space of three or four weeks, we can lose almost all of the prisoners. And you can imagine what impact that has, because they're the key to the station. They're our talent.

BS: Do any prisoners who were involved with NPR go on to careers in radio on the outside?

PM: Getting involved in NPR isn't necessarily a route into radio. We don't want to unrealistically raise people's expectations, but we definitely don't want to keep people down.

The skills that prisoners gain when they work with us will serve them well in whatever they choose to do afterwards. For many prisoners, studying a qualification for radio production is the first time they've been in a classroom in many years, and the first time they've ever achieved anything there and felt like they were a success. I think the most important thing that they learn is how to communicate effectively. If a prisoner is going to sit and interview the guy who runs the prison and ask him some difficult questions, if they can do that in a firm but polite and diplomatic way, he's going to be much better equipped for a job on the outside.

BS: Your programming has won many awards on the outside. Do you wish that people on the outside could hear it?

PM: We don't broadcast beyond the bars. I think the reason the programming is such good quality is because it's so tightly focused. We make programs specifically for prisoners. If we were streaming on the Internet, or if we were offering our programs to anybody else to rebroadcast, it would dilute the quality of the programming.

BS: In addition to your programming, what kind of information does National Prison Radio broadcast to prisoners?

PM: We concentrate specifically on things like giving prisoners information on how they can get access to work upon release. We have programs about finding accommodations, how to deal with drug and alcohol problems, how to maintain or reestablish positive relationships with family members, and information about how to stay healthy in prison.

BS: Those are all pretty major things.

How does a prison that doesn't have a radio station communicate those things to prisoners?

PM: That proves the need for a prison radio project. Whenever you go into a prison, you just see notice boards everywhere, with posters and leaflets, many of which have been there for several years and are out of date, or many of which are badly designed, or there is too much text. Then consider that the average reading age for a prisoner is the same as that of an 11-year-old—many prisoners can't read and write, or read and write well.

BS: Why is yours the only National Prison Radio network?

PM: I don't know. Maybe the stars just haven't been aligned at the right time. There are more and more countries asking us to help them do it, and there aren't enough hours in the day to respond to the requests. I've been [to Trinidad and Tobago] twice at the invitation of the British High Commission out there. We've had a visit from someone who is interested in setting something up in Hungary. We've had a visit from a delegation in Sweden who have since set up something called Radio Fri. We've been to Australia trying to get prison radio off the ground there. "Prison Radio International"—I don't know what it looks like; I don't know how it's funded. I don't know how it's going to work, but I think that there's something there. **Q - BEN STONE**

**“FOR MANY PRISONERS,
STUDYING RADIO PRODUCTION
IS THE FIRST TIME THEY’VE
BEEN IN A CLASSROOM IN MANY
YEARS, AND THE FIRST TIME
THEY’VE EVER ACHIEVED
ANYTHING THERE AND FELT
LIKE THEY WERE A SUCCESS.”**

SOUTHBANK'S GRIND

Urban street skaters organize to protect their home at Southbank Undercroft, London's oldest "found space" skatepark.

The sounds of metal, wood, and occasionally, skin hitting concrete fill the dimly lit vault. The walls are covered with vibrant street art, one artist's work overlapping another's to create a sprawling gallery of graffiti. In the corner, a group of young men recline along the cool concrete, protected from the sun by the boardwalk above. Sitting with skateboards beneath their feet, they seem to be the center of this park. Younger boarders ride up to ask for help with a particularly difficult trick or to bum some water. A railing on the opposite side of the park protects tourists from the action. Observers line every inch of the barrier, cameras clicking and video rolling. This is the Southbank Undercroft, the birthplace of London's skateboard culture, and it is in danger of being destroyed in order to make room for a commercial shopping center.

Skateboarders have been landing tricks and taking spills in the Undercroft since the 1970s. The colorful concrete park is located beneath the Queen Elizabeth Hall event center, near the River Thames and the iconic Ferris wheel known as the London Eye. This overhang shelters the world's longest inhabited "found space"

skatepark. A found space skatepark is an area not originally intended for skateboarding, which has been transformed by skaters into a functional park. The Undercroft's vibrant community of street skaters has kept this particular location alive for over 40 years.

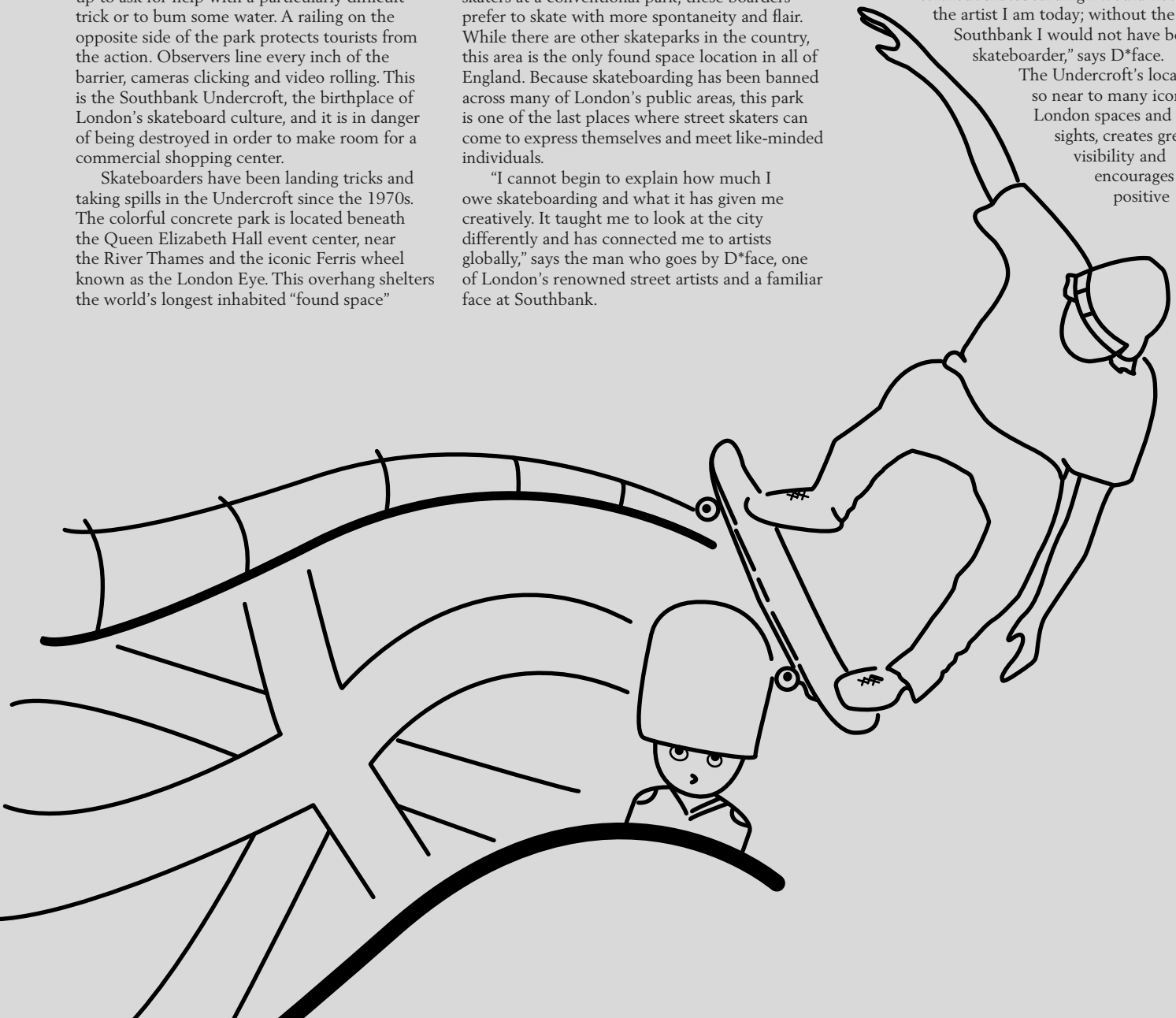
Street skating differs from skating in a traditional park in that riders enjoy creating new lines, also known as routes, and repurposing the original architecture of the space into a park. Unlike skaters at a conventional park, these boarders prefer to skate with more spontaneity and flair. While there are other skateparks in the country, this area is the only found space location in all of England. Because skateboarding has been banned across many of London's public areas, this park is one of the last places where street skaters can come to express themselves and meet like-minded individuals.

"I cannot begin to explain how much I owe skateboarding and what it has given me creatively. It taught me to look at the city differently and has connected me to artists globally," says the man who goes by D*face, one of London's renowned street artists and a familiar face at Southbank.

Generations of skateboarders have grown up under this overhang, and veterans like D*face have helped to shape both younger skaters as well as the space itself. Its unique, unplanned location provides shelter from London's frequent rain, but more importantly serves as a cultural center and home for the city's street boarders. This park hosts a rich cultural convention of skateboards, BMX riders, graffiti artists, and those who come to watch them.

"Without skateboarding I would not be the artist I am today; without the Southbank I would not have been a skateboarder," says D*face.

The Undercroft's location, so near to many iconic London spaces and sights, creates great visibility and encourages positive





LEFT: Tourists and locals spend a sunny afternoon watching skaters perform tricks. RIGHT: Located under an overhang, the park is the perfect setting for a quick skate in London's often rainy climate.

interactions between skaters and tourists, who often stop to watch the action behind the metal railings around the park's entrance.

This collaborative, creative space was originally intended to be an architectural feature of the Queen Elizabeth Hall. The park is located along the boardwalk near the Thames in London's riverside cultural area known as the Southbank Centre. The Centre was established in the 1950s, when the Festival of Britain, a national exhibition to celebrate post-war United Kingdom, was held along the river's southern bank. Its intended purpose was to create an area for the people of London to engage in arts and culture. Even before the Festival of Britain, this riverbank had been historically known as a local hub for performance and entertainment. Southbank's reputation as a location for amusement and culture dates back to medieval times. Throughout the years it has hosted bear-baiting, pleasure gardens, and more recently, the National Theatre, Jubilee Gardens, and the Royal Festival Hall.

In 2013, after serving many years as a hub for street culture, the Southbank Undercroft is in danger of closure. The Southbank Centre, the complex of artistic venues that owns the space, recently announced a remodel of the area that would uproot the Undercroft skating community from its historic home and transform this long-time cultural hotspot into a row of shops. According to the Southbank Centre's website, the aim for this remodeling project is to "transform this part of the site... to deliver a larger and more ambitious arts and cultural programme for all Southbank Centre's visitors to enjoy," creating tension between the Southbank Centre and the community of skaters who have called, and continue to call the Undercroft their home.

Judy Kelly, artistic director for the Southbank Centre, has released a video statement regarding the remodeling plans. In the statement, she

explains that the Undercroft "has been a very neglected site, and it needs a lot of money to keep going, and also to turn it into the next thing that will allow even more people to use it." She claims that her goal is not only to increase revenue generated from this area, but to enhance the area's cultural impact as well.

But for many of the Undercroft's devoted skaters and longtime fans, cultural impact is in the eye of the beholder. Long Live Southbank, an organization founded by London skateboarding cinematographer Henry Edwards-Wood, is aimed at stopping this development and is fighting to preserve the space and its long history as a cornerstone of London street life.

"I CANNOT BEGIN TO EXPLAIN HOW MUCH I OWE SKATEBOARDING AND WHAT IT HAS GIVEN ME CREATIVELY... WITHOUT SKATEBOARDING I WOULD NOT BE THE ARTIST I AM TODAY; WITHOUT THE SOUTHBANK I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SKATEBOARDER."

"Long Live Southbank really came about because we realized we needed one unified voice to represent the skateboarders," explains Wood, who has been skating the Undercroft since he was 12. "Everyone I now call a close friend I met at Southbank. It's a community that is driven by the history there, and that's what engages the young kids. It's staple of the London skateboard scene."

The concern over the fate of the Undercroft isn't just a local matter—the issue has attracted international attention. One of the world's most famous skateboarding icons, Tony Hawk, recently reached out to Mike McCart, director of the Southbank Centre, with an official letter of support for Long Live Southbank. In this letter, Hawk urged McCart to "please preserve the integrity of

Southbank, a sanctuary for skateboards, and an important piece of London history."

Hawk is not the only professional skater to publically support preserving the park. The Long Live Southbank website's supporter page features many professional skateboarders' and BMX bikers' messages of solidarity. A comment submitted by Rob Smith, a professional rider for the Death Skateboarders merchandise line, reads, "After traveling the world as a professional skateboarder, I have never come across such an iconic, historic, progressive landmark as the Southbank Undercroft."

Although this area holds huge importance to skateboarders, it is also a meaningful location to Londoners who don't skate. On any given day, the Undercroft teems with locals and tourists alike. At night, the area often hosts musical events of all types, connecting the community to this space.

Hannah Feldman, a volunteer for the Long Live Southbank campaign, has long fought for the protection of this site. "This is somewhere people can interact with a culture they may not otherwise experience," says Feldman. "There is nowhere else like it in the whole of the UK."

The Southbank Undercroft was recently declared an Asset of Community Value by the local community, but this status doesn't protect the area from redevelopment. It only ensures that the skatepark must be considered when discussing the remodel plans, and the title also gives the Long Live Southbank organization six months to raise funds and purchase the property in the event that the land is being sold. In the coming months, as decisions are made regarding the proposed £120 million renovation, local skateboarders will learn whether they will be able to continue enjoying their unique space that they discovered and built, or if it will be transformed into a shopping center in the name of "enhancing the culture" of Southbank. ♀

- NICOLE CORDIER

The Birthing Debate

With new legislation in place, practicing traditional midwifery is being regulated to new and controversial levels.



ABOVE: Amanda Moore, a licensed midwife, develops close relationships with her patients while providing them with in-home care before, during, and after childbirth.

Instead of a desk and papers, Amanda Moore's home office is furnished with a bed and a closet of medical supplies. The room is decorated with soothing shades of green and unusual birth-themed decor. The bed is sometimes replaced by a tub for mothers who prefer the soothing presence of water during one of the most painful and miraculous moments of their lives. Moore is a certified midwife.

"My job is to honor the family and to make sure everything is safe," she says. "Most of the time, what's really needed is a lot of love and encouragement, and I think that is the midwife's space. They're trained in the tradition of midwifery, of honoring the mother, the family, and the child." Moore has a warm, calm demeanor and a soft voice. Her graceful movements are often interrupted by her sweeping her hair behind an ear. She serves 12 to 24 expecting mothers each year. "I'm friends with a lot of my patients, I feel like they're family to me," she says. Moore describes the wonder and the empowerment that comes with home births. She explains how hormones like oxytocin can make birth as pleasurable as it is painful, so long as the woman isn't fearful and full of adrenaline. "When a woman is delivering in a hospital, her privacy is violated. There are a lot of interventions in the hospital and a lot of fear, which creates that adrenaline and negates oxytocin levels in the body," explains Moore.

Midwifery is considered by many to be a natural alternative for mothers who perceive hospital births as antiseptic and impersonal. A home birth holds appealing familiarity and sense of comfort. Since a midwife maintains a relationship with the mother for their entire pregnancy, the midwife has

plenty of time to adapt to the birthing situation and help the mother have a natural birth. However, recent deaths like that of Bethany Reed's daughter in 2011 have placed blame on unregistered midwives doing home births. This incident, and several other similar cases, has called many safety standards into question and brought about talks of licensure for midwives.

On July 6, 2013, legislation was passed requiring all midwives to be registered by the state, so Certified Professional Midwives (CPMs) like Moore must pass two exams and participate in more than 50 deliveries, 100 prenatal care visits, and 60 examinations before they are legally licensed to provide midwife care. According to Moore, these standards of midwifery education have been a barrier in CPMs starting their own home practices. "Midwifery is so much deeper than getting a certificate at some school. A traditional midwife serves her community and was trained by her preceptor, another midwife, through an apprenticeship model. That model is being killed off," says Moore. Despite the appeals of midwifery, approximately 99 percent of births in the US still occur in hospitals, and more than 30 percent of which are commonly practiced cesarean sections, a serious abdominal surgery that was once used solely in emergency situations.

Michael Hare, a retired doctor from Salem Hospital, feels that birthing options should be an informed choice. "Wherever someone feels most comfortable is best, so long as they have somebody attending them who knows what they're doing and also knows how to call someone in a hurry. You need someone knowledgeable with you and somebody comfortable with you," says Hare. While home births and women's clinics seem to

have an edge on providing comfort to expecting mothers, many hospitals are trying to get in on the trend by creating homey birthing rooms. Some hospitals even have baths for mothers who might prefer a water birth. "Everyone has realized that [it's best] if the mom is relaxed. No matter how many technicians are hiding in the background close by, at least they can have the feeling that they're at home," says Hare.

Brooke Kyle, a physician at Women's Care, an obstetrics and gynecology practice in Eugene, Oregon, thinks she can provide both the comfort of a home birth and the safety of a hospital birth. "There can be events during labor and birth where delivery should occur within 30 minutes or less to ensure a healthy baby. With a home birth, it is impossible to expedite birth within those time guidelines. My goal is a healthy baby and mother, so I combine the positive thoughts and hopes of a midwife's care with the expertise of a doctor's care," says Dr. Kyle. Her practice, however, does not perform births in the mother's actual home. Midwives like Moore perform many of their prenatal checkups in the home as well as the actual birth.

Moore feels that a true home birth is far better than one in a hospital, when it comes to feeling at ease. "Women who choose home birth seem to share their stories with their friends, and those stories are really powerful amongst women talking about their birth experience," explains Moore. In a home birth, the woman is completely supported throughout her pregnancy." According to Moore, this start to finish model of care is much more common with a midwife. "We're with a mother for nearly a year of her life, till the baby is 6 weeks old, but women in the hospital are subjected to rotating staff, bright lights, machines, beepers, and doctors they might not even know," she says. Moore claims to provide an optimal amount of care, both before and after the child is born. "I check in with the mother's health and ask her if she's getting enough sleep, and usually I offer to help with the dishes or put her older kids in the bath. It's my role to help [the mother] with the transition of adding another child to her family."

Dr. Kyle feels that she provides similar care to a home birth in her women's clinic, but with increased safety. "For pregnancy care, we see patients after the pregnancy test is positive. We see women every four weeks until the third trimester, every two weeks until a month before their due date, every week afterwards and whenever they have an urgent concern."

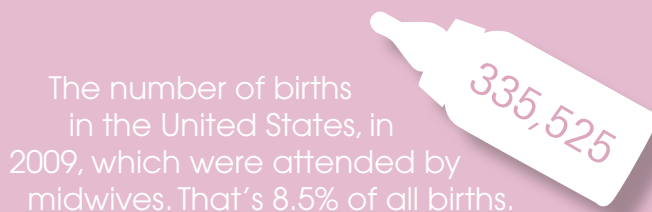
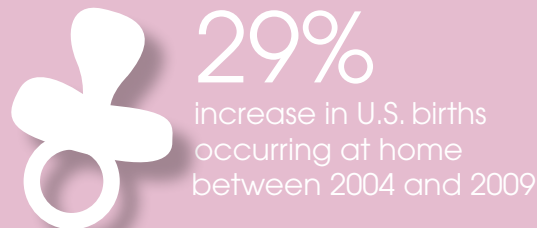
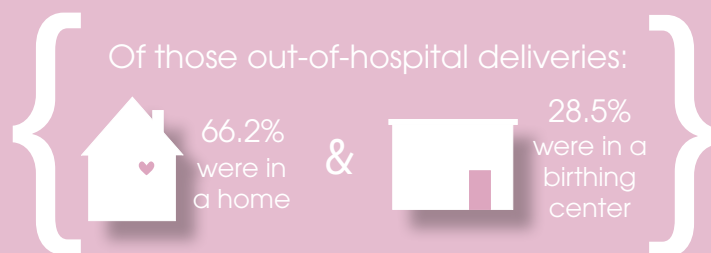
Dr. Kyle feels that licensure for midwives is necessary, and is pleased with the recent legislation. "I do believe lay midwives (those without medical training, such as Direct Entry Midwives or Certified Practical Midwives) should be licensed. Licensure is required for the person who provides a pedicure. Should it not be the same for a person who delivers your baby?" From a medical standpoint, the safety of the mother and the child comes before anything else. Moore agrees with the importance of safety, but doesn't think licensure is the way. "Uncertified midwives in the state of Oregon have better outcomes than the licensed midwives. Statistically, it is black-and-white: Licensing does not ensure a competent practitioner." Although Moore herself is licensed, she feels that providing a range of options to the mother is a high priority, and that the mother's choice of care should be respected as long as she is aware of the risks involved.

Beyond a home birth or a hospital birth, expectant mothers have a wide range of care options. Throughout Oregon there are plenty of birthing centers that employ certified nurse midwives who can prescribe antibiotics and pain relievers after extensive education and nursing school. Such centers often employ OB/GYNs like Dr. Kyle in case a medical doctor is needed to perform an emergency surgical birth or another advanced procedure. Licensed midwives have completed an additional ten births and specialized training that allows them to prescribe additional medications. All the experience required of CPMs has taught Moore a great deal about the needs and comforts required for a healthy and natural birth.

The earth-toned, pine-scented living room of Moore's home is lined with musical instruments, often used to soothe a mother in labor. Many mothers find comfort in the music, and the soft smells make the entire atmosphere warm and relaxed. Although her home can be a haven for mothers in labor, the question of safety still permeates through midwifery. While hospitals have all the advantages of new technology, midwives have thousands of years of expertise and knowledge passed down to them. Ultimately, the decision lies with the mother. Her ability to choose is perhaps the most important part of the debate. "I believe in midwifery," Moore says enthusiastically. "I know that birth is ancient, and it's way more powerful than our society honors or empowers women in the family dynamic. I believe that a healthy planet and a healthy family begins when you make healthy choices." ☘

- KELLY KENOYER

The breakdown of birth:



Statistics were gathered from the Center for Disease Control's National Vital Statistics Reports



CUBA: A CHANGING CULTURE

PHOTO & STORY **ANDREW SENG**
DESIGN **CARLY ELLIOTT**





Walking through the streets of Havana, Cuba, an American civilian, especially one with a fancy camera from the Oregon University System (OUS), tends to turn a lot of heads. I figured that if I walked with purpose and confidence, I wouldn't stick out like a sore thumb. As a journalist in the United States, it takes a lot of courage to approach people you don't know and ask for a picture or two. In Cuba, the biggest challenge is the language barrier. My only choice was to immerse myself head first into Cuban culture and attempt to connect with locals on a personal level.

While visiting with Cuban elders of the Psycho Ballet, a group that uses classical dance moves combined with music to rehabilitate elders and psychiatric patients, I had the pleasure of meeting Miguel Aguillar Torres and Carmen Garcia: a pair of 100-year old Cubans who have lived through Cuba's pre-revolution era, Fidel's revolution, and the Special period of the '90s when the country was struck with immense poverty after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even more touching was how they reveled in joy from seeing us OUS students.

The amount of energy they produced was astounding, almost palpable, and their stories were driven by emotion. It pained me to see Cuban elders display so much passion for their country and the OUS program that brought us to their country, when the United States government and American citizens have such a detached and misguided perspective of the beautiful people of this island.

Alfredo Prieto, a native Cubano and expert on Cuban-U.S. relations, told me "At the end of the day we're supposed to have good relations." I was struck by the simplicity of his statement because Cuba and the United States are only 90 miles apart, which is a shorter distance than driving from Eugene to Portland, Oregon. We're so close, yet so far.

Prieto exudes progress when it comes to the betterment of U.S.-Cuba relations. He believes that if the blockade, an embargo that prohibits trade between the U.S. and Cuba, was lifted, American tourists would be a refreshing and uplifting change to the Cuban economy.

Cuban identity and nationality is defined by social unity between different cultures. Cuba is versatile in the sense that communities are able to absorb new traditions without the outstanding Cubano culture becoming over-saturated by foreign influences. This melting pot is largely evident in Havana, where you can observe the many influences that mesh together, creating the Cuban experience.

When it was time to return to the states, the Cubanos called us not friends, but brothers and sisters. They desired to help me provide the truth about Cuba. They wanted us as students to act as a medium for the truth, passing along messages of peace to our friends and family back in the United States. The spirit of my photos and the purpose of my work is to convey their passion for unity between the United States and Cuba—a passion that should be passed onto their, and our, younger generations. ☉

TOP: A boy plays baseball on the corner of a busy street in Havana. Like many Latin American countries, Cuba is passionate about baseball. Due to a lack of access to baseball equipment, kids will use whatever they can get their hands on, including sticks to replace bats, or rolled up tape and rocks to replace balls.

MIDDLE: Raul Acosta fixes the clutch of his 1954 4-door Chevrolet Bel-Air in Varadero, a Cuban resort town. In 1962, the United States implemented a trade embargo on Cuba, which meant that Cubans could no longer receive new cars or new service parts to replace broken vehicles from America. There are an estimated 60,000 of these 1950s Chevrolets, or "Yank Tanks", that are still driven on Cuban streets. Currently, the only way to maintain these vehicles is with Cuban ingenuity and the use of spare Russian car parts.

BOTTOM: Ofelia Montalbo, 78, is a member of the Cuban dance therapy group known as Psycho-Ballet.

RIGHT: Elvira "Beba" Boullosa is also a member of the Cuban dance therapy group Psycho-Ballet.



RIGHT: Lázaro Melgares is a farmer at the Organic Garden Cooperative in Alamar, a city in Havana's eastern district. Cuba has developed one of the most successful urban agriculture systems in the world. Because the availability of petrochemical materials is limited in Cuba, urban agriculture production is almost exclusively done with organic biological fertilizers and biological pest control techniques. Organic and urban agriculture are essentially interchangeable terms since both draw upon organic practices.

BOTTOM LEFT: Lazáro Ortelaza Peña works for the Center for Martin Luther King, Cuba's largest non-government organization. The center serves as a meeting hub for various delegations, socio-political activities, religious and missionary ventures, and international students.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Abel Hierrezuelo and his daughter Rosabel Hierrezuelo sit in their house, which also serves as Abel's place of religious worship. Abel is a priest of the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería, a religion that is derived of Western African and Carribean origins fused with cultural elements of Roman Catholicism. Santería has a strong spiritual element that emphasizes religious worship, and communicating with the spirits of the dead, for traditional healing purposes.





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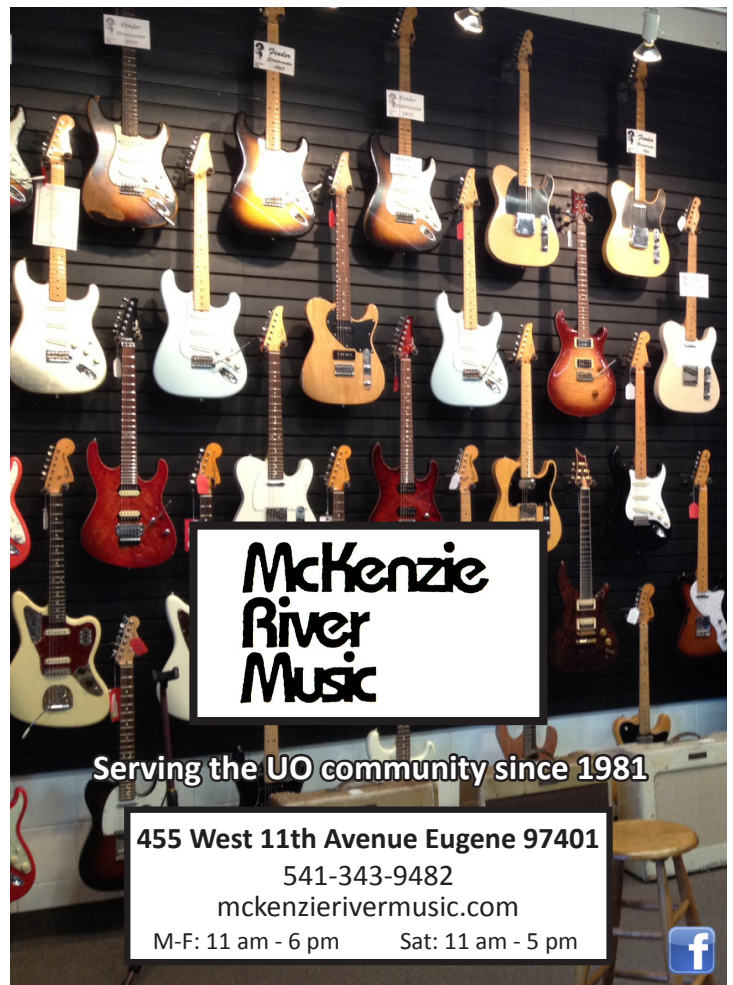
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MOUNT SHASTA IS HOME TO SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST DIVERSE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES.

Walking in the shadow of the mountain, there's an eerie sensation. Perhaps it's the mountain's imposing 14,161-foot height, or that its looming peak is one of the largest dormant volcanoes in the United States. It's quiet except for the sound of water rushing over polished rocks and lava tubes as it flows from the McCloud River to Shasta Lake.

The dramatic beauty of Mount Shasta's pristine landscape is enough to leave anyone breathless. It's not hard to see why it draws thousands of visitors each year. Some seek adventure on the mountain's many hiking trails, ski runs, and waterways, while others come in search of something deeper—most commonly, a spiritual connection or extraterrestrial encounters.

Local resident Peter Chesko, a former skier, fine jeweler, and park ranger, has lived in Shasta for 27 years. "It's the last national park with no gates or borders," Chesko says. He explains that he has traveled the world but picked here to live. Chesko likes the bountiful trees and the fresh water of the mountain as well as the progressive, comfortable nature of the town. "I've even met lumbermen here who practice meditation," he says.

Mount Shasta's traditional spirituality draws its roots from the Native American tribes who trace their ancestry to its slopes: the Achumawi, Shasta, Modoc, Atsugewi, and Winnemem Wintu tribes. According to the legends of the native Shasta tribe, the mountain is their birthplace, for they are descendants of the grizzly bear people and the Great Spirit of the mountain. The Shasta tribe regards the slopes above the tree line of the mountain as incredibly sacred. Only shamans and spirits of the dead venture there.

The Winnemem Wintu also regard the area as their native place of worship, regularly hosting rituals such as coming-of-age ceremonies in the rivers that flow from the mountain.

Today, Mount Shasta is a spiritual melting pot. Nestled in the woods of the mountainside, cobblestone walls make up the beautiful wooden complex of Shasta Abbey, home to a community of 26 male and female Buddhist monks ranging in age from 25 to 75. Some locals believe that the mountain is home to an advanced, ascended race of ancient beings called the "Lemurians," survivors, of sort, from the sunken fabled continent, Lemuria. Today, ambitious adventurers seek out entrances to the supposed hidden city within the mountain, and some even claim to have contacted them.

Further from these spiritual hotspots, at 3,600 feet, is the small community of Mount Shasta City, California. The mountain watches over its inhabitants. Sunlight pours over the streets, and people walk unfazed by the heat in loose, colorful garments. Some are travelers with backpacks or peaceful retirees; others are teachers, practitioners, and shopkeepers at various alternative medicine and therapy stores. Enterprising residents give tours of the mountain's various spiritual and recreational locations, while others simply enjoy the city's serene atmosphere.

Lawrence Jordan has been living between Mount Shasta and Marin County with his wife since 1963. "It's rural, beautiful, quiet and peaceful. It's uncontaminated," says Jordan. Tourism for recreation and spiritual enlightenment is a large part of the town's economy, and summer is its busiest season. "I think there's definitely something mystical about the mountain. It's a religious icon, like Fuji and other big mountains of the world," says Jordan.



The Mystery of MOUNT SHASTA

STORY **HEATHER BALDOCK** PHOTO **KYLE MCKEE** DESIGN **NAI SAEPHANH**



The rich variety of spirituality in the region draws in tourists from all over the world. Walking along the main boulevard of the city, sits a small yellow cottage with stained glass doors and “I AM READING ROOM” painted above the porch. As soon as the door opens, a three-foot portrait of a bearded man in 18th century French dress stares back through intense violet eyes. This is Saint Germain, the central figure of the spiritual group, I AM.

According to his book *Unveiled Mysteries*, in the early 1900s engineer Guy Ballard encountered the “Ascended Master”, Saint Germain, while climbing Mount Shasta with his wife Edna. So began Mount Shasta’s most famous spiritual movement, I AM, which teaches that each person has their own individual omnipresence, his or her own “God Self,” with the potential to ascend to become a higher immortal form.

During the summer, thousands of believers nicknamed “I AMs” by the community congregate for the annual conclave, where non-members are prohibited entry to even view the gathering. This year marks the conclave’s 15th anniversary, concluding with a three-day I AM Pageant at the G.W. Ballard Amphitheater, which is accessible to the public.

Further down the boulevard, shop windows on either side of the street are glimmering with the reflections of crystals, amulets, flutes, skulls, tuning forks, and holy figures from a pantheon of religions.

At a repurposed 76 gas station in the heart of town lies Mount Shasta’s Shambhala Center. Written on the gas station’s sign, past a row of prayer flags, are the words, “Home of the 13th Crystal Skull”.

Inside the Shambhala center, old refrigerators are filled with exotic jewelry and crystals. Lounge chairs flank shelves of colorful books. Rows of small Buddhas and angels gaze out at customers, while ambient music plays from behind the counter. Here, locals and tourists alike shop for icons that promise spiritual fulfillment, or stop in for classes and outdoor workshops aimed at increasing spiritual wellness.

Sitting in a separate, tapestry-covered room in the corner of the center, Susan Isabelle’s golden-white hair is pulled back to reveal dangling gemstone earrings. Her voice is soothing, matching the tranquil music floating through the center. “It completely flipped my life around,” says Susan, who first visited the area on a spiritual journey in 1999. “This is an incredibly spiritual place.”

Isabelle moved to Mount Shasta City in 2004 because of one specific sacred artifact—she calls it the “13th Mayan Crystal Skull”. According to Isabelle, the Mayan people of Belize claimed she was the keeper of a sacred crystal skull, and led her to attain two halves to make the skull whole.

“While the first half is masculine,” Isabelle explains the skull’s shape, “the second half is feminine. When the two pieces come together, they form [the shape of] a perfect human heart and they even have a heartbeat.”

Isabelle believes the crystal skull connects the idea of “one heart, one mind,” epitomizing the ideal mantra for humanity. “I was literally sent here to be with the mountain, which is both male and female,” she says. Mount Shasta has two peaks, known as Shasta and Shastina; Isabelle believes Shasta is male and Shastina is female. “To me, it’s a great big twin flame crystal that rises up through the earth... This mountain holds that energy.”

To Isabelle and travelers seeking spiritual guidance, crystals provide a source of energy to find inner peace, healing, and creativity. “People come here who don’t know why they’re here, but they end up at this store. Here at the Shambhala Center, we are a multicultural center that honors all religions and all beliefs,” she says.

On the other side of town, author and mechanic Brian Wallenstein doesn’t necessarily agree with the profiteering nature of spiritual practices in Mount Shasta.

“When I first moved here, there were a lot of ‘teachers’ up here,” says Wallenstein. “There were lots of groups competing with each other. A lot of these people were charlatans, and they were doing what they were doing for money.”

Down a long stretch of winding road just outside the city, Wallenstein lives in a forested property surrounded by chicken wire. An old black Volkswagen Beetle rests on the lawn. He sits on his deck below a set of wind chimes, dressed in a sleeveless t-shirt and shorts. A colorful tattoo of a dreamcatcher decorates his tanned left arm, and his messy, curled hair makes him look far younger than his wizened face suggests.

“I was hitchhiking around California, and didn’t know anything about Northern California. I didn’t know there was a volcanic mountain here. I told myself, I got to come back here,” says Wallenstein. “There’s a unique energy here and it’s been here for a long time.”

Wallenstein recently released a 625-page book called *Mount Shasta Sightings*, documenting specific dates, photos, and research behind various extraterrestrial encounters surrounding Mount Shasta.



ABOVE: This Shambhala symbol outside of the Shambhala Center in Mount Shasta city means “Heaven’s Light.” The Shambhala is just one of the many religious facilities in the area.

“I think there’s definitely something mystical about the mountain. It’s a religious icon, like Fuji and other big mountains of the world.”

Now, living in Shasta, Wallenstein says he has seen many incredible sights.

“Amazing things have happened here. With UFOs, I’m fortunate that all my encounters have been with other people. Plus, I study science, so I was really trying to come from an empirical viewpoint.”

He describes a particular instance in the early 90s when two missiles were rumored to have chased a UFO over the Dunsmuir, California area. “One crashed on the mountain, and hundreds of people saw it,” recalls Wallenstein. “Later, they basically put sham stories in the newspaper to cover up what had happened. Everyone forgot.”

According to Wallenstein, who refers to extraterrestrials as off-worlders rather than extraterrestrials, UFOs are common in Siskiyou County, and are usually spotted in quick sightings.

“Why Mount Shasta? Why are UFOs here? Maybe it’s just a beautiful place,” ponders Wallenstein, flipping through pages of his book as he recalls local alien sightings. He remarks that one theory connects the aliens to ancient places in the area. “I mean, how many ancient sites have accepted off-world intervention as a sound variable?”

UFOs are not the only unusual encounters Wallenstein has had during his time in Mount Shasta.



ABOVE: Brian Wallenstein is a local expert of supernatural phenomena in the Mount Shasta area. His book compiles UFO sightings around Mt. Shasta and contains information about UFOs, yetis and other otherworldly phenomena. His book explores the history and background of sightings that have been reported to the Mutual UFO Network, Project Blue-Book, and the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena. BELOW: Mount Shasta, part of the Cascade range in northern California, is considered a sacred destination for spiritual folk around the world. Tourists flock to the scenic hills for worship and refuge. Native Americans in the area believe it to be the center of creation.

Wallenstein recalls a particularly memorable venture to the mountain in 1987, when he and his friends came across an overwhelmingly musky odor around the mountain's old ski lodge.

Peering back at them through amber eyes and white fur matted in clumps, says Wallenstein, was a family of majestic Sasquatch—a male, female, and juvenile.

"They were really beautiful and pleasant to look at," he recalls. "They were just as scared as we were."

His group slowly backed away and never saw the Sasquatch again. The US Forest Service tore the lodge down the next year and, according to Wallenstein, gave no reason for the closure and denied any association with the Sasquatch. "They were trying to protect them," he says. "They're so endangered, but they're out there. They exist."

It's easy to see why so many legends have found a home in Mount Shasta. From its giant lava-formed boulders to its abundant rushing streams, the mountain attracts a wide variety of creatures, plants, and people. The sky overhead is as bright and crystal-clear as its reflection on the water. Come sunset, crimson and magenta spill over the horizon. Clouds float above the mountain and rest by its slopes in perfect discs, giving it the appearance of a meeting place for hovering spaceships and wandering spirits. While many hikers may not know of Shasta's mystical reputation, they just might feel something mysterious in the mountain's shadow. ☉



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Alive & Free

A public health approach to high-risk youth in
Seattle, Washington.

STORY **ADRIAN BLACK**
PHOTO **ANDY ABEYTA**
DESIGN **SPENCER KELLY**
ILLUSTRATION **SARAH GOLDNER**

"When a young person tells me that they believe they'll be dead or in jail by 18, they are giving us an opportunity," says Eleuthera Lisch, Director of the Alive & Free program at Seattle, Washington's Metrocenter YMCA. Through ambitious street outreach work, often performed by former gang members, Alive & Free teaches kids that "the disease of violence" they've been exposed to can, if left untreated, take their freedom—or worse—their life.

"We're trying to build resistance training in young people."

"Nah, bro. What would I need that for?" said David Lujano, an Alive & Free Outreach Worker, when a loosely acquainted kid tried to sell him a pistol in the detailing section of a friend's local auto business. "You must not know me."

Lujano gave the young man some perspective on the risks guns pose to kids and the community. "I've been in the system. I was just like you," Lujano told him, grateful that the conversation came to him. "Some of the people I work with who have the most needs; we get them in the shop," Lujano says. Those needs are most often for a capable guardian—someone to keep at-risk kids on a healthy path. "You work with them on a car, side by side. They tell you what's going on. You learn together."

In 2008, there were 17 gang-related deaths in Seattle's King County, five of which were youth-on-youth shootings. The lost lives prompted the city to form the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI). The community-based coalition Lisch helped design and now supports with Alive & Free services focuses on 12 to 17-year-olds at high risk for involvement with violence. Alive & Free's interactions on the street are only the beginning of a process that connects community outreach with classroom learning to put kids' entire lifestyles up for review. "It's an incredibly complex job," says SYVPI director Mariko Lockhart, "but Eleuthera has a unique skill set that is extremely important with this line of work."

"I was born with what I believe to be an exposure to and an infection by the disease of violence," explains Lisch, whose turbulent and painful youth inspired her current vocation. Alive & Free teaches kids to recover from violence by resisting its triggers through "The New Rules for Living," the most distilled form of a comprehensive curriculum called the "Alive & Free Prescription."



ABOVE: Eleuthera Lisch, Director of the Alive & Free program at Seattle, Washington's Metrocenter YMCA

The New Rules for Living

1. Respect comes from within.
2. Change begins with the individual.
3. A true friend will never lead you to danger.
4. There is nothing more valuable than an individual life.



ABOVE: (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) J'Quai Holiday, Eleuthera Lisch, Ebony Johnson and Marquise White. Holiday, Johnson and White are outreach workers for the Alive & Free program.

The goal of the New Rules is to interrupt a widespread narrative that tells youth that violence is a solution to life's struggles. "You have to tap into that every single time you feel disrespected, especially if you formerly responded by pulling a weapon on somebody or beating them," says Lisch of the first rule. Alive & Free works against the labeling of gangs as violent and treating violence as a gang issue, addressing the stigma in a broader scope. Still, youth gang members in Seattle are more than three times as likely to be convicted of assault. "When we're looking at violence through a public health framework, we're trying to build resistance skills in young people," Lisch says. This means meeting a kid where they're at—not sitting in judgment of the lives they've led up to that moment.

"If you wanna take that away, you have to give them an alternative."

"I had already been exposed to the street life. My mind was already made up," says Brandon Shell. His mother sent him to Seattle from St. Louis, Missouri when he was just 11 years old as an attempt to put distance between him and his old neighborhood's detrimental influences. "I'd see the hustlers and the pimps and I'd mimic that," he says. Shell began selling drugs at age 13 and was carrying a gun by 15.

For Lujano, the choice was just as simple. His father drank and raised hell. "My mom used to tell me, 'Go find your brothers down at the park.'" His brothers, however, were in a gang. "There comes this question of whether you're in or out," he says.

"Most of the people I ran with didn't have people who cared about them," Shell says. "So we said, 'We're gonna be family.'" Hearing the word "gang," he rolls his eyes. "You'd need money for food and nobody's gonna give you that, so people were selling drugs," he says. In Seattle, the poverty rate is currently 11 percent for whites, 26 percent for Latinos like Lujano, and 35 percent for African-Americans like Shell. "They don't feel like they have an alternative. If you wanna take that away, you gotta give them an alternative," Shell says. Faced with such limited choices, Lisch understands why kids see drug dealing as the only option on the table. "If I'm only looking at the means of survival and it's right now presented to me as an illegal economy, how far will I look elsewhere?" she explains.

"I didn't pay attention in school. It was hard for me. It was easier for me to do something I understood," says Shell, who landed in an alternative school at 17 after multiple expulsions from public high schools. Lisch recalls her first encounter with Shell, saying, "Brandon was the first young man I met when I walked into the classroom. He was extremely charismatic." Shell, who had been applying that charisma to gang

leadership, initially saw Lisch as an adversary. Every day she would throw him out of class, something he says he earned. "I'd come back and she would always let me back in. She saw the good in me before I did. If someone loves you that much, you have no choice—unless you're a piece of shit—but to love them back." Lisch was able to capitalize on Shell's positive influence, which he has since used to help the program attract and retain many other at-risk youth.

"Kids get expelled for behavioral issues that stem from other things that are never actually addressed in school," Lisch says. Alive & Free devotes great effort to keeping kids in school, with an 83 percent rate of re-entry for drop outs. Through SYVPI's internship programs, Alive & Free gets kids focused on their future and finding a risk-free career path. That change may betray "the life" for some, but as Lisch says, "If I'm not selling drugs anymore and I have a job and I feel pretty good about myself, and I see myself having a longer future than 18, did I sell out?"

"Being in the system, I had time to sit down and investigate things."

Lisch opened Alive & Free in Seattle in 1999, but the genesis of the program was the work of Dr. Joseph Marshall, who founded it in 1987 as the Omega Boys Club's Street Soldiers. In



ABOVE: The YMCA's downtown Seattle location is home to Eleuthera Lisch's office as well as many other offices and 50,000 square feet of fitness space. This enables the building to provide one of the founding goals of the YMCA, to promote health and overall wellness.

1993, Lisch heard Dr. Marshall's radio show of the same name out of San Francisco, California. "What came over the airwaves really moved me," Lisch says. Marshall, a veteran anti-violence activist, was calling for peace in the streets. One year later, he would begin simulcasting to Los Angeles, California, where he lived for 11 years before coming to the Bay Area.

Amid the media-sensationalized, crack cocaine-fueled street battles of early 1990s Los Angeles, "Parents were very concerned that their kids were getting involved in gang violence," says Marshall. "They would send their kids with relatives to live in other places. Unknowingly they spread the disease." At the time, the lasting psychological impact on young people living through the trauma of toxic, unstable, violent communities wasn't well understood.

When Lujano was almost 18, he moved from Los Angeles to Seattle. "I took myself out of L.A., but I never got L.A. out of my mind," he says, "I came up here with the same mentality I had down there." Barely a year later, at age 19, Lujano found himself amidst a drug deal gone sour. "Being in gangs, you'd party and get messed up and people would just start some shit," he says. But this time, knives were drawn on both sides. Lujano woke up in the hospital to learn that he had killed a man.

He served 14 years in prison, where he says he had an epiphany about violence. "Being in the system, I had time to sit down and investigate

things," Lujano says. He bonded with inmates over finding the causes of the violence that put many of them there, triggers that still resurged at times. Helping defuse a potential brutal melee over a cigarette, Lujano's stark conclusion was that people were just on auto-pilot, responding with violence out of habit. By the time of his release, Lujano had spent some five years committed to a message of non-violence, even negotiating truces between prison gang spokesmen. "They called me 'The Peacemaker,'" he says. All of this prepared him for his work on the streets of Seattle.

"When a crisis happens in a in a community, Everybody's got a role."

Shouting into her cell phone over clamoring traffic on Southeast Seattle's Rainier Avenue, Lisch helps a grieving relative plan for a candle-light vigil, providing both emotional and material support. Promising to purchase flowers and candles, she knows the memorial will stir an already aching community, but that this pain is necessary. "Vigils only take place where the [death] occurred," Lisch says, "and they can go on for a number of days." Recalling a spring vigil outside a bar in the Seattle suburb of Auburn, Lisch thinks back to the first moment of loss.

"They were young people we knew," she says, of the triple homicide in March. Dawn

was coming. Families were arriving. Lisch and her team moved past the police cordon set up around the victims. Her first thought was to identify their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers, a task made easy by the women's disconsolate wailing. "Part of it is really just being a shoulder to cry on," she says. "When a crisis happens in a community, everybody's got a role."

Her team quickly checked in with young people that had congregated in search of answers. "There can be points of escalation in grief," Lisch says. "Gossip was starting about it on Facebook about who might have done it." The incident, like all gun violence, had serious potential for retaliation, which they were working to alleviate. "There may still be consequences," Lisch says, "but in that hot moment, outreach workers look to connect with [the youth] and find out what's going on."

Another worker made sure a fourth surviving victim went straight to the hospital, offering transportation for family to meet them there. "We help walk them through the steps to the victim's assistance package," Lisch says. "We can get them things they're not in a position to think about." If a suspect is detained, workers assist their family in contacting them while in confinement. Outreach workers may also help suspects later by advocating on their behalf in court.

For Lisch, Lujano, and others, this "critical incident response management" is a 24/7



ABOVE: David Lujano struggled through gang related activity in his youth, eventually finding himself behind bars. Now Lujano has put his life on track and found success as an outreach worker for Alive & Free.

responsibility. "It's her life's work," says Lockhart. "She will often show up at a morning meeting having been up until 4 am." To that, Lisch says, matter-of-factly, "Why waste the clock?"

"A war on gangs is a war on human life."

"All sorts of folks are having a conversation about how it's time to treat gun violence like a public health issue," Lisch says, having recently returned from Washington, D.C., where she met with presidential and vice presidential staff to discuss gun control legislation.

The Centers for Disease Control, which monitors youth violence, just recently lifted a ban on gun violence research that was orchestrated 17 years ago by the National Rifle Association. "Our gun lobbyists aren't interested or concerned about our young people," Lisch says. "It's the same reason why big tobacco couldn't be confronted."

America isn't just the gun country, it's the jail country too. The United States imprisons citizens at a rate higher than China, India, and Brazil combined. Lisch has been in talks with the Department of Justice and its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, addressing issues like disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile and adult justice systems.

Seattle particularly suffers from this problem. The US Department of Education investigated the city in March over African-Americans being suspended or expelled more than three times as often as other students. Seattle's black youth are one and a half times more likely than all others to enter the juvenile justice system and, once there, are six times as likely to be transferred to adult court. Although African-Americans and Latinos make up 13 and 17 percent of the US population

respectively, they account for 37 and 35 percent of Americans behind bars.

President Obama, in a July speech following the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman verdict, highlighted that "there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws," referring to the decades-long "War on Drugs". For example, crack cocaine is punished at a rate of 18:1 compared to powder, and despite the variants being pharmacologically identical and evenly used among races, 83 percent of federal crack cocaine defendants are black. In the state of Washington, African-Americans are almost three times as likely to be arrested for marijuana possession, although rates of use between ethnic groups are nearly equal. "All of this is legal," says Dr. Marshall. "That needs to change."

Attorney General Eric Holder announced in August a series of steps intended to scale back the War on Drugs, and by extension, on gangs, in order to alleviate further undermining of social stability. "We will start by fundamentally rethinking the notion of mandatory minimum sentences for drug-related crimes," Holder said, adding "We cannot simply prosecute or incarcerate our way to becoming a safer nation."

"Any attempt to have a war on gangs is a war on human life," Lisch says, "It's made it impossible to rely on generations of fathers who are now [imprisoned]." SYVPI offers a support group for fatherlessness, recognizing it as a serious risk factor for youth involvement in gangs and gang violence.

"We're gonna break the cycle."

"We couldn't find this kid at all," Lujano says. "His mom was worried about him. He didn't show up to court, so they got a warrant for his

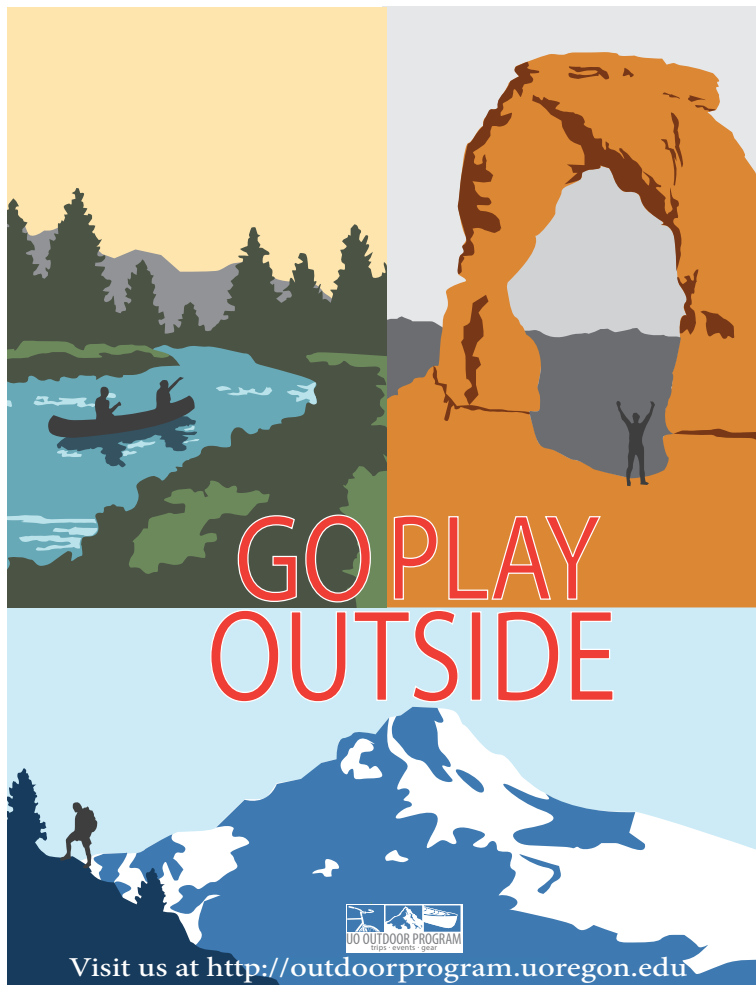
arrest." 16-year-old "D" was caught up in drugs, having been recently introduced to crystal meth. Lujano performed court advocacy for him, carrying out the Alive & Free model of valuing treatment over incarceration. "Little by

little, he started opening up," says Lujano, who has been able to present "D" with some better options.

"There's a ton of little dudes out there selling drugs and shooting guns," says Shell. "What's left when they have no leadership is that they're out here just going crazy." In a power vacuum ripe for a better kind of mentorship, Shell is ready to give back. "This is my hood. Anything that comes over that West Seattle Bridge, I've got a say so in what goes on," he says, with the authority of a man who has hard-earned life lessons to share. "You're gonna go get in this fight? Nah. Come kick it with me," he says.

"Back then, we had respect, we had money, we had it all," says Shell, the only one of the five core members of his old crew currently alive and free. He refused to have his little brother share his crew's fate. "I never gave him any other choice," says Shell. "He's never been in trouble, never went to jail, nothing. I said, 'Not you. We're gonna break the cycle.'"

Alive & Free is working to do just that, giving Seattle's at-risk youth the tools to succeed. "The four New Rules for Living can take a lifetime to understand and embrace," says Lisch of "graduating" from Alive & Free. You don't just pass a test and move on to easy street. "When I'm out there grocery shopping, I'm encountering folks who are part of our community that are a part of this issue. If we do it right, we're building people back into their rightful place in society. We graduate in terms of purpose in a community over time." ☪



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INTO THE DARK

Public access to central Oregon's stunning and expansive cave system is being reevaluated due to high levels of underground vandalism.

STORY **HANNAH HARRIS** PHOTO **ANDREW SENG** DESIGN **DANA RENGEL**



ABOVE: 10-year-old Nyhl Skeels enters the entrance to Bear Scat in Central Oregon.

“Who wants to do a squeeze?” Asks Chip Dixon, a guide at Wanderlust Tours in Bend, Oregon.

The term squeeze triggers visions of getting stuck below a tiny entrance while giant rocks drop from the ceiling, squishing my fingers and toes. I envision basalt walls crushing closer, pushing into my pupils to mask the world in complete darkness. Instead, we stop at a space about two feet wide and a foot tall: the entrance to the squeeze. Dixon leads the way, skillfully navigating through the wormhole. Dropping to the ground, I inch after him through the ash, elbow-by-elbow, legs squirming snake-like into the depths of the soil. Despite my attempt to think like a snake, my mind insists trying to convince my body the space is entirely too small to pass through until I start to wonder what might be on the other side. A sense of optimism begins to flow through my veins as if I

were absorbing adrenaline from the cave walls themselves. In that moment, my body springs to alertness and I twist to my side to inch over the small, jagged rocks stuck between me and the mystery that lies just a few feet from the end of my squeeze.

Dixon leads tours to Skeleton Cave, the second largest lava tube in Oregon. Ancient skeletons—ranging from hyena-like dogs to grizzlies-on-steroids—were discovered by Oregon journalist Phil Brogan in 1928. As a result of his findings, Brogan's career took off and eventually he wrote a book titled *East of the Cascades*. The book has since been the go-to guide for many avid cavers throughout Central Oregon.

Beyond preserving old bones, caves were likely the first air conditioners and refrigerators for humans; regardless of the temperature outside, caves tend to hover between 41 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit, making them a



ABOVE: 7-year-old Aspen Marchington climbs down the entrance of Bear Scat Cave in central Oregon. Although young in age, Aspen has already navigated through hundreds of caves.

natural place to cool down. And their large open spaces provide endless storage possibilities. Bend, Oregon is home to hundreds lava tubes, caves that can be miles-long and were formed by lava that had once flowed through the region, that were formed after the Newberry volcano erupted thousands of years ago.

"How're you guys doing?" Dixon calls back.

The soles of Dixon's hiking boots are all that's visible of him. Looking to the left or right is out of the question, and the thought of craning my neck to call back is about as plausible as defying gravity. All I can do is force my focus on what may lie ahead. Rocks pierce like daggers into both of my knees, bringing unwanted flashbacks of James Franco as Aron Ralston having his arm crushed in 127 Hours. Words of encouragement echo back that the end of the squeeze is near.

My eyes dart to the floor, which is covered in volcanic ash. In the dark, the cave floor could easily be mistaken for a sandy beach. Dixon refers to the icicle-like formations that protrude so prominently from the walls and ceiling as "lavacicles." Although the cave is composed of rock, parts of the walls are scarlet due to natural rusting and mineral deposits. Droplets of water hug the cave's ceiling from the previous week of heavy rainfall.

"It's almost like the rocks sweat," Dixon explains.

An earthy aroma whirls into each nostril, clearing my mind. Caves are places where darkness swallows any sense of existence. When the headlamps turn off, eyes widen and mouths shut. Being immersed in complete darkness is like being in a dream, unable to control what happens next within the confines of my own mind. It's like being asleep with both eyes open but instead of feeling trapped under the warm weight of the down comforter, my mind feels free as I inhale the untainted subterranean breeze.

"I think that detachment from your senses can be very healthy for the mind—it's kind of like meditating," Dixon says. "To be able to separate

yourself from most forms of stimuli is a very special thing."

Not everyone understands this rarity. In the past few years, it's become common for people to use caves as a place to party. Dixon often finds anything from broken bottles to sunflower seeds littering the cave floor. As a company, Wanderlust Tours participates in locally organized cave cleanups. Despite these active efforts towards reformation, current cavers still suffer the consequences of other's irresponsibility by having limited access to the caves. Dixon says it's likely that the US Forest Service will keep the caves closed until vandalism dies down completely.

"Unfortunately, for the Forest Service to gain trust in the public, the public needs to start respecting the open-access caves," Dixon says.

Oregon High Desert Grotto (OHDG), a local caving club in Central Oregon, encourages preserving caves by educating members on cave conservation. And what better way to do so than visiting multiple caves and hunting for new ones? One of OHDG's goals is to discover new caves to enjoy for cavers all over

the planet. Matt Skeels, chairman of OHDG, has discovered over 100 new caves by utilizing aerial photography and topographic maps. Skeels explains that the maps and photography usually reveal features that resemble a collapse. On topographical lines, he looks for a bulge or vent where lava may have been coming out.

"[How we find new caves] is a secret weapon, so to speak," Skeels says. "We don't talk about it much because it conflicts with our beliefs of caving. We enjoy caves and want to protect and conserve them. We're secretive about nice caves because of vandalism."

About two years ago, Skeels recalls OHDG members producing a video to raise awareness of mistreatment of caves. With rocks splattered with neon spray paint, needles, broken bottles, and scattered garbage littering the cave floor, Hidden Forest Cave was so badly damaged that members of OHDG took matters into their own hands. These visual images of defaced caves moved the issue out from underground and into the public eye. OHDG also created

"I THINK THAT DETACHMENT FROM YOUR SENSES CAN BE VERY HEALTHY FOR THE MIND...TO BE ABLE TO SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM MOST FORMS OF STIMULI IS A VERY SPECIAL THING."





LEFT: Matt Skeels peers down a cave tube at Bear Scat Cave. Matt is one of Oregon High Desert Grotto's group coordinators and routinely does topographical research in the area. ABOVE: Oregon High Desert Grotto member Jeff Taylor emerges from a tight cave tube at Bear Scat Cave.

a website where people could donate funds to restore the cave, which made the public feel more obligated to help. Finally, OHDG encouraged anyone who had information about cave vandalism to contact the US Forest Service. Eventually, vandals were caught and brought to justice. But it wouldn't have been possible without OHDG and their dedication to protecting caves.

Pushing past ponderosa pines and making small talk on the trek to Bear Scat Cave, Skeels' most recent discovery, a slight excitement stirs the late morning's dry air. The possibility of making it past another tight squeeze gives me incentive to keep up with the rest of the OHDG members, who also seem excited judging by their swift stride. Skeels is leading the way, holding a handheld GPS device in the air with such confidence, it looked as if he'd come out of the womb with it (his buddies often refer to him as a bloodhound). Within a few minutes, boulders bordering a hole in the ground come into clear view and members drop their backpacks to the ground and begin to gear up.

It's impossible for anyone to look good in a helmet or feel comfortable in kneepads aboveground, so once everyone is on their hands and knees on the floor of rugged basalt, everyone is an equal, at the mercy of the dark. The cave's entrance requires regressing to an awkward, primordial crawl, but with the amount of fellow cavers on this particular day's excursion, we must pay special attention to maintaining a safe distance between us. No one wants to know the smell of the bottom of a boot.

With each inch forward, kneepads scrape fragments of rock off the ground, making it sound as though the plastic is cracking in all directions, awakening fears of my kneepads tearing apart to expose a bloody bare knee. Luckily, after about 300 feet of rocky, paranoia-filled crawling, a predominantly sandy area appears and Skeels asks if anyone wants to try the squeeze. It's a little over a foot. Two other cavers inch forward to volunteer.

"WE ENJOY CAVES AND WANT TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE THEM. WE'RE SECRETIVE ABOUT NICE CAVES BECAUSE OF VANDALISM."

"You guys are going to want to go head-first through the first part," Skeels says. "And then to the left you're going to want to go foot-first, since you'll be going down."

Like a gopher traveling through underground tunnels or a newly-hatched turtle trying to find its way past the shore to the sea, my elbows wriggle through the sand while my knees fight to propel me farther, since the ashy ground discourages grip. Although my limbs are limited in their extension, an earthy smell soaks into my clothes and I feel as though I'm back to my roots. Being submerged underground, unable to fully extend my limbs, gives me a whole new perspective on how miniscule I really am.

The smallest squeeze Skeels has ever accomplished was a mere seven inches. Almost as soon as he got in, he was stuck up to his chest. He took off his jacket to give himself that extra half inch of clearance and, as he got a little further in, he noticed the squeeze gradually opened up. Skeels was spurred to continue through the tight squeeze by the thought that he'd be one of the few people to make it back that far. Exhaling the air out of his lungs to give him extra room, he pushed past the constriction point. As he inhaled, however, his body expanded sideways because of how tight the squeeze was. He moved forward but got stuck again on his hips. The only way Skeels would make it through was to pull his pants down to his knees. Without the fabric on his lower body, Skeels was able to wriggle through to the other side, a walking passage of about 400 feet.

"It isn't so much fitting through a tight passage that's rewarding," Neil Marchington, a fellow OHDG member, says. "It's the sense of finding what's beyond." ☐

Paper Lanterns & Cuffs of White

Student Mickey Scott pushes past language barriers to discover a wealth of love and compassion held by the people of Thailand.



ABOVE: Located in a temple outside of Chiang Mai, the Buddha protects the town's residents.

My host father, P'Khom (pronounced: pah kh-home), knotted a white thread around my wrist while reciting a Buddhist prayer. Cradling my alabaster hands in his caramel palms, he repeated his blessing in English:

"May you have good luck... Be safe... We wish you happiness of the world..."

The light of the village's Buddhist temple was blurred by the humidity of the night. Heavy air licked the faces of visitors unaccustomed to Thailand's unrelenting wet heat. Broken English laced with the northern Thai dialect of Chiang Mai, Thailand echoed through the already crowded temple, where 34 students and 12 host families sat facing one another. We had gathered here for our final night together, having spent the last four days in constant company; trekking the surrounding hills, walking the length of the Sticky Waterfalls, exploring a temple that was perched on top of a hill, and working alongside one another to construct a small dam.

Much like the twine around my wrist, my stomach knotted with thoughts of my family back in the United States as I looked at the faces of my host family. This moment was so personal to me, and I was sharing it with people I had only known for less than one week. I bit my lip and swallowed my homesickness, but a few tears escaped the corners of my eyes. I had spent only four days in this village, and felt overwhelmed by the hospitality shown to me.

Over those four unforgettable days, my host family had given me a blessing that reached far beyond the temple walls. They gave me a space at their table, refuge under their roof, and the opportunity to help their village by building a much-needed dam. I didn't speak any Thai at the time, but words were not important: This family, who knew me by nothing more than my first name, accepted me into their home as if I were a long-lost daughter. This was the final day of our homestay in the foothills of Chiang Mai before the academic portion of my Oregon University System International Program began.

PHOTO MICKEY SCOTT DESIGN JILL SOCKOLOV

Kingdom of a Million Rice Fields

I'd always planned on studying abroad during my junior year of college—traveling outside my comfort zone, and even my time zone, promised to be an educational experience in itself. After researching multiple programs, I chose a corner of the world devoid of English speakers. For five months, I lived abroad in northern Thailand, also known as the “kingdom of a million rice fields”, intermingling with other students from the United States, Japan, Australia, and Gambia. I attended Payap University, located just outside Chiang Mai’s crowded city streets, and studied in the university’s international college. After three days spent wandering around campus, our program leaders held an orientation to brief us on our Thai home-stay trip. The meeting also doubled as a crash course in Thai, because we were venturing into the hills of Chiang Mai to meet our Thai-speaking host families the very next day. Plans for our excursion were vague. We clamored for concrete details, asking:

“Where are we going?”

“To a village.”

“For how long?”

“Four days.”

“Will our families speak English?”

“No.”

Once I began packing, my mind was consumed by how little I actually knew about my upcoming journey into the depths of Thailand. I would pack one thing one minute, then unpack it the next. In the end, I spent most of the night locked in a staring contest with my backpack, questioning my choices and feeling utterly unprepared.

A New Home

The hog truck hugged each bend of the two-lane road that unfurled ahead of us, climbing each incline like a charging bull. Our momentum as we drove towards the village caused foliage to blur into splashes of green as our truck raced by jungle, small roadside towns, and rice paddies. We sat shoulder to shoulder in the back of the canopied truck on three rows of unsecured benches. The close-packed bodies felt strangely intimate, considering that I couldn’t even remember the name of the person bumping shoulders with me.

“Mick-ee and Ayako, this is your father, P’Khom,” said P’Gai, one of our teachers, as he read our names off in pairs through his thick Thai accent. We stood awkwardly in a circle around the village’s dirt courtyard, waiting to meet our host.

“Hi, I’m Mickey,” I said with a nervous smile as I took my place next to Ayako, a graduate



ABOVE: Oil candles at Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep. Each visitor pours oil into the candle associated with the Buddha of their birth month to show devotion to their spiritual practice.

student from Osaka, Japan. We’d arrived in the afternoon and had gathered a few meters away from the village’s Buddhist temple, where monks clad in orange and burgundy were hard at work restoring the temple’s aging exterior. Farther up the road, the terrain opened up into rice paddy fields that swallowed the plains, lapping at the feet of Chiang Mai’s foothills.

“Me-key? Hello, I am Aya.” Ayako’s smile was inviting, although her Japanese accent stuck to words in ways I wasn’t used to. P’Gai ushered us over to greet our host father, who waited quietly in front of his truck. Aya and I offered our new host father a wai, a traditional Thai greeting, placing our hands in prayer position and bowing our heads slightly to show our respect for P’Khom. After we’d performed the formalities, P’Khom took us to our new home where we were introduced to our host mother, M’Aew, and our nine-year-old brother, Rah-Shean. Before bed, Aya and I taught Rah-Shean how to play memory with the cards I had brought as a gift. At first, Aya and I had difficulty explaining the rules of the card game since our Thai was so limited. Lacking words, we arranged the cards and began to play. Soon enough, Rah-Shean picked up the rules and began matching cards that Aya and I had missed.

Paper Lanterns

On our second to last day, we travelled to a creek that needed to be dammed. We passed buckets of sand and rock hand-to-hand down the line from eight in the morning until four o’clock in the afternoon. Everyone ached. My arms shivered, drained of strength, but I radiated with the pride that came from knowing that my sore muscles had aided the villagers in irrigating their rice paddy fields.

I felt like I’d been hit by a train when I woke up on our last day; my shoulders ached from the previous day’s labor and random Thai phrases still bounced around in my head. But today, all of our efforts would be celebrated. Once

Aya and I emerged from our room, we saw our family busily preparing a money tree, which consisted of tissue paper ribbons wrapped around wooden dowels arranged in branches festooned with Thailand’s currency, the baht. Sitting at the family table, Aya, Rah-Shean, and I folded baht and secured them to sticks, resembling slim branches with protruding notes as leaves. Everyone gathered at our house before parading to the village temple. Then the rain began. It fell in unrelenting sheets, joining in on the chorus of drums and clash of bells that resounded from the parade of families walking to the Buddhist temple.

Before entering, everyone took off their shoes finding a spot on the floor and sitting mermaid style with the bottoms of our feet facing away from the statue of Buddha. The vivid colors of the temple walls reflected on our faces as a monk flicked holy water over the crowd. Once the monk had finished, our families directed us to sit in two rows in preparation for their own prayer. After P’Khom completed reciting prayers, he tied a piece of white string around our wrists to keep us safe and bring good luck. As I watched Aya receive her prayer, I felt overwhelmed by our host family’s desire to share their culture and beliefs with us along with their acceptance of our unawareness of their way of life. It was as if we were on the opposite side of a wide river—a river that my host family was willing to journey across in order to share their stories and their lessons.

Every family tied a white string onto each of our wrists, leaving us with cuffs of white thread on each arm. The final ritual was to let off floating paper lanterns. The rain had stopped and nightfall inked out any remnants of the sun’s rays. My host father, mother, brother, and sister all held the paper lantern as it began to lightly flutter, resisting our grasp. When it was ready, our mother, M’Aew, told us to let go of it and allow the lantern to rise into the night beyond us, releasing it as if it was the last connection to the lives we had before learning about life in Thailand. ☉ - MICKEY SCOTT

THE ADVENTURES OF SUMKINS AND RYNN



Krystal Stoner & Kathryn Griffin grow closer as friends, while bringing their fantasies to life on stage.

Curbide in the pick-up lane at Portland International Airport, a timid figure approached the idling car. Through the midday sun's gleam on the tail of a white Ford Taurus, the woman could just make out the vanity plate's letters—FFFFUN. Her apprehension began to fade.

Separated by 2,000 miles, but Internet pals for many months, Krystal Stoner and Kathryn Griffin, also known as Sumikins and Rynn, were finally face to face. "We squealed a little and ran up to each other and hugged," says Griffin.

The intrepid rendezvous was for Sakura-Con 2007, a Portland, Oregon gathering for costume play or cosplay, surrounding—in this case—animated entertainment media. Cosplayers compete through designing and modeling costumes, often acting out scenes from their character's related stories. Many cons, or conventions, focus on American comics, but Stoner and Griffin were joining hundreds of other enthusiasts paying tribute to their favorite characters from Japanese art—manga (comics and graphic novels), anime (television and film), and video games.

In late 2005, Stoner, living in Portland, began to notice that Griffin, from Chicago, was

commenting on a lot of her costume photos online. Soon, the two were privately messaging regularly and discovered a mutual interest in Fullmetal Alchemist, a serialized magazine-published manga that was later adapted into an anime television series. "You have to wait a month for the next chapter to come out and I just don't have the patience," Stoner says. "When it came out on DVD, I went home and watched all 51 episodes in one weekend." At SakuraCon, Stoner and Griffin

"Cosplayers complete through designing and modeling costumes, often acting out scenes from their character's related stories."

adapted the identities of the story's brothers, Edward and Alphonse Elric.

Griffin, a childhood thespian, recalls her birth as a cosplayer: "It started with Sailor Moon in second grade. At recess, four of my friends and I would be Sailor Scouts. We convinced the boys to be the bad guys." Griffin was Sailor Venus. "I was Sailor Mercury," says Kayla Lagmay, lifetime friend, college roommate, and once fellow scout, who shared a maiden voyage with Griffin. "When we first started cosplaying," Lagmay admits somewhat

shamefully, "we didn't actually make our own costumes. Her mom helped us." But Griffin, like Stoner, quickly learned to sew, blazing through online tutorials.

Choosing a costume is often more about aesthetic value and stageworthiness than personal attachment to the character, according to Stoner. Once the character is selected, it's time to shop. Eclectic lists of rare fabrics and embellishments make for all-day hunting. "I've always been an arts and crafts kind of kid. I've learned to manipulate different materials," says Stoner, who has learned how to use just about anything to create unique protrusions and props. She takes great pains to be accurate—dyeing, styling, and often grafting together multiple wigs to bring characters to life.

Stoner embraced fantasy as a child, playing favorite Disney characters on Halloween, and eventually realized that limiting herself to one day a year was absurd. When she started cosplaying, her best friend Kelsey Elsfield figured, "That's a bizarre hobby that she's gonna grow out of." Reflecting on it now, Elsfield says Stoner's interests "seem totally normal." The two spent ten years in dance classes together, where Stoner developed her edge as a performer. "Krystal's not really competitive," Elsfield says, "She's just in it for the love of the art." Stoner went on to study animation at DigiPen, a Redmond, Washington academy for electronic arts that shares campus space with Nintendo of America. Griffin attended DePaul University, focusing on public relations and advertising. Stoner, a tells-it-like-it-is gal who sees cosplay as an anytime Halloween and Griffin, a diplomat by nature who equates it more to prom, are truly magnetic halves to a whole.

Cosplay doesn't exactly have corporate sponsors, so these girls have day jobs, but still try to further their projects on the sly. Stoner, who works for a mortgage company, has been known to retreat to her car during her lunch breaks with a pile of hand sewing to knock out. Griffin, who works for a promotion agency, doesn't hold back. "One day I was sitting at my desk cutting up different colored folders for a Dragonball Z headpiece. I had taken apart these headphones and there were wires everywhere. I had some superglue lying out. The whole time I was thinking, 'It legitimately looks like I'm making a bomb here.'"

Their shared passion led Stoner and Griffin to become not only performance partners, but





PHOTO COURTESY OF LIONEL LUMI

LEFT: Stoner recently cleared out and reorganized her workspace, allowing space to neatly arrange her sewing station and fabric closet. As with her workspace, Stoner is detail-oriented when sewing her intricate costumes. ABOVE: Rynn (Griffin, Left) and Sumikins (Stoner, Right) dressed as Rue and Mytho from the anime series Princess Tutu. The pair made the costumes for the World Cosplay Summit 2010. RIGHT: Stoner in her Japanese priestess costume.

also members of the five-person collective called Ninja of the Night, which enters in group competitions at conventions. However, many entries are only for pairs, which meant Sumikins and Rynn had to step aside from the group temporarily to make a crucial bid at FanimeCon 2010 in San Jose, California that would earn them the chance to compete as the two-person US delegation for the World Cosplay Summit (WCS) in Japan.

Staying up all night in a San Jose hotel room, tensions grew. "Krystal broke down into tears trying to iron her costume, and I just walked right out of the room," says Griffin. Having only corresponded by video parcel as they worked to assemble their elegant, prismatic attire and brainstorm choreography, the two had expected a disjointed performance. In the end, they managed to compose themselves reaching a new pinnacle, and stealing the show with a performance from Fushigi Yugi, a classic manga. As the champions of Fanime-Con, they were bound for Japan, the origin of their greatest obsessions.

Arriving in Japan, with their luggage came a dark omen. Baggage handlers had crushed Stoner's carefully-packed raven head, her most essential prop. Griffin, who knows her partner to be a detail-oriented professional worrier, was shocked by Stoner's deadpan reaction: "I'm gonna get some tape and fix this."

Stoner came even further out of her shell when the mayor of the hosting city of Nagoya approached her with an off-color

joke. "Remember that time when you bombed the city of Nagoya?" asked the ordinarily formal Japanese businessman, momentarily bearing the likeness of a big-haired Dragonball Z character. Stoner's nervous "We're sorry?" was met with laughter. "Japan broke me in a way, but it was a good way," says Stoner, who finally passed the test as a performer who couldn't afford to lose her cool.

The two performed an ethereal courtship scene from Princess Tutu, Stoner's all time favorite anime. There was no win for them in Japan, at least not on paper. The judge's rankings were trumped by something far more important. "WCS is pretty known for either making or breaking relationships with your partner," says Griffin. They were just happy that after all they had been through, no love was lost. "Japan was the turning point for us," Stoner says, "That's when we really became not just cosplay buddies, but serious friends. I was like, 'We're in it for the long haul. Even if we stop cosplaying, we're always gonna be close.'" ♀

- ADRIAN BLACK



Fruit of the FOREST



ABOVE: A sharp pocketknife is essential for foraging; this one is being used to harvest small porcini mushrooms in the Siltcoos forest on the Oregon Coast.

The forest floor is the stage for one of Oregon's most abundant and sustainable natural resources.

On an early summer morning, the Siltcoos Lake Trail nestled inside western Oregon's Siuslaw National Forest is quiet, and the air is crisp. While visitors often come to Siuslaw to make the arduous trek up Mary's Peak, the highest peak on the Oregon Coast range, others come in search of smaller wonders. As the sun starts to filter in through the layers of leaves and branches of the forest's canopy, it highlights the variety of mushrooms that grow every year at this time.

From the coastal mountain range to the Blue Mountains in Eastern Oregon, wild mushrooms are bountiful in the Pacific Northwest. The mild climate, plentiful rain, and extensive forestlands make the region one of the most productive areas in the world, famed for growing edible wild mushrooms such as Wild Chanterelle, Lobster, Matsutake, and Morel in delicious abundance. Some other species, like Oregon White and Black Truffles, occur nowhere else on the planet.

Owen Rice, founder of MycoLogical Natural Products in Eugene, has been using his company as a vehicle to bring awareness to Oregon's wild foraged mushrooms since 1995. Rice

grew up in Michigan, where he picked Morel mushrooms each spring with his family. After moving to Eugene in 1989, his hobby sprouted into a passion. At the time, he was a student at the University of Oregon, but he spent his free time foraging for mushrooms and researching sustainable land management practices. "During that time, I started to read about programs in the Amazon forest where people were

"No one was talking about the value of the mushroom harvest, or asking why we weren't managing the forests for mushrooms and other understory products."

attempting to utilize the sustainable harvest of understory products to create incentive for forest conservation," says Rice. "At the same time, I was thinking about what was going on [in Oregon]. No one was talking about the value of the mushroom harvest, or asking why we weren't managing the forests for mushrooms and other understory products." After completing his degree, Rice decided to focus his attention on fungi full-time. "I just fell in love with mushrooms."

The United States has a long history of producing Portobello and Button mushrooms, but the wild foraged mushrooms that Rice's company sell aren't a common part of most Americans' diets. However, that is changing. "For generations," Rice explains, "Americans considered any other kind of mushroom to be a toadstool and they were afraid of it, but in the last fifteen years that's changed so much. There's a lot of interest in all different species of mushrooms and more farms are producing all kinds of exotic varieties." Farmers can grow Portobello and Button mushrooms on compost, and others, such as Shiitake and Oyster, grow on wood waste.

But even farmers have difficulty coaxing these wild species to flourish, because as foragers know, mushrooms are extremely sensitive to weather and need ideal conditions to grow. They need the perfect amount of rain and shade, and erratic deviations in the weather make it difficult to successfully cultivate them. Mark, who would like to keep his name confidential due to the competitive nature of his work, is a forager and mushroom enthusiast who has dedicated the past 15 years of his life to the practice. He says that "Mother Nature is in control" when it comes to harvesting mushrooms. Growers often rely on the processes of nature to produce quality mushrooms, which means they are

*Oregon's Most Popular
Mushrooms*

CHANTERELLES



LOBSTER



HEDGEHOG





LEFT: An inedible species of mushroom remains undisturbed in the Siltcoos forest. TOP MIDDLE: Colorful lobster mushrooms of this size are a rare, but rewarding, find in the Siltcoos area. BOTTOM MIDDLE: The underside of a porcini mushroom reveals unique textures and colors. TOP RIGHT: A few hours of foraging yields a number of porcini, hedgehog, and chanterelle mushrooms. BOTTOM RIGHT: Our anonymous source blending in with his surroundings.

sometimes unable to recreate certain conditions on their farms. One of these processes is the mushrooms' symbiotic relationship with the root system of trees, or mycorrhizas, where the fungus absorbs specific nutrients from the tree roots to produce a particular kind of harvest.

Wild mushrooms are hot commodities in Oregon for several reasons. The increasing popularity of the farm-to-table movement make fresh picked mushrooms a staple in restaurants throughout Oregon. Mycologists are attracted to the scientific intricacies of the diverse species of mushrooms, while spiritual seekers use hallucinogenic properties of some varieties of the fungi. With the demand for wild mushrooms being so high, foragers are often competing against less experienced mushroom hunters for the best harvest. Due to the lack of control over the growth process, foragers must be skilled in locating and picking the best mushrooms.

In the pursuit of wild mushrooms, foragers face many obstacles. According to Mark, one of the major issues of foraging is the U.S. Forest Service failing to enforce foraging laws. Foragers need a proper license to hunt for wild mushrooms, costing anywhere from about \$25 per month for a basic license to \$200 per month for a license to pick the Matsutake, a highly sought after species of fungi. Mark believes the general public can easily get away with taking an excessive amount of mushrooms with

little to no consequence. In turn, foragers like Mark go to extreme measures to collect the best mushrooms. Personally, Mark has his own unique tactics for fending off inexperienced mushroom hunters. He covers his tracks to the mushroom plots by walking backwards on the sand dunes, and keeps an eye out for "tattletales", a flower that indicates exactly where a mushroom will grow and what type it will be, and removes them. While some may find his methods bizarre, he takes pride in foraging correctly, abiding by the set laws because they are there for a reason: to preserve the wildlife and keep mushrooms growing.

Although the preservation of wild mushrooms is of the upmost importance to farmers and foragers, in the Pacific Northwest, forestlands are not managed with the goal of protecting mushrooms and other foraged harvests. Most products that grow on public lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service. Rice believes that the primary mission of the Forest Service is serving the timber industry and managing the forest for timber harvest. "They turn a blind eye to the value of Chanterelles and other mushrooms that are being produced on the land, because their main objective is the timber harvest," says Rice.

The timber industry clear-cuts and thins the forests of the Pacific Northwest, even though foraged harvests are a sustainable resource. "There have been numerous studies done by

people at Oregon State University and amateur mycology groups regarding the intensive harvest of wild mushrooms. To date, all of the studies have shown that the harvest is very sustainable," Rice explains. "There isn't really a negative impact on the resource. The mushroom is a fruit of an organism that is living in the ground, so it's like picking berries or fruit."

The mushroom harvest already creates income for local people, but Rice believes that foraged products could generate enough revenue to displace the timber industry. "It's sustainable, it happens every year, and it has a much less dramatic impact on the resources."

Rice believes that people need to be educated about the impact that land management has on the production of mushrooms. "I think if the public realized that these wonderful things are dependent on proper management of the forest, people would demand that management practices change. If you clear-cut a forest, the mushrooms don't come back for one hundred years. Even a lot of the thinning operations dramatically reduce the number of mushrooms." In spite of their size, these small wonders are a resource that the Pacific Northwest could not afford to lose, and may be an instrument in creating more sustainable land management practices in the future. ☐

- CHLOE LOVEALL & DEVIN GOSBERRY

YELLOW FEET



MATSUTAKE



PORCINI





Festive Frock

The sport of Irish dance embodies a glamorous culture that has evolved from modest beginnings.

The dancer is a soldier —her upper body is frozen with arms tightly bound to her sides, shoulders firmly rolled back, and a chin raised high with pride. Each dancer precisely echoes the rambunctious rhythm of Irish music illustrating the musical notes through their fast footwork. When it comes time to compete, the students at the Murray School of Irish Dance (MSID) in Portland, Oregon, will trade in their sweaty oversized t-shirts for frocks that are more festive than their moves.

"If you are competing for something, it has to be bigger each time, or you don't win," says the school's director, Geraldine Murray.

On a typical summer afternoon, Murray's students practice their choreography for two hours with the goal of achieving nothing less than perfection. The mirrored walls reflect the dancers' ballet, jazz, and tap-inspired moves all choreographed by Murray. She never imagined she would be able to dedicate her life to being a full-time dance instructor. Unlike her teachers when she was young, Murray has been able to make a living off of Irish dancing.

However, its entry into mainstream culture has made that possible. Performances like the

theatrical show Riverdance captivated a new generation of dancers. Since its debut in 1994, it has toured in over 45 countries across six continents. The resulting unprecedented interest in Irish dance inspired a wave of students never before exposed to the speedy sounds of hornpipe music. Over the last 20 years, Irish dance has transformed from an aging art form into a thriving, competitive sport. The dance form's increased popularity has simultaneously

"The dancers' traditional look has fallen to the seduction of glamour by rebelling into a more pageant-like look with bronze legs, colorful makeup, and massive wigs full of pin curls."

created more arduous expectations for dancers, who will do whatever it takes to earn a world championship title.

"When you have 100 kids in the competition, it's sort of like peacock syndrome," says Murray, "something has to stand out from the rest."

The dancers' traditional look has fallen to the seduction of glamour by rebelling into

a more pageant-like look with bronze legs, colorful makeup, and massive wigs full of pin curls. Some dancers even top off the ensemble with a tiara. Up until the 1990s, dancers would perform in simple black dresses, often referred to as their "Sunday clothing".

"My first dress was heavy and I hated it," says Mirabel Rice, a student at the Butler-Fearon-O'Connor School of Irish dance in California.

Today, dresses are much lighter and are crafted to help dancers execute their movements with greater ease. Despite the shorter hemline, modern dresses are still kept modest with signature long sleeves and high necklines. The dresses are also offered in a slew of emerald greens, fuchsia pinks, and other festive colors with unique detailed designs that pay homage to the turned sport's Irish roots.

Rice hopes the twinkling crystal bodice from her black and white color-blocked ruffled dress will help her stand out on the stage she'll share with her competitor, and ultimately advance her to the World Irish Dancing Championships (WIDC). The 21-year-old student has yet to place in the top qualifying percentage at a regional or national competition necessary to move forward for a shot at a world championship title. She hopes to have as much luck in the dress as the former owner, Simona

Mauriello a dancer featured in the Irish dance documentary Jig, who won fourth place at the 2010 WIDC.

"Some judges are really into appearances, like when they see a dancer they want to see a certain look," says Rice, who even with naturally dark skin, is still encouraged to tan her legs. Her sun-baked bronze skin helps to visibly define muscles and creates a strong stage presence.

"Some people are really into making their dress sparkly and perfect and I'm not into it that much," says Rice. "It's my mom who says 'this needs more crystals, this needs more sparkles, and you need to wear earrings,' and I'm more 'whatever' about it."

Unlike Rice, three-time WIDC competitor Morgan Wise is charmed by elaborate Celtic embroidery and gemstone embellishments. The 16-year-old student from the Comerford School of Irish Dance in Portland, Oregon, loves to design her own dresses, which are made to order in Ireland.

"It is very costly, unfortunately. It can be very cost-prohibitive for parents because you get into these costumes that can run for \$3,000," says Morgan's mother Sharon Wise. "The wig, makeup, travel, the coaching, and private coaching—it's really expensive."

Still, behind the façade of her dolled-up face is the spirit of a true competitor. On stage,

Morgan must exemplify confidence, perfect technique, and style to enchant each judge. She and other passionate competitors offer their bodies as living sacrifices in the name of this art-turned-sport by dancing on rolled ankles, shin splints, even broken bones.

"The bling and the pageantry that go along with competition can be just a little too over-the-top," says Murray. "But the dancing is gorgeous."

Like the Olympics, WIDC contestants represent the best from every region around the world. Contestants grouped by age and gender, perform two dances in competition with another dancer on stage. If the dancer receives a recall, then he or she advances and performs an individual dance.

"It's really hard mentally trying to prepare for such huge event, but over the years, you kind of learn what you need to do to in order to get yourself to the level you want to be," says Wise.

That mentality landed Morgan in 36th place at 2013 North American Irish Dance Championships (NAIDC) held in early July. Out of more than 150 contestants, Morgan placed sixth overall for the Western region. She and competitors from New Zealand, Mexico, and all over of the world gathered in Anaheim, California for the competition. Morgan will face

a more daunting set of about 15,000 to 20,000 competitors next year in London for the 2014 WIDC.

Murray hopes some of her students will be among those competitors who do not qualify through NAIDC, but have another shot to do so through the Western US Oireachtas competition that usually takes place in late November.

"You have to train like an Olympic athlete to do really well at something like the world championships," says Murray, who emboldens her students for excellence.

One-by-one, Murray's dancers perform their razor sharp steps under her even sharper scrutiny. Despite the booming sound from the music and steps, Murray's voice pierces through all the noise as she corrects their overall presence. Still, her students are not intimidated. Their feet scurry across the blue scuffed floor to a rhythmic pattern with sheer confidence, something that cannot be showcased by any costume – no matter how glitzy. ♀

- JENNIFER HERNANDEZ

Learn more about the
ART OF THE JIG

WWW.ETHOSMAGONLINE.COM



LEFT: Mirabel Rice practices her high kicks in her traditional Irish dance costume. Mirabel describes Irish dance competitions as cutthroat at high levels.

BELOW: Mirabel Rice practices her dance treble. A treble is a dance done in hard shoes, and is popular in the show dancing world rather than in competitions.





THE PULSE OF PORTLAND

Inspired by the rapid pace and unlimited potential of internet music culture, deejays at Club Chemtrail seek to create a medium for international club music in Portland's downtown.

It's 11 p.m. by the waterfront in downtown Portland, Oregon and the streets are empty. The only passing cars are taxis and police cruisers patrolling the city grid, peering at sleepers in the doorways of bakeries and salons, their windshields lit by a nearly full moon. It's mostly quiet, except for the east end of Ash Street, where the night air pulses with the sound of reggaeton, digitally-manufactured gunshots, and air horns coming out of the Rose Bar's blue-lit doorway. On the third Thursday of every month, the night of Club Chemtrail, nobody sleeps on the stoops of Ash Street.

It's mostly dark inside the bar, except for a silver rose projected on the wall. The music has mixed into what sounds like Ginuwine's sex jam, "Pony," layered onto a heavy ghetto-house beat, and the loose pack of dancers on the upper and lower floors respond by swaying side-to-side while trying to keep their drinks level. Standing around the sound system are the deejays who organize Chemtrail—SPF666, Commune, DJ NA of Nguzunguzu, and Massacooramaan—all dressed in dark colors and unfazed by the uproar of the Jamaican dancehall, London grime, Chicago house, Jersey club music, and early 2000s American R&B shaking the speakers.

"Sometimes everybody's dancing and sometimes nobody is dancing, but they absolutely love it," says DJ NA. Although the love he refers to is from the dancers, the statement seems to best apply to Massacooramaan himself, who is busy plugging his laptop into the sound system. Massacooramaan, a moniker adapted from an old Jamaican folktale about a hairy sea monster that plagues sailors, always deejays the last slot of the night, and it's becoming clear why.

Massacooramaan switches out all of the romantic R&B elements and familiar American rhythms for fast, bass-distorted re-appropriations of faraway dancehall, Caribbean soca, and Amsterdam's bubblin' house music. Those too weary or too drunk to stay on the dance floor stagger to the exits or slump along the bar, but the remaining dancers, shirts sagging from sweat and still in their early morning rave rhythm, begin to shoot amazed and baffled looks up at Massacooramaan, whose real name is Dave Quam. But he seems to have his head in a much different place, lost in thought as he looks down at his decks.

Quam's sound stems from basketball games he played in Chicago's Ukrainian Village. He

was attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago at the time, playing five-on-fives with some high school kids in the park. Whenever the ball went out of bounds or they lost track of the score, the kids would ditch the game and start dancing. Like breakdancing, it was a kinetic solo dance, but breakdancing seemed like slow motion compared to how they moved—tight and frantic while still maintaining a sort of cool swagger—with no boombox or beat. They told Quam it was called footwork.

Over the next few years, Quam became a fixture at footwork battles around Chicago's southern neighborhoods, gatherings where locals smoke and drink and watch their friends dance to an insanely fast version of ghetto house music characterized by a bare minimum of melody, ceaseless vocal samples, and intricate, disorienting layers of 808 hi-hats, snares, and rim shots. But it always bothered Quam that the only evidence of footwork on the Internet, and therefore to the world outside south Chicago, was in the few shaky, pixilated videos uploaded to anonymous YouTube accounts. So in 2007, Quam created a blog called "IT'S AFTER THE END OF THE WORLD," on which he documented several critical years of footwork

history, and in 2010, he wrote arguably the first in-depth analysis of Chicago's footwork scene for XLR8R Magazine.

Since then, footwork rhythms and sounds have become a key part of music scenes in Germany, New York, and the UK, and many of Quam's old friends from footwork battles have since released full-length albums.

In their 2012 review of Quam's record of his own productions, British music review and retail site Boomkat.com wrote, "As a blogger/journalist/DJ, Quam's coverage and knowledge of the Chicago scene has been invaluable in the virulent spread of footwork." Quam maintains that all credit goes to the dancers.

After a while, Quam began to branch out from footwork to begin covering movements in other under-publicized music scenes, digging deep into Google results pages to find obscure soca and Amsterdam's bubblin' house message boards, mass-translating the text, and streaming the sounds of scenes that often did not exist outside of small metropolitan areas around the world. He would then post the music to his blog, which began attracting increasingly heavy traffic from around the world. At the time, MySpace.com had evolved into a surreally connective environment for musicians.

While bouncing around the site one day, Quam discovered "voodoo bass" duo, DJ NA and Asma, known professionally as Nguzunguzu. They became good friends and introduced Quam to the rest of the small group of avant-garde producers to have released records on the Fade to Mind label. After Quam moved back from the "cutthroat" music environment of Chicago to his hometown of Portland last year, Fade to Mind released Quam's brilliant, skeletal Dead Long Time EP of Caribbean styles and footwork productions, littered with surprising sound effects and imprinted with the flare and sonic watermarks of countless modern musical styles.

Playing to an increasingly thinning and sweaty crowd, Quam's set has become lost in a thicket of massive sub-bass swells and breakbeats of late '90s UK Jungle music. One of the heaviest bobbing heads is that of Zak DesFleurs, or DJ SPF666. DesFleurs and Quam have been

friends ever since they started arguing at a Kingdom concert about who spun in French ghetto-tech crew Nightmare Juke Squad. To Stevens, Quam's "vast ethno-musicological knowledge" defines Quam's personality and work.

"HIS SETS ARE NOT ONLY A BREAKNECK HISTORY LESSON IN THE WORLDWIDE DANCE MUSIC OF THE LAST DECADE, BUT A REQUIEM FOR THE COUNTLESS, GEOGRAPHICALLY DISJOINTED MUSICAL STYLES AND MICRO-GENRES THAT HAVE BOTH RISEN BECAUSE OF—AND BEEN QUICKLY DROWNED BY—THE AVALANCHE OF ONLINE INFLUENCES."

"[Quam is] really driven—doesn't go out that often, works on tracks like mad," Stevens says. "You could nerd out and try to point at footwork, bouyon, or bubblin' influences, but it's less SoundCloud-era micro genre splicing—dude has a very particular voice."

And Quam's voice can be exhausting. Not only does his music sap dancers' strength and hearing with its fast tempo and high volume, it can be intellectually disorienting. His sets are not only a breakneck history lesson in the worldwide dance music of the last decade, but a requiem for the countless, geographically disjointed musical styles and micro-genres that have both risen because of—and been quickly drowned by—the avalanche of online musical

movements. A prime example of this is Quam's blog: Due to the shutdown of many file-sharing websites, every one of the hundreds of stunning digital glimpses that Quam posted and analyzed on it have disappeared. The artists and song titles that labeled these obscure files now draw blanks on any search engine. The music is

simply gone, and one of the only places in the world to find it is on the laptop of this Portland deejay named after a mythical Jamaican sea monster—

and of course, within the walls of Club Chemtrail.

Quam, DesFleurs, and the rest of the crew live and breathe for their night of the month at the club.

But with an awareness of the transient nature of the Internet, they are all considering life after Chemtrail, probably in a larger city with a deeper network of musicians. "PDX has its limits," Stevens says. "And Chemtrail is definitely just a moment in time."

Around 2 a.m., having closed his computer and drained his can of Pabst Blue Ribbon, Quam seems present for the first time all night. He watches proudly as pairs of club-goers get each other's numbers at the bar and exit woozily. "This is a big night—this is more people than have ever come out," Quam says, so quietly that he's barely audible over the fading synthesized horns that still echo around the room. ☐

- BEN STONE

LEFT: During his set, Quam is deeply lost in his thoughts as he stares at his decks. BELOW: People pack the small lower floor of Portland's Rose Bar for the monthly Club Chemtrail event and a special live-stream set by LENKEMZ (UK).



A Day to Fly

Kite fliers, young and old, kick off summer at the Lincoln City Summer Kite Festival.

A patch of sun splits through the clouds to illuminate a giant spinning tunnel of rainbow in the sky over Lincoln City, Oregon. It's not a bird. It's not a plane. It's a 30-foot cylindrical kite. Following the rainbow kite's lead, a succession of life-sized whales, a bright blue teddy bear, and a vivid clownfish float on high. Farther ahead flies an exotic jellyfish, a white seal, and several colorful triangles with long, dancing streamers. On the sand, older couples smile, leaning on each other's shoulders, and school children weave in and out of the crowds. The aromas of elephant ears and grilled hamburgers waft from the local food stalls. On this breezy June day, the Lincoln City Summer Kite Festival kicks off the beginning of summer at the Oregon Coast.

The festival celebrated its 29th year this summer, with visitors from all over the Pacific Northwest gathered around to enjoy performances by professional fliers. The two-day event typically draws around 10,000 spectators prevailing through rain or shine. The festival attracts visitors with its free entry and relaxed, fun environment, which welcomes both professional and leisure kite fliers.

For many, first dates take place at a restaurant or a movie theater. For Barry and Susan Tislow, it was on the beach sharing a kite. What started as a relaxing pastime 17 years ago for the married couple from Renton, Washington, has since become much more than a hobby. The couple originally took pride in flying up to 30 small kites at a time, but moved to flying large, inflatable kites about ten years ago.

"Since then, it's gone crazy. Now we don't even know how many kites we have," says Barry. "We quit counting years ago."

Some of the Tislow's kites are over 30 feet long. Their colossal size makes these the elephants of the kite world. The Tislow's began performing with them at the Lincoln City Summer Kite Festival about eight years ago.

"It's not unusual to spend \$1,000 or more on a kite. Six years ago, we bought a 14-foot trailer for our kite. Now, even that is getting cramped for space," says Barry.

The Tislow's lead a professional show kite crew named Team Suspended Animation. With kites ranging from frogs, to caterpillars, to giant rainbow rings, the team has more show kites than any other group in the US.

A kite festival is a perfect setting for anyone interested in trying their hand at flying kites and gives them the opportunity to learn from enthusiasts and experts who fly in from all over the world to meet and exchange stories.

The Lincoln City Summer Kite Festival typically features 20 to 30 professional fliers, some of them sponsored by the event, and a few competitive teams of five to six members.

"We have a whole new family because of the kites," says professional flier Connor Doran, who at age 20 is among the youngest in the sport. "There's a kite flying community all over the world. We're always meeting new people and supporting one another and new fliers."

Professional flier John Barresi agrees. "Kite flying is a worldwide culture. It's not defined by

"There's a kite flying community all over the world. We're all connected and all friends, no matter where we are. We're always meeting new people and supporting one another and new fliers."

country lines," says the leader of the kite flying team iQuad and Editor-in-Chief of KiteLife.com. "We go to festivals all over the world and there will be 50 nationalities represented there. We all have kites up and we share a bond."

Three fields span across the shore each year: one for the breathtaking inflatable show kites, one for kite demonstrations and stunts, and another for free-flying, where anyone from toddling young novices to aspiring retirees can fly their kites in the open sky.

"The vibe translates to all visitors," says Scott Humpert, the festival's public relations coordinator. "It caters to young and old; it's something new and exciting for young people, and for the older generation, it's reminiscent of the past."

Kite flying had a resurgence in popularity in the past 50 years with the invention of new and improved materials such as fiberglass. According to the American Kitefliers Association, the first kites originated in China over 2,000 years ago. Since then, kites have spread across the world, attracting enthusiasts like Barresi.

While Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody plays from the stands, the six fliers of iQuad stand side-by-side as their kites create a one-of-a-kind dance in the air. In a spectacular display that baffles the crowd, the kites perform a series of coordinated cartwheels, zigzags, and do-si-dos to cues in the music, executing their dramatic twists and turns to the song's

heightened tones, and finally gradual spins towards the ground as the music fades. The sight is all the more impressive when one considers the number of lines that would become hopelessly tangled if not for the pilots' skill.

Since iQuad first began in France in 2006, the team has performed in more than 130 events, with a typical season running February through October. Barresi met his wife and fellow iQuad teammate, Takako, nicknamed TK, at a kite festival in Japan.

"I see better people when they're flying. They're outside and they're interacting with something that's really positive," says Barresi, who regularly helps at workshops and instructional clinics.

These workshops allow many avid fliers, such as Connor Doran, to get their start in the sport.



ABOVE: A group of kite enthusiasts flies kites through the light winds on the Lincoln City shore. BELOW: The delta is designed to be an eye-catching kite, able to float at high angles through very light wind. These specifications make it a popular choice among kite enthusiasts

"For me, when I'm flying, I'm in the moment. I'm in the zone," says Doran, who discovered that kite flying was a great outlet for his epilepsy-induced anxiety. "It's me and the kite, and I'm not thinking about anything else. It's so beautiful and relaxing, and it takes away my stress."

Doran became a celebrity in the kite-flying world as a top 12 finalist on season five of America's Got Talent for performing indoor kite flying on stage. He currently attends South Puget Sound Community College and uses his fame to support the Epilepsy Foundation as an advocate, giving talks, kite performances, and workshops with the goal of raising awareness about epilepsy. He flies under the slogan "Dare to Dream," to inspire others to not let a disability or any obstacle hold them back from pursuing their aspirations.

"It's one of those rare activities that literally anybody can do," says Barresi. "There are kites you can fly from a wheelchair."

Kite flying is a unique hobby that draws in so many because it is just that—simple, and easily accessible to people of all backgrounds.

Amy Doran, Connor's mother, appreciates the simple beauty of kite flying. "Anyone can learn to fly a kite... And don't worry about crashing. We crash all the time," says Amy, laughing. "Life isn't about how many times you fall, but how many times you get back up."

Back on the beach, the sun is setting. Some fliers start to reel in their kites as others continue to fly strong in the dwindling gusts of wind. The enormous animals are pulled to the ground, having had their chance to fly for the day, the colorful nylon polyester spills over the sand like deflated hot air balloons. Although the vendors pack up their stalls after most fliers and visitors hit the road or retire to a hotel for the night, there remains at least two or three small kites dancing in the sky, refusing to go home. ♀

- HEATHER BALDOCK



DRUMMING UP THE SUN

Waking up alone in the desolate New Mexican desert, 6-year-old Keegan must brave the demons of the cold before drumming up the rising sun.

The cold was like an animal; it snapped at my fingers and gnawed on my toes, dragging me into consciousness. I curled up tighter beneath my blanket, my shield against the creature, but it was no use. The freezing nighttime air crept in anyway, expertly winding chilly tendrils past my childish defenses. It was a monster of the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, and I was at its mercy.

Worse was the realization, as I slowly peeked out from under my blanket, that I was completely alone. My mom, who had been lying next to me when we settled down for the night in a friend's workshop in the village of Luna, New Mexico, was nowhere to be seen. I was an utterly afraid, shivering six-year-old, surrounded by a monstrous darkness.

That is, until I heard the sound of chanting and singing drifting in the air, coming to me from somewhere across the darkness. As I listened, I started to calm down. I remembered these melodies. They were stories, stories I had heard from people who were old and wise, stories of protective medicine and powerful rituals. My elders told me these stories were special—if recited properly, they could convince the spirits to intervene on my behalf, protecting me from the frosty demons that the wintry New Mexican high desert had sent to hunt me.

Armed with this understanding, I prepared to face the monster. I filled my head with memories of the stories as they had been told to me in the past, conjuring up images of dancers moving in time with the beating of drums in the pow-wows of the White Mountain Apache Reservation where I was raised. I remembered storytellers weaving tales of the great trickster, Coyote, outsmarting evil spirits, and brave, curious Raven crafting talismans to protect his loved ones. After a few long moments of reciting to myself, turning the familiar legends over and over in my mind like my own mental talisman, I stood up and let the blanket fall to the floor.

I started walking toward the sound. When I returned to this place eight years later, I would discover that the distance I walked was no more than twenty feet, but on that night it felt like miles as I braved the lonely leagues of cold darkness toward the sounds of safety. Halfway there, I began to see people-like silhouettes sitting in a circle around a shimmer of

light. They looked like spirits to me. As I drew closer, I could see by the glimmering of the candles that filled the center of the circle that they really were people: the family we were staying with, some of the wise storytellers whose tales had guided me here, and, smiling up at me, my mother.

Others smiled at me as well, beckoning me into the circle, but they didn't stop their chanting. I sat down at my mother's feet and surveyed the faces surrounding me. To my childish eyes, they were elders of incalculable years, their faces etched with lines of laughter and sorrow, forged in the dry air of their arid home. Each carried stories of the desert, tales and songs they had shared with me so often that I was certain the sacred stories were beginning to engrave themselves into my very bones, as I was sure had already happened to these wise ones.

Some of them had told me stories of the Great Spirit, mother of all things, the spider web of life that connected all the world together. In these stories, the other people, the animal people—the Spider people, the Raven people, the Snake people, the Bear people—showed the human people how to love and live and learn. They were the stories of the Hopi, and the Navajo, the Apache, and the peoples of the desert that stretched out around me in every direction. Other elders told me stories of another desert in a faraway place, and of a powerful spirit that had sent his only son to Earth to sacrifice himself for the sake of all humankind—but only after he had traveled the land and taught others how to forgive, cherish and care for one another.

In my later life, I would learn that it was unusual for people of such different faiths to come together in worship. But at the time, without knowing anything of the divisions of pantheons and the age-old conflicts of religions, seeing all these faces gathered around the circle made perfect sense to me. They were all people of the desert, and they had a monster to face. It was then

that I began to realize the purpose of this ritual.

As the first hints of dawn began to appear in the sky, one of the elders, a wise woman, pulled out a hand drum. It was beautiful—handcrafted, with dried animal skin pulled taut over a wooden frame smelling of juniper berries. All around the rim of the drum were pictures of the animal people, Coyote and Raven and Bear and all the others.

Talismans like this had power; I felt a connection with the things they represented. The spirits of the animal people were with us too, I thought. I was happy.

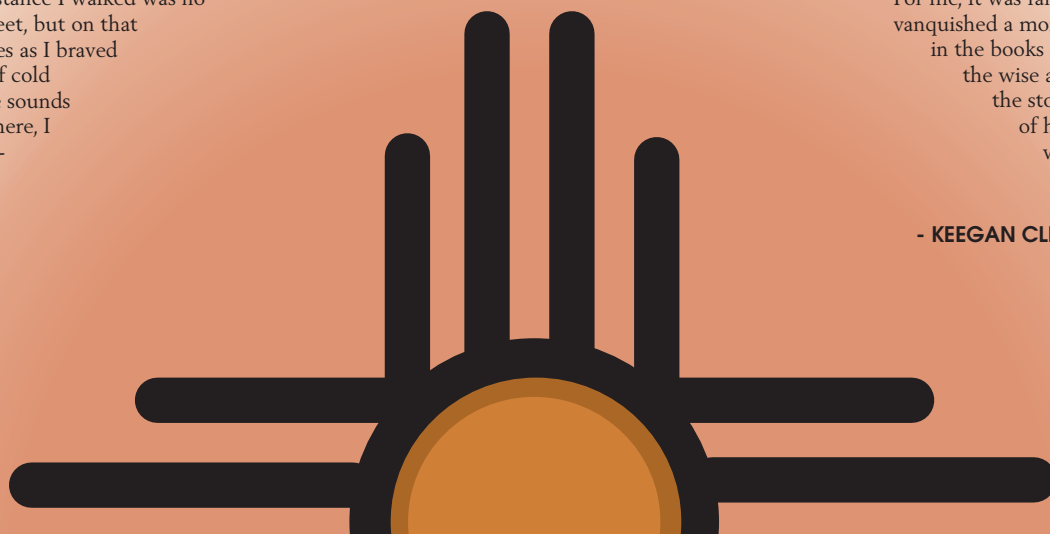
The wise woman began to beat the drum in time with the chanting, the steady rhythm sounding almost like a heartbeat. As she struck the drum, the sky outside began to brighten, oranges and reds and pinks cresting at the edge of the desert vista. But in the space of a few minutes she stopped and said to me, "I'm too old and tired to do this. Will you take this drum and finish bringing the sun back to the world?"

I gave a serious nod and took the drum from her. At first I was uncertain, but smiling faces encircled and encouraged me. After a few stuttering moments, I took the beat up from where she had left off, and the singing continued. As I beat the drum, the sun began to creep up over the horizon ever so slowly, and with every new beat I thought I could see another ray of light appear. The monster, still lurking at the edge of the circle, retreated with the shrinking shadows.

An hour later, it was done. The sun was in the sky, and when my mom squeezed my shoulder, I stopped drumming. Around me people smiled and stood to stretch, and conversations began to spring up about breakfast. Though my understanding of their multi-faith dynamic was limited, I could tell that they had enjoyed seeing each other again, and they said it felt good to know the cold of the longest night was finally behind them. It was a symbolic moment for them, a moment of friendship and camaraderie, an ending to the isolation of winter.

For me, it was far more than that. I had vanquished a monster, like King Arthur in the books I loved to read, or like the wise and wily Coyote in the stories I never got tired of hearing. The demon was gone, and I had drummed up the sun.

- KEEGAN CLEMENTS-HOUSER





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