

ETHOS

Fall 2009 Volume 2 Issue 1

The Celtic Tiger's Demise
Searching for Fire
Drink of the Gods
Somali Pirates

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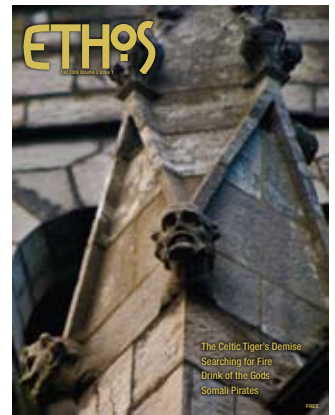
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Late this past spring, as we finished the previous issue of *Ethos* (Summer 2009), I told myself that three terms as this magazine's editor in chief is enough for me. My body was exhausted, my mind stressed out, I couldn't go on much longer.

Now that summer has passed and the Fall 2009 issue is here, part of me regrets my decision to end my tenure as *Ethos'* top editor. Of course I'm going to enjoy more free time, a lessened degree of responsibility to the magazine, the staff no longer looking to me for supreme direction (well, maybe not "supreme").

So why am I regretful? If you haven't noticed, *Ethos* has been getting better and better ever since we started calling ourselves *Ethos*. We've had more people on staff this summer than any summer before. We've completely reorganized our PR and advertising teams. We've created a brand new position for Multimedia Director. We've a monthly column on our website featuring video interviews with international students. Even the paper we print on has changed—again!

You see, *Ethos* is an opportunity for us to experiment with new ideas we (probably) wouldn't be able to do elsewhere. With this issue, you'll notice we've added a beautiful gloss to our magazine. All the photos are now extra shiny! But perhaps the spirit of our experimentation is best on this page, below, where I've decided (jokingly, at first) to add gloss to my signature. Elaborate, true, but we're experimenting!

That's just one of the many things that makes this publication so great: we decide for ourselves. We don't have an academic adviser. The editor in chief is the adviser. So yes, I am exhausted, tired, and stressed from all this work. But in the end, after being a part of the spectacular progress *Ethos* has made over the last year, I could definitely continue on. That said, I'll still be on staff until I graduate, just not as the editor in chief. Now is the time I pass my duties to the magazine's next leader, Art Director Kevin Bronk. I'm confident that he'll continue to help make *Ethos* an even better publication this coming year!



PHOTO BY MELANIE KEPPLER

Roger Bong

Roger Bong
Editor in Chief

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Blue Eyes, Native Blood

Stephanie Wood proves that Native Americans come in all colors, shapes and, sizes

STORY & PHOTO STEPHANIE REYES



Wood is a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, a federally recognized Native American tribe.

Stephanie Wood, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, comes from a diverse heritage, giving her a unique perspective on how Native Americans are perceived.

Sitting in a shaded spot outside of the UO's Museum of Natural and Cultural History, senior Stephanie Wood breathes in and sighs. "It's good to be home!" she says. Wood recently returned from an internship at the Smithsonian Institute of the national museum of the American Indian. Wood is a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, which includes twenty-seven bands of federally recognized Native American tribes. But as the face of Grand Ronde youth, Wood does not "look the part."

Blue-eyed and fair-haired, Wood is a testament against stereotypes. And while her heritage may be hard to guess at first glance, as soon as she begins talking about her involvement in the Native American community, it becomes apparent.

Wood has recently completed a degree in cultural anthropology with an emphasis on Northwest Native American Cultures. As an undergraduate student, she worked as a tour guide at the Museum of Natural and Cultural History before helping catalogue

over 350 baskets from the Northwest with the Western Oregon Basket Project.

Being part white and part Native American, Wood has found that her mixed ethnicity has brought challenges. She has experienced instances of stereotyping by both white and native people.

But she shrugs off these problems as misconceptions on how Native Americans are perceived.

Upon graduation this past summer, she departed for another internship in Pendleton, Oregon, at the Tamástslikt Cultural Institution on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

She hopes that upon completion of her second internship that she will go on to work in the cultural department for Grand Ronde, or possibly in a museum.

As for Stephanie Wood, her multicultural background has helped her gain an appreciation for traditions and values, and an ability to educate others through her experiences.

When did you realize that you were Native American?

I was really young. I grew up on a farm in Amity, Oregon, and every weekend we would travel 25 minutes to the Grand Ronde reservation. We would visit Grandma and I would hang out with my friends. It was instilled from the time I was born, but we didn't really talk about it.

Why didn't you talk about it?

I went to a very small, white school and my mom told me not to discuss it. We never learned about Native Americans, which is odd since Grand Ronde is one of the biggest tribes in Oregon and is located next to Amity.

Why do you think she gave you those instructions?

My two brothers, another student, the school mascot, and I were the only Native Americans there. There was only a few other students who were ethnically diverse. Everyone else was ... white.

How did you learn about your culture then?

My Grandma and other elders in the family would tell me stories to fill in the gap the public system had created. We learned about the Oregon Trail, and Christopher Columbus, but nothing on Native people.

Did your peers know you were Native, or did they think you were white?

I think a lot of people knew I was Native, but there was a time when I was in third or fourth grade and a teacher had noticed I marked the 'Native American' box on a state assessment and told me that I was not Native American, and that I should re-mark it as 'white'.

Have you felt outcasted by members of the Grand Ronde community?

Yes. A main reason is because I never really lived in Grand Ronde. People who live there are more accepted than those who live off the reservation. People who live off the reservation are different.

Many people who live on the reservations haven't had as many opportunities as I have had—my education, my internships so I am viewed slightly different because my life branched out. I didn't get stuck there like many other people.

Was there a time when you wished you were darker?

When I was born I had blonde hair and blue eyes. My older brother Chris looked like the stereotypical Native American. He had darker skin and hair while my little brother looks like me.

Until high school, I wished I was darker until I realized Native Americans come in all different shapes, colors, and sizes.

Do you feel defined by the color of your skin?

Yes. When I first arrived at the University of Oregon, I remember watching the flood of students between classes. There were more students than I had ever seen in my life. I chose U of O because of the Chinuk Wawa language program. The language was originally used by the tribe and developed into a trade language, so that people could communicate when trading with other natives.

When I went to the Native American Student Union and the members rejected me, I thought twice about my college decision. They looked at me like I was some white girl who was bothering them and so I was ignored. I called my mom crying and told her that I didn't belong at the U of O.

We are still here. We do not appear as we do in mass media.

How did you work all of that out?

I just kept to myself and didn't get involved for more than two years. I started coming to culture night at the Long House and hung out with individuals in the group. Some of the people who originally rejected me either got to know me or graduated and were no longer involved.

I am proud that I have never had to convince others I was native and I knew eventually everything would fall into place.

Have your siblings had any effect on your identity?

My brothers and I never really talked about it. In my family children were seen and not heard. When my older brother Christopher died something inside me awoke.

How did Christopher's death affect you and your family?

He passed away when he was 23 years old. I was 13. David was nine. His death is still hard on our family.

He had Wilson's disease, which means he had too much copper in his blood. It is a very rare disease and doctors thought it was something else.

I now participate in annual genetic testing. His death has focused that we Natives are still here. It's made me want to focus my energy and work harder rather than living the way I had previously. My life began to have a purpose.

How did your life change?

I became more on my own. My parent's changed their child-rearing techniques and weren't as involved as they had been. My family fell apart. I felt as though I had to take on the part as a role model for

my younger brother, and I tried harder in school. I wanted to show others that I wasn't weak. After Chris' death, I grew up fast.

Where does your family come from?

We can trace my mother's lineage back to Grand Ronde's treaty signers, and my dad is Scottish/Irish/French. My dad comes from a long line of farmers and his ancestors traveled to Oregon on the Oregon Trail.

So I am half Native American and half white. A lot of the white side came through.

I have cousins of the same generation who are really dark, and other cousins who are redheads! They are so light that they need SPF 100! Yet they are native too. That cousin's mother has really dark eyes and long black hair. Genetics are a funny thing.

Why were you raised off the reservation?

My parents wanted to give me a different life than one I would have had on the reservation. I would have

loved to have been more involved in the youth programs that are available, but I understand why they chose not to. They didn't want us to become wrapped up in problems that ail the native community like alcoholism and drug use.

I really got to live a better life, well, maybe not better, but different in a good way.

What does the future of Grand Ronde look like?

In Grand Ronde, blood quantum (a predetermined amount of lineage to enroll in a tribe) is a big ordeal. Today many natives marry non-natives.

There are benefits being enrolled in a tribe and if you can prove your lineage, you should. There are a lot of people of mixed decent in Grand Ronde and so there is a wide range of appearances. I would be happy marrying a non-native person, but I would hope they would support my culture and me.

How do you help expand Grand Ronde culture outside of the tribe?

By talking with as many community members and non-GR tribal members and educating them on our culture. By working at Native museums I can help educate others about our heritage and culture.

What do you hope to accomplish through your involvement with the Native community?

I hope to keep the culture alive. We are still here. We do not appear as we do in mass media.

Native Americans are still living a contemporary life, just like many other people. ♀

Have Sled, Will Travel



No car? The old tradition of dogsledding remains the primary mode of transportation across the harsh, icy terrain

For the largest island nation in the world, it is also the least densely populated. Fifty-two thousand of its fifty-seven thousand inhabitants use the Internet, yet hardly any of them own cars. Welcome to Greenland, a country of contradictions.

There's a reason for this Arctic country's strange statistics: more than 80 percent of its surface is covered in ice, rendering it uninhabitable. Cars are available for those who live on the other 20 percent of its surface, but they won't get you far; there are virtually no roads between Greenland's towns because most of them are separated by wide fjords. Walking or biking is also out of the question because towns are too far from one another and heavy snow is on the ground most of the year.

So, how *do* the locals get around? For most of the year, dogsleds are the most reasonable, efficient, and environmentally conscious mode of transportation.

Dogsledding is an old tradition started by the Inuit, a community of indigenous

"There are virtually no roads between Greenland's towns because most of them are separated by wide fjords."

Arctic people who moved from Alaska to the coastal regions of Canada before reaching Greenland. For more than thousands of years, dogsledding has been the primary mode of land transportation for these Northern dwellers.

Though most Greenland natives learn the art of dogsledding at an early age, they're not allowed to take the reins by themselves without a dogsled license. Anyone who wants a license, including visitors, must travel to Tasiilaq, the biggest town on Greenland's east coast. Newcomers undergo a two-day training session before the test in which they learn the importance of multitasking. Dogsledders must keep the sled gliding in the right direction while paying attention to all the dogs on the reins.

The Greenland sled dog, a direct descendant of the wolf, is the only breed allowed to steer sleds on the country's icy terrain. Their proud, independent spirit and their acclimation to Arctic weather make them ideal for the job. And since no other breed can take the sled dog's place, none of



Greenland locals travel by dogsled across the icy terrain between towns.

these four-legged wonders have been cross-bred for thousands of years.

Sadly, recent murmurs of rising temperatures and melting ice due to global warming may put this popular Greenlandic sport and traditional transportation in peril. While tourists might revel at the sight of

huge melting ice caps from the decks of cruise ships, for locals, the rapidly altering environment serves as a reminder that their way of life may too, change. Someday, Greenlandic natives must break ties with their ancient traditions if they want to stay in their Northern homeland. —*Seiga Ohtani*

Catch of the Day

A modern-day spin on the hunting and gathering method that puts Greenlandic cuisine on the map

Bang! A bullet cuts through the air and sends one caribou falling lifelessly to the ground. Is it a life wasted? Not to Greenlanders.

In the U.S., hunting is generally considered a sport or a hobby. When Americans need to eat, they drive to the nearest Safeway or local outdoor market. But in towns as remote as those in Greenland, centuries-old methods of acquiring food are still in place—and ingredients in local meals have not changed much.

For thousand of years, the Inuit people of Greenland relied on their hunting and fishing skills to survive. Dependent on their environment, their diet consisted of fish, birds, and local game such as reindeer, ptarmigan, musk oxen, and snow hare. They also feasted on marine mammals such as whales and seals. And while the rest of the world's food culture lines have been blurred due to booming trade markets, in Greenland, the same traditional staples are still the principal ingredients in almost every meal.

The idea of hunting and fishing for

every meal may seem daunting to Safeway shoppers, but in Greenland, it's a part of daily life—and it pays off. The food is always local, fresh, and unprocessed, making it one of the healthiest diets in the world. The oils from the fish they eat contain essential Omega-3 fatty acids, which have been proven to prevent heart disease, reduce risk of breast cancer, and even prevent mental conditions such as schizophrenia. As a result, the percentage of Greenland residents who have fallen victim to blood clots or heart disease is among the lowest in the world.

Traditional Greenlandic dishes are always simple to prepare, with very few garnishes or complex flavors. A popular soup called *suaasat* consists of fish, bird, seal, whale, or reindeer meat mixed with rice, onions, and potatoes. The spices? Salt and pepper. The garnishes? None. *Suaasat* exemplifies the Greenlandic diet: unpretentious, filling, and dependent on the catch of the day.

Since their arrival thousands of years ago, the Inuit people of Greenland haven't changed the way they gather and eat food.



Population: 57,564
Capital city: Nuuk
Currency: Danish krone
Area: 836,109 square mi
Average temp: 16°F - 45°F
Official language: Greenlandic

And while the rest of the world has been taken over by McDonald's and Taco Bells, the Greenlandic diet has remained consistent despite the gradually diminishing population of local animals due to changing climate. Even in the modern era, centuries-old traditions live on. —*Seiga Ohtani*

A Midwinter Night's Dream

Whether you call him Santa Claus or Kris Kringle, you know where to send your Christmas wish list: the North Pole. But according Greenlandic legend, the home of the man in the red suit isn't as elusive as it sounds.

Because tall tales say Santa himself is Greenlandic, Christmas is one of the most revered holidays on the icy island. In every town, candles and red-orange stars decorate every house from the beginning of Advent, the fourth Sunday before Christmas, until January 6, the Twelfth Night, illuminating the 24-hour darkness of winter.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas Day, Greenlandic people hold numerous celebrations to help drive the cold sunless winter from their minds. On the first Sunday of Advent, families go caroling, make mulled wine, and hang Christmas stars in their windows. Entire towns attend the local church service at 10 a.m., many of its residents dressing in white anoraks, which are reserved for special occasions. In a procession on December 13, children celebrate and sing about Saint Lucia, whose name means "light," wearing garlands on their heads.



Legend has it that Santa himself is Greenlandic. Christmas is one of the most revered holidays in Greenland.

Greenlandic children have a special reason to love Christmas Eve: they know they'll be the first to get their presents since Santa lives so near. While other children

lose sleep wondering what will be under the tree in the morning, kids in Greenland can skip the thoughts of sugarplums and sleep peacefully through the night. —*Seiga Ohtani*

Fighting for Their Shores

Somali fishermen take drastic measures against illegal activities

STORY **REBECCA BREWSTER** ILLUSTRATIONS **CAMERON GIBLIN**

They call themselves the Volunteer Coast Guard, and they arm themselves with whatever they can—a small gun, a machete, anything to protect their waters from those who illegally fish, dump waste, and harbor weapons off of Somalia's coast. Even in their small, outdated motorboats, they catch up to the massive foreign vessels illegally treading their waters. They board with an air of authority, holding a gun to the captain's head: they demand payment. And their hostages, pirates to Somali eyes, are quick to pay the bribe—or, depending on your point of view, ransom.

"We don't consider ourselves bandits," Sugule Ali, a Somali pirate spokesman, told *The New York Times*. "We are simply patrolling our seas. Think of us like a coast guard."

This coast guard, consisting of a group of Somali fishermen, made an estimated \$150 million in 2008—most of which was demanded from foreign ships. In April 2009, Somali pirates kidnapped Captain Richard Phillips from the container ship *Maersk Alabama* and held him hostage on a small lifeboat for five days. As negotiations with

American forces became heated, they held an AK-47 to Phillips' back before Navy SEAL snipers shot the pirates and rescued the captain.

Somalia has been in turmoil since 1991, when rebels overthrew President Mohamed Siad Barre, dissolving the country into a civil war that continues today. Despite attempts throughout the next decade to rebuild the central government, Islamist militias took control of Somalia. In 2004, a massive

"We don't consider ourselves bandits, We are simply patrolling our seas. Think of us like a coast guard."

tsunami hit the country's southern shore, killing hundreds and hurling Somalia into further disarray.

Fishermen, who traditionally make their living off of the two thousand-mile coastline, found that without a central government, their waters became a free-for-all for illegal fishing. The oceans of many developed countries had been severely overfished, but Somalia's waters still contained plentiful sea life, attracting fishing boats from countries in Europe,

Asia, and North Africa. The United Nations reports that since the collapse of Somalia's government in 1991, foreign boats have stolen an estimated \$300 million worth of Somali seafood.

As early as 1992, European countries began dumping toxic waste off the Somali coast, including nuclear waste and heavy metals such as mercury. In 1998, an Italian magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana*, investigated Progression, an Italian waste broker, and

Achair Partners, a Swiss firm. The acting president of the coalition government, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, had accepted \$80 million in exchange for allowing the

companies to dump ten million tons of toxic waste in Somali waters.

As a result of toxic dumping, Somalis who live near the shore have become ill from the waste and given birth to deformed babies. Hundreds of barrels of waste washed onto the shore after the 2004 tsunami; *The London Times* reported 300 deaths caused by radiation sickness alone.





At first, a group of Somali fishermen formed a volunteer coast guard—their aim was to patrol the waters and collect taxes from illegal vessels. But they quickly found that by boarding ships and stealing cargo or taking hostages and demanding ransom, their collections became more lucrative. Many of the ships they raided paid the ransom quickly to avoid drawing attention to their violation of international maritime laws. These easy victories allowed the pirates to purchase weapons and ammunition.

Omar Eno, a Somali refugee and professor of African history at Portland State University, said that pirating emerged from a culture where hijacking buses is common.

“Violence is a normal thing there—it’s a daily thing. Pirating in Somalia is not something new; it used to happen among the nomads; they used to rob one another for camels and cows.”

Even law-abiding Somali citizens benefit from boomtowns that have appeared along the coast in a trickle-down effect as pirates build stately mansions and buy supplies for their journeys. According to *WardheerNews*, an independent Somali news website, 70 percent of Somalis support the pirates in their activities.

“They wed the most beautiful girls; they are building big houses; they have new cars; new guns,” an anonymous Somali living in the regional capital of Garowe explained to the *BBC*.

“Piracy in many ways is socially acceptable. They have become fashionable,” the Somali said.

Residents say they do not care where the money comes from. Because of pirate money, they are no longer starving and can afford to send their children to school.

“There are more shops and business is booming because of the piracy,” a clothing merchant told *ABC News*. “Internet cafés and telephone shops have opened, and people are just happier than before.”

The maritime vigilantes, who started in small boats with a few guns, have since acquired GPS systems, satellite phones, and modern weapons. The fishermen have banded with ex-militia fighters and technical experts who handle the sophisticated navigation equipment.

The Toronto Star reported in 2008 that major funding for weapons and supplies comes from Somali expatriates from as far away as the United States and Canada.

The pirates are said to number in the thousands, and make tens of millions on each ransom. They typically treat their hostages humanely, even ordering catered food like meatloaf and spaghetti for the hostages’ Western palates.

“Killing is not in our plans,” Ali said.

70 percent of Somalis support the pirates in their activities.

“We only want money so we can protect ourselves from hunger.”

Even if pirating began as a result of illegal dumping and fishing, it long ago surpassed that initial purpose. “Their intention was good,” Eno says. “It’s a no man’s land; anybody can dump anything that they don’t want in their backyard—but it didn’t stop there! The situation has gone from bad to worse.”

Residents in several boomtowns have begun to regret welcoming the pirates. The ransom money flowing into the economy has inflated prices, making things less affordable for the average Somali.

In Puntland, the epicenter of piracy in Somalia, the traditional Islamic culture is clashing with the high-rolling lifestyle of the sea bandits. The president of Puntland, Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud, blames the pirates for bringing drugs, alcohol, street-fighting, and even AIDS to the area. Alcohol is illegal under Islamic law, and a May 2009 raid of a pirate bootlegging ring uncovered 327 bottles of Ethiopian gin, shocking the locals. But Mohamud and other leaders have done little.

“The government knows what they’re doing,” Eno says. He believes Puntland officials want to use the pirate situation to get foreign aid. “Right now they’re just watching, they’re saying [to the pirates], ‘Go ahead, don’t worry, we will know when to stop.’ They will promise to stop this pirating but they will get a consistent income.”

The bandits say they will only desist if Islamic sheiks offer them alternative jobs and help them form a legitimate coast guard to prevent illegal fishing and dumping.

“We are patrolling our seas. This is a normal thing for people to do in their regions,” Ali said. “If you hold hostage innocent people, that’s a crime. If you hold hostage people who are doing illegal activities, like waste dumping or fishing, that is not a crime.” ☐



The cityscape view from Istvan's fifth floor balcony

A CELTIC TALE

The rise and fall of Ireland's
economic boom

STORY & PHOTOS KEVIN BRONK

"They blew up my car," Istvan said in a thick Hungarian accent. "It's completely destroyed." I could hear the numb roar of the fire brigade's sirens outside my five-story apartment in Dublin's city center. His phone call rattled me out of a deep sleep at five in the morning. I rubbed my eyes and managed to scrape out, "What?" *They actually blew up his car?* Istvan repeated himself then hung up, leaving me disoriented and wondering what to do next.



Nine hours prior to Istvan's wake-up call, he invited me to keep him company on his balcony while he smoked a cigarette. The light blue Camel cigarette pack had a white stamp invading half of the front's tranquil invitation. In bold black letters it read, "Toradh caithimh tobac — bás / Smoking kills."

He blew out his match and threw it in an overfed ashtray. His brown hair, buzzed short on the sides, disappeared in the thick white smoke from his freshly lit cigarette. The sulfur and smoke floated away, presenting a clear view of the north side of Dublin. It was a cool February night and the air still had a moist taste left over from the day's rain. Istvan zipped his olive-colored fleece jacket up to his neck. "Damn Irish weather," he shivered.

We looked down when we heard teenagers throwing glass

bottles at the wall surrounding our apartment complex. Istvan yelled at the hooligans, who lived in low-income housing nearby. Soon, bottles started to land on our side of the wall, shattering beer-stained glass on parked cars.

"Why are you throwing bottles!" His voice projected down the street. Bracing his legs, he stood shoulder width apart, supporting his sturdy frame. His square, smiling face had quickly transformed into a stern mien.

"Why are *you* throwing bottles?" one of the teens shouted back. "You Hungarian fuck—we'll destroy you. We'll demolish that red Fiesta of

yours!" I could almost see the veins flare out of his forehead from five floors up. Their aggressive Irish voices, soaked with inebriation, echoed throughout the narrow streets below.

The glass-ridden cars belonged to tenets of the Christchurch View Apartments. As the caretaker of the building, Istvan became friends with many of the residents. His job was to look after them, as well as the apartment property. But warding off bottle-throwing teenagers drunk with rage was not necessarily in his job description.

Istvan and I sorted through our options. His thick, brown eyebrows crunched together, subduing the calm, collected look that normally rested on his face. I had never seen his dark blue eyes so wide open. Fighting on the streets is common in Dublin—night or day—and violent debauchery outside Istvan's balcony was deafeningly familiar.

We were high up in an apartment complex, guarded by three security gates. Still, uneasiness crawled up our necks. We both

TORADH CAITHIMH TOBAC—BÁS / SMOKING KILLS.



LEFT: Ireland's economy has been struggling since the collapse of the Celtic Tiger. BELOW: Tourists and locals crowd the thin streets of Temple Bar; despite the downturn, the area is still a popular hub for entertainment. OPPOSITE: Istvan glances away from Dublin's St. Patty's day parade.



knew there were ways they could get in, and these belligerent thugs could certainly follow through with their threats, although I figured they wouldn't.

But what if they weaved past security and found their way to Istvan's door? What if this confrontation became face to face, escalating beyond an oral clash?

"Come down and fight us!" they shouted.

"I'll be right down," Istvan waved, still holding his cigarette. The drunkards below didn't detect the derision in his tone.

He climbed through the sliding glass door into his bedroom and called the Garda, the Irish police. The instigators clenched their fists and paced, awaiting a battle. Before long, flashing red and blue lights bleached the damp streets below. We watched the Garda haul off the teens in handcuffs. They continued to snarl at us until the van door slammed, muffling their voices behind the glass.

A wave of relief slid down my spine. I looked to Istvan expecting to see the same. "They know who I am," he said, his eyebrows now climbing up his forehead. "They know which car is mine." He lit another cigarette and took in a large drag. I danced around my jumbled thoughts and assured him it would be all right. He insisted otherwise, but my naivety had already convinced me the confrontation had reached its conclusion.

Sunlight bled through my foggy skylight the following morning. I awoke, instantly remembering Istvan had called just hours ago. Somehow, I had fallen back to sleep.

I quickly dressed and ran downstairs to find the remains of his car, tucked to the side of the building where Istvan had parked. It was completely charred, the interior melted. The tires remarkably survived the heat and remained intact. A blackened halo around the colorless frame of Istvan's Ford Fiesta had formed on the wall. The remainder of a gutter hung, nearly liquefied, in front of his car.

The *DUBLINER Magazine* had granted me an internship in Ireland for the winter. Istvan had befriended me the evening of my arrival. He is one of the nearly 600 thousand foreign nationals who have immigrated to Ireland because of its (now-formerly) opportunistic economy. Ireland's economic strength first started in the early '90s when corporations moved to the island's shores to take advantage of its low corporate taxes and attractive provisions for businesses. Foreign investment and a young, educated work force led to a massive and legendary economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger. Ireland transformed from a historically poor country into one of the wealthiest nations at the turn of the century.

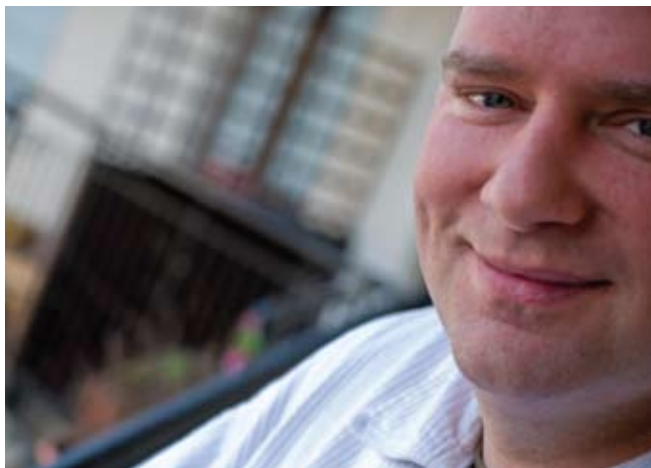
"When I moved here Ireland had a strong, reliable economy with one of the biggest salaries of Europe," Istvan explained to me. "I can save 1,500 quid [euros] a month in Ireland. In Hungary, I would be happy if I could get 400 a month – I could not save anything at all."

Istvan decided to move away from Hungary in 2006 when

I FOUND MYSELF IN THE CAPITAL OF A COUNTRY WITH A RICH, HARSH HISTORY IN A SCARY, DOWNWARD SPIRALING TIME.

he found a job through a Hungarian service advertising for air conditioner technicians in Ireland. The wages were low and the job was technical and demanding, but it offered Istvan the opportunity to not only work, but also improve his English. "I had three trades at home and still no job," he said. "In Hungary you can find a good job if you have connections, otherwise you have no chance. It's very corrupt—there is no free market anymore."

Today, the Celtic Tiger is a thing of the past. The boom that had once attracted immigrants like Istvan as well providing jobs for locals, has all but died. Ireland's job market is weak. In April, an Irish convenience store called Londis advertised a job opening in one of its Dublin store's front windows. More than 500 people,



both Irish and foreign, lined up to apply for the single cashier position.

Istvan has a job — fortunately. He moved on from being a technician in 2007 and now works at Christchurch View Apartments, where I lived during my internship. It provides him with a good salary and a free place to live – not to mention a spare bedroom to rent out. But the teenage punks could strike again. They knew where Istvan lived and that he wasn't going to move anytime soon. The sour job market has left Istvan with no options to find employment elsewhere. Even if he wanted to move out and still keep his current job, he couldn't; as the apartment caretaker, he is required to live at the complex.

I left the car ruins, already late for my internship. As I hustled through morning traffic, I thought how grateful I was that neither Istvan nor myself were physically harmed. Yet my subconscious refused to relax; we were lucky in a disturbing, twisted way.

Dublin at times carried an odd ambience of vulgarity and contempt. The vomit on the sidewalks was there every time I went to work. It was difficult to ignore. Heroin addicts huddled inside old sleeping bags on the corners of most Dublin streets were also tough to overlook. And the drunken aggravation we experienced was impossible to disregard, especially with Istvan's car now destroyed.

After work, I accompanied Istvan to the Garda station to drop off what we optimistically hoped would be incriminating video surveillance footage to the officer assigned to the case. We watched the video of the suspects in hooded tracksuits jumping the wall and running towards Istvan's car. Conveniently, they stayed out of the frame. Some 30 seconds later, they darted across the screen. Thick, white smoke eventually came into view and the black and white camera shorted out soon after, likely due to excessive heat.

The officer informed us the two drunken teenagers arrested were released later that night—45 minutes before Istvan's car was destroyed. Reluctantly, he walked us out the door. He would do his best, he said, but a conviction was unlikely.

If the Garda were persuasive enough to obtain a confession, sentencing would be completely up to the judge. They could receive anything from significant jail time to a warning. *A warning? Bollocks.*



UNEMPLOYMENT CURRENTLY IS A STAGGERING 13.2% COMPARED TO 9.8% IN THE U.S.

THERE ARE MORE THAN EIGHT TIMES AS MANY IRISH AMERICANS AS THERE ARE IRISH CITIZENS.



ABOVE: Istvan's charred car. LEFT: A bench in St. Stephen's Green in the city center. OPPOSITE: Dublin's River Liffey separates the north and south sides of the city; the O'Connell Street bridge divides the city east to west.

"It's these damn Irish scumbags," Istvan explained as we walked back. "They get on the doll [welfare] and just get pissed [drunk] all day. Nobody stops them from causing trouble." His voice was calm. He didn't appear to be angry – he was just defeated. His defeat was not out of weakness, but rather it was an element of strength in his kind nature.

While Istvan's point was harsh, it was difficult to dispute. Irish adults have the highest consumption of alcohol and the highest degree of binge drinking in Europe, or so Alcohol Statistics Ireland claims. More than a quarter of Ireland's population is on welfare. Those over 21 can receive up to €334 a week, the equivalent of roughly US\$476, which opens up opportunity for drug or alcohol abuse. In fact, Ireland's Drug Policy Action Group found drug treatment has a lesser impact in Ireland because it is so far removed from other social care services. Even worse, a committee assembled to assess public expenditures released a report in July proposing to close half of Ireland's Garda stations because the funding simply isn't there.

During the Celtic Tiger, Ireland enjoyed the second highest GDP per capita in the European Union. Public spending rose, unemployment fell, infrastructure grew, and Ireland experienced a shift from mass emigration to mass immigration, luring those like Istvan to leave their home country for the third largest island in Europe.

DURING THE CELTIC TIGER, IRELAND ENJOYED THE SECOND HIGHEST GDP PER CAPITA IN THE EUROPEAN UNION.

TWO-THIRDS OF IRISH ADULTS BELIEVE IN MORE RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES DUE TO THE CURRENT ECONOMIC STATE.



As an American, I rarely hear the term emigration. *Immigration*, however, has been a hot political topic for years in the U.S.—members of Congress have fretted over paying billions of dollars to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. But in Ireland, emigration was a genuine fear, and immigration was a gorgeous prospect. Between poverty, starvation, and violent conflicts, a large portion of Ireland’s citizens have historically fled. More than 34 million U.S. residents claim Irish ancestry—over eight times the current population of Ireland.

I found myself in the capital of a country with a rich, harsh history in a scary, downward spiraling time. Sadly, the blissful Celtic Tiger began to slump in 2001, but made a recovery in 2003 when property values shot up and the country once again experienced great economic strength. However, in 2008, that strength diminished when the global economy began to plummet. As a result, Ireland, what had once been Europe’s best performing country, became the first in the EU to sink in the current global recession.

By 2008, the Celtic Tiger had taken its last breaths. Now, many foreigners who originally moved to Ireland for work are without jobs. Unemployment currently is a staggering 13.2 percent compared to 9.8 percent in the U.S. By 2010, some experts expect Ireland’s unemployment to reach as high as 16.8 percent. With unemployment on the rise, immigration is starting to be viewed as a threat. *The Irish Times* reported two-thirds of Irish adults believe in more restrictive immigration policies due to the current economic

state. Also, the same committee that advised closing nearly 450 Garda stations suggested cutting away 240 jobs from the Irish Naturalization and Immigration Services’ staff.

“We were eejits to think ninety years of poverty could just turn around in a quick moment,” a pub owner said when I asked about the Celtic Tiger.

Eventually, Istvan purchased a new car. But just as calm and safety set in again, his car was stolen and destroyed, likely by the same parties as before. A successful prosecution still does not appear to be promising. A community meeting for the Christchurch View Apartments decided Istvan is no longer allowed to park on the premises. “They think this is the solution of the problem. But I am still alive and have a job,” Istvan said recently.

“These guys causing trouble on the street have no sense for responsibility. If somebody tries to stop them, they steal and burn his car continuously and cause lots of inconveniences. The worst thing is the Garda can’t protect the normal tax payer because of the soft laws ... or who knows why?” he continued.

“Of course we can’t forget the normal part of the Irish population who are lovely, open-minded, and have a great hospitality. I have learned a lot from these nice Irish people and I have many

good Irish friends.”

Istvan is right. Although both burdened by Irish crime, we saw the remarkable character of the Irish people. The people surrounding me in Ireland were deeply sincere—I was often entwined in a delightful excess of upbeat conversation. The Irish people have a reputation for being warm and kind. That reputation is well deserved as their warmth and welcoming embrace is difficult to ignore.

Ireland has begun to shift the paradigm in the last twenty years as it developed into a strong and prosperous country. Intel, for example, was one of the foreign companies that paved the way for the Celtic Tiger when it first opened a manufacturing center in

“IT’S TIME FOR US TO STUMBLE AND REMEMBER WHO WE ARE AND TRY AND JUST BE STRONGER ABOUT THINGS”

Kildare in 1989. The corporation created over 5,500 jobs for Irish citizens.

Unfortunately, today, Ireland can’t offer the same complete manufacturing as it used to. Intel is considering cutting back production in Kildare, sacrificing 400 to 500 jobs. The Irish economy is losing its grip on the remains on the Celtic Tiger. How Ireland reacts now will factor greatly into what we see from the island in the future.

A week before I left the island and said my goodbyes to Istvan, *The Dubliner Magazine* sponsored a debate on Irish identity. The debate came on the eve of St. Patrick’s Day in Dublin’s Liberty Hall. I arrived and wandered around the buoyant crowd. A mixture of Dubliners, tourists visiting the capital for Patty’s Day, and foreigners living in Dublin eagerly loaded into the large auditorium for the night’s debate. I sat down amongst curious chatter, joining the crowd in wondering what the so-called Irish experts paneled for the debate would argue about Irish identity.

“It’s time for us to stumble and remember who we are and try and just be stronger about things,” *The Irish Independent’s* columnist and social critic Ian O’Doherty said to the crowd. “We have to look in the mirror and collectively check ourselves and say, ‘Right, let’s turn things around.’ Let’s become the country not that we think we are, but who we hope we can actually be.”

Leaving Ireland, I couldn’t help but remember O’Doherty’s evaluation. The Celtic Tiger’s swift rise and fall is an opportunity for the Irish to reevaluate. Perhaps this is Ireland’s chance to continue to show its strength and to rebuild: rebuild into a nation that foreigners like Istvan can safely settle; into a country that can again take the lead as an economic strength in Europe; into an island that can truly boast the luck of the Irish. ♡



picking your

STORY **MICHELLE MCKENZIE**
ILLUSTRATIONS **CAMERON GIBLIN**

poison

*Afghanistan's blooming poppy industry
causes unrest on an international level*



Afghanistan was once a kingdom at the center of the world, a meeting point of the East and West. Caravans from many nations traveled its mountainous deserts for trade; the kingdom was prosperous. Unfortunately, outsiders saw the wealth of the kingdom and desired it for themselves. Attacked and raided for its wealth, the kingdom eventually fell from glory. Today, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. The people toil on farms, and many only manage to make a living by participating in an illegal drug trade with other countries.

In 2007, opium products made up 53 percent of Afghanistan's GDP, making heroin, derived from the opium poppy, the country's largest export. The United States and its allies in Afghanistan have been committed to stopping the production of this plant since the 2001 U.S. invasion. U.S. officials believe that opium income helps fund the Taliban, which has been regaining strength in recent years.

Opium poppies are bulbous flowers cultivated on huge farms in the countryside of Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Opium poppies flourish in dry, arid regions. Drought starting in the late 1990s also encouraged opium poppies to flourish in Afghanistan, because the poppies require less water than other crops. The brightly colored flowers take about three months to bloom. Once the leaves fall away, a bulbous seed pod is exposed. Inside is a milky white sap—pure opium. After the sap is collected, it is boiled with lime to extract the morphine, an intoxicating alkaloid that makes up about one-tenth of raw opium's weight. This morphine is processed further using ammonia, then molded into bricks for transport to illicit laboratories where heroin is produced.

Most people have consumed an opium poppy in some form. Two common U.S. painkillers, morphine and codeine, are made from the plant. Even the poppy seeds used in poppy seed muffins come from opium poppies. Though the seeds are not intoxicating, they can produce false positives on drug test screenings. Opium is one of the oldest painkillers, and is still used in hospitals around the world despite the high potential for addiction. Legal opiates, however, do not come from Afghanistan but are grown primarily in India, the only country allowed to export it. Today, 92 percent of the world's opium is grown in Afghanistan. The reason the country currently produces so much

heroin is entwined in its history of conflict.

During the Cold War, Soviet troops invaded the country. Soviet-U.S. battles destroyed villages, killed civilians, and wiped out Afghani farmlands. When the Soviets withdrew, there was no longer a central government ruling Afghanistan. Many local warlords competed for power, making day-to-day life very dangerous for civilians.

In some cases, growing opium poppies was, and still is, the logical choice for farmers to make. In a country where bombs could drop at any moment, opium provides reliable income. Poppies are profitable and low-risk compared to other crops. While farmers often travel dangerous roads to deliver traditional crops to distant markets, opium dealers pick the drug up directly from growers. However, Martin Austermuhle of the Embassy of Afghanistan stresses that, "while growing opium might provide a farmer with money they need to survive, they still engage in an illegal trade that leaves them at risk of arrest and potentially provides funds to terrorist groups that kill innocent civilians." Yet despite these risks, poppy cultivation burgeoned in Afghanistan.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, approximately 2.4 million people are involved in opium cultivation in Afghanistan—nearly one-tenth of the country's population.

The United Nations' initial policy was to destroy acres of opium farms in an effort toward eradication. This process began in October 2004 and continues to a limited extent today. In addition, the U.S. and the United Kingdom have taken active roles in ending Afghanistan's heroin trade, but corruption has undermined their efforts. Border officials often allow smugglers to pass in exchange for cash, and regulators accept bribes from farmers. For this reason, only the smaller, poorer farmers are punished, while the larger growers are allowed to continue production. The Drug Enforcement Administration has been working to decrease corruption by vetting officials and making sure they pass rigorous standards.

In 2005, the International Council on Security and Development, a Paris-based think tank for international



solution: convert Afghanistan's illegal opium farms into legal ones that would produce opiates such as morphine and codeine. The proposal claimed that this would allow many countries—including Afghanistan—access to medicinal opiates. However, the plan was never put into action. The lack of opiates in many countries is not due to a simple lack of supply. Instead, fear of addiction, illegal trade, and distribution problems are responsible for the absence of pain relieving opiates in many countries.

These unsuccessful methods demonstrate a fundamental misunderstanding of the opium cultivation problem in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. has partnered with the Afghan government to institute more effective measures, and progress is being made.

Though the U.S. has now largely given up on eradication, the change may come too late for some farmers as many crops have already been destroyed. Individual growers barely subsist on drug profits. Many have had to take out loans from traffickers or other growers in order to pay for basic needs. But when opium yields are not as high as growers expect, they are often left with no cash to repay the debt. The situation is especially dire when farmers' crops are wiped out and they have no opium profits. This has led to a new phenomenon of "loan brides," daughters of opium growers who are given away in marriage to repay a debt. Drought and counter-narcotic efforts have increased the occurrence of loan brides.

The country once produced enough food to both feed its people and export crops such as wheat, corn, and grapes. But now, much of the land that was used for food has been converted into opium fields. This has led to a food shortage, driving up the price of subsistence crops. With wheat prices rising and opium value declining, many farmers have switched back from opium to other crops. Opium production declined in 2008 for the first time since the U.S. invasion. Austermuhle points out, "If alternatives are available, many farmers will take them."

However, the economics behind farmers switching to food crops makes long-term elimination of opium seem dubious. If high numbers of farmers switch to wheat, the supply will exceed demand and prices will drop. And unlike opium, wheat does not have a guaranteed international market because it can be grown virtually anywhere.

But opium is illegal in almost every country, meaning, imports are highly valued.

The U.S. and its allies are now

focusing on intercepting drugs in transit and preventing chemicals needed to produce heroin from being imported into the country. The DEA is currently working with the government of Afghanistan to create institutions needed to enforce the law. This shift away from other crops has seen more success than previous efforts to reduce opium production. Twenty-two of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces are now opium free, and this number is expected to rise in 2009. Austermuhle supports this new strategy, saying, "Once opium is planted, it is too late. If you eradicate

existing opium fields, you run the risk of pushing the farmer further into the hands of the Taliban."

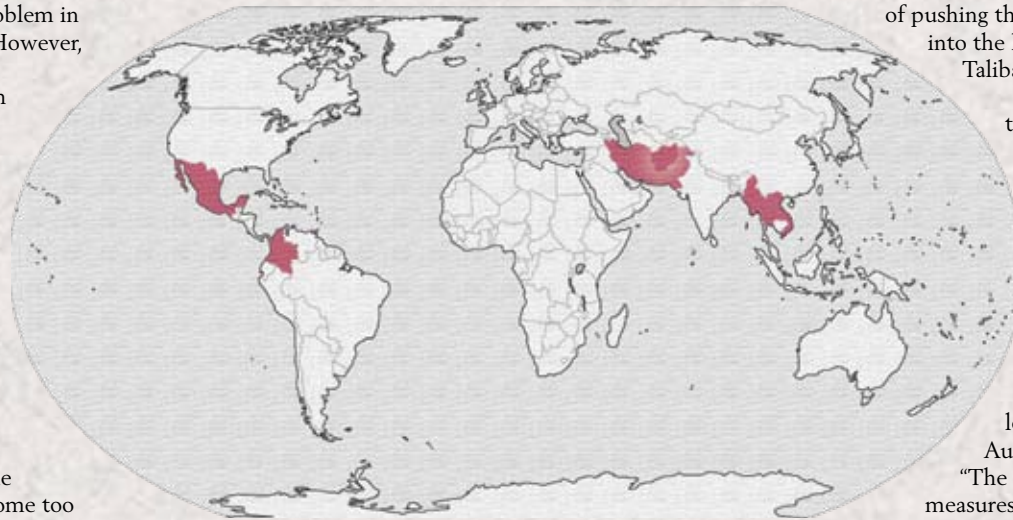
Though the margin is narrowing, opium still sells for more than wheat—but government subsidies have allowed many farmers to make the switch without losing money.

Austermuhle says, "The most effective measures [in stopping opium production] are those that give farmers workable alternatives to growing opium." He acknowledges

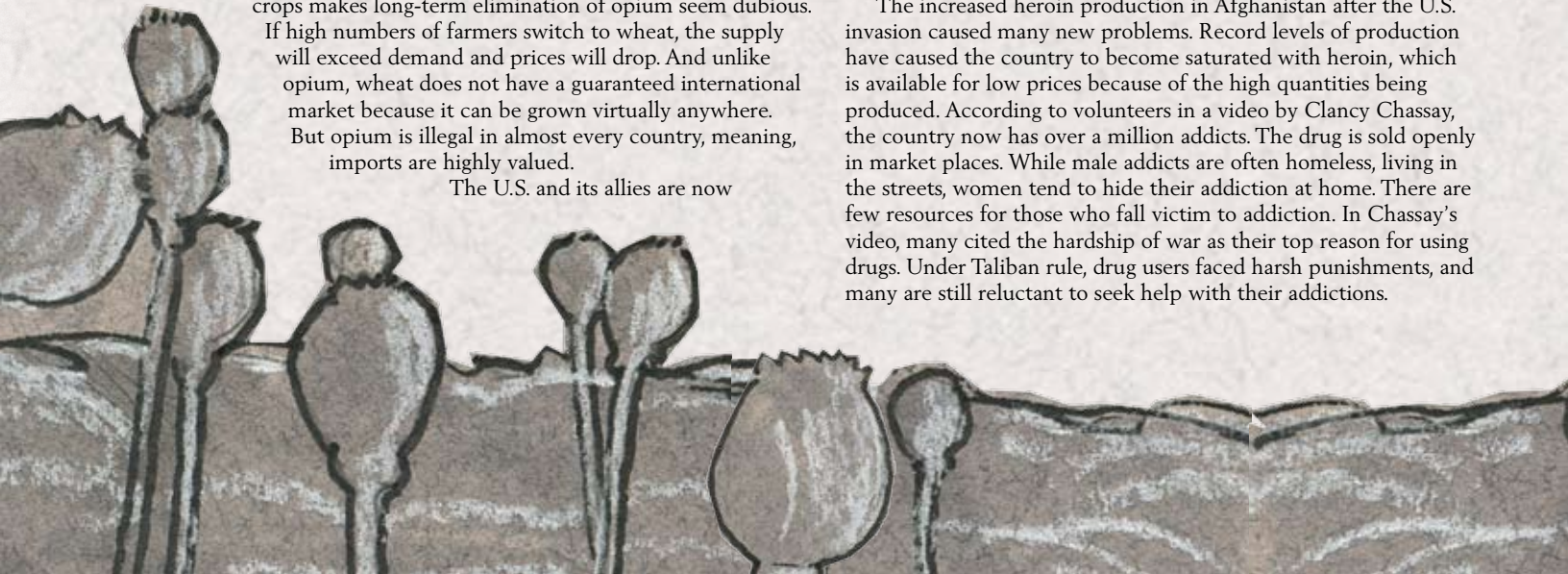
however, that these measures depend on cooperation with the international community. He stresses the importance of "establishing the infrastructure [such as] roads, airports, packing facilities, [and] cold storage so that farmers can add value to their crops, by turning them into juice, for example, or getting them to market more quickly and efficiently." Without these measures, which currently depend on the support of other countries for funding, Afghanistan cannot replace opium as its top export.

Since the time of the Soviet conflict, Afghanistan has never regained the stability it once had. The economy became centered on production and trade of the drug. Years of fighting had destroyed the monetary system, and opium was often used like cash, traded for other goods, or saved for potential future hardships. Austermuhle says, "Decades of conflict left the Afghan government and economy shattered, providing ripe conditions for growth of a crop that is easy to harvest and transport, and provides massive profits for those involved with it." The drug trade was valued at approximately four billion US dollars in 2007, a quarter of which was earned directly by opium farmers.

The increased heroin production in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion caused many new problems. Record levels of production have caused the country to become saturated with heroin, which is available for low prices because of the high quantities being produced. According to volunteers in a video by Clancy Chassay, the country now has over a million addicts. The drug is sold openly in market places. While male addicts are often homeless, living in the streets, women tend to hide their addiction at home. There are few resources for those who fall victim to addiction. In Chassay's video, many cited the hardship of war as their top reason for using drugs. Under Taliban rule, drug users faced harsh punishments, and many are still reluctant to seek help with their addictions.



While opium poppies mainly bloom and are primarily harvested in Afghanistan, a small percentage of poppies are grown in eight other countries.



These issues make removing heroin from the country seem beneficial to Afghanistan, but that may not be the case. Though heroin production is currently down around the country, it has become concentrated in the south, where the Taliban have a stronghold. The southern region is now producing 91 percent of the country's heroin, allowing the Taliban to increase revenue by taxing growers and traffickers. The organization has been accused of encouraging poppy growth to finance its resistance to the U.S.-backed government. The Taliban presence has made it difficult to initiate poppy alternative incentives in provinces like Helmand, which is now the foremost producer of opium in the country. As a result, the Taliban is receiving a higher percentage of opium profits because cultivation is concentrated in the South where Taliban forces are strongest.

But removing opium may not mean that Afghanistan becomes a drug free country. In an interview with Ron Synovitz of Radio Free Europe, UNODC spokesman Walter Kemp said, "Afghanistan is now one of the biggest, if not the biggest, producer of cannabis in the world. This is often in provinces that have become opium-free." According to Ryan Ball (now-formerly) of the DEA, "Afghanistan likely will continue to produce large quantities of hashish for export worldwide, as it has done for decades in the past. Marijuana production in the region has been increasing in recent years; however, there is not sufficient evidence at this time to suggest that this increase is due to any reduction in opium growth." Whether increased hashish production is related to reducing opium or not, it is clear that drugs in the region are a presence that will not disappear anytime soon.

The question that the U.S. government doesn't seem to have considered is whether opium production should be stopped at all, or if the U.S. should be involved in preventing this production. Billions of tax dollars have already been spent on eradication efforts. The U.S. attempts to provide alternatives to opium have seen moderate success, but are dependent on continued funding from Congress. While encouraging food growth in Afghanistan will help feed the nation's people, it seems possible that a balance could be struck between opium growth and food growth. The government could legalize opium growth and collect a moderate tax from farmers. This tax income could provide money to subsidize food crops from within Afghanistan, instead of the U.S. paying for these subsidies. Legalizing opium growth would mean that the new government would see opium profits instead of the Taliban—which, according to Auster Muhle, "are so dependent on the sale of opium to support themselves that in 2008, they actually stockpiled opium to avoid flooding the market and letting prices for the crop drop." This would in turn benefit the U.S., whose primary concern is preventing a Taliban resurgence. The government would also be able to regulate opium growth so that there wouldn't be excess in

Afghanistan, potentially curbing addiction.

While Western nations may see heroin production as detrimental, allowing its production could be a beneficial strategy for Afghanistan. The nations concerned about drug use could focus on preventing addiction from within their borders instead of attempting to stop drug production in Afghanistan at the expense of Afghan farmers.

There is no simple solution to the problem of opium production in Afghanistan. While the drug is devastating to addicts and their families, growing poppies provides income for farmers. It seems that stymieing production will be difficult as long as there is still demand for heroin. Auster Muhle asserts, "Much like the production

of cocaine in Colombia, the growth of opium will always find a place to happen if the strategy against it is not ... comprehensive in scope. Getting rid of opium in one place doesn't stop it from moving elsewhere."

Replacing opium crops with food crops could potentially lead to a crash in the economy. Making experimental changes could have deadly consequences for the citizens of one the poorest countries on earth. But with Western troops influencing the agricultural economy, the people of Afghanistan have no choice but to wait and see whether their country can survive without opium production.

The people inhabiting the land of the once great kingdom now struggle to survive. Many seek to take away their only means of living, claiming the opium poppies are a poison. But these poppies sustain those who cultivate and sell them. Though there is hope of significantly reducing drug trade throughout the country, there are no guarantees. For Afghan citizens, this is a bittersweet prospect. ♀

While the drug is devastating to addicts and their families, growing poppies provides income for farmers.

Why Should You Care?

As mentioned in the article, the poppies in Afghanistan have various purposes and consequences aside from drug use. These poppies affect the medical world as well as the personal lives of those who farm these poppies. Many farmers become dependant on poppy profits to sustain their families; so when their crop falls short many farmers trade their daughters as payment to drug lords. To learn more, visit:

ethos.uoregon.edu

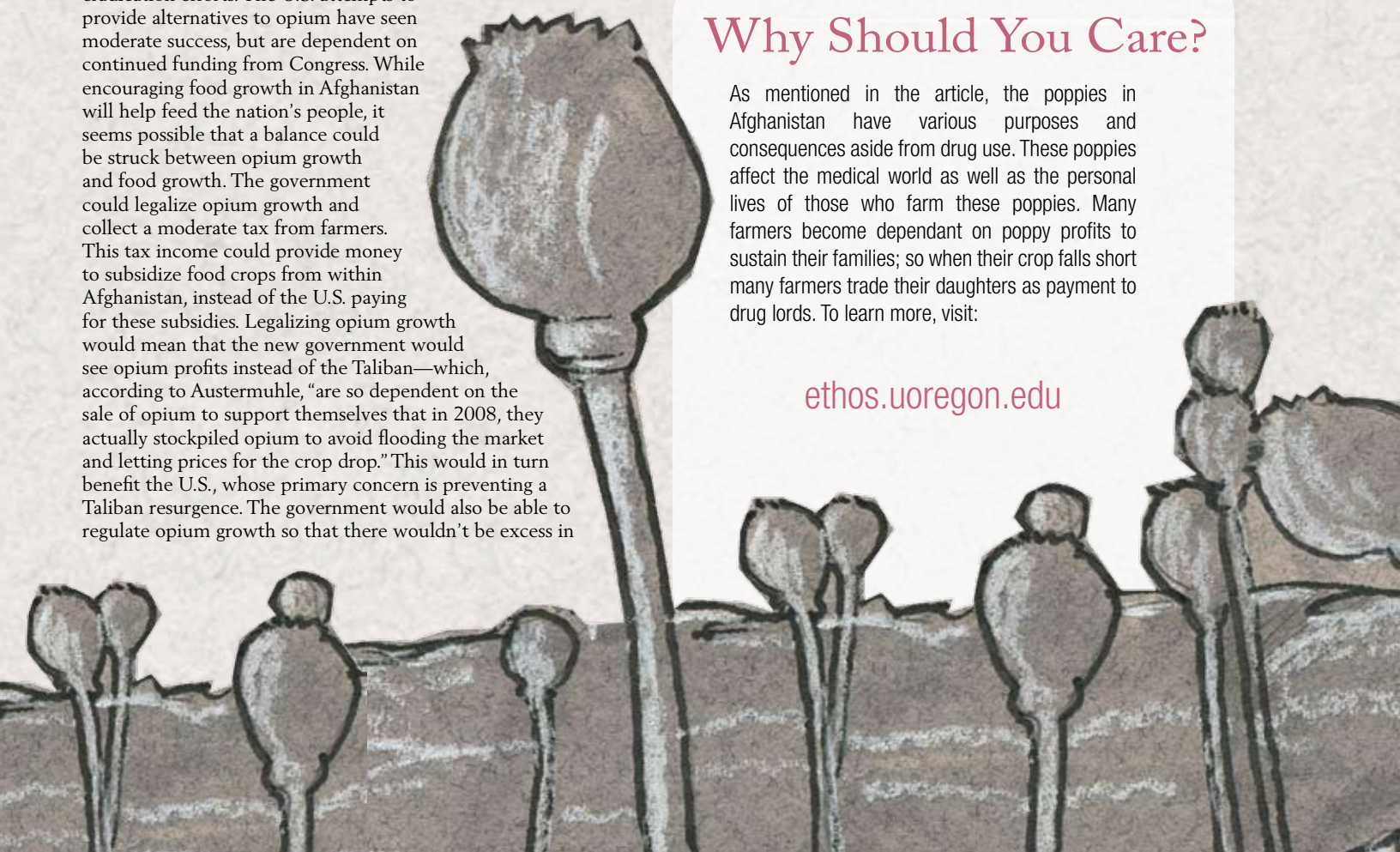




PHOTO COURTESY SEAN HARRIS

FACE the FLAME

On-call wildland firefighters spend their summers eagerly awaiting the opportunity to battle the flames of forest fires in Oregon's beautiful, unpopulated landscapes

STORY **SACHIE YORCK**

PHOTOS **THOMAS MARTINEZ & ALICIA GREENWELL**

Across the nation, scores of students get to play with fire for a summer job. Their workplace is backcountry nature and their lunch break can last most of the season. Although some may say the labor is arduous, those who stay in the career will insist it's well worth it.

Oregon Woods Inc. is a local contractor for various wilderness landowners and government agencies, specializing in restoration, forestry, and fire. The company enlists physically fit, dedicated young people willing to respond to environmental emergencies.

A good portion of the typical summer firefighter's schedule is spent waiting for a phone call. Oregon Woods goes down a list of potential firefighters and lets those available join the next run—their next opportunity to make money and tame flames. Repeat decliners risk losing their chance, as they are less likely to be called again. Since nature is nearly unpredictable, those determined to participate wait patiently with good reception.

"You never know how much work there's going to be," says Stephen Clarke, Oregon Woods' fire and restoration manager. "Everything in *this* world is on call." In order to join Oregon Woods, prospective firefighters must endure a weeklong in-classroom training session, preparing in areas of theoretical scenarios and fire safety. However, the real challenge is passing the "pack test:" a grueling 45 minute hike bearing the weight of upwards of 50 lbs of gear.

Once they've passed the test, firefighters are sent off in crews of about twenty, with a crew boss and three squad bosses in each team. In order to keep the trips harmonious, dispatchers often try to maintain consistency within groups.

Because of its rewarding nature—both personally and financially—wildland firefighting appeals to all demographics. Of those who apply, most qualify for the job. But in this field of work, it takes more than just skill, but also patience and preparation, for a chance to face the flames.

Four firefighters tell their stories.



Being a firefighter has led Larry Huseman to consider a career in fire ecology.

LARRY HUSEMAN RESTORATION AND REJUVENATION

When people ask Larry Huseman what he does for a living, he likes to tell them, “I’m saving butterflies.”

It’s not some scheme to get the ladies to swoon—albeit it may work—but rather, Huseman’s latest responsibilities with Oregon Woods Inc. as part of the company’s restoration efforts with the Nature Conservancy in Eugene’s Coburg Hills. Preservation of the oak savanna grasslands has led to the rediscovery of an endangered Fender’s blue butterfly population that was once thought to be near extinction in this area of the Willamette Valley. Huseman and his teammates are currently restoring the Kincaid’s lupine, the rare plant where the butterflies hatch their eggs.

Wildland firefighting with Oregon Woods is more than extinguishing outdoor flames. For those truly dedicated to the career, there are many other opportunities to help defend forests beyond fire suppression. And for Huseman, such activities are merely icing on the cake.

This summer marks Huseman’s fifth year with Oregon Woods. The time spent as a wildland firefighter for the company has had a profound impact on him.

“It’s been one of the most unique experiences I’ve ever had,” he says. “I got to figure out who I was in a different setting, so removed.”

After having spent almost half a decade fighting flames, this year Huseman is finally able to participate in project work.

As a graduate of the University of Oregon with a degree in economics, a career in firefighting wasn’t what Huseman initially had in mind. But as he became more compelled by what he “did on the side” than his intended field of study, he set aside his degree for a shovel and net. Currently, Huseman is considering whether to pursue a master’s degree in fire ecology. “I can see myself doing this for a lot longer period of time than I thought,” he says.

Huseman’s first assignment as a wildland firefighter came early one summer morning at 4:30, when he was the only participant on the list to answer for two hours. He rushed to the office headquarters, and within an hour was in a vehicle en route to a forest on fire.

“In a way, firefighters are slaves to those things,” Huseman says as he pulls out his black mobile phone. He puts it on the table and looks at the pocket-size machine buzzing in a low hum. Having spent the past five summers trying to make it to the top of the prestigious Oregon Woods’ list, Huseman has scheduled his life around fire season and cell phone reception.

“It’s longer than any relationship I’ve had,” he says. With his phone always in earshot, he makes sure to never miss a call—especially not from Oregon Woods.

A tall, slim man with wavy straw-colored whiskers, Larry Huseman speaks about firefighting like it’s truly magical, the way it secludes people to understand their inner core better. In town, Larry can retreat home when he wants to remove himself. Out on the job, there’s no place else to go beyond the woods and campgrounds. With nowhere to run, he has to deal with problems right then and there.

“It’s one of the best times of your life every single time,” he says. “A very sobering experience. There, none of the materialistic things matter outside of my backpack holding my water and tools.”

“It’s one of the best times of your life every single time.”

LAUREN MILLER JUST ONE OF THE BOYS

Lauren Miller always knew she would work outdoors.

Out in the Oregon hinterland, she gets an exclusive showing of the Northwest's most magnificent natural settings, full of melodious biodiversity and alternating landscapes. Better yet, for a generous income her job is to preserve these surroundings.

"I can't believe I'm actually getting paid for this," she says.

According to Miller, the on-call waiting, limited summer plans, and distance from her boyfriend in southern Oregon are all worth the spectacular beauty only remote wildland firefighters are able to see.

In the past three years since Miller, 23, first got involved with Oregon Woods Inc., she has fully dedicated her life to fire.

This spring, she graduated from the University of Oregon with an environmental studies degree and two fire ecology internships under her belt. Although the University only offers a few fire-based courses for undergraduates, Miller sculpted her own educational path. She took three fire ecology classes in the landscape architecture, geography, and sociology departments.

As the summer season progresses in Oregon, this Indiana native waits around for potential fire opportunities as she continues to collect experiences in hopes of working at a national forest someday.

"At first, I didn't know if that was something available to me—I'm a small woman," she says, laughing in reflection. Despite her petite height, Miller has a strong build, with muscles softly shaped into a tiny frame. With her muscles taut and hair pulled back tight, her fierce determination is unmistakable.

As a female firefighter, Miller has to emphasize her capabilities a lot more vigorously than her male counterparts. Female firefighters used to be a rarity. But as gap between male and female continues to shrink in the field, some workers still hold sexist ideas. Miller says more of the noticeable chauvinists are from other companies and are usually old-timers in the business, stuck in aged mentalities.

"We all have a healthy fear and respect for fire."

"People don't always think I'm as competent as I am," she says. "But it hasn't been anything really offensive or blatant, besides stares. No one has actually said anything to me."

The Nature Conservancy, an international conservation organization locally based in the west Eugene wetlands, placed Miller in an internship doing fire effects monitoring. She is able to determine whether a prescribed fire is necessary by surveying weather, topography, and fuel, such as trees and plants.

"Fires are also beneficial for forests," she says. "The Willamette Valley is a climate-created ecosystem. Disturbance ecologically is not destroying."

Miller dreams of working for a government agency like the Olympic National Park in Washington, with nearly one million acres in land. Currently, through collaboration between Oregon Woods Inc. and the Nature Conservancy, Miller helps restoration efforts in the Coburg Hills. Still, fire still flames her passion.

"We all have a healthy fear and respect for fire," she says. "Firefighting is full of highs and lows. We're able to witness what nobody else will ever be able to see."

As one of the few female firefighters, Lauren Miller must deal with sexism from some of her colleagues.



KEVIN KASS NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE

Down the busy street of Alder, parallel to the University of Oregon campus, a row of cooperative houses shade the block with eccentric colors and lawn art. Creative energy spills out of their doors, blanketing the area with ideas of sustainability, collective living, and elevated consciousness.

One of these three homes, the Campbell Club, holds the largest number of residents. Dwellers describe their roommates as family, saying there's always someone to talk to and rely on.

When Kevin Kass first moved to Eugene last year, he desperately needed a job and a place to live. At the Campbell Club, he found both. Fortunate to enter during exceptionally reasonable summer rates, Kass then met a handful of roommates who worked as on-call wildland firefighters. They referred him to Oregon Woods, and advised to always keep his phone near.

Now a Lane Community College student majoring in music and audio engineering, Kass is one of many young people enrolled in wildland firefighting, a job critical during the hot and dry summer season. Oregon, known for its vast forests and lumber, is especially susceptible to fire, with record temperatures above 100 degrees. For the 15.8 million acres protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry, this year alone has had more than 300 fires on public and private land. Although on average most fires are caused by humans, lightning tends to be more damaging.

"It can be stressful," Kass admits. "You're taking orders and working in the heat." Raised in Kansas, Kass was unaccustomed to the mountainous and diverse Oregon landscape. He describes his hometown of Olathe, Kansas, as "suburbia." Here in Eugene, he finds more like-minded people, which he enjoys.

Kass, having always participated in outdoorsy activities, easily adapted to the physical exertion of wildland firefighting. Although members work on-call, Kevin managed to go on three runs, including one that lasted a week. "After a week, you're ready to go home," he says.

This will be Kass' second summer working with Oregon Woods. So instead of the weeklong training that newcomers must endure, he only has

to take a one-day refresher course. And for Kass, that's just the way he likes it: the less time spent indoors, the more work outside.

"The best part of the job is the scenery," he says. "You're out in the middle of nowhere. Oregon has giant trees and mountains."

Kass enjoys the physical work and exciting projects alongside the good company of his coworkers. And of course, the money doesn't hurt. Kass reveals that some people can make up to a thousand dollars in just one week. He plans to utilize the high profit better this coming summer and save up. Last year, he spent all his paychecks from firefighting on musical instruments.

"They were investments," he says, defending his choice. "I'd say I'm a musician first and foremost."



Kevin Kass enjoys that firefighting allows him to work outdoors amid Oregon's green, mountainous scenery.



As a squad boss, Jason Hight gains valuable leadership experience.

JASON HIGHT WHO'S THE BOSS

A prism of light flickers off of Jason Hight's wedding band, beaming the reflection of nearby stunning colors. He spins the ebon gleam of his ring, made of nearly indestructible tungsten carbide. Married just this March, Hight needed a durable ring to tolerate the rigors of his job: fighting fire. His silver watch, although just a few weeks old, is already covered with scratches.

Preparation for Jason Hight's sixth year with Oregon Woods practically comes like clockwork. The dispatcher calls him, he tells her his bags are packed, and he's ready to leave at any moment. Hight finished fifteen credits in the past five weeks at the University of Oregon. But for the rest of the summer, he gets to replace schooling with firefighting opportunities.

Things are slightly different this time. His new bride, Mari, will spend the season in Eugene rather than go to Los Angeles like previous summers. With the prospect of long periods apart, the couple is prepared for the challenge.

"Luckily we just got a new puppy," Hight says with relief.

For a self-described "nontraditional" student, Hight has handled going back to school later in life well. Now 32 and on course to graduate after this fall, he says he's excited to experience the world with a college degree. He hopes to leave Eugene for more lucrative towns.

"In Eugene, waiting for a position is like waiting for someone to kick the bucket," Hight says. He adds that it all depends on his career coming out of school. Although he is a general science major, he won't limit his options just to that field.

Currently Hight is a designated squad boss, overseeing sixteen subordinates with two others. Hight plans to train for the position

of crew boss, but is ambivalent about how far he will take his firefighting career.

As a leader, Hight must focus on not only his own efforts, but also the work ethic of everyone around him. He describes the atmosphere as sometimes a "pressure cooker."

"It can magnify interpersonal conflicts that we all have on a daily basis," he says. "A big part of my job is de-escalating them."

After a self-destructive stage, Hight joined firefighting and re-enrolled in college almost concurrently. Through both, he says he has grown up a lot. His level of physical fitness has also improved. As a squad boss for the past two years, he developed a level of expectations for his colleagues and inferiors.

"Passing the pack test is no sign that you're ready to be a firefighter," he says.

Hight also will not stand for people showing up in unfit conditions; he delegates obnoxious tasks or even brutal labor as punishment. Hight says basic physical shape and psychological preparedness and toughness are essential to the job.

"There is a certain level of competence as a baseline that I really want to be able to demand," he says.

When Hight has accomplished keeping the group motivated and working cohesively, he digs right in. He has an oasis of memories and experiences that only a wildland firefighter can recall. He says it's not just a paycheck, it's an experience that has him coming for more. ♀



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15

AND COUNTING

OREGON CONSERVATION GROUP
WORKS TO SAVE ENDANGERED
SEA TURTLES IN COSTA RICA

STORY EMILY HUTTO

"I don't eat turtle eggs and I have the biggest balls here!" Marc Ward screamed into a crowd of drunken men circling around him. Dodging their punches, he slammed one man below the waist before jetting away from the beach campsite of more than twenty angry turtle poachers. It was pitch dark the night before Valentine's Day in Punta Pargos, along the coast of Costa Rica. The campers had set up a shack to serve as a bar where they could sell sea turtle egg yolks as shots, and they wanted the eggs that Ward had collected from his conservation efforts earlier that evening. A conflict erupted when they harassed him for the valuable leatherback sea turtle eggs, an assumed aphrodisiac in Costa Rica, rumored to enlarge family jewels.

Believed to increase potency and fertility, turtle eggs are coveted in many Central American and Asian countries for their purported aphrodisiac effect. However, like so many alleged "natural aphrodisiacs," the eggs' supposed benefits are not documented, but the dwindling numbers of sea turtles worldwide are. According to a fact sheet from Costa Rica's nonprofit nongovernmental organization PRETOMA, only thirty thousand leatherbacks remain in the oceans. And at the rate they are disappearing, they will cease to exist within fifteen years.

Ward is one of many activists attempting to slow the rapid pace of sea turtle extinction. On a trip to Costa Rica ten years ago, the native Oregonian witnessed poachers stealing sea turtle eggs before sunrise. He knew their actions were illegal by Costa Rican law, but when he asked them to stop, they just looked at him silently and continued their theft. Ward felt helpless and frustrated. "I couldn't stop [them], but I stewed

on the whole thing and decided that I was going to develop a strategy that would secure the eggs from illegal harvest." Since then, he has bounced between the West Coast of the United States and the Punta Pargos area of Costa Rica, doing just that.

In Costa Rica, he manages sea turtle hatcheries, an important component of his Punta Pargos sea turtle conservation project. Ward also enforces environmental laws in the Santa Cruz province of the country. In 2002, he started patrolling the beaches of Punta Pargos at night. His duties include camouflaging nests and wiping away turtle tracks to prevent poachers from finding the eggs.

Ward's night patrols quickly attracted a crew of local teenagers who wanted to help. Several months later, Sea Turtles Forever, a nonprofit organization aimed at preserving the future of this species, was born. He began filming the night patrols, not only to show community members his efforts, but also to facilitate marine biology research. Ward brought his passion for the issue with him to the U.S., and established a branch of the organization in Seaside, Oregon.

No matter the location, fellow activists are vital to the success of his conservation endeavors. Volunteers in Costa Rica interact directly with the turtles, working in hatcheries and helping during night patrols. "[They] support our data teams' habitat projects and educational programs," Ward says. Because poaching is not a prevalent issue in the U.S., volunteers work on conservation advocacy. "In America, [volunteers] work on public relations, fundraising events, and community outreach." Oregon volunteers table weekly at the Astoria Sunday Market, joined by their life-size sea turtle model, "Izzy."

The main goal at the market is to inform Oregonians that, contrary to popular belief, leatherbacks are also present on the Pacific coast of the United States. According to the Marine Turtle Research Group's satellite tracking program, the turtles travel to Oregon and Washington during their approximate thirteen thousand-mile annual migration, which includes varied patterns of circulation in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. Using this comprehensive system, researchers discovered that sea turtles have the longest migratory journey of all vertebrates.

Much like the sea turtles they track, collaborators with Sea Turtles Forever come from all around the world. Ward is currently teaming up with Dr. Takada of the University of Tokyo to research the effects of marine plastics. "Working with people and specialists gives us an international outlook in the overall health and condition of marine turtles on a global scale," Ward says. The organization has also worked with volunteers, interns, and researchers from the United Kingdom, Singapore, and South Africa to name a few. "Marine turtles undertake extensive foraging migrations and cross multiple national borders on their migrations," Ward says. "This makes marine turtle conservation a shared responsibility of whole regions if conservation is to be completely effective."

Volunteers are the backbone of many of these international projects. Samantha Goodwin, a psychology major at Western

turtle eggs laid in Central and South America would be stolen if it weren't for the night patrol. After industrial fishing, poaching in Costa Rica is the second leading cause for the disappearance of sea turtles, according to research by Sea Turtles Forever. Plastic debris contaminates nesting areas, which further decreases sea turtle populations.

Poaching, harmful fishing practices, and ocean pollution can only stop if people are conscious of these issues. Thus the goal of many activists is to spread awareness. However, even "spreading awareness" can be controversial. Wildcoast, a San Diego-based conservation group, received so much criticism for its 2005 "Don't Eat Sea Turtles" media campaign in Guerrero, Mexico, that the posters were banned in the state. The posters, targeting men who believe in the eggs' aphrodisiac qualities, feature a scantily-clad Argentine playboy model saying, "*Mi hombre no necesita huevos de tortuga,*" my man doesn't need turtle eggs.

Sea Turtles Forever takes a less racy approach to communicate the issues. The organization sponsors outreach programs in both the United States and particularly in Costa Rica.

"Ninety-nine percent of turtle eggs laid in Central and South America would be stolen if it weren't for the night patrol."

—Sea Turtles Forever

Oregon University, just returned from working with La Tortuga Feliz, a nonprofit conservation organization based near the Pacuare River on the Caribbean side of Costa Rica. There, she and a group of twelve other students participated in night patrols, helping turtles dig nests and transporting their eggs to hatcheries to protect them from poachers.

The practice of stealing turtle eggs continues in Costa Rica not only for their alleged aphrodisiac power, but also because as the number of eggs decreases, their value increases. They are often traded on the black market and even used as currency in the local drug trade. To combat the increasing numbers of disappearing eggs, many organizations employ ex-poachers as night patrol guides. As "experts," they know best where to find eggs. And because their new jobs give them a source of steady income, they no longer need to illegally prowl at for eggs when they can do the same work with the support of a conservation organization. "It's more profitable for the poachers because they can make money year-round, instead of just during egg harvesting season," Goodwin says.

Night patrols are exhausting and dangerous, but many conservation programs rely on individuals like her to meet their goals. "Our volunteers lose weight, get tired, and experience culture shock," Ward says. Accordingly, Goodwin describes her time in Costa Rica as "excruciating, but rewarding."

The Sea Turtles Forever website says ninety-nine percent of

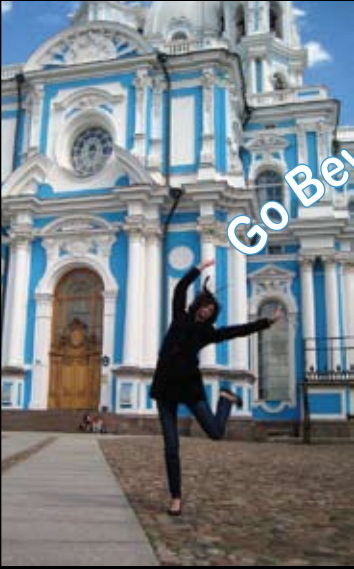


Sea turtle conservationist Marc Ward protects young hatchlings on the coasts of Costa Rica.

Volunteers dress up like turtles in Costa Rican schools and pass out educational coloring books to teach children about the deeper impact of consuming eggs.

When Ward isn't dressed as a sea creature in Costa Rica, he's standing behind a booth in the Astoria Sunday Market sporting multiple layers of the organization's apparel. From under the bill of his hat that reads, "It's a beautiful day," he sporadically shouts "Sea Turtles Forever!" into the crowd. When he took a break from Clackamas Community College in Oregon to escape to the Costa Rican jungle years ago, he never expected to get involved with sea turtle activism. Ward never did return to school; instead, he's immersed himself in sea turtle research projects and has become as a pivotal member of the international conservation community. For Ward, nothing gives him as much joy or a sense of accomplishment as watching "the little guys" shuffle through the sand, making it out to sea. "The difference you make on this planet [is] to sustain the overall health and integrity of our global community. I could find no other more important work than re-establishing the severely depleted numbers of [sea turtles]." ♻️

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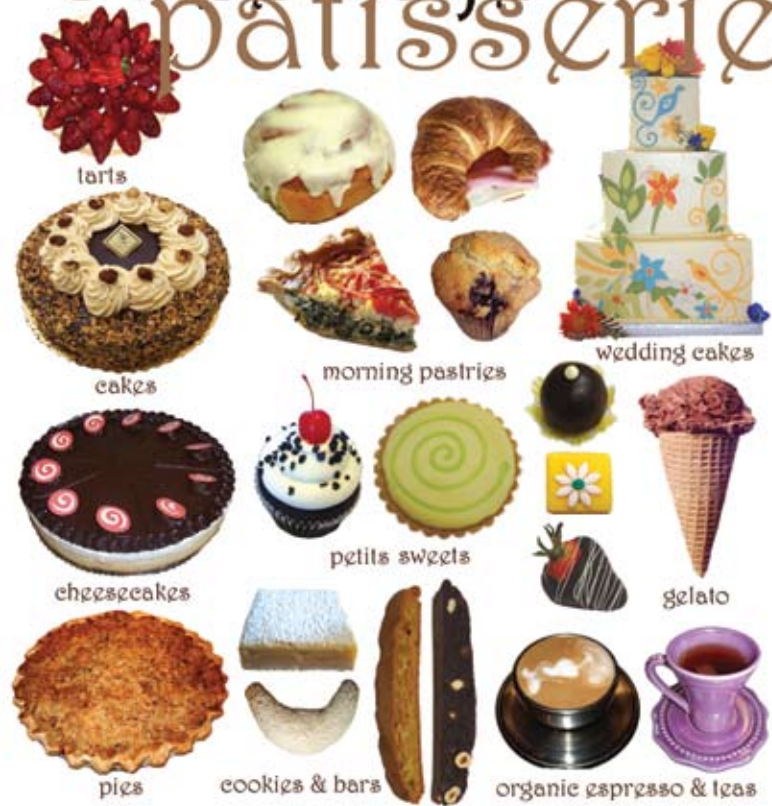
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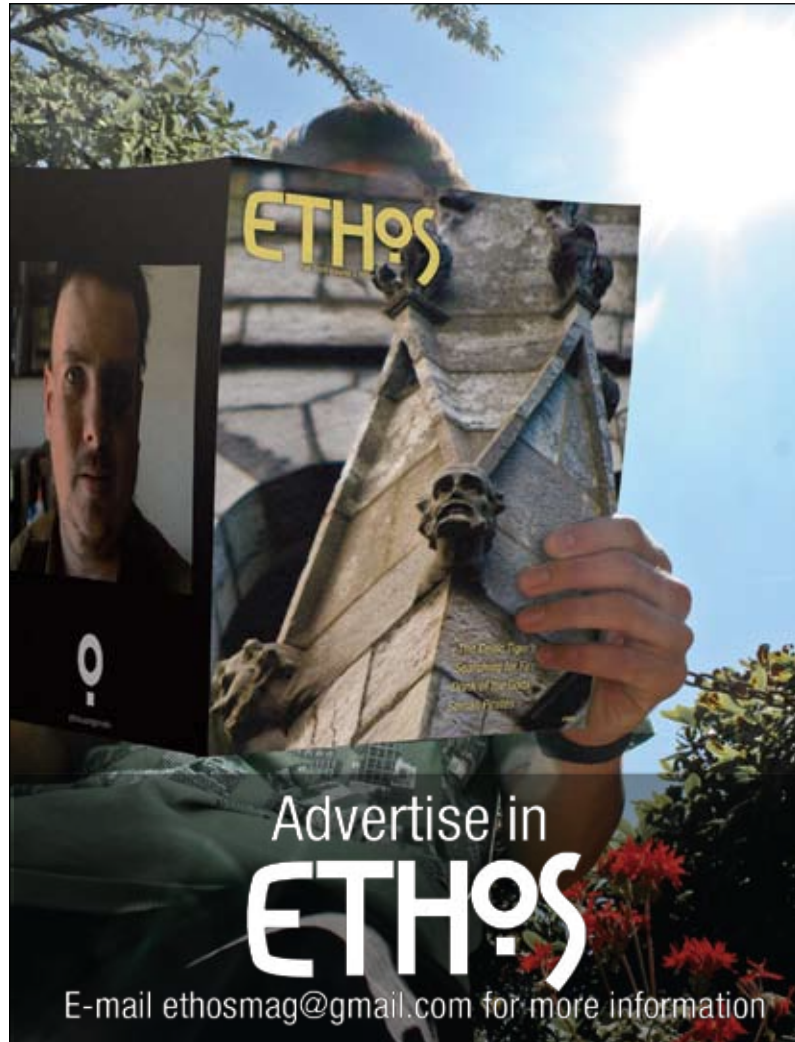
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Journeys Abroad Dresden

My fears and anxieties grew as I scrambled to fit a year's worth of belongings into two suitcases the night before my flight to Germany. The next morning, bags in hand, I turned the corner past security and left my family at the gate. As I looked back, I saw my mother in tears. It was at that point that I could feel my heart beating in my throat. My stomach flipped as a voice nagged inside my head; "You are walking into this blind."

No one's exchange is a piece of cake. If they can claim it was, they're either lying or they were drunk the entire time. My experience abroad was challenging, but nonetheless rewarding.

I went to Dresden, Germany my junior year of high school without a clue about what to expect. I was naive, silly, and ready for any adventure that I thought might cross my path. I look back now and tell strangers that I loved every second of my exchange experience. But that is a lie.

I didn't love every second. In fact, many were extremely painful.

That doesn't mean I regret my stay in Germany. Despite homesickness, loneliness, and personal crises, I never felt cheated out of the "picture perfect" exchange. And while I didn't make friends right away and there were moments when all I wanted was to go home, my time in Dresden helped me understand that I am capable of standing on my own.

When I left Sherwood, Oregon, I knowingly gave up many typical high school experiences such as prom, football season (pretty big in my hometown), and an array of antics that my high school friends were planning to carry out the ensuing school year. Despite this, my head and heart drove me toward the unknown path of studying abroad, and I happily grabbed the opportunity that was, and still is, unique.

In retrospect, what attracted me to Rotary International Youth Exchange probably had more to do with the fact that I hated high school. (I was a teenager; can you blame me?) To my sophomore mind, a year abroad was my "golden ticket" to a land of surprises and new beginnings—it was my chance to start over.

I started my exchange for all of the wrong reasons: by thinking I could escape my problems, when in reality, they were waiting for me when I got back. Yet, when I arrived in Dresden in August 2005, I chose to stay for all of the right ones: for the sake of making a new beginning and being a representative of my home country.

I may have stayed for the right reasons, but the right reasons aren't always the easiest.

Homesickness set in as soon as the



leaves began changing colors, and it only intensified when I got into a fight with my German classmates. It turned out, they didn't trust me the moment they met me, simply because I was an American; a citizen of a country that had recently re-elected George W. Bush. The situation worsened when they interpreted a moment of me crying alone during a class trip as a sign that I, too, hated them.

School only got harder as their taunting intensified. From school supplies to verbal insults, I was the target of adolescent angst. Once, my classmates actually had the gall

to find a picture of the World Trade Center, draw planes crashing into it, and then move the "artwork" closer to where I sat. They were out to get the American girl.

The day I realized my comprehension of the German language was improving was the day I overheard a group of girls at lunch insulting me by saying how stupid I was. I was shocked—I had never been bullied before—and added to the stress I was already experiencing from culture shock and homesickness.

Throughout the course of my exchange, I missed the familiarity of my American

high school. However, despite the pain caused by some of my classmates, the rest of my German peers treated me with respect. I also made some good friends outside of class. Once virtual strangers, these people were able to give me insight into German culture that few get.

Although my German classmates and I had a rocky relationship for most of the academic year, we did learn to respect each other by the time I left. In the end, they taught me to be stronger and to develop a thicker skin.

During this difficult adjustment, I found a support system amongst my peers who were in the same exchange program. I spent many memorable weekends with my new group of international friends. Sometimes we would meet up on a Thursday night for a cheap dinner of bratwurst or *doener*, lamb gyros, and talk about how different our lives in Germany were compared to our lives back in our respective countries.

Our heated debates about geopolitics and the differences between American English and British English helped me forget my troubles in school. My new friends kept me hopeful and helped make my exchange worthwhile.

Regardless, I always missed home. My homesickness was only compounded by the fact that members of my family were struggling with major illnesses. Worse, I was served with a healthy dose of Catholic guilt every time I opened an e-mail, made a call home, or just thought about my time apart from my family.

Traditionally, Christmas time is the hardest for high school exchange students

since we're not usually allowed to go home for the holidays. Rather, we're encouraged to stay put as leaving would interrupt the adjustment abroad.

Less than a week before Christmas that year, I received a phone call from home: my grandma had passed away after struggling with terminal cancer for four years. Before my exchange, I realized that I would probably never see my grandma again. But she was the one who ultimately encouraged me to go.

In her heart, I think my grandma figured that if she could never go on such a "grand adventure," her granddaughter should do it for her.

My experience abroad was challenging, but because of it I learned how to appreciate life and people more.

That holiday was the hardest I've ever gone through, knowing that my family was gathering for a funeral before gathering for Christmas. Then three months later, my grandpa—her husband of nearly fifty years—passed away from heart failure.

Some days, even now, I look back and ask myself why I didn't just end my exchange and fly back home immediately at Christmas; at least then I would have had three more months to spend with my grandpa.

However, he would have never stood for it. Like my grandma, he was living vicariously through me, and my exchange represented the adventure that he never had in his youth. To have it end for him, or for my grandma, would've been a disservice to their memory.

Although it was a tough decision, I know

that by staying in Europe, I made them proud. After all, if I had returned home, I wouldn't have been able to call them from Germany to tell them stories about what I was doing and describe all of the characters I was meeting.

Looking back, I think my host family helped me cope with my losses the best. I remember my host mother, Dagmar, wrapping her arms around me as I sobbed after I hearing the news about my grandma. The next day, I found a box of German chocolates and flowers waiting for me when I got home from school.

Although it was difficult going through these times without my real family, I

discovered a new family in Germany that was just as strong and supportive.

The year I spent in Dresden was the hardest I've ever had. However, it was easily the most rewarding. Within three months of arriving in Germany, my German had drastically improved.

Currently, I'm in the process of completing a German minor. I have made friends who will be there for me throughout my life, and knowing that their love is there helps me get through difficult moments.

Since Germany, I've realized that I'm my own worst enemy but also my own best friend. I learned that I can get through the toughest of situations, and that there is always light at the end of the tunnel. No matter what, I will find love wherever I'm blessed enough to find myself.

The lessons I learned, the adventures I had, and the good people I found are what made the sacrifices I made that year worthwhile. —*Kaitlin Flanigan*



OPPOSITE: During my breaks from school or on a sunny weekend afternoon, I loved to wander through Dresden's rebuilt streets of Alt Stadt, or Old Town.
ABOVE: Palaces dot the Dresden skyline and the state of Saxony.

Modest in Spandex

For Mike Modest, professional wrestling is no match to being a family man



The Tokyo Dome is packed, and fifty-eight thousand fans yell in anticipation of the four-man tag team match. For Modest, fighting in the Tokyo Dome is the most defining moment of his career. He didn't win a belt or get a shot at a title match, but he realized that he didn't care about wrestling as much as he thought he did.

It was a point in his life when he began to understand the gift of children and spending time with the people he loved. "[These] are really the only things you get

to take with you past this life," he says. "All of the fair-weather fans that I've met along the way that I don't remember, and don't remember me for the most part, [makes for] a pretty empty life."

Professional wrestling can be an even tougher career on the faithful family man, as temptation lies beyond the ropes of every ring. Once a wrestler makes it to the professional league, lusting women persuade them to find the comforts of home in the confines of their bed. In this sport, if a married man chooses to forego

temptation, he is called a "gentleman," as Modest says. In Japan, he was one of those men. Once he denied himself the scores of swooning women, he had to accept that the remainder of his fans didn't wear lipstick and knee-highs. However, Modest loves his fans, and says he is able to find something in common with almost all of them.

Michael Modest commands respect rather than asks for it. He is a figurehead for the West Coast Wrestling Connection, an independent wrestling league based in Salem, Oregon.

Almost every month, the wrestling league makes its way to the Regional Sports Center in Springfield. Jeff Manning, the owner, works hard to give this league a community feel. Joan Valdez, well known by the wrestlers of the WCWC, gets emotional as she speaks of Jeff. When Joan was down-and-out, abandoned by her daughter, Jeff was there to help in any way he could. Once she was able to find a place to live, she had no money left to furnish it. Jeff provided her with some furniture to make the place feel more like home. "He has a heart of gold," she says.

Troy Frink, Valdez's partner in crime, nods his head as she tells her story. He is one of the few fans at the event who is able to get a word in edgewise on Valdez, and knows more about amateur wrestling leagues in Oregon than the wrestlers themselves. Between Frink and Valdez, the wrestlers endure a lot of verbal abuse in and out of the ring, but this halts when Modest comes from behind the curtain.

In Springfield, Modest is the most beloved wrestler. Kids scramble to get his autograph, grown men struggle to high-five him, and other wrestlers respect him. Joan Valdez has his picture printed on her T-shirt and screams, "Mike [Modest] will kill you!" to his contenders.

PHOTOS BY JESSIE RUNYAN-GLESS

After seventeen years in the profession, Modest is a seasoned wrestler with a realistic outlook on the sport. The illusions he once had regarding professional wrestling have slipped away, and today he views it as any other job. “[There are all these] things you think it is going to be, and you find out that it’s not. It ends up being a regular job,” he says, though to the rest of us it is anything but regular.

Modest spent twenty-four weeks out of the year in Japan up until four years ago, and found it nearly impossible to balance family and work. “[When traveling], I’m really truly happy about ten minutes a day; [the] ten minutes that I am in the ring.”

As the glamour of the job has faded away, the constant abuse to his body has begun to surface. Modest laughs at the people who write professional wrestling off as fake. Though some moves may be discussed prior to the match, the pain is real.

Modest was fighting the Brown Bomber Robert Thompson when he broke his ribs. He felt a hot sensation in his chest and couldn’t breathe for a minute. Once he got his breath back, the Bomber picked him up to throw him back into the ring. Modest noticed the swelling on the left side of his rib cage where the break was located. His broken ribs shifted as he moved, and came

“Everything we do in there is real.”

close to piercing the skin. When Bomber threw him, the swollen area caught on the apron (the fabric that covers the floor of the ring) and again he was unable to breathe.

At age 22, Modest was fighting Fatu in Modesto, California. Fatu back-dropped him over the top rope, and Modest landed on the floor in the splits. He tore his ACL in his left knee.

Later, he tore his ACL and meniscus in two places in his right knee while training wrestlers. “Everything we do in there is real. When I body slam somebody, I am picking them up and I am body slamming them. He is landing on his back.” As he says, the business demonstrates how much abuse the human body can take. “Pro wrestling is an indefinable sport,” he says. “There are parts of it that are fake, and parts that are very real.”

When two men are wrestling against each other in the ring, both want to win regardless of what the promoter has told them to do. “Wins mean video games, posters—payday up,” Modest says. “Both of them want to make money [and] both

of them want to feed their families. You get a lot of heat inside the ring ... If someone gives you something that was out of line, you give it right back,” he says.

Once, without thinking anything of it, he sent one of his fans on MySpace a few signed posters. The gesture meant the world to the young boy. He told Modest how he had cancer, and that he was a role model to him. “[The boy] said, ‘you give me a lot of hope, because I figure if you can get slammed around in the ring like that, then I can beat cancer.’” Currently, the boy is in remission.

The last time Modest was in Springfield, a logging family of four bought him a beer. The youngest was around ten years old and goes to every match in Springfield with his father. The boy asked his dad if he thought Modest would come and sit with them for a minute. The dad told his son if they bought Modest a beer and asked him to come sit, he probably would.

The kid walked up to Modest and said, “We want to buy you a beer.” Once Modest had the beer, the kid said, “Now we bought you a beer, will ya’ come sit with us for a minute?” Modest laughed and said of course he would, regardless of the beer. There couldn’t be a more suitable surname for this wrestler, as his demeanor is what sets him apart from others.

In Springfield, the West Coast Wrestling Connection fans are wild, the wrestlers are outrageous, and any vacant chairs go unnoticed by all. Modest puts the same heart into the show as he did while wrestling at the Tokyo Dome in front of nearly sixty thousand people. As Modest walks through the curtain to fight Dr. Cleaver, his face is mean, his jaw is clenched, and his light-blue eyes are piercing. Even in spandex, his masculinity is daunting. His loyal followers go nuts. The people of Springfield croon. Their hero has entered the ring. —*Jessie Runyan-Gless*

LEFT: Modest shows his intimidating side.
OPPOSITE: Wrestlers in the ring at the Regional Sports Center in Springfield, Oregon.



Watch a slideshow of Modest and the West Coast Wrestling Connection

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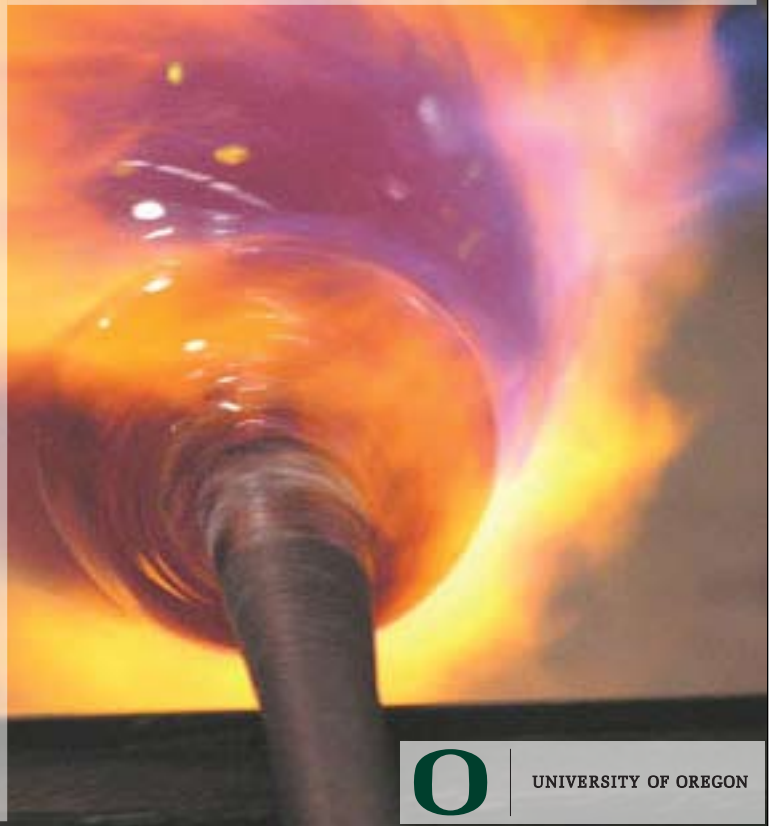
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Drink of the Gods

In South America, yerba mate is a cultural cornerstone



Mate is traditionally served in a hollowed gourd and sipped through a specially designed metal straw, called a *bombilla*, with an attached strainer.

Hot, soothing, and wavering somewhere between weak black coffee and green tea, yerba mate, pronounced “mah-tay,” has grown to be one of the most popular and widely consumed beverages in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile. And for those who swear by it, yerba mate is more than just tea; it’s a cultural symbol that people of all ages, genders, and social classes enjoy.

Every morning and afternoon, Gladys Grunberg, an Argentine from Buenos Aires, fills a teakettle with water, places it on the stove, and waits to hear it sing. Just before it starts to boil, she whisks it off the stove. Next to the sugar, a dried, hollowed-out mate gourd and a bag of peppermint-flavored mate leaves sit waiting on the kitchen table. Grunberg fills the gourd with leaves, strategically places the bombilla, a specially designed straw that filters the yerba, into the gourd, then slowly pours

the hot water until the steeping leaves start to bubble. After each drink, she refills the gourd with water and a spoonful of sugar.

Some days her sons, Fernando and Patricio, join her in drinking mate. On those days, Grunberg prepares the mate and passes it around the table – everyone sharing

recognizable, it’s not the only method. Yerba mate is prepared and served depending on personal preference and regional customs. Some choose to brew their mate in a coffee maker or French press, while others use tea bags, which offer a slightly milder taste. Mate drinkers may also add herbs and spices

With each pass of the gourd, the mate becomes smoother and more enjoyable to drink.

the same gourd and straw. With each pass of the gourd, the mate becomes smoother and more enjoyable to drink. After a few rounds, the teakettle is empty and Grunberg is left with considerably more energy thanks to the *mateína*, as some call the caffeine found in mate.

Although Grunberg prepares mate the traditional way, which is perhaps the most

such as peppermint, orange peel, lavender, and chamomile to complement the tea’s strong flavor.

No matter how it’s prepared, mate is bitter. To avoid its bitter taste, Cecilia Escobedo, an Argentine living in Eugene, says that she spits out the first three mates. “At the beginning, the loose yerba is new so it tastes much stronger. But as the mate

is drunk, the taste becomes milder.” And for those who prefer their mate cold, Escobedo recommends Terere. A variation of yerba mate brewed from hot water, Terere is made from yerba, chilled juice, and ice.

Although tea leaves primarily determine the flavor of the mate, the serving cup can also influence the taste. Most cups are made from various types of wood or hollowed-out gourds that are dried, but mate can be served in nearly any type of container. Paulo Henríquez Feest, a Chilean doctoral candidate at UO, says his mother often hollows out a grapefruit and serves the herbal beverage in the rind.

Mate is a partner to study with, and a friend to accompany you to the beach. Mate is present in every moment of our lives—it’s the ultimate companion.

Mate cups made of wood or from gourds must be cured before using. This initial process is important in order to seal the pores of the cup and preserve its natural flavors. Otherwise, mold will begin to grow after a few uses. To cure a cup for mate, a container is filled with yerba leaves and hot water, allowing it to absorb the flavors. After 24 hours, its contents are thrown out, and the cup is thoroughly scrubbed—it’s now ready for use.

Native to subtropical South America, yerba mate was first cultivated by the Guaraní, an indigenous people from what is now Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Bolivia. According to Guaraní legend, the people long awaited the arrival of Pa’i Shume, a god who would descend from the heavens bringing knowledge of agricultural practices. The legend says that when Pa’i Shume finally came, the most important secret he shared with the Guaraní was the understanding of mate—a drink of the gods that was intended to bring good health, vitality, and longevity to whomever drank it.

Having evolved from its Guaraní roots, yerba mate has become highly varied in the ways it’s prepared and served. Over a decade ago, Argentines served mate directly from the teakettle at home. Now with thermoses and shoulder bags designed

to hold mate paraphernalia, the tea has become a mobile endeavor. In Argentina, mate street vendors allow pedestrians to sip as they walk and motorists to enjoy while on the road. But no matter how the market for mate changes, the tea’s meaning remains the same.

In Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Uruguay, people get together to drink mate the way people in the U.S. meet for coffee. “Mate is a partner to study with, and a

friend to accompany you to the beach. Mate is present in every moment of our lives—it’s the ultimate companion,” Grunberg says.

And while it may seem as though mate flows freely through the streets of many South American countries, Escobedo says that the process of preparing and serving the tea is an intimate ritual. “When you drink regular tea, you drink it and it’s done,” Escobedo says. “With mate, it takes time, it’s self-nurturing.” —*Natalie Miller*



University students Feruza Ashirova (left) and Aoi Futata enjoy a brew of mate and conversation in front of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the University of Oregon.

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indie rock/electronica

Play Us a Song

After years of wandering, Mike Smith settles in Eugene to share his passion for piano



When 34-year-old “Lucky Ear” Mike Smith was just 5, doctors predicted he would only live another year-and-a-half at most due to a softball-sized tumor in his brain.

As if imitating the rain bouncing off the pavement outside, Lucky Ear Mike’s fingers effortlessly bounce up and down the piano’s eighty-eight weathered keys. His hat bobs as he nods his head to the music, his foot tapping rhythmically on the brass pedal below.

Lucky Ear Mike doesn’t read music—he feels it. For the listeners at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Eugene, it is impossible to tell that Mike is blind, but the lengthy scars running atop his head, which he covers up with a tattered brown golf cap, always remind him of the past.

Mike is fortunate to be alive. In 1981, when he was 5, doctors found a softball-sized tumor in his brain. He had a 50-50 chance of surviving an operation, and even if he did, he had a year-and-a-half to live. The doctors accidentally severed his optical nerves during the operation leaving Mike legally blind with 2600 vision in his right eye and 2450 vision in his left.

Two years after the surgery he suffered a stroke. It took him two additional years to learn how to walk and talk again. At 13, Mike suffered a grand mal seizure. But Lucky Ear Mike, as some call him, is still around.

“Why God does what he does, I don’t think any of us will have answers for,” he says.

“My folks considered me mentally retarded. My stepmother was convinced that I was going to burn my hand on a toaster.”

Mike has no birth certificate and has no idea know where he was born. He describes himself as a shotgun baby, “shot out” in an unknown county while his mother and father passed through Illinois. His parents divorced when he was 2 years old. His

father, Bob, remarried. Bob operated a charter fishing company called Guardian Angel out of the family home near Lake Superior. While his father and brother were fishing, Mike would stay home and answer the phone for Guardian Angel.

“My folks considered me mentally retarded,” he says. “My stepmother was convinced that I was going to burn my

hand on a toaster,” Mike says. His father was abusive, so Mike took refuge in his grandmother. “She was actually my inspiration for music,” he says.

When Mike’s father and two uncles forced his grandmother into a nursing home,

she passed on her large collection of albums to Mike. He listened to them obsessively and eventually learned to play some songs by ear.

However, his visits to his grandmother couldn't improve his situation at home. So, Mike ran away. He got caught. He ran away again. It became a cycle. He ran to escape his family and the stereotypes they held him to. But the last time he ran away, the cycle stopped. A counselor at a youth shelter eight miles from home suggested sending him to the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) in Faribault, Minnesota.

At 18, four months prior to graduation, Mike received his first Social Security check, dropped out of MSAB, rented an apartment in Faribault, and tried to get his GED. But he never could. He tried multiple times, but could never get any help.

"A lot of the places aren't equipped and don't know how to react to people with visual impairments," Mike says. "It takes a little more time for me to read through stuff and they've got everything on timers."

Mike left for Minneapolis. But the transition from a small town to a big city was overwhelming, so he packed his bags and left. He hopped trains, hitchhiked, and took buses until his travels dotted the Midwest and West like a map of flight connections.

In 2002, Mike returned home to make amends with his family, which he hadn't seen in twelve years. However, Mike's father discovered his musical talent—and tried to make a quick buck.

"My father had the idea that he could

pawn me off on the public as being a blind, mentally retarded musician," Mike says.

Mike left feeling used and betrayed. He hasn't seen them since.

In 2004, Mike moved back to Eugene, where he lived once before. "I didn't know where else to go," he says.

Mike stayed at the Eugene Mission, but was kicked out after he suffered another seizure. Fortunately, St. Vincent de Paul's was able to place him in the Mary Skinner

"I'm not one for fame and glory; I don't believe money can buy everything."

apartment complex, where he lives today. Mike has lived in Eugene for the past four years—the longest he's stayed in one place

His tiny apartment room is bursting at the seams: pipes, recorders, tin cans, food containers, wine glasses, tea cups, computers, an antique sewing machine, a 1930s Smith Corona typewriter, a whoopee cushion, a baton. Bookshelves overflow with texts on every imaginable topic. He has seven Bibles and twenty books about the Bible. Sunlight shines through a small, algae-infested fish tank, where two dead goldfish, that Mike says killed each other, have been rotting.

"I haven't gotten around to cleaning that."

The small portion of the floor that isn't consumed by the twenty-plus large Tupperware containers Mike uses for storage is littered with the remains of the nuts and seeds Mike feeds his rat, Snowball, who lives

in a cage atop his lofted bed frame.

Mike keeps his mattress in the closet and sleeps underneath his lofted bed frame in a sleeping bag, wedged between boxes, an old suitcase where he keeps his clothes, the sewing machine, and a keyboard that sits on a broken stand. "I try to get out of here as much as possible," he says.

He entertains children and adults alike by blowing smoke bubbles out of his pipe at Alton Baker and Skinner Butte Park. He

also ties balloons, creates origami, and writes riddles—but piano is his forte.

On Tuesdays, Mike plays piano at Japoa, an assisted living complex near his apartment, and every other Saturday he plays at St. Mary's Episcopal Church during the Free Breakfast Saturday. He also occasionally plays at the soup kitchen.

"I knew if I made it my career, I wouldn't enjoy it," Mike says. "I'm not one for fame and glory; I don't believe money can buy everything."

On a hot day in mid May, Mike races his children's-sized BMX bike from his apartment to Skidders Butte Park two blocks away, tooting his horn as cars pass and churning his legs to compensate for his flat tires. When he reaches the park, he plops his oddly shaped, 5-foot-3 frame on a bench overlooking the Willamette River. His asthma flares up. Huffing. Puffing.

"I don't usually go that fast," Mike says. "I was trying to show off." After he catches his breath, Mike packs his pipe with tobacco and starts blowing smoke bubbles. The warm breeze carries them toward the people on the bike path.

Today is Mike's thirty-fourth birthday, and although there will be no celebration, no cake, no friends, no family, and no presents, he is happy to be alive.

"[Life] is just kind of a wild guessing game," Mike says. "Everything in life for me is just one day at a time." —Michael Bishop



Lucky Ear Mike in his crowded downtown Eugene apartment, practicing the repertoire of songs he plays at St. Mary's Episcopal Church.

As The Riots Raged

STORY & PHOTO KELSEY IVEY

With each laborious gasp of air, the white, hazy smoke seared my throat like a sizzling frying pan. Tear gas stocked the Athenian streets, hissing between stampeding feet, falling rocks, shattered glass, and overturned cars. To filter the toxic mixture, I wrapped my blue and green striped scarf, which I had bought just weeks before in Paris, around my mouth, but the usually soft fabric offered no comfort. My eyes burned. My lungs choked. My mouth watered. But my legs would not move. Locals swiftly retreated past me down the narrow road lined with tan apartments and small storefront windows, now smashed in, as the smoke drifted downwind toward the sea.

Run. Find your friends and get out of here. I told myself. Nervous panic welled up inside me. Instead, I reached for my camera.

Growing up in my middle-class suburban home, safety was a high priority. My street had a block watch team. We had a hide-away key I was sure no one could ever find. My parents and I had reviewed the fire escape route in my house and I had even pinpointed the best hiding place in case of a tornado—the hall coat closet behind the vacuum. To me and my small world, everywhere was safe.

Ever in doubt, I always had faith that someone would come to my rescue. Before I could even read, I had memorized 9-1-1. The police and firefighters—the good guys—were the friendly faces of the neighborhood. They captured the bad guys, rescued cats out of trees, and kept our community safe.

Yet on December 6, 2008, while I waited in Milan, Italy for my plane to Greece, 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was fatally shot on the streets of Athens by a police officer. That day, the same force entrusted with maintaining public safety and order, ignited riots throughout Greece.

Morning rose quietly but as the sun reached high in the sky and fell into late afternoon and night, rampant rioters scattered the streets.

Standing on the street corner, packed shoulder-to-shoulder with locals, I felt like an unwelcomed spectator of a private dispute: a battle between protester and police. With black bandanas draped over

coat closet to hide in as the police swarmed from all directions. I no longer knew on which side I stood. Was there even a line? A rock flew inches above my head hitting an advertisement behind me. Police beat a young man with night sticks only yards away. The crowd cheered.

The police turned. Night sticks in hand, they charged the crowd where I stood.

Can't they see that I'm not a part of this? It didn't matter. Ducking out of the way, I dropped my camera to my side and took shelter in an alley. A dumpster rolled by ablaze. My heart pounded against my chest as the adrenaline turned to fear. Athens was no longer safe.

The cool roughness of the stucco alley wall clung to my back as I leaned to catch my breath. Although the firm permanence of the building offered security, this time I knew there was no more hiding—my closet disappeared the moment I had entered the smoke. In the blur of commotion and noise I realized it was time to stand up and trust myself.

So with shaky hands I put away my camera, tucking it back into its blue canvas bag and into my purse. I stepped out of the alley to make my way carefully through the

hazy crowd to join my friends.

As we walked by storefront windows where vendors sold delicious one-euro gyros just earlier that afternoon, shards of glass and rubble crumbled under our feet. Glistening in the Grecian sun, the jagged glass reflected the fractured violent image of the rioters and police. Troubled by political corruption and public fear, the Athenian people were more willing to live in an unsafe city than stand down to what they thought was wrong. They were not only fighting for the boy who was killed, but also for themselves—and it was about time that I stood up for myself on two solid feet.

As the smoke began to clear, I turned around one last time. Smoldering trash framed the angry protestors as riot police, wearing gas masks, lined up for another charge. It was the perfect shot—a front-page headliner—but I knew it was not mine to take. ♀



Overturned police vehicles outside the Piraeus Police Headquarters in Athens, Greece.

their faces, more than 300 rioters formed a street blockade. The protestors—many who didn't look older than 15—chanted fearlessly at police while bombarding them with chunks of sinter blocks, oranges, eggs, and petrol bombs as the sun set to their backs.

"Cops, Pigs, Murderers!" a nearby local, whose boss had let her out of work early so she could reach her car before the riots worsened, translated for me. "Killers in uniform!"

I never thought I was in danger. *I am an American student, a journalist—this is obvious, right? I am behind police lines. I'm totally fine.* I assured myself as I switched my camera to video mode and followed the police officers down the street. *This will be great footage.*

The police charged.

Confusion. Rioters scattered. I was caught in a tornado of activity without a

ē'thōs'

the fundamental characteristic
of a spirit, people, or culture.





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