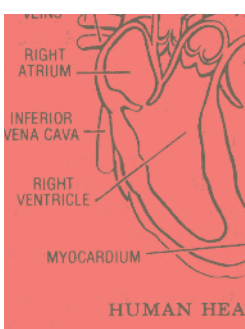
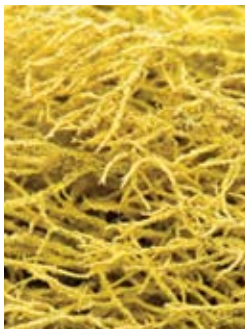
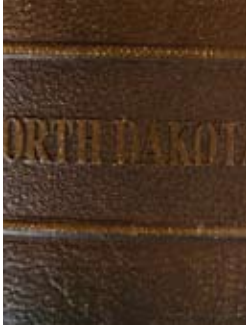


NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY SPRING 2007 magazine

lyric by IRVING TAYLOR

music by VIC MIZZY





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editor's note

For a while there, not long ago, I was on fire. I had a hot car, a big, wild, red hairdo, a fabulous pair of jeans and three-inch heels to strut in them. Please pardon my indulgence here, but that's how the past has come to seem, now that I drive a nice four door, have a tame haircut, and wear sensible shoes. And walk around muttering about the horrible music the kids are listening to these days, and other things my parents used to say.

I knew I was in trouble with the shoes, though I remained in denial, but after the haircut, I had to admit it: I've crossed over. Comfort is more important than cool. Once the door opened to this fear, that I'd become a grown up and therefore crashingly dull, all kinds of evidence came clear. As if sensible shoes and an easier hairdo aren't bad enough, there's that pair of Levi's, a size larger than I'd really need them, with a little stretch in the fabric for extra ease of movement. (How did I even come to be in the Welcome to Early Old Lady section of the department store?) All the crutches I'd relied on, the ballast of hair and shoes, in a few months, gone.

This sense of a changed status snuck up on me. There were lots of clues, but I didn't see them as they occurred. When an about-to-graduate architecture student went on a weekday run with me and kindly said she hoped to be in as good a shape as I was when she was my age, the flattery allowed me to ignore the fact that I am twice her age. I focused where my hopes held. I'm still surprised not to have to ask someone for permission to go to the movies, how the heck did I get to be twice as old as a budding architect?

The sensible shoe thing is the result of having become a runner. I am wildly excited about this. I am slow, (which I blame on ridiculously short legs, not lack of effort) but I am out there putting in the miles, grinning like a fool.

Runners have all kinds of aches, and feet are often where it hurts. High heels are not the best way to rehab a foot full of stressed connective tissue. Never mind you might fall off one and break an ankle.

And the haircut, that was a very spontaneous, brave choice I regretted as soon as it was done. I'd kept it long for thirteen years, and had no plans to ever go even a half-inch shorter. But one day my stylist showed me a magazine cover of Sandra Bullock and said she'd like to cut my hair like this beautiful movie star's, so I said what the heck. A girl's gotta be open for change, right?

Shoes and hairdos and cars are just symbols, perhaps not the most meaningful, but they've been mine, and their absence plays into the realization that I've reached a new point. I am accustomed to gunning hard for the next thing. From childhood, you look forward to being in junior high, then high school, then can't wait to get to college, chase after a good job, aspire to own a house, get married, always looking forward, always moving forward. And now the list of natural next steps is shorter.

Or is it? Maybe I've been taking that list for granted, and it's time to make it mine. Giving up the false hope of being cool might be a relief. Maybe now is a good time to savor the small stuff, like the great thrill I've been getting out of making pizza dough from scratch. Or trying to make a chocolate cake as good as Mom's. I may always miss that feeling of speed and power I got when I shifted my hot car into fifth gear on a wide open stretch of road, but at least there'll be something good to eat when I've safely, slowly made my way home.

Thank you for reading.

Laura.McDaniel@ndsu.edu

Solving puzzles, making the world safer



Thomas C. Schelling, *left*, and Robert J. Aumann, during their Nobel lecture at the Royal Academy in Stockholm, Dec. 8, 2005.

Telling the story of a Nobel Prize winner

Upon graduating from North Dakota State University in 1967, Robert Dodge did the things lots of people do after graduating: served in the military, got a job as a history teacher, earned a master's degree in education. He later took time off from teaching to attend Harvard in pursuit of a master's degree in public administration at the Kennedy School of Government, where he had the good fortune to meet the economist Thomas Schelling. This teacher-student relationship became a friendship and a collaboration, and eventually led to a book about Schelling, an influential but not widely known adviser during tense years after World War II. Here is a bit about Dodge's experience with writing a biography of Schelling, who received the 2005 Nobel Prize for Economics.

It was 1957 when the bespectacled economics professor from Yale first spent a summer in Santa Monica, California, at a site where workers gathered during their lunch breaks to entertain themselves by playing a challenging blind-chess game called Kriegspiel. The game required two chessboards with a barrier between them, so the players could only see their own boards and pieces. The contestants made moves against blank spaces, and only found whether those moves were allowed or they had captured opponents' pieces when told so by the third person, the referee. Halfway around the world at Baikonur in Kazakhstan, workers were entertaining themselves in a more raucous manner, by throwing pairs of scorpions in large glass jars and watching them fight to the death. It is appropriate both were entertained by combat. The Kriegspiel world Thomas C. Schelling had come to was the RAND Corporation, the think tank where elite civilian strategists worked on military strategy, focusing on nuclear war. The Soviet workers were at the Baikonur Cosmodrome, preparing a launch pad.

One thing Schelling brought with him to that isolated world was a knowledge of game theory, the study of interactive decision making by rational decision makers. That knowledge would be recognized when the man with a ready smile and a twinkle in his eye was awarded a Nobel Prize in Economics in 2005. The Prize would bring his profound yet quiet influence public attention. Schelling had liked solving puzzles from his early days and that joy of solving puzzles led him to study economics, as the Great Depression seemed the most challenging puzzle to take on. That 1957 fall Sputnik went up, and Schelling's focus changed. As Paul Samuelson, first American winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics said, "Once the vital game of survival in a nuclear age challenged Schelling's attention, mere economics could no longer contain him." He was back at RAND then on to Harvard, and was soon the leading nuclear strategist of the time. A RAND document states, he "established the basic conceptual structure of deterrence theory. In fact, one could go farther. Schelling's ideas are at the

heart of the complex, counterintuitive logic of mutually assured destruction, which has underpinned American nuclear and arms-control strategy for four decades."

The year he moved to Harvard, John Kennedy was elected president. It was the most dangerous time in history and this little-known strategist helped the world survive. Now there is great concern because North Korea has tested a nuclear device and Iran might be working on one. When Schelling became involved in nuclear strategy, the United States was producing an average of 70 nuclear weapons per day. America's nuclear arsenal reached a high point in explosive power of 40 trillion pounds of TNT in the early 1960s. A pound of TNT would bring down a plane and the United States had more than 13,000 pounds of TNT for every man, woman and child on the face of the earth. The Soviets had larger bombs but not quite as many, but would catch and eventually surpass the United States. As Albert Einstein had observed years earlier when Truman decided to go ahead with development of the hydrogen bomb, "annihilation of any life on Earth has been brought within the range of technical possibilities ... General annihilation beckons."

Schelling believed that in such volatile situations communications were vital and was first to propose the hotline. He also conducted war games for training decision makers for crisis situations, where participants included, among others, Henry Kissinger and Robert Kennedy. His game theory was apparent in the "chicken dilemma" advice he gave John Kennedy for making a stand in Berlin in 1961, when nuclear war threatened. Schelling believed tactics could have desired outcomes and recommended what he called "commitment." In the chicken dilemma game the problem is making the other side know its actions will be disastrous. It comes from old movies about teenagers driving their cars at each other to see who will be the chicken and turn away. Schelling said commitment, a binding statement of intention one makes in advance of his opponent's decision, is a winning way to play this game. He likened it to one driver ripping off his steering wheel and holding it out the window as he sped forward



Schelling receives the Nobel Prize in Economics, Dec. 10, 2005.

Credit: JONAS EKSTROMER/AFP/Getty Images

“Tom Schelling is a titan, and it is not the slightest exaggeration to say that his remarkable scholarship has made the world a safer and better place.”

—David T. Ellwood, dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government

at the other car. After reading Schelling’s advice Kennedy announced, “We have given our word that an attack upon that city will be regarded as an attack upon us all,” and “the choice of peace or war is largely theirs, not ours.” The Communist response came with no attack. Instead, the Berlin Wall was built.

Perhaps Schelling’s greatest success came with his arms control efforts and work to overcome the “prisoner’s dilemma” that had locked the United States and the Soviets in an arms race for so long. The prisoner’s dilemma game demonstrated that even though the “rational” thing to do seemed to be to cooperate, rational players wouldn’t do so out of fear of being exploited. So both the United States and the Soviets sought to gain superiority in arms when cooperation in reducing the expenditures would have been mutually advantageous. He worked to show that the efficient outcome for both sides, and one that could be monitored, was for neither to continue to try to gain superiority. Schelling’s efforts, according to Al Carnesale, who was on the U.S. negotiations team for the treaties, contributed greatly to the success of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and the ABM Treaty. The importance of this was apparent on one of the most emotive symbols of the Cold War era, the Doomsday Clock. The Doomsday Clock is a seven-inch by seven-inch orange clock face expressing the peril the world faces that first appeared on the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists of June 1947, set at 12 minutes to midnight. After the first Soviet atomic bomb explosion in 1949 the clock was moved forward five minutes, and in 1953 with the explosion of “Mike,” the first hydrogen bomb, it was set at two minutes to midnight, where it remained during much of the thermo-nuclear era. With SALT I and ABM treaties, the world moved back from two minutes to midnight to 12 minutes to midnight (currently it is five).

Schelling worked to make strategies understandable, so those in power would choose wisely. His greatest book, *The Strategy of Conflict*, is still commonly used in universities. It formed the foundations of strategic studies, gave it its vocabulary. Stanley Kubrick

was influenced by his writing to make a movie about nuclear war, *Dr. Strangelove*.

As to his importance, typical comments (coming both from before and after his Nobel) are the following: David T. Ellwood, dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, “Tom Schelling is a titan, and it is not the slightest exaggeration to say that his remarkable scholarship has made the world a safer and better place.” Richard Zeckhauser, professor of political economy at Harvard, adds “Schelling is the world’s foremost strategic thinker about social situations and human behavior. He helped make the world a safer place to live.” And from Paul Samuelson, Nobel Laureate 1970, “In Japan Thomas Schelling would be named a national treasure.”

It wasn’t just the Cold War he had worked on. He had talked about the “tipping point” and about other problems that helped show “how” segregation took place rather than “why.” His ideas on segregation had found fertile soil in Singapore where we live, as the Prime Minister and several other ministers had studied under him at the Kennedy School. Measures were put in place in the massive public housing complexes to assure the racial or ethnic composition of the state was mirrored in all housing estates. Earlier “race riots,” pitting one ethnic neighborhood against another, wouldn’t be repeated. His views on congestion models also were influential, as Singapore worked to avoid the traffic gridlock so common among its neighbors. His work on organized crime, self-control, global warming has all been leading and novel in the application of pure rational thought to problems that bring on strong emotional response.

I first got to know Tom Schelling during the 1989-1990 school year. My wife and I are from Fargo and taught in the local area from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. We then decided to try overseas teaching and after a four-year stay in London, moved to Singapore, where we have remained. I was given a sabbatical to attend the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, a professional school Schelling helped found, to earn a master’s in public administration.

Its alumni include five acting heads of state and the new Secretary General of the UN, along with a number of members of congress and many civil servants from around the world. It is a stimulating place.

The course I enjoyed most was Schelling’s “Conflict Cooperation and Strategy.” It was about how to think about problems and emphasized game theory. I thought the skills we were learning could be presented to a younger audience and went to see him. We agreed it would be interesting and that we would cooperate on putting something together. We corresponded regularly, then began getting together in summers, and I suggested he should be writing his memoirs. He said he didn’t want to take the time, so I volunteered, and a serious project was under way.

Schelling remains active and productive at 86 and his fertile mind has looked at many of society’s problems and offered truly imaginative solutions. Perhaps one anecdote that captures that imagination is a story told by Herman “Dutch” Leonard, a professor of public administration at the Kennedy School since 1979. “The story is that there was a faculty committee to study the ‘Harvard faculty parking problem.’ It has been said that there are three relevant groups and interests around a university: sex for the undergraduates, football for the alumni, and parking for the faculty. My experience is that that is roughly right. You can imagine what the ‘parking problem’ looks like at Harvard. Harvard has a higher concentration of prima donnas than any other place on the planet. The faculty parking problem is not that we have too many parking places to distribute — it is, roughly, that no matter how you distribute the parking places, (a) there will not be enough; and (b) [far worse] you will be implicitly or explicitly announcing some form of hierarchy among the eminent — which, of course, is anathema. So what to do?”

“The story goes that Tom was unable to attend the first meeting of the committee, so the chairman told him that the first meeting was for brainstorming alternative methods of distribution, and that the committee would meet and come up with some ideas and make a list, and that Tom could think on his own about alternatives and that if he had thought of any that weren’t on the committee’s list, he could add them at the second meeting. So it came to pass that the committee had thought of half a dozen materially different alternatives — and, when Tom came to the second meeting, he had a list that included all six of the committee’s alternatives, plus another dozen materially different new ones.”

When the story of the Cold War of the Twentieth Century is finally written, perhaps the role of Tom Schelling will emerge more prominently. The civilian strategists behind the scenes whose ideas shaped the views and influenced the decisions of that conflict are the missing part of the story, and none was more important than Schelling.

My pleasure has been spending so much time and continuing to do so with such a brilliant, yet modest man, who has been a quiet influence on American affairs for over a half century. My biography of this remarkable man was published in the US by Hollis/Puritan Press and in Asia by Marshall Cavendish, and is entitled *The Strategist, subtitle: The Life and Times of Thomas Schelling*.





No. 106

THE LIBRARY OF KEVIN:

ONE MAN'S QUEST TO ARCHIVE
NORTH DAKOTA'S LITERARY LANDSCAPE
IN HIS HOUSE

Kevin Carvell confronts the stacks of used books languishing in the musty frugality of a thrift store with a mixture of mild expectation and weariness. He reminds himself that gems have a tendency to turn up in the most unlikely places, including the volume he found tucked into a shelf of ornamental books meant to dignify the sales floor of a waterbed store, and more than a few have come from garage sales. Long years of prospecting the tattered stocks of books in secondhand stores have yielded some of his best finds, but he knows when walking in, that most of the time he will leave empty-handed. Carvell's three decades of ardently stalking bookstores scattered around the country have made it harder to find titles he doesn't already own, sometimes in duplicate. To warrant his interest, a book must pass one of two tests: It must be about North Dakota, in a way he regards as more than superficial, or it must have been written by a North Dakota author.



Crouched down in the dim light of the thrift shop, Carvell brightens when he spots a paperback poetry book, “Treasures, Pleasures and Measures of Inspirational Verse,” by an unfamiliar author. “I don’t know if it’s worthy,” he says while turning to the copyright page, where he learns that the self-published book was issued by Mr. Print in Fargo, thus qualifying for admission to his collection. His momentary satisfaction fades when he spots trouble standing in front of a nearby stack: David Martinson, actually an old friend, but here a threat. Martinson, a poet and English lecturer at NDSU, is also an accomplished book collector — and therefore a rival for any hidden jewels. “So you’ve already covered all of this,” Carvell says with mock defeat in his voice. “So this is all trash.”

Martinson chuckles. Their friendship is further colored by the fact that Martinson owns Great Northern Books, a rare used bookstore in downtown Fargo, and has supplied Carvell with hundreds of hard-to-find titles. “I’m not getting any North Dakota stuff today,” Martinson says. After giving that reassurance, the book dealer compliments Carvell’s bonafides as a collector. “Kevin has the finest collection of books of this region anywhere,” he says. “One of the things I admire about Kevin’s collection is its inclusiveness. It’s just a fabulous collection, and it’s meticulously cared for.” Carvell’s penchant for inclusiveness displays itself a few minutes later, when he grabs two slender volumes, a pair of annuals from Fargo’s Ben Franklin Junior High, for 1987 and 1989. “I’ve got two treasures,” he says, paying \$3 for his three finds. “That’s enough for here.”



Carvell can trace the beginnings of his obsession back to those stolen moments years ago in

Sister Helen Margaret’s classroom, back when he was a curious seventh grader eavesdropping on the teacher’s lectures about North Dakota history, lessons that were intended for the eighth graders, whose classroom at St. Vincent’s School in Mott, N.D., he shared. He was excited to learn that important explorers, men like Lewis and Clark, had passed through the area. At home, his mother told him bedtime stories about growing up on a farm near town. Her father was one of seven Czech immigrant brothers who settled adjoining homesteads. The brothers had helped dig the New York City subway and farmed in Iowa and Minnesota before trying their luck in the thin soil of Hettinger County. In his adolescent years he began his own study of local history, reading whatever he could find in local libraries, and found the accounts surprisingly rich. He was intrigued by the nearby Battle of Killdeer Mountain, a major conflict between the U.S. Cavalry and Sioux bands that fled into Dakota Territory following an 1862 uprising in Minnesota. According to legend, Sioux warriors who were completely surrounded escaped down the Medicine Hole, an opening in the earth near the top of a commanding hillside. More likely, he admits now, the warriors simply snuck off under cover of darkness. But stories like those prompted Carvell to see his humble hometown and surrounding countryside from a fresh angle. “The fact that you live in a place where something interesting happened appealed to me,” he says. “It puts a whole new light on the place where you live and gives you a whole new appreciation.”

One book in particular from his boyhood made a lasting impression, and lingers as a sentimental favorite, “Extraordinary North Dakotans.” One of the most oddly extraordinary North Dakotans was Hans Langseth, a prolifically whiskered Norwegian immigrant who farmed near Barney, N.D., and whose 18-foot beard made it into the Smithsonian Institution. Carvell, who keeps his own beard carefully trimmed in counterpoint to his balding head, has a picture of Langseth displaying his regal whiskers, clipped decades ago from a newspaper. He keeps the photo inside the back cover of his own copy of the book, whose exotic profile subjects reinforced his realization that history was a trip worth taking. He wanted more.

“That book was the inspiration, I guess,” Carvell says, but adds that it was one of a series of early influences, that there was no single seed. He sounds more than a little mystified by all that has sprouted from his boyhood fascination, which ultimately led him to amass a collection of more than 7,000 books, periodicals, maps, county histories, school annuals, autographed monographs — seemingly anything ever written about

"MY COLLECTION'S ENORMOUS.

IT'S LARGER THAN MANY INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS."



DAKOTA DAYS

Milligan

MAXWELL, REV. S.R.

THE NONPARTISAN LEAGUE
FROM THE INSIDE

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North Dakota or by an author with legitimate ties to the state. Carvell's definition of a North Dakota author, it's worth noting, skews toward leniency: anyone who stayed long enough to get mail. Will Weaver, the well-known Minnesota novelist and short story writer, nonetheless qualifies as a North Dakota writer by Carvell's criteria, since he attended classes and collected mail at the University of North Dakota. Given such generous standards, and the vast reach of his ambitions, the collection has overtaken his home in a leafy neighborhood in south Fargo. Over time, bookshelves spread like kudzu along his walls, starting in his living room, where shelves flank his fireplace and dominate the main wall, the site of his nonfiction collection and where he manages to display a few keepsakes from his father's drugstore, including a large mortar and pestle as well as utensils from the soda fountain. Shelving resumes in his grown daughter's bedroom, where most of his North Dakota poetry and fiction collection now resides, and continues down the hall, where row after row of books engulf a room that doubles as his office and guestroom, finally culminating downstairs in his basement. He jokes that he has to be careful, recalling news reports of a bibliophile who was crushed to death by falling books. "My collection's enormous," Carvell says without sounding boastful. "It's larger than many institutional collections."

The inspiration to build such an extensive collection struck Carvell after he bought a rare, three-volume history of his native state while browsing at a secondhand store. He got home and looked at his bookshelf, where he had 30 or 40 titles about North Dakota or written by its sons or daughters, and decided it would be fun and maybe even worthwhile to keep going. That motivating spark came to him more than 25 years ago, not long after his divorce, when he found himself with more free time and without a spouse to question how he handled his discretionary spending. Soon he began haunting thrift stores, antique shops and, of course, used bookstores. A sure sign of his mania came when he realized he'd become a regular at the state historical society's yearly spring book sales, whose gaggle of book-hungry history

buffs he jokingly compares to the throngs of shoppers who mob Walmart on the morning after Thanksgiving. Interestingly, most of Carvell's fellow North Dakota book collectors are male. "This book-collecting thing," he says, "is a guy thing."



Carvell has succeeded in most of the tasks he's assigned himself in life, as his densely populated bookshelves attest, but he is a failed pharmacist. After graduating from high school he marched right off to NDSU with plans to study pharmacy, following a family career path blazed by his paternal grandfather and taken before him by his father and uncles. Elective courses allowed him to indulge his interest in North Dakota history, some of it brought to life by his professor, kindly old Rudolf Otterson, himself a walking history book, able to spice his lectures with asides drawn from his own experiences, which reached back before World War I, when North Dakota was still a young state. The professor told about the time in the 1930s that he walked from campus to the railroad bridge spanning the Red River to see long lines of railroad cars — grain shipments halted by Gov. Bill Langer in a vain effort to boost the price of wheat. Those lectures motivated Carvell to go on collegiate historical research expeditions, burrowing into state historical archives for a project on the Dakota Indian wars. But Carvell encountered one small problem in college: He hated chemistry. This left him with an unexpected dilemma about what to make his life's work, and he did something that now seems uncharacteristically rash. After two years of indifferent study he went back home to the Hettinger County draft board and volunteered to be drafted. The board was surprised; this was an unusual move in 1965, when U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was escalating. Carvell entered the Army as a draftee, a status that enabled a shorter tour of duty, which he served in Germany as a clerk to a two-star general, and rewrote a guidebook for soldiers in Europe.

After his Army tour ended, Carvell returned to NDSU and civilian life, this time with an interest in journalism, which appealed to him because of the ferment of the times. He was invited to become a staff writer at the Spectrum after the editors saw his contributions to a local newspaper supplement. Soon he was covering the storms sweeping society, including antiwar and civil rights protests, American Indian activism, the ecological movement and the sexual revolution. In the spring of 1969, the year of Woodstock and the first Apollo moon landing, Carvell and his fellow Spectrum staff members decided to have a staff picnic. Then, on a lark, the editors invited the general public to the gathering in Zap, N.D. The outing became a hot topic of conversation around campus, so Carvell wrote a front-page article about what by then had become known as the "Zip to Zap." His story was picked up by The Associated Press news wire, and appeared in papers around the country. Hordes of young people estimated to number 3,000 converged on tiny Zap, a sleepy coal-mining town of 300, and eventually spilled over into surrounding communities. The crowd became a rowdy mob after drinking the local bar dry, prompting the governor to call out the National Guard to restore order. The Zip to Zap ended up making national news, to

Carvell's lasting chagrin, and became a quirky footnote in the annals of North Dakota celebrations.

After graduating in 1971, Carvell joined the reporting staff of *The Forum*, drawing an assignment at city hall, where one day he was surprised to find himself the subject of a news conference called by the mayor, who wanted to complain about Carvell's coverage of a controversial neighborhood renewal project. One moment Carvell was taking notes, the next moment he was trying to act composed when the television cameras focused on him for reaction as the mayor offered a ranting journalism critique. At first Carvell was a bit ruffled, but then he was bemused to be the subject of a news story. Carvell's eyes often twinkle with mirth. He has an ironic sense of humor, often directed at himself. He recently discovered, to his dismay, that a former police officer in Mott who once arrested Carvell for driving one mile over the speed limit is buried next to a plot he bought in the local cemetery, making it an uninviting place to spend eternity. He quips that he has cheap ground to sell.

After city hall Carvell ascended to the state political beat, where he had opportunities to deepen his knowledge of North Dakota and to indulge his interest in history, occasionally roaming between trips to the state capitol and political conventions, including the time he drove old U.S. Highway 10 from Minnesota to Montana, with reflective stops in out-of-the way spots, including the tin-can tower near Casselton and the rock fountain at Crystal Springs, both unseen by motorists whizzing by on Interstate 94.

Following a decade of meeting newspaper deadlines, Carvell's journalism career ended when he accepted an offer to head the Fargo field office for Byron Dorgan, who had grown up a few years ahead of Carvell a few miles down the road from Mott in Regent. Dorgan had just been elected North Dakota's lone congressman, and later would become its junior U.S. senator. Carvell drew from his extensive knowledge of North Dakota when Dorgan called on him for historical references to insert into remarks during the senator's appearances around the state. The job made large demands of Carvell's time, and he kept a pillow and blanket in his office so his daughter could nap while joining him at the office on weekends. The years of long hours took their toll on Carvell's health, and he retired three years ago after developing heart problems, allowing him more time to pursue books. Unfortunately, his heart condition left him with less energy, forcing him to set aside what was to be his Magnus opus: the definitive bibliography of North Dakota books and authors, spiced with biographical sketches and other tidbits. The unfinished bibliography languishes in the orderly drawers of index cards on his desk, and on the memory inside his computer, but falls far short of completion — or of keeping up with his growing collection. When Carvell abandoned the project several years ago, he had index cards cataloging 4,570 items in his collection, purchased at a cost of \$22,781. His collection has almost doubled since then, but his acquisitions no longer come with index-card notations.

Carvell, now 61, has no idea of the monetary worth of his collection. First editions or signed copies, although welcome, aren't that important.



Hans Langseth, "King Whiskers"



EXTRAORDINARY NORTH DAKOTANS -- Rolfsrud

Reapers
of the
Dust

Hudson

Atlantic



Content counts most, especially when he has a personal connection to the book. That explains why one of his favorite volumes is also one of his most obscure, “Dakota Days” by Edson C. Dayton, the privately printed memoir of a Hettinger County rancher from 1886 to 1898. “This was the first thing written about my home stomping grounds,” Carvell says. He bought his copy from a Texas bookseller for \$400, but finds a passage about the tormenting winter of 1897 priceless for what it reveals about the hardships of early ranch life in the area where his family settled, a period that is sparsely documented. All of Dayton’s 12,000 sheep were exposed to scabies, an infectious skin disease caused by mites, and had to be double-dipped in a leaky handmade tank, an unwieldy task accomplished with help from a large crew of Hungarian immigrants, the most ready form of surplus labor rounded up from surrounding communities. Besides the intrinsic rewards of having so many rich historical accounts at his fingertips, Carvell derives other satisfactions from his collection, including acknowledgment of his efforts from appreciative authors. He has a signed first edition of Lois Phillips Hudson’s 1964 collection of short stories, “Reapers of the Dust,” drawn from her experiences growing up on a farm near Cleveland, N.D., during the Great Depression. “To Kevin Carvell,” the author wrote in her inscription, “who managed to do what I haven’t managed to do — find a copy of this book.”

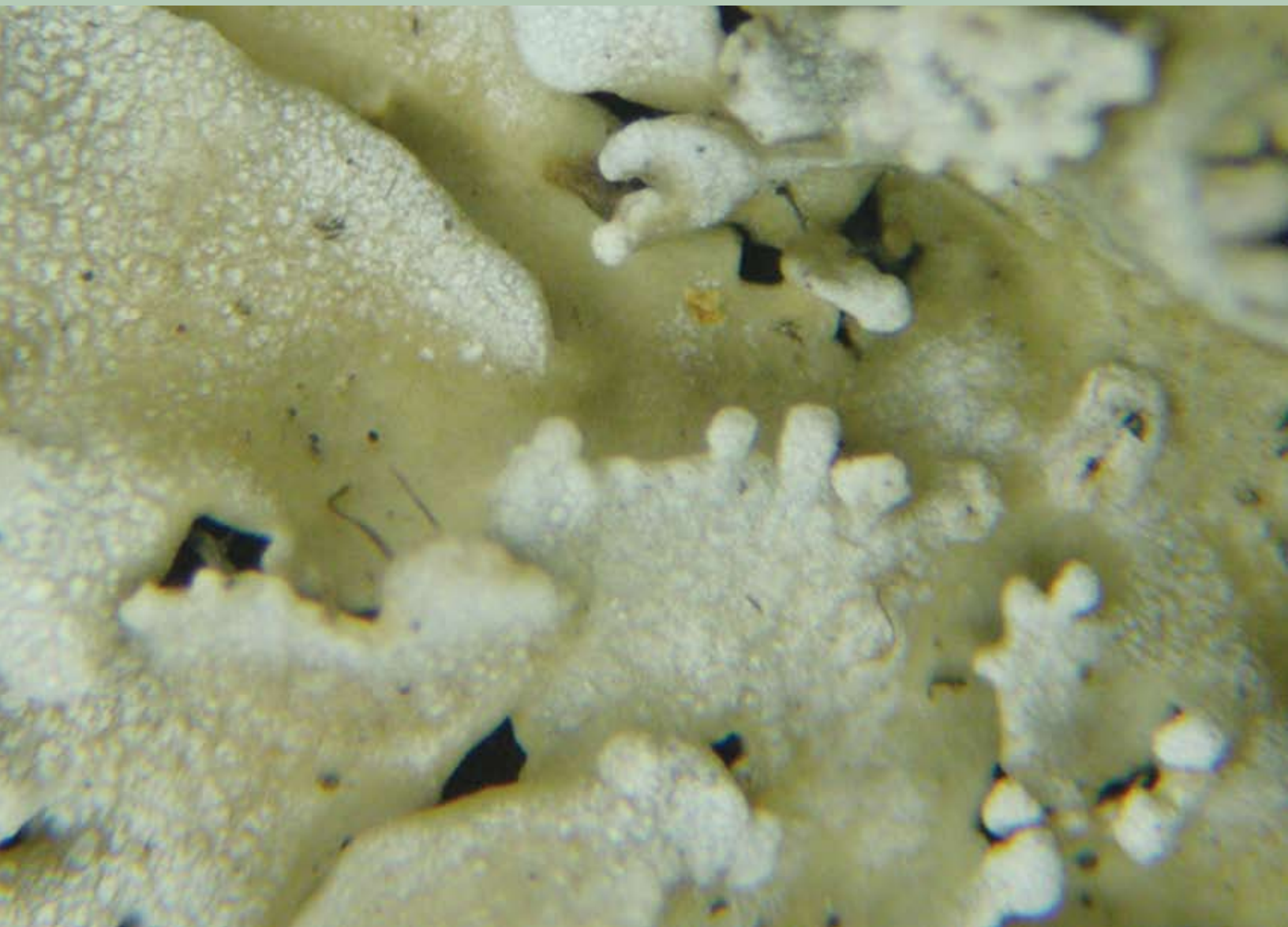
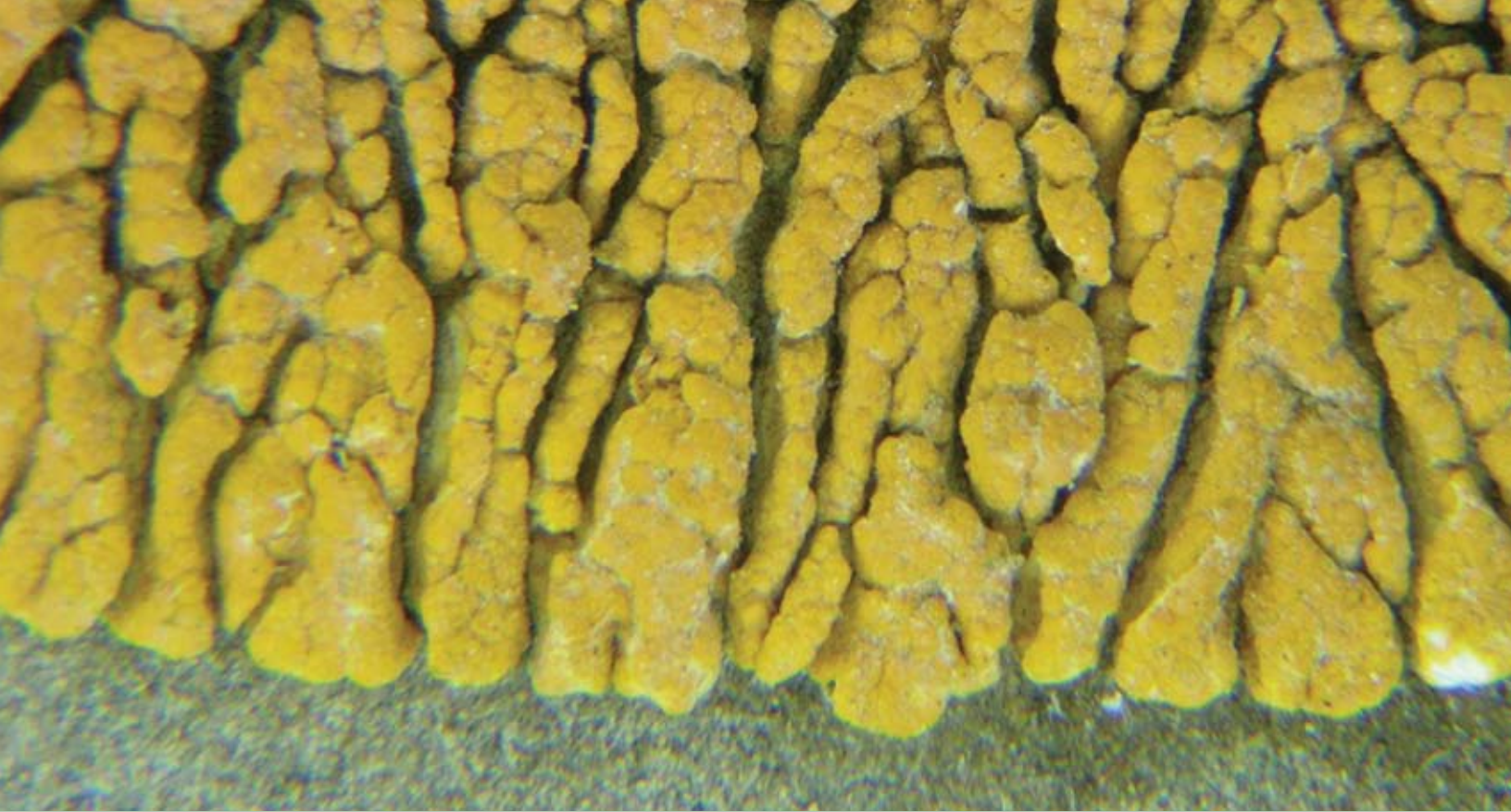


After combing the thrift shop and leaving with his unexpected finds, Carvell resumes the hunt a few blocks away, at B.D.S. Books, Fargo-Moorhead’s largest used bookstore, located across from Martinson’s downtown shop. Now Carvell holds two index cards, a list of novels by North Dakota authors that he owns – his way of avoiding unwanted duplication. “All fiction this time,” he says. “Makes it easier.” When starting out, Carvell didn’t know which authors or titles to look for. He simply skimmed book spines for promising words. “A long line of prairie this and prairie that,” he says. He is working his way methodically down the aisle, dragging a stepladder behind him so he can scan the top rows, out of reach for his five-foot, eight-inch tall frame. “I’m not doing very well here,” he says. His eyes travel to the end of a row, but find only disappointment expressed by a single word, “Nope.” His luck improves at the next stack, where he smiles as he retrieves a copy of Keith Wheeler’s “Peaceable Lane.” The novel, topical when it appeared 45 years ago, examined social and racial tension in the affluent suburbs of New York City, a headline-echoing quality some critics faulted. But Carvell grabs it without hesitation, even though he already owns it. This copy, though, is in good condition, with a dust jacket, a bargain at \$4. Wheeler, Carvell explains, was North Dakota born and raised. He later became an associate editor of *Life* magazine, and has at least four published novels to his credit. The author’s father managed a grain elevator in Carrington, where both parents are buried.

Brad Stephenson, proprietor of B.D.S. Books, has placed himself at Carvell’s disposal, somewhat in the manner of a solicitous casino manager making sure a high roller is properly attended to at the roulette table. “Brad, where’s your science fiction section?” Carvell asks.

He wants anything Stephenson might have by the late Clifford Simak, a well-known science fiction writer who, many years ago, worked a stint as a newspaper reporter in Fargo. This information amuses Stephenson, himself a science fiction fan. The bookseller is in awe of Carvell’s esoteric knowledge of North Dakota authors. “This is why I keep bugging this guy to finish his list,” the bookseller says, referring to the annotated bibliography project Carvell had to put aside. “Because he’s finding these North Dakota connections that most of us don’t know.”

When finished 20 minutes later, after finding a handful of Kathleen Eagle romance novels and several popular westerns by North Dakota authors, Carvell heads for his rendezvous with the cash register. “Boy, I was surprised at how many Kathleen Eagles there are,” he says, adding that she’d once taught school in Fort Yates. “It’s going to cost a fortune. Won’t be able to go to the Czech Republic.” Carvell is eagerly anticipating a trip this spring with his daughter and a sister to a tiny Czech village, the name of which he struggles to pronounce correctly, where they will try to locate relatives on his mother’s side. The trip is an offshoot of Carvell’s recently completed family history, which commemorates the arrival 100 years ago of his Czech-immigrant ancestors in North Dakota. Stephenson rings up his sale, counting 24 books, and gently ribs his customer about whether he actually reads everything he buys. “Well,” Carvell replies, “I eventually get around to reading most of the nonfiction.” Then he totes his purchases home, pleased that eight came free, thanks to a sales promotion, adding the latest items to what might be the largest private library of books about North Dakota. But Carvell is not one to allow his purchasing department long periods of idleness. A few days later, en route to Mott, he stops to browse at Huntington’s, a used bookstore he frequents in downtown Mandan. There he apprehends two more wayward Ben Franklin annuals, from 1977 and 1982, taking two more pieces of North Dakota to make his own.





LICHEN PASSION

Esslinger elected president of 109-year-old botanical society

When Ted Esslinger begins talking about lichens, his resonant, professorial voice notches up a bit in speed and tone. He starts using his hands to gesture more; his eyes open wider, and he looks intently from behind his glasses and full, gray beard, as if judging the level of understanding (or misunderstanding) occurring.

“Excuse me a moment,” he says. “I’ve just gotten a specimen I’ve been dying to take a look at.” As he opens a small, yellow-paper packet and tweezers a portion of something dried and green onto a glass slide, he explains that the specimen is from Canada, that this species of lichen hasn’t been found that far north before. He is dubious it is actually *Anaptychia bryum*, and he is to verify it as such or, if not, correctly identify it.

He hunches over a microscope, adjusts a couple of knobs, and after a brief moment stands. “Here, take a look,” he says. “You might need to adjust the eye pieces.” Under magnification the specimen resembles crushed oregano.

“Let’s find what we’re supposed to be looking at,” Esslinger says and goes to the back of the lab and opens a cabinet, which is at least eight feet tall and four wide. It, and a matching one next to it, is where he keeps his labeled specimens. He is an expert on the

genus *Phaeophyscia*, and as such he is called upon for identifications and verifications like this, but that is only a small part of what he does as a lichenologist.

Over Christmas break he was in the field in Mexico — Jalisco State, to be exact. He has been there often in recent years, contributing to two volumes of a work titled *Lichen Flora of the Greater Sonoran Desert*, edited by his colleague T.H. Nash of Arizona State U.

His latest project, which is only in the beginning stages, will cover all of Mexico and focus on one taxonomic family of lichen, *Parmeliaceae*, in an attempt to identify patterns of evolution and distribution. The research relates directly to one of the really “hot” topics in biology today, the study of biodiversity and the identification of biodiversity hotspots around the world, necessary steps toward conservation of such areas.

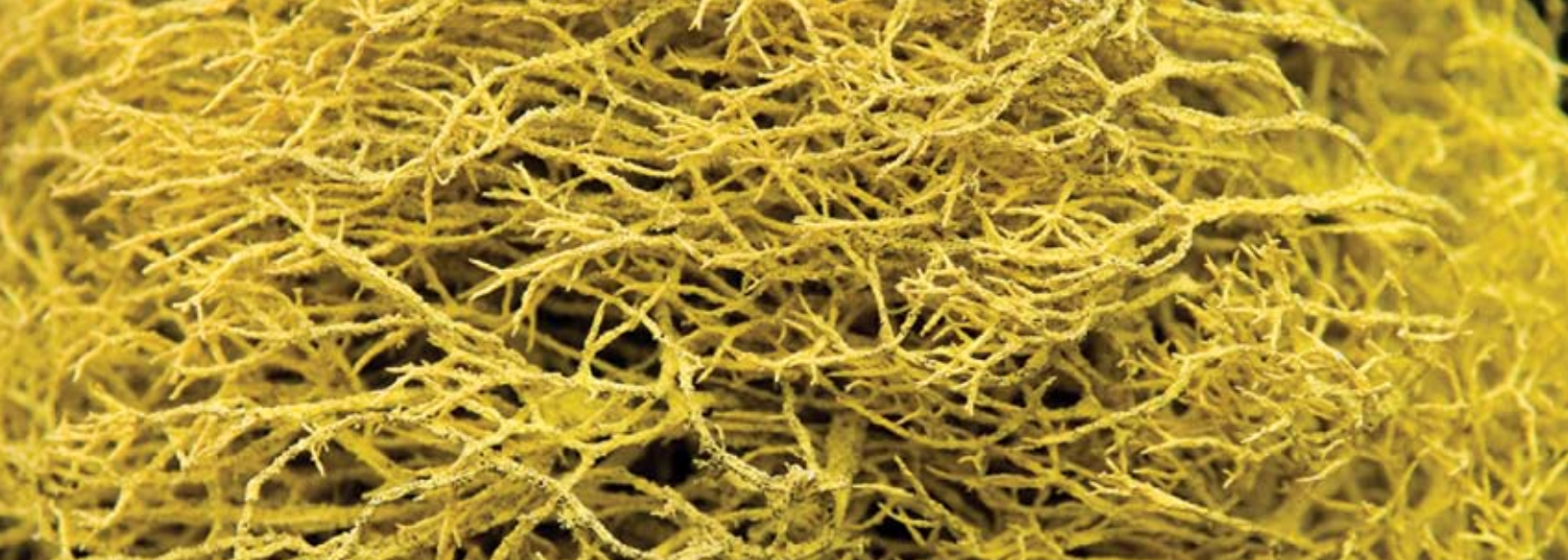
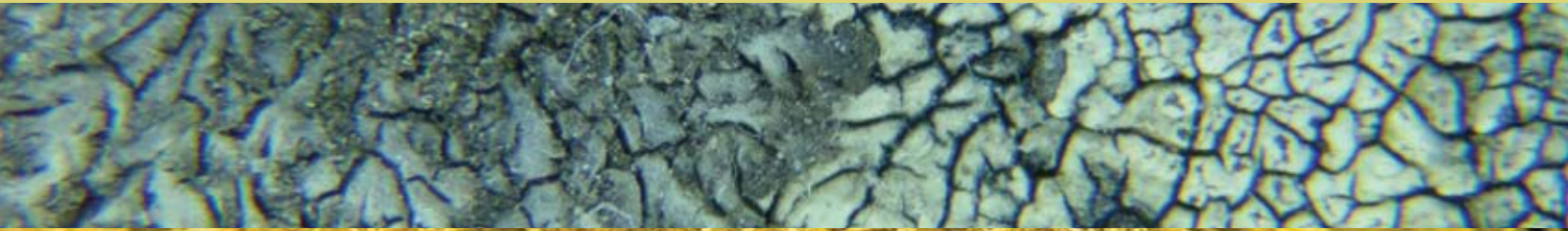
On the door to lab 331A, there is taped an editorial written by a well-known lichen physiologist, explaining the importance of lichens in the biological web of the world. It begins by claiming: Lichens are probably the most misunderstood and poorly appreciated organisms in the world.

Esslinger and his colleagues are used to defending their profession and argue that lichens are fascinating because of their unique structure. Composed of two organisms — a fungus and algae — they are symbiotic, a photosynthetic association. The algae provide the fungi with food while the fungi offer the algae a living environment.

Lichens can be found in some of the most barren and inhospitable environments. They occur worldwide and can eat stones, endure severe cold and remain dormant for long periods without harm. An experiment by the European Space Agency in 2005 showed that lichens can survive prolonged exposure to space, the most complex form of life known with this ability.



fungus + algae=lichen



Back from his collection cabinet, Esslinger opens another little paper packet in which a preserved specimen of *Anaptychia bryum* is nestled between what looks to be Styrofoam packing peanuts. Under magnification it is grayish green, an intricate layering of folds and baffles, something like looking at the inside of a sponge.

He explains that the specimen he has just received is fragmentary, not in good collecting shape. Ultimately, he will have to hand cut longitudinal sections of it with a razor blade and look at the internal tissues under a dissecting microscope in order to make a judgment whether it was correctly identified.

Esslinger has been hooked on the study of lichen since his first collecting trip in the late '60s when he found what he was sure was a previously unknown species. For confirmation he sent the specimen to a man he describes as the "most famous lichenologist," William Culberson of Duke University.

Culberson agreed that it looked like a new species and invited him to come to Duke to describe and name the find. Culberson eventually became his major professor for his doctoral studies, and the new species of lichen became the subject of Esslinger's first published paper in 1971: "*Cetraria idahoensis*, A New Species of Lichen Endemic to Western North America."

But that isn't the whole story. Culberson and others eventually viewed Esslinger's find as a species belonging to an entirely new genus of lichen and subsequently named it *Esslingeriana idahoensis*.

It was a favor that Esslinger would return in 2000 when he identified a new genus of lichen and named it *Culbersonia*.

It is this kind of discovery that keeps him passionate about fieldwork. He explains that making a new find is exciting because he knows something about this species of lichen that no one else in the world knows, and won't, until he publishes his findings.

It is a feeling he has had quite often in his career, having discovered more than 120 previously unknown species of lichen. At heart Esslinger is a collector and cataloguer. Growing up in Spokane he was always outdoors looking and gathering, using the popular Little Golden

Book nature guides — books with titles such as *Birds*, *Trees*, *Mammals*, *Non-Flowering Plants*, and *The Pacific Northwest* — to learn about the natural world.

He was the first person in his family to go to college and describes himself then as naïve because he had no idea he needed to declare a major. He knew that he liked studying animals and plants and chose biology by default. When an instructor in a senior mycology class spent a week on lichens, he was intrigued, partly because lichen grows year round and can be collected and studied in all seasons. That class prompted him to go out and collect the previously undocumented species that would eventually be known as *Esslingeriana*.

This summer Esslinger starts a two-year term as president of the American Bryological and Lichenological Society, which was founded in 1898. It is one of the nation's oldest botanical organizations and has more than 600 members. (Bryology is the study of mosses, and mycology is the study of fungi, including lichen, which was first studied for its medicinal properties.)

The society's journal *The Bryologist* is the oldest continuously edited and published botanical journal in America, according to Esslinger, and he has been a contributor since that first paper he wrote in 1971. He also became an editor for the publication, compiling for the last 15 years the "Recent Literature on Lichens" lists published in each issue.

Last year he turned that project over to Robert Egan of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, his co-editor on *A Cumulative Checklist for the Lichen-forming, Lichenicolous and Allied Fungi of the Continental United States and Canada*, which currently is being maintained online by North Dakota State University.

After graduating from Duke, Esslinger spent a year of postdoctoral studies at the Smithsonian. When he came to NDSU to teach biology in the fall of 1975, he didn't expect to stay 30 years; however, it has been a good fit both professionally and personally. He and his wife Rickie, who accompanied him on that first, fateful lichen collecting trip in Idaho, have a daughter and grandchildren in the area, and though they love to travel, Texas being a favorite destination, Fargo is home.

And as for that fragmentary specimen of *Anaptychia bryum*, Esslinger was able to salvage enough of it to confirm that the identification was correct. It is a rare species, he relates, and its confirmation indicates that it is circumpolar, with a distribution across Eurasia and North America. It is not really an arctic species but rather an arctic-alpine or a high latitude/altitude species.

Esslinger officially starts his term as president of the American Bryological and Lichenological Society in August at the society's annual meeting held this year in Xalapa, Mexico. It is a five- or six-day event with field excursions scheduled into the agenda. Given his plans for other collecting trips earlier in the summer, it's a good bet that this fall Esslinger will be holed up in Stevens Hall analyzing and describing his discoveries.

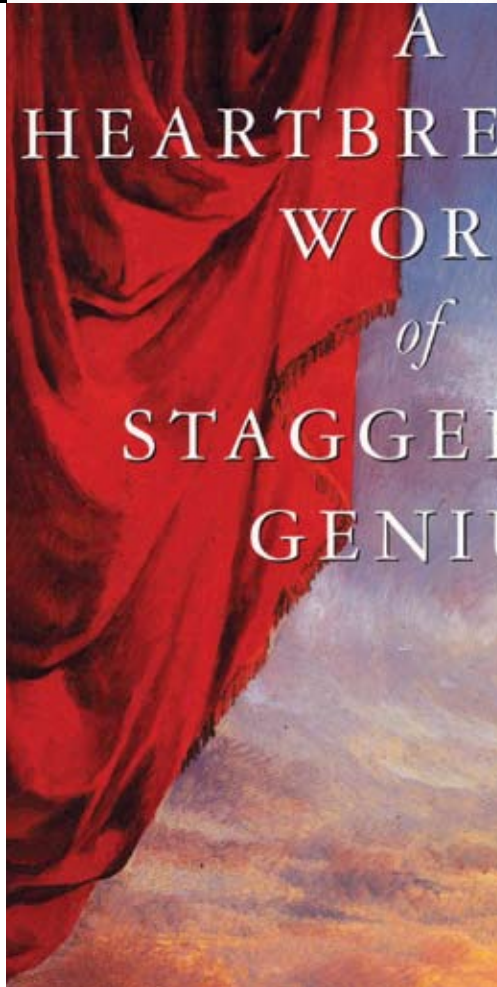
—S. Piehl

[excerpts] David Eggers



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David Eggers is a writer, teacher, publisher and founder of San Francisco's only pirate supply shop. The pirate supply store is actually a front for a tutoring center, established to meet the zoning requirements of the neighborhood, but it says a bit about the creativity and diverse interests of this man. He is widely known for his first book, an autobiographical story of his parents' dying of cancer and raising his brother, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. Eggers publishes a literary magazine, McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, among many other endeavors, ranging from humorous to serious, which can be viewed at mcsweeneys.net. He was the key-note speaker at an arts and humanities summit hosted at North Dakota State University.



It would seem irrational almost to come and go and disappear without any trace of yourself, so memoir is proof that you were here.

Memoir is the process of self discovery or figuring out patterns of your life and the heroes and villains and why you do certain things. It's just like therapy in a way I guess but it's cheaper and then at the end if all goes well then you might end up with something that could teach a reader a thing or two if you could make the personal universal.

When I think of my parents who both died very young and my sister who died young and I think, well I don't have anything but pictures and stories to go by in terms of what their lives were, and I would kill for a book written by any one of them and I could go back again and again and know them that well. So I think that it's a cheat in a way to not leave something like that behind.

I wish I had 500 pages from every one of my family members no longer here.

I think the other thing with a memoir is the cathartic element of it. It feels good to write it. But after 300 something pages, you think does anyone care, could anyone possibly care to hear me for this long. I think it's almost inevitable that you get tired of your own voice after a while.

When that first book came out it was read by a much wider audience than it was intended for, and that was a shock. I wouldn't have written so candidly had I known the audience would be larger.

I had great teachers. I had fantastic teachers, all the way through school. At least I was encouraged by them. I never had an English teacher who said no you've got to fit in this category and you've got to write this way.

I think it's always the great killer of any potential writer if an adult says no it's got to be this way, this is how it's done, five paragraphs, topic sentence, introduction, conclusion, whatever. I think that the teachers that we learn a lot from really untether their students and let them go at it from whatever angle they feel they should. The last thing you want to do is impose any kind of paralysis before they get started.

I think that once students know you're serious and once you're setting an example where you're being honest and you're saying you will not be judged, you will not be chastised, there's no wrong, that's where you get the most incredible writing. We've gotten it out of every conceivable student. But then we are sticklers about grammar and everything like that completely. It's not just rainbows and unicorns, we're really nuts and bolts about it. Students are always more than happy to do all the mechanical stuff if they're expressing themselves in a way that they feel is honest.

The writers I like are mostly people that are the most sort of lyrical and they are able to harness an incredible amount of life and throw it on every page.

I think all writers should be somewhat educated about the printing and publishing process. And I think it's a long held myth that writers and artists sit there by themselves in an ivory tower and don't have to ever get their hands dirty with like knowing anything about the means of distribution. It's totally insane to try to inoculate yourselves from all those things.

Half of the people who work at McSweeney's are old friends from high school and so part of that was an effort to be around your good friends as much as possible and try to figure out a way to work together. It's an obsession of mine to be around old friends and try to figure out ways that we can spend more time together.

I would much rather spend time with the baby than do anything else and as she gets older it's going to be very dangerous because I don't have anywhere near as much interest in anything as I do the goings on in a kid's brain and what they want to do.

Everybody should wear as much flannel as possible, I think, especially on weekends.

I would just rather talk about anything but me.

Bridging worlds

He set out to study physics, but found his niche in anthropology



It takes a slew of e-mail to arrange our meetings. Bill Brunton is constantly on the go — speaking, teaching and traveling all over the United States and abroad. He's just back from a board meeting in the Twin Cities of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and is leaving in a day or so for Hawaii. We meet at his light-filled bi-level home in one of Fargo's newer south side developments. We've chatted before so I am prepared with my trusty digital tape recorder — this man talks fast. Big ideas fall like a three-day snowstorm and I need my brain and eyes engaged in deep listening, not taking notes. His gentle guardian, a border collie cross named McDough, laps intimately at his ankles and visits me occasionally for a quick ear scratch. The couch is one of those soft wrap-around things that can devour a short person so I sit cross-legged, punch record, and we take off.

*Hungry for complex ideas, I want hours of this conversation. I feel a bit like an anthropologist myself as I collect about five hours of tape and mourn the loss of some of the greatest bits, which come after I thought we'd concluded and the recorder was turned off. So it goes. I skim the books he's recommended and promise myself a deeper read soon, especially of *The Cosmic Serpent*. My research mostly complete, the harder work of writing begins. The magazine's readership is diverse. What will engage them? Provoke them? Which threads to pull and which to let languish in my sound files? Is it possible to capture a theory about the origins of the universe in 2,500 words? I love this assignment.*

A small blonde boy lives in the scablands of eastern Washington, that wild geologic oddity left by glacial rivers of an ancient age. The boy is a bright and isolated child who pays close attention to the world around him. He pores over the National Geographic magazines his German-Russian grandmother provides and imagines himself as a great physicist. The grownups around him are women. He is their center and there is no question but that he will attend college. They're hoping he'll be a medical doctor or a lawyer.

As the boy becomes a young man, that early isolation pays off. He is his own person, equally at ease with the wild boys and the pocket protector crowd. He is a math geek on a motorcycle and has discovered that he is skilled in bridging worlds — moving between the roles and identities in which his peers are caught. Perhaps that first signals his calling to the study of anthropology.

Diploma, sunglasses and slide rule in hand, stoked with ambition and big dreams, he leaves Walla Walla. Already an adept mathematician, he still wants to be a physicist and unlock the mysteries of the universe. He enters the University of Washington in 1959. There, to please a girl, he takes a class in the anthropology department, *The Art of Preliterate Peoples*; then he takes another. Soon his math and physics books are gathering dust for he is well and truly in love — with anthropology as well as the girl. Along the way he takes a little break to do the odd things bright young men like to do: he builds and flies model airplanes, develops his skills as a brewer (and tester of that brew), works as a mathematician for a company that makes missiles for the U.S. government. Restored to the classroom after a year's hiatus, Brunton discovers civil disobedience, grows his hair long, and protests the war in Vietnam. His yearning to practice anthropology — to understand other cultures, to learn, for example, how groups assign meaning to concepts like family or leadership — continues to deepen.

Spurred by his studies, he moves past the skepticism and even disdain for a perceived “softness” in scientific method that he'd always associated with the social sciences. He comes to understand that the anthropological data are demanding and rigorous; still empirical but with the empiricism flavored differently when the instrument of observation is a human being rather than a telescope. The data are harder to quantify and much of the power lies not in counting and tallying, but in grasping the big picture that lies beneath the day-to-day activities of human beings. The complexity of his studies provides a channel for his insatiable curiosity.

He marries the girl and they steer a course into the deep waters of anthropology — fieldwork. But the birth of a child with special medical needs cuts short doctoral study in Hawaii and their field work in French Polynesia. Returning to Washington with his family, he builds a relationship with a family from the Kootenai tribe of Plateau Indians. Some of the more familiar Plateau Tribes are the Nez Perce and the Flathead. His scientific observation and the insider's view he gains by being adopted into the tribe provide a master's thesis and a dissertation called *The Legacy of Skincoats*. This game, *Skincoats*, is played by the Kootenai and has a host of meanings for the tribe — social, economic and spiritual. Kootenai culture becomes his academic focus and brings life-long friendships, and a first insider's glimpse of the spirit worlds that will become his greatest passion.

This is a story about the man and about his study of shamanism, an authentic and ancient healing science that relies upon a set of skills often dismissed in Western culture, but highly valued in many others.

Bill Brunton came to North Dakota State University in 1969 as an associate professor and finished his dissertation in 1972. He became professor emeritus in 2001 ending the academic phase of an anthropological career that began with National Geographic magazines in Walla Walla, Washington,

and continues to this minute with his work for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Along the way, he chaired the anthropology and sociology department, served as editor of Shamanic Journal, and maintained his connections and research with the Kootenai.

Brunton is an anthropologist who studies shamanism. He is also a highly trained, working shaman and teacher of shamans who sees no conflict in acting simultaneously as scientist and practitioner. Indeed, he argues, it is a rational and appropriate course to take if one is to truly comprehend an ancient practice that can only be described in metaphors — a subject that literally must be experienced to be comprehended.

One of the ways Brunton explains why a researcher discovers more by being both investigator and practitioner is to describe how archeologists who study stone tools often become stone toolmakers in order to fully grasp the craft and the people who created it. In the process they learn that what most of us call “primitive” is in fact a highly sophisticated technology.

What is shamanism? Brunton finds it’s easiest to start with what it is not: shamanism is not a religion. It is not witchcraft or magic. It doesn’t require belief in a deity or a lot of ritual trappings, though it is found in religions and in the spiritual practices of tribal cultures. A drum, rattle or some other method is used to induce a trance state — a change in

These historic “barriers” have made it difficult for anthropologists, including Brunton, to explain cultural similarities and differences. So for example, it is excruciatingly difficult for adults to learn how to perceive reality in ways other than the way of their own culture. In the West, we have agreed upon five senses, but other cultures recognize more. This is hard to understand because we don’t think in those terms. We may talk about having a sixth sense as a way of talking about nonordinary reality, but do we trust it?

Brunton clearly loves finding the metaphors and similes that are needed to explain a circular worldview to someone who thinks in straight lines. Many cultures think in circles rather than straight lines, and the verb, rather than the noun, is the driving force — in other words actions take precedence over things.

While he has experienced harsh criticism and outright shunning for his choice to “act outside the box,” to study shamanism by becoming one, Brunton is no longer troubled by the disapproval of others. It’s a consequence of maturity, experience, and clear indications to him that scientific objectivity is being increasingly challenged, particularly by the social sciences and quantum physics.

The questions he asks in his research are: Why shouldn’t science be addressing the spiritual? If the spiritual is a phenomenon, can it be studied in a methodical way? Haven’t we already begun to broaden our view of science, rather

The data are harder to quantify and much of the power lies not in counting and tallying, but in grasping the big picture that lies beneath the day-to-day activities of human beings.

brain wave frequency — this leads to expanded awareness, an awareness of unseen realities. As Brunton explains it, shamanism is a science, a technology, and a method of using the world of spirit to bring healing to those who seek it.

From the shamanic perspective, reality is divided into three parts: the upper world, the middle world and the lower world. Human beings inhabit the middle world, which includes all physical reality or as Brunton says “the universe as far out as it goes.” The upper world is the world of teachers, guides and guardians. One travels outward to reach it. The lower world is the world of animal helpers and is reached by sending one’s consciousness or spirit inward. The idea of three worlds is something about which all shamanic cultures agree. That agreement is the impetus for scientific attempts to explore and map the shamanic worlds in an empirical way.

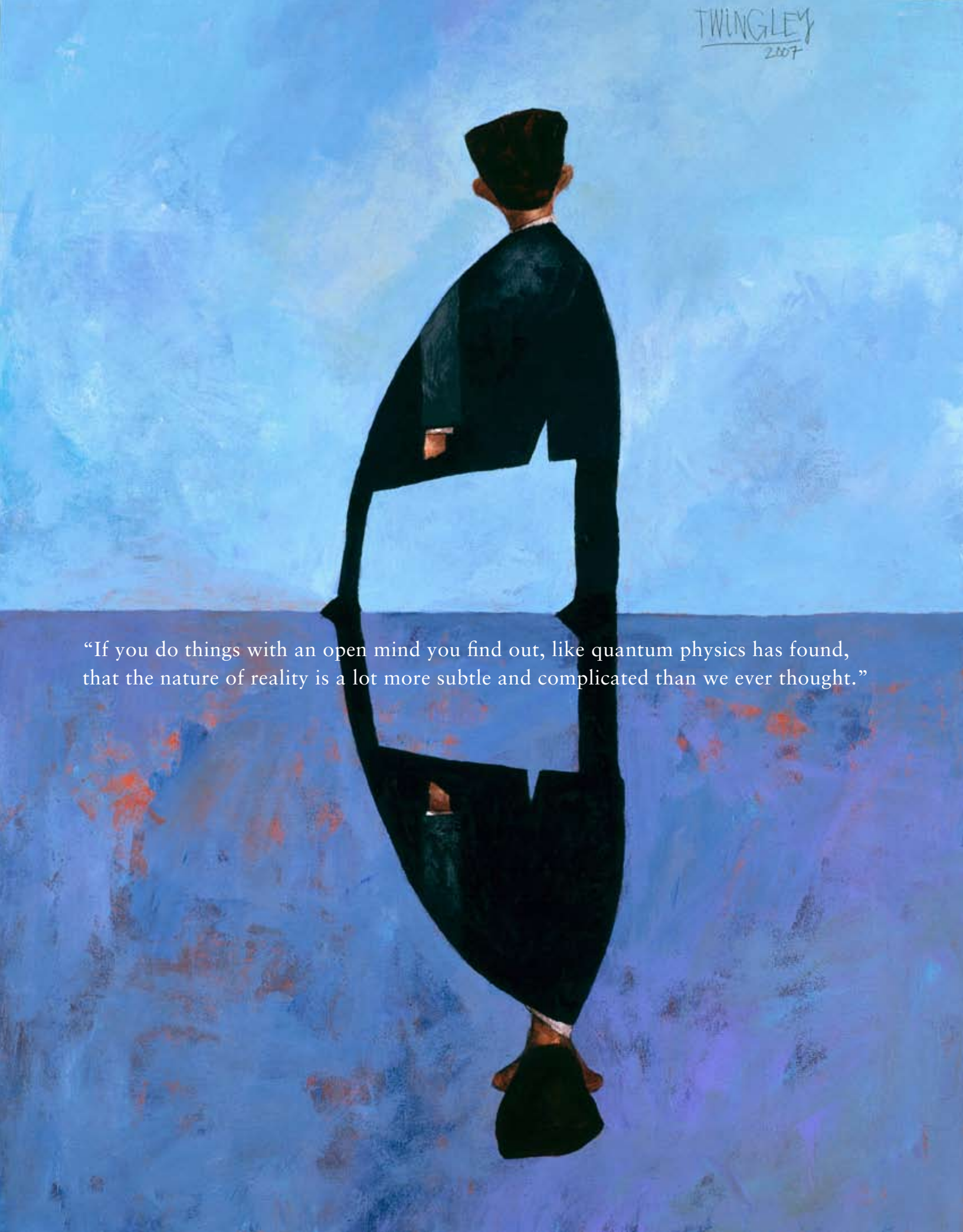
This has long been controversial.

Remember when Descartes and the Pope cut a deal and divided the world into what scientists could investigate and what the church would control? The church would stay out of “observable phenomenon” like astronomy and biology and scientists would stay out of the “unseen realms” of the spirit.

than adhere to the old bargain? He points out that scientists studying the brain are looking at EEGs of meditating monks and beginning to see how the spiritual and physical are inter-related. Quantum physicists are reaching the point in their observations where matter ceases to be physical and becomes something else.

Brunton maintained his early interest in physics and sees profound connections with what he’s learned from anthropology. “If you do things with an open mind you find out, like quantum physics has found, that the nature of reality is a lot more subtle and complicated than we ever thought it was and Newton’s laws don’t work. That is, they work fine for a teeter totter; they work fine for other kinds of mechanical systems that are moving slowly relative to the speed of light, but when you get to speed of light then relativistic things come in and Newton’s laws have to be adjusted. ... The more you incorporate the more complicated it gets until you get to the subtle sublime level of the very underlying fabric of time and space and at the quantum level that starts to look pretty simple again. When I read quantum physics it sounds like shamanism to me.”

TWINGLEY
2007

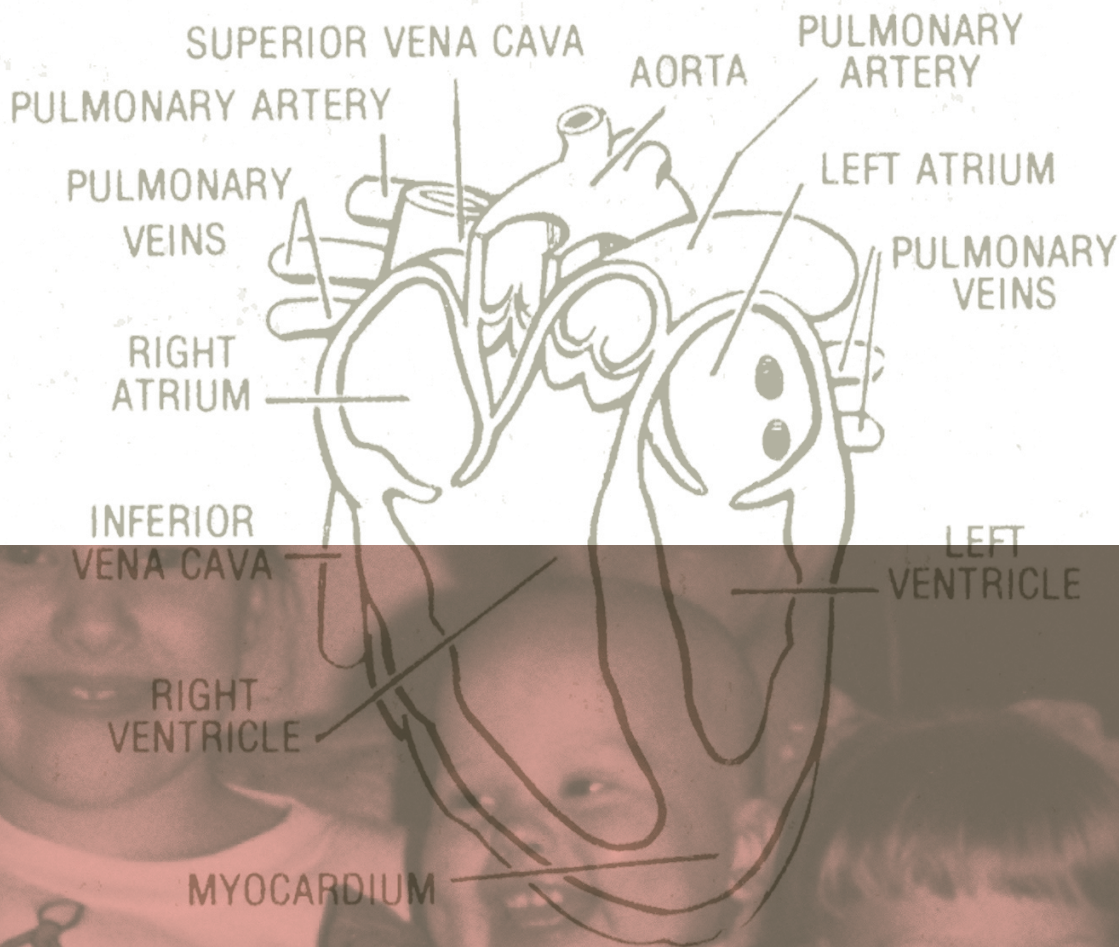


“If you do things with an open mind you find out, like quantum physics has found, that the nature of reality is a lot more subtle and complicated than we ever thought.”

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HUMAN HEART

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HOW DO YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART?

About a year ago at course registration time, fifteen students signed up for an elective in cardiovascular engineering, expecting to be lectured, given assignments and exams, to be taught in the usual way. It's a 400-level course, open to seniors and graduate students, so these are students savvy in the ways of picking good classes. But when the semester began and they arrived for the first day with new notebooks and sharp pencils, they were surprised. Instead of the usual introductory lecture, the professor is urging them to drop the course. Get out while you can, he says. This is not a normal class. You'll teach yourselves. You'll be in charge of how to grade yourselves. This will be different. The six graduate students took the advice and cut bait. But the nine brave undergraduate students stayed. And it was a very good thing.

The professor in this story is Dan Ewert, and though you'd never guess from looking at him, he's been teaching for 25 years. He is a man jazzed about being a teacher, which means he's probably pretty good at it. In fact he has gotten high marks from his students over the years, graduates keep in touch with him as the person who changed their lives, colleagues bestow teaching awards, and other signs of success. So it's worth noting when Ewert says this particular class was the most amazing experience he's had as a teacher. He can't break it down or draw you a graph — one of his favorite ways to explain a thing — but every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to one he was one happy instructor. He loved to watch the students participate freely, and see that the chemistry among them helped them all learn from one another. He calls it magic.

“YOUR CHOICE IS TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK, OR BE ANGRY THE REST OF YOUR LIFE. IT’S PRETTY SIMPLE.”



This class in cardiovascular engineering meets in a generic classroom in the electrical engineering building. A tiny teacher’s table sits at the front next to an old metal folding chair, and there’s even an old style hand crank pencil sharpener. Someone has drawn eyes, a handlebar moustache and a smile with its tongue sticking out in blue marker on the standard-issue clock. On this day, the two women and seven men arrange the little chair-desks in a semicircle. Two are eating something from Taco Bell, another is working on a cup of coffee. Ewert arrives early, comfortably lolls in the old folding chair, and sips from a big bottle of Coke.

At the top of the hour, they start on the question of the day: How to measure left atrial pressure in an artificial heart. One of the guys has some thoughts. He starts in on his description, his hands awhirl as he talks, and then he is up at the white board, drawing this device he’s imagined. He asks if there’s a pharmaceutical option to handle the immune system response, and Ewert nods for him to assume there is, and they’re off. His classmates ask and answer a few questions and Ewert jokes with them about who gets credit on the patent. That’s follow up from the previous class meeting. They move on to the new subject, self-calibrating pressure transducers. For a few seconds, the room is quiet, and then six or seven of them start talking at once, mostly mumbling, but they seem to be making sense to one another.

He had to nudge them at first — they are engineers, after all, even if drawn to cardiovascular engineering. At first, they’d qualify their ideas with a “this is probably wrong” but Ewert works to squelch that impulse. He likes a batting average analogy. A good baseball player is “right” three out of 10 times at bat, and scientists are lucky to be right once in 100 tries, he says. So get up there, draw us an idea, the important thing is to ask questions and figure out how to test hypotheses. And so they learn from one another and teach themselves and get fired up about their own curiosity and begin to synthesize a whole lot of information, the very things this teacher loves most about teaching. Which is nice, because a student who learns from a curious person who is not afraid to make mistakes is a lucky student. How Ewert came to be the human he is — the teacher, researcher, engineer, person — is another story.



The story begins in 1983, in a room of Station 55 at the University of Minnesota Hospital. A 25-year-old Ewert watches for four months as his infant daughter gets sicker, is tested and treated and tested again, with no diagnosis to explain her condition. From her room, Ewert can see the square nurses’ station, surrounded by a square of hospital rooms with windows all around so the nurses can see everything from everywhere. Sometimes the bigger kids ride trikes through the halls, pulling their IV stands along beside. The walls, the light, the furniture, he remembers as a hazy yellow. He knows that’s probably not so, but that’s how he sees it. He remembers a baby boy in the next room, just old enough to pull himself to a standing position in his crib. Ewert and his wife play peek-a-boo through the window with him, because the boy had no visi-

tors, his family brought him to the hospital and did not return. All the while, this young couple hopes each day to figure out what's making their own baby so sick, watch her suffer through tests and treatments. Ewert always carries her from the room when there is a procedure, even though she comes to understand the pattern and learns to fear him.

Kristin Ewert died when she was seven months old, still without a definite diagnosis. Doctors assumed she suffered an autoimmune disease, which destroyed her body from the inside. Eleven years later her youngest sister, Sara, suffered the same disease, but lived a longer and better life, and enough advances had been made that this time a specific diagnosis was possible. Sara was four years old when she died, like Kristin, of familial erythrophagacytic lymphohistiocytosis, which means the destruction of red blood cells and is known as FELS. Two girls born between Kristin and Sara — Heather and Megan — were not born with the genetic disease.

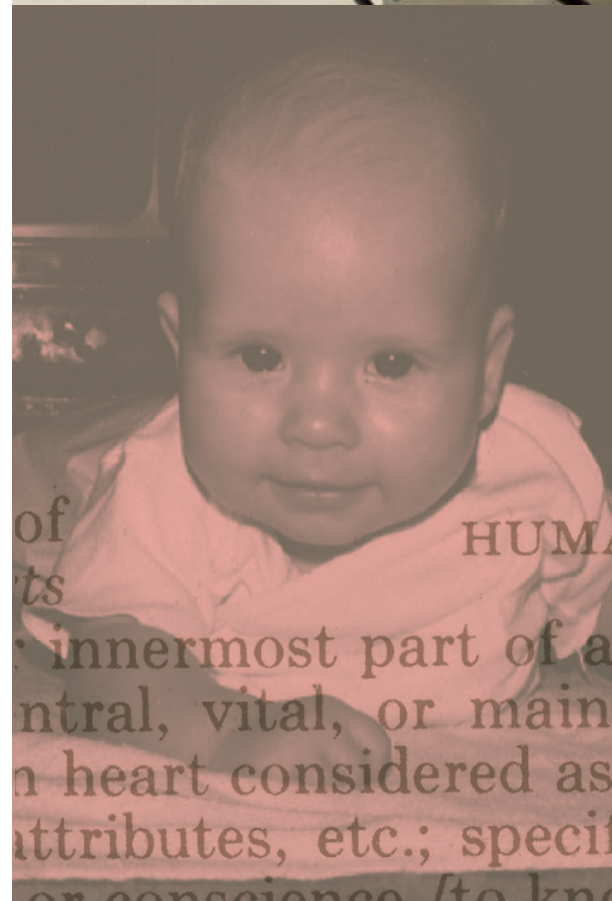
Ewert was not prepared for these massive losses. As a boy, he learned from Grandma Ewert that where there's a will there's a way, and he believed it. "Kristin was the first experience where will didn't matter," he says. "I couldn't affect the outcome no matter how hard I worked. It was the first time I felt powerless. It completely shakes your foundation." To honor the memories of his girls, he is an optimist. For a guy who has watched two children die, and endured the almost inevitable dissolution of the marriage to their mother, he's a happy man because he's decided to be so. "Your choice is to give something back, or be angry the rest of your life. It's pretty simple." It wasn't simple, though. He'd lived a good life, mostly on the straight and narrow, with the idea that bad things don't happen to good people, so his worldview was shattered.

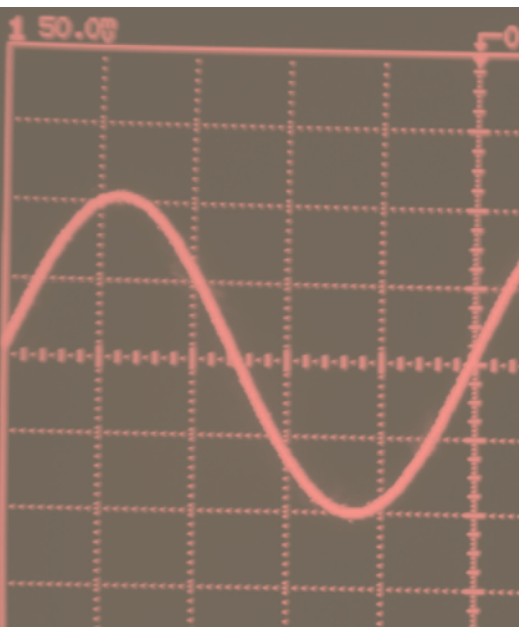
Eight months after his second child died, he was called to donate a kidney to his sister, who was diabetic. He'd been working on a summer fellowship in San Antonio for only two weeks when the call came, so he got on his motorcycle and started driving north. The closer he got to the hospital in Minnesota, the sicker he felt. It was his physical reaction to going back to the hospital where he watched his daughters die.



When Kristin was sick, he was working on his master's degree in mechanical engineering, and during all those hours and days and weeks in hospitals he saw plenty of examples where engineering could make a difference, could make those sick kids' lives less awful, if not better. He had a lot of time to think, and he thought about what his life should be about, and decided he wanted his life to be about helping other people. He considered medical school, but that profession seemed too limiting for him, so he decided to pursue a doctorate in neurophysiology. He had hoped to steer his career toward the neuro side of things — working on the body's computer is considered pretty sexy in engineering circles — but the opportunities that kept coming his way had to do with the plumbing — and so cardiovascular engineering became his area.

As it's turning out, the plumbing isn't so dull. After graduate school, Ewert had a research fellowship at the Biodynamics Research Unit of





“EDUCATION AND FREEING PEOPLE’S MINDS IS A WORTHY ENDEAVOR.”

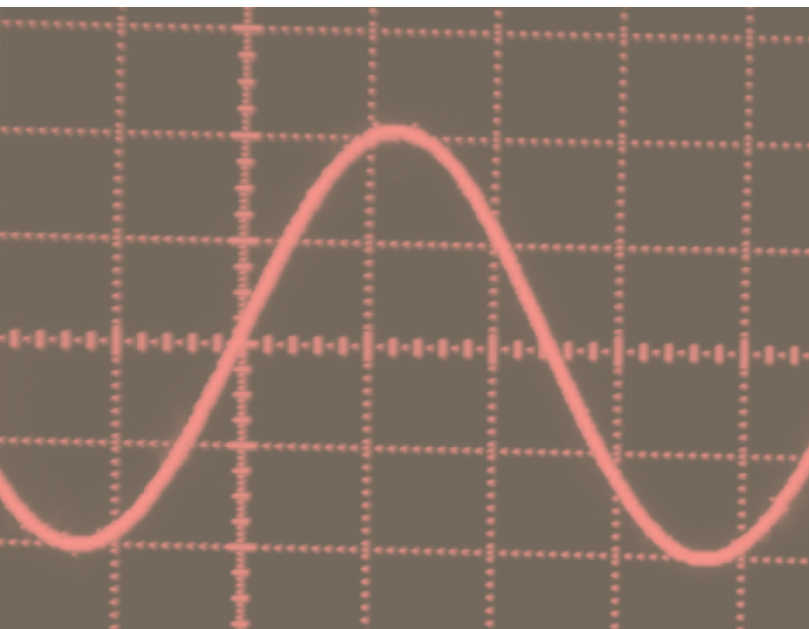
the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at Mayo Medical School, Rochester, Minn., and he loved working with all the best at Mayo, but the job did not include teaching, and he missed students. Truth be told, though, when he came to North Dakota State for a job interview in 1990, he wasn’t very serious about it. He agreed to come because there was a curling tournament he wanted to be in on the weekend. He liked the place and the people and got a job offer on the spot.

He’s the type to downplay his abilities, and claims any success comes from being a hard worker. Either way, he’s done some amazing things. Just lately, he conceived, modeled and helped develop a new ventricular assist device. These devices, known as VADs, are familiar to anyone who watches medical dramas on television, and are thought of as a bridge to transplant. But only half as many hearts become available as are needed, so researchers keep looking for better solutions. Ewert’s VAD capitalizes on the fact that some patients’ hearts actually were healing while the device was in use, so he decided to try to create something intended to give the heart a rest, the way you’d rest any other sore muscle. “I’m a simple guy,” he says, “so I thought about it in a simple way.”

Last year his colleagues honored him with the university’s Faculty Lectureship. With this campus award, the tradition is for the recipient to suggest a snappy title used to promote his or her lecture. Some years this is a struggle, as one’s hard-earned academic career often doesn’t lend itself to a catchy phrase. Ewert knew his title right away, because he knows his Bee Gees song titles: “How do you mend a broken heart?”



Ewert and some of his engineering buddies lunch at the Memorial Union most days, and this is clearly their mental break in the day, judging by their goofy repartee. But even as they make fun of each other and themselves, the humor is very much engineering minded, so, for example, if they get started on the differences between the genders, one pulls out



a pen and another hands over a napkin to graph how male and female moods swing in opposite directions. Perfectly logical to them. This goofball side adds to the impression that Ewert is just a regular guy, just happy to enjoy a little hot lunch, not an intellectual who can dream up new ways to save human hearts. But if you get him away from the guys and talking, he'll start in on the importance of liberal arts in the education of engineers. Galileo. And wanting to be a better writer. Which book on tape he's listening to on his hour-long drive to his lake home. He likes to talk about how the beauty of engineering is the creative part. "If you get to the synthesis level, all things become art."

You could know Ewert for years and never guess he's had hard times. He does not like to tell about his life. He doesn't want pity or allowances. He's developed a "lite" version he can hurry through when pressed to tell his story. But he is a different guy than he would have been. He'd have continued to be a straight and narrow type, more likely to dog after the things guys like him are supposed to want — power, prestige, position — and he thinks he probably would not like that guy. These days, he's happiest when he's at a table full of smart people who want to figure things out, and no one is worried about who gets the headline. Or when his students are teaching themselves. Or when he's out on his all terrain vehicle which is kitted out with some new kind of tracks. Or wrestling with his stepson, and that at 49, he can still prevail over a 6-year-old.

Ewert and Darcie, his wife of four years, married just a few months after their first date, and he says she has helped him heal "in ways no one else can." His daughters are not, despite some efforts on his part, pursuing engineering careers. But he clearly is, in the great way of a dad, proud of them, and enjoys their company. Megan is just back from a year of study in Japan, and Heather is about to begin study in linguistics and foreign service in Washington, D.C. The girls remain very close. Ewert has a favorite snapshot of them when they were little girls asleep, holding hands, one wearing a bunny ears headband.

He's teaching the cardiovascular engineering class again this year. Ironically, word got out that it's a great class, so the size made it harder to recreate the chemistry from last year, but as the semester goes, the class is catching the wave, so much so that by mid-March, a guest speaker from industry felt pinned to the front wall by the students' questions and ideas. Ewert is teaching them to do that — not to just regurgitate what they are told, but to ask bigger questions, come up with ideas. This is how he decided to deal with his losses, what he found when he dug deep and wondered how to recover. He found a deeper commitment to teaching. "Education and freeing people's minds is a worthy endeavor."

And while he's helping to create thoughtful, inventive engineers, he tries to give his students a little life wisdom. Students, he says, expect their lives to unfold in a straight line, just as he did, but it's more like the children's board game Chutes and Ladders, in which you'll suddenly hurtle down a slide or drop down a chute and lose your place in the game. But you pick up the dice and roll again, and once in a while you get to go up the ladder. The negatives and the positives contribute to who you are in the end. It's not about the knowledge, he says, it's the pursuit of knowing.

—L. McDaniel



GEO. FAIRMAN
.. Publisher ..
New York.

All's Fair in Song and War

Bob Groves looks exactly like you want a beloved music professor to look. He is a laid-back guy with kind eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses, a generous mustache and a fondness for comfy cardigan sweaters. He carries a cup of coffee with him everywhere. It's easy to imagine him patiently guiding students through the rigors of college-level piano lessons or music history.

Groves also seems more content in the background, guiding others toward greatness. He talks about outstanding graduates who have gone on to bigger things, promising could-be students who are eyeing North Dakota State University, colleagues who are great teachers. He doesn't seem all that comfortable being in the spotlight.

When it comes to his historical collection of sheet music, though, Groves is more forward. He'll walk around a conference table, spread with dozens of brightly illustrated sheet music covers from his own collection, and enthusiastically point out the different trends and composers. See this one? It's a suffragist piece dating back to 1838. Or this? A number that spoofs the Scopes Monkey Trial, the notorious court case in which a Tennessee teacher was tried for teaching evolution in school. And this one? So rare Groves has never met another person who has a copy.

He isn't bragging. That isn't in his DNA. He simply loves his collection, which weighs in at 50,000 pieces, and he loves to share it with anyone who is interested. The typical collector searches out mint-condition pieces because they are the most valuable. Groves likes well-worn music. To him, wear and tear means quality. It means the person who first bought the music played it again and again. Maybe memorized the words. Liked it enough to keep it propped on the piano for a long time. If they never played it? Well, it probably wasn't a good piece to begin with.

Groves collects pieces for their age and character, and for the history behind them. Early on, the historian in him noticed something fascinating about sheet music: It was like a cultural barometer. It echoed what people worried about, what their lives were like, what they valued. War, love, politics, fashion. No topic seemed too big or too small. Sheet music could tell you amazing things about American cultural history.

This was history from the masses. Most of it was written by professional songwriters looking to tap into popular opinion. Less often, it was written by everyday people who felt so strongly about a topic or their musical gifts that they paid to have songs published. They were known as "vanity publications." The messages could be paranoid and racist, or uplifting and inspiring. It was perfectly democratic. As such, it was as imperfect as the people who wrote it.

As he collected more and more, Groves received a crash course in women's history. He saw free-thinking women portrayed as home wreckers, and 1920s flappers depicted as vamps and heartless gold diggers. He collected songs that championed the ideal woman as a rosy-cheeked milkmaid who never left the farm. He found songs that predicted women would destroy modern civilization if given the vote. He was especially fascinated to see how women were depicted during wartime. The woman in uniform. The young wife back home. The little daughter waiting for her soldier father. He also noticed what a difference two decades made. The images of women in the first world war were radically different from female images in World War II. He visited with Larry Peterson, chair of the history department, to get some historical perspective. Together they identified trends in how women were depicted in song when America was at war.



WWI: 'My Mother, My Flag and You'

To better understand the music of World War I, you have to get a feel for where it came from. Most of the country's popular tunes came from a row of grubby Manhattan brownstones, better known as Tin Pan Alley. The Alley could be ruthless. Once in a while it produced a great songwriter like Irving Berlin. But the average Alley composer was no genius. He was a hard-living cynic. He had few delusions about making art. He feverishly cranked out songs to pay gambling debts, bar tabs or rent. And if that meant he ground out musical sausage that shamelessly pandered to popular tastes, well, so be it.

The Alley's songwriters found it profitable to poke fun at suffragists before the first world war. Some people resented free-thinking females in those days. Women wanted to vote and get jobs. They weren't content to get married, have children and keep house. They seemed to threaten the very foundation of the traditional American family.

But a funny thing happened when the country entered World War I. All that negativity toward women evaporated. The songwriters praised women. Or at least they praised old-fashioned, one-dimensional stereotypes of women. It was like they'd cranked back the clock 50 years to focus on some Victorian ideal of femininity:

POOR, OLD MOTHER: The mother from these songs was white-haired and bent over from a lifetime of hard work. She was often shown waiting by the window for her beloved boy to return. Songs in this genre served two purposes: They honored women who sacrificed their sons, and they encouraged other mothers to send off their sons to the trenches.

On very rare occasions, the mother figure was used to protest the war, as in the song, *A Mother's Plea for Peace: I Didn't Raise My Son to be a Soldier*.

THE BRAVE, LITTLE GIRL: Angelic little girls in white nighties decorated covers for songs like, *Hello Central*,

Give Me France: We Want Our Daddy Dear Back Home. To really ratchet up the sentimentality, the artists would give the child an extra pale complexion, as if — cough, cough — she might just have a touch of the consumption.

THE LITTLE MISSUS: The condescending lyrics in *My Mother, My Flag and You* showed all the things the soldier's wife had to endure in the early 1900s, from her young husband risking his life to, worst of all, the knowledge she ranked behind her mother-in-law in her husband's priority list.

THE PATRIOTIC ICON. A few years earlier, women were hell on heels. Now they were practically heaven sent. Females became symbols for peace, purity and all that was right with the world. Sheet music illustrators produced gorgeous, saint-like images of women leading troops on to victory.

THE WOMAN IN UNIFORM. Women who wore uniforms back then were caretakers, but even so, many Red Cross workers and Salvation Army volunteers risked life and limb to help out the boys on the front lines. These songs gave them their due. One particular hit, *The Rose of No Man's Land*, saluted the Red Cross worker, even if its lyrics were sticky sweet.

THE 'HOT' WOMAN OVERSEAS. American men could still lust after sexy women — as long as those hoochie mamas lived thousands of miles away from America's vestal virgins. French women especially were the cat's pajamas, as suggested in the number, *Come Play With Me, My Sweet Babe*.

Ooh-la-la.

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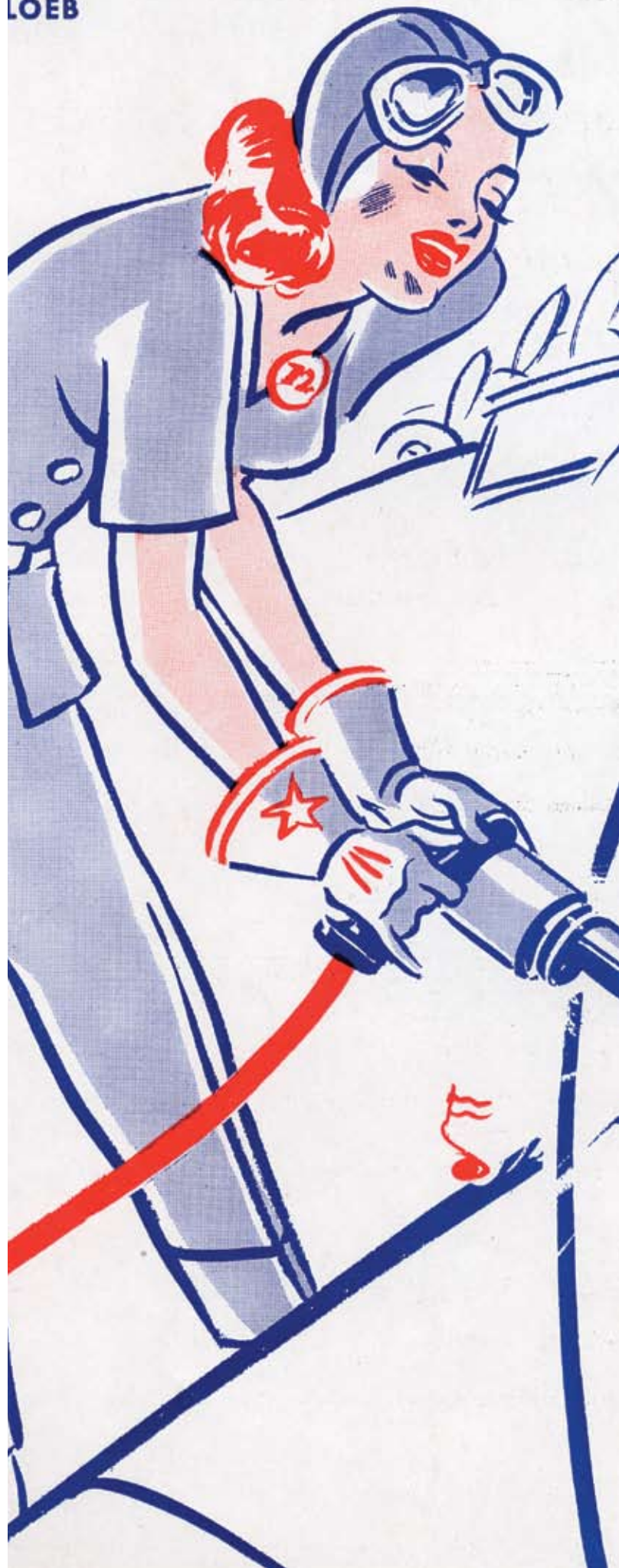
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WWII: 'We Oughta Have the Girls'

The American woman changed a whole lot by 1940. Unlike her mother or grandmother, she was more likely to have graduated from high school, to have lived in a city and to have worked outside of the home. She had been exposed to so much more outside of her hometown. Her views of what to wear, how to act and what to expect from life were shaped by movies and radio. She was much worldlier than the women born decades before her.

As for the war effort itself, she was essential to it. In the first war, a scant 5 percent of the labor force consisted of females working outside of the home for the first time. But the number of working women shot up 57 percent in the second world war. The home front would have ground to a halt without female labor. Women staffed the offices, manned the factories and drove tractors to help farmers. They ran salvage drives, planted victory gardens and entertained the troops on USO tours.

This time around, Tin Pan Alley's music makers gave women respect. They weren't so ready to reduce women to simplistic, old-fashioned clichés. But all was not perfect. The male (and female) songwriters still got in their digs:

THE FUN-LOVING GIRL: Taking its cues from Hollywood, popular music showed women as young, upbeat and full of life. These high-spirited dames weren't overly prim. Although songs and movies never mentioned the "s" word outright, they found every possible way to hint at hopping hormones. Take the lyrics for *Oh! How She Lied to Me*: "She took me to the park, introduced me to the dark. She knew ev'ry star way up in the skies, Knew them too well, but I wasn't wise."

THE MILITARY WOMAN. The second time around, women did everything but actual combat. They joined military auxiliaries, operated communication centers and flew planes overseas for use by fighter pilots. With cover art of dignified women in uniform, songs like the *March of the Women Marines* or *WAVES in Navy Blue* inspire a surge of pride. This is American womanhood at its best and brightest.

A few stubborn notions still persisted. At first glance the song, *The Army and Navy Say Yes! We Oughta Have the Girls!* seems practically Gloria Steinem-esque. A song recommending women in combat in the '40s? Pretty progressive stuff. Then you realize the cover art shows women parachuting into combat in hot pants. And you read the lyrics: "Then we'd take a bunch of cuties, send 'em up in parachuties, And just think of all the things that they could do!"

ROSIE AND CO. Some songs patted the backs of non-military war workers. One number, *Rosie, the Riveter*, took its title from the era's top cultural icon. But unlike the powerful feminist image from J. Howard Miller's famous "We Can Do It" poster, the sheet music *Rosie* was a silly caricature. She wears tailored overalls, lipstick and one photogenic grease smudge. Appealing, if not entirely accurate. By the end of the war, the average war worker was married and more than 45 years old.

In a pinch, women workers could withhold their wiles to keep the male slacker in line. A female worker at a Portland shipyard supposedly launched the "No Work-No Woo" movement" in 1943. "NWNW" members had to take a pledge: They would not date men who made a habit of calling in sick to work.

After *Collier's* magazine picked up the story, aspiring songwriters at the shipyard banged out a song to drive the message home: "Let me see your time card honey, Work and soon the world will be sunny, Even though I love you true, It's No Work! No Woo!"

Now that's patriotism.

—T. Swift



iCEaRT

Internationally known artist James Rosenquist has lent his name to establish the James Rosenquist Artist in Residency program at North Dakota State University, an agreement that allows students and community to see unique artistic methods and view exceptional new artwork.

Rosenquist, who was born in Grand Forks, N.D., is considered one of the greatest living artists of the pop art movement of North America.

Hedi Schwöbel, Ludwigsburg, Germany, is the first visiting artist. Her work includes site-specific artistic installations that often capture the spirit of a site by examining its history, dimensions and atmosphere. Schwöbel worked with ice, salt and aluminum foil in her North Dakota pieces.



GO WEST // Fargo // March 7-13





VOM VERWEILEN UND VORUEBERZIEHEN // Laichingen, Germany // Summer 2006



essay CAROL RENNER

PROM CONFESSIONS

Closets hold many secrets. A floor length, slippery white satin halter dress with an overlay of white organza and tiny rectangles of flocked pink. The bolero jacket with hot pink marabou feathers sewn delicately along the cuffs and placket. A pattern of tiny pink roses strewn on the fabric of a satin, flounced dress edged in sweet pink lace. The bouffant skirt requires a special pink satin slip to achieve just the right southern belle à la Scarlet O'Hara motif. The prom dresses still hang neatly in a closet in my parents' house — a time-warped shrine to emotionally charged high school memories. They cost maybe \$50 each. A local lady in the small town sewed them.

We decorated the high school gym with miles of crepe paper and glitter-strewn, wall-size murals. Romantic themes such as “We may never pass this way again” and “Do you know where you're going to?” set the stage for over-amplified teenage hormones. Boys wore an old suit or a new suit, but never tuxedos. We all knew everyone was at the grand march to look at the dresses anyway, especially the ones that would cause dress whiplash as teen boys strained to take a look.

Everyone has a prom story. The springtime high school rite of passage carries good memories for some, nightmares for others. Still — years later — we often remember that dress, that date, that car, that joy or that disappointment. Prom encompasses more drama than a bad actress, American Idol and a presidential political campaign combined.

After being stood up for the biggest date of their young lives, young women have sued teenage boys in small claims court over the cost of a prom dress. That's how important the dress is during prom season.

The rite of passage can require a wallet full of cash or a suitcase full. In some schools, it resembles a teenage version of the Oscars, with Beverly Hills 90210 costs to match. One private school in Uniondale, N.Y., cancelled prom one year, noting financial decadence, with students



ESTIMATES PUT THE TOTAL AMOUNT SPENT ON PROM-RELATED ITEMS AT \$4 BILLION IN THE UNITED STATES.

putting down \$10,000 to rent a party house in the Hamptons and parents chartering boats for their teens' late night booze cruise.

In Minneapolis-St. Paul, several high schools host a prom day, inviting vendors such as florists and limousine companies to showcase their offerings, much like a bridal fair. And in Racine, Wisconsin, the community turns prom night into an annual town-wide celebration where teens are treated like movie stars, arriving at their party on everything from fire trucks to elephants — all shown on a live telecast. The event is featured in a documentary film called "The World's Best Prom."

Estimates put the total amount spent on prom-related items at \$4 billion in the United States. And author Nathan Dugan, who wrote the book, *How Not To Be Your Child's ATM: Prodigal Sons and Material Girls*, suggests that teens' prom spending may predict future savings habits.

Maybe that's what drives Debra Pankow, an assistant professor of child development and family science at North Dakota State University. Seven years ago, Pankow began thinking about what type of big consumer expenditure teens face. "Obviously, it's prom." She then began

surveying high school students in North Dakota to develop a database of prom expenditures. It seems teens in the state spend an annual average of \$600 on prom. Schools, too, shell out big bucks. Schools in the state spend from \$500 to \$10,000 on prom extravaganzas. Pankow and her team of graduate and undergraduate students are developing a system to conduct additional long-term tracking of the social and economic juggernaut of prom.

Pankow's research and her approach to using prom as a way to teach financial responsibility have drawn national attention. Her statistics and budget planning tools have been featured in a multitude of media — MSN Money, Chicago Sun-Times, Cincinnati Enquirer, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Telemundo, to name a few.

"What happens with most people, it might start with the dress. And then they might have to have the perfect shoes. And then it's the perfect jewelry. And then it's the hairdo. They might want to have a pre-prom hairdo just to make sure it looks how they want it to on the big night. And then they have to get tan. And then they have to have the tanning package and the tanning lotion. Then the manicure," Pankow says. Girls can need money for: a dress, boutonniere, shoes, purse, jewelry, shawl or wrap, undergarments, garter and grooming costs such as hair styling, manicure/pedicure, tanning, waxing, tweezing and makeup. Typical prom costs for boys can include: tuxedo, accessories, shoes, vests, ties, hair, prom tickets or dinner, corsage, photographs and transportation.

No wonder the retail industry loves prom. "It's just like holiday season on a smaller scale," Pankow says. People are going to spend a lot of money and there are a lot of different industries that are affected — the floral industry and the clothing industry and the tux rental industry and the limo industry. There are a lot of people who are depending on prom business from the retail end."

Retailers send the message to teens that if they end up spending more than expected, that is okay, because it will be worth it. That type of phrase is like waving a red flag in front of Pankow, who also surveys college students

about their high school prom experiences. “So many of them say ‘I can’t believe I spent this much money. It wasn’t worth it.’ There shouldn’t be a school memory that isn’t worth it. I don’t think the amount of satisfaction and the amount of money they spend are related.”

Through the budget planning tools Pankow developed, she is trying to pave the way for parents and students to talk about prom, making it a memorable experience, while ensuring that a large credit card bill doesn’t become a prom souvenir. “I think it’s just such a good opportunity for kids and their parents to talk about money. We don’t always talk a lot about it and you have time to plan how much you’re going to spend,” Pankow says. “Ask teens, ‘Do you really need this? Can you borrow this? Can you make this?’ ”

Pankow also admits her common sense prom-spending crusade can’t be accomplished alone. “Americans kind of like to keep up with the Joneses and they don’t want to say no and deprive their kids. I do think it takes a community — meaning parents or students who go to a particular school — to kind of take control of the whole atmosphere about their prom. That’s the part that I’m hoping education and parents

money to be able to go to prom and have a good time, that’s not good for our kids.”

So how does a mother with two teenage daughters approach prom? “I always felt like — I do this prom research — and I am a tightwad at heart — and I always believe in walking my talk,” Pankow says. One year, one daughter wore a sister’s bridesmaid dress to prom. Another year, she chose a dress from a community event offering pre-owned prom dresses. But even the stalwart Pankow started having some doubts. “I thought, well, I can’t just be such a total tightwad and I don’t want my kids to grow up with that as a role model. So I decided that really, I wanted my philosophy to be this budget idea for prom in high school.” So Pankow told her daughter that whether she attends once or all four years of high school, she would offer \$300 in total monetary support.

Pankow has her own priceless teenage memories of attending prom in Williston, N.D. “We came in through these curved stairs during the grand march. Our theme was ‘Gone With the Wind.’ The stairs collapsed after about the third couple.” At another prom, the post-prom activity was even more eventful. “One of the major hotels on Main Street burned down. And that’s what I remember. If I didn’t have the pictures, I would not remember what I wore. I remember who I went with.”

Whether parent or teen, it’s difficult not to be sucked into the vortex that is prom. One day in a local department store, after prom season, with rack after rack of \$200 dresses marked down to \$34, I let my 13-year-old daughter try on a few. I mean, only the most powerful among us can walk by racks of gleaming, rhinestone-studded, sparkling, splendiferous dresses in every manmade flammable fabric available in a rainbow of colors. Trying on a fabulous dress allows one to enter the world of princess-make-believe where everyone does our bidding.

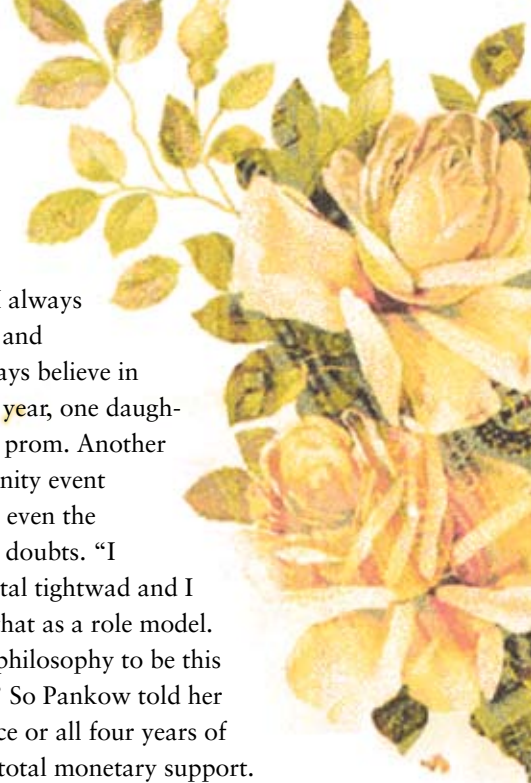
With a twinge of feminist guilt, I tried to make it into a teachable moment. “So, are these dresses any different than they were two months ago when they cost \$200?” I asked her. “Nope,” she replied. “Then, maybe spending \$34 makes more sense than \$200,” I pointed out. “I get it, Mom,” although her eyes were still sparkling from the fun of twirling around in them in the dressing room. I have, no doubt, opened a Pandora’s box. If the time comes, I will be

using Professor Pankow’s lesson plan and budget worksheet for prom planning. You can find it at www.ag.ndsu.edu/money/prom.htm.



SO MANY OF THEM SAY ‘I CAN’T BELIEVE I SPENT THIS MUCH MONEY. IT WASN’T WORTH IT.’

and communities can help kids deal with. If there’s some really good memories to be had with prom — and I think there are — then all kids should be encouraged to go and money should not be the problem. If we’re living in a culture that says you’ve got to spend all this



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