NDSU magazine

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY ■ SPRING 2002

contents

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Editor
Laura McDaniel

Editorial staff
Dan Koeck
Kathy Laid

Art Direction/Design
Julie Babler

Address changes
Send address and name changes to:
office@ndsualumni.com

Letters
Unless noted "not for publication," communications to the editor are considered for publication, often in a condensed version.

E-mail: *laura.mcdaniel@ndsu.nodak.edu*
PO Box 5167
Fargo, ND 58105
Fax: 701.231.1989

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editor's note

As we finish work on our fourth issue of NDSU magazine, it occurs to me with a large sigh of relief that we have begun to do intuitively what we had struggled so to do deliberately. (I use "we" to be democratic, but I suspect my coworkers would whisper to you that I alone was the worrywart.)

I had long hoped for a chance to launch a magazine. Such a goal was at least remotely possible, it seemed, while outlandish dreams like being an amazing novelist clearly remain out of the question. But when the day came to get to work on NDSU magazine, I began to experience fear. How to honestly portray the institution, to honor its traditions while showcasing its progress and potential. How to please the boss and still be interesting to the diverse audience, who, for starters, range in age from 16 to 100-plus. How to not blow it.

Communication practice is all about knowing your readers and understanding the message, recognizing obstacles, finding solutions. The framework was clear, but in practice I was trying too hard to form a mental picture of a thread that connected us all.

Being a land grant university means much to people on campus; it is no doubt a less pressing detail to our future students and alumni. But it is the thread. "For the land and its people," was the theme for NDSU's centennial in 1990, and while technology and globalization and much more have changed the particulars, the meaning still holds. So, for example, when I sat next to an alumnus on an airplane, a 1949 graduate in agricultural economics, we're friends from the moment we discover our common thread. He knows my uncle Sig, '49, who's pals with Bill Guy, '41, (later North Dakota Gov. Guy) and on it goes.

Thank you for reading.

laura.mcdaniel@ndsu.nodak.edu

letters

"The Duke was here" story brought back pleasant recollections of my years (1956-60) playing in the famed Crystal Ballroom with the Paul Hansen Orchestra. That 80' by 120' dance hall was an acoustic gem. Small wonder that Richard Burris and Jack Towers managed to record 40 of Ellington's songs so well on Nov. 7, 1940. It must have been a magical night. In 1995, jazz critic Nat Hentoff called it a "still vivid Fargo night," noting the orchestra's buoyancy and looseness, despite their eight-hour train trip from Winnipeg.

While the orchestra played a few warm-up pieces before Ellington's appearance on stage, they actually performed a total of 21 songs before beginning the KVOX radio broadcast with "Sepia Panorama." And the show ended at around 1 a.m. with Ellington leading the audience in a rendition of "God Bless America." How about that?

Robert Brake
Class of '60
Ocean Park, WA

I purchased the Fargo Recordings as L.P.'s when they came out years ago and they truly are treasures.

I used to play with the Paul Hanson Orchestra in the 1950's and we did a live TEEN CAN-TEEN broadcast every Friday night at the Crystal Ballroom so I have fond memories of that era.

I still play trombone in the Louisville, Kentucky, area and I know Orv Eidem and other Fargo musicians. NDSU was a wonderful place then as it is now.

Dick Sharpe

Read the Fall Issue of the NDSU Magazine on Thanksgiving Day and thought it was great. Got a lot of laughs from "Far" "go" North Dakota. It reminded me of my freshman days at the "AC."

After Pearl Harbor Day in '41, I signed up for the Navy V-12 Program, a scheme to keep kids in college until ships could be built for them to man. In the course of the program, I found myself in Asbury Park, New Jersey, waiting for Midshipman School to open at Cornell. Three or four of us decided to go to New York for the weekend. We learned that the Navy Waves were holding a Sunday afternoon Tea Dance at the Roosevelt Room and we attended.

Across this large room, I noticed an attractive Wave and I walked over and asked her to dance. In our

conversation, I asked her where she was from and she replied, "North Dakota," and I said "that's where I'm from."

Well, we were in a city that has maybe 14 times the number of people as the whole state of North Dakota and here two of its natives were dancing. I asked her, "Where abouts in North Dakota?" and she said "Lisbon." I said "That's where I'm from!" Turned out she was Frank Hanson's wife and had joined the Waves to help in the war effort.

I have met people from North Dakota in many parts of the world and I find it hard to believe not every one hasn't.

Bill Chisman

I finally decided to reorganize my desk and in the pile is a Fall copy of NDSU magazine. I liked the article about the fascination with North Dakota. I did my young boyhood growing up in North Dakota and later studied at NDSU and even later wound up on the faculty and started a family in Fargo before embarking on what would become an every now and then long term job assignment in Africa.

I was trying to describe North Dakota to a friend. I don't think he got it. My vocabulary is insufficient. But there is a beauty there that can barely be pictured in words ... the changing colors of the valley, the rolling hills, the prairie, the badlands. Even the politics and its history and the changing culture from place to place is unique.

I don't remember or comprehend at what moment during our lives in Africa that I stopped noticing that Cameroonians were black, but I sort of remember when it occurred to me that it had happened. I often tell friends that the primary wonder of the world is that all people seem to have the same hopes and dreams. Little African boys tease little African girls in the same ways and for the same reasons that all boys and girls engage in that mystery of growing. Occasionally my wife and I would watch Cameroonian children returning home from school skipping, singing, poking, giggling as we remarked how literal the commonality of childhood is. While surprised, I understood being spit at in the face of a Cameroonian man while we met each other on a downtown street one afternoon. I could escape any frustration or disappointment I might have ... he couldn't!!

David C. Nelson
Class of '60

contributors

Catherine Bishop

Sally Ann Flecker

Sarah Jacobson

Catherine Bishop *(School of fish)* may be the best writer ever to have begun a career so inauspiciously. Her first job interview was scheduled such that she had to appear directly from her waitressing job, in her waitressing uniform. But since good writing always trumps a fashion faux pas, she got the job at the Devils Lake Daily Journal and her now impressive career was off and running. After several years of hard work, she joined the Forum of Fargo-Moorhead as entertainment writer, later advancing to features editor. A year ago she became the grant writer for Trollwood Performing Arts School. Bishop is her pen name; in daily life she is Cathy Jelsing. Her husband is Terry Jelsing, who led the Common Ground project featured in this issue. She may be reached at jelsing@i29.net.

After many years as editor-in-chief of Pitt Magazine, **Sally Ann Flecker** *(Living design)* is living the dream. She's become her own boss. But it's called a dream for a reason. A freelance writer's credibility is won or lost on her ability to meet deadlines, so when the curse of the tape-eating transcriber falls upon her house, she must act quickly. Sally Ann is no exception. She is in demand as a magazine writer and adjunct member of the University of Pittsburgh's English department for good reason. In addition to ample talent and grace, she now has four transcribers.

Her credentials were of little interest, however, the day she traveled to Washington, D.C., to interview North Dakota State University alumna Tama Duffy, whose colleagues were eager to view another North Dakotan, this time one who lives here full time. Apparently Duffy's coworkers already know plenty of people from Pittsburgh.

Sarah Jacobson *(Work Play)* has taught high school biology, raised five children, earned a doctorate, taught organizational behavior at the university level—all things that might have imposed a sense of, well, rigidity, on her writing. Evidence to the contrary comes from biographical tidbits she submitted not in a formal resume but in bits of poetry: "My Mom was a great story teller (the Irish influence I suppose) and my childhood was filled with the stories of my grandmothers

Carole Woiwode

Larry Woiwode

(Sarah Anastasia, Mary Frances, Lousanna, and Martha), the hardships they endured and the ways in which they created new lives under difficult circumstances. Those stories helped me believe I was a part of a line of strong women and that I could do anything with my life I set out to do — not such a common belief for girls growing up in the '40s and '50s. The stories also gave me 'itchy feet' and a life-long love of travel."

Carole Woiwode *(photographs, Letter from Western North Dakota)* is manager and co-owner of Anchor West, a photography, registered quarterhorse and writing enterprise in southwestern North Dakota. Her photography has appeared in *The New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Washington Post* and *The Bismarck Tribune* and many other publications.

Larry Woiwode's *(A letter from Western North Dakota)* fiction has appeared in *The Atlantic, Harpers, Paris Review, Partisan Review,* and a variety of other publications, including two dozen stories in *The New Yorker*. His books include *What I'm Going To Do, I Think, Beyond the Bedroom Wall* (finalist for the National Book Award and Book Critics' Circle Award; Association of American Publishers Distinguished Book of Five Years for presentation to White House Library), *Indian Affairs, Silent Passengers,* and the memoir *What I Think I Did,* his sixth book to be named a "notable book of the year" by the *New York Times Book Review*. He is a Guggenheim Fellow, has conducted writing seminars across the U.S., in England and Europe, and for four years was director of the writing program at the State University of New York, Binghamton. In 1995 he received the Award of Merit Medal from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, presented once every six years, for "distinction in the art of the short story." He has received the Aga Khan Prize, the William Faulkner Foundation Award, the John Dos Passos Prize, the Lanan Foundation Literary Fellowship, among others, and in 1995, by a joint resolution of the state house and legislature, he was named poet laureate of North Dakota. He lives in rural North Dakota where, with his wife and family, he raises registered quarterhorses.

A letter from Western North Dakota

-by Larry Woiwode, poet laureate

Photos by Carole Woiwode

Rural Burt, ND
March 7, 2002.

Dear *******,

Thank you for asking me why I live in North Dakota. It's a question I ponder, if you can believe this, more, I suspect, than you. Sometimes it occurs to me dozens of times over a single day, and I hope it hasn't hit you quite that way yet. Some of the answers I've tried on myself now have the blessing of release through your inquiry, so I'll take the opportunity to set a few of the multitude in flight down the right course, if I can, by the writer's trick of grabbing for sparrows to produce from them these words you read.

I'm a writer, teacher, farmer, churchman, and I've sat here too long trying to set their order right. Whatever I decide, no matter what weight I ascribe to each, the order will, I know, offend some. People here are that touchy about what's important. Some offense, however, a writer must be willing to give, or sit paralyzed.

What you can't fool even the foolish about in writing is what you believe. It's difficult enough to move language toward sense under the governance of belief, which causes it to cohere, and without belief (in the most elemental sense) all pages are blank. So every word squeezed into ink and then any strings of them that make sense are pure self-revelation, awkward, embarrassing exposure, as with intimacies under the quilt in speech.

I and my wife (a Dakota locution), Carole, who is a writer and photographer, have four children. We have been married thirty-five years and presently are twenty. Well, some days we believe that. Our first daughter was a child of the sixties, our only for nine years, and had not just the benefits and privileges of an only child but accumulated a sorrow no actual only child has to bear, having that status knocked out from under her. Then a convenient nursemaid for the wild and sometimes mean bunch beneath her.

Why are we here? If I had thought ahead of how to sort this, I doubt if I would say what has occurred to me, because it isn't a conscious thought, I mean, one I recognize as clearly as a Dakotan does a grudge, and so a surprise to me too to say, now, that if there is an overarching characteristic to start sorting my thought-scraps down through as through the sieve of it, it would be: North Dakotans know how to suffer.

So thanks for the question. It has caused some sort of swift reassessment, in order to know where to begin, and the answer, as I say, surprises me. Dakotans know they will suffer if any of the earth's daily attendance on us and the maintenance we give back to it is going to get any better, ever; or else suffer through a stretch of time until it does, as all do with the weather. Most suffer simply from the weight of work put in on the maintenance. Many are farmers, and that's the answer. A farmer is like a poet in the way he wants to see the perfect page, every detail and nuance and fly speck of foreign matter pertaining to the ink and print, even, set down in such unshakable lines Shakespeare would pale: flawless fields facing a cloudless sky.

The problem is you find a dozen details branching from a detail newly discovered (the dilemma of committed gardeners worldwide) and over every season, year after year, no matter how you attend to those details or fix or prop another up yet again, you still have to produce from the earth at just the right time a bumper crop; bumper, yes, or the vision of perfection loses its edge and the farmer his shirt. And by farmer, in a reach of mechanized distance from the gardener, I don't mean only those farmers who raise the truckloads of stuff that go running everywhere in the fall and spring, so that even the natives get restless behind a chugging drudge of a truck of 1950s vintage, with ancient green canvas wallowing over its side-racks as it bleeds a red-gold trail of the pumice of wheat like a dangling afterthought onto the road under your tires.

A farmer is like a poet in the way he wants to see the perfect page, every detail and nuance and fly speck of foreign matter pertaining to the ink and print, even, set down in such unshakable lines Shakespeare would pale: flawless fields facing a cloudless sky.

By "farmer" I mean an inner sense in most Dakotans. This takes on a curious, affirming shape: a hibernating perspicacity that operates three floors below language and allows for rather complicated tasks to be completed at nearly every level across the state without any of the participants speaking a word until the task is done. Dakotans know the multiple mechanics relevant to the physical world that well. And, oh, impatient as a magpie with a claw between a coyote's teeth if you don't!

Do not submit to any farmer's request to help him by assuming the seat in a lead vehicle, truck or tractor, to pull his stuck one out.

Most of us have farmed at least a half section (320 acres) of land for X or more years, and, if family fortunes or fate or government noninterference allowed, most would be back at it right now. Half the people forty and older I know have been waiting twenty years for the chance. They suffer that. And all the women who tend to like to nest spring up in embattled desperation at the thought of losing a family homestead—not in my generation!—and put in full-field-hour days beside their husbands, then return home to do the chores others have the leisure of (if not a day) an evening to resume again near the top of the stack, not to mention the children always cranky lately at your absence.

Women support every venue of daily work in the state with the heroic power of a pine board under a piano caster, and so suffer. You may find places in the U.S. where a woman is appreciated more for being a woman, while at the same time serving as stalwart compadre, but I'm not sure, and I've traveled through all but Alabama and Arkansas in the lower forty-eight. When Dakota men and I mean men allow a woman to have her head to step forward and scout out every emerging development, if not initiating a few, with her generally down-to-earth, intuitive and refracting mind (instead of this encapsulating one), he should be prepared for a doubling of new outlooks on his horizon. Some men turn away in the ageless gesture of too much, yet hope this keeps up. And when it does, they admire her more in that magnetic combination attraction triggers—a way of saying a notable number of women here feel well attended to, thank you.

If a husband turns away in anger, hoping to get this under control, just exactly who's doing what, well, here we also have the pattern of self-pity to alcohol to divorce or abuse. All suffer then. Husband, wife, children, all carry midnight slivers like nail clippings from their household dark nights into the community at large. I have been in the halfway house here, if not the doghouse, no joke; a reluctant admission from yet another Dakotan who has sworn off. My wife helped. The equal unattractive side to this stained coin is a statistic I read in a rural magazine two decades ago: an estimated forty percent of farm wives are secret (meaning bottle-hiding or hoarding) alcoholics. The percentage of husbands is probably worse. Villages of five hundred support three bars, and we have our beery brayers, as anywhere, but few fights.

The usual annual rate of homicide is one per year.

From what I've seen over the last dozen years, I would have to retreat from those statistics and say I see a change, including a number of bars closing down. But tied to the top of this positive trend a worse pall perhaps rests—fewer and fewer farms exist for outside interests to wrest from the grieving families who have known no other life for three generations.

Dakotans suffer also the distancing effect of astonishment when they hear, after working like serfs to put part of each meal on most every table in the U.S., that young people from all points of the compass (the more distant, the truer) believe that the source of food is the corner market or deli or the big store in the mall or some such local dispenser of manna—or, in the farthest stretch of their minds, their most stalwart effort to comprehend the concept, warehouses.

Dakotans suffer this but do not (as the poet Theodore Roethke says about his grief over the death of animals as a child) suffer excessively. Few adopt the martyr trend. We understand that the source and

What we care about is people. That's a rarity you don't find in many areas of the lower forty-eight, except for a few crusty Maine old lobstermen and others of their type commonly seen to be at the fringes of life.

center of matters is defined differently elsewhere than here. We do watch TV. It merely refracts a sense of our own defining of selfhood, simply defining who we are, with no television shows or films based on us (*Fargo* is about Minnesota), and no other information about us or our state than the weather. We may carry our defining process into sleepless nights in bed, a craving as for the sweetest of sweets, grinding our teeth on further refined definitions like Eskimo Pies vying after a mellower morsel yet.

Since September all have suffered the capsized Twin Towers, America's Confidence and Security down in a crash; the agonized separation underway in the chalky dawn of that catastrophic dislocation, worse than dreams of the ashy Arctic of the H-bomb; and if we haven't responded other than monetarily, or with our few volunteer firemen, it's because we haven't recovered, either, from the wound that day left across every part of our back road pastureland, even, as we pause in winter stillness, cattle or horses ambling in at the scent of us. We suffer the effects on your families and children, the thousands altogether, appalling, ghastly as we picture ourselves in its midst with our families and children. Here we are in such scattered settlements we take most matters personally.

The jump is you can't form affectionate bonds with multitudes, and when you rub shoulders with thousands in a city of millions day after day, it's difficult to get serious about more than six or seven. Generally we have less than six within one square mile in this quadrant of the state, so our minds range wide among any with whom we have bonds. We care for the fellow in the next county in financial trouble, just as we feel a familial pride when we meet Dakotans elsewhere, in another state or city, New York or Chicago or Phoenix, or even England, Norway, or France. We wave to one another from vehicles in state and, outside its borders, wave at the familiar license plate. North Dakotans still wave.

All this preface to my point; what we care about is people. That's a rarity in most areas of the lower forty-eight, except for a few crusty Maine lobstermen and others of their type commonly seen as at the fringes of life.

Americans seem blinded to others by categorizing conceptualizations; Money, Education, My Cause, Personal Advancement, Church, Body, TV, the laundry list long as a railroad flat. For most of the rest of America, North Dakota, if it exists, is less than fringe: that cold square way high.

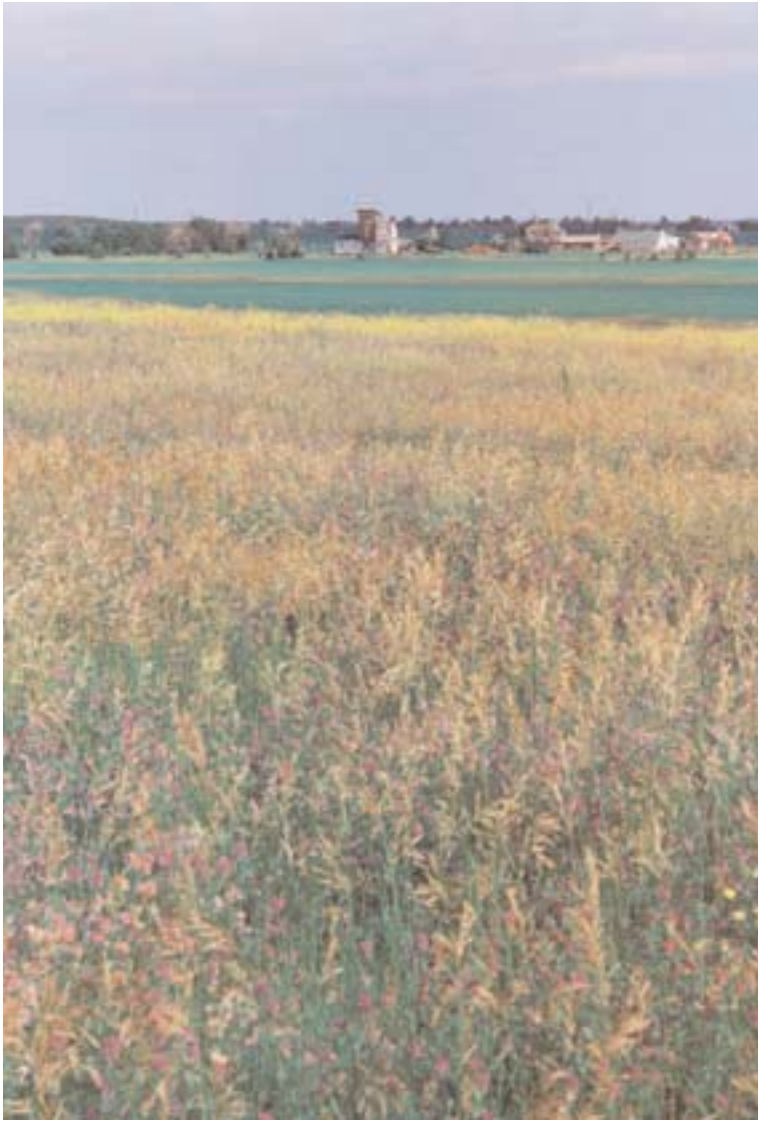
I notice (after a break to see what I've said) that I have strayed, but I hope to pick up here tomorrow, as the weather and other demands permit. I've decided to narrow my range of reference further by dividing this into the natural divisions of life here, the seasons.

Winter

The season we've entered, finally, in our first week of March, surprising us. Let me say now, Yes, I've driven out the last two days for a look at the worst storm of the winter, just returned from my recent tour and, No, not looking for trouble or material for a book. I have more than enough of both to purge me a dozen times through eternity or drop me with the sizzle of used lard into the other place.

Which is to say that often when we think we know others so well we are able to talk about what they *think* (as we do here) we don't, and before I continue I feel I should say, as you might hear from the heavy matronly or the adolescent-looking young secretary (it seems there is no in between) at one of our many local church meetings, "It is with a sense of sadness and joy that I give my report."

I mentioned my two excursions, so first let me try to give a sense of the look of things, as if you were in the passenger seat of my Bronco II (the pint-sized Bronco) of early vintage, 1988, which has adopted a kind of rocking wallow from the thousand natural shocks that such are heir to on our gravel roads, and even though you must see it through scrims and streamers coming at you, you can make out the lay of the landscape, as if its sinking rest is so deep the planet has sunk in this spot to absorb it, leaving long planes of space with plates and plateaus raised in regularities, bearer of the weight of the ages; these grainy imperfections seen out your window, up close, furrowed and seamed, red-rock edges giving in gravelly lesions; eroded buttes assuming a primitive harmony with the spread and angularity of the land itself—like the last raised edge of consciousness in one otherwise submerged in sleep. Then color, what we miss in winter! Pastures



and open grassland the hue of beef, tan and pale orange, the upper half of every stem so far evading this snowy invasion. Field-wide rows of subtle yellow furze, stubble, its shifting parallelisms pinwheeling away when your eye strikes the lines of planting runs head on, streaks of snow between their furze like comb-tooth partings across a healthy scalp—the white-lavender color snow assumes in tree shadow.

When I'm away from this, though it's in a computer, I see each page in a tight U between the platen and roller of a mechanical typewriter of last century, and the only explanation I can give is my sense that I'm writing out of a distant past, one that most Americans don't get a glimpse of, much less experience.

I've been catching mice, here where I work, one after the other in their winter incursion, and carrying each miniature corpse out in the snow for disposal, dust to dust, thinking no more of it, there are so many. But Native Americans (*Indians*! as they prefer to be called here) brooded over any death with solemn import, asking forgiveness if they caused it. They, our longest-known residents, were taken note of by French and British trappers, largely, from the 1600s on, moving from Quebec into this region (The Metis of the Red River Valley), recorded in prose by Alexander Henry, visited by Lewis and Clark, painted by the New York lawyer turned portraitist, Catlin, who depicted members of Dakotan tribes as blond and fair-skinned—our Natives admit they have trouble keeping track of all those states down below, in their sovereign view.

The makeup of the state, as presented in the sweeping intuitive way of its most successful businessman and non-expatriate, Harold Schafer, is, "There's a few Icelanders and Dutch and Dane, and some Scotch and Irish, but mostly it's Norwegians and Swedes and Germans and Germans and Germans!" He of course was German. Or half. As my wife is half Norwegian with Brit and other mixes on what used to be called the distaff side, as I'm half German, one quarter mix of Norwegian and Finn, then Brit and other blends on the, well, *staff* side. The thought of this Nordic strain might cause you, as in the manner of many of our residents, to gulp a gasp of air from slightly parted lips in a downward stream into a *Kah* deep into the lungs, an *O!* at the pit of its course, forever kept there, no release of a vocalized *Oh* except perhaps in an unexpected sneeze.

Seventy percent of our inhabitants are Scandinavian (thus the *Kah*!) and we seem to have inherited the introspective Nordic spooky look, especially in winter, or it's from watching our display of Northern Lights from fall to spring, even when plowing. We plow or cultivate or plant or harvest all night, or often do. Most here have the Norwegian grip on dimes (pinching pennies, we've calculated, isn't worth the time, and were the first to empty heavy pockets into a plate beside a cash register), so we are often better off than we pretend, or even dress, or are silent about how broke and badly in debt we are, when we are, pride rampant above anger at our nemesis, those who took it all: the bankers.

Spring

Planting season. A Dakotan need hear no more. When a natural force such as the wind strikes hard, the Dakotan moves into and against it, when not with it (which can end up knocking you six ways into next Sunday, if afoot), with the emotive motion a few might clinically classify as "crazy," in our frenzied tracking after half the tasks a farmer has to take care of without breaking down (we pray), not only from spring planting to the time of harvest but the many mini modulations of every season of the four on every day times three.

We are possessive of the weather, the IT of our existence, any farmer's only non-defecting ally, plus worst foe. Oh, now that word *farmer* is going to cause me, or so I feel in the queasy second predating exposure, a confession: only months ago I was reading about a writer and ran through a sentence that mentioned he was a farmer (not Wendell Berry) and the dazed and sneaking thought that crawled into my consciousness was: *Bumpkin*!

I've worked farms forty years, farmed here for twenty.

When you feel the prejudice against yourself and others that American society holds, as certain minorities must, prejudice has doubly hit home. Now I understand, I think—or for the first time thoroughly take in my lesson; I see that (and what could be worse?) I agree! I am proof that prejudice works so

well it converts its victims, those discriminated against. That is what is at the root of all the worse in educated humanity, and must be stamped out, along with money-love.

The scroll has been unfolded, seems my tone. Perhaps the reply should be, *The Shroud is Intact*, but I don't keep up with that kind of theological controversy any more.

Our hundred and sixty acres, or pip-squeak quarter (of a section, 640 acres) is more than enough for a family of six to deal with as we do, and in our twenty-some years here I still see dozens of projects I have yet to undertake, besides being able to do the jobs we know must be done to accomplish what we want, a part of the Dakota syndrome: "Two weeks and seven years behind!" That *as we do* is the relevant qualifier; our farm is entirely organic, all those acres. Besides, a wood-burning outdoor furnace; and we've installed solar panels and wind generators—enough wind here to run the U.S. into eternity— disgusted we can't get these practical contraptions to work as well as the power industry gets natural resources to do.

Organic. Twenty years ago it roused catcalls and beer cans in the mailbox, unheard of, but since then some have seen to the other side. Organic instead of spraying or injecting so much "chemical," as they say here, that some of the state's best soil has been shocked sterile, approximately as productive as white sand, with herbicides and pesticides and chemical fertilizers and hormones flowing around roots to provide growth, as in hydroponics. Some also irrigate. But in our western sector the ground water, arriving in its roll off one half of the Rockies, is too hard or too soft, meaning mineral bound or alkaline, too tea-colored or laced with too much hydrogen sulfide (that sickly sweetish tang of raccoon delight, going-rotten eggs), and can't be used to irrigate.

Our yard is three acres, the garden an acre, and over our first few springs we mowed the whole lawn and planted the garden from edge to edge, then took stock and focus now only on restricted patches, heaping them with compost. I've added lettuce beds near the house for Carole and attached a greenhouse to this building. All of the disenfranchised, demortgagized farmers who have moved to town and taken three jobs, as their wives also do, to pay whatever else they owe to the bank, raise paradisiacal gardens, often in a wordless glance-out-of-the-eye competition with other farmers in town.

We've planted thousands of trees and about half, suffering several droughts, have survived. That look that every elderly farmer knows—the earth replenishing itself in rich new colors across a stretch of healthy landscape—is seldom seen now. Some of Carole's recent photos from our farm catch it. I will include a few, as in a family album, one of those older ones interleaved with cards and notes and letters and pressed flowers. She sees deeper into aspects of the landscape than I do, something coastal or oceanic, which is surely what drew Scandinavians, as I understand in a way I never did before: glimpses of lakes in snow with coastal sunlight gripping surfaces with transforming Western Gold.

Once you work at organic farming, a kind of vision starts rising from the ground within your particular place, and you don't mind so much the tiring labor and tillage—seeing a small patch of the resilient but much-abused planet being helped toward the ultimate green of its re-creation. And once you see that, you can transfer it as comparison or state of perfect repair to other landscapes.

What we are deprived of in winter, color, colour, colors in the suggestive shades of a French impressionist, not the hues of house paint, appear everywhere in spring, and the festive taste of our unpolluted air sends all the senses, especially the sovereign one, smell, into an ecstatic search for every form of life and a graded sorting

The new generation begins where the height of our knowledge left off and all of our daughters, all lovers and trainers of horses, one a rodeo participant and queen three times over, often seem so far in the distance of their sensibilities they have trouble finding words for it.

of the diversity of the actual unexpurgated spectrum. Life of this kind in the U.S. is going out in the fast lane.

Fall

Harvest (summer a secret season I decline to examine), and the work of gathering in one's labor. The sharp scent of fall air sometimes tastes richer than in spring, especially as it bends toward freezing. I picture myself a puffing and puttering, chubby, diminutive, mangy and aged version of The Deerslayer, Matty Bumpkin, bustling through

this season, the one in which I most like to work—and winter on its way again, snow in October!

I don't hunt with the thousands from out of state for pheasant, although occasionally I will walk beside my son carrying a shotgun because he once said with an unguarded look how much it meant to walk with me like this one fall after a harvest, so I do. I've not shot a deer, like many of our neighbors, but have clipped four from inside a car or pickup, a daily hazard in the fall due to the overpopulation (and our speeds), two of them fatally. We made use of both in the four years apart; one for us, one for the dogs.

Herds of antelope roam over this part of the state, one pair familiar in its fall return to our distant alfalfa strip, now seldom seen either, migrating to the county-wide ranges of South Dakota.

Our animals are mostly domestic, horses and dogs, with the companionable presence of horse, like warm shadow, always hovering close. We presently have eight on the place, three or four elsewhere. I confess I can't keep track as our daughters do, knowing every one in its bloodlines and at every stage of development, forward and back, along with a sense of the milieu the absent ones experience in distant pastures (mostly South Dakota) and barns and stalls and rings and pens and exercise yards.

The new generation begins where the height of our knowledge left off and all of our daughters, all lovers and trainers of horses, one a rodeo participant and queen three times over, often seem so far in the distance of their sensibilities they have trouble finding words for it. So it's sometimes difficult for them to be patient with me when I talk about horses. But my vision is complete; my span reaches back to a grandfather who farmed with horses, and all I wanted from the time I was twelve was a few horses on my own place. That wish, at the height of my priorities for many years, has been granted.

Perhaps that's why I more and more see in Carole's recent photographs miniature inscapes of those delectable mountains to the most insignificant pilgrim in progress, lit as if in their interiors with the glory of paradise.

I have much more to say but portions of our stories others have no reason to hear. That's where others enter and move the message of Dakota forward with stories of their own, seeming at times (to me, as with your question) like the angelic presences we can almost imagine, when our imaginations aren't self-seeking or jaded, who might be walking beside us in everyday duds like this dude here—to badly imitate my younger daughters.

I see the lacy leaflets of one of the many Russian olives you and I planted, Carole, the cheery shining faces at our small oak table, the first steps we took to reach this place, imagining the leafy green abundance of another state, yet fearing the onward course of one of us or the other. So it happens that the turnabout we still speak of, as we have today, arrived and carried us to North Dakota. As for my affection for you and all of them in this state and what that state is and why it is that we live in it, *Shhh*.

IN THE CENTER RING

KAY 'THE SCRAPPER' BURGUM

It has been said of Katherine Burgum, "She can walk into a room full of people and make you feel you're the one person she was really hoping was going to be there." By the time the event is over, everyone in the room will feel the same way.

That air of infectious enthusiasm has not abated nor diminished at the age of 87.

In fact, on the advice of her personal trainer, the former dean of the College of Home Economics at North Dakota State University is now practicing a skill that might have come in handy back in the days of budget hearings with her fellow deans (99.44 percent of whom were males). She's learning how to box.

That came about a couple of months ago when she called one of Fargo's health care providers and said, "Send over the best personal trainer you have for working with an 87-year-old woman." The hospital folks, unaccustomed to being interviewed by a prospective patient, nonetheless agreed to go along with it. Burgum now has her personal trainer, a woman named Charlotte Hermes, and is happy with her choice. "Exercising has been good for me," Burgum observes.

Still, one day the trainer came up with a question that may have seemed a little strange.

"Have you ever boxed?" the trainer queried.

"Not recently," the former dean replied.

"It's a good way to loosen up those muscles at the top of your back," the trainer advised.

"I don't see any punching bags," Burgum responded.

"I just put these pads on my hands," the trainer pointed out, "and move them where we want you to hit."

Ever game to try something new "Kay," as she is known, agreed to go

a couple of rounds with the pads.

"I was having a great time practicing uppercuts, left jabs and hard rights to the midsection when this old guy came up and said, 'Lady, if she takes you on the road make sure you get the center ring. It always pulls the biggest bets.'"

Burgum has always been a scrapper. She believes it goes back to her childhood on Fargo's North Fourth Street where she claims to have been a member of a gang.

The youngest of five Kilbourne children and the only girl, Burgum once told a reporter, "It taught me how to function in a man's world," adding, "... family expected me to be just as productive, just as effective and just as responsible as any of the boys." That experience would stand her in good stead in years to come.

Katherine Kilbourne was born at Minneapolis (Kansas that is, not Minnesota). Her dad, a public health physician, brought the family to Fargo in 1923 when Kay was 8 and settled in a house at 1122 4th Street North.

"It was a great neighborhood," she recalls. Other members of the Fourth Street Gang included a group of fellow 8-year-olds: C. Warner Litten, who lived at 1045 North Broadway, Betty Baillie (later Betty Litten), Hugh Anstett, John Jenkins and Ellen Blair, all of whom would grow up to be solid citizens of Fargo, and whose names would become very familiar in both the community and "the AC" as NDSU was known in those days, in later years.

Burgum's dad had chosen Fargo from among a number of possibilities including Atlanta. His reason? Because, unlike Kansas, "Fargo cools off at night."

Being a public health physician was not a popular occupation in 1923, even among some of Dr. Kilbourne's fellow doctors. "Dad was an epidemiologist," Burgum recalls, "concerned with contagious diseases." The city of Fargo had employed him to be its health officer for five years as part of a nationwide campaign to improve health conditions, including the purity of local water supplies. In those days most people preferred the water from their backyard wells.

Dr. Kilbourne liked to use his children to demonstrate that things like the Schick test for tuberculosis didn't really hurt very much. "I underwent more Schick tests than any other person in the whole world," Burgum says.

Dad would say, "'OK, who's going with me tonight?' He'd administer the test and I'd have to walk down the aisle holding my arm out to show everyone I was OK." Looking back on that experience, Burgum believes it helped her develop an appreciation for the importance of public issues and for keeping an open mind about them.

At age 12, a solo trip to Washington, D.C., when Burgum was 12 and in the seventh grade, she had another "defining experience." As a student at Horace Mann Junior High School, she won a county essay writing contest among junior and senior high students. First prize was to represent North Dakota at a national Red Cross convention in Washington, D.C. Burgum and a boy from Casselton won the nod. "It was the biggest day of my life up to that point."

For some reason, the student from Casselton wasn't able to make the trip, so Burgum boarded the train alone, armed with a couple of shoeboxes filled with candy bars and a paperback book provided by some of her classmates. "I didn't sleep a wink on the train." Too much excitement.

"These days," she reflects, "no sane set of parents would put a 12-year-old on the train and send her halfway across the country." But those were simpler times.

Although her parents may have had a few reservations about sending her off alone, they made arrangements with the Traveler's Aid folks in Chicago to meet the train and put her on the right one for Washington. Friends of her parents, another doctor and his wife, had agreed to meet her in D.C. and let her stay with them. All of that went without incident, according to plan.

When the time came for her presentation at what is now the Corcoran Art Museum in Washington, the young emissary from North Dakota was ready. "Although my notes fell under a table and were unrecoverable just as I got up to speak, I knew my topic — What the Junior Red Cross had accomplished in North Dakota — well enough by then to wing it without my notes.

"That was the point where I decided a person from North Dakota could do anything they chose to tackle. I never worried about public speaking again after that."

Back in Fargo the 12-year-old celebrity was in demand to speak at senior Red Cross gatherings, one of which was held in the Lincoln Log Cabin at the college on the top floor of Old Main.

The guests had just finished dinner when it came time for her to speak. The college's famous impresario, Professor Alfred Arvold was master of ceremonies. Just as Burgum began her presentation, Arvold announced "They can't see you!" "He picked me up bodily and stood me on the table with the hem of my dress about eye level, right in the middle of the dirty dishes. Another defining experience."

Burgum enrolled at North Dakota Agricultural College in 1933 and quickly emerged as a student leader. Over the course of the ensuing four years she was elected president of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority, editor of the 1937 Bison Annual, and an outstanding member of the senior class. She was graduated in 1937, by which time the Kilbournes had moved to Montana.

Offered a teaching job in Beach, which is about as far as you can go in North Dakota and not be in Montana, she boarded the train at Fargo, setting her alarm clock to go off in plenty of time to take a look at Beach. Perhaps luckily in retrospect, the alarm clock didn't wake her up and she slept all the way to Helena. That fall, instead of taking the job at Beach, she took a position teaching junior high and high school home economics at Sayville, N.Y., on Long Island, about as far as you can get from Montana and still be on the continent.

That job allowed her to earn a master's degree at Columbia University during evenings and weekends, which in turn led to a teaching position at Wayne State University in Detroit. She taught there from 1939 to 1947, becoming an assistant professor and research associate in the university's school of business.

"FAMILY EXPECTED ME TO BE JUST AS PRODUCTIVE, JUST AS EFFECTIVE AND JUST AS RESPONSIBLE AS ANY OF THE BOYS."

Katherine and Joe Burgum had met as students at the NDAC. He went on to the University of Minnesota Law School, then enlisted in the Navy. After a several-year courtship they were married in Chicago in 1944. He spent most of the next three years on a destroyer in the Pacific and Aleutian Islands, his service culminating with the Japanese surrender.

Still essentially newlyweds, Joe and Katherine Burgum returned to Arthur in 1947 and started a family. Over the course of the next several years, Brad, Barbara and Doug were born, and Katherine Burgum would embark on a 27-year career as homemaker, community leader and political activist. That role would change quite dramatically with Joe Burgum's untimely death in 1971.

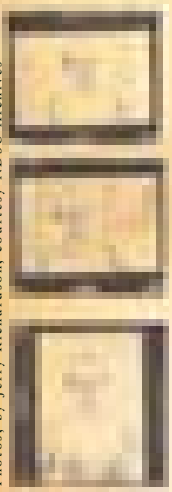
That same year, in her new role as head of the household with three teenage children to raise, Burgum agreed to serve as the alumni representative on a committee searching for a new dean of the NDSU College of Home Economics. The following year, when the search proved to be unsuccessful, she agreed to become temporarily the acting dean while the search continued. Later, on a unanimous recommendation of the home economics faculty to President L.D. Loftsgard, she was appointed dean of the college.

At an event rededicating the Family Life Center as the Katherine Kilbourne Burgum Family Life Center in 1998, Don Morton, then assistant to the president at NDSU, recalled, "Back when President Laurel Loftsgard accepted the recommendation of the home economics faculty to appoint Katherine Burgum as dean, one can't help but wonder if he really knew what he was in for.

"Practically within minutes of that announcement, the new dean was camped on the front steps of Old Main, insisting a new building was the college's top priority."

"Still," Morton added, "President Loftsgard had a lot of respect for people who knew how to get things done. I have a feeling that he sensed he had made the proper choice."

During Burgum's eight years in the deanship, dramatic changes took place in the college.



Photos, by Jerry Richardson, courtesy NDSU Archives

Enrollment grew to more than 1,100 majors.

The Family Life Center was built, reflecting Burgum's considerable powers of persuasion with the university administration, the North Dakota Legislature and a sizable group of private donors.

The number of faculty members holding doctoral degrees grew from four to 18.

The NDSU College of Home Economics became ranked among the top 15 colleges of home economics in the nation, and 26th among 400 eligible colleges of home economics to be accredited by the American Home Economics Association.

The 1979 North Dakota Legislature earmarked $100,000 in Agricultural Experiment Station funding for research projects in home economics, something for which Burgum had campaigned throughout her professional career.

As a charter member of the NDSU Development Foundation, created during a meeting at Medora in 1968, Burgum served with distinction, first as its secretary, then president, board chair, then member of its executive committee, over the course of a quarter century.

In 1976, on the 300th anniversary of the American Revolution, Jim and Jean Leet and Erv and Marie Rector volunteered to be hosts to the Development Foundation board's semi-annual meeting in London. Rector was managing director of Burroughs Corporation operations in the

United Kingdom and Leet was a senior vice president of Pan American Airlines. Partly through her political affiliations, Kay Burgum had come to know Texan Anne Armstrong, at the time serving as American Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Largely because of that connection the NDSU contingent was treated royally, receiving a private briefing at the U.S. Embassy, and an invitation to be guests of the Armstrongs at Winfield House, which is the official residence of U.S. ambassadors to England.

For the NDSU board members, a highlight of the visit was being announced individually by the Armstrongs' veddy proper British butler as they came down the stairs of the palatial British mansion on London's historic Regents Park.

The Development Foundation honored Kay Burgum with its Service Award in 1994. That recognition had been preceded with an Alumni Achievement Award in 1971, designation as a Blue Key Doctor of Service in 1978, an Honored Alumnus in 1981 and an Honorary Doctor of Science in 1982.

Foundation Trustee Bob Reimers, in presenting the group's Service Award, referred back to the Declaration of Independence and its commitment to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," noting "I can think of no one who embodies those treasured American aspirations more than my friend, Katherine Burgum. And, in so doing ... has set an example for women ... and all of her fellow citizens."

Since her retirement more than 20 years ago, Burgum has continued that pattern of active involvement in civic, professional, business and philanthropic affairs.

As a member of the original board of directors of Great Plains Software, of which her son, Doug, became president, (it's now Microsoft Great Plains) she played a major role in the company's early growth and expansion and, in that sense, the economy of North Dakota.

Some years ago, comedian Woody Allen put it quite succinctly in a commencement address, advising the new crop of graduates: "Life is a series of pitfalls and opportunities. The trick is to avoid the pitfalls, seize the opportunities, and be home by five o'clock."

Kay Burgum rarely got home by 5 during the years of her professional life. On the other hand, over the course of a relatively long life, she clearly encountered her share of pitfalls and opportunities. Characteristically, she dealt with them with intelligence, verve, good humor and dogged perseverance.

— Jerry Richardson

BUFFALO BILLS

No. 90

Photo courtesy of the Buffalo Bills.

PHIL HANSEN

Phil Hansen is 33 and has just retired from the National Football League after 11 years with the Buffalo Bills. After winning two college championships at North Dakota State University in 1988 and 1990, he was drafted in the second round. In 2000 he was voted one of the Bills team captains. He grew up in Oakes, N.D. Hansen earned a bachelor's degree from NDSU in agricultural economics in 1991.

EXCERPTS

Any time you play for more than a couple years in the National Football League you always think about retirement, especially Monday mornings after Sunday games. But for a defensive lineman — playing 11 years — that's almost above and beyond the call of duty.

I wanted to leave the game on my own terms. I didn't want to be cut or traded.

I watched football as a kid but I never thought in my wildest dreams that pro football would be a reality for me. I never really considered college. My scope was a farm in Oakes. I've thought out of the box a little bit since that time and learned the sky's the limit and tried to achieve my potential through sports.

I worked hard through sports, but if I would have been a sales rep., I would have liked to think I'd have progressed just as much. The hard work is the common denominator, not just the job you're in. There's no substitute for effort. I've been told that and had it instilled in me and I believed it and I can't say that it has ever failed me.

I would have never paid to go to college.

The financial rewards of playing professional football far outweigh anything I could imagine. I can say this now — I would have played the game for a lot less.

The NFL is really a cross section of America. It's like any other business, you have every walk of life.

I played in three Super Bowls and two national championships in college. We won all the college ones and lost all the professional ones. I wouldn't reverse it but I wish I could have won one in each.

Everybody says 'at least you got there, 30 other teams didn't even get to the Super Bowl.' That only goes so far with the competitive spirit.

I would have given up the chance to go to two Super Bowls to win just one.

I think everybody should move once in a while so they don't become a pack rat. I moved out here with two duffel bags and a suitcase. It's amazing what you collect.

Basic things will always get you through — hard work, determination, truth. Put in an honest day's work and you'll get an honest day's pay.

I want to be remembered as a dependable, consistent, accountable person. Those are things I prided myself on and those are things I had to go to sleep at night knowing I achieved that day. You don't lie to yourself, you don't assign blame. If it's your fault take it, live up to it and move on.

Marv Leavy used to say football is simple but it's not easy.

I've learned that common sense isn't so common any more.

Respect is earned. It isn't given as a birthright. In my career I've come to that conclusion.

living design

It's hard to keep up with Tama Duffy, even when she's wearing high-heeled leather boots that would make the feet of a lesser woman whimper. The 42-year-old is speed-walking through her Capitol Hill neighborhood in Washington, D.C., in the middle of a brilliant and chilly Friday afternoon. The air is almost as brisk as Duffy as she heads from the Metro station to her home. Cell phone in hand, she is speed-dialing, too, checking messages en route to her meeting with an air conditioning contractor — worried that she might already have missed him.

Duffy, a 1980 design grad, is one of the latest additions to the team at OP.X, an edgy D.C. strategy and design firm. She's at her best leading high-powered teams of architects and interior designers on complex building projects. She can go head to head with major contractors without blinking an eye. And this project today is no different — only this time Duffy's client is Duffy herself.

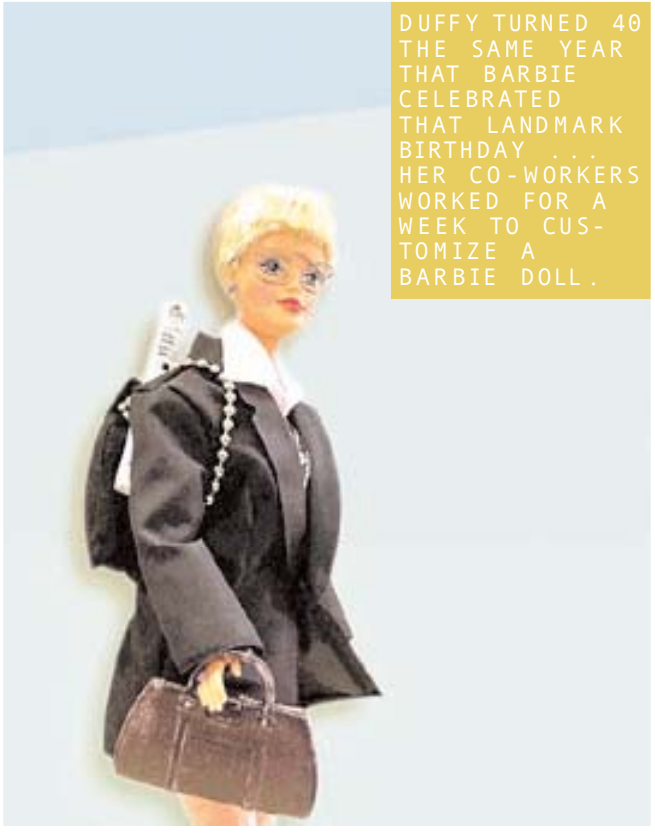
The AC guy is upstairs, Duffy's electrician tells her when she reaches her classic 150-year-old wood-framed row house. She charges up the narrow steps — temporarily sans banister — to the second floor while the electrician continues to calmly work. He's installing track lighting — small, multi-faceted halogens to brighten up a room that gets only the soft light of morning. Duffy had called the home a demolition zone. It's true. There's an elegant black velvet sofa half covered with plastic in the middle of the room. Other pieces of furniture — a table and several chairs — are huddled up next to it, trying to stay out of the way. Yet despite the Men at Work feel, it's clear that there's a gracious, welcoming home coming into being.

Standing in the front living room, you can see straight through the dining room and kitchen (also under construction), past the bright Caribbean-blue mosaic walls of a tiny downstairs bathroom all the way to the sunny, terraced brick garden. Duffy moved to D.C. from New York City at the end of the summer and lived in the house for a couple of weeks watching, as she says, "how the sun penetrated the spaces." She thought about how natural light could be brought indoors — an important theme in all of her work — then drew up plans and elevations. That done, she packed her bags and moved in with her sister's family for three months while workers exposed brick walls, gutted the bathrooms and kitchen, straightened walls and leveled floors. She's been back in the house for a month. Even if the kitchen sink isn't yet in place and plaster dust is still flying, she's determined to get herself settled. (The upstairs bath, which is completed, helps. It's spa-like, with a bath deck that gives the original cast-iron tub the impression of being sunken, a heated, tumbled stone floor, and large custom-sized window. This is the room that speaks to Duffy's deep, contemplative nature. She's designed a place where she can soak away a tough day, look out at the stars and dream.)

Duffy's move to D.C. was a gutsy one. She had been at the top of her game in New York. Vice president and principal in charge of health care design at Perkins & Will, she'd spent 20 years building her reputation as one of the leading national experts in health care design. Now, she wasn't just changing jobs; she was restructuring her life — personally and professionally — and every bit as radically as she was her small and sturdy new house.

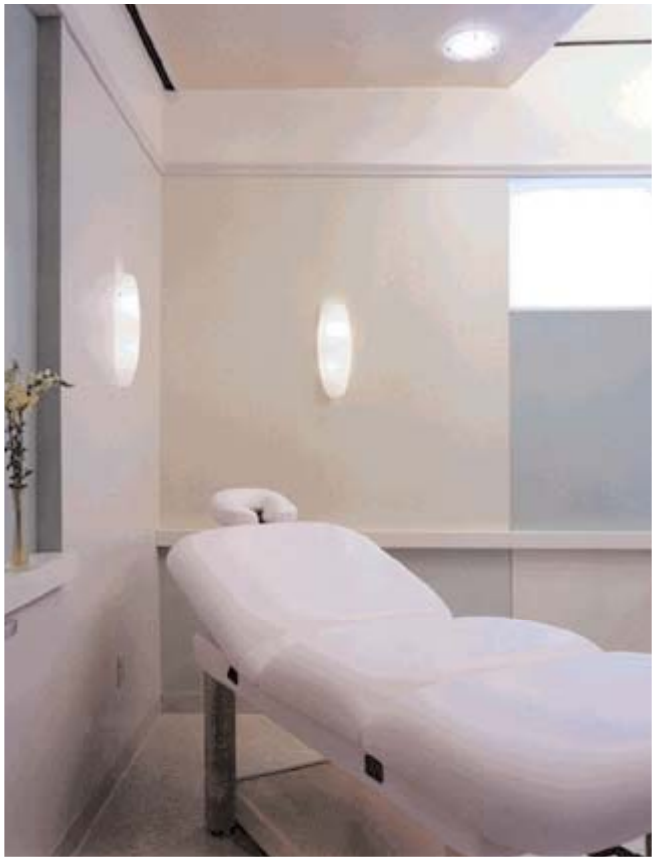
Some of the impetus for the change came from a desire to live closer to family; her sister's family and other close relatives reside in the D.C. area. Her parents' failing health back in North Dakota made Duffy reflect on her own life and take stock of what mattered most. (Her father, who gave Duffy an appreciation for beauty through his stamp-collecting hobby, took a turn for the worse suddenly in early September, passing away on Sept. 11. Her mother, who liked to paint and draw and who wrote weekly letters to Duffy while she was still able, is now in the late stages of Alzheimer's.) Still, it wasn't easy leaving behind the close relationships she'd developed with her colleagues in New York. Duffy turned 40 the same year that Barbie celebrated that landmark birthday. As a surprise, her co-workers worked for a week to customize a Barbie doll, hiding it when Duffy passed by. They cut off the hair to look like Duffy's short "do" and dressed her all in black. Then they made her tiny Tumi roll-on luggage, called her TamaBarbie, and, as a final grace note, set her up with a Ken doll, replete with blanket and bottle of French wine.

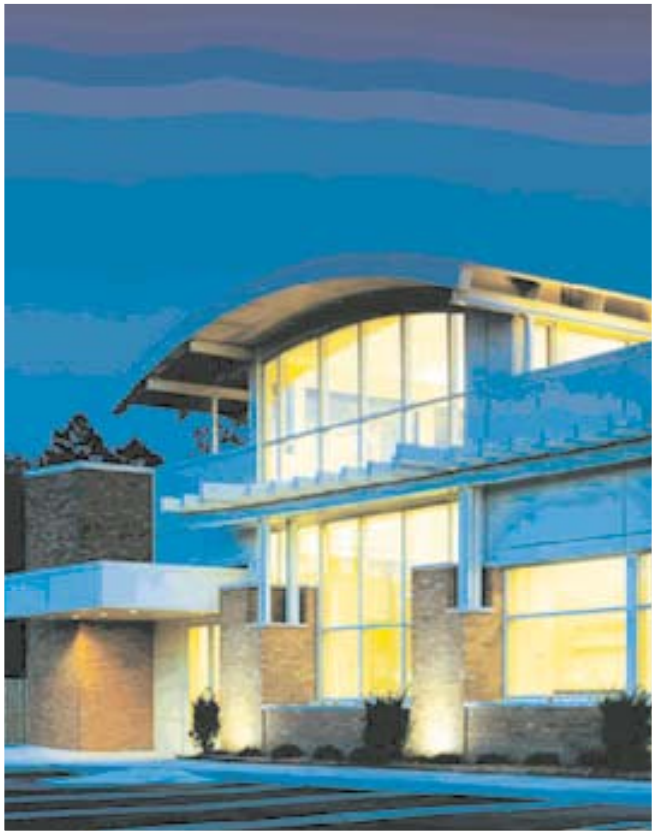
Back when Duffy was starting out, health care was only beginning to emerge as a design niche. Fresh out of school, Duffy went to Minneapolis to look for a job in commercial interiors. She landed a position in a small firm and proceeded to wrest everything she could from the experience. "I did everything from unlocking the door and making the coffee," she recalls, "to meeting with the reps, typing up specs, coordinating the library, and designing. I kind of got my fingers in every aspect of what was needed to support a project. Working for that small firm helped me to understand the entire process of design."



DUFFY TURNED 40 THE SAME YEAR THAT BARBIE CELEBRATED THAT LANDMARK BIRTHDAY . . . HER CO-WORKERS WORKED FOR A WEEK TO CUSTOMIZE A BARBIE DOLL.

— D.J. Case





DUFFY'S WORK HAS SHOWN HOW IMPORTANT THE COMPONENTS OF SPACES — NATURAL LIGHT, INTERESTING VIEWS, COLOR PALETTE AND FURNITURE — CAN BE IN HELPING PEOPLE FEEL WELL.

photos, on this page, courtesy of Perkins and Will

Her next career move was a calculated risk — a three-month contract in the Minneapolis office of Ellerbe Becket. Moving from a six-person shop to a firm of 800 could have caused culture shock in a young woman who hailed from Westhope, N.D., near the Canadian border (population 600). Instead, she thrived. "In a large firm, gathering information to do your job can be a bit like a scavenger hunt," she says. "But I liked that." There were lighting designers, architects and interior designers, not to mention the mechanical, electrical, structural and landscape engineers. They all had, Duffy says, an abundance of information: "It was a great place for me to bloom." Her three-month contract lasted for 10 years.

Duffy's second project for Ellerbe Becket, the Mayo Clinic's Charlton Building in Rochester, Minn., would shape her life in ways she never anticipated. It was Duffy's first experience in health care design. In the middle of the project, the director of design left. Duffy, who describes herself as focused and intense and a product of the Midwest work ethic, took up the slack, attending all of the meetings, coordinating the team of designers. At one point, she discovered that the furniture specifications — a complex and detailed listing of the component of each and every piece of furniture, in this case several million dollars worth — were riddled with errors. Duffy started over on it, working nights and weekends nonstop to get it right.

Duffy's contributions and promise were recognized. She was asked to head another health care project, then another. "Before I knew it, I was leading teams on four projects around the country and had suddenly become a specialist," she says. She made vice president before she turned 30.

As one of the leaders in the field, Duffy's work has shown how important the components of spaces — natural light, interesting views, color palette and furniture that supports the patient, the family and the caregivers — can be in helping people feel well. But when Duffy began, health care design was not a coveted niche in interior design. In fact, it was called institutional design, reflecting interiors that took their cues from medical equipment. "I became intrigued in the practice of healing environments because they tended to be dismal," says Duffy. "Many creative people steered away from them because they felt they were too limited in terms of design solution."

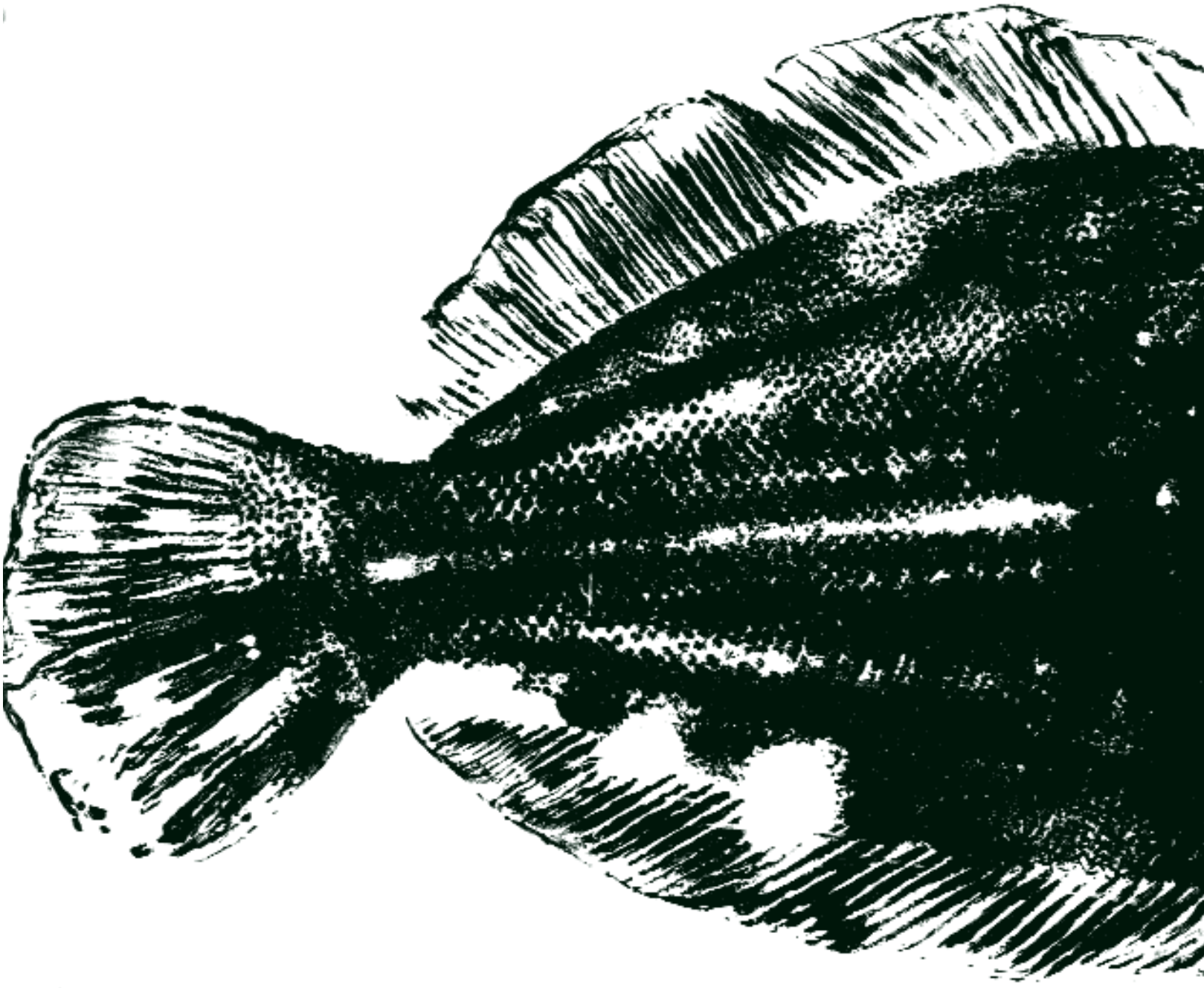
The Mayo project was eye-opening for Duffy, its philosophy dating back to the turn of the century when the Mayo brothers insisted that their facilities be warm, inviting and visually friendly. "We always say that the perception of design by our visitors and patients reflects on the perception of quality and care," says Robert Fontaine, who was Duffy's client on the Charlton Building. (He's now director of planning and projects for the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla. Duffy has not only worked with him on several other high-profile projects, but considers him a mentor.) Fontaine adds, "It takes more ability when you have parameters that are limiting. You have to be able to actually be more creative."

Duffy thrived on that challenge — and she's not exactly leaving that behind now. Her new challenge is to take what she knows about healthy design and apply it to other venues. At OP.X she's currently working on projects that include law offices and a hotel and conference center. "I'm interested in the whole mind/body response to environment," she says.

Meanwhile, back at her own personal construction zone, the interview with the air conditioning installer, a man whose hair bears more than a little dab of Brylcreem, isn't going well. Duffy is looking for an efficient and elegant alternative to the upper story's current window units. The salesman is reluctant to problem solve with her. Whatever you want us to do, we'll do, he says. She knows there's a better answer than that, so she'll keep looking.

And maybe there, right there, is the key to Tama Duffy. She isn't afraid to keep looking until she finds the solution that works. She's a woman who can look at something — a space, a profession, a life — and see what it could be. She's given definition to her new house. She's turned her career in a new direction. How her influence will play out in the commercial world of design will be interesting to follow.

That is, of course, if you can keep up with her. — **Sally Ann Flecker**



SCHOOL of FISH

ART IS THE TEACHER

"Maybe Jesus was an ice fisherman."

Someone said it between baiting hooks, eating barbecues and playing dice in the belly of the Big Fish. It came off as a gentle joke, but it presented an interesting comparison.

Jesus walked on water, had a thing for fish, and used the familiar to explain the unfamiliar. These five North Dakota State University students were "living" on the water. They aimed to preach a little gospel of art, of NDSU and the land. And they were using a fish as bait.

People came almost as soon as the students began assembling the Big Fish on frozen Devils Lake. It's not every North Dakota fish house that has a dorsal fin. And not every fish house is so modular in design that — on a good day — it can be put together, wood-burning stove and all, in 74 minutes flat. Nor do most ice fishermen invite visitors inside to draw pictures on the walls. So, when visitors ask "Why?" the students set their hooks and reel them in with the story of Common Ground.

It all started a few years ago with the Kellogg Foundation. "Kellogg's interest was in discovering how land grant institutions were interacting with the public and if they were still meeting the mission of being the people's universities," says Gary Brewer, who chairs the NDSU entomology department. That research evolved into the Leadership Initiative for Institutional Change or LINC, a partnership of land grant universities in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. "One component of the training they provide is the use of art to break down communication barriers and to get people to share their thoughts and feelings about different ideas," Brewer says. Agriculture reached out to the art department. Architecture got involved. President Joseph A. Chapman liked the idea. And so in the fall of 2001, with the help of a Kellogg grant, two Fargo artists were hired.

Jon Offutt and Terry Jelsing were selected based on their proposals for public art projects that would engage the university community and foster relationships out in the state, says Kim Bromley, art department coordinator. Offutt's project was to build a portable glass blowing studio and use it to share his expertise with NDSU students and people across the state. Jelsing invented Common Ground, a project that would introduce a corps of NDSU students to site-specific sculpture, take them on "art safaris" across the state, and engage the public along the way. While the impact of the two projects is yet to be fully evaluated, Bromley says, "I've had a couple of students tell me working with Terry and Jon have been life-altering events for them."

The lives of the Common Ground students changed the day they decided to show up for the first informational meeting. Most of them remember how they got the call. One overheard other students talking about it. A couple caught wind via e-mail. One heard about it from a girlfriend too busy to participate herself. Before they knew it, the "chosen ones" (it was a competitive selection process) were wandering in the rain building sculpture from twine and twigs along the Red River at Fargo's Dike West.

The group's Doubting Thomas was revealed: Andrew Rising, 22, a senior in art and philosophy from Medina, N.D. "I'm the one trying to figure it out, trying to push whatever lesson there might be to its extreme, to try and get as much as I can out of it," he says. Rising did not "get" the twigs, grass and twine project, and he told Jelsing so over coffee. Jelsing said, "I'm glad you brought that up." And they talked, and they talked, and they're still talking.

A few students who began with the Common Ground team weren't able to continue for various reasons; schedule conflicts and that thing called winter graduation. In the end there were five, each with a distinctive personality and role within the group. Of course, they had no idea of what those roles would be until their first art safari on the banks of the Missouri River, near Williston. On a chilly night in early October they pitched Jelsing's outfitter's tent, stoked the wood-burning stove, and began to discuss what they, as a group of artists, would create. Jelsing, the "synthesizer of ideas," preached trust, respect and honesty and talked about how those common principles of behavior would affect their endeavor. The next day he turned them loose on the land, to scavenge and experiment with nature's materials: driftwood, brush, stone, sand. Jelsing calls them "earth sketches." They were all different, some starkly stunning in their beauty.

Site-specific works like these, Jelsing says, are transitory. "The weather, the water, the sun, will change them ... In that way this brand of public art is very fragile. It's created with an intense energy and focus, it exists in time, and then it goes away or changes."

The sun went down and the serious talk began. The next day the team would collaborate on their first joint project. Guided by Jelsing, they reached a consensus: they would use the flat, sandstone rock from the shoreline to build a perfectly round disc, 12 feet wide and 3 feet high. Part of it would rest in the water. The project defined, they relaxed and listened to the cowboy poetry and songs of D.W. Groethe of Bainville, Mont., a buddy from Jelsing's undergraduate days at the University of North Dakota. A coyote wandered by and the land quietly awaited the artists' assault.

To this point, Common Ground's major projects have been extremely physical, one working with rock, the other with saws, screws and plywood. And each was executed under less than choice conditions, one cold, windy and damp, the other — in an art department Quonset — dry, dusty and cramped. The two women in the group were challenged by the physicality of the rock work and the unfamiliarity of power tools and construction, but never discouraged. They persevered for the love of the process and the camaraderie. "I kind of wimp out early if I don't have other people working with me," admits Cindy Sondreal, 24, a senior in landscape architecture from Grand Forks, N.D. "When we were picking up all those rocks, and they were talking about more layers, I knew in the end it would look great, but I needed everyone there working with me in order to keep going." Amanda Henderson, a 22-year-old architecture major/art minor from Scranton, N.D., concurs. "The thought crossed my mind that 'This is crazy, all we're doing is making a big pile of rocks,' but at the same time, it was more than that." How much more, Henderson discovered the next day.

photos by members of Common Ground project

"I remember as I was walking up to it ... my heart started racing. I felt so much excitement and energy coming from the piece. It was hard to leave. I really felt personally attached to it."

The feeling was mutual. The team was forged. And they started spreading the word about the great things they had seen and done.

The momentum drew a late addition. Rick Woodland, 41, a visual arts major who grew up in Idaho literally worked his way into the group, lending a hand on the Big Fish. Selfishly, he wanted to spend a little more time around the "young minds" he'd grown to appreciate; generously, he thought he might play the role of helper perhaps even mentor. "They're becoming a unit — a small patrol," observes Woodland. "I think they could capture and dominate anything they decide to do."

One might assume the main reason at artist would build a fish house that looks like a fish would be to have the joy and challenge of painting it. Not Troy Mann, 21, a fourth-year architecture student and visual arts major from Dickinson, N.D. "This is the stuff I like," he says, as he measures, cuts, fits, re-cuts and installs one of the collapsible bunks in the Big Fish. Wood and metal are more his media as an artist; as a team member his tools are honesty, a sense of humor, and a rejection of absolutes. "I'm the agitator ... the instigator. I like to disagree and play devil's advocate," Mann says. "Terry does that too. He says things like, 'Why don't you do it the opposite way of how you do it, then you'll know what it is that you do.' " Or, as Mann remembers from a philosophy class: To understand the antithesis is to understand the thesis.

The Big Fish is the antithesis of the Missouri River Project. Obvious. Gaudy. Humorous. Smack dab in the middle of Devils Lake's fishing derby one weekend in January and Shiver Fest another in February. People come to have their pictures taken beside the Big Fish. Guys in earflap caps volunteer to drill ice holes. A group of teenage fishermen from South Dakota donate a Northern pike, which is hauled back to Fargo and tested as a printing tool. Inspired, the team develops a printing project for kids, which they conduct during the Shiver Fest chili cook-off in the Devils Lake Elks Lodge. To top it off, the team wins a Sony home stereo system in the fishing derby drawing (they donate it to the art department) and the Big Fish makes newspapers across the state.

The media also covered the intimate exercise out west, and the creation will last, but it will never draw crowds. "I don't regret that the first project was not seen," says Sondreal, voicing the team view. "I feel like it was the right project to do. It came from the land. It was so perfect. It was so secluded. Our piece just reacted to that seclusion."

The team's final work will likely have more in common with the stone disc than the wood fish. Maintaining the serendipitous water theme, a canoe trip is planned. Consensus is yet to be built on what they will create, but Jelsing says the students have the tools to design and execute the project themselves. "If you come from the kind of background in art theory that looks at art and life as necessary equals, then the experiences they've been part of so far would prepare them for conceiving a project and carrying it out to the end. What's been most rewarding for me is seeing the students coming together and giving up some of their own individual egos for the common good of the group. ... I think wherever these artists go, they will engage others in team art projects."

Common Ground has profoundly affected the students. Each has a high point, a low point, a point of revelation. Each confesses a deeper appreciation of the land because of the project. And each has exciting ideas of how they will apply to their own work, both now and in the future, the lessons of leadership, teamwork, art making and risk taking. But ask them — one by one — what they believe is the Common Ground, and the answer is unified: People. "If you didn't have the people, you wouldn't have Common Ground," Mann says, "the six people in Common Ground, and the people they affected, without that — in my mind — you wouldn't have anything."

—Catherine Bishop

COMRADES IN GERMS

NDSU SCIENTIST SEEKS RUSSIAN HELP IN A QUEST FOR A BETTER ANTHRAX TEST

ANTHRAX IS CAUSED BY BACILLUS ANTHRACIS, A BACTERIUM THAT FORMS SPORES. THE SPORES ARE HARDY, CAPABLE OF WITHSTANDING EXTREME TEMPERATURES AND SURVIVING IN THE SOIL FOR DECADES, AND RELEASE TOXIC PROTEINS. THE NAME STEMS FROM ANTHRAKIS, THE GREEK WORD FOR COAL, BECAUSE THE SKIN FORM OF THE DISEASE CAUSES BLACK LESIONS THAT RESEMBLE COAL.

photos by Charlie Stoltenow

Obolensk, a clearing in remote woods southwest of Moscow, is the site of a scientific city that has fallen into sad disrepair. The broken windows and grime belie the significance of what once took place there. One building in particular stands out among several drab structures enclosed by an electrified fence, an eight-story box of concrete and glass that houses a collection of hundreds of bacterial strains, many of them genetically altered. Building One, as it's still known, served as the hub of a mammoth Soviet bioweapons program, which at its peak employed 60,000. Within the guarded complex, in one of the most closely kept secrets of the Cold War, Soviet scientists toiled for almost two decades. Their work produced breakthroughs in germ warfare, including deadly neurotoxins, plague and anthrax made resistant to antibiotics.

Inside Building One, on a chilly afternoon last October, Charlie Stoltenow sat at a library table among Russian scientists, some formerly employed in the Soviet Union's biological weapons program, in a scientific exchange. Their meeting was interrupted when a man came in holding news

pulled from the Internet, a CNN report that a south Florida man had died from inhaling anthrax, amid spreading fears that he was the victim of a bioterrorism attack. Stoltenow, who knew a little of Obolensk's dark history, asked a blunt question.

"Is this you guys? Are you doing this?"

The Russian scientists looked at each other — an unspoken conversation flickered between them, conveying surprise at the impertinence from the affable, bearded visitor who days earlier had jokingly introduced himself as coming from the North American Siberia.

"Nyet, nyet," came the answer, accompanied by awkward chuckles: No, no.

Stoltenow, an extension veterinarian at North Dakota State University, considered this response for a moment. Maybe he was emboldened by the camaraderie that had developed during the preceding week of meetings, increasingly frank discussions smoothed by small talk over vodka and a trip to the Bolshoi ballet. Or maybe he was thinking of the temptations that might have been dangled before some struggling Russian scientist by someone willing to buy his deadly expertise. He pressed further.

"How do I know this?" Again the Russians exchanged wary looks before one of them, a senior scientist, answered for the group.

"Oh, comrade, if it was us, there would be a lot more dead. This looks like the work of an amateur operation." More nervous laughter followed, this time from the Americans as well, and then the scientists went back to their work, a dialogue exploring research possibilities of mutual benefit. Cooperation in defending against anthrax attacks, in fact, was one of the agenda items in the scientific exchange that Stoltenow took part in, one of two recent delegations of American civilian scientists who met with counterparts in Russia. The respected National Research Council sponsored both trips. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. government has led programs aimed at keeping the arsenal of biological and nuclear weapons from falling into hostile hands. Even before last fall's attacks, which killed five people, authorities were worried about the lethal use of anthrax, which was available via mail order until the mid-1990s.

Stoltenow, whose specialty is veterinary epidemiology, was selected as part of a six-member team of civilian scientists that included fellow veterinarians as well as several molecular biologists. Previous exchanges involved defense scientists, but the government wants to broaden American-Russian collaborations. During Stoltenow's two-week visit, he was able to see first-hand how even elite Russian scientists must make do with working conditions one would expect to find in the Third World. Dilapidated buildings at Obolensk were dotted with broken glass panes, some replaced by boards or aluminum foil. For the first 10 days, Stoltenow's hotel room had no heat. Obolensk had just two large apartment buildings, no business district and few services. Within the science compound, laboratories function with outdated equipment. On a tour of one lab, Stoltenow's group saw an empty gin bottle under a lab-bench ventilation hood. Most surprising, he says, was the fact that it was left out in the open, where it could be seen.

Earlier exchanges, involving U.S. military or other government scientists, often ended in mutual frustration. Sometimes scientists agreed to share information, only to be overruled by their superiors. Russian scientists, for instance, once agreed to provide copies of their arsenal of germs — specimens from Building One's Museum of Cultures, a deadly collection of plague, anthrax and tularemia microorganisms — but security officials nixed the idea. Almost five decades of Cold War hostility will not evaporate overnight, in spite of a warming in relations. The scientists work under watchful eyes. Case in point: Stoltenow learned that one of the Russian scientists, a balding, bearded man whose vague explanations of his duties seemed to change daily, was, in fact, a spy for the Russian equivalent of the FBI. The suspicion is mutual. While in Moscow, en route back to Fargo, Stoltenow encountered some American military officers in an international hotel and joined them for dinner. He told them about his talks with Russian counterparts, with hopes of cooperating to combat bioterrorism. The officers shrugged, saying such lofty work is best left to civilians. "In two or three years we could be at each other's throats — you never know how world politics will go," he says, quoting the officers' reaction.

The changes have, indeed, been

ANTHRAX BACTERIA OCCUR NATURALLY THROUGHOUT MUCH OF THE GREAT PLAINS, INCLUDING AREAS OF NORTH DAKOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA. SOME SCIENTISTS BELIEVE THE BACTERIA MIGRATED WITH CATTLE ON DRIVES FROM TEXAS, WHILE OTHER RESEARCHERS BELIEVE ANTHRAX CAME EARLIER, WITH THE ROAMING BISON.

PULMONARY ANTHRAX WAS FIRST DISCOVERED IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY, WHEN WORKERS IN A TEXTILE MILL BREATHED SPORES RELEASED BY NEW MANUFACTURING PROCESSES TO MAKE WOOL. IT WAS KNOWN AS WOOL SORTERS' DISEASE.

AN ANTHRAX INFECTION REQUIRES EXPOSURE TO BETWEEN 10,000 AND 20,000 SPORES, A MICROSCOPIC QUANTITY. AS SOON AS AN ANTHRAX SPORE ENTERS THE BODY IT GERMINATES AND MULTIPLIES. WITHIN A FEW DAYS, THE BACTERIA PRODUCE TOXINS THAT CRIPPLE THE ABILITY OF WHITE BLOOD CELLS TO FIGHT DISEASE.

THE PIN CUSHION PREVENTION: ANTHRAX VACCINE SHOTS MUST BE GIVEN SIX TIMES BEFORE THEY BECOME EFFECTIVE — THREE TIMES IN TWO-WEEK INTERVALS AND THREE TIMES IN SIX-MONTH INTERVALS, FOLLOWED BY YEARLY BOOSTERS. SO FAR, THE VACCINE IS NOT AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

(NO EXIT)

staggering. During the late 1980s, at the peak of the Soviet bioweapons program, Obolensk teemed with a staff of 3,000 scientists and technicians. The number today has dwindled to approximately 1,000. Among those who remain, even top scientists are paid the equivalent of $500 a month. Stoltenow knows of one former scientist who works as a construction worker; another served as one of their interpreters. In light of the widespread poverty and lack of jobs, Western officials worry that some unemployed Russian scientists might work for terrorists or rogue states.

"I asked them 'where are the other 2,000,' " Stoltenow says of the scientists who left Obolensk. "They said 'we don't know.' It was pretty scary. People are a pretty liquid commodity. What type of information left — who knows?"

●

As demonstrated by last fall's bioterrorism-by-mail attacks, the first evidence of a clandestine anthrax release is likely to be stricken patients turning up in emergency rooms, complaining of symptoms similar to pneumonia or other respiratory infections. Unfortunately, by the time symptoms turn up in cases of inhaled anthrax, it is often too late for a cure. The fatality rate of pulmonary anthrax approaches 95 percent if treatment doesn't begin within 48 hours of exposure. Blood culture tests are used to diagnose the disease, usually evident within 6 to 24 hours. Confirmatory immunological and microbiological tests can take up to several days to provide a definitive diagnosis. That leaves little margin for error.

However, Stoltenow says, the tests used for initial diagnosis of anthrax are prone to false positive results, causing unnecessary panic and expense. Given those problems, he has assembled a team of scientists, Russian and American, to search for a new testing method for anthrax. The technique he proposes would zero in on detecting what is called the lethal factor of anthrax, a toxic protein that must be present for the bacteria to cause a fatal exposure. Once inside a nutrient-rich environment — such as warm, moist lungs — the bacteria secrete the lethal factor and two other proteins, a protective antigen and an edema factor, which causes a rapid buildup of fluids in the victim. Luckily, researchers have learned that anthrax with the lethal factor develops a distinctive cleavage of protein enzymes once it establishes itself in a host; by targeting that long cleft, using biochemical processes that "see" unique molecular shapes, Stoltenow and his colleagues hope to develop a more reliable medical test to confirm the presence of anthrax.

Three prospective Russian colleagues from Obolensk have expertise in virulent anthrax strains and their proteins. His four American collaborators would include Lynn Rust, a microbiologist at NDSU; Eric Garber, a biochemist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Fargo; as well as a diagnostic molecular biologist with expertise in developing test kits from South Dakota State University and a Colorado veterinarian whose company is the sole supplier of anthrax vaccines for livestock.

"Quite frankly I wanted to do something out of the Midwest," Stoltenow says. "We're small schools, but we have excellent scientists." His proposal, for funding to bring the Russian and American collaborators together for an initial strategy session in Washington, D.C., is pending before the Department of Defense. In addition, Stoltenow is formulating a second research proposal, involving anthrax monitoring and surveillance, to collaborate with a colleague who is an anthrax expert working for the Russian equivalent of the Centers for Disease Control. The plan is to study environments where anthrax occurs naturally — as it does in three pockets inside North Dakota as well as nearby northwest Minnesota — in the hope that someday it will be possible to predict where outbreaks might occur.

Stoltenow is pleased with the rapport he has developed with his Russian colleagues. He has bilingual business cards, with English on one side and Russian on the other, and keeps in regular contact with Russian colleagues via e-mail. "I'm very encouraged about the Russians," he says. "They were very matter of fact, yet very open," and many have sons and daughters studying in American universities. "We don't have to fear the Russians." Still, he would like to learn more of the secrets kept inside Building One, which he fears is a microbiological Pandora's box.

"It would really be good if we could know what's in their arsenal," he says. "If we know what's in there we could have a pretty good idea of what might have slipped out of there."

—Patrick Springer

work

Sarah Jacobson/Associate
Professor/Business Administration

In July 2001 the White House announced that George W. Bush, some six months into a presidential term entered by virtue of controversial election, would be spending the entire month of August on vacation at his Crawford, Texas, ranch. The announcement was met by the press with derision apparently reflecting a sense that chopping wood and driving a pickup around his property were inappropriate ways for a president to spend his time — vacation or not. Or, perhaps, their reaction came out of jealousy. At any rate, Bush stuck to his plan, and, despite a few brief political junkets, maintained his retreat. Given the events of Sept. 11, who among us would begrudge him that time?

I paid particular attention to press reactions over the Bush vacation because at the same time I was making last minute arrangements for a long anticipated developmental leave. On Sept. 10, my retired husband and I were to depart Fargo to spend the fall semester in Europe. We planned to do a bit of traveling in Italy before heading north to Finland where I would be working, and Jim would read his way through a pile of books.

The previous year had been a particularly demanding one even for a person as essentially resilient as I. While I relished each activity, serving as presiding officer of the University Senate and embarking on a new research project, in addition to my usual responsibilities, made for a busy year. Then, in January, we learned that my mother was dying of pancreatic cancer. My sister and I, indulging my mother's wish to die at home, served as her primary caregivers until her death in late March. By summer I was more than grateful that my request for developmental leave had been approved the previous fall. I was elated at the prospect of time the leave offered to read, reflect, write, redesign a couple of my courses and, on a personal level, to renew my energy.

At the same time, however, I felt a nagging sense that I must be "getting away with something" — a peculiar pull between on the one hand the attraction of time away from the busy days and multiple responsibilities being a college professor implies and, on the other, the sense that I really "should" spend the fall in my office conducting business as usual. Needless to say, this conflict was not serious enough for me to abandon my plans. However, it was serious enough for me to feel somewhat uncomfortable sharing the story of my good fortune easily with any but my closest friends and colleagues. What could be the matter with me?

Prompted by these feelings I read a book over the summer by Cindy Aron, a history professor at the University of Virginia, called "Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States." It is a fascinating read in which Aron chronicles the history of the vacation concept in the United States from the early 19th century forward. Aron argues that the American middle class, from the time of early industrial development, has felt considerable tension between work and play. On the one hand, reaching a level of economic security that made vacations possible, was a highly valued goal of 19th and 20th century Americans. On the other hand, there has long been cultural suspicion and discomfort with the idea of leisure for leisure's sake.

The end result has been twofold. First, long vacations like that of President Bush are uncommon and, when taken, suspect. Americans have been labeled the most "overworked nation in the world" surpassing even Japan. We seem proud of that fact. Until quite recently most companies, both large and small, allowed just two weeks of paid vacation for employees with less than five years of service. Today, while about half of all large companies offer three weeks, it is uncommon for workers to take those weeks at one time. Contrast this with European countries where almost everyone is allotted four to six weeks of vacation per year. Many Parisians, for example, depart for the entire month of August filling French highways and leaving the city to tourists.

The second effect of our uneasy relationship with leisure, and one that has more to do with leave granted to professors, is that when Americans vacation we take our work with us or, as Aron notes, "fashion vacations that substitute for work." Connected by laptop, e-mail, cell phone, fax and the FedEx truck, we Americans can literally work anytime, anywhere. Many of us do — even on our porch at the lake in the heat of August. Or, instead, with the goal of active self-improvement, those of us who can afford it may spend our vacation time in service activity somewhere around the globe, or learning a new skill like cooking or a language, or exploring a particular avocation like genealogy or archaeology, or engaging in challenge with long-distance bicycle trips or white water rafting or losing weight.

Reading the Aron book put my ambivalence in perspective. It helped me to understand the source of my discomfort, which I elected to dismiss and, prompted by the excitement of the moment, I left for Europe with great anticipation and joy. After all, I wasn't abandoning my work, I was just moving it to another location!

Jim and I arrived in Amsterdam early in the morning on Sept. 11 and took a train north to Groningen where the NDSU College of Business is in partnership with the university. The purposes of our trip

The American middle class, from the time of early industrial development, has felt considerable tension between work and play.

to Groningen were to visit the university and to take two former exchange students out for a promised dinner. After arriving, we had lunch and then, because we were tired (a tourist class flight from Minneapolis to Amsterdam will do that to you) and needed to be fresh for the evening ahead, we decided to take a nap. We were awakened about 5:30 p.m. by the ringing of the telephone — a call from one of the professors I was to visit expressing his concern and sorrow over planes having crashed into the World Trade Center. I remember saying, "What a terrible accident!" My colleague replied, "No, I'm afraid it appears that it was not an accident at all but an act of terror." We immediately turned on CNN and stayed pretty much glued to it, between appointments and tours, for the next several weeks.

There was no way that day or for most of the next to reach our five grown children by telephone. However, early on Sept. 12 we went to the public library in Groningen where access to e-mail was available. It was a tremendous relief to find a way to contact our family, to know they were OK, and to let them know we were too. Also, on that day, I was able to help the faculty and staff at the university by meeting with the American exchange students who had arrived in the Netherlands no more than a week before and who were, understandably, scared to death. It seemed to help them to have an American adult around.

At first we thought we might abort our trip and head for home. It was unclear from that distance, as I understand it was here too, whether the attack was to be an isolated event or signaled more extensive violence. Our children encouraged us to come home as soon as possible. However, since flights to the United States were grounded for several days, and subsequently overbooked to accommodate all of the Americans stranded in Amsterdam, there was literally no way to get home. So we stayed on and flew to Milan, agreeing to re-evaluate our decision daily at first and later weekly. Before we knew it, it was December.

We are both glad we decided to stay. People in the countries we visited could not have been kinder or more supportive. The almost 60 percent drop in American tourism in Europe over the fall made it possible to actually get within viewing distance of the "David" in Florence and "The Lord's Supper" in Milan. We joined flocks of other tourists from all over the world as well as a sizable group of citizens of Milan in the palatial and somber Duomo to silently mark the week's anniversary of the attack, emerging into brilliant sunlight and the pealing of church bells throughout the city. It was a moving reminder of the solidarity of so many people around the world in the face of terror.

We spent five weeks in eastern Finland, taking long walks along the banks of beautiful lake Saima, observing the progress of autumn when I took breaks from my work with a long-time colleague and collaborator at Lappeenranta Technological University. We lived at the university, and I was loaned a bright, spacious and quiet office where I spent my days writing. My colleague and I conducted a research workshop for faculty and doctoral students, and I was a guest lecturer in several of her classes.

We took a train one weekend to St. Petersburg and attended two ballets. We attended a symphony concert in Lahti and met its musical director, Osmo Vanskaa, who is moving to the Minneapolis symphony. We spent our final weeks in Germany, where I taught an international business module at the Berufsakademie in Mosbach, a lovely town in the Neckar River Valley about 35 kilometers from Heidelberg.

Over the fall, I accomplished all of the work I set out to do — the writing and the planning of new research and the course revisions, the chance to talk about my ideas, and the chance to teach in a new venue. Jim managed to finish most of the books he planned to read. The trip was a perfect combination of work and play.

We were very happy and relieved when our plane landed at Hector field, glad to be home, but incredibly grateful for our experiences.

In January, I returned to the classroom feeling "re" freshed and "re" created — exactly the way one is supposed to feel after leave. Along the way, however, the two of us also learned some important life lessons that we did not expect to learn at our ages. From the Italian rail system that mysteriously goes on strike every Sunday, we learned patience and flexibility and the value of giving up thoughts of being in control. After pulling heavy duffels and lugging sizable carry-on luggage for several weeks, we discovered the virtue of economy, keeping only items we absolutely had to have, and sending the rest home.

We learned humility as we struggled to be understood in a series of unfamiliar and often incomprehensible languages — it is not true that everyone in Europe speaks English, especially in Russia. A driving tour around St. Petersburg with its depressing apartment complexes from the period natives call "the time of stagnation" offered the lesson of appreciation for all that we so often take for granted.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, we came to appreciate in a dramatic way the fragile interconnectedness of this world and the precious commonality of human experience. Most of all we experienced the essence of time well spent and incredible gratitude that I am able to do work that I love that offers this kind of opportunity. No more ambivalence about that for me.

Aron, Cindy S. (1999). "Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States." New York: Oxford Press.

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