Salt Institute for Documentary Studies

SALT, 2005-2006

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"The Salt semester is transformative. Students uncover their own and others' capacity, depth, potential, and quite often, purpose."

-Polly Bennell, Director of Writing
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Address: Salt Institute for Documentary Studies, 110 Exchange Street, P.O. Box 7800, Portland, Maine 04112. Telephone: 207-761-0660; Fax: 207-761-2913; Email: info@salt.edu; Website: www.salt.edu

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Salt would like to extend a special thank you to Jennifer Andrews who served as Editor of this issue from conception through a good part of the journey to fruition. We could not have done this without the leadership and contribution of Jen. This issue is a reflection of her dedication and artistic vision, as well as her skills as a teacher, editor, and writer.

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What do we do at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies? We are story-seekers.

Stories are everywhere. Sometimes they are obvious; sometimes we have to patiently discover them.

A group of high school students and a former newspaper publisher with a vision began a journey together. When I arrived at Salt eight years ago, I embarked on a similar journey.

While at Salt, along with about 20 of my peers, I discovered the stories of Irish Ceili dancers, breast cancer survivors, country music venues, community orchestra members, Chinook sled dogs, beekeepers, Micmac basket weavers, and many more.

I also discovered something about myself: a passion for photography and a deep commitment to the craft of documentary studies. Then, I watched my peers realize their excitement for writing, interviewing, and story telling; today, I watch more than 60 students a year pursue their fascination for documentary work.

Salt is still discovering stories of the people of Maine, still helping our students discover the passion for and commitment to their craft, and still sharing all of these discoveries with our neighbors next door in Maine and all over the world.

Read our latest issue and find out more about the lives of so many unique and interesting people... and discover your own interests, your own passion, and your own story.

Donna M. Galluzzo, Executive Director
UNTIL THEIR FEET LEAVE THE SAND

Anna and Jason Cyr share a final kiss and embrace with their daughter, Gwen, before Jason leaves for Iraq.
By Whit Richardson
Photography by Elizabeth M. Claffey

THE SUN HAS NOT yet risen, but the lobby of Watertown, New York's Day's Inn is busy. Coffee gurgles and steams as a desk clerk collects keys. Soldiers in desert camo, their pants tucked into tan boots, stand in small circles of family, huddled together, sniffing and puffy-eyed. The three-day leave for members of the 133rd Engineer Battalion, Maine Army National Guard, ends at 0700 hours. This morning will be the last time these soldiers see their families before leaving for Iraq.

Jason Cyr paces the lobby, waiting for a friend and fellow Guard member to drive him back to Fort Drum. The desert uniform he received a few days ago—compulsory from this point on—is on a hanger, draped over his duffle bag. Through wire-rimmed glasses, Anna Cyr watches her husband. Gwenna, their six-month-old daughter, curls into her arms, while their two-and-a-half-year-old son, Blaine, stands next to Anna, rubbing his eyes from sleep.

It is nearly 0700. The friend arrives. Jason reaches for Blaine, picks him up, then, turning toward his wife and daughter amidst stiff chairs and glass coffee tables, he folds into his family. Tears run down Anna's cheek, pause for a moment at the ridge of her chin, then fall, one by one, onto Gwen. Blaine sits above the huddle, perched in his father's left arm, wearing a look of tired indifference. He does not grasp the importance of this moment.

Anna lifts her head. "Mommmy..." Blaine says, seeing the tears. "Honey, it's okay. Daddy has to go away again." Anna lowers her head onto her husband's shoulder. As she does, Blaine places a hand on her head and pats it—okay, okay.

Too soon, Jason detaches himself from his wife's embrace and grabs his bag. Putting on a soldier's face, he leaves without looking back. During the night it snowed; cars are still covered in white. Together, Jason and his friend drive off into the haze of predawn light. The date is March 8th, 2004.

THIS IS THE second time Anna and the kids have made the eight-hour journey from their home in Lewiston, Maine, to New York to see Jason. Two months ago, in early January, Sergeant Jason Cyr and his brother, Ron, left Maine with the 133rd, destined for Fort Drum. Ultimately, for Iraq. From Maine their convoy of buses, Humvees, and military trucks snaked its way across the back roads of New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York until it reached the base. There, Jason, his brother, and the rest of the 133rd received much-needed training before their deployment to Iraq.

Sitting in classrooms, soldiers are lectured on Iraqi culture by a naturalized American citizen who once fought against U.S. forces during Operation Desert Storm. He tells them how not to offend the people they are mandated to help. Do not step on food: it is considered a desecration. Do not look at Iraqi women...
Tonya Cyr lies on her coach on a Sunday. Her dogs look out the door.
salaciously: you could get killed. They learn how to secure perimeters and spot what the military calls IEDs, Improvised Explosive Devices. They learn how to use a GPS system and radio equipment, then they learn it again. They learn how to act and react as a cohesive unit: what to do in case of an ambush, an explosion, an attack. They learn the things never covered during their weekend training sessions in Maine.

These “weekend warriors,” as National Guardsmen often call themselves, are combat engineers who have never experienced combat. Their part-time commitment to the Guard—one weekend a month and two weeks every year—is usually spent building Little League baseball dugouts or wooden bridges for snowmobile clubs. Now, they will step into a year’s enrollment in Operation Iraqi Freedom, where they will construct military barracks and hospitals, repair roads and bridges, and help rebuild the infrastructure of Iraq.

When the 500 or so members of the 133rd arrived in Iraq, the total number of Maine National Guardsmen deployed to Iraq rose to 1,100: a number which constitutes 62 percent of the entire Maine National Guard. A number which makes this deployment the largest the state has experienced since the Second World War.

ANNA RETURNS to Maine on the same back roads that brought her husband to Fort Drum. With each mile, a distance that stretches across lives and countries, the reality of her situation begins to weigh in. The thought of the next eighteen months without Jason is overwhelming. So, she’ll take it day by day, knowing it’s the only way to make it through the next year and a half.

She will return to a full-time job as Marketing Coordinator at Keiser Industries, a modular home manufacturer. She will return to a life forever changed by a policy decision, following the Vietnam War, which integrated the National Guard into the regular Army’s extended deployments. She will return to the same small, salmon-pink house with rose trim and a barn roof. But she will return to a changed household.

FOR THE PAST three months her sister-in-law, Tonya, and her seven-month-old son, Caleb, have lived with Anna and her two children. Tonya is married to Jason’s brother Ron, who is a medic with the Headquarters Support Company of the 133rd. He left Fort Drum two weeks earlier and arrived in Kuwait at the end of February.

When the two brothers were notified in November of 2003 that their unit was being mobilized for deployment overseas, Jason hatched an idea; while the brothers were away, Tonya and Caleb would move into the refinished basement of Jason and Anna’s home in Lewiston and the two women—Anna, who is 26, and Tonya, who is 31—would create a new household. A household with a new routine, one that deals with the temporary absence of husbands, and one in which its members will support each other emotionally, financially, and through everyday minefields.
A WEEK AFTER returning from Fort Drum, Anna stands at the sink washing dishes. She peers out a window and into her yard; it is empty except for a swing set and a small shed in one corner. Jason is still in New York, anxious to depart and begin the task ahead of him. The rest of the 133rd was to leave that very day. But after word was leaked to family members, the unit’s security was compromised. So, they all wait. So does Anna.

She rinses a dish and sets it in the dishwasher. A shiny, cylindrical contraption sits on the end of the faucet—their water filter. Anna remembers just after Jason was notified about his deployment, she’d asked him to help her change the filter. It was simple.

“I feel much better now,” she’d said.

“What do you mean?” Jason asked.

“Because,” Anna confessed, “that was one of my biggest worries—learning how to change the filter on the sink.”

Jason was surprised.

“I’m worried about the furnace breaking down or something,” she remembers him saying.

“Yeah,” she shot back, “but nobody expects me to fix a furnace!”

Jason laughed at the truth of his wife’s statement. While Jason worries about leaving his wife with the big problems like the furnace, the house, and the car, Anna worries about taking care of those simple, everyday things most people take for granted.

“I asked my sister for a step-stool for my birthday,” Anna says. “Got to take care of the practical issues first.”

IT HAS BEEN a long day. This morning Gwen was running a fever, and without babysitting options, Anna was forced to bring her to work. It is now early evening and after the dishes are done, Anna takes Gwen to the doctor’s. Tonya stays at home to watch over both Caleb and Blaine. She makes herself dinner, feeds Caleb, but can’t get Blaine to eat. Then, the phone rings. It’s Jason.

“Hey, nothing… she went to the doctor’s. [Gwen] just had a fever…. She’s had it all day…. Nope, she’s just gettin’ her looked at. Nothing to worry about.” As soon as Tonya hangs up, she wonders if she should have mentioned Gwen’s fever to Jason. Now he’ll worry until Anna calls him back.

Both Tonya and Anna are still navigating the parameters of the long-distance relationship. Neither wants to worry their husbands unnecessarily with details that the men can do nothing about. Anna will tell Jason family-oriented news and anything that is conclusive and could be serious. “He deserves to know, he has the right to know,” Anna says. “But as far as, like, when the furnace breaks down or something like that, I’m not gonna bother telling him—there’s nothing they can do. Why bother to worry them?”

Ten minutes later, Jason calls back. Tonya answers. “She’s not home yet…. No, no.”

TONYA BRINGS Caleb downstairs, then sits in her rocking chair with him until he’s fallen asleep, the nipple of his bottle still in his mouth. The only light comes from a small table lamp. It casts shadows across a framed picture of Ron. Pictures of Ron litter the room—Ron in a tuxedo at their wedding, Ron dressed like a civilian, a picture of Ron and Jason in uniform with berets on their heads. The picture was taken the morning Ron left for Fort Drum.

Tonya feels her life is part of some cycle. Her father was a military man, stationed in Germany, absent for the first year of her life. Now Tonya, like her mother, like Anna, raises a child without a father, a husband. Pressing Caleb against her shoulder, she wonders if, someday, the cycle will continue.

When Tonya’s father was abroad, her mother placed pictures of him all over the house so Tonya wouldn’t forget who “Daddy” was. “If I was playing on the floor,” she remembers, “there was a picture of my dad on the floor. His picture took the place of his body sitting next to me. When he came home,” she says, “I ran right to him, knew exactly who he was. I’m hoping I can do that for Caleb.” Tonya knows Caleb won’t remember this time in his life, but she keeps a diary of their everyday experiences so Caleb will someday know what it was like when his father was away.

She places Caleb in his crib—he is sound asleep. A soft, red and yellow mirror with a clear plastic sleeve is attached to its railing. “I’m going to blow up a picture of Ron and put it here,” Tonya whispers. Soon, Caleb’s father will look over him as he sleeps.

ANNA STANDS in the living room, bouncing Gwen in her arms. Toys lie scattered around her feet. “She is so uncomfortable,” Anna says as her daughter wails. The neighbors’ daughter, a young college student, sits on the floor watching helplessly while Blaine lies face-down on a recliner watching TV.

Tonya comes upstairs, smells a dirty diaper, and doesn’t hesitate...
Tonya and Anna feed their children dinner. Their husbands, brothers Jon and Ron, are in Iraq.
Anna Cyr gives her two children, Blaine and Gwen, a bath.
before rolling Blaine over to clean him up. Gwen closes her eyes and tries to sleep. But soon, she begins crying again. “I haven’t seen you cry like that,” Anna says. Her voice is soft, pleading. “It’s gonna make me cry.”

After changing her nephew’s dirty diaper, Tonya prepares him for bed. Red, one-piece pajamas are laid out on the carpet. With the help of the visiting neighbor, Tonya coaxes Blaine off the chair and into his bedtime clothes. While Blaine stands, four hands pass arms through sleeves and tuck legs into bottoms. Standing him up, they run the white zipper up until it rests under his chin. Then, Anna takes him upstairs to bed.

Putting Blaine to bed was Jason’s job. He’d tuck him in, read a Walt Disney story from the stack of books next to the bed, then lay with Blaine until he fell asleep. When he was mobilized—working full-time with the National Guard but still living at home—Jason focused all his energy and attention on Blaine. He realized that no matter how hard he tried, Gwen wouldn’t remember him.

Anna and Tonya have developed the closest thing to a two-parent family. “I can’t imagine going through this without somebody else here to help me. I don’t think I could do it,” Anna says shaking her head. “It’s hard for two women to share the same household,” she acknowledges, “but, it’s so much of a huge help that even the little things that may end up getting on one of our nerves … you know what? It doesn’t matter, ‘cause we’re doing what we can to help each other out. In the long run, that’s all that matters.”

But the help only goes so far. Anna and Tonya can’t rely on one another to the extent they would a spouse. Anna can’t ask Tonya to take a day off from work to stay home with a sick child, or to take Gwen to a doctor’s appointment. And though Anna is probably closer to Tonya’s son than any other person—it was she who discovered Caleb’s top teeth were on the verge of breaking through—she still can’t be fully his parent, his father. And, instead of Jason, it is often Tonya who hears or sees Blaine’s newest word or expression or trick.

JASON’S FEET HIT the sand on Thursday, March 18th. “Kuwait is alright, but very dirty,” Jason writes in a March 26th e-mail. “There is a lot of trash everywhere due to the high winds, and no vegetation to stop things
from just blowing everywhere." Because the 133rd doesn't yet have any equipment, there is no training, just a lot of spare time. "The mood is the same with all the troops," he writes, "we want to get there to start our jobs."

The Kuwait base has many amenities: restaurants like Hardee's, Subway, Pizza Hut, and internet cafes, run by locals called Hagis, dot the desert outpost. And every computer is equipped with a web-cam so friends and family sitting thousands of miles away at a computer in Maine, can see their husbands, their brothers, their wives, their sisters, their sons.

The modes of communication available today allow for possibilities never before imagined by the wives and soldiers of past conflicts. Cell phones, carried by most soldiers, allow for instantaneous communication. Instant messaging is free and available, digital photography makes pictures sent via email possible, and web-cams allow for a visual relationship between loved ones. Jason can watch his kids grow up over the next year and a half. He can watch Blaine wave to him, and Anna can show off her new haircut.

Almost everyday, during her lunch break, Anna chats with Jason on Yahoo!’s Instant Messenger with a web-cam. Because Maine is eight hours behind, Jason has usually just finished his dinner before speaking with his wife. In a window on Anna’s computer screen, dialogue scrolls up as they speak through cyberspace. A choppy web-cam image of Jason sits in a corner on her screen.

"sgt_cyr: look at my new friend!!!!!! her name is molly!
annapcyr: put the pic up by your face
sgt_cyr: my weapon
annapcyr: oh god"

A FEW DAYS after Jason arrived in Kuwait, Anna stands in her living room wearing jeans and a dark gray sweatshirt. She holds Blaine in her arms as he reaches his hand down the front of her sweatshirt. He is searching for a silver, heart-shaped locket that Anna wears around her neck. When he finds it, he pulls it out and presses it to his face with an open-mouthed kiss. The locket carries two photographs of her husband. In the photo on the left, Jason is barely recognizable behind a mask of green, black, and brown camo face paint. On the right, he is Dad.

Later in the evening, after bathing both children, Anna breastfeeds Gwen, then tucks Blaine into bed. For a month after Jason left, Blaine refused to sleep in his own bed—it just wasn’t the same anymore. So, every night Blaine would climb into bed with Mommy and sleep there. The stack of Walt Disney books Jason read from is still piled alongside Blaine’s bed. But now, a stack of cassette tapes leans in a small tower nearby. While Jason was at Fort Drum, Anna sent him books. He’d read stories like 101 Dalmatians and The Jungle Book into a recorder and then send the tapes back. Tonight, Blaine falls asleep listening to Jason’s soft voice reading Hercules.

"sgt_cyr: give the kids kisses for me
annapcyr: I will
sgt_cyr: love you, see ya round
annapcyr: love you
annapcyr: bye
sgt_cyr: don’t say bye, see you later"

Blaine is angry that his father is not home. He throws temper tantrums; his behavior and habits have changed. Anna fears it could get worse. That once Jason returns, the anger Blaine feels now could become resentment. "Cause then it’s going to be, ‘Why weren’t you here? And now you are and you expect me to do this?’" The transition will be difficult. “When [Jason] comes home he really needs to take a step back and come into our house more as a friend than as a father,” Anna says. “Let Blaine get used to having you around,” she’s told Jason, “before you step into the position of being the Dad.”

For families and soldiers, homecomings are often more stressful than the departure. “People change over a year, and when you see or live with somebody on a day to day basis you don’t really notice it as much,” says Tonya. “But when you don’t see it, and then they come home....”

Members of the 133rd are living for more than a year on a military base abroad, where something is going on 24 hours a day, where risks and anxiety hang over their heads everyday. When Jason returns, he might find that a family he once thought dependent on him is now independent. “It’s not that their place has been filled, but they’re really not ... they aren’t needed for this family to function,” Anna says. “I know Jason and I will be fine after this, I think we’re gonna have to take some time to focus on getting to know each other again. We’re not going to be able to walk back and have it be like it was...."
Anna Cyr packs her two children, Blaine and Gwen, and her nephew, Caleb, into the car to go to the March of Dimes.
Anna Cyr talks to her husband, Jason, who is in Iraq. Their son Blaine tries not to listen, not wanting to say goodbye again.

Tonya and Anna Cyr in their kitchen in Lewiston, Maine.
sgt_cyr: it is just that we keep hearing that 80 to 90% of marriages split up during a deployment, i think that is not true with NG units though
annapcyr: no its higher in NG units
sgt_cyr: i don't think so, and if true i don't want to be a bad statistic
annapcyr: because NG units aren't used to getting deployed like this
sgt_cyr: we are fine and will be fine when you come home
annapcyr: good, i love you and the kids and want to be together forever
annapcyr: we will be
sgt_cyr: i know, are u crying
annapcyr: no

“I WA WATCH Daddy,” Blaine says the next morning from his father’s recliner. These words mark the beginning of a daily ritual in the home. Anna turns on the TV, pressing ‘Play’ on the video recorder. Blaine sits, transfixed. He is waiting for his favorite part—a clip from a family trip to the Children’s Museum the day before Jason was put on active duty.

In the video, Jason stands at the bottom of a fireman’s pole; Blaine is out of the camera’s view. “Come here Blaine, I’ll hold you,” Jason says. Blaine runs into view, his arms outstretched towards his father. Blaine, now sitting on the living room floor, reaches out his hands toward his father on the screen.

annapcyr: blaine watches the video at least twice a night
sgt_cyr: really
annapcyr: every night - "Wa Daddy"
sgt_cyr: good, the little shit won’t forget me
annapcyr: absolutely not
sgt_cyr: where do you tell him i went
annapcyr: just away
sgt_cyr: oh
annapcyr: and that you miss him too
sgt_cyr: good

“The hardest part for me has been watching Blaine,” Anna admits. “I was putting Blaine to bed one night and he hadn’t got to talk to Jason on the phone. He put my hand up to his ear and said, ‘Hi da.’” Anna played along, answering, “Hi buddy,” as Jason would have. Blaine began talking into Anna’s hand. “He had this whole long conversation about the bus, the bus that Jason left on, and he says, ‘Why go bye-bye?’”

Anna won’t tell him that “Da’s coming home” because Blaine would assume that meant his father would be back tomorrow. Anna only tells him, “Da had to go away.”

NOW THAT their husbands are in Iraq, Anna and Tonya avoid the daily news—news that dwells on the violence in Iraq. “I don’t turn on the TV during the news hour at all,” Anna says. “It’s so stressful from minute to minute, you don’t know what is going on over there, and unless you’re online with him you don’t know what condition he’s in.” Anna will occasionally hear a news broadcast over the radio, but she does what she can to stay away from the headlines. She even has her internet home page set to Google rather than Yahoo! because Google doesn’t carry the news.

But the unwanted news inevitably finds its way to Anna. When it does, rather than worry, she wishes she’d heard it from her husband first.

annapcyr: why didn't you tell me that they throw mortars over the fence onto the base like every day?
sgt_cyr: and what are you going to do if i told you about it anyway
annapcyr: nothing, but if you aren't being honest about little shit like that, what else aren't you telling me about
sgt_cyr: you take care of things at home and i will take care of things here, isn't that what you said the other day
annapcyr: I want to know about stuff when it happens, because I will eventually hear about, and if it doesn't come from you I'll worry more!
sgt_cyr: please don't be mad at me about not telling you everyone all the time, i am in a warzone and that's the facts

Jason’s conversations with his father have a different tone. Ronald Sr. wants to hear everything. “I’ve told them I want the straight poop, don’t tell me ‘Everything’s alright Dad, everything’s fine, it’s just like we’re in New Jersey.’ Because I know it isn’t.” Their father is an outlet for both Jason and Ron, and for those things that they can’t tell their wives or mother. But even Jason claims he doesn’t tell his father everything.

Ron Sr. joined the Maine National Guard in 1976, but received an honorable medical discharge after injuring his shoulder during basic training. “There’s times after I get off the phone talking to ‘em that I feel guilty that my two young sons are over there.” He doesn’t tell his wife, but he would trade places with his sons in an instant.
Blaine Cyr touches the image of his father, Jason, on the TV. Jason is stationed in Iraq for two years.
At their in-laws’ home, Anna and Tonya lounge on the couch while their mother-in-law, Linda, entertains her grandchildren on a blanket. Anna has a novel in hand and Tonya looks through some take-home work.

Jason arrived at Camp Marez in Mosul, Iraq, the day before. He saw his brother for the first time since Ron left Fort Drum in late February. “He’s safe, he’s sound, and he’s back with me and I’m very happy,” Ron told his mother on the phone that morning. He’d missed his brother. “I wish he would say that to me,” Tonya says. “He sounds so depressed on the phone to me.” “But he’s happy now…,” Linda says. “He doesn’t tell me that. He doesn’t want me to worry, but he doesn’t tell me he’s happy again.”

ON APRIL 20th, the 133rd Engineer Battalion suffered their first combat fatality. One soldier was killed and three others were wounded, as their lead vehicle in a convoy was hit by an IED. After only a month in Iraq, the death of a 23-year-old soldier from Portland brought the reality of war home to the families of the 133rd.

Anna was at work and hadn’t yet heard about the incident when she got a call from Jason—he and Ronnie were safe. Even with the high level of communication available to soldiers, the incident was on the news before many could get through to their families. And since the military didn’t release the names of the dead or wounded, Tonya, who heard about it from a friend, was left thinking the worst until Anna called to let her know Ronnie was safe.

“Now, I look at everything as if it can kill us, and it made me more aware when we are out and about,” Jason writes in an e-mail on April 23rd. “I didn’t know the kid that died, but my thoughts are with his family. I hope and pray the rest of us make it home to all our kids and families and these people don’t get the satisfaction of taking that away from us.”
Turn It On, Turn It Up, and Kick Some Butt
By Jennifer Whitney

STEPHANIE MARIE Hammond stands on her bedside table, an 8-year-old in platform shoes and full makeup, shaking her hips to Missy Elliot's "Get Ur Freak On." She walks across the tabletop, singing into a fake microphone, then stops to strike a pose—for a moment, she is a super-star. Her 11-year-old sister, Brooke Ann, charges into the room, jumps on the bed, and joins in on the performance. The two girls bounce and pose, passing the microphone back and forth in a flurry of giggles and song lyrics until sharing gets old and they wrestle each other down.

"[I]t all started when [Brooke] was five with a little piece of pink paper—an announcement to sign up," their mom, Kim, explains. "I said, 'Yeah, okay.' And she got the title and she went to Potato Blossom, but she didn't place and she was fine with that because she was having so much fun that she didn't care." Since then, Brooke and Stephanie have won seventeen titles, including Brooke's 2001 Maine National Preteen Petite, which sent them to Florida to compete on a national level. In 2004 alone, the girls competed in a combined twelve pageants.

But Brooke and Stephanie aren't stereotypical beauty pageant princesses. With their dad, they love to watch wrestling on TV, eat lots of chocolate, and play rough. "I've taught my girls, it don't matter what you look like on the outside," their mom says, "it's what's on the inside—that's what beauty is." During the interview portion of the Miss Northern New England pageant, Brooke was asked, "What are the three words that best describe you?" She confidently responded with the answer she had rehearsed since six that morning, when her mom began curling her hair. "The three words that best describe me are caring, kind, and helpful, because of my big heart, and I do things for others before I do things for myself."
But this is also true for the girls’ parents, Kim and Doug. Doug takes in auto-body work at night and on weekends to help make the $10,000 a year it takes to cover pageant expenses. And Kim is with them every day, every night, to hear them practice, to preen them, to help them sing past tired voices and through tough moments.

“Since the day they were born, to me, they were the most beautiful things that was ever placed on this earth,” Kim says. “I mean, next to the flowers and the trees … they were the most beautiful things that God put on this earth, and the pageants don’t need to tell them that because they know—we tell them every day.” But the girls are motivated to win. Brooke has

*Stephanie Hammond plays with her makeup at home.*

*Brooke plays with her dad, Doug Hammond, at their home on Thanksgiving Day.*
Stephanie Hammond sings Missy Elliot's "Get Ur Freak On," in her bedroom.

aspirations of being a lawyer, a model, and Miss America. And their mother indulges their desire to compete—when the girls step on stage, Kim looks them in their blue-shadowed eyes and tells them, "Smile, have fun. But, most importantly, be yourself, and ... turn it on, turn it up, and kick some butt!"

Kim Hammond removes curlers from Stephanie's hair at six in the morning, in preparation for the Miss Northern New England Pageant.
Stephanie Hammond waits for her sister at the Presque Isle Sunburst preliminary.

Brooke and Stephanie Hammond wrestle on their bed.
Stephanie Hammond, Brandie Sloan, and Brooke Hammond, cheer after a friend's victory at the Presque Isle Sunburst preliminary.

Stephanie Hammond and her “boyfriend,” Hunter Turner, wait in line for lunch at Easton Elementary School.
AS I STRIDE onto the pitch, I am careful not to step on the lines. This is an old superstition and I feel silly, but I'll take any help I can get. Nerves have tightened the muscles in my stomach, and my hands shake as adrenaline shoots through my veins. I jump up and down to work the knots out of my legs, yelling, "Let's go boys! Let's go now." It is a Saturday afternoon in late October. In Portland, Maine, there is rugby to be played.

As we line up to kick off, I peer at the man opposite me; his eyes burn black from twenty meters away. There is no masking his contempt for me, for our team, as he springs from one foot to the other, clapping his hands and sneering around his yellow mouth guard.

The referee walks to the middle of the field. As I slip into my own mouth guard, my teeth sliding into its molded grooves, somewhere in my brain a switch is thrown. The tightness in my stomach, the shallow breathing, the shakes—they all remain, but are suddenly, and totally, irrelevant.

The whistle blows, the ball is kicked, and I want to fly. I want to drive my shoulder into my enemy's stomach, to step on his hands with my cleats, to send his mouth guard and sneer flying from his mouth like spent gum.

As we tear downfield my legs are a blur. I can't feel my feet pounding or the ache of my straining hamstrings. In my mind, the inner voices of doubt, nerves, and excitement blend together. Roaring.
The Portland Rugby Club.
IT IS SEPTEMBER. On this day I stand on the pitch, shifting from one foot to the other, occupied with a very different apprehension. I do not wear cleats or a jersey or a mouth guard—it will be two months before I need those things. Today, I check my pockets for my notebook, my three pens, and the gum I will chew to seem nonchalant and professional as I wait for the members of the Portland Rugby Club to show for practice.

Some men pull up in luxurious sedans, others in muddy pick-ups; they are small and skinny, giant and round, blunted and stocky, with broken noses and taped fingers. But as they tie up cleats, slip on shorts, and take one last piss, it becomes impossible to tell the insurance salesman from the lawyer, or the handyman from the doctor. They are simply rugby players. And though it terrifies me just to stand on their field, I must find out what this means.

When they arrive, they greet each other with complaints about traffic or work or "the wife." But behind the belly-aching, a smile tugs at their mouths. For me, there are fewer smiles. Most of the team sidles away from me and my frantic pen to tape their ankles or stretch somewhere else. They speak in whispers, motioning toward me with quick jerks of heads or unmasked stares.

As I write down my latest insight—lots of birdshit on fence posts—the captain of the club, Jason Willey, chases a ball toward me. "So you're writin' a story on us huh guy?" He is six inches shorter than me, but I'd never cross him—muscles bulge and ripple through his heavy sweatshirt. He stares at me, smiling through capped teeth and eyes that twinkle as if he's just told a joke. I nod with a cool, detached confidence that I do not feel. "Well, you'll get a good look at all the bullshit I gotta deal with—we gotta game Saturday, in Boston. You should show up."

TWO DAYS LATER I stand shin-deep in a puddle in South Boston. I stand on the sidelines watching Portland's second match of the season—it is against the Old Gold Rugby Football Club. It is pouring. And it is no charming Irish mist. This is no soap commercial. This is an angry afternoon that tests raincoats, snaps umbrellas, and stings my eyes shut as I struggle to take notes.

Play begins, and all is chaos. A bloated white ball soars around, seemingly without aim. In the monsoon, the ball is impossible to catch or hold. Vicious tackles are made. Once in a while, the referee blows his whistle and makes cryptic hand signals, as if bringing in a plane to land at mid-field.

I don't know what to feel, watching these men slog through the mud. Even in a foot of water, they crush into each other with exhilarating speed. And, as I watch a Portland player wobble off the field, concussed and bleeding, to dunk his head in a puddle for relief, I realize that there are consequences. He grimaces as a teammate pours clean water over the four-inch gash on his forehead. It is hard to remember that what I watch is considered recreation.

After tackles or injuries or tough runs, there is no celebration—there is no time. But after a whistle, two men quickly congratulate each other. One grins broadly, the other scowls with contempt for the "weak-ass motherfuckers" on the other team. A hand reaches out to swipe over his teammate's head, as if cuffing the family dog. Both men tap their foreheads together, gentle as a kiss, and hold them there. No words are spoken, but the message is clear. And, as quickly as the tenderness slipped into the game, it is gone. The whistle blows, and once again, they are barbarians.

AFTER THE GAME, as we sit in a booth drinking beer, our conversation bounces naturally from family to work to women, but always, we come back to rugby. It is the thread that weaves Jerry Alves' life together—it led him to his job, selling industrial supplies, because the hours allowed him time for practice. He points out women, calls them over and chats them up; they ask about the team, how the season's going, what the record is. Jerry is among the oldest active members of the Portland Rugby Club—he has no wife, no children. He is a rugby player, first and last.

For as long as anyone can remember, Jerry has worn the red-and-blue of Portland. He rents rooms in his house to the younger guys on the team and hosts visiting players from overseas. Jerry is both corrupting older brother and caring father, a hell-raiser and wizened guide all in the same package. Rugby gets the credit for all the good things in his life—the overseas travel, the friendships, and a vitality that belies his age. "Guys that I graduated with, they look so much older than me it's unbelievable—and I don't think they drink as much as I do, I know they don't work out as much as I do, but I think I look younger just because of rugby alone. Maybe it's Portuguese skin, but I like to think it's rugby."
Andy Nelson pushes himself into the scrum.
It is loud in the bar tonight, but Jerry's giant voice, with its vigorous coastal accent, has no trouble riding above the din. It rumbles out of him, hot with tall tales and disdain for my questions. From a distance, he and I might appear as two people engaged in conversation, but what's going on at this table feels more to me like holding on to a kite in high winds.

Jerry hassles me for drinking too slow, for writing down everything he says, for not writing enough. The jabs and the stories go on until I ask him about an injury I heard about the previous Saturday. He tries to keep things light, but the air is out of him. His voice calms, and suddenly, he speaks in a way that makes me want to change the subject, to go back to jokes and insults. Instead, I listen.

THE PAIN TORE Jerry from sleep with its relentless stabs, a white-hot railroad spike in the back of his neck. At 37, Jerry was no stranger to pain. He'd played rugby for nearly half his life, his body bearing the marks to prove it. There were the two shoulder surgeries, the matching knee operations, and the broken nose that still takes an abrupt left halfway down its length. He has dislocated his shoulder and fixed it himself, rolling on the ground until he felt the familiar pop of joints sliding back together. But he had never felt anything like this.

He found that if he held his arm curled over the top of his head he could ease the pain a little—to a throb. He drove like this to the hospital a 5-foot 6-inch muscle-bound ballerina at the wheel of a half-ton pick-up. They gave him a prescription for painkillers and instructions to take no more than two at a time, for fear of an overdose. Jerry listened but the fire in his neck spoke louder. Two pills became four, then six, and still, no relief. “I actually considered ticking a bullet in my temple, I was in so much pain.”

I search Jerry’s eyes for a glint, a sign that this is hyperbole, an exaggeration to liven up his story. His gaze is steady. “I actually considered sticking a bullet in my temple, I was in so much pain.”

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It was a doctor on the rugby team that got Jerry an appointment with the best orthopedic surgeon in New England. Within a day, the herniated disc in Jerry's neck was partially removed. After the operation, the surgeon did not tell Jerry whether or not he should continue to play rugby. As Jerry explains, “At the time I was playing rugby seventeen years. I decided, I love the game that much, I’m willing to take that risk.”

As he talks about this game he loves, I can't help but see him on the pitch. He does not play rugby like a man with a fragile neck, surgically repaired joints, or more miles on him than his opponents. He throws his body into pile-ups, cuts and jukes and flies around with an abandon usually reserved for the young, the spry, the whole. He is forever bouncing up with a well-timed curse or a handful of Vaseline to plug up whatever bleeds most. He scowls and pants and looks ready to kill. And, he is never happier.

Jerry looks across the table at me with a smile, a storm ready to kick back up. I brace myself and smile back. “People called me crazy and all that,” Jerry says, shrugging, “but it’s just a love of the game. I love it more than anything in my life.”

“YOU DON’T wanna fuck with me today,” the bass line rattles out of the white Honda that pulls up to the field—Jason Willey has arrived. During the season, each Saturday starts this way: a light breakfast, a few cans of energy drink, and some “hate music.” As he hops out of his car, Jason leaves the music on and conversation becomes impossible. He looks at me, his eyes bursting with excitement. “Good to see you,” he shouts, jogging back to get the team jerseys, then to chat with the referee, then to supervise setting up the goalposts. Jason cracks another can of energy drink and turns the stereo up even louder. Speakers scream, “Fuck you, I won’t do what you tell me.” Kickoff is in two hours.

Once the game is underway, Jason makes his introduction to the visitors from Springfield, Massachusetts. I am looking away when the hit is made. But I hear it. A snarl is followed by the thud of unpadded flesh meeting flesh, bone crunching into bone. By the time I look up, Jason is gone. But the aftermath tells the story—a stocky man writhes on the ground, paws at his ribs, and moans unintelligible words. As Jason explodes into ball carriers, his intentions are clear. He does not want to impede their progress, or steal the ball. He is there to maim.

During the week, Jason works behind the counter of the deli he manages. He handles his customers with a soft chuckle and a grin, even when the day has grown long and the steel rod in his leg has started to rub into muscle. “I’m an aggressive kid, you know, and I deal with the public all day long…. I can control my emotions because on the pitch,
Fred Hoyman charges after the ball with his teammates.
Saturday," he explains, "I can let them go."

SITTING ON a bench, waiting for his teammates to arrive for practice, Jason is at home. Slouching in a nylon warm-up suit, emblazoned with the logo of his college rugby team, he answers my questions and tells his stories with good humor, spitting carefree streams of tobacco juice into the dirt between his knees. At first, it is easy for him to think back to his first hunt, to the day he became a killer in a field. To the day his father proclaimed him a *Man.*

Shaken awake before dawn, blue autumn stars still gleaming overhead, he is stuffed into a truck between his father and stepbrother, rifles and cases of beer clattering in the truck bed. He begins his story with the excitement he must have felt that morning, barely a teenager, speeding north to become a man. But as the story continues, he is no longer slouching; he is sitting forward. Jason is fourteen again, a scrawny high school freshman, trudging through the woods with a heavy gun.

When they got to the clearcut they saw him—a full-grown bull moose with antlers as wide as the grille on a pick-up. They had marched through the woods all day looking for him, and there he was, 1200 pounds, "fuckin' huge," and perfect.

Jason's father left him at the edge of the woods, while he climbed the crest of a ridge to an elevated position. Alone, with breath coming quickly in plumes of white smoke, Jason knew what had to be done. "The first round I fired hit the moose in the shoulder," Jason's speech speeds up; he knows he should be excited to tell this story.

"The reason you know the round hits him in the shoulder is because you see the snow come up from his coat. He just looked at me like, 'What the fuck was that?"' He spits and chuckles with awe. Jason has played his last two games with a torn pectoral muscle, but this is a different kind of grit. "It's not like we're up there shootin' with bb-guns," he says. "We got some high powered rifles.

"My dad fired the next round and I'm not sure where that hit him, but he took off into the woods—big crash—then the adrenaline kicks in." Jason's eyes are half closed now and suddenly unwilling to meet mine.

"At this point you have to kill the moose, and the moose doesn't want to die. I would say we probably hit him anywhere from eight to nine shots, in the jugular vein, just to kill the fuckin' moose."
And then he is there, pumping round after round into the giant's neck. But as the words tumble out of him, it is clear he goes back to that place near the clearcut more often than he lets on. He throws away his dip and packs another one. "Finally, when he died, it was one of the most eeriest things I've ever seen in my life. He took one last breath and his eyes just went black. And he was dead."

After the kill, his father and his friends whooped and hollered and celebrated, welcoming Jason into the family of men. Bagging a 1200-pound moose on his first hunt was something to brag about. And when Jason describes that October day, he uses phrases like, "thrill of the hunt," and, "that's what you're up there to do," but they ring hollow.

"You're just in awe that you took the life out of this fucking animal that was just walking through the woods one normal day, and just got shot and died. It made me never want to kill anything like that again.... To see that, it was hard for me to understand how anyone could ever hunt like that."

As Jason finishes his story, his teammates begin to arrive. Immediately he stands up to fight with one, then gives another a hard time about his love life. All of the hesitation, the discomfort of his story is gone; it is like those things in the woods happened to someone else. Here, on the rugby field, he is himself again—all bravado and balls. With his team, the captain is strong.

IN THE EIGHTIES, the Portland Rugby Club was invincible—a terror on the New England circuit. When he explains those times, Jerry Alves' voice picks up speed. "When we were at our best, we were feared all over New England. We had three ex-professional football players, four semi-pro football guys on our team, we had captains of college soccer teams, state wrestlers—just top-level amateur and pro athletes."

Back in those days, Portland fielded three strong rugby sides with a membership of over fifty. Today's troubles seem unreal to Jerry now, his lens still focused on the past. As the team steamrolled the competition, no one ever thought of the need to recruit, to replenish the numbers. Now the team scrambles to have enough men to play a game—just one game on a Saturday. For Jerry and Jason and the other members of Portland's Rugby Club, some hard truths have had to be examined over the last months. "Knowing rugby [might not] be around Portland, Maine is a sad thing; knowing what rugby's brought to me as a person, I want to see that go on for generation to generation. Honestly if I won the Megabucks right now I'd buy a field," Jerry says. "I'd buy a clubhouse and I'd donate it to the Portland Rugby Club just to make sure that rugby stayed around at least for the rest of my life anyways."

Jerry's eyes are distant as he dreams of the club as he would have it, strong and well funded, in no danger of abandoning the men who need it. It is clear in this moment that, like Jerry, the Portland team does not choose to keep running out onto that field. Despite the risks, the sacrifices, the game is part of them, wired into their personalities, no more a choice than the color of their eyes.
The origins of Rugby, complete with an appendix listing every rugby-related death dating back to the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, lists of ruptured kidneys, fractured spines and burst livers prove to be a jarring lullaby.

By three, I am like a dog that dreams of chasing cars, so excited to play, the muscles in my legs twitch. It has been years since I've tied on cleats and tested my courage on an athletic field. The adrenaline pumps freely and I tremble in my bed.

By three-fifteen, I have come up with a compelling pack of excuses—car trouble, a sick grandma, no health insurance—but I know that I will not use them. Tomorrow I will play rugby for the first time. I feel so alive I have to fight back the bile.

Before I know it, he is there meters away and closing in. It seems the sweaty practices, the time spent gasping for air, the long drives and the quick warm-ups, all flew by in a blink, leading me here to the twenty-two meter line on a rugby field in Maine.

Standing in a borrowed red shirt, a burly man fills my field of vision with knees, elbows, and a barrel-chest he will use to drive me into the ground. As he cuts the distance between us, I see that he is still sneering, still gnawing on that yellow mouth guard. Before, I would have been terrified, running off the field to the safety of the safety of the twenty-two meter line on a rugby field in Maine. But something happened at the kick off. When that first body slammed into mine, when a knee crushed into my forehead knocking me dizzy, I felt no fear, just a blinding white anger. And I know that he must pay. I hop to a stance almost involuntarily, my feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, calf muscles flexed. I feel my eyes widen and my nostrils flare as I burst toward him, building speed. I hear a noise and realize it is a growl coming from deep inside my chest. I all takes just a second, but I feel like I have hours to drive my shoulder through him.

I do not know the tackle is perfect until after I have made it, until I have heard the wind blast out of his lungs in one tortured grunt, and seen the grass rush up to my face like a fist. Ask a baseball player what it feels like to connect perfectly, and he'll confide that you don't feel anything—no vibrations up the handle, no stinging in the palms, just a sweet emptiness, followed by the beauty of a ball disappearing into the sky. If you catch your victim just right, a rugby hit can feel just like this—clean and pure and quiet. After the match, we adjourn to a Portland bar to get drunk. We accomplish this with incredible efficiency; it is a longstanding tradition in the world of rugby and well practiced. Before I even have time to sit, two plastic cups are pressed into my grip. The beer sloshes over the rim and onto my wrists, cooling the throb from the tape I tore off just minutes ago.

The men of the Portland Rugby Club have spread throughout the bar, hoisting stiff bodies over stools and onto chairs, feet up. It has been a long day on the pitch. As we lounge, children chase each other through a forest of legs, re-enacting the tackles of their fathers.

With each gulp, the pain in my shoulder, my wrists, and the ringing in my head, is a little less persistent. I am clapped on the back and offered hands to shake, "Good shit out there.
Portland Rugby Club teammates having a beer in the basement of Gritty's after a meeting.
today, good shit.” And advice, “Now when you tackle, you gotta watch that belly button—you’ll never get faked out that way.”

I am only half listening, a pounding headache and the cold beer making it hard to focus on their praise. Even so, as I drain my glass, their raspy pointers and thick accents sound familiar, a sound like coming home.

And, as the light outside the bar grows dim and our eyes begin to dull, some go home to wives and kids and aspirin, but the core remains, swaying slightly or leaning heavily against the brass of the bar. Some grapple playfully, giggling as they try to flip each other to the floor. Others throw pulled punches to the shoulder, the jaw, the groin. It is the time of night when shot glasses rattle empty across the bar and stories start to flow easily, like the songs we all know.
KAPPA SIG

Based on an interview with photographer Chris Kendig

THIRTY-EIGHT Harpswell Street stands eviscerated, like a British tea ship in Boston Harbor after the infamous party. Broken desk chairs and sofas thrown from the roof and upstairs windows of the house decorate the lawn. The night before, Kappa Sig raged. It wasn’t just a party to mark the end of another academic year; it was a final farewell, an emotional and destructive protest to the closing of fraternities on Bowdoin College’s campus.

Chris Kendig learned about Bowdoin’s fraternity shut-down upon his arrival at the Salt Institute in early 2000. “I found out that a student had died at a frat party [four years prior],” Chris remembers. “[Bowdoin] was shutting down fraternities and I saw it as a special opportunity to document Maine, something that won’t be there anymore.” A graduate of Temple University, he came to Salt with his own preconceptions of fraternities. “I thought I could get over my disdain, my dislike. I could figure out why I, and so many other people, thought this way about fraternities.”
When Chris first went to Kappa Sig, he did so without his camera. "It took me weeks to get 'in,'" he remembers. Some of the brothers were happy to have him there, but others were concerned about how his work would portray frat life, afraid that it would only perpetuate stereotypes. "It was their last semester together as friends, as a fraternity, as a group. A stranger could upset the dynamic," Chris recognized, "so I just hung out."

In the time that Chris spent with Kappa Sig, he saw that while a part of fraternal life is "one big party," the brothers also shared a strong sense of school pride, national pride, and loyalty.

Still awaiting full access, Chris was pouring beers at a keg party when the vice president of the fraternity approached him. "He let me know it was okay for me to be there. He trusted me. That was it. It's not all about taking pictures—it's about hanging out, getting to know your subjects."
IT IS 3:30 in the morning when the alarm goes off in Tim Barry's room. He rises quietly, not wanting to wake his two boys, still asleep in the small apartment the three now share. Tim moves to the kitchen and makes two pots of coffee. He drinks one as he does the dishes from last night, then pours the second into a Thermos for later. He doesn't eat breakfast—as part of his contract, the guiding outfit he works for will provide him a sack lunch. Tim must be out the door by four in the morning, so he can be at camp by five, ready to guide bear hunters through the mountains and trees near Bingham, Maine.

In 1989, Tim moved to Maine after quitting his rock band, "The Well-Babys." His maternal grandfather had hunted bears with hounds, so when a friend gave Tim a hound dog, he was interested in trying it out. He hunted alone a few times, then hired a guide. "I went and [the guide] couldn't find a bear," Tim laughs. "I thought that if he could be a guide, I could do it for sure." In 1994, Tim passed his guiding exam on the first try and now spends six days a week through September and October hunting in the Maine woods.

But Tim no longer uses traps or bait. Hunting for him is "not so much the guiding, it is hunting with those pups... raising a young dog and watching them finish out... you get happy."

Tim Barry (center) and hunter, Russ Forder (right), congratulate James Buckley (left) on a successful hunt.
But Tim struggles with raising his own pups—his children—6-year-old Cian, and Phelan, who is fourteen. Until recently, the boys had lived with their mother. Now, they live with Tim and a schedule that is challenging at best.

Finding himself responsible for his children, Tim has become acutely aware of how his lifestyle affects those around him, something he had no cause to think about before. "Guiding is not really fair for the boys," Tim says. Guiding others across rough terrain is one thing, but finding time to provide guidance, to provide a supportive environment, a life, for his boys, is another. Each day, Tim takes the lessons from the woods into his home. There he listens, he learns, and then he does his best.

Sitting at the kitchen table, his head resting in his hands, Tim scans the room with tired eyes. Phelan sits at the computer, while Cian plays knight with a plastic sword. Swish. Swish. Tim yawns. "I need a partner," he says. "We all do, in the end, we all need a partner."
Left: After letting his dogs loose in the woods to pursue a bear, Tim Barry listens for their barking.

Below: In his pocket, Tim's hunting knife.
Once his dogs are out of hearing range, Tim Barry, hunting guide and bear hunter, uses a GPS device to track them.
Tim Barry and his dog, Bone, keep watch over a treed bear until the client arrives.
Tim Barry's bloody hands after gutting a client's bear.
Dragging out the bear after a kill.
Rebecca Goodale pauses to sketch a rare Maine sedge from the boardwalk at the Saco heath.
A GIRL WITH a paint box in her hand ascends to the top of a hill, to the house of a woman who teaches her art. Hundreds of steps lead up, up, to the studio door, and, step-by-step, she climbs them.

Hearing a brush clatter inside her box, she thinks of her painting—the scene of a bay with trees growing forever into the sky, hemming an ocean that leads to a mountain. Her teacher helped her paint the clouds, but the bridge was too difficult, and never happened in the painting. So the girl named it, “The Bucksport Bridge, Without the Bridge.”

FORTY-SIX YEARS later, a woman opens a door and walks into a building on Congress Street in Portland, Maine. She walks through its hallway, breathing the air that smells of old books.

Stairs squeak beneath her as she climbs to her studio, passing Vivien’s, passing the studios of all the other artists who work there. In the corner of the fourth floor, is hers. On its door, bold black letters read: Rebecca Goodale. Next to her name hangs a postcard covered with the image of an opened book. A flower is painted on its inside pages. Across its top, green letters write out its name, Small Whorled Pogonia. Along its bottom, red letters read: Endangered.

But today, she finds something unfamiliar—another sheet of paper is pasted to the door. Her eyes fix to its message: Please be advised that on 10/1/04 the building was sold.... She tears the paper down.
As Rebecca steps into her studio, light embraces her, glazing her hay-colored hair with gold. The air feels forgiving and wraps around her like a blanket. She walks toward the window; a slice of ocean sits on buildings. An illusion. In the distance is a cove. From Rebecca's perch, it looks as though the blue of the cove lays itself out between buildings and a sky. Its color reflects her own blue eyes.

A worktable occupies the center of her studio. Its once-white surface is streaked with splashes of bright colors—pinks, greens, and reds—evidence of her time there. On its surface, pages of a book wait to be glued to their cover. She spreads out a sheet of brown paper and book-cloth, dips her brush into a jar of glue, then, with long strokes, her arm moving like a wave surging to the shore, she paints on the glue.

Leaning her body against the table, long bangs fall across her face. The softness of her features disappears—her lips seal, her eyebrows tighten. Through her glasses, keen eyes navigate her hands' movements; fingertips move pages into place.

Then, she wonders when she will have to move.

"I ALWAYS WANTED to tell stories," she says, her voice calm, like the sound of sand falling from a shell. She walks towards a bookshelf and holds up a sheaf of writing paper stapled together. Time has yellowed its pages. Scrawled across the top of its cover, in hard, thick lead, the title reads: My Chicken. In the center, a chicken named "Cluck" is colored in brown crayon, with jet-black dots for eyes. On the bottom of the page, a 5-year-old girl signed her name, Rebecca Goodale. The handwriting shifts slightly to the left, like grass nodding to the wind. Rebecca still writes this way.

"My brother had this incubator shaped like a spaceship." She holds a pencil and draws on the paper; two curly legs cradle a dome, two eggs sit inside it. Rebecca does not forget to draw the heating bulb beneath the eggs. "I know just one egg hatched." She draws a cracking line over one egg. "The one that hatched was kinda sticky, sticky little bird," she smiles, dimples appearing on her cheeks.

"It was all dark," she says, "except the light in the incubator..." Her voice grows quiet as her eyes read over her past, her story, My Chicken.

Once my brother got an egg and put it in an incubator. One night the egg cracked open and out came a baby chicken. He was quite ugly. After a few days he grew quite fast. One morning when my mother turned on the radio the chicken began to sing. He ate quite a lot of things and these are the things he liked oatmeal, baby food, cat food and many other things. One day my sister took some yarn and tied it to his leg and took him for a walk. One Afternoon when I came home from school the chicken was laying in the sun with one wing over his eye. This is about all I have to say.

Her eyes trace the words; her finger pointing out the word quite. She still says quite, "quite often" in her speech. She is not sure whether she likes the word, but guesses she does.

Rebecca's mother and grandmother were the first collectors of her books—she sold My Chicken to them for 25 cents. Rebecca carefully places the book back on its shelf. Cluck watches over her studio over what has happened all these years. And now, it's not just her mother and grandmother who purchase her books, but collectors.

Over the years, through days and months littered with ideas and experiments drawn on scrap paper, then art paper, then hand-made paper, through the many exhibits and shows her work has been featured in, thousands of people have come to view and appreciate Rebecca Goodale's book art.

REBECCA STANDS by a showcase that glitters under the lights in the Bowdoin College Library. Its cases hold some of the books from her current project, Threatened and Endangered. In this project, she researches Maine's endangered species, sketches them in their natural habitats, and creates artist's books from her experiences in the field.

Rebecca's face glows. She is surrounded by a crowd of men, women, and some students who have come tonight to learn about her work. Her always-moving hands are still now, held tightly in front of her as she watches the Director of the Special Collections, Richard Lindemann, introduce her to the audience.

He begins with Rebecca's art education at the Portland School of Fine and Applied Art, Memphis College of Art, then the Cranbrook Academy of Art. He also mentions her shifts in media—from printmaking to textile to weaving to books.

A catalogue for the exhibit sits on a table near the showcase. In it, Lindemann writes, "The artist's book [is] essentially a twentieth-century anti-establishment phenomenon... [It] is conceived of by the artist as art work in book form." He continues, "They convey the artist's expression..."
Rebecca Goodale takes an afternoon walk on Willard Beach, near her South Portland home.
outside the norms of traditional textual communication or illustration."

After accepting a round of applause from the audience, Rebecca steps toward the crowd and holds up a book. On its cover, a cobalt blue kingfisher flies high above a girl and into the sky. A streak of orange is brushed across the bird's chest, marking it as female. Whenever she can, she identifies the animals in her project as female.

Rebecca opens the book to a blue sky spread across the page and white clouds drifting overhead. Thick green paint captures a mountain, while a wash of glittering blue creates a stream of shallow water. The kingfisher pauses on a branch; her black eyes alert, surveying her home.

On the next page, the kingfisher flies above the cloud, up to the blue, blue sky. Beneath her tail, black pen whispers the title, Gone for Help. Rebecca looks to the crowd and begins to tell her story.

"On a Sunday morning in August, I went to a little shopping plaza to buy a newspaper. There was a Goodwill Store right nearby. When I was walking down the sidewalk...I saw this kingfisher...."

She turns the page. The kingfisher has hit the store window; on the next page, the bird is on its back. Above its head, red letters read GOODWILL.
and a "closed" sign hangs from the door.

"It was alive but looked pretty sad," Rebecca looks up, but her eyes are distant, empty.

In the book, people begin to gather as the bird opens its eyes. On the last page, the kingfisher flies away, over all the people. Behind their heads, big red letters read: WILL. "The will to live," says Rebecca, "will to survive."

She closes the book and faces the audience. "I felt really bad, because I didn’t know what to do," she says. "I was bothered by that and kept thinking, ‘How can I help?’" Rebecca’s eyes shine. "Within twenty-four hours, I decided to do this project, Threatened and Endangered." She shifts, rubs her arms. "I thought that I might be able to use my creativity to foster awareness about how human activity can affect the natural world."

REBECCA PRESSES her body against a cage at the Maine Wildlife Park. Wrapping her thin fingers around the fence, she squints her eyes, seeking the lynx kittens held captive inside. Her sketchbook and a palette wait by her side.

"Oh, there they are!" Two kittens lie on the ground, one face resting on the other. Two little mouths grow into two big yawns, the kittens squint. Rebecca lifts her eyebrows; her eyes are gentle. The colors in her yellow and brown sweater match the kittens, while her ochre pants melt into the carpet of leaves spread out in front of their cage.

The kittens walk toward Rebecca and stand still as if to pose for her. Rebecca kneels down, reaches for her sketchbook and opens her palette. She soaks a brush in a jar of water takes it out, then draws circles on the palette to moisten the color. She stands up, her sketchbook cradled in her left arm.

In black, she shapes four small triangles—ears with tufts of hair, a characteristic unique to the lynx.

As one kitten jumps off a wooden pole, Rebecca brushes a brown line over the paper, capturing its flexibility. Rebecca paints their eyes—black dots on yellow circles. As she hears the squeaky voices of approaching children, she closes her sketchbook then turns to leave.

As an art student, Rebecca remembers going to the zoo to draw birds in the aviary everyday. "To me, drawing is a common way to get close to the natural world," she says, "it helps me to see better."

"I WANT TO BE a research biologist," Rebecca once said. Instead, she became an artist who makes books. And while the two professions may seem entirely different, the process of creating the books that hold her stories allows her to conduct her own research.

IT IS MIDDAY and Rebecca stands at the end of a boardwalk. Two white Atlantic cedar trees stand on either side, like columns at the entrance of a shrine, framing an ocean of trees. Golden leaves sway in the wind.

"These cedar trees are rare," she says, stroking her palm over the thin, dry trunk. The Maine Natural Areas Program lists the white Atlantic cedar as a "special concern," the third level after "endangered" or "threatened."

Gazing at the tree, her face settles. She takes out her sketchpad—a big sheet of paper folded into smaller pieces. As Rebecca’s pencil lands on paper, everything around her falls to silence. Soon, the only sound is pencil stroking page and leaves rustling on the breeze—a duet.

Rebecca looks at the bark, draws a line, looks and draws again. She stands straight and quiet, just like the cedar tree. "Accuracy is not important for me," she says, smearing a streak of golden yellow across the page. She holds the cedar leaves up against the sky. They are dry, thin, shaped like snow crystals. Rebecca draws them on the paper so quickly and quietly, it is hard to know whether she is sketching or casting a shadow onto the page.

"I want to serve up the feeling to the reader," she says, leaving somber lines of silver-gray next to the yellow. Through her books, she tries "to give and share a way of seeing" with the reader. She drops her brush into the glass jar; gray ink swirls into honey-gold water.

IN HER STUDIO, Rebecca holds a bronze unicorn sculpture. Its skinny legs stand on Rebecca’s palm, and from its fragile face a thin horn grows. The sculpture was an assignment during her first year in art school. Stroking its neck, she remembers her time there.

"Making a good piece of art did not come easy for me," she says. Her classmates were talented and their work often impressed her. But she was disciplined and ambitious, and her teachers, who noticed her effort, encouraged her to "stick with it."

"It is not effortless," she says. "I work hard to get it." Her face is relaxed but her eyebrows are firm. "Maybe when I’m eighty, it will be effortless," she giggles, shrugging her shoulders. Veins emerge, narrow tributaries, over Rebecca’s hands as she traces the lines of her unicorn, holding it to the light.
Rebecca Goodale shares unique book forms with her design students at the University of Southern Maine.
Having lived and moved to many different places, Rebecca's unicorn was abandoned in a box at her parents' house. When she returned home to settle, she went back for the unicorn. Gingerly pulling it out of the box for the first time in decades, she thought, Who was it that made this? In that moment, past and present merged, then melted away.

"I like it a lot," her voice softens, as if unraveling. "Because I couldn't make this now.... I'll never be her again, you know...." As she speaks, she looks out the window, somewhere far beyond the ocean.

Perhaps for Rebecca, looking at the unicorn is like reading an old journal—a reminder of who she once was. It retains not merely its own shape, but perhaps the way a young artist once saw the world.

FOUR BOOKS LIE face-up on her worktable. They are rectangles, about the size of a human hand. Rebecca made the book in the beginning of her book career, all of them "right in a row." They each tell a story about a bridge.

"I was living beside a bridge in Portland and I started to make images of [it]," she says holding up her favorite book, the fourth one. "Eventually, I distilled it to this one." As she opens the book, the image of a red bridge is revealed. On the top, the title reads, Draw Bridge.

"It was a pun," she smiles. "Not only was I drawing a bridge, but I was drawing a drawbridge," she says, turning to the middle of the story. There, the pages are folded in half, where a close-up image of a bridge is drawn. "Then the bridge opens, like this," she says, her hands unfolding the pages, "to let the boat come through." She holds the book open and waits—its pages are covered in washes of greens and blues—as if to let the boat go through.

"And this closes," she says, folding the pages back down. "That's called the drawbridge," she says with a laugh.

Rebecca was once a girl who could not paint a bridge, but later, as a mature artist, she drew it four times. However, she did not yet link her childhood to her adulthood. Not yet. Not until the day she drove over the Bucksport Bridge—the bridge in the painting she could not paint as a girl.

REBECCA'S ARM stretches high into the air. The paper unfolds, expanding to the studio floor like a stretched accordion. Inside, the image of a woman emerges. "She is five feet tall and two feet wide," says Rebecca from behind the paper.

She made the book three years before her Threatened and Endangered series. In it, the woman's dark hair frames her tanned face. Rebecca's bold, lively strokes form straight eyebrows; the woman's scarlet lips are shut and her eyes dart to the reader. Thick arms grow out of a swirl-patterned dress, while big hands hold an opened book. She is reading Rebecca's story, Eclipse. Rebecca's fluid handwriting runs across the page. Beneath the woman's feet is the title: Reading.

"When you are reading a book, you are in the world of the book," she says, her hands flipping and flapping as she explains. "I was trying to hint at something timeless." She pauses. "Or infinite."

During the seven years of this project, Rebecca chose to work with female figures. "It was about being a self-portrait," she says, her face resting in her hands. "I'm a woman reading books, I'm a woman making books." A powerful undercurrent shivers beneath her calm voice. "If you are a woman looking at my books as an audience, then it becomes a complete circle." As her words form this concept, her index finger draws circles in the air. "I want to make images about women because I'm female and I have something to say."

"When I grew up, all my teachers were male and I loved them," she says. Not only was the art world male-dominated but most of Rebecca's textbooks focused on male artists. "All the art history I was taught was about men," she says. "So it seemed against all odds that I should even be an artist." But her love of making art overcame the challenges she faced; she kept working and became an art professor to many female students as well as a woman artist who makes books that women read. She became much like her first painting teacher—the woman who lived at the top of all those steps.

Now that Rebecca teaches art, she takes it very seriously. Most of her students are female and she does all she can to try to empower them. "I tell them about other women who make art and have a lifestyle that's exciting or comfortable or any number of things we all strive for." Rebecca pronounces each of her words carefully, intentionally, in the same thoughtful way she approaches her students. "I try to make work mindful of the fact that I am female and how I grew up," she says, "so that I can correct some things."
IN AN EMPTY classroom at the University of Southern Maine, fluorescent lights illuminate Rebecca, but still, the room feels dim. She picks up cut pieces of paper scattered across the desk and puts her books back into a box. It is 6:45 on a Friday evening. Her last class, Illuminated Autobiography, has ended, and Rebecca's long day is over. For 19 years, she has taught this course with her friend and writer, Dennis Gilbert. It is on these long days she misses her favorite time of day—the moment when light shifts to darkness, turning the sky a deep indigo blue. She turns the lights off, then walks, head down, to her car.

"I taught fifty-six students today, eight and a half hours of teaching," she says, turning her key in the ignition. "Think of the energy you give out to them." Her voice sounds thin, her lips are dry. "Teaching is like performing." She pauses, holds the wheel. "It is demanding being an authority in a classroom."

"I do like to teach," she says, her face shaded in the dark. "I get frustrated though." She does not mean at the students, but at institutions as a whole and at the way most teachers are treated. "Underpaid, class size is huge, not enough support," she says, clutching the wheel. "You get worn down."

Since graduating from art school, finding a way to support herself while keeping a studio has always been a challenge. "I would be happy not to teach," says Rebecca, "but I can't afford to quit." So, she teaches part-time to keep a studio to create her art, the art she needs to make.

"If I put all the pressure on the studio to carry my financial weight," she says, "I might start to worry about making the work that would sell." She shakes her head. "That's not a concern of mine," she says. "It takes a lot of courage to step outside and decide to stay with it, year after year after year, to make the work I want to make."

LATE AFTERNOON light pours through Rebecca's studio window warming her sofa. As her small shoulders sink into its cushions, Rebecca thinks about the note on her door and the fact this building, which houses her studio, has been sold.

"At first I was panicked," she says, her voice jumping up and down. "I thought they would kick us all out." In February, only four months away, over twenty artists will lose their studios. Already, some have scattered. "I don't want to leave. I want everything to stay the same," she says, her voice firm with conviction, but wavering in anticipation of what's to come.

After Rebecca found out she had to move, she stopped by Vivien's studio, downstairs. Vivien had found a new space for herself and was moving out. "Hey," she'd said, "why don't you move down here and get closer to the road?" Rebecca went up to her studio, looked out across the buildings to the ocean, to the sky. "I can't do it from here, she thought, I have to first detach from this space before I can find the next.

Standing in her studio now, she explains, "It would be easier to do A-B-C than A-C. I like the transition." A smile grows, "maybe I need that shift—that big indigo sky." She looks up, her eyes glowing. "Maybe Vivien's studio is that moment between day and night."

"I LIKE that time of the day when it shifts from light to darkness," says Rebecca, as if whispering her secrets. Leaning back against her studio sofa, she accepts the light on her face. If she ever creates a book about her life, she says, her story would take place in the afternoon. "That's what I will do," she says, "something small, seemingly small, to tell something very big."

Rebecca opens a page and reads its title, Oh, Alan. She glances up from the page. "It's a story about...." She tries to explain why she wrote the story, but instead pauses, decides not to say.

The story takes place in the afternoon when a woman named Linda visits her friend, Alan, who is in a psychiatric hospital. The woman walks along a corridor to buy the food and cigarettes Alan had asked for, and experiences that moment when the day shifts.

"The sun was making way for darkness and the sky was a deep clear blue. Linda breathed slowly, sucking life in, then out."

Once the moment passes, the woman goes back to Alan's room and he speaks to her.

"I'm so tired Linda, people treat me differently now." He stretched out and closed his eyes. He fumbled for her hand. She slid her fingers around his.

"It is actually a true story," says Rebecca, when she can. "A friend of mine was very sick and dying and I went to visit him." She says this with a calm voice, but her shoulders look even smaller than usual.

Around the same time she wrote Oh, Alan, she made the Silence Book. The book is a long sheet of paper, about the size of a small woman, and collapses like an accordion. When it opens, an image of a female figure reclines, holding a small, full moon.
On the other side of the image, Rebecca has written *silence, silence, silence*, like a prayer. Then, the distilled definition of the word from the dictionary is revealed: *secrecy, stillness*, and the last word, *death*.

After the story and the book, she stopped making work about her friend’s death. “It was all part of the process,” says Rebecca, “to accept, find a way to live with it.” Perhaps for Rebecca, the process of making these books provided another shift—from light to dark to light again.

NEON LIGHT floods her new studio. Olympia Sports blinks a hard red across the street and through her window. Rebecca gazes at the concrete wall as if searching for the ocean concealed within it.

She climbs the steps to her old studio. As she opens its door, light greets her and warm air wraps around her like an embrace. Out her window, the ocean shines with the last strands of daylight. The walls look cold with her paintings gone. Surrounded by garbage bags and scattered books, she feels dizzy.

Rebecca decides to call it a day as she picks up a plant, its leaves withering. As she fingers the light switch, her memory flashes back to a time eleven years ago, when she was in this same room, helping a friend move out so she could move in. She turns off the light and closes the door.

The stairs squeak as Rebecca
Rebecca Goodale and a friend take a break during a long day of moving into her new studio.
climbs down. She stands in front of her new studio door. Wiggling the key into its hole, she thinks, *Sometimes change is good. Vivien's studio has more space, more space to accept that I have to move out.*

FROM A BACKROOM in the studio, Rebecca carries a book. As she turns the cover, its title appears—*Tributaries*, drawings by Dennis Gilbert, poem by Rebecca Goodale.  

"It was an epiphany," says Rebecca, remembering the moment that inspired the poem. She was driving over a bridge to teach Illuminated Autobiography, at the art school on Deer Isle, when she realized she was crossing the scene of her girlhood painting, "The Bucksport Bridge, Without the Bridge."

As she turns the page, her eyes stop, her voice slows. She begins to read lines from her poem:

"...All blues and greens, some / yellow ochre / marking the turn from ebb to flow/ along the water's edge. / The trees were close to the sky, / which had clouds / That rose up and swept on past us /toward Venus..... / As we were lifted up / into that moment / Linking childhood to adulthood / with imagination / And the town of Prospect to Verona Island / with steel."

She lifts her face from the book and walks to the studio’s wall to remove a painting. Aged wood frames the scene: a beautiful bay with trees growing forever into the sky, hemming in an ocean, reaching towards a mountain.

Rebecca looks up. "I think I am determined. I wanted to make things and I just kept making things and it became my priority," she says. "If you do work, if you do find the way to just work and work and work and work ... then somebody will see the authenticity of what it is that you are up to."

"Keep your eyes open," says Rebecca as her eyes settle over the bridge, over the ocean, over the green trees growing forever into the blue, blue sky. "Pay attention to who you are."
Surviving More Than Adolescence
By Allison Wightman

Cathy Hardy holds her sons, James and Nickolas, during a family barbecue.
IT'S SATURDAY night and 16-year-old Cathy Hardy isn't getting ready to go out on a date with her boyfriend; she isn't thinking about what movie might be featured at the theater. Instead, Cathy is wondering if her sons, Nicky and James, will sleep. After dinner and bottles, baths, stories, kisses and hugs, Cathy sinks onto the couch in her small apartment and closes her eyes. When they open, she scans the room. It is cluttered with toys, piles of laundry, and a sink overflowing with dirty dishes. A stack of school books waits patiently on the table. She sighs, then smiles, "They all look like angels while they are sleeping."

At 14, Cathy got pregnant with James, now two. Eighteen months later, Nicky was born. Growing up in Smithfield, Maine, she lived with her father until she moved in with the boys' father, Donald. Her days no longer begin with an alarm which startles her awake for school. Now, it's when the kids get up at six or seven.
James peers out the window after bathtime with his mom, Cathy Hardy.

Each morning, she gets herself ready first, then tackles Nicky, and finally, James. Her father calls each morning to make sure she is up. And each morning, after dropping the boys off at daycare, Donald drops Cathy off at school—the Maine Children’s Home for Little Wanderers.

At Little Wanderers, Cathy can finish her high school requirements and take a parenting class—a class that offers a supportive environment for her to discuss the complexities of being a teenage mom. It is the only place that allows Cathy an outlet, a place where she can cry and be heard, a place where she can still be a teenager. And while Cathy and her classmates love to talk about boys, clothes, and music, the conversations somehow always turn back to something funny one of their kids did.

“I feel like I have to be a woman, but sometimes I want to be sixteen. And definitely, having kids changed that.” Though she constantly battles all instincts to act her age, there is no doubt in her mind who must come first. “If I need something and James needs something, he definitely gets it first,” she says. “Because no matter what I need, I can live without it.”
James tries to get his mom, Cathy, to give him a milk bottle while she does the laundry.
Cathy Hardy does her accounting homework while bouncing son, Nicholas, in his chair.

Cathy Hardy feeds son, James, birthday cake at his Grandma Janice's birthday party.
Cathy stands in the messy kitchen as James climbs over toys he has pulled out of his room.

Cathy Hardy looks out her porch window as she takes a moment for herself.

Cathy Hardy talks on the phone in her front hallway, while James digs through a box of discarded Christmas decorations.
Growing up in southern New Jersey in a home he calls a “battlefield,” Bill Curtsinger would sit alone and turn the pages of his grandfather’s old National Geographic magazines, studying animals, places, and perspectives. He also found refuge in the quiet pulse and subtle nature of the Pine Barrens. Years later, Curtsinger would return to capture images and produce stark black and white photographs for John McPhee’s book, The Pine Barrens.

At 16, he walked into the local photo shop, bought a Kodak Retinette 1 A 35 mm Rangefinder and settling into the landscape of the Pine Barren, he shot a red-bellied turtle climbing a rock. The turtle was obvious, a known species in an easily accessible place, but it was a beginning.

Now, some forty years later, he has photographed over 33 articles for National Geographic, six of which have been cover stories. His work has also been included in Outside, The Smithsonian, Time, Newsweek, Audubon, BBC Wildlife, numerous text books, encyclopedias and aquarium displays. He is a regular contributor to Gulf of Maine Aquarium publications. With his diving partner Eric Hiner, Curtsinger co-produced a National Geographic Explorer TV short on Gray Reef Sharks, and in the fall of 2005, he released his first solo book, Extreme Nature.

The following is an excerpt from Bill’s writings about his personal inspiration:

“...No assemblage of words better portrays how I feel about the beauty and integrity of our universe as does [the] poem [The Answer] by Robinson Jeffers. I memorized it when I was a teenager. I often whisper it to myself, and only have to step into my back yard, and gaze skyward on a clear night to be reminded that, ‘the greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe...’ and why we might want to ‘[l]ove that, not man apart from that....’ Every moment I live, observe, follow, immerse in the wild, only fortifies this idea more, which has always seemed so obvious to me anyway. I suppose that all along I have subconsciously tried to provide visual elements to Jeffers’ writing with some of my photographs. I think all artists attempt to do this with an important and inspired piece of writing they relate to. It has been a formidable and somewhat futile undertaking given how perfect the picture is that Jeffers paints for me with this and other poems.”

SM: In your book Extreme Nature, you write, “You take pictures, but you make photographs.” Can you explain?

BC: It’s about every ounce of energy to get to that moment—to mine it successfully—to produce a memorable image.

SM: An example?

BC: The eyes of the leopard seal, the hatchling ... [referring to the cover image from the February 1994 issue of National Geographic, a photo of a sea turtle hatchling swimming for its life.] You see, I thought about conveying that sense of ephemeral life the sea turtle has. So many are lost in nature.
Only three to four percent of the 60 to 80 hatchlings in a nest make it. Look at their mortality rate from the beach to the water... everything is waiting to eat them—feral dogs, birds, even humans. I once sat behind a nest; not one single one made it. They’re like grains of sand tossed to the wind. So I thought about this. And I didn’t know how I was going to do this—"What have they done? Did they do it well? What did they miss?" I make it part of my research.

BC: Well, your greatest power is in ideas. I’d been there before with the Navy, so when I was at National Geographic with my portfolio, I had this idea to do a story on the Antarctic, one they’d never done before. They’d always done it on the Polar Plateau, not the peninsula. My idea was to do it on the peninsula—you had boat access, you could look below the water and above. I knew my work because I knew the look and feel of the place, I had dive and aircraft experience with the Navy and they knew that. I was just some guy off the street, but I knew I could pull it off. I knew it, because I knew the place. I lived it and I studied it. I wanted to give them a new sense of the Antarctic. Before I left with my portfolio, the guy said to me, ‘And I mean this, send me a proposal on that Antarctic thing.’ So I did.

SM: What are some lessons you’ve learned, both from your experience in the field and from the animals you’ve studied?

BC: First, you can’t ask enough questions. You’re only as good as your last shoot. If you get the wrong information—the whales aren’t there because it’s the wrong time of year, or the Japanese cleared them out and your guy didn’t track this—it’s a high price to pay. And, go slow. Slow down.... I was back in the Pine Barrens, asking something different from this landscape than I had as a kid. It was a quiet place—I wasn’t there to fish or hunt or drink beer—there was nothing dramatic about it; it was flat and barren. Quiet. So I had to be there in a different way. Then, one day, after spending a lot of time there with a family who was still so connected to the land—they farmed blueberries and cranberries, and still worked their cycles—Ada Simmons, one of the original homesteaders, walks out to her blueberry plot in a flower-print dress with a woven basket on her arm and a bonnet on her head... I thought, ‘Jesus. Jesus. Slow down, calm down or you won’t get the photo.’ In moments like that, you have to back off, try not to get too excited, but at the same time, you don’t want to lose the photo either. It’s a slower, methodical approach.

SM: Because Salt is an educational institute, what’s some advice you can offer to students of documentary work?

BC: What a lot of young people fail to do is to build an intellectual foundation for their work. Research takes time, but it takes you further into a subject, helps you understand your work, and maybe discover something new. And once you find that foundation, you’re there. If you approach your subject in this way, I don’t see how you can miss. Why do the ‘golly-gee’ story; why do what everyone else is doing? Don’t do the obvious. Ask: ‘What are you going to do different?’

The other thing is, you have to have passion. In order to stay in this business, you have to have passion for what you do in order to make your work stand out.

For more about Bill Curtissinger and his latest work, go to http://www.billcurtissingerphoto.com/.

To see his panoramic digital imagery from Maine’s highest peak, Mt. Katahdin, go to the Gulf of Maine Aquarium website, http://octopus.gma.org/katabdin/katabpano.html.
Roland Watier prepares to cut an elder pine from his forest that he hopes to use in the construction of his storytelling center.
THE STORYTELLER stands just beyond the light of a bonfire, his hands smoothing the plaid flannel shirt curving around his torso, and his gaze settles in the coals. Leaning in towards the flame, the panes of his spectacles are fringed with crawling light, and his eyes seem gargantuan, luminous with intent. Waving a single upheld finger slowly before the circle of men gathered there, he begins to tell his story:

"Once upon a time, once beside a time, or was it once behind a time, or even once beneath a time? Well in that time and space...walk with me."

RUNNING DOWN into a valley cradling the tiny town of Union, Maine, the St. George River sidles up to an old country lane. Side by side the river and road cut between farmhouses and fields of blown straw, skirting past orchards grown wild, and running through columns of tumorous sugar maples until they both pass the end of a dirt drive. Standing there together, swallowed within a thicket of rhododendrons, are a bus stop shelter the shape of a Volkswagen bug, a barber pole, and a sign that reads, 'Positive Images.'

Up the drive, in a field flanked by forest, is a house, curiously resembling a barn. Massive nut-brown beams jab out between the first and second floors like bones on a rack of lamb, and knots emerge from the wood siding, warped, witchy eyes that glare down at the arrival of visitors.

Beyond the house, a dark drumbeat stutters out across the turf, originating from a distant bonfire. Ringing the fire, a group of men lean forward in ramshackle wooden chairs, their eyes fixed upon Roland Watier as he speaks.

"...walk with me." Twilight and reflected flame cup around the bulbous contours of his face, framed by a curtain of hair that sways as he moves. He slows to a stop, anchoring his body in place with his hands on the back of a chair. Pausing, he lets his audience attune their ears to the night, to the peal of pine pitch squealing almost inaudibly from within the wood.

And then Roland continues, reveling in the sound of his own voice as it resounds in a creeping meter.

"A hunter takes his son deep into a dark forest to hunt for honey. They follow the song of the honey bird and eventually find her perched in a tree swarming with a colony of bees. The father scales the tree and, ever so slowly, hands down a honeycomb to his son, telling him not to lick his fingers, for it is horribly bitter."

He pauses for a moment, a tense smile bunching his cheeks as he lowers his eyes to the ground.

"Overcome with curiosity, the son takes a small taste and instead, finding it marvelously sweet, devours everything his father hands down. Climbing down from the tree, the father sees what he has done. Enraged, he summons all of the beasts of the forest to attack his son as a punishment, and as a test of his worthiness."

Roland begins prowling closer to the flames, pupils flashing in the firelight, forehead lacquered with sweat. His voice rumbles out as he sweeps his arms up in a violent pantomime.

"Ripping up a tree trunk from its roots and swinging it like a gigantic club, the son slays each of the beasts, one after the other! He scans the forest floor to survey his kill, then beaming with pride, turns to his father for approval..."

He comes to a standstill, clasping his hands below the small of his back, eyes fixed between his feet.
"...but instead of praising his son, the father gruffly orders him to go make a fire to cook the beasts for his supper. Deeply disappointed, the son goes and does as he is told."

He raises a finger in front of him and studies the men's expressions.

"Years pass, the son marries and he has a son of his own. Forgetting his own childhood, he takes his son out hunting for honey, and the story repeats itself, again and again."

Finding a few expressions twisted into thought, a few grins gleaming there, the taut line of Roland's mouth curls into a thick-lipped smile, his eyebrows raised. Bracing his hands on the arms of a chair, he arches his spine back into its seat—wincing—and sits, his satisfied eyes continuing to probe their faces in the light of fire.

THE COUNCIL OF MEN unites each summer for a weekend of ritual to celebrate their strength and camaraderie as men, to examine traditional male roles, and to share their own personal stories within a compassionate, accepting male community. Every year a bundle of artifacts representative of the previous years is carried to the Council. Every year a drum is brought and is played continuously, sometimes even through the night, as a symbolic reminder of Mother Earth's heartbeat. And every year a talking stick is passed around the fire so that each man can in turn be given the chance to express himself.

This year the Council has gathered to witness and participate in the rites of passage of its two elders. The first has turned 74, and the men have honored him with a walking staff tied with strips of cloth bearing written prayers for his life. And the second, Roland Watier, at 59, is on the verge of realizing a lifelong dream, the creation of a place where he and others like him can speak and be heard. Within eyeshot of the Council's fire, a wide circle—60 feet in diameter—has been dug down into the sod and partially filled with round river stones hauled up from the St. George. The Council will help Roland fill the foundation, consecrating the space with their labor. They will assist him in the creation of a storytelling circle, the focal point of perhaps the first storytelling center of its kind ever built in Maine.

TWO WEEKS HAVE PASSED since the Council's departure, and Roland sits in a blur of wood dust suspended in the fluorescent light of his workshop, readying his hammer and chisel. Studying a three-foot section of hollow tree trunk fashioned into a drum, his eyes search the ripples and eddies of grain that run around its side. He zeroes in and taps tenderly, sending shavings thin as fingernails to the table, his wispy, auburn-gray ponytail bobbing lightly with each strike. With head cocked sideways, he lays his tools to rest in front of him. Raising his hands up to the drum, Roland massages its length in long, loving ovals, stroking over the skin of burley maple, over and around a relief carved at the base—a small figure hunched forward, exposing an arch of vertebrae that seems grossly disproportionate to the rest of its body. "This expresses my wounded back." His fingers hesitate a moment longer on the bent figure before they snake along a line of other figures wrapping around the side of the drum, men sitting, leaning against each other, huddled with foreheads tipped together—a totemic representation of the Council of Men.

The sculpting of the drum has
Roland Wirtie, storyteller, Union, Maine.
been a process of gradual revelation—each gouge, each etching has emerged on its own terms for over a decade. “It’s about coming into communion with the wood, letting it reveal what is inside, the part that speaks. You talk to wood—tell me what’s there. I speak aloud through the wood and I ask a question—who are you?” He presses a finger over the divot of his upper lip, his brow furrowing. “It’s hard to explain.”

In his life, Roland Watier has willed himself into an astonishing array of forms: woodcarver, carpenter, folklorist, woodsman, metalsmith, barber, stonemason, sign maker, environmental activist, men’s group elder. And in each of these roles, he has afforded himself the opportunity to express his own inner narrative, a tale that is often difficult to hear, and to tell.

Roland pets the table length sweeping mound of sawdust into ridge patterns molded with the curve of his arm. Leaning back in his chair, he closes his eyes and with a heavy breath, continues. “One of the surest ways to kill a child is to not see their gift. Don’t look at them. I grew up in Gardiner, Maine, and a few people saw that I was an artist child…but they were outside my family. Inside the family, it was always, ‘Why don’t you do something useful? How are you ever going to make money doing that? That’s nonsense. That’s illiterate.’ And yet I would draw and draw and draw.” Determined to convince his family of his talent, Roland entered a national Hallmark card contest for young artists, and was awarded first prize. Despite this, they remained cynical and unsupportive.

“It was just like when the father came down from the tree, and all the animals are dead,” he declares revisiting the story he had told at the Men’s Council gathering. “I had won this great contest that was really powerful and significant, and the father says, ‘Well now that we have all this artwork kicking around here, why don’t you find a match and make me a fire and cook me some food.’ It didn’t mean a damn thing. Not seeing the gifts that your children have is a very, very cruel thing.”

Roland reaches up and hefts the drum to its side with a grunt, sands his palm in slow circles over the center of its elk hide head, and thumps it twice with the heel of his hand to test its voice.

He had brought his drum to ‘The Big E,’ a fair held in Springfield, Massachusetts where he manned the booth of a woodworker’s guild to which he belonged. “I was just bored to death…I decided I was going to have a good time, so I started telling stories.” He relates how a small girl wandered up to the booth, captivated by his tale. Noticing that she was eyeing his drum, he encouraged her to play it. “She just played the drum beautifully, much to the amazement of everybody. It was just like, this kid was a natural.” Disgusted that his daughter had become the center of attention, the father ordered her to stop playing. “He just belittled her and put her down, and was vicious about it. And I couldn’t tolerate it—I exploded.”

The following year, the little girl and her aunt returned to the fair, looking for “the guy with the drum.” Upon finding him, the aunt told Roland that the child had been suffering through years of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her father. Witnessing Roland challenge him had convinced the aunt that she could do the same. She went to the authorities, and later, her testimony in court resulted in putting an end to the father’s abuse. “The little girl threw her arms around me, and just thanked me for saving her life,” he recalls. “I think I began to realize right then and there how powerful storytelling could really be in people’s lives.”

A FLAME KINDLES in Roland’s eyes as he stands within his circle of stone, declaring his intentions for the space. “In my world travels, I’ve noticed that tribal people seem to know what their myth is, and what their story is.” He pauses, pursing his lips, and then continues, “I find it a real tragedy that people in our world today have no idea what their story is. And with no teachers, how could they possibly even know where to begin to create their own story?” He stirs a hand in a broad oval over the wide expanse of stone beneath his feet. “Hence—the storytelling circle!”

Roland points out four stakes standing opposite each other on the periphery, marking the four cardinal directions. “One of the things that happens here is you get to orient yourself.”

He revolves slowly and calls out each direction in turn, outlining the shape of the space. “There are no physical theaters in the round anymore.” He gestures out into the field. “Most of the storytelling places I’ve been to are—you’re on the stage and they’re out there. In a storytelling circle, for me to be in contact with the audience, I need to move,” and he weaves over the rock, between imaginary listeners seated around the mental image of a cauldron he plans to set in the center, “here, around this fire, and make contact with everybody in the audience. It’s a circle. What comes around, goes around.”
In his woodshed, Roland Watier sorts through piles of wood milled from trees cut in his forest.
Standing in his hand-crafted storytelling circle, Roland Water explains his vision for its use.
Roland plans to open to the public the following summer, hosting storytelling sessions every Friday and Saturday from June until October. He envisions the empty spaces filled with travelers and spiritual seekers who have been intrigued by the sound of a storytelling center set out in the countryside, but perhaps, compelled by something else.

“They’re leaving where they are, and they’re traveling on a holiday to Maine. They are being called by spirit to come here,” he proclaims, sketching silhouettes around the circle with his hand. “You’re on a journey, a quest to find something. And it’s my job as an elder to try and be a conduit to help you find what it is you’re looking for. I can’t find it for you. But maybe, if I tell a story that is eight hundred years old, or three thousand years old—a story from another land—all of a sudden you’ll go, ‘My god! Aha! I can’t believe it! That’s it! That’s exactly right!’”

IT IS HALLOWEEN morning, and Roland waits at the dining room table, nuzzling his face down into a plume of steam piping off a tray of blueberry muffins. Carol Watier scoots out of the kitchen in nappy tartan pajamas, shuffles a saucer of butter up to her husband’s chest, arcs a stream of anka into his mug, then curls into her chair. The couple sits in a mingling of vapor and mid-morning light, looking out over a broad expanse of sallow, uncut straw, and beyond, a thin border of naked maples running along the length of the property.

Roland wags a teaspoon at the window framing the field, mumbling through a mouthful of muffin, “The big sliding barn doors were right here, two stories tall. And they would slide open.” He shifts in his seat and traces a threshold constructed of beams to the right. “Everything over here was all hay, right to the rafters. All of the beams you see sitting on top of other beams were brought in by tearing down five other barns.” Roland’s eyes crawl up along a weathered plank into the rafters and then back down, as though remembering every nail he pounded to build the place. “It’s taken thirty years.”

In 1969 Roland finished a tour of duty stationed on an aircraft carrier in the waters just outside of Vietnam and returned to the states for shore duty in Brunswick, Maine. He met Carol on a “swinging singles weekend” cruise put on by the military, and they were married a year later. In 1974, after living together in Roland’s house in Brunswick, they decided to move out to the country, choosing the tiny town of Union, Maine as a good place to raise a family. It had been Carol’s hometown and they would have the support of family that lived there still.

The couple searched for land and eventually purchased a 45-acre plot of farm field left fallow, surrounded by forest. They’d spent nearly everything on the property with the hopes that the old barn set out by the road might be coaxed into the form of a house. To Roland, it seemed like it could be done. But there was one major obstacle that had to be overcome before the work could begin—the barn had to be moved away from the road. “We were not going to raise children to have them hit by a car,” Roland explains.

In March of the next year, with what little money they had after installing a foundation and a leach field, they hired a crew to attempt the move. Gigantic steel girders were laid down to stretch back into the field, then coated with oil. A pair of bulldozers began to drag the structure over the beams with chains. “When they started to move...the creaking!” Roland clenches his jaw into an underbite, emitting a hideous grating screech. “We had all the neighbors gathered around. At a distance,” he chuckles. “They thought we were crazy. Hell, anyway. They really did.”

The barn was set on its new foundation, a drafty, skeletal structure that now needed to be fashioned into a house, and Roland, Carol, and their first child, Kathy were living with Carol’s parents while Roland was doing the construction. On April Fool’s Day, Roland was laying in flooring, working at a grueling pace to make the house whole. “I missed the floor joist...fell right into the basement, and when I landed, I landed on these stones, kind of half folded up like a partly opened jackknife.”

He had shattered his back, an injury from which he would never fully recover. But the barn continued to be turned into a home as friends and family living nearby lent their support, helping to build a stairway and a barbershop where Roland, now disabled, could work from home. Carol supported the family, doing census bureau work and occasionally waiting tables at a local restaurant.
They managed to move in just a month later, on Mother's Day, 1978. Over time, they planted row crops in the field. Roland started building a root cellar for storage, and Carol canned and preserved the food they grew. They kept livestock, experimenting first with goats, and then moving into cows, hogs, and geese, butchering their own meat. Roland culled portions of the woodlot for firewood and to mill into lumber so that he could build a storage barn.

"It was very, very crude in the early days," he admits. Carol shakes her head with a wry smile, humming to herself in agreement. Lacing her fingers around a lukewarm mug, she gazes out on a sea of bunched straw growing to need, remembering how difficult it had been, how everything seemed to fall apart after Roland's accident. A heartrending miscarriage had come just after, then a diagnosis that she had diabetes. He recalls having been broadsided in a terrifying accident, convinced that her unborn child might be lost as well.

The string of events had shaken their faith in providence. But years later, they would come to see that their misfortune during those times had ultimately served to define and strengthen that faith.

INSIDE HIS BARBERSHOP, Roland skims a straight edge razor from the line of his jaw in a swath slowly down along the length of his neck, shaving himself. A work-stained shirt lies wadded on the Formica lip at the base of a mirror which frames his bare barrel chest, and he spouts his lips to one side, rolling the blade in an arc over the curve of his cheek.

Behind him, draped in a nylon sheet grazing the floor, a customer and his unruly mop of bone white hair wait in the chair. Tomm Shockey sits facing a portrait opposite him on a maple-paneled wall, a framed portrait of John F. Kennedy beaming majestically, as if flaunting his flawless, chiseled hairstyle. Tomm has been returning faithfully to Roland's shop, 'Positive Images,' for twelve years.

Roland shakes off the straight edge in a sink, towels off his face, buttons up an orange, white, and blue pinstriped shirt, and ties on an apron. Then, reacquainting himself with the familiar dimensions of his customer's head, his body weaves intuitively within the narrow space, sliding around and circling the chair. Lowering the back of the barber chair, Roland cups Tomm's head down into in a plastic basin and he massages crème shampoo into his scalp.

"One of the most pleasant experiences for everybody in a barbershop is this moment here where you actually revert back to when your mother was shampooing your hair when you were a little boy," he declares, his fingers diving into the ridge of Tomm's hairline, along the line of the fontanelle and down and around the temples. "It's a very sensual thing to be able to touch someone else, and barbers have the singularly unique experience in all the nation—they're the one male who touches other men, perhaps more than any other man does. Your doctor will not have as much physical contact with you as your barber does."

He rinses and towels off Tomm's hair, then turns to lift a squat cardboard box off the shelf behind him and removes an index card with a penciled sketch of a head, what looks like a crude phrenologist's diagram. Positioning it on the counter in front of him, he wheels around the chair, fluttering the blades of his scissors. "Every person that comes into the shop is blueprinted," he reveals, arching his body like a matador into and away from his subject. "All the idiosyncrasies about the cranium and everything is all jotted down."

ON A WARM AUTUMN afternoon, Roland navigates his John Deere 950 along an old cow path leading into the forest behind his house. A layered mesh of fallen limbs and roots crackles under the tractor's treads, sending a lone nuthatch skittering up tree bark to dissolve into the canopy's light. Roland leans into the machine's tilt as it plows over stumps swallowed by moss and fern, heading for an elderly white pine. When he reaches it, he kills the engine, leaving a blue apparition of diesel smoke to drift in the branches.

He slides down to the ground and hobbies over the forest detritus, brushing aside saplings with the edge of his chainsaw as he circles the tree's base. He stops, jaw tilted back, letting the blade sink slowly to his side. "Hello again, old man." The pine's bark scrolls down to reveal ghoulish white skin riddled with woodpecker damage. They stand there together in the quiet, the afternoon sun filtering in through the forest in long, orange bars that strobe in slow motion across their bodies.

Then shifting his weight, rooting boots wide in the duff to brace himself, Roland whips on the pull cord, ponytail lashing around neck as the
chainsaw screams alive. He squats to score the edges and then leans in forcefully, the blade snarling in and through, spitting out a grainy skirt of sawdust. A few last thrusts, a faint snapping as the pine begins to list sideways slightly, and then, finally, with a violent crack, the tree hurtles down and pounds into the forest floor.

Roland silences his chainsaw and the forest seems almost eerie with silence, motionless except for a line of termites spilling out from cavities marbled in the tree’s cross-section. He walks up and traces his fingertips over the cut, mouthing the number of rings as he moves from edge to center, sapwood to heartwood to pith. “Sixty-one, sixty-two... sixty-three years old.”

Patting along the felled tree, he surveys its length. It will go to feed the storytelling circle’s fire and sections will be cut and used as seats for his audience. Bending to the ground, he cradles a wounded sapling, its top portion snapped off. He takes its spindle-thin trunk in the notch between his middle and index fingers, and fans through its needle bundles affectionately, under and up, over and over in the quiet. And then from far off, a flurry of rifle shots explode and Roland’s eyes leap to the forest’s horizon, his fingers seizing a cluster of needles tightly until the final report trails away into silence.

IN 1965, ROLAND LEFT his childhood home in
Gardiner, Maine for the shores of Vietnam. He had been assigned as a photo analyst to do intelligence work, reporting on images that suggested the movement of enemy troops and suspected military installations. After ten years of service, he had seen enough to convince him that the war wasn’t worth fighting. He had been witness to terrible errors of judgment on the part of those in command, mistakes that led to massive casualties. He remembers instances when the intelligence he was interpreting was ignored for the sake of political strategy. “There were so many of those incidences where we just ground up people and threw ‘em away for no reason whatsoever.”

Weary and frustrated, Roland decided to leave the military. Perhaps more disheartening, upon his homecoming he returned to face a contemptuous nation and a father who refused to acknowledge him for his service. “Young men go into battle to prove to their fathers and to their father’s friends that they are men. And they should qualify to have the voice of a man. In the case of Vietnam, we came back and were continually dishonored by the same men that we had gone to war to prove that we were men for.”

A MAPLE TREE with a jagged scar running down its lanky trunk pulses violent yellow in the direct rays of November twilight. Its leaves release and whorl down coming to scuttle in the gray tone of the storytelling circle where Roland roams in a suede jacket and a black beret, his arms outstretched over his creation.

“I should probably mention the name. It’s called, ‘The Golden Raven Storytelling Circle.’” He explains that the title had been inspired by a Haida folktale that tells how a raven brought light into the world by stealing the sun, casting it into the heavens to illuminate his dark form so that he might be seen.

“Do you know what the old world says? About a crow and a raven? When you hear a crow caw, it’s an oppor-
tunity for you to simply remember that if you would listen and pay attention, magic is afoot.” He giggles, and then shakes his head, “But you know, a lot of people hear crows, and that doesn’t mean a thing to them. I would prefer to live in the world of magic and fantasy, to living in the world of fear and terror, any day.”

Roland gestures to a red pine towering above a storage barn which he and his friend and fellow Council elder have begun to convert into a meeting hall for the storytelling center. The pine will serve as “the elder tree,” in an arbor of varieties indigenous to Maine planted around the circumference of the space. He points up to a high branch, the spot where he plans to perch a wooden raven he has carved and painted golden. “Probably he’ll be seen first by a child, each time, I suspect.”

Digging into the pocket of his vest, Roland takes out an apple, holding it at eye level to block the glare of sun spooling down into the horizon. He rolls it slowly between the tips of his fingers, and envisioning that child sitting there, bends down to pose a question to him: “What single, wonderful, special gift did the gods send you to earth with? Your teachers want to know, your parents want to know—the world wants to know. Because when you know and the world knows, the universe will be well served.”

And then standing again, he raises a finger. “The interesting thing all the ancient stories talk about is that you will go through hell on earth if you ignore paying attention to your gift. It will always be there to plague you, to bother you, to give you a difficult time.”

IT IS THE FOLLOWING summer, and opening night at the Golden Raven Storytelling Circle. A light June rain falls, and mist veils a cluster of family and friends gathered upon the stone in a cocoon of gauzy firelight. Carol passes a plate of cookies while Roland collects his thoughts, pacing slowly and evenly in front of the iron cauldron he has set in the center, backlit by a helix of flame torching up from its rim into the night sky.

Roland turns to honor each of the four directions with prayer, then hands each person in the circle a turkey feather, an offering of spirit and a token of a new beginning. He starts the session by reciting a bit of Maine humor, his voice rolling along in a sonorous, down eastern drawl. Taking on the form of a lizard in his second story, he bulges his eyes out in a reptilian stare as his tongue flutters feverishly between the rasping of his narration.

And after he finishes his third and final tale, Roland waits until laughter and applause is finally replaced by the steady chirring of crickets. Noticing the crowd tuned into that song, he points into the dusky haze—the field is ablaze with fireflies and falling embers winking out into the mist. “What a spectacular night for storytelling!”

He stands in his creation, marveling at it all a while longer, and then encourages a woman from the audience to stand and tell a tale—this is her debut as a storyteller. Planting himself on a cross-section of tree trunk, he watches as she summons from within herself the courage to begin. And with a deep breath, she does, and the circle is complete. Roland sits hunched forward, beaming as he listens to the sound of her story rise up above the roar of the flames. It is a sound filled with fire and intent, the voice of a child, speaking from the center.
John Eder and friend, Eustle Shettleworth Jr., talk at the campaign kick-off.
It's Not Easy Being Green:
Representative John Eder's Campaign for Re-election

By Anne Phillips

JOHN EDER swallows an Aleve, his back aching from hours of standing at the polls. After casting her ballot, a woman shouts to John's opponent, "I voted for you!" Earlier that morning, John pulled on his lucky socks and tried out the smile that would take him through the long, long day. However, after thirteen hours of greeting voters at the polls, and with the race close, the lucky socks and smile are beginning to wear thin. Today John will either retain his seat in the Maine House of Representatives, or be locked out of the job he loves.
In 2002, at the age of 33, John was voted into office by two-thirds of his constituents, making him the Green Party's only state legislator in the United States. "I never expected to win," he says of that first election. Now, after a year in office, and the changes that came with 2003's redistricting, John and his Democratic opponent are both incumbents. Things have changed. There's more at stake. This year, the anxiety John feels over the race is different than last year—one of them will lose his job on Election Day. For John, losing his job would mean losing the sense of

Exhausted, John Eder sprawls out on his living room floor.

John Eder enthusiastically reports the election results at Mesa Verde restaurant.
purpose he has as a Legislator. For Mainers, it would mean losing a unique perspective and an impassioned voice.

Just down the street from the polling place, John sits with friends at his dining room table, wringing his hands as he waits for the race results. Cell phones ring as campaign workers call in, reporting district votes. John is ahead by 300, but there are still 10,000 absentee ballots yet to be counted. His public smile wilts to a worried frown; he gets up and begins to pace the room in measured, even footsteps. A former yoga instructor, John calms himself.
by repeating a mantra—Outwardly I smile; inwardly I breathe calm.

It is three hours later. John sways and wiggles beneath a disco ball in a crowd of his supporters. He mingles easily, though he has been awake for more than twenty hours and on his feet for more than fifteen. But tonight he will sleep peacefully, knowing he still has a place to sit as a member in the House of Representatives and knowing his purpose will continue—to voice the perspective of a people whose ideas and visions might not otherwise be heard.
John Eder answers his phone the morning of the election.
John Eder and friend, Eustle Shettleworth Jr., talk at the campaign kick-off.
DOWSER: CONSULTANT TO THE UNIVERSE

By Owen Agnew
Photograph by Katie Hayes

“In my life I have always had to know how, when, why, what for? When it comes to dowsing, I know it works; I don’t know how it works, and I don’t give a damn. There is no other area in my life that I know of that I can do that.”

To hear this story in its entirety go to:
www.salt.edu
HARD TO SAY

By Bente Birkland
Photograph by Stephanie Weinstein

“What she does remember, of course, are the things that happened years ago…. I built the kitchen the way it is so we would have plenty of room to dance. We’d turn on the TV for the Lawrence Welch program and the big bands and we would dance out in the kitchen, just dance…. She knows I’m her husband, that I’m someone that she loves, but I’m sure ten minutes after I leave, she’s forgotten I’ve been there.”

To hear this story in its entirety go to:
www.salt.edu
Wilhelm Reich's tomb with the cloudbuster in the background, Orgonon.
Our Mysterious Something

By Andrea Maio
Photography by Kiersten Hanna

"Comfort? There is no comfort, only truth! In the depths of an ocean of desolate unconsciousness there exists a spark—am I its bearer, or another? It pains me—the spark feels not pain—it leaps—it cannot be quenched."

*From the Journals of Wilhelm Reich. April 11, 1941*

THE ROADSIDE is muddy and there's a rush of warm earth in the air, but still, a layer of icy snow covers the ground, and it will be a long season of muck before summer returns to Rangeley, Maine. Diehard snowmobilers are still out, carving noisy paths through the woods, one hand on the accelerator, the other on the brake, zooming from one edge of the valley to the other. But the deer aren't afraid; they stand in people's yards, nosing bird feeders for seed, blinking long lashes over glass-black eyes, and chewing browned leaves or bits of grass in small, tight circles.
Up the road, tucked deep into the woods, beyond the deer and snowmobilers, the mud and icy snow, stands the Wilhelm Reich Museum. Part of a campus called Orgonon, it is the place Wilhelm Reich, the psychoanalyst-turned-scientist, built to facilitate his experiments. But this time of year, it's still quiet—the way Reich liked it.

In the summer Orgonon is busier; people come for workshops exploring Reich's scientific work, or as part of a program for foster families the museum runs. And, on rainy days when vacation ideas come short, they tour the museum. It is then they discover something surprising, unexpected. Something extraordinary. In the logbook at one of the two cabins the museum rents out, people have written their thoughts:

There has always been a bitter sweetness about Orgonon—hovering just above the joy of the nature it presents.... The sadness comes from a sense of loss—from having lost Reich too prematurely for the world's good.

We were chased by a Cooper Hawk (guarding her nest) through the loop trail—Be Careful—you'll hear her shrieking high pitch voice first warning you—it was exciting though.

Everything you need is here, thanks. I bet Wilhelm Reich would have rigged a better shower curtain though.

AT THE TIME of his death in a state penitentiary, Wilhelm Reich was a household name. Anyone who read the newspapers had heard about the wild-haired foreign doctor. His radical ideas about sex and politics had given way to strange inventions, which were said to cure cancer and change weather patterns. But these inventions also made him a subject of scrutiny for the U.S. government, which at the time, was in the throes of McCarthyism.

After Reich's death, his colleagues wanted to distance themselves from his name. As such, a director for the Reich trust couldn't be found. Enter Mary Higgins, a young woman from New York City who had never met Reich and didn't know a thing about running a foundation. Now, nearly fifty years later, Mary is dutifully carrying out the wishes in Reich's last will and testament—publishing his letters and writings, running the Wilhelm Reich Museum, and doing what she can to keep the place alive.

AS MARY WALKS the muddied paths at Orgonon, her dogs, Ping and Muppet, dart past her. She stays steady, never breaking through the snow or slipping off the narrow way. Mary knows these trails by heart.

In a clearing with a wide view of the western mountains sits Wilhelm Reich's tomb. From the top of a morose concrete block, a bronze bust in his image looks out over the Rangeley lakes. Beside the bust, a strange looking machine made of long steel tubes tied together, like Pan's flute leaning against a pair of buggy wheels, points up at the sky. This is Reich's Cloudbuster; in 1951 it was said to bring rain to the withered blueberry fields of northern Maine, saving the farmers from crisis. This Cloudbuster is long retired, aimed permanently at a place far above the mountain.

ONE SUMMER night in 1941, Wilhelm Reich stood on the shores of Mooselookmeguntic Lake and looked up at the stars, at the space between the stars. In that space, there it was—pulsing and moving and glowing. He had seen it before, this glow, through a microscope when he'd lived in Oslo, then in New York City. But here, on the edge of the lake at the foot of the mountains, the crisp air made this mysterious something sing.

"Have you ever looked just above the horizon on a bright day? Or on a very clear night at the Milky Way?" Mary tries to explain. Her eyes are small and bright. Mary is 78 years old, and though her irises are fogged at the edges, her lucidity defies it, extends itself beyond her physical vision.

"That's where you can see it," she says. "It's very subtle." A flickering of tiny light in the atmosphere, a something people always see, but a something they don't know is there.

AT THE MUSEUM, Mary leads the way up the steps to the entrance. As she keys the padlock on the door, she points out a plaque that reads "Orgone Institute." "This was not a home," she says. "It was a place where work went on." If there's one thing Mary wants the visitors at Orgonon to understand, it's that something serious went on here.

Once, people came in carloads from faraway cities to study with Reich at his institute. Rangeley locals would crane their necks to watch an unusual cast of characters cruise by on their way up the mountain. First, it was the Austrian doctor and a small group of his colleagues then visitors from New York and California. Then, it was men in suits—government agents, asking questions and snooping around in the woods. Now, nearly 50 years later, the town is quiet, Wilhelm Reich is long dead, and the suits have gone.
Above: The Orgone Room, Orgonon.

Right: Wilhelm Reich's museum, Orgonon, in Rangely, Maine.
WILHELM REICH shot onto the psychoanalytic scene in 1920's Vienna. The son of middle class farmers in the easternmost part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he put himself through medical school in Vienna. While a student there, Sigmund Freud began sending patients to him for treatment. It was during these treatments that Reich began to notice a reoccurring theme: when patients had a satisfying sexual experience, their neuroses dissolved. Eventually, their problems would return, but for a time, they would disappear completely.

This phenomenon was so consistent that Reich wanted to know what was happening on a scientific level. So he began measuring the charge along the surface of a body during certain experiences. When someone was experiencing pleasure—a good smell, or pleasant music, for instance—there was an increase in the charge along the body's surface that moved outwards.

Conversely, during times of displeasure or "unpleasure" as Mary says, the charge was weaker and moved inwards. Reich found that greater energy meant a greater sense of well-being in the patient. But he believed this energy was different than electricity—a theory previously accepted by his colleagues. He believed instead, it was the same energy that was released during the human orgasm. He came to call this energy "orgone." And it became the basis for all his further work.

THE FIRST FLOOR of the museum feels like a mountain hotel, with shiny floors and beamed ceilings. Mary points out two boxes at the center of the room; small wooden cubes with thermometers popping out of the top measure the temperature of the air inside. She explains that one of the boxes is a control and the other is an actual "orgone energy accumulator."

In the logbook beside the boxes, visitors to the museum have recorded a consistently higher temperature inside the accumulator. The walls of Reich's accumulator are lined with alternating layers of organic and metallic materials. The way it works, Mary explains, is that the felt-like material absorbs orgone energy while the metallic layer deflects it, creating a concentration of the orgone energy inside and thus a higher temperature. This wasn't just a box, Mary insists, it was a tool—perhaps Reich's most important.

Reich's belief that pleasure had a direct correlation to emotional and mental well-being wasn't too far off the mark from the Austrian school of psychoanalysts, who themselves were turning modern thinking on its head with the idea of the libido and the consequences of its repression. But when Reich began to investigate the phenomenon in the body on another level, explaining the energy as something that wasn't merely electrical, people began scratching their heads. In time, he found himself increasingly more isolated, and eventually, ridiculed. The further he delved into his orgone energy research, the further the scientific community rejected him.

Despite the controversy, Reich continued to work. He founded health clinics in Austria that provided sex education for women and men in ways that didn't cast shame on sex, promoted access to birth control, and supported a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy. It was in these clinics that he developed a new kind of therapy—one far more physical than psychoanalysis. Reich's therapy involved movement, movement that released tension from the body, allowing orgone energy to flow freely.

Even with recorded success, Reich was shunned by his Austrian colleagues. Eventually, he left for Berlin, but with the rise of fascism and his anti-fascist views, he was forced to leave. For a brief time, he found refuge in Norway, where he continued both his therapeutic and scientific work. But with the pressure of an oncoming war, mounting opposition to his theories, and an enthusiastic invitation from a group of physicians in New York, he caught the last ship sailing to America before the war broke out. He settled in Forest Hills, a suburb of New York, and continued his research while teaching classes at The New School for Social Research.

In New York, he began experimenting with cancer mice. By placing mice in the accumulator, he was able to make their cancer go into remission. When he built a human-sized accumulator, he received similar results. Reich wanted to share his discovery, but he feared the ramifications. Having been ridiculed by the European academy, Reich was reluctant to reach out for support. But in 1940, he took a calculated risk and wrote to Albert Einstein.

Dear Professor Einstein,

I would very much like to meet with you to discuss a difficult and urgent scientific matter.... Several years ago I discovered a specific biologically effective energy, which in many ways behaves differently from anything that is known about electromagnetic energy.... The matter is too crucial to expose it to the danger of being destroyed by workings of irrationalism in the scientific community, as so often happens.... It would be...
good and productive in every sense if I could tell you about this matter before asking you to observe the phenomena in my laboratory.

WHEN EINSTEIN met with Reich, they spoke for four hours. Einstein agreed to observe the orgone phenomena. While looking through Reich's Orgonoscope—a tube with a magnifying glass attached to it—he saw a blue, flickering light. Einstein was stumped. He chalked it up to a subjective optical impression. When Reich showed him the temperature difference in the two boxes, Einstein had no explanation for it. His assistant suggested that the difference in temperature could be due to convection currents in the room. Without replicating the experiment under any other conditions, Einstein and his lab assistant were satisfied with this reasoning and put the matter behind them.

Mary's eyebrows arch dramatically as she explains that Reich wrote Einstein a lengthy rebuttal, detailing the consistent results he had when he replicated the experiment in other environments, like when he buried both boxes in the ground, leaving no room for air currents to affect the temperature. Einstein never replied. Mary thinks he may not have even read the letter. "We'll never know," she shrugs.

Between his hectic schedule and experiments in New York City, Reich escaped into the Rangeley Lakes Region for refuge. He resonated with the soft, coniferous mountains and the cool, clean air. The landscape, Mary says, reminded him of some of his favorite places in Europe, and the lack of humidity made the place ideal for collecting and observing orgone. Eventually, he built a laboratory, and later, a modest home. He named his corner of the world Orgonon.

MEANWHILE, Mary Higgins was a young woman in her twenties, living in New York City. On subway rides, like the one from her piano lesson to home, she read a copy of Reich's *Function of the Orgasm*, a book her piano teacher had lent to her. She found it interesting, but not "mind-blowing." She liked Reich's way of thinking; the logic seemed graceful to her. But she had no inkling that one day she would take on a job that put the future of Reich's work in her hands.

In the museum, paintings done by Reich line the walls to the second floor. Mary moves quickly up the steps, shouting back, "Someone gave him a set of paints and he just caught fire!" She marches up, up, past the bright, childlike scenes of mountain landscapes and onto the second floor. It is an open space with soft pink carpeting and large picture windows. Cool blue fills the room, casts winter light onto bookshelves brimming with everything from medical texts to Walt Whitman. When asked if these were Reich's books, Mary responds, "Yes, of course. This is not a phony library!"

It is Reich's study, just as he left it—his lab coat still hangs in a corner, his record player sits ready to play Marion Anderson singing Ave Maria, and on the mantle above the fireplace sit a photograph of Reich's eldest daughter, Eva, and a portrait of Beethoven. In his will, Reich lists the objects in his study, among them, a signed portrait of Freud and a thick, modernist sculpture of a reclining woman by Jo Jenks. He writes, "...all of these things and similar things should remain where they are now in order to preserve some of the atmosphere in which the Discovery of the Life Energy has taken place over the decades."

Mary has taken this to heart. She has stood up in court against Reich's own children to uphold his will. She has stood next to an FDA agent as he threw volumes of Reich's work into a New York City incinerator, making sure he didn't burn more than he was supposed to. At every turn, Mary has considered Reich's will to be the map she should follow. And to the best of her ability, she has.

The problem, Mary says, is a lot of people come to Reich's work thinking it makes a nice philosophy and they don't realize the science of it. He was looking at an energy that was everywhere, that was in the body and in the stars. But he wasn't just philosophizing about it, she insists, he was actually isolating it, measuring its properties, seeing what it could do. "Call me whatever you like," Reich would say, "but look into the microscope."

AS REICH'S WORK broadened, so did the negative attention. A journalist, posing as a Reich enthusiast, visited Orgonon and wrote an article titled, "The Strange Case of Wilhelm Reich." The article made Reich out to be a sex addict and a cult leader. Among other things, the author detailed the use of the orgone accumulator in the treatment of cancer patients. When this came to the attention of the Food and Drug Administration, a lengthy investigation ensued.

The FDA accused Reich of selling snake oil. Reich thought that they were ridiculous. He was not selling anything and he did not claim to have found a cure for cancer. But the FDA pursued Reich with ferocity. Agents and investigators scoured the town of Rangeley; they interrupted his mail and his telegrams. They even had people positioned along the property
Above: Mary Henderson works in her window flower garden, Orgonon.

Right: Mary Byrd Higgins, Director of Orgonon, speaks passionately about Rea's work.
of Orgonon, monitoring the comings and goings of the doctors and patients. Reich and his colleagues felt so threatened, at one point, they began to carry guns.

The people of the town of Rangeley were also frightened and wanted no part of it. If before they had been leery of Reich, now they hated him. Locals jeered at outsiders who came to visit Orgonon. The library refused to shelve any of Reich's books. Even people who liked Reich personally—his barber, the butchers, the owner of the local inn—were afraid to stand behind him.

THE STAIRWAY to the third floor of the museum is narrow and seems to end at the ceiling, blocked off by a piece of styrofoam to keep the heat in during the cold months. Mary pushes the foam panel up and away, then switches on the light. This part of the building was never completed.

Though the same group of designers that built the Hubble telescope drew a plan for Reich, the upper observatory remains a small square shack on the roof, a shack Reich used in his final years for painting.

Reich's paints are left out exactly as they were when he was taken away. On one wall are two self-portraits and a painting of his youngest child, Peter. On the opposite wall, next to windows which look out over Saddleback Mountain, and below a broken wind velocity meter, sits a framed print of Galileo.

Reich was sentenced to prison in 1957 on the grounds that he violated an injunction forbidding him from distributing orgone accumulators across state lines. To his detractors Reich responded, "Man's right to know, to learn, to inquire, to make bona fide errors, to investigate human emotions must, by all means, be safe, if the word FREEDOM should ever be more than an empty political slogan."

In November of that year, a day before a hearing about the length of his prison term, an exhausted Reich died in his cell.

MARY TAKES her lunch in Orgonon's conference center. She's eaten the same lunch every day for as long as she can remember; coffee, yogurt, a cup of Earl Grey tea and a couple of thin ginger biscuits she calls "holey cookies" because they have little holes in them. She puts one up to her eye and squints as she looks through it. Mary's tea mug has a cartoon of a herd of zebras on the side. One of them is painted with rainbow stripes; below the zebras it reads, "Have the courage to be a little bit crazy."

The wood stove behind her radiates warmth, filling the room with the smell of wood smoke. Mary's office assistant, Mary Henderson, dubs audio recordings Reich made in 1952 during his FDA trouble. On one tape, Reich says, in his heavy Austrian accent, that he hopes someone, someday, will listen to this recording with respect. He says that he is alone. That no one, well-intentioned as they might be, can understand his work. That he has no one in the world that he can talk to. Mary Higgins sips and listens.

When Mary first came to Orgonon, the place was abandoned. She had never seen snow so high or stars so bright. Reich's daughter, Eva, loaned her a pair of children's snowshoes and they hiked up to the museum in the moonlight. The place had been broken into, vandalized; every lock had been broken. It felt like a haunted house.

Mary remembers walking through the building with an assessor and seeing a sign that Reich had made which read, "It can be done." She winked at the sign as she passed by. In that same
visit, the assessor looked around at the scattered equipment and abandoned projects. “Death of a dream,” he sighed to himself.

THOSE FIRST years were hard. Mary recounts them with the tone of someone who has been through a war and lived to tell of it. She doesn’t want to get into specifics. She describes her taking on the role of Director as “putting her foot in a wheel that was going downhill.” Even then, the FDA was still snooping around. She kicked them out with stern words, get off the property and never come back. But she’d rather not talk of these things. Times have changed since then, for the better.

At the conference center there’s a framed series of photos. They are photos left after Reich’s death in 1958. The pictures in the frames tell a story: photos of the museum with its windows boarded up sit next to photos of a meadow, where pieces of wood and fiber lay hacked into pieces. After Wilhelm Reich was arrested, the FDA showed up with hatchets, dragged the remaining accumulators into a field, and axed them apart.

At Orgonon, there are also photos of the grounds today. In them, the buildings have been restored and the railings on the observation decks have been freshly painted. The place is full of people—on the decks at the museum, on the paths in the woods, and in the conference center busily building paper mache models of birds and bugs.

In an effort to bring the community of Rangeley to Orgonon, the museum started a nature program. The idea was that providing children the opportunity to observe nature would provide a direct link to some of Reich’s ideas. This program has helped build a bridge to the Rangeley community. Now Orgonon’s conference center hosts everything from Ladies’ Luncheons to PTA meetings.

Over time and with Mary’s effort, people in Rangeley have come to see Orgonon as more of a resource than a liability. The town library has a whole section of its main room devoted to Reich. The Rangeley Chamber of Commerce has pamphlets for the Museum at its information center and even provides a link to the Museum’s website from its own. As one member of the Chamber of Commerce notes, “If they’ve been there, they don’t have anything bad to say about it.” In other words, rumors may still circulate, opinions may still fly, but only on a private level. On a public level, Orgonon is an interesting attraction, accepted by its community.

“You do all sorts of things to bring life to something,” Mary explains, “and sometimes they work, and sometimes they don’t. But you have to just keep on trying.” Mary leans back
Above: Mary Byrd Higgins, Director of Orgonon, shares ideas with Kevin Hinshley, the Assistant Director.

Right: Mary Byrd Higgins at work in her office, Orgonon.
her chair and looks at her older dog, Muppet, who is lying on the floor. “You thought,” Mary says, “something I’ve thought about lately that I had never really thought about before is how, in a scene or story or a play there are a hundred different things going on all at once. And how, as the writer of that play, you have to juggle all of them, and push them forward without really knowing where they are going.” Mary takes a sip of tea. “It’s kind of the same way with running this place.” Muppet sighs, wheezes, and shifts to her side.

Though Mary is busy planning summer events and editing Reich’s journals and letters, every once in a while she gets out to do something, like playing piano for the church. Since her Midwest childhood, Mary has never been a church person. But the regular organ player at the Congregational Church found herself in a bind, knew Mary played the piano, and gave her a call. She likes the social atmosphere at church, and playing there allows her to practice.

ONE SUNDAY morning, the pastor reminds everyone to keep faith. “That only with faith can we lead a fulfilling life. Faith in God’s miracles. Faith in what we don’t understand, what we don’t have answers for.” Back at home, Mary thinks about the church service.

“If you were to ask what is god?..... Is it some form of human being type of thing with a long beard sitting up in the sky?..... If you were to say ..... ‘What if this God, that you are talking about—a patriarchal figure—is not this superhuman expression of what people are and is a form of energy which exists in everything?’

I don’t know what would happen.” Mary takes a sip of her tea.

She thinks church is interesting and sees religion as one way people try to get to the truth of life, just as Reich was doing. But while she understands most people at church believe God has all the answers to things in the world we can’t explain, she also understands Reich believed there was a reasonable explanation for these mysteries.

He asked a lot of the same questions that religion offers answers to, but instead of answers that required faith, he found answers that were based on natural laws, as he understood them. In his experiments, recorded in his journals and on tapes, he observed a common thread—a reoccurring phenomenon contained in energy. A phenomenon which surprised him with its simplicity.

“When it comes to science, you can’t address everything at once, like you do with religion,” Mary says. “You want a nice proper discovery that you can parade around; you don’t want something that’s just going to blow everything away.” This is what Mary believes Reich was trying to do. And also why most people could not accept what he did as science.

Mary says that in order for the world to understand Reich’s work, his experiments would have to be replicated by a group of serious scientists who work within the constructs of Reich’s belief and methodologies. As it’s happened, without Reich around to guide his work, his ideas have been fractioned off into pieces that no longer fit.

Over time, doctors and scientists, philosophers and academics, mystics and conspiracists have all taken what they wanted of Reich’s ideas and run with them, spinning out their own interpretations. Mary thinks this keeps the world from taking it seriously. She believes his work has to be resurrected and put back together, piece by piece. But Mary can’t be the one to do that; she’s not a scientist.

When asked how she can be sure that Reich was really “on to something,” Mary answers, “How do you know Beethoven is Beethoven? How do you know blue is blue? Some things you just know. And if I’m wrong, then fine. I might be wrong..... But I don’t think I am.”

TODAY, Muppet is feeling better. For the last couple of days Mary has been at her side. She set up a bed for her at home, and laid an orgone accumulator blanket on her. Mary thought Muppet was on death’s doorstep, thought it was her time to go, but today she’s eating again, her joints are less stiff and she isn’t breathing so heavily anymore. Today, Muppet shuffles around the living room with ease.

Asked if she thinks it was the orgone accumulator blanket that made Muppet better Mary shrugs. “I don’t know, I just don’t know.” She’ll say the same thing if asked about her eyes turning from brown to blue, or the begonia bulbs that winter in the orgone room and never go dormant. And in the spring, they yield the biggest blossoms.

Mary doesn’t pretend to have the answers. She lives her life curved into the question mark left by Reich’s absence, tending to the spaces he left behind, and each day, making them ready for someone, someday, to take up his work.
Walking After Midnight:

LINDA MAE, HOMELESS AT SEVENTY-ONE
IT IS THE DAY before Thanksgiving, a cool, damp Wednesday night. Classic country and orange light seep onto an empty Portland street. The music and shadows come from Rockin' Rickey's Tavern, a dingy bar full of misfortuned regulars who have earned it the name, "the welfare bar." In a corner booth, Linda Ash holds a bottle of Budweiser in wrinkled hands and gazes across the table at a wild-haired man. He is her "Indian Husband." Somewhere between too drunk and dreaming, his eyes are closed. As Hank Williams' "Hey Hey, Good Lookin'" lopes through the jukebox, they rise and begin to dance a dance only they know.

Since the summer of 2004, when her trailer was condemned because it didn't have running water, Rickey's has been Linda's home. Now, Linda sleeps beneath a bridge, and each morning, heads to Rickey's where she keeps bags stashed in corners behind the bar or near the jukebox. They are bags filled with blankets and pillows, family photos, groceries and her "nice black heels." It's after rifling through her bags and memories that Linda spends her days on Portland's streets.

She walks to the Preble Street Resource Center to check on the status of her low-income housing application, to the soup kitchen for food, and to the homeless health clinic, where she gets haircuts from a nurse who also gives her clean socks, underwear and a nebulizer treatment for her asthma. And while the streets provide Linda with some practical necessities, it is Rickey's that provide her with a resting place, a familiar place, a home.

Sitting on Rickey's back porch, Linda lights a cigarette and mutters, "I'm someone worth knowing," then adds, "I used to be." Linda tells stories about singing with Conway Twitty in the Catskills, dancing with a burlesque dance company on The Ed Sullivan Show, days spent "road-dogging" with another of Rickey's regulars she calls "Fast Eddie-O," and writing the song, "I've Lived My Life," for Dolly Parton.

Linda Mac Ash in a booth at Rickey's with her "Indian Husband."  
Phillip Giles King, the night before Thanksgiving.
By the age of seventeen, Linda says, she was married and pregnant, and by 23, she had seven children. She drove a truck to support them. Dancing on the sticky bar floor of Rickey's, she remembers touring the States under the stage name, "Linda Mae," singing country tunes. Her theme song was Patsy Cline's, "Walking After Midnight."

It is one in the morning—closing time. The jukebox stops and the fluorescent lights turn the evening's orange glow to cool white. The bar won't open until the day after Thanksgiving, so Linda picks up two bags, full of blankets and clothes, to get her through the next few nights. Outside, she pulls a chair from the shopping cart she'd parked near the back door, sits down and lights a cigarette.

The night is misty, the ground wet. Linda hopes to get low-income housing in Portland by the New Year. "When I have my own place," she says, "I'll come out when I feel like it, not when I have to. Fast Eddie-O will come... we'll do music again." A smile spreads across her face. "I wish I could be layin' in my bed, listening to my music and holding the cat, saying, 'To hell with the world.'"
Above: Linda Mae Ash with her belongings.

Left: Linda Mae Ash standing in front of Rockin' Rickey's Tavern on November 1, 2004—her 71st birthday.

Below: Linda Mae Ash doing yard work on Portland Street.
Linda Mae Ash gets a haircut from Kelly McCarthy, a nurse, in a bathroom stall at the homeless health clinic in Portland.

Linda Mae Ash having dinner at the Wayside Soup Kitchen in Portland.
Linda Mae Ash tries to call her lawyer from the phone at the Preble Street Resource Center.

Linda Mae Ash dances to the jukebox with Ronald Spiller Sr. at Rockin' Rickey's Tavern.
EVEN AT THIS DISTANCE: A SEASON IN THE LIFE OF A MAINE BOWHUNTER

By Caitlin Van Dusen
Photography by Kate Lisbin Rubenstein

BENEATH LAYERS of face paint, Sam Cook’s bright blue eyes gleam. Scanning the shadows fifteen feet below for the flicker of white tail he thought he’d glimpsed just moments ago, he raises his bow. Pulling the string back to full draw, his forehead crumples and his lips curl under the sixty-five-pound weight. His shoulders quaking, his knuckles white from the pressure of the string, he holds his breath, and points his arrow into the dark. At this moment, like the sky before snowfall or the space between a shared secret, the forest is held in abeyance.

Sam Cook bowhunting from a tree stand, Baxton, Maine.
But once again, it’s nothing. “Sometimes the shadows start looking like deer, this time of night,” Sam sighs and lowers himself onto the tree stand built into the branches of a pine behind his childhood home in Buxton, Maine. Flipping up the tops of his mittens to keep his fingers limber against the pre-dawn chill, he settles in to wait. Coarse red hair curls out from beneath his baseball cap. He smells of sweat, bug repellent, and doe-urine buck lure. His stomach grumbles. A dog barks. Sam does not move.

As the sun begins to limn the horizon, the leaves, perforated into lace by insect blight, are cast like webs against the sky. This autumn, Sam says, his goal is “to shoot the biggest deer shot in Maine, antler-wise, with a bow.” He hasn’t had a good chance yet, but it’s still early and he’s seen some promising signs.

“AS IF I had been there, maybe even passed by when I was very young...” Sam’s story scrabbles across pages torn from his bowhunting journal, which he’s kept since first discovering his passion for the sport eight years ago, when he was twenty. The cover is the tawny color of a deer’s coat. Across its spine in black Sharpie, Sam has inscribed: MY THOUGHTS!

The pages are filled with drawings of bows and quivers, antlers, maps of hunting sites traced with lines marking deer trails and feeding spots. On one page, entitled “Brain Storm,” Sam jotted down a few key words in an attempt, he says, to figure out his life direction: Money hunting women gym family drinking partying wrestling deer antlers fights food pain regrets camp disappointments dreams. He’s also been using the journal to record the story of one of his first hunts. He was about nine years old and is still not certain if his recollections on that November morning really happened or are memories of a dream.

FOR YEARS the dreams and visions of a broken down shack in the back of an old field near my parent’s house were a mystery. I decided one year to make the journey.

CLASPING A Bud Lite, Sam wanders over to the Big Buck Hunter II video game, glowing from the corner of The Stadium Sports Bar, in downtown Portland. Big-screen TVs hum while waitresses slither between the tables, bearing platters of nachos and chicken wings. In carpenter jeans, a flannel shirt, and trail runners, Sam is compact and tightly strung, with pale skin that easily flushes. His eyes are alert yet guarded, as if he’s perpetually waiting to be surprised.

Sam’s hard to track down; he doesn’t own a phone and sleeps most nights in his truck. And he likes it this way—for now. Friends and family puzzle over his lifestyle of solitary forest vigils and crowded parties, over his determination to harvest a buck with a bow and arrow and win Monday night Texas Hold ‘Em games. By way of explanation, Sam sometimes cites a photograph of himself, taken when he was a kid. “It’s me in the back room at my parents’ house, and the light’s coming in one of those big bay windows and it’s, like, dividing my face,” he says. “There’s the quiet, independent, isolated Sam that does a lot of the hunting and stuff, and then there’s the social Sam that likes to do everything else.”

An eight-pointer—a buck with eight antler tines—saunters onto the video screen and munches on some pixilated bushes. “Have to wait for an ethical shot,” Sam mumbles, bolstering the plastic gun against his shoulder. An ethical shot kills an animal as quickly and painlessly as possible. For a deer, this means shooting them in their vital organs. For now, a fence blocks the big buck’s vitals.

To make money to pursue his bowhunting and have a social life, Sam does odd jobs: painting, carpentry, and some light moving. But he makes sure his clients understand that during hunting season, which runs from mid-September through mid-December in southern Maine, he sets his own schedule. Before dropping out of college, Sam completed less than a year. But he has plans. One day, he says, he’d like to start a business that would allow him to share his knowledge of bowhunting and the world of whitetail deer with others.

The buck clears the fence and Sam shoots. The screen goes black, then reemerges—a dead buck splays across the center, its head cocked back, its legs limp. Sam sets the gun down and reaches for his beer, fizzing behind him on a coaster.

“With a gun you just put in a bullet and pull a trigger. With a bow you have to think about things, you know?” He likes to bowhunt because the discipline challenges him and gives him a sense of focus. Usually, a bowhunter has to get within thirty yards of a deer to harvest it; at this distance, hunter and deer are even, and the intimacy of the range allows the hunter to meet the deer, more or less, on its own terms.
As Sam sees it, deer don't have a fair advantage against firearms. They have extraordinary senses, yet a rifle hunter can drop one from three hundred yards away. To be a successful bowhunter, he insists, you have to practice. And you have to become part of the forest, to remain silent and motionless for hours at a stretch, eliminating all human scent and visibility. But mostly, you have to love the waiting, the anticipation.

“Hey, Sammy!” One of his bowhunting friends lumbers over and claps Sam on the shoulder with a meaty hand. “Bagged any bucks yet?”

“Haven’t seen you at the gym lately,” Sam quips. “But guess what? I saw this wild turkey off the side of the road this morning. Had to swerve into traffic to avoid hitting it.”

“Yeah, I saw one of those the other day, too,” his friend says, “tried to hit it with my tires, but it got away.” Sam looks down, takes a swig of beer. It’s stories like this, he knows, that threaten the future of his sport and earn hunters their reputation as ruthless killers. From the corner of the bar, the Big Buck gazes out from the screen, waiting amid the pulsing lights and neon greens, for the next hunt to begin.

I WENT ACROSS the big field and there it was. This small, broken down shack seemed to be in the middle of a whitetail deer’s paradise. So I decided to hunt from it one hunting season.

“SAM WAS the kid who, if you were lost in the woods, you’d want to be lost with Sam,” his mother says. While his brothers played video games, Sam was out catching frogs, climbing trees, or stalking field mice behind the
barn. When he was twelve, Sam's father built him his first tree stand. It sat in an old fir tree within view of their kitchen window, so his mother could keep an eye on him. On Christmas mornings, while Sam's brothers pulled action figures from their stockings, Sam pulled out bottles of Tink's Trophy Buck Lure. When he was sixteen, he received a meat smoker as a gift. And, when he and his brothers went sledding down the hill behind his family's farmhouse, just beyond the end of a dead-end road, "I always ended up in the woods," Sam recalls wistfully.

Both of Sam's grandmothers came from hunting families and tried to instill in their grandchildren a love of the outdoors. For many years, Sam gave his maternal grandmother, Ginger, a Christmas ornament crafted from the foot of a rabbit he'd shot. One of his prize photos is a dignified shot of his father's mother, Alice, standing beside Sam's truck, grasping the antlers of his biggest trophy buck: an eleven-pointer, 207 pounds. "Growing up," Sam says, "we always had books on birds, leaves, insects just the simple stuff that kids that live in a state like this should know. They don't."

In his early teens, Sam began to accompany his father on trips to a hunting lodge in Patten, Maine. The lodge owner was a bowhunter and Sam became intrigued by his bow, with all its gadgets and wheels and strings. Though he'd grown up with junior bows, Sam was inspired to buy a serious split-limb compound bow. Favored by most bowhunters because it takes off some of the draw weight, it also locks the string in a more comfortable position at full draw. And, its aim is true.

Sam's father loved sharing his knowledge of the outdoors with his capricious middle son. He taught him about how deer bed near white oaks and apple trees, the difference between doe and buck droppings, how to gauge the size of a deer by its tracks and the size of its rack by the worn spots on tree bark where they rub the velvet off their antlers. But when he was sixteen, Sam decided not to hunt with his father anymore. "We started locking antlers, I guess," he explains with a wry smile. "I wanted to do everything on my own, so that's when it kind of fueled the fire to learn as much as I could about deer and deer habits and the woods."

Sometimes, Sam walks into the forest, brushes the leaves from a patch of dirt and kneels before it. He rubs his hands in the earth, then lifts them to his face, smears the dirt across his cheekbones and around the back of his neck. He's been known to tumble dry his clothes with apple peelings, pick up pieces of bark and leaves and put them in his mouth "just to try to touch nature, you know?"

I AWOKE by 3 am. With the Nov. frost already here I made my way to the shack. I settled in. Stay warm and wait for the sun to come up. It would be trying, But with the hopes of a great deer, it made it worth it.

SAM STRETCHES his feet toward the woodstove purring from the cabin corner. This weekend will be spent at the Cook family hunting camp, on the shore of Moosehead Lake. The cabin smells of propane gas, wood smoke, and the mineral-mossy richness of lake water. Its windows reflect back the room: rafters crowded with fishing poles and snowshoes, walls lined with photos mottled by damp air, bookshelves stacked with camp logs recounting tales of bear baiting, empty Bud Lite cans, and baked beans.

This weekend at camp, Sam knows, he'll be lucky just to catch a glimpse of his trophy buck, much less get a shot at him. But still, at dinner, he pushed aside the box of garlic Triscuits, knowing even a tinge of garlic on tomorrow's hunt might alert the wary north Maine bucks.

In the Portland suburbs, where Sam typically hunts, deer are more acclimated to human sound and scent: they wander into backyards, onto highways. To keep the population under control, hunters in southern Maine are allowed to harvest unlimited does, in addition to one buck. But Sam is well aware that his chances of a bow kill are slim no matter where he hunts in Maine. In 2003, only six percent of bowhunters, averaged across the state, were able to harvest a deer.

THERE IS no pain, you are receding. A distant ship's smoke on the horizon..."Comfortably Numb" fizzles from the truck's radio, then dissolves into static. This morning, Sam arose at four to stoke the woodstove and pack the truck for the hunt grabbing handfuls of juice boxes and plenty of wool hats to stave off the cold. The pre-dawn air thrums through the open window. Gravel pelts the chassis as the truck lurches over ruts in the logging road, sending the bright beams dancing across the forest and revealing glimpses of evergreen trunks, rising silvered in the sudden light.

The Dodge pickup is Sam's home this hunting season, furnished with a blue Rubbermaid storage bin containing...
Sam Cook painting a house for extra money.

Sam Cook coming out of Moosehead Lake in northern Maine.

Sam Cook hangs out at the Portland Rugby team's Halloween party.
Sam Cook applies camouflage to his face before a hunt.

Sam Cook scouts the woods on Cousin’s Island.
his few possessions: paint-spattered shorts for odd jobs, his camouflage clothes, face paint, "autumn forest" human scent killer, and a few single-serve packs of Jell-O chocolate pudding for meals on the run. To assert his independence from his family, Sam hasn't slept inside his childhood home for years. But from time to time, he'll stop in to take a shower, make phone calls, or grab a slice of his mother's pie.

Most nights, Sam sleeps stretched out across the front seat of the truck, under a down comforter that leaks feathers. "Yeah, it's cold," he admits. "But if you don't put yourself in the woods or hunting a certain amount of hours, you're not going to see that trophy buck." If he's not meeting friends in the evening, Sam uses the leather chairs in Borders Books in the Maine Mall as his living room, spending his evening pouring over copies of Bowhunt America magazine.

"You are only coming in through waves... the song resurfaces. Sam swerves the truck around a pothole, sending puddle water over the hubcaps and into the bush.

When he was a little boy, Sam recalls, he would go out in the dark and lie in the deep swale grass behind his house, shivering with the cold and the thrill of the deer he sensed around him. He says he's given some thought to what it would be like to be a whitetail living in the Maine woods—and how their lives are fundamentally different from his. "Like not putting on sneakers and walking through places you wouldn't normally walk, but you're a deer, and you can, having this huge headdress of antlers and getting through the wires of bushes. It should help you become a better person if you can try to put yourself in a deer's—hooves." He smiles, "Like, I'd never take for granted shooting a deer, or wounding one and not putting all I could into finding it. It's still hard for me, even with a bow, to shoot a doe." His voice drifts, then returns.

"When you're standing over a deer and it's—you know, it's dying and you see the last little bit of life coming out of it." He pauses. "You definitely—I wouldn't say spiritual, but it can definitely move ya."

SAM SWINGS the truck onto the shoulder of a logging road, jams his foot down on the accelerator to hurtle over a bump, and sends a shower of yellow alder leaves fluttering onto the windshield.

"I don't have a girlfriend; I don't have all these bills; I don't have a child that I have to support. I'm just as happy getting up in my truck and opening the door and planting my feet right on the ground and going into the woods," he insists.

Six months ago, however, Sam had all three. He was living in an apartment with his then-girlfriend, Jenn, and her young son, Austin. Sam loved Austin; he used to take him on nature walks, just as Sam's father had with him. "She might have thought I was trying to turn him into a hunter, which I wasn't. I was trying just to teach him something I knew."

Sam runs a finger along his sideburn, regretting that he lost Jenn, Austin, and the intimacy of a settled life. He says maybe things didn't work out because his heart was in the treetops when it should have been twenty feet below with Jenn, who thought he should set his sights on a career rather than on a deer's vitals. "I thought about the next time I get into a serious relationship and it's during hunting season, how I can make it," he sighs, "a better, more sustainable relationship. As I grow as a hunter, I can grow as a person, and tie them into the whole thing."

Recently, Sam dreamt Austin had asked him to walk in the woods. The next thing Sam knew, Austin was lost. Sam searched everywhere, trying to track him as if he were a deer. "I was worried that he wouldn't be able to find his way home," Sam says, "because I'm not in his life anymore to teach him."

Lately, Sam's begun to realize that the stakes are getting higher—that by continuing to pursue this monster buck, he's letting a more normal life pass him by. After all, it would be hard to take a girl home to his truck, serve her a dinner of Jell-O pudding and sleep with her stretched across the front seat. He jokes about installing a hot tub in the flatbed—but then his eyes grow sad, and he looks away.

SONGS FADE from the radio as the truck turns onto an even smaller logging road and overhanging branches rasp against the roof. Sam pulls the car onto the shoulder and clambered out, closing the door softly. The outside air is cool and sweet.

Standing by the side of the truck, he pulls on his Scent-Lok jacket and pants, spritzes them with scent-killer, then smears camouflage paint over his face and the pale backs of his hands. Grabbing his bow, a handsaw, and the faded red milk crate he uses as a hunting stool, he tucks two rattling antlers into the elastic of his fanny pack and
sets out into the forest, careful to pick up his feet as he walks across dry leaves. Deer can see only dark and light, but their senses of smell and hearing are far more acute than any human's.

About a quarter mile in from the road, Sam spots a patch of flattened grass where he imagines deer might have bedded for the evening. Nearby, a copse of berry bushes might coax them back to feed before sunrise. He knows the dark hours—when deer feel safest—are when they are most likely to come out of hiding. At the edge of the clearing, Sam spots a pine tree—its branches hang low and there's a clear space around its trunk: a perfect natural blind. He saws off a few branches from nearby trees, then props them against the blind and fills in the gaps with fistfuls of leaves.

Generally, Sam prefers to be above ground, out of the deer's sensory range. At home, he usually climbs up to a plywood platform blind or hunts from a portable tree stand, which he straps to the tree and, with the help of claws attached to the seat, he shimmies up the trunk. But there's no time for that this morning. Already the meadow is husky with early light. He walks out into the clearing and bends to light a doe-scent incense stick. Pearly smoke rises into the dawn, its rank aroma mingling with the redolence of pine needles. He exhales into the frosty air to check the direction of the wind, then ducks beneath the pine swag and takes his seat on the milk crate.

Once in place, he doesn't move. He stifles his coughs, his itches, his leg cramps. He peers through the web of branches for the glint of an eye, listens for the snap of a branch, as the forest awakens around him with quiet rustlings, and the first few twitters of birds. Every so often he blows into a grunt tube which simulates deer sounds—a doe bleat, a fawn in distress—or clatters together his pair of shed deer antlers to lure in bucks with the false promise of a good fight. At any moment, his trophy buck could wander into the clearing and quarter toward him. When he does, Sam will shoot for its vitals.

THERE HE was—beautiful 10 pter. strolling down a deer run not a care in the world. I would imagine the thought of a doe in estrus on his mind, maybe a morning sparring match with a subordinate buck who really knows. I swear I could see his breath ever so distinctly, even at this distance. It was to be now or never. At the sound of that shot he had disappeared. Gone. Scoping the area I couldn't see where he might of gone, nervousness and that sick feeling were setting in, the thought of a miss or even worse wounding and not being able to find that beautiful deer.

SAM'S TRUCK creeps up the driveway of his parents' house, headlights slicing across the forest. It's the middle of November, only a few days before the end of bowhunting season, and Sam has been feeling the pressure to produce. So, he decided to take matters into his own hands. Deciding to target a monster buck on family land, he began sleeping at his parents' home rather than in his truck. He admits it's actually been "kind of cool" to be back home for the hunt. "I got to retrace my footsteps as a little kid," he says, glancing toward the glowing window of the farmhouse, where his father is watching TV. The acres of woodland beyond are as familiar to Sam as his own reflection.

Leaving the motor running, Sam hops out and struts forward, gesturing toward the truck bed. His fingernails are rimmed with caked blood. A six-pointer—not a monster buck, but decent—lies splayed out, its stomach slit and gutted. Sam flips down the back gate and the deer's head flops over it; the body has not yet stiffened. Grinning, Sam raises his eyebrows and lifts his baseball cap as he gazes down at the deer. But beneath the shadow of his cap brim, his eyes hold something back. He shifts his weight from one foot to the other. Steam unfurls from the buck's still-warm stomach cavity, frosting the night air.

Beside the buck lies Sam's bow, its quiver still full of arrows.

Sam's mother's car lurches up the driveway, its headlights casting yellow beams across truck bed, the deer, then landing still on a bloody bullet hole. A hole in the middle of the deer's heart.

As his mother walks toward him pulling a cardigan tight around her, Sam yanks the buck over the edge of the barn doorstep. Sherri Cook has Sam's hardened, wary blue eyes belied by a surprisingly gentle voice.

"Um, Sam?"
"Yeah," Sam huffs, tugging.

"Aren't you going to want to hang it tonight? I mean, won't the blood settle?"

Sam stops. "Mom." He looks down at her from the barn doorway. "When was the last time you hung a deer?"
Sam Cook clears branches during a hunt in order to get a more ethical shot, Buxton, Maine.
“You’re right, you’re right. What do I know about deer?” Sherri throws up her arms, steps back.

Sam lugs the buck over the threshold into the barn. There’s no electricity, so he clamps a headlamp between his teeth. Straddling the deer, Sam flops it onto its back. The body has started to stiffen. Sam strains, grunting, to pry the legs apart and wedge a stick across the stomach cavity, which will allow the meat to cool overnight. Sam finally pins the legs down and, jaw clenched in concentration, wipes a hand across his forehead, leaving behind a streak of blood. Finally, he manages to wrench the stick into place, a bloody rafter stretched across a cathedral of arched ribs.

Gripping the handle of a rusty handsaw, Sam hacks into the breastplate. The dull teeth rip through fur, then hit bone. Hair shears off in tufts; bone dust hovers in the lamp beam. As each rib cracks, the chest splits further open. Finally, Sam crouches down beside the body. His shoulders sag as he fingers the matted fur around the bullet wound. Above him, the rafters of the cavernous barn seem to hover, waiting. “Well, now I can focus on bowhunting again,” Sam finally says with a swallow, hoisting himself to his feet and running his hands down the thigh of his jean, leaving twin smears of blood. “But it’s weird; there’s no exit hole,” he says. “The bullet must be lost somewhere inside.”

WOW STOPPED him right in his tracks lying on the deer path he lied. Overflowing with Adrenalin and that natural instinct. I made shore he was down for good after counting points and admiring this trophy for a while in awe of such beauty and the magnificence of such a creature. Now it was time to figure out how i was going to get him home.

LAST NIGHT a hunter’s moon hung full above the forests of southern Maine, tarnished to a copper penny by a lunar eclipse, which Sam thinks might be auspicious. As he climbs the oak ridge behind his parents’ house, his hiking boots crunch over beech leaves, their tight scrolls stippled with frost. The cold air, musky with pine needles, sears his nostrils, bringing tears to his eyes. He comes to a stop before the shack.

Shrouded by overgrown raspberry bushes, its warped plywood walls are knocked together with rusty nails, and the roof, collapsed, cants in toward the floor. Sam saunters over and rests a hand against a splintered wall furred by patches of lichen. Since Sam was here last, a young alder tree has grown up inside, reaching through the roof toward the pine trees that spire overhead.

Sam peers into one of the windows. “Looks like the deer have been bedding up here.” He sounds relieved. On the ground is a scattering of deer droppings. Beside it, a Gatorade bottle and a few shards of glass lie buried in drifts of leaves. Sam ducks into the shack and stands by the window, his face half in the shadow of the fallen roof. He says he’s always assumed the oak ridge was once farm fields, and that the shack was used by a family as a shelter for animals. “Or,” he muses, “maybe they had a hermit son who liked to be in the woods as much as me.”

He rests a hand on the windowsill and gazes out. Sometimes it seems as if his memory of killing the ten-point buck from this shack on that frosty November morning was only a dream. A breeze picks up, shaking pinecones onto the fallen shack in a sudden rain. Sam looks up, smiles. Even at this distance, he can see the roof of his childhood home and the forest waiting beyond. Even at this distance, it all seems one and the same.
Sam Cook holds the buck he harvested with his rifle, Buxton, Maine.
John Affleck worked as an organic farmer on both the east and west coasts and as a teacher-naturalist at an Audubon center in Lincoln, Massachusetts before coming to Salt. He is currently a freelance writer in Portland and returns regularly to Roland and Carol’s homestead in Union for dinner and a story.

Owen Agnew first discovered his love of radio at community station KBOO in Portland, Oregon. After a semester at Salt in Fall of 2004, he enjoyed the Maine winter and then headed to New York for a summer internship with public radio program, Studio 360. He still hasn’t left New York.

Bente Birkeland worked at the Department of Justice and volunteered at Pacifica Radio in Washington, D.C. for the show PeaceWatch. She won the Best New Artist award from the Third Coast International Audio Festival for her first radio documentary, Hard to Say, which aired on The Next Big Thing. She is currently a graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Elizabeth M. Claffey is originally from Chicago but is currently following photography wherever it will take her. She is pursuing a freelance career and looking forward to eventually going back to graduate school. You can view more of her work at www.elizabethclaffey.com.

Upon leaving Salt, Kiersten Hanna returned to Chicago to resume her studies at Columbia College and graduated with honors, receiving a BFA in photography. She interned with the Museum of Contemporary Photography for a year and was then hired there as an assistant to the permanent collections, dealing mostly with acquisitions and loans. Kiersten has been awarded the Weisman Foundation Grant for emerging artists and continues to work on her “Detroit Project,” an attempt to address the discrepancy between the visual reality of Detroit and the nostalgic idea of car culture found in the hearts of those who live there. She now lives in Vermont.

Katie (KT) Hayes lives in Austin, TX where she just accepted a teaching position at Lake Travis High School. She currently photographs weddings and freelances for the Round Rock Leader, a small newspaper north of Austin.

Chris Joob came to Salt after graduating from the University of Michigan. He lives in Chicago, Illinois where he is pursuing a career as a freelance writer. Chris is currently working on a project about his experiences at a Neil Diamond concert.

After Salt, Emilie Kapp moved to France for eight months to study French, theater, political science, and photography. She spent several months doing documentary thesis research on the wine crisis in France.

Rena Kaneko came to Salt after graduating from Warren Wilson College in 2004. After the program, she returned home, to Japan. She works as an instructor at an English conversation school in Tokyo.

Four years ago, Chris Kendig moved back to Philadelphia to start his own wedding photography business. He combines the documentary skills he honed at Salt with the artistic disciplines he practiced while attending the Tyler School of Art, creating images where content and aesthetics are seamlessly integrated. He freelances for various publications, and he hopes to break into the outdoor adventure photography scene. He also plans to create a documentary on squatters in Philadelphia. Chris’ wedding photography website can be seen at www.chriskendigphotography.com. Other work can be seen at www.chriskendig.com.

Matt Largey is currently a field producer at WBUR, the NPR member station in Boston. His work has been heard on Here and Now, Weekend America, and Maine Public Radio. Matt is also a member of Radio Pie, an audio collective that originated at Salt in Fall 2004. Check them out on the web at www.radiopie.org.

In the fall, Allison Lucas attended (and fell madly in love with) the Eddie Adams workshop in New York. She is currently working with Radio Pie on a project concerning
Hurricane Katrina. Allison still maintains strong relationships with her Salt subjects, who changed her life by inviting her into theirs.

Andrea Maio is based in Northern Michigan and works as a freelance filmmaker and radio producer. Her work with the Wilhelm Reich Museum has evolved into a full-length documentary film project. Her current film, *Burn This Boat*, will be traveling the film festival circuit in 2006.

Anne Phillips is a Morehead Scholar at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. After her Salt semester, she interned for the Refugee and Migration Affairs office at the United States Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Anne is a politically moderate North Carolina native.

Whit Richardson lives on Portland’s West End and works as a full-time staff writer for the *Current* newspaper. Since graduating he has also interned at Maine Public Radio where he produced a few radio pieces (including one about Anna Cyr and her family) that have aired nationally on public radio stations.

Kate Lisbin Rubenstein graduated from Antioch College with a degree in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Studies, with a focus in photography. She plans on moving to NYC to work on youth media literacy.

Since attending Salt in Fall 2004, Shea Shackelford has been working as a freelance audio producer, based in Washington, D.C. Shea co-founded Big Shed, an Internet based podcast to showcase independently produced audio documentaries. He is also a member of Radio Pie.

Before coming to Salt, Caitlin Van Dusen was senior editor of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* and a freelance writer and editor for City Lore, a cultural heritage organization in New York City. She developed an interest in bowhunting by taking weekend archery lessons in a suburban garage in Queens. Recently, she and her husband moved to San Francisco, where she is a copyeditor at the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and works at the pirate supply store at 826 Valencia, a nonprofit writing center for children.

Talia Weiner graduated from Swarthmore College with a BA in English and Psychology. She has studied photography at Swarthmore, University of Pennsylvania, the International Center of Photography, and Salt. Talia is especially interested in the intersection of personal narrative, sociology, and documentary photography. She lives in Brooklyn, New York and is currently pursuing graduate studies in photojournalism.

Stephanie Weinstein came to Salt after graduating from the University of Alabama with a degree in Anthropology and Photography. Currently she lives in Augusta, GA and works in her family business. She is helping to build a small photography program at a local community college.

Jennifer Whitney graduated from the University of Colorado in 2001 with a BFA in photography and a BA in American Studies. She has since been wandering the globe pursuing her passion for photography. She hopes that in nurturing her love for music, monster trucks, the ocean, yoga, good skirts, and green vegetables, she will discover the way to turn her passion into a living. She recently relocated to San Francisco, CA.

Ross Wick attended the Salt Institute in the fall of 2004. At that time, he could occasionally be found - camera in hand - on the rugby field as well as documenting other interesting outdoor adventures and venues. Like many of our elusive alumni, his current whereabouts are unknown.

Allison Wightman is currently employed by Diane vonFurstenberg, where she is the store operations manager. She resides in NYC.
BEYOND SALT

Kate Philbrick, photography instructor at Salt, has a show of her recent work at the Front Room Gallery in South Portland. Besides preparing for this show, which features her own family, Kate has kept busy with freelancing. "I was hired locally to shoot a behind the scenes look at what it is like to work in an international marketing and advertising firm." She also has been working on a project documenting the Elmet Technologies plant in Lewiston, Maine and has served as photo editor for this magazine.

Rob Rosenthal heads the Salt radio program and has recently finished a series of short commentaries regarding Maine's working waterfronts for Coastal Enterprises, Inc. His "big gig" though is an 80-minute audio tour of the Kennebec Chaudiere Heritage Corridor. He's also working on a 60-minute program that features essays written for a Wilderness Society book. Rob does grant writing for the Blunt Youth Radio Project, teaches radio production at the University of Southern Maine, and helps with a series produced by the Maine Folklife Center. This fall, Rob is presenting at the Third Coast International Audio Festival and the annual meeting of the National Oral History Association.

Writing instructor Polly Bennell has been busy with the business end of her documentary film, "Helen Nearing: Conscious Living/Conscious Dying," as well as polishing up the final draft of "Rose of Mantoulin," a screenplay about itinerant pre-depression era performers. She's also beginning research for a non-fiction book (subject is top secret) that is sure to be a best-seller.

Wheaton College sociology professor John Grady teaches "Approaches to Documentary Studies" at Salt and has presented a paper which assesses the contribution that the Salt approach to documentary studies could make to the social sciences. The presentation was at the annual conference of the International Visual Sociology Association in Dublin last August.

Neal Menschel, Director of Photography at Salt, and his daughter Molly, Salt radio alumna, have spent the last few summers rattling around West Virginia working on a book project entitled, "The Back Porch Music Project." The project has taken them into the lives of loggers, churches of all types, coon hunting, coal mines, music halls, kitchens, and, yes, onto back porches.

The project's focus has been on eight different families and the way they represent the character of the land in their work, music, and religion.

The work is drawing to a close. Neal will return to West Virginia this summer and begin the process of publishing a book, which will include between 80 and 100 photos, an introduction, interviews, and observations, along with a CD of music and stories.

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"What I found at Salt, what I couldn’t have known on that first anxious day, was that I was amongst friends and colleagues. My peers, who were also my teachers, pushed me to go deeper into my truest work, to write closer to the heart, as scary and difficult as that was. But it wasn’t just that I was challenged to do more, to work harder. Through the entire process of interviews, transcription, field research, and endless drafting and re-drafting, I was also regarded with deep respect and confidence. It was my classmates’ belief that we, and I, could do this work justice, tell these stories truthfully, that enabled my success at Salt. Their support and encouragement was and is invaluable, and it’s what makes Salt so unique."

Salt Alumna, Jacqueline S. Shine, spring 2004

Semester Programs in Writing, Radio, & Photography
David Isay, Executive Director of Sound Portraits Productions and founder of StoryCorps in NYC, describes Salt as "...The epicenter of documentary studies in the US. It is the place that is spitting out documentarians and spreading the Salt aesthetic. Salt is an American treasure."

Bricks & Mortar
Salt is located in a beautiful 4 story building in Portland’s Arts District. The gallery space is often referred to as one of the most beautiful in Southern Maine. Student work is stored in an onsite archive, home to more than 750,000 negatives, over 6,500 hours of recorded interviews and more than 7,000 photographic prints—all gathered by students over the past 30 years.

Scholarship Funds
Help create opportunities for students to come to Salt and experience a program unlike any other in the country.

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