The U of R Graduate
who was almost
Prime Minister
of Australia
Luther College student Jeremy Buzash was among the competitors at the Regina Musical Club's recital competition on May 10 in the Luther College Chapel. The competition included performances on piano, violin, flute, percussion and vocals. Up for grabs was a $1,000 scholarship. The winner was soprano Mary Joy Nelson BMus'01. Nelson graduated summa cum laude in 2006 from the vocal performance program at the University of Kentucky where she is completing a doctoral degree in voice. Photo by Trevor Hopkin, AV Services.
Although you’ll find “The University of Regina Magazine” on our front cover, that moniker is not entirely accurate. That’s because in the truest sense Degrees is your magazine. Of course we enjoy bringing you the stories of the terrific people who have an association with the University of Regina, but we can’t do it in isolation—we depend on your input. We were thrilled with the number of letters and emails we received in response to the Fall 2007 issue of Degrees. It’s so gratifying when the stories we pursue strike a chord with our readers. Please, keep those emails and letters coming. Tell us what we are doing right and let us know those emails and letters our readers. Please, keep

enjoy bringing you the stories

story ideas or just drop us a

improvements. Send us your

pursue strike a chord with

gratifying when the stories we

of the terrific people who

your magazine. Of course we

Editor

Greg Campbell

I read with interest your tribute to Professor Duncan Blewett in the Fall 2007 issue of Degrees. I thought that I should balance the emphasis on psychoactive drug research in the article with a story about one of Professor Blewett’s other interests. In the winter of 1984, I took a graduate reading course in consciousness with Professor Blewett. He had read Gary Zukov’s book The Dancing We Li Masters and wanted to talk about the interface of quantum mechanics and consciousness. Every week he asked me to explain to him basic ideas in quantum mechanics and its relationship to consciousness.

Then, after a while, we would break off that line of discussion and we would talk in a far ranging manner about the nature of consciousness. I ended up writing my term paper about quantum mechanics and human consciousness and it ended up getting published in Physics in Canada. It was my first academic publication!

Since then I have gone on to write numerous articles and four academic books. And for the past 20 years I have been teaching consciousness at King’s University College, courses that have always been popular with students. But it is only recently that I have returned to the substance of those discussions with Professor Blewett and have gone back to looking at the quantum mechanics and consciousness interface. This is a rich area of investigation that is gaining in prominence, but whose importance was appreciated by Professor Blewett already back when I was still a doctoral student at the University of Regina.

Sincerely,

Imants Baruss PhD’89
Professor

I was interested to read the fall 2007 article by Marie Powell Mendenhall on the legacy of Duncan Blewett. I was one of a few hundred students in his Psychology 100 class in about 1969. I don’t remember what he looked like or how he dressed but I vividly recall his charisma and powerful stage presence.

At the start of each class he would ask for estimates of our group psychic energy level and then decide whether he needed to raise it or not. If it was too low, he would increase it by standing at the front of the stage and slowly raising his hands, palms upwards. Believe it or not, it worked; I always felt better afterward and I think everyone else did too.

He must have had some kind of power over the department too, for although we had an expensive textbook, I don’t recall that he ever mentioned it or anything in it. Instead, we heard a great deal about his theories of consciousness.

I was appalled when he “spray painted” Einstein’s famous equation to match the décor, like something from a garage sale, and hung it on the bare wall of his consciousness theory classroom. If it was just a teaching method, it worked, for I remember it almost 40 years later. Dr. Blewett’s classes were often outrageous and sometimes infuriating, but they were always well-attended and never boring.

Randall Osczewscki BSc’73

I’ve recently re-connected with the University and got my first copy of Degrees today (Fall 2007). I was stricken to find an article about the life and death of my teacher and friend, Duncan Blewett, and bemused to find an article about student activism back in the 60s and 70s, in the online archive version of Spring 2007.

Who’d have thought, after all these years, that two issues in a row of Degrees would have content that struck so close to home?

I was an undergraduate and graduate student at the then University of Saskatchewan Regina Campus from 1967 to 1973, and intimately involved in student affairs. As a member of the SRC (and president for a while) in the late 60s, the Carillon crisis and the surge of student activism became a defining part of my life. A few years later, when I was a grad student, Duncan Blewett was a major influence and mentor, and a member of my thesis committee. He and June became friends, and I remember paddling into their remote Lac La Ronge island one summer, unannounced, to a very warm welcome. The enthusiastic reception might have had something to do with the fact that we had a supply of rolling papers, and they’d run out.

There are a lot of stories still to be told about those heady days on campus, and I hope that you will continue to tell them—without neglecting the present, of course. Life does go on.

Best regards,

Ron Myhr BA(Hons)’71, MA’73

In Degrees, (Vol.19 #2, pg. 19), I am included in your cover of alumni represented by the Assiniboia Gallery of Regina. The article states that I have an MEd’96. Sadly, this is not the case. It must belong to someone else, but the thought is flattering. Thank you for your attention.

Terry Osborne BFA’74, BEd’81

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Terry Osborne BFA’74, BEd’81
Meet Vianne Timmons, the University of Regina’s seventh president and vice-chancellor.

Dream project 12
California filmmaker Chrystene Ells uprooted her life and moved to Regina to begin a film she had been dreaming about making for almost two decades.

The earnest emergence of queer studies 18
Queer studies is slowly finding its way into Canadian university classrooms. This winter, Cultures of Queer, the first U of R class offered in the discipline made its debut.

A man for all seasons 24
John Hewson spent less than a year at the University of Regina in the late 1960s yet his experience in Regina left an indelible mark on the man who would later vie for the office of prime minister of Australia.

A conversation with Rob Norris 32
Degrees sits down with Rob Norris, Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, to talk about his vision for post-secondary education in the province.
President’s Note

Just over a year ago, I assumed the office of the president of the University. A good deal has happened in the interim, and I welcome this opportunity to reflect on where the U of R has been and where it may be going.

My first task as president was to try to instil a sense of calm and stability after a period of upheaval in the senior administrative ranks. I have written and spoken repeatedly during the past year about the gratitude and humility I have felt as a result of many expressions of support for me and the executive team. This support played a key role in re-establishing a calm and purposeful atmosphere on campus.

The Board of Governors was clear in its expectation that I would be more than a “caretaker” president. This coincided with my own preferences but, at the same time, I thought it was important for me to restrict my plans to initiatives that either could be completed in 15 months or ones that were of clear strategic benefit to the University, lest I unnecessarily circumscribe my successor’s plans. Fortunately, there was no shortage of such initiatives; I will briefly review four of them now:

**Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM):** Alarmed by a disturbing downward trend in enrolments in recent years, I was determined to develop an SEM plan to help the University reverse this trend by attracting more new students and retaining a higher proportion of those already enrolled. Jim Black, president and CEO of SEMWorks, was engaged as a consultant. Working with Don Clark, special advisor to the president on SEM, five teams of faculty and staff, and the SEM Management Committee, Jim Black produced a draft SEM report that was rolled out to the University community in late April.

**Branding Initiative:** In an age of increased competition for students, staff and faculty, it is important that the U of R present a consistent and clear image to the world. To this end, Barbara Pollock, vice-president (External Affairs), and Paul Corns, director of communications, are working with a consulting firm, Stamats, to develop the University’s “brand.” This project will continue into 2009.

**School of Public Policy:** In June 2007, the University of Saskatchewan and the U of R agreed to merge their public policy programs to form a single, provincial school: The Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. The universities expect the new school to be in operation by the fall of 2008.

**Fee sharing with Federated Colleges:** In early 2006, there was a very public confrontation between the University and two of its federated colleges, Campion and Luther Colleges, about the apportioning of tuition fees among the three institutions. A stop-gap arrangement considerably reduced tensions for the 2007-08 academic year, and I’m optimistic that a more permanent arrangement will be in place before I leave office. These initiatives, while important, barely touch the surface of the achievements of the University during the past year. The successful completion of the Building Dreams and Futures Campaign and the receipt of the largest single donation in the University’s history—$10 million from Mr. Paul Hill—are two other signal events. To be sure, the past year was not all clear sailing. The strike by support staff last November had generally negative effects on the entire campus community and it reminded us all that there is no room for complacency with respect to labour relations in pursuit of the University’s overall goal of being a preferred place to work and study. On the whole, through the efforts of faculty, staff, students and administration of the University, we have accomplished much to be proud of in the past year. I feel confident that Vianne Timmons, the new president and vice-chancellor, joins a university that is positioned for future success on all fronts.

It was an honour to have been asked to serve the University of Regina as its president and it has been a privilege to work with and have the support of the campus community, alumni and community leaders during my short term in office. To President Timmons, I offer every good wish for success.

Jim Tomkins
Briefly

On May 1, Mo Bundon, chair of the Board of Governors, announced the appointment of Vianne Timmons as the seventh president and vice-chancellor of the University of Regina. (See story page 8). Timmons comes to the University with a wealth of academic and administrative experience as well as a history of community engagement. Prior to coming to the University of Regina she was the vice-president of Academic Development at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). A professor of education, she has served as chair of the Education Department at St. Francis Xavier University and dean of Education at UPEI. Timmons spent her early career in Alberta and British Columbia and moved to Atlantic Canada in 1992 to join St. Francis Xavier University. She has been at the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown for the last 13 years. Simons and her husband, Stuart, have been married for over 25 years. They have four children and two grandchildren. As a family, they enjoy skiing, kayaking and the outdoors generally. In recent years, she has taken up marathon running.

This spring convocation's honorary degree recipients are violinist Eduard Minevich; Bonnie Dupont BSW'76, group vice-president, Corporate Resources, Enbridge Inc.; and mathematician Robert Moody. Minevich is a respected performer and teacher and serves as the concertmaster for the Regina Symphony Orchestra and Regina Chamber Players. DuPont has worked in both the grain and the energy industry and is accountable for Enbridge's Corporate Resources function, which includes Information Technology, Public and Government Affairs, Human Resources, Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility. Moody is a celebrated mathematician and is an Officer in the Order of Canada.

The recipients of this year's Alumni Association's Awards for Excellence have been selected. The awards reflect the three primary roles of the University—teaching, research and public service—and are jointly funded by the University of Regina Alumni Association and the University. Department of English faculty member Susan Johnston is the recipient of the Award for Excellence in Teaching. John Conway BA'66, MA'68 of the Department of Sociology and Social Studies will receive the Award for Excellence in Public Service. And, the Award for Excellence in Research goes to two faculty members: Polo Diaz from the Department of Sociology and Social Studies and Stephen Kirkland from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

Forty-four students from the Paul J. Hill School of Business proved they have what it takes to compete with other business students across Canada when they took home second place honours at the JDC West business competition held at the University of Lethbridge in January. During three days of competition, more than 500 students participated in nine business case challenges including marketing, management information systems, entrepreneurship, finance, accounting, strategy and human resources. In the individual business case competition, the University of Regina finance team was crowned as JDC west finance champions, while the accounting team finished second in its division and the management information systems team finished third.

On May 6, the University of Regina's Seniors Education Centre and Seniors’ University Group honoured David Suzuki with their Distinguished Canadian Award. Suzuki is an award-winning scientist, environmentalist, broadcaster and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Each year the Seniors Education Centre and Seniors’ University Group honour a Canadian who has contributed to Canadian life with the Distinguished Canadian Award. Past recipients include Lynda Haverstock, Maria Campbell, Lloyd Barber and T.C. Douglas.
Three University of Regina engineers who have developed several CO2 capture and storage technologies are the 2008 recipients of the Award of Innovation. The award was presented to Raphael Idem, Paitoon Tontiwachwuthikul and Don Gelowitz, members of the University of Regina Process Systems Engineering group. The award was presented at the Regina Chamber of Commerce’s Paragon Awards banquet on April 3.

Raphael Idem was also part of a group of three professors to be awarded just under $600,000 to work on two different but related projects designed to develop new methods of producing biodiesel and hydrogen fuel from renewable resources. Idem, Amy Veawab MASc’95, PhD’00 and Adisorn Aroonwilas MASc’96, PhD’02, all professors in the Faculty of Engineering, have received three-year Strategic Project Grants from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the federal granting agency that funds research in the natural sciences and engineering.

Veawab and Aroonwilas’ project involves using low-quality feedstock such as cooking oil and animal fat to produce biodiesel. By using these sources rather than high-quality and high-cost sources such as virgin vegetable oil, their work could develop a lower-cost biodiesel whose production and availability are not affected by crop-growing variables such as drought, frost or poor harvest. Idem’s research involves finding an economically viable way of producing hydrogen fuel from renewable and non-purified biomass sources. This process would involve using waste from biodiesel production as one of the feedstock materials, and would have the added environmental benefit of removing CO2 that already exists in the atmosphere.

Mary Hampton, professor of psychology at Luther College at the University of Regina, has been appointed the Saskatchewan Academic Co-ordinator for Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse (RESOLVE). The research network pools resources to address family violence and examines the social, legal, psychological, health and financial problems violence creates for tens of thousands of Canadians. RESOLVE was established at the University of Manitoba in 1992 and has satellite offices in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In her new role, Hampton will act as a liaison between academic researchers and the broader community.

With the April 2 opening of the Interactive Media and Performance (IMP) labs, the University unveiled one of the most unique centres of study on the continent. The labs house a multi-media DJ interactive studio workshop and performance space, a beat-making and electronic music production studio, an ethnomusicology lab and research offices for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. The labs offer U of R students and researchers one of the few opportunities in North America to study DJ technologies, DJ music cultures and the social worlds within which they thrive.

History professor James Pitsula BA’73 celebrates the students of the 1960s and their legacy in New World Dawning, launched in March. The book was published by the Canadian Plains Research Center. All royalties from the sale of New World Dawning will be donated to the Carillon, the student newspaper on campus.

David E. Smith, Senior Policy Fellow with the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy (SIPP), has been named the winner of the 2008 Donner Prize, the award given annually to the author of the best book on Canadian public policy. Smith’s award-winning book The People’s House of Commons: Theories of Democracy in Contention, examines the major questions of parliamentary governance facing Canadians today. The book outlines the historical foundations of Canadian parliamentary, constitutional and electoral democracy, and considers the ramifications of many of the changes currently being proposed to Canada’s political system.
William Hales BFA'78, MFA'00, an instructor in the Department of Theatre, has been busy recently with The Only Animal theatre company's NIX in Whistler, B.C. and Calgary, Alta. NIX is described as a fairy tale for the end of the world and centres on a handful of survivors who take refuge in a snowdrift. Next January, NIX will premiere as part of playRites '09 (in Calgary) and in 2010 will be one of the central pieces of the Cultural Olympiad that will be part of the Vancouver Winter Olympics.

Anne Lavack, dean of the Faculty of Business Administration, has been reappointed by Tony Clement, Minister of Health, to the Board of Directors of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA). She has been on the Board since 2002. In addition to her position with CCSA, Lavack also served on the Ministerial Advisory Council on Tobacco Control, a national committee also reporting to the Minister of Health that serves to work with Health Canada on the design and delivery of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy. Lavack's current research focusses on the social implications of tobacco marketing and promotion.

Four University of Regina researchers—David Sauchyn, Polo Diaz, Elaine Barrow and Norm Henderson BA(Hons)'83—spent two years helping research and write the Canadian Prairies section of a report on climate change and adaptation for Natural Resources Canada. Entitled From Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate 2007, the report concludes that the effects of climate change are already apparent in Canada and throughout the world. As a result, in addition to taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we will also have to adapt our thinking, decisions and behaviour in order to mitigate the many risks associated with climate change. Among the report's conclusions:

- The climate of the Prairies is warming faster than the global average;
- Future projections are for more frequent drought, but also increased precipitation, especially in winter and spring, but generally longer, drier summers;
- Major shifts in the distribution of ecosystems and water resources;
- The Prairies are losing some advantages of our cold winters such as limiting pests and diseases, and facilitating winter operations in the forestry and energy sectors.


Two University of Regina faculty members have published a report that ranks 17 industrialized nations in terms of their food safety performance. Sylvain Charlebois, a marketing professor in the Paul J. Hill School of Business, and Chris Yost, a biology professor who is also the Canada Research Chair in Microbes, the Environment and Food Safety, have just released Food Safety Performance World Ranking. The study benchmarks Canada's performance relative to that of other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in four major areas: consumer affairs, biosecurity and trades, governance and recalls, and traceability and management. Here are the countries that hold down the top ten rankings: United Kingdom, Japan, Denmark, Australia, Canada, Finland, United States, Switzerland, Norway and Germany.

Director of the University of Regina's Office of Energy and Environment Malcolm Wilson can count himself among those who have contributed to winning a Nobel Peace Prize. Wilson was one of the lead authors of a special report on carbon dioxide capture that was released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). As a result of the report, the IPCC, along with former U.S. vice-president Al Gore, was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

For the past year, Saskatchewan residents—as well as people from around the world—have been touring the province from their own homes using the online version of the University of Regina's Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan. The results are impressive—since the encyclopedia first became available online last April, the website, www.esask.uregina.ca, has received more than one million hits.

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Media Production and Studies faculty member Mark Whilak’s BFA'90 film RIVER won three awards at the Canadian Film Fest in Toronto at the end of March. RIVER received the William F. White Reel Canadian Indie Award, the Meridian Artists Best Screenwriting Award and the Best Actor Award for Adam Budd. The film had its U.S. premiere in April at the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Film Festival. Last October, a seat plaque in memory of fine arts professor emeritus Jean Oser was unveiled in the RPL Film Theatre prior to the Regina debut of RIVER. Oser was an internationally known film editor and Oscar-winning dramatic filmmaker who worked with such talents as Garson Kanin, Burgess Meredith and Jean Renoir. He was a catalyst in the development of the Saskatchewan film community in the 1970s and a formative member of the Department of Media Production and Studies at the University. Throughout the ’70s and early ’80s, he taught film history and aesthetics and inspired a generation of Saskatchewan filmmakers.

The University of Regina’s new director of Enterprise Risk Management is David Boehm MBA’02. A long-time Regina resident and formerly the director of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food’s Policy Branch, Boehm also served as the acting associate deputy minister for Saskatchewan Agriculture and was formerly director of Sask Ag’s Financial Programs Branch and the Statistics Branch.

English department faculty member and Emily Dickinson scholar Cindy MacKenzie has just published Wider than the Sky: Essays and Meditations on the Healing Power of Emily Dickinson. The book is a joint effort between MacKenzie and her co-editor, American actress and children’s author Barbara Dana (who was married to Alan Arkin for 37 years). MacKenzie has just signed another book contract, and will publish another book on Dickinson in 2009. She is the only Canadian member of the Emily Dickinson International Society and has persuaded the Society to hold their annual conference in Regina in July 2009. Next year’s conference will culminate with The Belle of Amherst, a one-woman play based on Dickinson’s life and works starring Dana. The play will be produced in co-operation with the University of Regina’s theatre department.

Thomas McLeod died in Victoria, B.C., on January 1, 2008. He served as dean of Arts and vice-principal at the University of Regina from 1964 to 1977.
Growing up in a close-knit family in Labrador City, Newfoundland and Labrador, Vianne Timmons learned at an early age the importance of family and hard work. Her father, an iron ore miner, and her mother, a coal miner’s daughter, also instilled in their children a love of learning and education. Those lessons were not lost on the six Timmons children as all would pursue higher education and go on to earn university degrees.

“We never had a television until I was in my teens,” recalls Timmons. “My parents spent money on books. We were turned on by learning and reading. I can remember the kids sitting and reading—that’s what we did. We read all the time. Even now, when we get together, it’s not uncommon to see all of us reading.”

The spark that was ignited while reading books in a small Labrador mining town has turned into a blazing career that has taken Timmons across the country—from Nova Scotia to B.C. And now, after a rigorous presidential search, she has landed in Regina, where on May 1 Board of Governors Chair Mo Bundon introduced her as the seventh president and vice-chancellor of the University of Regina.

“Dr. Timmons’ academic accomplishments and exemplary record of senior administrative leadership made her the ideal choice,” said Bundon at the announcement. “She has a love of teaching and research and a commitment to students has been evident throughout her professional life. Through three rounds of interviews and a great deal of interaction throughout the search process, she impressed the search committee to the point where she distinguished herself from among a very, very impressive group of applicants.”

Timmons’ career path really started to take shape while still in high school when she volunteered to give swimming lessons to people with intellectual disabilities. The experience was profoundly influencing and led
Vianne Timmons, the University of Regina's new president and vice-chancellor. Photo by Trevor Hopkin, AV Services.
her to pursue studies in English and Psychology at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. While earning her undergraduate degree she spent summers working at an institution for children with intellectual disabilities, another affirming experience that would lead her to Acadia University where she earned a BEd in Special Education.

“I saw such resilience and potential in the children I worked with,” she says. “The majority of these children were abandoned. They were segregated and kept out of the mainstream. The sense of injustice was overwhelming to me. Children with special needs became my passion and inclusive education became my field of study.”

In 1980, with degree in hand, Timmons headed across the country for her first real teaching job as a learning assistance teacher in Granisle, B.C., teaching children on the Babine First Nations Reserve. It proved to be another experience that deepened her resolve to help the disenfranchised and underserved.

“During my time in northern British Columbia I became passionate about Aboriginal education. I was seeing the same kinds of things that I saw working with children with intellectual disabilities. There was such potential in the children I worked with from the Babine First Nation and yet their potential was so under realized. It only added to my sense of frustration.”

Fuelled by her teaching experiences, Timmons went on to earn a MEd in Special Education in 1983 at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash. A decade later, she completed a PhD in Education Psychology specializing in rehabilitation at the University of Calgary. That led to her first university teaching position at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, N.S.

In 1993, Timmons found herself heading St. FX’s Education Department during a colleague’s sabbatical. Her timing couldn’t have been worse. A rationalization study recommended the termination of teachers’ education programs at three institutions in the province, including St. FX.

“I was untenured, a brand new faculty member, had moved my family from Calgary, left a secure teaching position and dropped $20,000 in salary,” Timmons says. “I was thinking, what am I going to do?”

What she did was dig in her heels. Working closely with Nova Scotia’s Mi’kmaw First Nation, she went to
work on a proposal to revitalize the St. FX teachers education curriculum by specializing in Mi'kmaq education. The plan worked as the community rallied around the proposal and the decision to shut down the program was overturned. The program remains strong to this day.

“That's when I realized that you can make a difference as an administrator,” she says.

She’s looking forward to making a similar impact at the U of R. In part, because so many of the University's institutional priorities mirror her own areas of interest and expertise. She cites as examples an emphasis on the student-focussed university experience, the importance of an institution connecting with its community, and her passion for internationalization as areas where she wants to help make a real difference.

“For a person to be successful at university, and I don’t mean academically, I mean as an experience, they have to be connected in some way,” she says. “We have to be focused on student engagement if we want our graduates to have the best university experience possible. The only way that can happen is if we give them lots of opportunities to get them connected to our campus. Student employment gets students connected, arts and culture connects students, so does athletics, and our professors connect with students each day in classrooms. I’m a great believer in constantly assessing and enhancing student engagement.”

Despite the adage “once a Maritimer, always a Maritimer,” Timmons does admit to being enamoured by her visits to Regina throughout the presidential recruitment process. She and her family are looking forward to living in the Queen City and she goes as far to say that in her observations Maritimers and Prairie people seem to share a kindred spirit.

“We fell in love with Regina and with the people,” she says. “In the Maritimes as well as Saskatchewan that community support for each other is deeply embedded in peoples’ ways of doing things. I feel that in Regina—like I have never felt in any other city. I feel a real connection to Saskatchewan—I feel at home.”

Though she will continue serving as vice-president (Academic Development) at the University of Prince Edward Island, Timmons will travel to Regina periodically to work with current president Jim Tomkins through a transition period lasting until Sept. 1. She will be formally installed as president and vice-chancellor at fall convocation ceremonies in October.

Degrees | spring 2008

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California filmmaker Chrystene Ells uprooted her life, moved to Regina and began to make a film she had been dreaming about making for almost two decades. Her film, *Sisu*, is the story of the last hours in the life of Finnish immigrant and shipbuilder Tom Sukanen. The film’s title comes from a Finnish word that roughly translates “to have guts.” Ells has demonstrated her own *sisu* through the ups and downs of making a feature film on a shoestring budget. And though she’s faced her share of challenges she has never let them derail her dream project. Tom Sukanen, for one, would be proud.
ream project

by B.D. Miller BA(Hons)'89, BJ'95

Photos by AV Services and courtesy of Chrystene Ellis
Meanwhile, during a visit to Alberta, she first heard the story of Tom Sukanen, as told by a family friend as they sat by a campfire near High River. “I heard about this guy who had built a ship on the prairie, worked on it for a decade, but he wasn’t accepted by the local people and they vandalized the ship. And I immediately said, ‘Oh my god, I have to make this into a film.’”

University of Regina filmmaker and MFA candidate Chrystene Ells moved halfway across a continent to tell the definitive story of a prairie legend—pioneer and shipbuilder Tom Sukanen. Along the way, she’s learned that separating the myth from the man can be as elusive and challenging as, say, building a steamship on the Saskatchewan prairie and sailing it to Finland.

Ells was born in Fresno, Calif., but grew up near Calgary, the daughter of a psychology professor. In her early 20s, she returned to California, settling in San Francisco where she established a career in the motion picture special effects industry. She worked as a character fabricator, making puppets for Star Wars creator George Lucas’s company Industrial Light & Magic. While in San Francisco, she contributed to a number of feature films, including Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas.

In the early 1990s, two things came together that would change Ell’s life. First, the digital revolution in filmmaking made her skill set as a special effects artist obsolete, with puppets and scale models largely replaced by computer-generated imagery. “I was a dinosaur,” she says. “At the age of 32, I had to retire from my career.”

Meanwhile, during a visit to Alberta, she first heard the story of Tom Sukanen, as told by a family friend as they sat by a campfire near High River. “I heard about this guy who had built a ship on the prairie, worked on it for a decade, but he wasn’t accepted by the local people and they vandalized the ship. And I immediately said, ‘Oh my god, I have to make this into a film.’”

Years passed, but Ells never gave up on her dream of one day filming Sukanen’s story. She eventually pitched the idea to some of her movie contacts in California. “I knew people who were producers for Lucas, people who knew the film industry. Down to the last person they said ‘Why do you want to make this dusty story about some guy in the Depression that ends tragically in a place no one’s ever heard of?’” She was advised to go to Hollywood instead and “find some chick action flick to direct, that’s what you need to do.” And so she realized she couldn’t make the film in California.
At the same time, Ells was hoping to enhance her education and academic credentials as a filmmaker. She looked for an MFA program in western Canada that might allow her to “make this film my thesis project and kill two birds with one stone and come out with a film and an MFA degree.” She learned about the MFA program in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Regina and knew right away that it was the perfect fit. She was accepted into the program in 2006 and moved to Regina with her husband, Raul Viceral, who worked with her on the film as assistant director.

The Interdisciplinary Studies program allowed Ells to tap into the expertise of no fewer than three MFA supervisors while making her film: faculty members Mary Blackstone (Theatre), Leesa Streifler (Visual Arts) and Gerald Saul (Media Production and Studies). Ells worked with Blackstone for two semesters developing the script. Meanwhile, she consulted with Streifler on developing the look of the film and with Saul on how to storyboard and shoot the various scenes. “Gerald comes from a visual storytelling background and he’s also really good at story and character development,” she says. “He was integral in helping me develop the way that I tell the story.”

Ells shot the bulk of the footage over 11 days in August 2007, followed by a supplementary winter shoot in March 2008. She is currently completing post-production editing, animation, special effects and audio mixing and hopes to have the film ready to première in March 2009. The film will be called Sisu, the Finnish word for “courage or tenacity until death.”

Ells shot the film on a shoestring budget of about $25,000, a portion of which came from her own savings. Some of the cast and crew donated their time in exchange for a percentage should the project ever make any money. Others simply worked for food—the meals that were provided during the shoots. Ells also benefited from the generosity of the community. Donations to the film included various period costumes and props, such as antique cars and a threshing machine. She also received permission to film for free at various locations. She estimates the budget of her film would have been about $1.8 million if she'd paid “bottom of the barrel” rates and wages for everything.
In any biopic, the actor playing the lead role is crucial. In this case, Ells chose San Francisco-based actor Don Wood. “I used to be a theatre director in San Francisco and worked with Don for years. He’s an amazing actor, one of the best I’ve ever worked with. And he even looks like Tom Sukanen.”

Ells says Wood demonstrated a commitment to the project to match her own. He donated his acting time and took a month off work during the August shoot. He also paid his own way to join Ells on a research trip to Finland. “It’s cost him so much money to be in the film,” she concedes. “But he says it’s the role of a lifetime.”

The role came with its share of physical challenges. The film is set in Sukanen’s mind as he lies dying in a mental hospital in North Battleford. “As the film progresses, he starts going on these astral travels, out of his body into the past,” Ells says. “So he’s in his hospital gown on the prairie. And we were all completely bundled up against the wind and Don was out there in this thin little gown. He never once complained. Every day he was just grateful to be involved in the project.”

Commitment verging on obsession is something that both Ells and Wood seem to share with their subject matter, Tom Sukanen. During her research for the film, Ells learned that Sukanen’s fixation with building a ship and sailing it to Finland was more about the journey than about returning to his homeland. In fact, she discovered that he probably worked his way home to Finland on a merchant ship in 1929, only to return to Saskatchewan later that year to start building his own ship. According to one version of the legend, Sukanen had promised his mother that he would someday come back to Finland a rich man piloting his own ship and that he would bring her to America.

“There’s the story, if that’s true,” Ells says. “It was the journey. And that’s what I’m interested in with this project. I think the journey started the day he made the decision to take his destiny into his own hands and become who he was really meant to be. The journey started when he started to build that ship.”

Updates on the film as it moves through post-production, as well as the announcement of its premiere and other screenings, will be posted on Ell’s website at www.chrystene.com/sisu.htm.

B.D. Miller is a Regina-based playwright, fiction and non-fiction writer whose work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies and on CBC radio. His historical drama, Kobyla, about the life and death of convicted war criminal Hermine Braunsteiner, will receive a staged reading as part of the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre’s 2008 Spring Festival of New Plays.
Jean-Marie Nkongolo-Bakenda, is a professor of International Business and Strategy and the driving force behind the transport of a 40-foot shipping container packed with farming equipment and other tools destined for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The container left Regina in March travelling by train to Montreal, and then by ship to Europe, the Middle East and Tanzania before making the final leg by rail to the Congo. The equipment will help villagers increase their agricultural output which includes crops like corn, coffee beans and peanuts. Nkongolo-Bakenda left for Africa on May 14 and helped reassemble the equipment upon its arrival.

Where did the idea to send farm equipment and tools to the Democratic Republic of the Congo come from?

The idea came during a research trip to the region back in 2006. I visited the Territory of Gandajika that I had visited forty years ago. I was shocked by the ruinous conditions of the social and economical infrastructure. For example, children were spending two days a week working on the teacher’s plantation. Women had to walk three hours to get 20 liters of water and men were in despair.

How will this equipment change lives?

With the equipment currently in use (hoe and machete), the most productive family could cultivate only one hectare of land. I believe that the use of equipment like the ones we bought could allow them to increase their productivity by as much as five times. With the increase in family revenue, parents will be able to pay for their children’s school supplies and other expenses and, if organized in co-operatives, pay for other additional equipment for farming activities and even water distribution. One of the many benefits of such productivity improvement will be that the children will devote more time to classes instead of working in their teachers’ farms!

What is the long-term goal of this project?

To break the vicious circle of poverty and dependency in this rural African community. The project will assist the community to be aware that it can overcome its poverty and take care of itself, if its members can start acting in concert with each other for their economic, social and cultural development. At the same time, it will serve as a model that can be duplicated by surrounding communities.

What about the Democratic Republic of the Congo would surprise most Canadians?

Most Canadians would be surprised by how poor the Congolese people are despite the potential wealth of their country.

Finish this sentence: The greatest personal satisfaction from this project will come when I…?

I see that members of the community of Bena Mpiana can generate ideas for their own development, when children will not longer be required to work two days per week before they can attend school, when women will have more time for their own education. In the longer term, when I will see that this project has contributed not only to the development of the spirit of entrepreneurship, self-reliance and independence among the members of this rural population, but also has become a model that can be duplicated in surrounding Congolese and African communities.
“I've now realised for the first time in my life the vital importance of being earnest.”

Jack, The Importance of Being Earnest, Act III.
scar Wilde regarded theatre as the greatest of all art forms and the audience inside the Riddell Centre’s University Theatre is inclined to agree. A handsomely mounted production of Wilde’s play *The Importance of Being Earnest* has transported the capacity crowd away from the no-show spring of 2008 to an English high summer in the previous century. Onstage, Algernon and Jack debate the significance of the inscription on Jack’s cigarette case—an argument that foreshadows the unravelling of Jack’s double life. Seated in the audience are 30 students enrolled in the University of Regina’s groundbreaking Cultures of Queer course.

Prior to the play, the students are gathered in a classroom listening to instructor Randal Rogers attend to some housekeeping—assignments due and upcoming events. The atmosphere is relaxed but attentive as guest speaker Wes Pearce BA(Adv)’88, BFA’92, head of the University theatre department, speaks of the significance of *Earnest* and Wilde’s roller-coaster life. When *The Importance of Being Earnest* premiered in 1895, Wilde was on the cusp of a series of trials that ushered in, as Pearce says, “radical change and a rethinking of sexual identity.”

Essentially, Wilde became embroiled in a legal dispute with the Marquis of Queensbury over Wilde’s relationship with the Marquis’ younger son. As Pearce indicates, the subsequent testimony in Wilde’s gross indecency trials exposed the “tawdry side of his existence. Suddenly the light was shone on all of it. The trial became about class, ethnicity, and sexuality.” The concept of the modern homosexual was on the way to being born, and Pearce says, “Many of the artists of the time who had assumed a foppish, aesthetic, effeminate identity were denigrated and reviled, regardless of their actual sexual identity and inclination. You can’t paint everyone with the same brush, but no one was listening.”

Cultures of Queer, a first-time offering at the U of R, examines this long-time bias. The interdisciplinary class studies gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) histories, as well as queer art, cinema, literature and theatre.

Rogers is an original member of the University of Regina Queer Initiative (UROI), an ad-hoc organization formed to foster communication between queer faculty members and researchers on campus. Among its activities, the recently established group has created an endowed fund to promote awareness and support queer scholarly and creative projects and launched the “In and Out Speaker Series” co-ordinated by Pearce. UROI members were also instrumental in developing Cultures of Queer.

Rogers is justifiably proud of Cultures of Queer, which is the first full course of its kind at the University. Rogers notes other offerings have contained queer elements, such as the Women’s Studies course “Mapping Sexuality,” but Cultures of Queer takes a more detailed look. “We’ve gone through a history of queer representation from the medieval to
the contemporary period. We’ve thought about the kinds of communities that need queer representation, and some of the theoretical framework.

Queer theory soundly rejects stereotyping people by gender or sexual identity, postulating that sexual identity is individual and fluid. Originally used as a derogatory term, queer was re-appropriated by activists and theorists in the ’90s as an umbrella term for virtually any sexual identity outside the heterosexual norm.

Rogers says, “The taking back of the word queer was an important one to the political establishment of queer studies in the 1990s. Of course it comes directly out of AIDS—where gay men were positioned as already dying. AIDS did a lot to disempower but it also bought queer people together into a cohesive whole around an issue that then expanded into a much broader movement around rights and representation.”

Although developments such as the legalizing of gay marriage seem to indicate queer is entering the mainstream, Rogers says the jury is still out. “The question would be is gay marriage something that is queer at all because it’s a movement that is around normativity and brings queer institutions in line with the institutions of heterosexuality. Judith Butler (an American philosopher who is a major contributor to modern queer theory) would call gay marriage part of the heterosexual matrix. You can’t be queer when you’re inside. Queer demands outsider status; it demands change at all times.”

The very fluidity of queer theory implies that at some point its concepts will become outmoded. Rogers says, “Perhaps we can no longer think about queer ideology in the grand sense because it encompasses too much that is able to be expressed when we have a one-on-one relationship. There is a whole realm of theory now around individual perception—around feeling, around effect—that is bringing a new level of intimacy to queer studies. At the same time, there’s a more broad-based theoretical framework developing.”

English professor and UROI member Jean Hillabold BA’77, BAHC’79, MA’89 thinks that gay and lesbian identities have received the most attention traditionally, but it’s inevitable that other groups will raise their profile in the future. Considering the In and Out Speaker series, Hillabold says, “I’d be interested to hear someone talk about the politics of being bi or transgendered and how this gets expressed in art, literature, film—any of the arts.”

Certainly the Cultures of Queer class has proved popular. Rogers says, “My baseline for the course is that if you’re here you want to learn something about the subject of the course. And I don’t think you get here by accident; the class is easily identified by its subject matter. It’s for everybody: if you want to come and feel like you’ve found a home, this class is for you, but if you’re here because you want to learn more about your brothers and sisters, then you’re welcome here as well.”

The instructor-student dynamic in the course has moved beyond the conventional, Rogers says. “I saw it as a lecture course but it’s quickly turned into a discussion course. Students are engaged in the class in really fundamental ways. Queer students don’t get addressed explicitly very often. And when they do, they have expectations of what the address will be. They tend to be critical. The relationship between professor and student is somewhat upset because they have all kinds of incredible
Krista Baliko BA'00 is currently enrolled in the class. She is designing a graduate degree in queer interdisciplinary studies with the help of various faculty members including Randal Rogers. Baliko has a journalism background and is interested in queer youth and the difference in queer experience in a rural versus an urban environment.

“When people come from Regina or Saskatoon, they want to get out and go somewhere bigger where they feel more comfortable and there’s a lot more happening.” After speaking with a student who had just arrived on-campus after living in a small town, Baliko realized that happiness is relative. “He thought he’d landed in the biggest centre and couldn’t be happier; there was so much more freedom here. It was actually really dangerous in the town where he came from and he faced all kinds of discrimination and violence.”

Baliko has done stories on gay youth, including a drag king—a woman performing as a male—and a young transsexual student in the Catholic school system who was facing discrimination issues. The stories had positive outcomes. “In both instances, what came out of it was a broader and a wider understanding between them (the students) and their families. One of the parents approached me after the drag king story and said, ‘Thank you, it really explained to me what my daughter was going through.’”

Baliko then worked with U of R Education professor James McNinch on a First Nations University project interviewing two-spirit youth in Saskatchewan. Baliko hopes to examine the concept of two-spiritedness and its place in Saskatchewan more in the course of her graduate studies.

“The definition of two-spiritedness is different for different people and it’s still changing. Basically it’s the belief that precontact there were people in First Nations tribes who embodied both the female and male spirit. And when contact was made, that was no longer accepted. And now there’s a reclaiming of that name, so I’m looking at that.”

Baliko hopes to do more with media representations of queer issues. “Maybe every grad student says this, but when I’m done I want my body of work to have a use, I want it to inform people and spread out to people who need it the most. Somehow I would like the work to effect a change for the better for youth and for communities in general.”

As for the performance of The Importance of Being Earnest, Baliko finds no overt queer subtext in the work, but the context of the play and the treatment of Wilde prior to and after his gross indecency trials exemplify the approach of the Cultures of Queer class. “You’re looking at Oscar Wilde’s past, his history, and what happened to him and it’s still relevant. It’s important to look at the context of a play, for people to realize all the areas that queer theory touches on. You go to a play, you go to a movie, you read a theorist and it’s all connected somehow. It’s all interdisciplinary and eclectic. People need to realize that the topics queer studies examines affects everyone.”

David Sealy is a freelance writer living in Regina. When he’s not writing, he wishes he was. His latest play is Runaway Barbies.
Top: Traditional Nàx house, Lijiang.
Centre row (left to right): Longtime companions, Chuxiong, Yunnan Province; Internet café at 6 a.m., Chuxiong; shop behind Beijing Dance Academy. Bottom: Water taxi, Jinx Village, Suzhou.
Last spring, 14 University of Regina students took the road less travelled and received the educational experience of their lives. “Hands on China” was a three-week study abroad course led by associate dean of Graduate Studies and Research Dongyan Blanchford and history professor Phillip Charrier. Students conducted a wide variety of research and participated in discussions with Chinese academics and government representatives. They were also partnered with Chinese university students at Chuxiong Normal University and Xiamen University of Technology. Charrier’s daily walks yielded these photographs which he has assembled with other photos and excerpts from the students’ journals into a book tentatively called Saskatchewan Pirates in China. Says Charrier, “The book came together slowly, as a kind of hobby, but it is now ready to go out to prospective publishers. In the end I realized that the story it tells is not so much one of China as one of Saskatchewan: it was a surprise to discover the extent to which the young adults on the course drew from their own local and family identities in negotiating the challenges they faced in China.”
by Catherine Armitage
Photos by Lisa Maree Williams

A man for

University of Regina graduate John Hewson came within a whisker of becoming the prime minister of Australia in 1993. These days the self-described investment banker likes to relax by puttering around in his historic garden located in Exeter, New South Wales. Photo by Lisa Maree Williams.
In 1968 John Hewson MA’69 left his native Australia for the Canadian Prairies to further his education. Just 11 months later he left the Regina Campus of the University of Saskatchewan with a master’s of arts in economics in his hand and ventured off to see what life had in store. As it turned out, the future held a few surprises: In his early 30s he became one of the youngest professors ever appointed in Australia. By the time he was 40, he was one of the wealthiest men in the country. But it was as leader of the Liberal Party of Australia and his loss of the 1993 federal election, an election some pundits thought he couldn’t lose, that came to largely define the man. Yes, life did have lots in store for John Robert Hewson but through it all he never lost the soft spot in his heart for Regina and he never lost sight of the lessons he learned there as a young man.
University changes people and the University of Regina changed John Hewson more than most. In many ways, his life journey from scholar economist to maverick politician and prominent businessman began on the Canadian Pacific as it rolled into Regina in the early morning dark 40 years ago.

A future of distinction lay ahead. He was to complete his master's of arts in record time (11 months). Later, after another master's and a PhD at Johns Hopkins University and a stint at the International Monetary Fund, he was appointed one of Australia's youngest ever professors at the University of New South Wales, at age 31. He then became rich in banking and business before entering politics, where he was elevated in record time to leader of Australia's main conservative party, the Liberal Party, after just one three-year term in Parliament.

But back in Regina in 1968, the brilliant 21-year-old economics honours graduate and his wife of one year, Margaret, emerged blinking from the train into the blue prairie sky. He vividly recalls seeing Aboriginal men in the station, “so visibly poor and so visibly drunk.” “I remember commenting how tragic it was,” he says.

True, Australian Aborigines lived in shocking disadvantage then as now, but his strict Baptist upbringing in the placid orthodoxy of suburban Sydney of the 1950s had not brought him into contact with them. Hewson, a church deacon at age 12, aspired to be a bible translator in the then-Australian colony of Papua New Guinea, until missionary friends persuaded him he could do more good as an economist.

Restless for knowledge, he’d started writing abroad for graduate study opportunities in the U.S. while working as an intern at Federal Treasury in the Australian national capital, Canberra. He was too late to catch the start of the U.S. academic year, so looked to the United Kingdom and Canada for a stop-gap solution. “The opportunity in Saskatchewan was more interesting than other places, so I did that,” he explains.

For Hewson, it was a feast of firsts. There were new foods (corn and prawns), new sports (ice hockey, shooting, fishing) and new friends. There were passionate debates into the early hours at the home of economics professor Art Hillabold: “He would break out the Scotch and everyone would get stuck in, though I didn't drink at the time”.

At an early age Hewson aspired to be a bible translator until missionary friends persuaded him he could do more good as an economist. Photo by Lisa Maree Williams.
Some professors and teachers like Jack Boan, Bob Anderson, Anatol Murad and Alex Kelly he got to know “extremely well.” Many opened their homes for classes while the campus, then a branch of the University of Saskatchewan, was under development. Hewson taught undergraduate classes and tutored in macroeconomics and microeconomics while writing his thesis on the demand for money in Canada, building on the ascendant theories of Milton Friedman and the monetarists. The workaholic tendencies for which he was later notorious came to the fore. “I found the climate conducive to work. It was so damned cold, what else are you going to do?”

Hewson was fascinated by the principled passion of conscientious objectors among his teachers who had moved from the U.S. to avoid the draft. “I thought that was a pretty significant stand...People were very passionate, so much so that they would leave home, for example, grow up in Idaho and end up a professor in Regina.” Among his teachers, the work of health policy guru Jack Boan on universal health care particularly resonated, he explains: “At the time Saskatchewan had the only fully socialized medical system in the world.

“It was a time when big government was thought to be the solution. I thought a lot about whether it was the right way to go...I guess I was in transition from whether government was always the solution or whether it had become part of the problem.”

The evident poverty of Aboriginals, not just in the train station but downtown where he and Margaret got by in a tiny basement flat, haunted his thinking. “In Saskatchewan you had the contrast between significant social disadvantage and a centralized socialist government which should have taken care of these people better than any other system, if the system was right.”

He concluded that Saskatchewan had it wrong. His PhD at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore was on how regulatory controls distorted the workings of international financial markets, and his views have not changed in essence since: “I believe that markets are fundamentally important; if market forces run their course and economic processes are as true as they can be, you will get the best efficiency outcome. If politicians decide the distribution aspects of that are not attractive, or if the market is failing or certain groups are being disadvantaged, the government can step in and provide assistance.”
Saskatchewan has left its mark on much he has done since. As a staff advisor to the Australian Liberal government in 1982, Hewson used Canada’s 1964 Royal Commission on Banking and Finance as a model to draft the terms of a similar Australian inquiry for the Federal Treasurer. That inquiry was a blueprint for the transforming deregulation which opened Australia to global capital flows in the 1980s.

Hewson’s zealous determination to make a difference led him to run for a seat in Federal Parliament in the harbour-side Sydney electorate of Wentworth, one of the wealthiest in Australia, and win. The Liberal Party’s desperate search for a leader to unseat the 10-year-old Labor government ended at Hewson’s door in 1990.

In 1991 he released the policy package known as “Fightback!” which he took into the notorious election campaign of 1993. It was as close as a policy could be to an economics thesis. It detailed Hewson’s radical plan for a broad-based 15 per cent tax on goods and services (GST) and deep cuts to universal health care, among other measures, with a suite of personal tax cuts and increases in pensions and benefits for the poor.

It cost him the March 1993 election and his political career. His opponent, the incumbent Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating, ran a successful scare campaign against economic rationalism, dubbing Hewson the “feral abacus.” The Liberal Party dropped him as leader in 1994, despite an earlier undertaking that he would have at least two terms in which to campaign for the prime ministership. He resigned from Parliament in February 1995.

“He was naïve and trusting in terms of his own political relationships and in assuming that the good sense of the electors would see the policy for what it was,” says Norman...
“Politics didn’t change him at all,” says David Harley, a former senior bureaucrat and close friend for nearly 30 years. “John wants to change things, wants to do good. He thought that economics and finance would play a great role in the future of Australia and was hell bent on achieving that.”

Abjoresen, political scientist at the Australian National University and Hewson biographer. “He lacked that cunning side a politician needs.”

Hewson believes that his was the most detailed policy ever to be put before voters in a national election anywhere and as such established a precedent and a principle.

“I think I stand as someone who has always stood for principled policy decisions and been prepared to fight for them,” he says now, reflecting on the past from the boardroom of the finance company he now chairs in a glassy tower building overlooking Sydney’s ports. He admits, though, that “it is probably a failing in politics to worry too much about the detail.”

“Politics didn’t change him at all,” says David Harley, a former senior bureaucrat and close friend for nearly 30 years. “John wants to change things, wants to do good. He thought that economics and finance would play a great role in the future of Australia and was hell bent on achieving that.”

These days Hewson, 61, describes himself as an investment banker. Apart from the finance company, he chairs a charity on osteoporosis and has a portfolio of directorships including, in recent years, in the fields of health and aged care, biofuels, waste management and insurance broking.

Governance and corporate social responsibility are two key focus areas. He has a weekly column in the financial press and is frequently called on by the media as a commentator. It is a source of personal pride that he “calls a spade a spade,” dishing out criticism of Liberal and Labor policies with equal vigour.

Hewson might have had a greater role in public life but for the enmity between him and John Howard, the man who led the Liberals back to power in 1996 and was prime minister for 11 years until his defeat by Labor’s Kevin Rudd last November. Howard brought in the GST in 2000. Speculation that Hewson missed out on a seat on the Board of the Reserve Bank of Australia because of his outspokenness is “probably true”, Hewson agrees. But “I never imagined I would be offered anything by the Howard government,” he says.

He has taken up rose cultivation with characteristic zeal at his country house where he spends weekends with his new wife Jessica and his teenage daughter Suzannah from his marriage to prominent Sydney banker Caroline Simpson. That marriage split in his wilderness years after defeat. He has publicly expressed regret at spending insufficient time with the three children of his first marriage when they were young; these days, family has higher billing in his nevertheless frenetic life.

How would he sum up his time in Regina? “In terms of bringing me out of a very narrow, highly religious, very disciplined conservative background, the experience of Saskatchewan did more than just about anything you could imagine,” he says.

“It caused me to question things, to restudy things. These are values I have instilled in my students. Don’t just read what you are assigned; pursue your interests.”

“I am glad I went there and not anywhere else.”

Catherine Armitage is a writer and consultant based in Sydney, Australia.
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We sat down with Rob Norris, Saskatchewan’s Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, to talk about the state of post-secondary education in the province and where it’s going. Norris has university experience as both a student and an instructor. He earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Lethbridge where he was also a teaching assistant within the Native Studies program. During grad school, Norris was a teaching assistant at the University of Saskatchewan and taught courses focussing on Canadian government for SIAST and the University of Saskatchewan Extension Division. Between 2004 and 2007, he served as the co-ordinator of Global Relations at the University of Saskatchewan.
You've been both a student and an instructor in a university classroom. What's the gift that a student receives in a classroom?

I look at the transformational effects that advanced education gave me. I guess I am of the opinion that we remain students regardless of where we go and what we do. What that demands is making a commitment to the discipline of learning. I see it as a continuum where individuals at various stages of their life actually participate through various institutions in lifelong learning. Not only will this equip people to participate in our economy but it also better our communities.

What do you see as the fundamental role of the university?

The fundamental role of university education relates to citizenship. The University of Regina is obviously a very significant and successful contributor to that notion of citizenship in Saskatchewan. As part of the U of R vision statement says, the University of Regina is in the business of “facilitating the development of thoughtful, creative, adaptable, contributing and humane citizens.”

What is the Saskatchewan Party’s vision of post-secondary education in the province?

The focus of our ministry is really threefold: We need to ensure that more people across Saskatchewan have the skills training and formal education to participate in, and benefit from, our economic growth. Second, we need more people in Saskatchewan, and third, we are working to ensure there is a fair and balanced labour environment. All of these come under what I call meeting our talent challenge. That’s really the purposeful tack that we take within our ministry. We want more inclusive, more accessible, more affordable education in the province.

What role do you see the province’s universities playing in the future, especially considering the burgeoning Saskatchewan economy?

We are moving toward an increasingly knowledge-based economy and in the Canadian context our universities will play leading roles. This is where our universities are going to shine. Those universities that do this as nimbly as possible are going to be at the forefront. Not only do I think there is an opportunity for Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions to become worldwide centres of excellence, but I think there is an obligation to do this. We are going to be working collaboratively with the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan and other stakeholders and ask how we maximize opportunities.

What do you see as the strengths of the University of Regina?

When I look at the University of Regina I see growing opportunities for excellence. I see some best practices and I see innovation. That innovation is not just in the University’s research and development areas but also in its innovative programs like its co-operative education program, for instance. I also see the University as a place that is inclusive, affordable and accessible.

What about the University of Regina’s role as it relates to our areas of expertise in energy and environment?

When we think about Saskatchewan in the future, obviously, energy and the environment are key areas. I ask the question, have we reached our research and development potential? I think we are just getting started. We are the stewards of our resources, we need to take ownership over these resources and we need to engage the outside world. But we need to do it on terms that put Saskatchewan at a strategic advantage. We need to be saying to people around the world if you are interested in energy and the environment, and I don’t know too many jurisdictions that aren’t, then you need to take a closer look at one of the best centres of excellence in Canada and that’s at the University of Regina.

To what extent should the universities rely on international student recruitment? What are the benefits and disadvantages of looking beyond our borders for students?

It’s absolutely essential. We see enrolment challenges at both the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. There needs to be a much greater focus on Saskatchewan’s place in Canada and Saskatchewan’s place in the world. What does that mean? We have pretty remarkable centres of excellence that people across Canada and around the world need to know more about. We need to do a much better job telling the Saskatchewan story. The Saskatchewan story in the 21st century is a much different story than the Saskatchewan story of the 20th century.

When the Saskatchewan Party was elected last November, the premier issued a letter that outlined several of his expectations with regard to your portfolio. With respect to one of those, what is the status of the Saskatchewan scholarship fund which would see the government match scholarship funding raised by the University?

We are just beginning the dialogue with our partners, including the University of Regina. It’s yet another instrument that we want to utilize to ensure we are keeping advanced education as affordable and accessible as possible. I expect it to be out in the 2009-2010 budget cycle.
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1 800 387-0649
This is my last message as president of the U of R Alumni Association as my term will end later in June. I want to start by saying what an honour it has been to serve the fabulous alumni of the University of Regina during the past year. Although my time as president has been brief, it has truly been satisfying to work with a group of such dedicated board members. It’s a testament to the individuals who make up the Board that we were able to achieve the goals we set one year ago. I would also like to express my gratitude to the many others who have contributed in meaningful ways to the success of the Association’s initiatives over the past 12 months.

As U of R president Jim Tomkins prepares to step away from the senior leadership team, I would like to express my appreciation for all his support of the Alumni Association. Jim has generously offered his time, counsel and enthusiasm to numerous Association endeavours and I would like to personally thank him and wish him the best of luck in his future undertakings.

I would also like to congratulate Vianne Timmons on her appointment as the University’s seventh president and vice-chancellor and formally welcome her to the U of R family. Vianne’s appointment came after a vigorous search process which included former Alumni Association president Lisa King. Dr. Timmons has a wealth of academic and administrative experience as well as a history of community engagement which I’m sure will afford her many opportunities to get to know our outstanding alumni in Regina and around the country. I know each of our board members is looking forward to working with Vianne as we continue to strive to make ours the strongest alumni association in Canada.

It is with some reluctance that I step away from the role of president at what I see as the cusp of a most exciting time for the University. In particular, I believe that the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan and the branding initiative hold great promise for the future and will allow the University to build on past successes and move forward with renewed purpose. Coupled with the opportunities and challenges of a booming Saskatchewan economy, these are indeed invigorating times for the U of R.

Remember, this is your Alumni Association. As a graduate of the U of R you are eligible for all the benefits membership brings. Let us know how we are doing. Give us your feedback to help us make our programs and services even better. Call the office at 1-877-779-GRAD or in Regina at 585-4503 or, visit us on the Web at www.uregina.ca/alumni and give us your thoughts. We’d be happy to hear from you.

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors, I would like to wish the very best that the summer has to offer to all alumni, their family, and friends.

Loni Kaufmann
Upcoming Alumni Events

Alumni Association Annual General Meeting
Join us on Thursday, June 19 as the U of R Alumni Association hosts its annual gathering at the hottest new restaurant in Regina—Beer Bros. Bakery & Cuisine on the Scarth Street mall. We will be sampling a flight of beer with unique tastes and characteristics and pairing each with upscale, delicious morsels of food. The cost is just $20 for alumni and students and $30 for friends. RSVP by June 12 by calling 585-4503 or toll free at 1-877-779-4723. Or, email us at uralumni@uregina.ca. When registering please let us know if you have any special dietary needs.

6:30 p.m. Alumni Assoc. Annual General Meeting
7:15 p.m. Beer Tasting
Beer Bros. Bakery & Cuisine
1801 Scarth Street, Regina

Looking Back

Alumni Enjoy Slam-Dunk of an Evening
More than 60 alumni, family and friends came out to support the Cougars basketball teams on January 19 at the Centre for Kinesiology and Sport. Coaches James Hillis and Dave Taylor offered inside information to the alumni before the game at a pizza reception hosted by the Alumni Association.

Educators reunite to reminisce
In celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the U of R Alumni Association hosted receptions in Regina and Saskatoon in conjunction with the annual conferences. More than 50 education alumni came out to meet members of the Education faculty and the U of R Alumni Association.

Alumni attend product launch in Calgary
HTC Pureenergy launched the world's first commercially available CO2 capture system on January 29 in Calgary. HTC is in partnership with the University of Regina's International Test Centre for Carbon Dioxide Capture, a major international research institution dedicated to CO2 capture research. Sixty alumni, energy industry, private and public sector stakeholders in Canada's carbon economy attended the event which was held in conjunction with the Canadian Institute's second annual CO2 Capture and Storage Conference.

Professional Etiquette Series for Students & Alumni
The University of Regina Alumni Association invited students and alumni to attend two events as part of their Professional Etiquette Series: “How to Avoid Being a Cocktail Weenie” and “Professional Dining Etiquette.”

Approximately 100 students and alumni were entertained and informed on business communications by Canada's etiquette expert, Lew Bayer. Those who attended found the sessions to be “entertaining, interesting, excellent, fantastic, and a wonderful experience.”
Let us know what you’ve been up to and we will tell the world! Share your accomplishments and milestones. Please direct your items to uralumni@uregina.ca or send them the old fashioned way to our mailing address (see page 3). We’ll publish your photos as well. Just ensure they are the highest quality digital photos your camera can muster. Of course, we reserve the right to edit! And don’t forget Degrees is also posted on the University of Regina website.

1960-1969
Gerry Carline CD BEd’68, BA’73 lives in Moose Jaw with his wife, Gail Carline BEd’87. He has worked as a consultant for 20 years in the oil, gas and power utilities industries. He also served 32 years in the Saskatchewan Dragoons, Canadian Forces Reserve, in Moose Jaw from which he retired with the rank of honorary lieutenant colonel. He enjoys military history and writes, records and films stories of Canadian war veterans. He also has a master’s in organization development from Pepperdine University in Los Angeles.

On January 16 Norm Bolen BA’69 was appointed to the Board of Directors of mDialog, one of the Internet’s newest web video 2.0 platforms to emerge for independent filmmakers, amateur video enthusiasts and production companies. Bolen is one of Canada’s veteran media executives, serving in numerous executive positions with the CBC prior to starting his career at Alliance Atlantis in 1997 as vice-president of programming for History Television. Later, as executive vice-president for content at Alliance Atlantis Communications, Bolen was responsible for all commissioning, acquisitions and scheduling for 13 specialty channels in Canada including: HGTv, The Food Network Canada, Showcase, History Television and National Geographic Channel. He was also responsible for all new media and web content. Bolen also serves as the chair for the Banff World Television Festival Foundation and is co-chair of the Hot Docs International Documentary Festival.

1970-1979
Ron Myhr BA(Hons)’71, MA’72 is a psychologist living near and working in Toronto. After obtaining his master’s in Regina, he completed a PhD at the University of Toronto and went on to a career in professional psychology. He was a long-time council member and president of the College of Psychologists of Ontario and now works in industrial/organizational psychology as strategic accounts director for SHL Canada, an international consultancy specializing in employment-related assessment for selection and development.

Stephen William Gerald Lacey BEd’72, CEngEd’87, taught high school in Saskatchewan for 16 years before moving to Yellowknife, NWT, to continue his teaching. He is a member of the folk quartet Ceilidh Friends and The Gumboots trio. Lacey has recorded four albums and appeared at music festivals and concerts opening for such performers as Murray McLachlan, Connie Kaldor and Stephen Fearing. He was showcased at two North American Folk Alliance conferences, has been interviewed by Peter Gzowski on “Morningside,” played at a Royal visit and performed for, two weeks at EXPO 2005 in Aichi, Japan. He is a member of the Board of Directors for the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre, the premiere performing arts venue in the NWT. Lacey married Dawn Ione Walker BEd’90 in 1972. Walker is also a member of Celildh Friends. The couple has three children, Caitlin, Adrian and Bryan William Michael Lacey BFA’07.

Linda Dodd (née Vail) BEd’74 has retired from Regina Public Schools, where she was the consultant for outdoor environmental education for 23 years. She lives in Regina and is a Cougars season ticket holder. Dodd played for coach Sue Higgs when they were known as the Lady Cougars. She works part-time for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority working with their environmental education programs.

Barb Byers BSW’75 is the representative of Canadian labour on the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization, the only tri-partite body of the United Nations. It is part of her role as executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Andrew Moffat BAdmin’79 lives in Ottawa. After graduating, he served 21 years as a military officer in the Canadian Forces. Upon his military retirement he founded an information technology company that was sold to a U.S. technology company in 2004. Moffat is founder and chairman of three information technology companies, sits on a number of boards and is a member of the Ottawa Mayor’s eGovernment Task Force. Moffat and his wife also operate a rescue for large breed dogs.

1980-1989
David Halstead PGDC&I’82, MEd’90 facilitates professional development workshops for educators on two topics—the application of relative brain research in the classroom and researching neuroscience to get a greater understanding of behaviour development. His work has taken him across Canada, into the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. He has published two books: Putting the Brain into the Classroom: 39 Brain Facts and 231 Teaching Strategies and The Bully Around the Corner: Changing Brains—Changing Behaviours. www.brainpowerlearning.com

Kerry R. Johnson BMusEd’82 lives in Moose Jaw and has been teaching music, history and law for the past 25 years. For the past seven years he has also been involved in training educators and parents in drug use recognition and drug awareness. He and his wife Debbie have two children. Their son is in Grade 11 and their daughter is finishing her second year of elementary education at the University of Regina.

Sharlene McGowan BMusEd’83, MEd’96 is a teacher of at-risk youth with Regina Public Schools. She is also a freelance writer and editor for education publishing companies in Canada as well as the United States.

Elizabeth Raum MMus’84 wrote the original score for “Carmen, The Passion” choreographed by Mauricio Wainrot and created for the
Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Raum moved to Regina in the early 1980s with her husband, Department of Music faculty member Richard Raum. She is the principal oboist with the Regina Symphony Orchestra.

Conrad Baum BEd’86 teaches in Unity, Sask. and his wife, Hydee Baum BEd’97 teaches in Lloydminster, Sask. The couple’s daughter, Kailey is following in her parent’s footsteps and is studying education at the University of Regina.

Brent Buechler BA’86, CIA’96 has joined Imagine Canada in Calgary as the director of Development and Outreach. Imagine Canada is the leadership organization for Canada’s charitable and non-profit sector. Previous to his appointment, Buechler was the manager of Marketing and Communications at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary. Prior to relocating to Calgary he was the communications/public relations officer with the Saskatchewan Science Centre in Regina.

Jacklynn Holmes BAdmin’88 has joined Marketing Directions, a Calgary consulting company, as a senior consultant. After obtaining her MBA through the University of Phoenix’s FlexNet program in July 2007, she is now teaching business courses online for the University of Calgary. Holmes has been married nine years to her husband Chris and has two sons, Noah (6) and Jonah (3).

1990-1999

Deborah L. Henley BSW’91

After a career with both federal and provincial government departments in disability management, embarked on a new path in March 2007 as the owner of Chocolates Plus in Qualicum Beach, B.C.


Donna Hamilton BEd’93 has just finished her master’s degree in education from the University of British Columbia. Her research involved getting students with learning disabilities to peer tutor younger students facing similar challenges. Hamilton has been teaching mathematics at the Fraser Academy, an independent school in Vancouver for people with learning disabilities.

Claudia Klausen BEd’94 lives in Winnipeg where she is a teacher-librarian. She is finishing the last course of her master’s in education in Teacher Librarianship from the University of Alberta through distance learning and will convocate in the fall. Klausen is married to David Klausen.

Jason Lee BAdmin’97 lives and works in downtown Vancouver where he is a project manager for an international direct marketing firm. He is married to Sophia and enjoys golfing and snowboarding.

Monica Lysack BEd’97 lobbies for public policy affecting children and family/work balance. She has been a national spokesperson in her role as executive director for the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. She was also a member of the federal-provincial governments’ Early Childhood Development Working Group, Campaign of 2000 the national anti-poverty coalition and the national Coalition for Women’s Equality and Human Rights. Lysack was the nominated Liberal candidate for the federal riding of Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre in the last federal election.

Jacob Lehman BEd’98 is teaching high school English and Canadian history in Nelson House, Man. He is married to Heather Crichlow.

Randi Mosiondz BSc’98 worked in the IT field concentrating on business applications in Regina and Saskatoon before moving to California to make video games at Cryptic Studios. He worked as a game designer on the award-winning massive-multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) City of Heroes franchise and is currently working on an announced project due for release next year.

Allison Stein BEd’99 and Jason Stein BSc(Hons)’99, BEd’03 are parents to the 2008 New Year’s baby born at Regina General Hospital. Baby Olivia is their fourth daughter. The couple live and teach school in Turtleford, Sask.

2000-Present

Linda Aksamitis BV/TEd’00, MV/TEd’07 teaches for Credenda Virtual High School in Prince Albert, from her home in Qu’Appelle. She is teaching a library certificate program to Northern library staff. Aksamitis also has four children’s books scheduled for fall 2008: Longhorns and Outlaws, Science Solves It All: Sports Champions, Issues that Concern You: Teen Driving, Issues that Concern You: Choosing A Career.

Chris Beingessner BEd’01 and wife Brenda Baisley BEd’05 taught in Cambodia for two years and have returned to Regina where they are teaching and have bought a house.

Charles Anderson BA’03 was awarded the 2007 John Kenneth Galbraith Literary Award for his short story Von Claire and the Tiger. The prize, which consists of $1,000 cash and an engraved pewter medallion, was presented on October 13, 2007, at the West Elgin Performing Arts Theatre in Dutton, Ont. Von Claire and the Tiger relates the story of an elderly professor of English who is eaten by a tiger, survives the mishap, and from within the belly of the beast engages in a philosophical debate with the animal as to why he should be released unscathed. The story was published in weekly installments in The Chronicle, an Ontario newspaper. Since graduating Anderson has worked full time as a freelance writer for both adults and children, having written (chiefly under the pen name Rolli) over 500 stories, poems and articles, many of which have appeared in publications such as Byline, Grain, Spring, Spider, Cricket, Jerry Jazz Musician, Poesia and dozens of others. He lives in Southey, Sask.

Jordan Keller BSc’03 and Julia Keller BSc(Hons)’03 have moved back to Saskatchewan from Calgary where they now enjoy a more laid-back pace of life. They both work on the University of Saskatchewan campus—Jordan as a technician with the Department of Health, Safety & Environment at the University of Saskatchewan, and Julia as the lead technologist in the Analytical Laboratory of the Saskatchewan Research Council.
After premiering last fall at the Toronto International Film Festival, a short drama by Saskatchewan filmmaker Adam Budd BFA’03 had its inaugural American screening at the 2008 Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. The Whole Day Through follows a young couple (Mark and Mel) over one day in the starkly beautiful prairie landscape. When an event from the past puts their future in doubt, they must decide what to forgive and forget. The project was released by Arid Sea Films, a production company founded in rural southwest Saskatchewan by childhood friends Budd, Simon Nakonechny and Lea Nakonechny.

Crystal Howie BFA’03 returned to Regina to work in the TV and film industry as a set decorator/buyer. Howie created the three by nine metre mural located on the Regina Union Centre building in 2003. She then studied Japanese at Kyushu Women’s University on scholarship before moving to the UK where she became involved in theatre from 2004-07. Howie is moving to Esterhazy for three months to do research and development for a residency at Mosaic Potash Mines.

Vanessa Chesters (née Stewart) BAdmin’04 and husband Ryan celebrated the birth of their second son Marcus, born October 10, 2007. Chesters is a research advancement analyst at the University of Saskatchewan.

Tao Eliza Chamberlin BACEd’05 married and bought a house in 2007. She helped to establish a professional growth group for French teachers and is working on a high school history project. She teaches in the Saskatoon Public School Division.

Ben Barootes BA(Hons)’06 completed his master’s of arts at Acadia University in August 2007. His thesis, “Fallen Away: Post-lapsarianism in Tolkien’s Saga of Jewels and Rings,” received the Governor General’s Medal for best overall thesis. Barootes returned to the University of Regina to teach English at Luther College in the 2008 winter semester and will be starting a doctoral program at McGill in September.

Maya Batten-Young BFA’07 won the Best Actress Award for her performance in RIVER in the Borsos Competition at the 2007 Whistler Film Festival. The film was directed by Fine Arts faculty member Mark Whak BFA’90 and was shot in Regina, St. Louis, Mo., and Eastend.

Ryan Healey BSc’07 recently took a position as a leukemia/lymphoma laboratory scientist at Foothills Hospital in Calgary working in the area of flow cytometry, which is a diagnostic cancer science based heavily on cellular biology and immunology. He says his experience with Biology Department faculty members Harold Weger and Lauri Lintott prepared him for the job.

Jessica Ann Myren BA(Hons)’07 is marrying Derrick Deringer in Ogema, Sask. on August 16, 2008.
The Faculty of Arts takes pride in its students’ varied and exceptional achievements. Throughout the Faculty’s many departments and programs, Arts students are continually making their mark, through their academic accomplishments, their commitment to the community, and their passion for life. They bring to everything they do the curiosity, critical thinking skills, and detailed analysis that are the hallmarks of an Arts education.

**TODD BRYANTON**

“I wrote my two published short stories on the third floor of the Ad-Hum building at the U of R, tapping away on my laptop, feeling like I was in the centre of a creative matrix.”

**TODD BRYANTON** is currently working on an MA in English. He is a musician, composer, writer, video editor and artist. He is a published author, and has composed and scored for the Gemini Award winning comedy series Corner Gas, as well as the CBC mini-series The Englishman’s Boy.

**DR JAIME WILLIAMS**

Dr. Jaime Williams graduated from the University of Regina with a PhD in Clinical Psychology. Her primary research interests involve examining the impact of fear of falling on caregivers burden among families of seniors with dementia. She has now taken up a position as an assistant professor at the University of Saskatchewan where she continues her research into this area and into the areas of pain management among older adults and predicting memory outcomes following surgical procedures for epilepsy. When she isn’t in the lab Dr. Williams can usually be found drawing, painting, and enjoying dance in all its forms.

**DENNIS WARD**

“As someone who decided to go to university later in life, I've valued how the Faculty of Arts accommodates different learning styles. I'm fascinated by people and what they do, so in studying Anthropology I've found not only my passion but a whole new career path. I just wish I'd done this sooner!”

**DENNIS WARD**, MA student in the Department of Anthropology

**STACEY LOLACHER**

“This is not a question of race, of constitution, of political power, or of jurisdiction. This is a question of human rights.”

Political science student Stacey Lolacher is co-founder of Regina Streets Magazine, a new non-profit newsletter distributed and sold by the homeless in Regina. Stacey’s goal is not only to raise public awareness of the human face of poverty, but also to provide a source of income to people who would otherwise have none. Stacey’s poverty-fighting initiative is just one way that Arts students give back to the Regina community.

**VICTORIA PATZWALD and MEGAN EDWARDS**

McDougall Gaufey Fellowship winners Victoria Patzwald and Megan Edwards, undergraduate students in the Department of Justice Studies, are conducting innovative studies in the area of community-based justice administration. Victoria is studying the impact of a municipal project to install back alley lighting throughout Regina’s North Central area, while Megan is researching ways in which the RCMP can adopt more responsive and aboriginal-centred models of justice administration on Saskatchewan reserves.

**UNIVERSITY OF REGINA**

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www.uregina.ca/arts
January 16, 2008—My sister called in August, crying and scared. I have bad news, she said between tears. I braced myself. The words Ken, cancer, esophagus, spread, inoperable came crashing down, her sobs rendering further speech impossible. A doctor had just delivered her 47-year-old husband a death sentence.

A successful oil-and-gas land agent, Ken ran his demanding business with the energy and passion you would expect from someone who loved his work. He rode a Harley, coached his oldest son’s hockey team and fixed everything around the house. He did the laundry and cooking. He treasured playtime with his two-year-old son.

When I arrived in Regina two days after my sister’s call, like everyone else I looked for signs of hope, only to find none. The doctor’s report stated that his cancer was in stage four—that there is no stage five—and the oncology tests proved it to be an extremely aggressive form.

My brother-in-law accepted cancer as a death sentence, while my mother never stopped looking for a cure.
It didn't take a medical professional to see how sick Ken was. He'd lost 25 pounds. Every movement caused him pain that even morphine couldn't soothe. He had thrown up blood. There was brief talk of flying to the Mayo Clinic for chemotherapy, but Ken knew it was too late to fight. I can’t imagine the courage it took to decide to live the rest of his days doing the things he loved: late-night talks around the fire at the cabin with family and friends; taking the boat out on the lake; watching his young son grow. Chemo might buy him a few more weeks, but it would erode the quality of the little time he had left.

People, feeling helpless, offered what they could. A friend brought over a bottle of concentrated blueberry and pomegranate juice, the label boasting its antioxidant power. The gesture came from a place of love, even though it seemed like handing someone on the Titanic a champagne flute and saying, “Here. Bail.”

Someone else suggested to me that Ken drink his own urine, assuring me it tastes better if you haven't been consuming alcohol, meat or greasy foods. Later that day I watched Ken eat a dinner of steak and potatoes washed down with rye and Coke. I didn't mention urine.

In 1994, my mother, a poet and teacher, passed away at 52. First breast cancer, then colon, then everywhere. Her death sentence had come a few years before her death, the word “terminal” written on a report similar to the one Ken had received. Chemo, radiation, surgery—nothing had worked. A few months before she died, having given up on conventional therapies, she left Regina for Vancouver to immerse herself in its alternative-healing environment. She would be back, she assured us. She would beat cancer.

My mother died long before the pomegranate craze hit, and I don’t know if she ever drank her own urine. But she would have been receptive to such suggestions. Her hope had opened her to endless possibilities.

“Dear God,” she wrote in her journal as she watched game three of the Vancouver Canucks and New York Rangers Stanley Cup finals on television, “Let me resist the temptation to say, ‘If the Canucks win, I shall be healed.’”

Ken died a week after Saskatchewan captured the Grey Cup last November. I’m sure, as he lay in his deathbed, he didn't pin any hope on the Roughriders saving him from his fate. In his mind, his death sentence was a death sentence.

Hope is “deceitful,” wrote French author François de La Rochefoucauld. I’m sure Ken would have agreed. But in the same sentence, La Rochefoucauld also observed that hope is of “good use to us, that while we are travelling through life it conducts us in an easier and more pleasant way to our journey's end,” words to which my mother would have no doubt attested.

Did Ken’s lack of hope render him ineligible for a miracle cure, in the eyes of whoever doles them out? In light of my mother’s experience, surely not. “I’m not dying,” she told a friend only weeks before she died. “I’m just sick.” By that time, she was in a wheelchair, her legs swollen, her face emaciated. Yet still she talked of coming home, of returning to teaching, of finishing her latest book. Hope may have made her journey more bearable, but it didn’t spur any miracles.

I wanted to be angry with my mother for not being honest with us, or herself, about how sick she really was. I also wanted to be angry that Ken gave up hope when, perhaps, he could have fought for his life.

But I can’t be angry with either. My love for them doesn’t work that way, and who am I to know what would have happened if they had chosen different paths?

Mom’s and Ken’s experiences have left me wondering who was right. If one day I am faced with the same death sentence, should I bravely battle my disease with the blind hope that a cure is imminent? Or should I equally bravely plan my wake and suck the marrow out of my final days? My only hope is that I will have the courage, as Mom and Ken did, to take control of the time I have left in whatever way I need.

Stefan Riches graduated with a BA in English (Distinction) from the University of Regina in 1997. He currently lives and works in Toronto and is completing the UBC Optional-Residency Creative Writing MFA program. Stefan’s essay originally appeared in Facts and Arguments in The Globe and Mail.
Professor emeritus Don Clark has been a fixture at the University of Regina for almost four decades. His teaching career began in the Faculty of Physical Activity Studies (now Kinesiology and Health Studies) in 1970. The same year he began his 15-year tenure as head coach of the Cougars men’s wrestling team. Despite his retirement in 1999, Clark never strays too far from the U of R. He is the academic advisor for the Rams football team, was the U of R liaison to the 2005 Canada Summer Games and served as special advisor to the president on strategic enrolment. Every year, the Dr. Don Clark Scholarship is awarded to the K&HS undergraduate student with the highest grade point average in the Fitness and Lifestyle program.

What is your fondest memory from your 38 year association with the U of R?

I get a great deal of pleasure from seeing former students enjoy successful careers and contributing to our community. My role as a co-founder of the Dr. Paul Schwann Applied Health and Research Centre, and in particular the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, is something of which I am very proud. The successful hosting of the 2005 Jeux du Canada Games by the University and the City of Regina provided an opportunity to showcase our institution to young Canadians from coast-to-coast.

Even through you retired from teaching in 1999, you continue to find yourself involved with the University in various capacities. What keeps you coming back?

The opportunity to give back to an institution, that allowed me to have a very rewarding career. I enjoy the experience of working with people from all areas of the campus to contribute to the continued development of our University.

If I say “Don Clark, outstanding lineman for the U of S Huskies,” what comes to mind?

Many great memories of both athletic and academic activities during my undergraduate days. I thought I was big at 235 pounds, today our U of R Rams players at my position are all over 300 pounds.

You have spent a great deal of your time volunteering for various University and community events and projects. What about volunteering appeals to you?

The opportunity to work with and learn from people from all parts of our community. The networking that occurs from volunteering makes our community a better place to live and work.

What was the main thing from your coaching experience you were able to apply in the classroom?

If you are going to achieve success you have to be organized. Planning provides for your best performance on the playing field and in the classroom.

What do student-athletes bring to their studies that maybe other students lack?

Time management skills; the time demands to be successful at the Canadian Interuniversity Sport level are high and at the same time academic eligibility must be maintained. The ability to find the right balance between athletic and academic pursuits and other parts of their lives must be developed.

Your wife Ann was a varsity basketball player for the U of S. If you had a free throw shooting competition against her today, who would win?

Don’t bet on me, Ann still has the touch.
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