

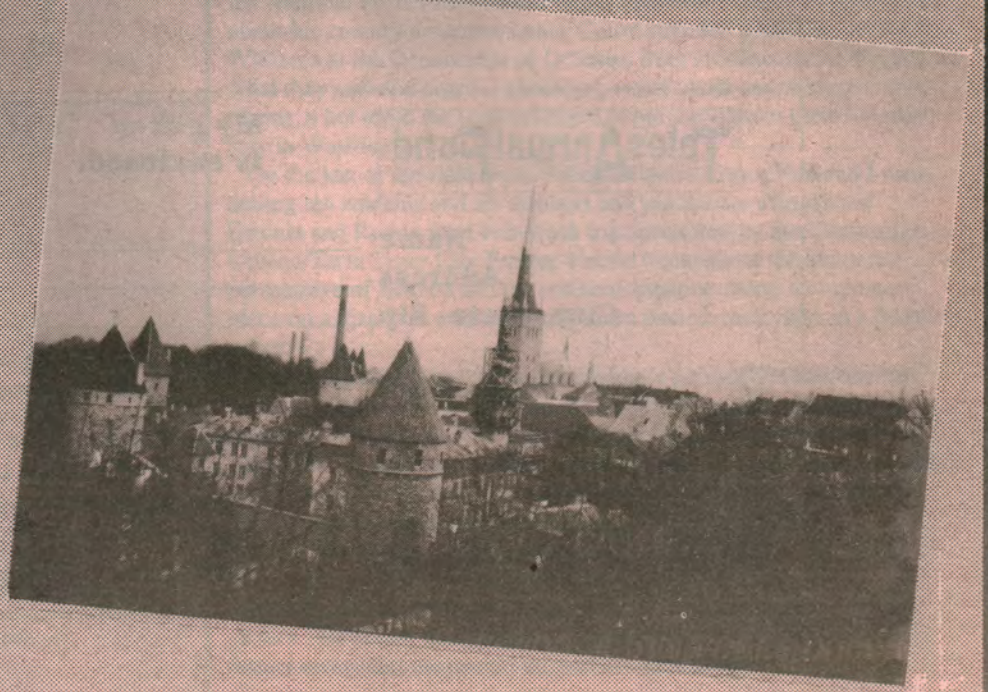
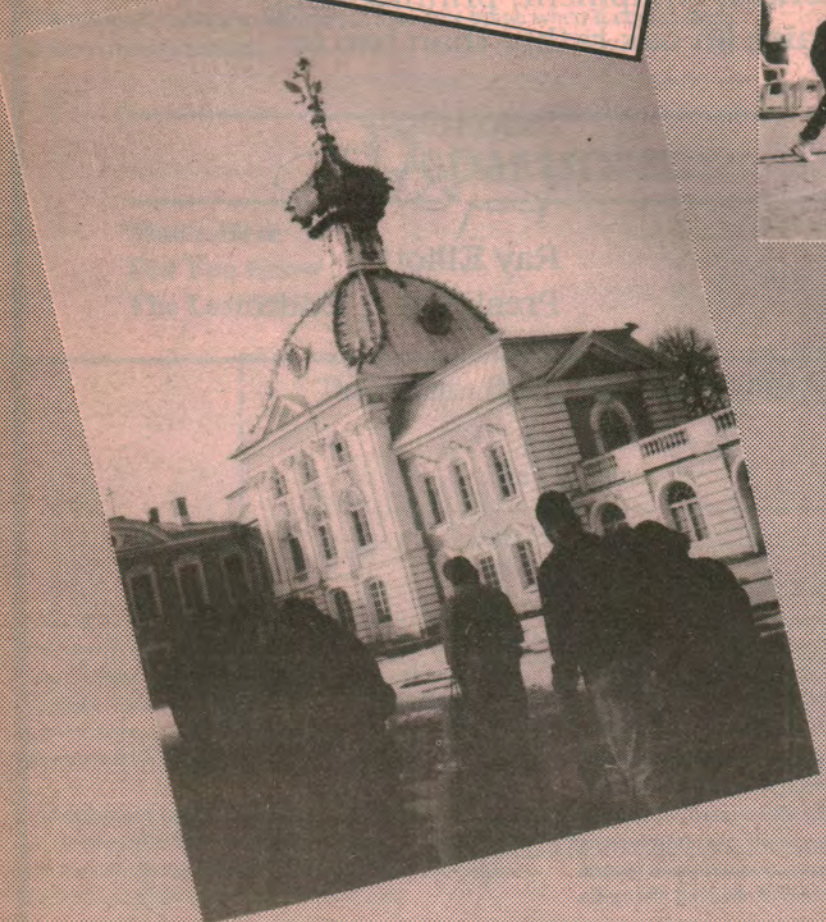
Spring 1991

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Tales



**Cultural
Excursions**



Tales Annual Fund

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The difficult is easy;
the impossible takes
a little longer.

Dear Tales Reader:

My grandfather used to tell me that you can get two or three crops a year if you want to raise alfalfa. But he said you have to allow a lot more time than that if you're raising an oak. I never realized the full implications of what he said until I started the Tales project.

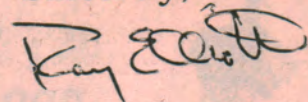
Over the last ten years, many of us have interviewed people and re-searched subjects that have added to our knowledge of our history and culture and shared it with you and preserved it for posterity. Our student writers have won national writing awards, been published in an anthology of student writing and gone on to successful careers as productive members of society. We're happy to have been a part of that and pleased that we're still around.

But to stay around and maintain the project takes money. With that in mind, we are starting The Annual Fund to guarantee that we stay around and provide the opportunity for others to be able to continue a worthwhile educational activity and community project. Without reader support, the project cannot continue providing the magazine and material as it does. And your gift will go a long way in guaranteeing that we stay around and are successful.

Because you are a Tales reader and supporter who believes in our mission of bringing old and young together around the world and writing about the experiences for publication, I want to thank you in advance for helping me get the first Annual Fund off to a good beginning.

Please make your check out to Tales from the general store, inc. (IRS #37-1107230) and send it today to R.R. #2, Oblong, IL 62449, along with the reply coupon below. Your gift will make a difference to us, and we will put it to good use in the purchase of materials, equipment, printing and mailing costs with the hope that we can raise an oak rather than two or three alfalfa crops.

Sincerely,



Ray Elliott
President & Editor

Tales Annual Fund

My gift of \$1,000 \$500 \$100 \$ _____
is enclosed.

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Tales from the general store, inc.

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Vanessa Faurie

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By Ray Elliott

History and culture are found outside the Midwest, too

Not long ago, I was talking about the content of this issue of *Tales* with some supporters. They asked me, considering the project was originally conceived to help preserve the history and culture of the rural Midwest, how I reconciled that with the fact that the students were writing about field trips to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Washington Journalism Conference, the Soviet Union and spending a summer in Spain.

Good question, I said. Part of the original idea was also for young people to learn to write by writing about the world around them by going out into it. And we're still doing that.

The project isn't like it used to be, though. Nothing is. Back when the project was launched, I had students from the newspaper I advised and journalism students from the University of Illinois who were interested in getting out into the country, talking to interesting people and writing about them.

Now I don't advise a student newspaper and don't know any journalism students anywhere who can see any benefit in going out into the country and talking to anybody. The past issue was close to our early concept. It was largely about the Champaign-Urbana area, however, which is where I teach now. I've had a teacher or two from other areas inquire about getting something going in their schools, but that's all I've heard. It's even difficult enough to get the kids I have in class to write the kinds of things I ask from them. You've got to work at it.

Students are accustomed to doing research papers, skimming through books and throwing something together for the teacher. When I mention calling someone for an interview, actually going out on an interview and then crafting a story well written enough that people across the country will read it, students freeze. Teacher and student alike are comfortable with the research process but don't seem to be comfortable writing for publication.

So when it became apparent that I would accompany seventeen students on three different field trips in a one-month period in March and April, it occurred to me that the history and culture of the world was inherent in the experiences we would share, and writing about them would be worthwhile and provide some interesting material for *Tales* readers.

Lori Adams, an award-winning and talented young artist who drew the cover and wrote the story on artist Billy Morrow Jackson last issue, was one of four Urbana students I accompanied to the Art Institute of Chicago for a new project where students write poetry about the art. Her piece in this issue describes that experience.

Soon afterwards, Phil Beth, Jeremy Colby and John Schomberg, who had just won fifth place nationally in the VFW Voice of Democracy contest, attended the Washington Journalism Conference. It is the premiere student journalism conference in the nation and was attended by 284 students from around the country. Beth attended a luncheon at the National Press Club where Poland President Lech Walesa spoke about his country's current status. Colby attended a briefing by Pete Williams at the Department of Defense. Both students wrote about what they saw and heard. Schomberg wrote about censorship in time of war, a hot topic the students heard about throughout their five-day stay in Washington, D.C.

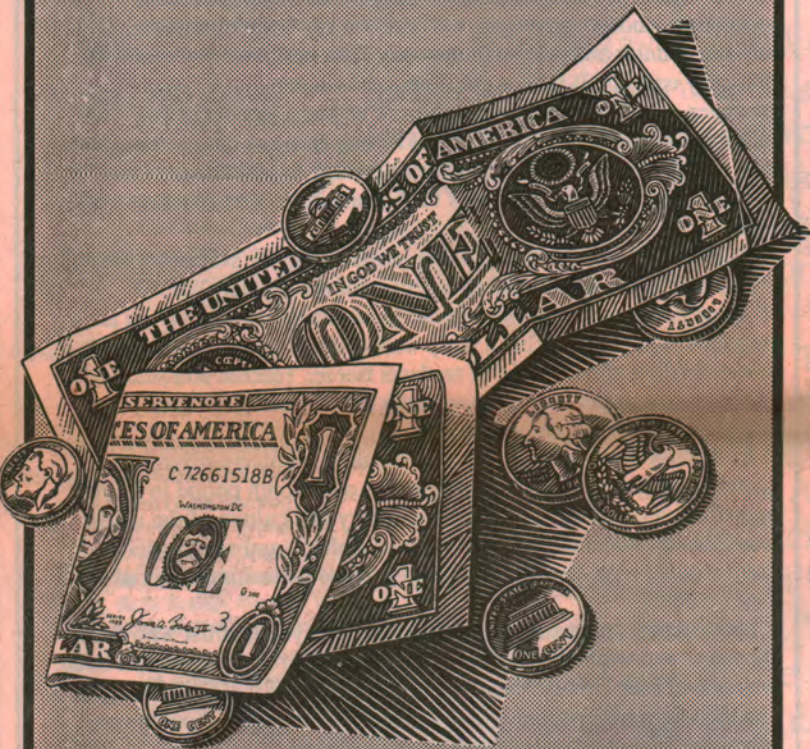
On the last of the field trips, Vanessa Faurie, Grace Han and I were among ten students and six teachers and journalists who visited Estonia and Russia for a two-week trip sponsored by the Champaign-Urbana/Tartu Sister City Project. Faurie wrote about the historical perspective of Estonia and the political situation there, including a piece on a dissident who has spent more than sixteen years in a Soviet gulag.

Han wrote about the trip from a student's perspective and how she realized what the whole trip had been about when she was halfway between Helsinki and New York after thinking about the emotional farewells and their implication at the airport in Tallinn, Estonia. And I wrote about the economic situation in the Soviet Union, the trip in general and the differences in the people we encountered there.

Please keep these things in mind as you take a look at the content of this issue. We're still interested in the history and culture of the Midwest. This time we just happened to be looking at a more global picture. We're still going out into the country. The country's just a bit farther away. But the people are just as interesting.

Mail's Here

Interested
in helping Tales
while you help
yourself?



Give us a call.
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It's a small world

Thank you for the recent copy of *Tales*, which was enclosed with the *Casey Reporter*. I grew up in Cumberland County and have always been interested in the history of that vicinity, as well as that of Champaign County.

I came to Champaign when I was a teenager, and the biggest treat I could have was to go to the Orpheum Theater to see the silent movies, followed by the vaudeville acts. During World War II, I worked part time at the Orpheum concession stand, and one day my co-worker and I got a tour of the basement. There we saw the dressing rooms of the stars. And I remember the large, round oak table on top of which many vaudeville stars had carved their initials. I am so glad that steps are being taken to preserve the Orpheum Theater.

I went to school with Tyke Vriner, and I remember how the high school crowd liked to go to Vriner's Confectionery. Sometimes we also stopped at Vaky's Confectionery for ice cream sodas. What memories *Tales* brings back to me!

I have also met Billy Jackson.

I will be looking forward to future issues of *Tales*. Please keep up the good work.

— HILDRETH JOHNSON
St. Joseph, Illinois

Volunteer worker relates to history

I enjoy your paper very much. I

am a volunteer for the Sesser (Illinois) Opera House. We are renovating and trying to keep it open. It is on the National Historical Register.

— MILDRED FITZGERRELL
Sesser, Illinois

Writer would have loved Tales project

I just finished reading your *Tales*, and I don't know whether to laugh from pleasure, or cry because I'm so touched. I enjoyed reading the whole paper, but because Phillip Beth is my grandson, I especially loved reading his story about his grandfather, my late husband. Hadley would have been so very proud and pleased.

I don't think you and Hadley knew each other. But I'm positive he would have come right over and offered to help with your *Tales* project if he had known you. He was an editor and writer. The two most important things in his life—after his family—were "communications" and "helping young people." He would have been enthusiastic about what you are doing: encouraging young people to write, especially about the history and culture of the Midwest. That's what his *Morning Chores* (book) was all about.

Writing was an important thing in our family. (We even believe in writing letters—almost a lost art these days.) Our daughter, Mary, has shown a flair with words, and I hope she will be

inspired to send in a piece or two for *Tales*. And now grandson Phillip has been exhibiting some promise also. I'm thrilled.

It would please me to receive future copies of your publications, and I'm enclosing a check with my very best wishes for what I think is a tremendously important and worthwhile project. Obviously you're one of those teachers who will make an unforgettable impression upon your students. That must give you much pleasure and satisfaction.

— MARGARET READ
Urbana, Illinois

Son's article a source of pride

This issue of *Tales* really spoke to me. Seeing something in print that my own son wrote about my father was, quite frankly, an emotional experience.

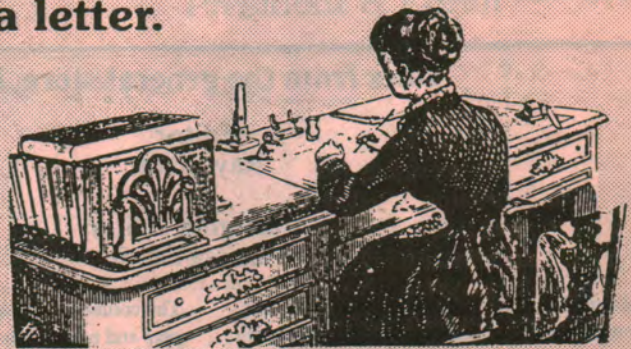
But more than that, the paper as a whole stirred my soul and excited the inner workings of my spirit. This is a *great* effort, and I'm so glad you're doing it!

Reading the articles, and speaking at the Young Authors Conference (last March in Urbana), put me back in touch with my own love of writing.

(My husband) and I applaud what you're doing and are enclosing our contribution.

— MARY BETH
Urbana, Illinois

Sit right down
and write us a letter.



Letter to the Editor
Tales from the general store
R.R. 2
Oblong, IL 62449



Photo courtesy of TBS

The debate over cattle grazing on public lands is explored in a "World of Audubon" TV special June 23 called "The New Range Wars."

Did You Know...

Program debates fate of rangelands

Cable channel TBS' "World of Audubon" series, produced by the National Audubon Society, explores the controversial issue of livestock overgrazing on public lands in "The New Range Wars," premiering Sunday, June 23, at 9 p.m. (CDT).

The impact cattle and other livestock have had on the western rangelands of the United States is one of the oldest and most disputed environmental issues in the country. "The New Range Wars" focuses on the debate between ranchers (whose livelihood and way of life are inextricably tied to public-land use) and conservationists (who are demanding reforms to protect vegetation and wildlife).

In some parts of the Southwest, the land has been degraded beyond its ability to recover. A 1984 Senate report estimated that 76 percent of the Bureau of Land Management range was either in fair or poor condition, unable to produce more than half its estimated original potential. The southwestern deserts are growing at an alarming rate. Grasslands are being taken over by juniper, pinon and mesquite shrubs.

The challenge presented by the issue of overgrazing is how to turn the dominant western

livestock economy into one that is well within the capacity of the range, while still preserving the ranching way of life.

St. Mary's City rediscovered

On March 27, 1634, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, and a group of one hundred forty "gentlemen adventurers" and "laboring sorts" bought an Indian village at the mouth of the Potomac River. Here they created St. Mary's City, the first English settlement in Maryland.

For sixty years it served as the colony's capital. Most of the people were tobacco farmers who visited town on business or to serve in the assembly. After the capital moved to Annapolis in 1694, the town gradually disappeared. But because of an ambitious program of archaeological investigation and rebuilding, the town now echoes with the sounds of the seventeenth century.

The city's unique living history project stuns audiences with its historical accuracy. In the State House, for example, visitors watch men in period clothes reenact some of the old cases in the records. The Godiah Spray family works on a reconstructed seventeenth-century tobacco plantation. And gossip and hearty

drinking songs are the daily fare at Farthing's Ordinary, a replica of an old inn.

—Maryland Office of Tourism Development

Deadwood gets boost for history

The National Park Service has entered into an agreement with Deadwood, South Dakota, on how it can interpret the history of the community through existing historic features.

The Deadwood Historical Preservation Commission and the South Dakota State Historical Center have signed a sixty thousand dollar contract that will lead to interpretive recommendations from the National Park Service.

"The National Park Service has extensive experience in helping develop the full historic potential of a location," said Mark Wolfe, Deadwood's historic preservation officer. "And we in Deadwood believe we have so much to offer our visitors. We are very excited about working with other professionals who will make recommendations in a plan called the 'Deadwood Heritage Project' that is scheduled to be completed February 1, 1992."

—Deadwood News Bureau

Santa Fe is area cultural center

Founded in 1610, Santa Fe, New Mexico, is the oldest capital city in the nation and boasts a reputation as the cultural center of the Southwest. The history, the political activity of the state government, the location and the combination of three cultures—Hispanic, Native American and Anglo—make for a unique environment that has attracted artists, writers, craftsmen, actors and musicians in abundance.

The Pueblo Indians were the original inhabitants of the land since the thirteenth century. Settled by Spanish colonists in 1610, the "Royal City" became the capital of "New Mexico."

In 1821, Mexico declared its independence from Spain and ruled New Mexico until the Mexican-American War of 1846. Following the war, New Mexico became United States Territory and opened the way for the famed Santa Fe Trail, linking east and west.

—The College of Santa Fe

Book celebrates Winchester's 125th

To commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Winchester firearms and ammunition, Random House has recently published, *Winchester: An*

American Legend, by R.L. Wilson.

The book is the authorized history of the company and its products that for more than a century have been legendary in American history. It is a companion volume to Wilson's *Colt: An American Legend*, which has sold more than sixty-five thousand copies and is the only firearms-related work to have been nominated for the American Book Award.

R.L. Wilson is a renowned collector, consultant and author in the field of firearms and engraving. He is also a consultant on American firearms to Christie's auction house.

ATTENTION

Any fall festivals or events being planned that you'd like *Tales* readers to know about? Send us the details by June 30 for inclusion in *Did you know?* for the summer issue.

Tales Editorial Office
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Urbana, IL 61801

Seeing history through the eyes of art

By Lori Adams

I first met Madame Pastoret just after her husband had fled France to avoid execution during the French Revolution. She wore a plain white dress and sat quite contentedly next to her newborn son. Back straight, eyes fixed, she looked nothing like a woman whose husband had just fled for his life. She looked nothing like a young mother unsure of what the future held for her own life. But she was.

Quickly I scratched notes on my little pad of paper. I watched as she sat so primly, searching her eyes, her posture, the tilt of her head to tell me the story she wanted me to hear.

History class had taught me nothing about Madame Pastoret and her counterparts of that time. Passing the time in class, I had written little poems or sketched in the borders of my paper just to distract myself from the teacher's monotonous voice droning on.

I learned her story at the Art Institute of Chicago. I felt Madame Pastoret's agony and pride in a portrait by Jacques-Louis David. The portrait, like her life, was incomplete. The project was cut short by the uncertainty of the times.

Before knowing her story or her name, I had taken notes on my impressions of the subject.

"Proud," I wrote, "but with a deep, inner pain that's all her own. She has fulfilled her destiny." What I saw in her face was more vivid and alive than any text I could have read about her life. I felt her emotions without even knowing who she was.

When the identity of the subject was revealed, it was frightening and exhilarating. I had seen her as she was. As my group left the room, I turned back for one last glance. I had the distinct feeling that she saw me, too, and without knowing me, had discovered who I was.

There were five of us from Urbana High School at the Institute that day. Along with about twenty students from various schools in Illinois, we were there as part of a poetry workshop. After studying eight portraits from various time periods and places throughout the world, we each wrote a poem about one of the subjects.

What had begun as a good excuse to get out of classes for a day and take my first trip to the Art Institute had become a sort of



Mme. Pastoret and her Son, by French artist Jacques-Louis David in 1791-92
Printed with permission from the Art Institute of Chicago

quest. Moving from portrait to portrait, we searched for clues in the expressions, the surroundings, the dress and hairstyles to tell something about the lives.

Rembrandt showed a young girl in a doorway, peeking out, waiting. Why did she wear the coral beads? Why was she dressed in orphan's clothes? Who was she waiting for? Why did she stand at the servants' door? We wanted knowledge about the picture and the girl. We sought to understand why the artist chose to portray this person at just that moment.

Again and again we found ourselves on a path that led straight back to ourselves. Who did we think she was waiting for? Who did we think she was? Those were the only questions that really mattered. Each new portrait we met spoke to a part of each of us, entirely different from how it touched all the others in the

group. The realization that art could teach history, religion, philosophy and still mean something new and different to every individual was something I had never expected. As an art student, I thought I appreciated art. But art had never meant a personal connection for me before—at least not other people's art. Thinking about my own revelations, I recalled my first real exposure to art in a drawing class at school.

When the high school art teacher told the class she wasn't teaching art, she was teaching how to see, I laughed and wondered how we could do art without seeing. For weeks the class worked on exercises for the mind and eyes, developing the right side of our brains and getting used to working that way. These activities seemed to have little to do with drawing or

seeing. Recreating lines and direction, noting the slant and length and variety in a single line. I slowly began to see.

But first I had to disregard my deeply entrenched notions of what things looked like. I had to see things as they really are.

Back at the Art Institute, the group passed quietly through a huge, cathedral hall. Literally in awe of the sheer quantity of artworks surrounding me, I thought of those weeks of seemingly senseless lessons on sight. How little I had seen. As our little flock moved from portrait to portrait, we started to recognize immediate reactions to the subjects. Pens scribbled madly as we noted what we saw in the painting.

But the most difficult part was still to come. With our pages of notes and impressions, we had to make a complete statement about a portrait to which we felt

particularly attached. We had to write a poem.

There we sat—twenty kids who had just experienced real sight, and not one of us could put pen to paper and make something concrete and real out of it. As a slide projector clicked through the eight portraits we had seen, I realized I was searching for the girl from Tahiti.

The portrait of the girl, "Tehe-mama and Her Ancestors" by Paul Gauguin, was drawing me into her world. She was a native of Tahiti, a young woman, still very innocent and trusting but also very torn. She wore a dress provided by European missionaries, but in the background there were distinct drawings of traditional Tahitian clothing and symbols like hieroglyphics that translated into her native words. I remember feeling her surrender to the new ways. I wrote the poem:

*If one and one were one
She would be fine.
But they are always two
And always separate.
All that has changed
Her world
Of painted walls.
Her gown striped
Are prison bars,
Separating her two halves.
Quietly, calmly now,
She accepts what's to come
And all that must go.
But who hears a thought?
Even she,
Even she is afraid to look behind,
Afraid of finding answer to the
future
Only in the past.
Afraid that the connection, the
integration,
The unity of all parts equalling
one,
Comes only from behind.*

Tehe-mama was a beautiful girl. As the group walked down the last hallway, I felt an urge to say goodbye to all the people we had met that day, all the portraits we had truly seen for the first time.

I walked out of the Art Institute with more than a few poems and some scribbles in the borders of my worn notebook. I left with an understanding of the influence of art, a sadness for all the things I'd never seen, and a deep appreciation for the power of one single expression and one single day.

Lori Adams is a 1991 graduate of Urbana High School.

A true 'man of the people' looks to America for help

By Phillip Beth

Working-class heroes are in touch with the common man, but have extraordinary integrity, courage and conviction for which all people strive. One of those working-class heroes spoke to members of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., as part of a week-long swing through the United States last winter.

Although he holds no government position in Washington, he seemed to epitomize classic American values and ideas. Ironically, though, he isn't even American.

He is Lech Walesa, the president of Poland.

He was an electrician and shipyard worker who wanted to change the terrible conditions for the working class in communist Poland. In an effort to gain rights for his fellow workers, he began the Solidarity Movement. It was the first union ever formed in a communist country.

As the group gained momentum and influence, Walesa found himself in a struggle against Poland's communist leaders over the future of the country. Finally, after years of fighting the Polish authority, his Solidarity Movement won out and a democracy replaced the communist government in Poland. Walesa was elected president.

Although these changes occurred across the Atlantic and on the other side of the Iron Curtain, they could still be compared to the American Revolution two hundred years ago. Walesa's struggle to overthrow communism is like the struggle of founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin and George Washington to persuade Americans to fight against the government of England. Walesa made a similar comparison.

"Many of the things which were new then," he said of eighteenth-century United States, "are new today (in Poland)."

Walesa brings to mind another famous American: Abraham Lincoln. Both were poor, common citizens who used leadership and integrity to bring about changes for the good of their countries. Also like Lincoln, Walesa has a great sense of humor, seems personable and is the head of a large family. His wife and eight children (Lincoln had four) had to look for accommodations in Warsaw so Poland's first family could live together after five months of separation, Joseph A. Reaves reported in the

Chicago Tribune. And while Lincoln is often called "The Great Emancipator," Walesa could also be considered an emancipator for freeing his people from communism.

Despite their similarities, Walesa is now faced with difficulties that Lincoln couldn't have imagined. As a result, Walesa must travel abroad to persuade other countries to forgive Polish debts and to attract foreign investors. In a seven-day visit to the United States in March, Walesa met with President George Bush in Washington, then traveled to Los Angeles, Chicago and New York.

While in Washington, Walesa's luncheon speech at the National Press Club addressed key issues, including Poland's debt to the United States. Then he answered questions from reporters who had packed themselves into a ballroom on the thirteenth floor of the National Press Club building.

Round tables set with fancy-looking tablecloths and centerpieces were situated throughout the middle of the large room. Eight television cameras were lined up in the back, along with dozens of reporters, cameramen and photographers. Most of the luncheon guests sat at the tables, but a balcony off to the left was also open to accommodate the

remainder of the people.

A table about fifty feet long sat at the front end of the room. A podium sat in front and center. Fifteen chairs, fourteen filled by press people and club officials, sat in back of the table. The middle chair was empty, presumably reserved for Walesa who had not arrived yet. A wall of bodyguards with sophisticated radios and Uzi machine guns bulging under their coats lined the front of the table as well.

When Walesa entered the room, more bodyguards hovered around him. He gave a few hardy handshakes as he received a standing ovation. Photographers frantically scrambled up to the roped-off area in front of the podium and the wall of bodyguards to take Walesa's picture shaking hands with various members of the press and government. All eyes followed Walesa, and he waved to photographers. Many people edged closer to see the twinkle in his eyes and his big, bushy mustache that hangs over the sides of his mouth and down to his chin. He looked strong and firm, like a capable leader should. But when he smiled, he looked like a big teddy bear.

Just as Walesa began to look like he couldn't stand having his picture taken another time,

everyone sat down to the baked salmon lunch with all the trimmings that was served before Walesa began his talk.

Walesa didn't speak English, but he tore into the speech with the fervor of a Baptist preacher. After he said a phrase or two, the translator standing beside him repeated the words in English. The translating was tedious, especially during the question-and-answer time when the questions had to be read in English and translated into Polish before Walesa would answer them in Polish and have them translated back into English.

When he told one of his frequent jokes, Walesa smiled wryly and chuckled to himself when he said it in Polish, and the audience had to wait for the translation to understand why he was laughing.

Despite the awkwardness of the situation, Walesa proved to be a dynamic speaker. He discussed his country's struggle to reform from communism and the huge debt which Poland owes to America. Walesa was hoping that President Bush would forgive the debt in light of the recent changes in government and because Poland would never be able to repay it anyhow. Walesa referred to communism as "the bad system" and seemed delighted

that a democracy had finally won out in Poland.

"But I must say," Walesa said, half-jokingly, "that this did cost you, the American taxpayer, some money."

The audience laughed at his humor. He used this sense of humor to full advantage to win over the crowd.

"I am very much concerned in the event of the failure of this (capitalistic) system," he said. "Where would I get political asylum? Neither the Eastern Bloc countries nor the American taxpayer would take me!"

As he spoke, the only other noise in the room was the clicking and whirring of cameras. When Walesa concluded his speech, the crowd cheered as if they were at a rock concert rather than a press luncheon.

Following the speech, Walesa fielded questions from the audience. One question concerned Poland's economic future. According to Walesa, the key to Poland's success is to secure foreign investments to help put the economy back on its feet.

"You came here to ask questions," he said. "But now I will be asking the questions. Why is it you don't want to make business in Poland and other post-communist countries?"

Not expecting to get an answer but to get his message out as a true champion for Poland, he seemed to be as concerned for his country as a mother is for her sick child. Even though Walesa is now looked upon as a hero, he has an even bigger challenge ahead of him before he can relax and look back on what he has accomplished.

Perhaps the biggest struggle is figuring out how to turn public services into private enterprises. He described it as a "tremendous problem," but remained optimistic in its resolution.

"We have to be victorious (in our reforms)," he said. "Only the time and price of our victory have to be discussed. ... We are like radishes—red only on the outside."

Although it is difficult for capitalism to replace communism, he said it would be all too easy for communism to replace capitalism.

"Communism could be here (in the United States) in one night," he said. "The army would move over the country and lock up all the businesses. And we know that the army is efficient for we have



Photo by Ray Elliott

Poland President Lech Walesa, seated at right, attends a luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., during a recent trip seeking U.S. support for the new democracy.

Continued on page 18

PETE WILLIAMS

Between the press and the Pentagon

By Jeremy Colby

"Are you a general?" I asked the man with Wilson sewn on the breast of his uniform.

"No," he replied with a short laugh.

I knew he wasn't a general. He was wearing the black uniform of a seaman. And why would a general have to lead the forty Washington Journalism Conference participants, of whom I was one, through a labyrinth of Pentagon corridors to our destination?

I just asked Wilson the question because the excitement of being in Washington and hearing a talk by Pete Williams had overwhelmed me. On the way to the briefing room, my excitement caused me to say several times to one of my companions, "Can you believe we're going to see Pete Williams?"

Looking back, it seems interesting to me that I could get so excited over hearing this man speak when only three months earlier I didn't know Pete Williams from Doug Williams. But I fell under the same spell as millions of Americans: I had a news fetish that was launched when the coverage of the air war against Iraq began.

I would come home from school to watch the Pentagon's daily news briefings. In the evenings I would lie on the living room couch and fall asleep watching CNN. I would even watch C-Span, the congressional network, which only weeks before I considered to be boring and an unnecessary addition to my local cable line-up.

It was this craving for news that introduced me to the wave of media celebrities that surfaced during the war. Wolf Blitzer of CNN became a household name. The same was true for the man tabloids nicknamed "Scud Stud," Arthur Kent of NBC News.

But the most welcome addition to my TV viewing was not these newsmen but the man who fed them their information, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Pete Williams.

That was what I was thinking as Seaman Wilson stopped and pointed to a doorway. I followed three people in front of me into the room. The walls of the room were covered with royal blue curtains.

This looks like the briefing

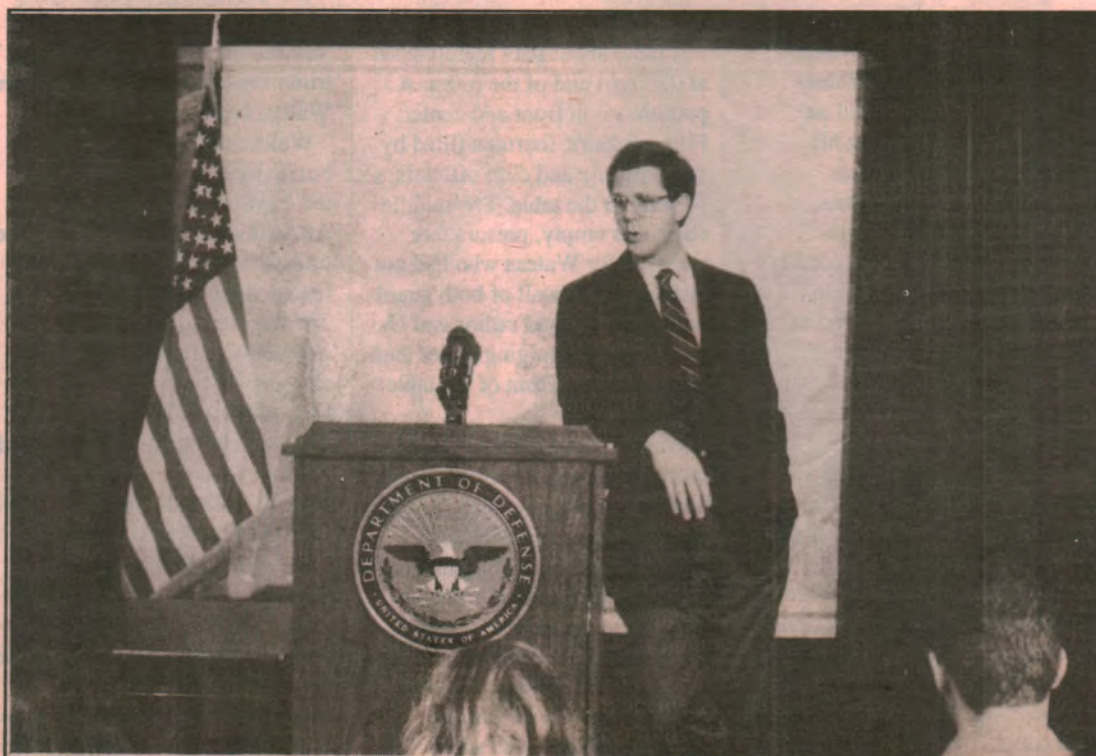


Photo by Ray Elliott

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Pete Williams speaks to student journalists in the same briefing room of the Pentagon where press conferences occurred during the Persian Gulf War.

room I always see on TV, I thought. It can't be the same one, though. The Pentagon must have several of these rooms that look exactly alike.

Taking our seats, I was lucky enough to get a chair just to the right of the podium—the same place Wolf Blitzer was usually seated. Then a man came out and introduced himself as Williams' assistant. My eagerness to see Williams himself caused my mind to wander and I'm not sure what else the assistant said.

Then suddenly a voice from the back of the room said, "Are you fillibustering, Dave?"

Everyone turned around.

"Oh, Pete," the assistant said. "You're here."

Williams was seated in the back of the room and apparently had been for some time. He had sneaked in through a back door.

He stood and walked to the podium. His attire was a little different than what he usually wore at the daily news briefings. The dark suit and conservative tie had given way to a blue blazer, forest green, cuffed pants, a light blue oxford and a red-and-blue-striped tie.

One of the conference chaperones later said, "He looked so young sitting in the back of that room, I thought he was one of you."

"You're in the Pentagon briefing room," Williams began. "If you watched the briefings during the war at all, this is the room they were done in."

My first question had already been answered. And over the next twenty-five minutes, Williams answered many more. He spoke about the history and set-up of the briefing room to press coverage to his own experiences as a TV and radio journalist for fifteen years.

The first point Williams stressed was the relationship between the Pentagon and the media. The wide smile and extra-informative tone which Williams took immediately signaled how proud Williams was of the relationship and how he thought everyone should know about it.

"The interesting thing about the Pentagon," Williams said, "is that you'll go over to the White House and you will see reporters working the White House, and you go over to the State Department and you see reporters cover the State Department. They go to work every morning at the State Department, just like all the diplomats. The same is true here in the Pentagon.

"Just down the hall, there are reporters who come to work here every day. They all come to work, they park their cars where

the generals park their cars and they come through the same doors as the secretary of the Navy does. And they come into their offices here.

"This is the only defense building of any democracy in which reporters work in the defense ministry building. I sometimes talk to my counterparts who are spokesmen for other governments and I say, 'How many reporters work in your building?' and they are shocked.

"In Britain, which of course is the great mother democracy of the Western world, my counterpart is named Hugh Culver. He works for the British Ministry of Defense.

"If you as a reporter, Jeremy," Williams said, looking down at me from the short stage and reading the name tag on my jacket lapel as I listened even more intently, "wanted to come in and interview the secretary of the Army, you would have to be escorted (in and out of the building). Not here."

Williams did admit that in spite of these facts, the media and the U.S. government are not always in agreement.

"There will always be a certain push and tug, what some people have called an adversarial relationship, between the press

and the government—and especially the Pentagon."

He then explained how much of the information broadcast or published from the Pentagon gets to the media.

"About twenty thousand people work in the Pentagon," he said. "It's the largest office building in the world," he said. Then he added, "How many people work here? About half. It's an old joke.

"The really good reporters who cover the Pentagon develop sources. You are at the ground zero of leaks. This is Mecca to leaks. Just as Cooperstown is the Hall of Fame for baseball, this is the Hall of Fame for leaks. Nothing leaks quite as well as the Pentagon.

"The good reporters walk up and down the hall. They see their sources in little cubbyholes down by the candy bar machine at the end of corridor eight, or they see them on the way into the rear entrance. Or they lurk out in front of where the Joint Chiefs of Staff meet.

"The really good reporters learn to read the subtle signs of the building like a geologist looking for Mount St. Helens about to erupt. And they can tell if the guys down there working in plans are scurrying back and forth from their offices to the Joint Chief of Staff's office."

He gave several examples of how a good reporter knows when something is about to happen.

"They learn to read the signs of the building," he said. "When I first came here to work in the Defense Department, having come from Capitol Hill, where I worked for then-Congressman Dick Cheney, there were four ways that I knew something was about to happen. The secretary (of Defense) would call me on the phone. General Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs would call me on the phone. The deputy duty officer of the National Command Center would call me on the phone. Or David Martin from CBS News would call me up and ask me a question."

From talking about the quirks of being a Defense Department spokesman, Williams faded into the qualifications of the job. He believes his reporting background helps him do his current job better.

"Now not every excellent government spokesman in history

is a former reporter," he said. "But I think some of the better ones are. I think it helps you understand what it is that reporters want. What it is that they need. I think it makes you a better spokesperson."

Making a near-perfect transition into the next subject which seemed to slip into his mind, Williams began to speak about another point of interest to the group of young journalists.

"You probably don't do a lot of on and off the record in South Dakota, do you, Holly?" Williams asked a girl whose name tag indicated she was from Olivet, South Dakota. "Washington has this strange system of talking in various levels of quotation. It's extremely controversial, every new reporter that comes to Washington thinks it's a terrible system and they rebel against it for a while. And then they just sort of give up and join the fray."

"On the record here means that you can be named, by name, and put quote marks around what you said. A background quote would be, they can use the quote but they can't use your name. They can use some amorphous way to describe you. The third thing is called deep background or off the record. That's where you will say, 'The session at the Pentagon was thought by many to be the duller briefing.' And there is deep, deep background, where you can just know it and not use it in your story."

Williams seemed to engineer

his whole talk perfectly. Using no notes, he moved from subject to subject with a stream of consciousness that had the most natural of transitions. And moving from on and off the record to the subject of why reporters ask certain questions was no exception.

"Television and radio reporters need to get stuff on tape," Williams explained. "And so they ask questions here that they know full well what the answer is, but they want you to say it because they need a piece of tape for the evening news, or they need a piece of radio tape for the next radio newscast. So they need you to talk into the microphone or look into the camera."

Another kind of question Williams described was the one where the reporter thinks he knows the answer and wants to see if the spokesperson will tell the truth. And then there are questions that reporters genuinely don't know the answers to.

"But they're all fair," Williams said of all the media inquiries. "I guess there's a kind of saying in briefing rooms that there is no such thing as a bad question. And they all have to be treated with respect, and we have to try to give the best answer that we can."

Then with a cordial thanks to all of us and just as he would finish the daily news briefings every day during the war, Williams concluded his talk by offering to answer any questions.

During the next twenty minutes, the questions ranged from

journalists' preparedness for desert living to the firing of Air Force Chief of Staff Michael Dugan in fall 1990 to the Pentagon's wartime reporting pool policy. Williams spoke candidly and answered the students just as he had answered other journalists' questions numerous times before.

But he also seemed more relaxed than at the daily briefings. He had a continuous smile on his face. And instead of standing behind the podium, he stood to the right of it and, at times, rested his right elbow casually on the corner. He laughed along with the audience when one of the students described reporters as "slinking around the Pentagon."

And he even corrected the grammar of one questioner, explaining that, "I can't help it—it's the old copy editor in me."

After the final question was answered, I began my duty (actually it seemed an honor) of being the designated thanker, a position someone filled for every conference session. I stepped up onto the platform and began, "On behalf of the Washington Journalism—"

"Wait a minute," Williams interrupted. "Let's do this right. You may have a promising future in this. Why don't you step behind the podium?"

So there I was, standing behind the Defense Department podium, trying to remember what I was there for. Finally I mustered, "On behalf of the Washington Journalism Conference, I would like to thank Mr. Pete Williams for sharing his insights on the war and its press coverage with us."

I shook Williams' hand.

As the group followed young Wilson, the black-uniformed seaman, through the maze of hallways, I knew that I had just experienced the highlight of my trip to Washington and the conference. I also knew that this was the best session, and everyone who opted for a trip to one of the foreign embassies or to the Supreme Court had missed out.

But no one on the bus ride back to the National 4-H Center, where we were staying, seemed quite as excited as me. I couldn't stop thinking that I had just met Pete Williams. When we arrived at the center, I asked one of my companions where he had been.

"My group went to the Chinese



Photo by Ray Elliott

Williams spoke casually and candidly with the students about how he works with the press.

Embassy," he said. "How about you?"

"We went to the Pentagon and heard Pete Williams speak."

He looked at me, seeming to question my proud tone.

"Who's Pete Williams?" he asked.

"He's the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. You know—the guy in the blue room doing all those press conferences."

He still didn't know who I was talking about. I guess that's O.K., though. Not everyone is lucky enough to watch C-Span and CNN eight hours a day. But it seems that the Wolf Blitzers, Arthur Kents and maybe even the Pete Williamses will soon fade

from the public eye now that the war is over. That would follow the pattern of most American fads: With every new fad, there are new "hot" people and perhaps one or two heroes. They come and they go.

Even Pete Williams admitted that when he said, "I don't know if I'll still be here by the time you get here."

Jeremy Colby is a 1991 graduate of Urbana High School and plans to attend the University of Illinois in the fall.

“This is Mecca to leaks. Just as Cooperstown is the Hall of Fame for baseball, this is the Hall of Fame for leaks. Nothing leaks quite as well as the Pentagon.”

By John Schomberg

"The first casualty when war comes is truth."

—Senator Hiram Johnson, 1917

Several hundred young journalists filled the National Press Club ballroom in Washington, D.C. Two days jammed with information and activities were taking their toll on the high school students. Eyes flickered, bodies shuffled in their chairs and heavy sighs filled in the brief gaps of silence.

The ties and high heels that had characterized the young journalists' step into the real world had lost their flash as guys tugged at collars and murmurings of sore feet dominated table conversation. It was the "real world" of journalism that they had come to see.

The shuffling dissipated as they waited to get the scoop from four journalism veterans of *The New Republic*, *The Washington Times*, *Newsweek* and Fox News. The big topic was the war in the Persian Gulf that had dominated the press for the past several months. The discussion didn't focus on the strategy of General Norman Schwarzkopf or whether a continuation of embargoes would have lessened the bloodshed with many of the same end results. The issue was what role the press played in this conflict. Before Operation Desert Storm, it seemed that the journalist's role was to be the eyes, ears and conscience of the reader or viewer. Truth was the ultimate goal.

Ted Koppel said in his keynote address at the 1979 Edward R. Murrow Symposium, "The fact of the matter is that the truth is very painful, sometimes even damaging." It is under the circumstance of war that this quote is tested and where reporters and government must find a balance between what is true and what is best.

In this day of high-speed computers and satellites that can scan the globe in seconds, the question of what is really true becomes hazy. Networks are so anxious to be first with the breaking news that sometimes accuracy is sacrificed for speed. This belief is not only held by much of the press and public, but even the highest ranks of the military.

"I basically turned the television off in the headquarters very early on because the reporting was so inaccurate that I did not

want my people to get confused," General Schwarzkopf said in a March *Insight* interview.

Topics such as accuracy, censorship, press pooling and truth headlined the panel discussion. But they all led back to the big question: what role should the media play in wartime? Perhaps a look at history can help put the question in perspective.

War reporting is almost as old as war itself. "Many of the great commanders of ancient times, like Alexander the Great, were accompanied to battle by what we'd call reporters," historian William H. McNeill told the *Chicago Tribune*. "But it might be months or even years before word of their campaigns reached home. War reporting went into history books, not newspapers, which were few before the end of the eighteenth century."

The war within the war (between the press and the military) started with the spread of the printing press and the mass production of newspapers. Napoleon became one of the

founding fathers of wartime propaganda with his communiqués—his "official" version of the war. Somehow the French always came out on top, regardless of the number of casualties or loss of ground. Napoleon quickly realized the power the press had in determining public opinion. Not only did he try to influence the minds of his own followers, but he tried to promote the belief in French dominance in battle through anonymous letters to foreign newspapers.

News traveled slowly during Napoleon's reign at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There was no need to worry about giving away strategy to the enemy as news stories were printed days and weeks after the battles had been fought.

At the end of the War of 1812, for example, Andrew Jackson received great acclaim (and eventually the presidency) with the United States' triumph in the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815. Little did Jackson know that a peace treaty had been

signed several weeks before by British and American diplomats meeting in Europe.

Throughout this time and until the 1850s, the news of war came solely from the military. There were editorial comments in the papers about battle reports from weeks passed, but the comments were from soldiers. These soldiers might merit the title "soldier-journalist," but the order of the title reveals where their priorities were. Loyalty to country meant slanted battle reports. Marching into battle forced the soldier's will to simply survive to outweigh the desire to get the truth to the masses.

William Howard Russell was different. He is often credited with being the first war correspondent. Russell was in the field for *The London Times* to cover the Crimean War. Although the war is better known for Florence Nightingale's heroics as a nurse, Russell made a name for himself and for all of his profession with his riveting reports. The truth of the pain and destruction experi-

enced by both the allies (Turkey, Britain, France and Sardinia) and the Russians struck deep in the hearts of the British public.

The British military didn't want compassion for the Russians, only their defeat. Lord Wolseley believed that Russell's compassion for the enemy affected the army's morale and performance. Outside of Britain, the military felt Russell's words gave hope to the Russian army and only strengthened its morale.

"Without saying so directly," Wolseley said, according to Lucy Salmon's *The Newspaper and the Historian*, "you can lead your army to believe anything; and as a rule, in all civilized nations, what is believed by the army will very soon be credited by the enemy, having reached him by means of spies or through the medium of those newly invented curses to armies—I mean newspaper correspondents."

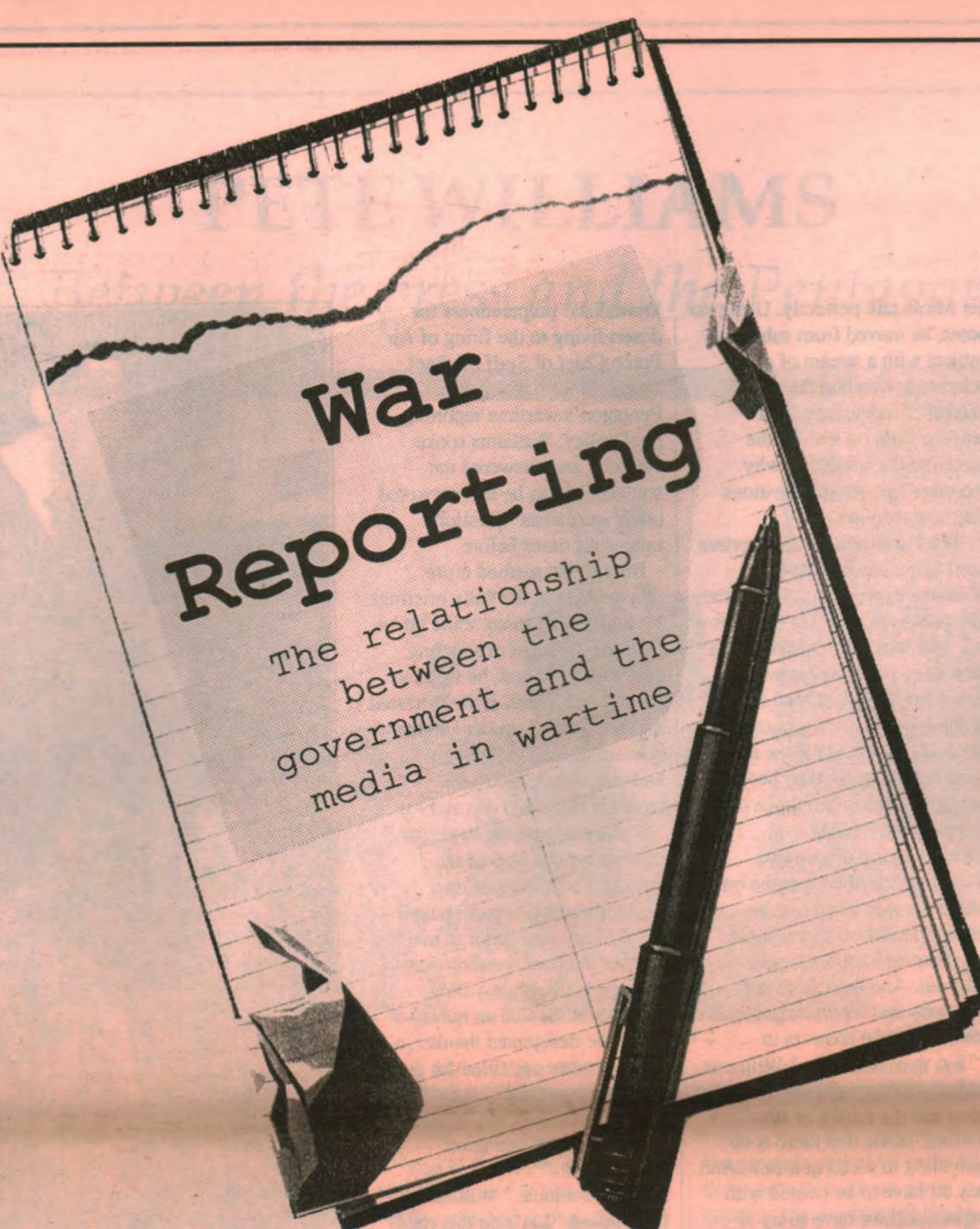
Less than ten years after reporting from Crimea, Russell was in America filling in the British on the events of the American Civil War. For the journalist, this war marked a time of great technological advancement. Samuel Morse's invention of the telegraph in 1844 was utilized across the country and war reporting rose to a new level. News of battles took minutes to travel across states rather than days. Instead of talking about battles weeks ago, the term "breaking news" came into use and the public was given next-day service on news from the battle front.

There were still close-knit connections between the press and the military, but their relationship began to sour. Some war correspondents served as press agents for generals and even fought in battle, but these same correspondents risked life and limb to get the news of battle to the nearest telegraph station to make it in the next day's paper.

General William Tecumseh Sherman was one of the first to protest the journalists' new, faster delivery of the news. In his letters, Sherman had few kind words for the war correspondent.

"They are spies," he wrote, "because their publications reach the enemy, give them direct and minute information of the composition of our forces, and while invariably they puff up their patrons, they pull down all others."

Sherman believed the press had



a death grip on both sides of the war. The words in print may have entertained the people, but they hampered the military. Stories were sometimes fabricated so correspondents wouldn't come to their editors empty-handed. The truth about upcoming battle plans and the lies fabricated by reporters at times caused much more than a loss of patience in the military. There was a loss of lives.

Sherman thought the role of the press had expanded beyond its limit. The only words the press heard from him were bitter ones: "If the press can govern the country, let them fight the battles."

But Sherman didn't live to see the Spanish-American War. Yellow journalism had reached its height with the turn of the century. Editors William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer ran publications filled with stories so sensationalized that the truth was camouflaged by fabrication and exaggeration.

Both editors knew that newspapers sold during wartime. The only conflict they could sink their teeth into at the time was the Cuban quest for independence from Spain. Each paper sent its "best and brightest" to cover the conflict. But while American interest was aroused, Hearst felt his paper needed something more and sent artist Frederic Remington to supplement *The New York Journal's* articles with pictures highlighting the Cuban uprising.

There was little uprising to be observed after Remington's arrival and his boredom with the stagnant atmosphere moved him to send Hearst a telegram: "Everything is quiet. There is no trouble here. There will be no war. I wish to return."

Soon after, Remington received Hearst's reply: "Please remain. You furnish pictures. I will furnish war."

With the destruction of the *USS Maine* in a Cuban harbor, Hearst immediately blamed the Spaniards for a direct attack, although it still is not known whether the fault lay with the Spaniards, Cuban rebels or some defect of the ship itself. The words of the press drove President McKinley to war and Sherman's words decades before stood as prophecy.

The yellow journalism and the press' manipulation of the public and the government were not

soon forgotten. The term "press pool" came from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 because only certain members of the press were allowed access to the battles. This censorship was only accented by the barring of war correspondents by the governments of Belgium, England, Germany and Italy at the beginning of World War I.

The public had lost confidence in the press because of tabloid reporting, and the military had lost all connections because the reporter and the soldier could no longer be one and the same. Soldiers felt spite toward some members of the press. Unlike some reporters who lived and ate with the ordinary soldier, some journalists brought their entourages in tow and had, by comparison, luxurious accommodations.

The media regained some respectability in the years building up to the outbreak of World War II and the Korean War almost ten years later. The press and the government finally agreed that some censorship was necessary for military security and as a courtesy to the families of the dead. Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Office of Censorship and the Office of War Information to help insure national security and accurate reporting.

Widespread fabrication and sensationalism were no longer an accepted part of mainstream journalism, but the question of whether the public was receiving the truth still existed. Responsibility shifted, and the question was now asked of the government, not the press. Most people believed that the media reported the truth—but how much of it?

During the Korean War, *New York Times* reporter James Reston said, "The official art of denying the truth without actually lying is as old as the government itself."

The public read the words of eyewitnesses to events, but it didn't know what other reports may have been omitted. The American people didn't know the true magnitude of the destruction of Pearl Harbor until months after the fact. No one knew where to draw the line between strengthening military security and deliberately keeping something from the public knowledge.

One counter to this new twist in the truth was the use of radio during World War II and the Korean War. The voices of

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VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

The Vanguard of Freedom

Editor's Note: This essay received first place in the state of Illinois and fifth in the nation in the 1991 VFW Voice of Democracy contest.

By John Schomberg

My father and I walked among the pale, white tombstones that stood at attention in their respective rows. The markers looked cold to the touch and seemed to stretch on forever along the freshly mown lawn.

At the time, I only came up to my father's hip and had to crane my neck in an effort to make eye contact.

"Why did they all die, Dad?"

My father took a deep breath, searching for simple words to answer this complicated question. He began by using words like liberty, freedom and democracy. After he had finished his reply, he looked down at my blank stare and was forced to look for an answer that would hit closer to home.

Stroking his beard, he continued: "They died so your grandfather could farm his own land. They died so when you grow older, you'll have a part in choosing the next president. They died so you and I can say what we believe without any punishment."

"Why is that so important? We've always been able to do those things."

"I know, son. But they died to guarantee that you always will."

As a child, I didn't quite understand how I could be better off than anyone else in the world. I was only allowed to have one dessert, had restricted television privileges and had to be in bed by eight o'clock. I thought I had it pretty rough.

I still think as that child until I remember the images from history books and television: the East Berliner hurling herself through a barbed wire fence in the midst of gunfire; the television cameras zooming in on the latest defector from the Eastern Bloc; and the student protesters in Beijing running from the gunfire of their own armies.

In these three cases, people chanced imprisonment, separation from their families and the loss of their lives so they might enjoy the freedoms that I'd taken for granted all my life.

In attempting to gain an appreciation for the value of freedom, I looked at not only the history and governments of other countries, but also at the past of our own United States.

In the American Revolution, in addition to desiring separation and freedom from Great Britain, we wanted a government "by the people, for the people." We created a democracy.

Democracy is a freedom and a

right outlined in the Constitution and first acted upon through the drafting of the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights created freedom of speech, religion and due process: rights that are still a vital part of American society.

So how is democracy a vanguard of freedom?

Flipping through my dad's old and well-worn Random House Dictionary, I read the second definition of vanguard: the forefront of any movement or activity. Translating this into my own words, I found vanguard to mean a leader by example.

The United States has been a leader by example in its establishment and preservation of freedoms. In the past few years, the United States' example has played a big part in bringing down the Berlin Wall. Democracies around the world have provided an example for the Eastern Bloc countries to emulate as they begin to realize what Winston Churchill said years ago: "Democracy is the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried."

As other countries realize the benefits of giving power to the people, those images from history of the East Berliner, the defector and the Beijing students can become images of the past instead of problems of the present.

It's incredible that a single example of democracy can bring change to the rest of the world, but it has. Democracy helped change the lives of our forefathers, and it's helping change the lives of the oppressed around the world. But what does it do for us today?

In a word, everything. Let's not fail to realize that every action we take is in some way a product of our freedoms that have been created by democracy, whether it be going to the church of our choice, voting for the county clerk or expressing what we believe through a VFW essay.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, "Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them."

I guess that's what my dad meant in the cemetery. I never realized that someone could stop my grandfather from farming. I'd always taken it for granted that I would get to vote when I got older, and it seemed absurd that I could ever be persecuted for what I believe in.

Our forefathers remembered those privileges ... the oppressed pray for them ... soldiers fight for them.

Thinking back to those long rows of pale, white tombstones, I now see a different face and story behind each one of them. If those soldiers could die for those privileges, at least we could learn to appreciate them.

By Vanessa Faurie

In 1920, a mere baby step backward in European history, the small country of Estonia on the Baltic Sea declared victory in its War of Independence against heavyweights Soviet Russia in the east and Germany in the west. For the next twenty brief but proud years, Estonia was in control of its own destiny.

The country blossomed during that time, embracing its own heritage, history and culture, only to fall victim to a secret squeeze play concocted in 1939 by power mongers Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. In their greed to collect countries like rare coins, the two agreed that Russia would annex the productive country and its two Baltic neighbors, Latvia and Lithuania, for its own collection. So in July 1940, the Soviet Red Army moved into the capital cities.

In the memoirs of Andrus Roolah of the State Propaganda Bureau of the Republic of Estonia, he described the day, June 21, 1940, when the Soviets took over the government buildings in Tallinn, Estonia:

"I was probably the last official to leave Toompea Castle that night," Roolah wrote. "Descending along Komandandi Road, I cast a glance back over my shoulder. The sight I saw and shall never forget was dread-inspiring. The first-floor windows of the Castle were wide open and the curtains were flapping in the wind. ... Strange, shouting people were standing on the balcony; they had fixed a red flag to the rails."

The Estonian national flag—three horizontal bands of blue, black and white—was gone from sight, and the Soviets began the fallen country's indoctrination into the communist way of life.

The Nazis, however, went ahead and took Estonia from the Soviets in 1941 anyway. And though the Nazis were guilty of inflicting mass suffering throughout Europe, they were, for Estonia at least, an improvement over the Soviets. The Nazi occupation lasted until the Soviets returned in 1944. And again, Estonians were caught in the crossfire.

In February 1944, Reet Noorlaid was born in a Tallinn hospital. Mother and child were still under medical care when Noorlaid's father came one day and informed the hospital that his wife and child were leaving. It was not safe for them to remain. Ignoring the doctors' protests, the



The traditional Estonian national flag now flies atop the town hall in Tartu, Estonia.

ESTONIA

works toward regaining independence

man took his family and went into the countryside for safety. About one week later, a bombing raid on Tallinn severely damaged the hospital and many nearby buildings. A theater about a block away was destroyed and many of its patrons who had fled to the cellar for shelter were crushed or suffocated underneath tons of rubble.

Reet Ligi, who was about 14 or 15 at the time, remembered a time when Russian planes attacked people who were fleeing the city in search of safety. The air raid sirens were sounding, and Ligi was with a group of people who all carried a suitcase or a few personal belongings. The planes came in and began firing their guns. Everyone dropped their bundles and scattered for their lives in a flurry of confusion and terror. They threw themselves into surrounding fields and tried

to burrow and hide in the ground.

When the danger passed, however, Ligi looked back to where the suitcases had been abandoned and saw an elderly woman standing by them alone. No one had looked after the helpless woman. The look on her face was not hateful, she remembered. It was just empty and perhaps somber. And Ligi, though very young herself, said

'It was such a wonderful feeling and such togetherness that we had not realized or felt for many years.'

she felt no fear, no relief—only shame.

People such as Noorlaid and Ligi and other Estonians old enough to remember those times were more painfully aware of what the loss of a free and independent Estonia meant. Those twenty years of freedom were enough time for Estonians to know they wanted it back.

Beginning in 1941 and again in 1949, while under Stalin's rule, Estonia's best and brightest, the intellectuals, the social activists and the political critics, were deported in waves to serve sentences for supposed "crimes against the people" at labor camps in Siberia. Many of them were taken with no warning, and families often never knew the fate of their missing loved ones.

"One family, our neighbor's family, was deported," Ligi said. "And our landlady, she was a

very kind person and she was a widow. But because her husband, who had been dead for a few years, had been a rich man, she was deported. We all somehow felt it very closely."

Some were more fortunate, but they still lost their jobs and their dignity in the community. That happened to Ligi's father, a university professor, and in some ways it may as well have been a death sentence for the proud man.

"After the war, again there were arrests and interrogations that my father had to bear. And all those humiliations when he was fired from the university.

"I have been brought up in constant danger and terror," Ligi said. "But we could not speak openly about it, even with our friends."

It has only been within the last few years, since Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the concept of *perestroika* throughout the Soviet Union, that Estonians have been able to speak openly about the Soviet occupation without fear of persecution.

"We have more liberty," said Ligi, who is a longtime English teacher in Tartu, the second largest city in Estonia. "We can express our views and opinions. We can write about them. For instance, the words 'Russian occupation' were not used a few years ago. We can more or less speak our minds about things."

Ligi is more vocal than many of her colleagues. Though some people might not think it proper, she said she would not be punished if her words appeared in print.

"I am older than my colleagues," said Ligi, 62. "And I remember the times when Estonia was a real republic. My parents had instilled in me an understanding of the cultural and historical continuity. I really know what an independent, small republic means. I have never forgotten my roots, and I have never forgotten the traditions of my parents and grandparents."

It was the upsurge of renewed freedoms that prompted the efforts in recent years by the three Baltic nations to regain their independence from the economically troubled Soviet Union. In 1988, during the height of this new-found nationalism, something happened at a gathering to commemorate the anniversary of the 1941 deportations that had not happened since 1940.

"We organized an open-air meeting in the town hall square in Tartu," Ligi said. "Many people

The price of one's dissidence

had gathered there, and the meeting was to begin at eight o'clock. It had been a dull, grey day; the sky had been overcast. But somehow when the bell in the tower of the town hall began to strike eight hours, the sun appeared between the clouds.

And at that very moment, several Estonian flags were hoisted in different parts of the square. It was the first time after many, many years that we saw them flowing in the wind freely, our dear three-color blue, black and white flag. It was so beautiful somehow that most elderly people, at least, couldn't help crying.

"When we heard those speeches and memories and some optimistic declarations about the future of Estonia and how we wanted to become a free state again," Ligi added with tears welling in her eyes, "it was such a wonderful feeling and such togetherness that we had not realized or felt for many years."

Last year the parliaments of the Baltic nations officially redeclared their country's independence, but the Soviet Union has not accepted the decrees and still maintains its authority over the republics. Peaceful negotiations have not made much progress, however, and many young people who were caught up in the whirlwind of seeking independence have become disillusioned and disinterested.

Then last January, the Soviet army carried out a violent crackdown against demonstrators in the capital cities of Lithuania and Latvia. And escalating economic problems have prompted the more immediate concerns of feeding and clothing one's family.

But optimism is not gone from the hearts of independent-minded Estonians.

"I can't be but an optimist," Ligi said. "Of course, I'm a realist, too. We can't expect relative changes very quickly. We have to be tolerant. Many people are impatient. They want to achieve things very quickly and are easily disappointed. At least our children will see a better future."

Vanessa Faurie accompanied a group of educators and high school students to Estonia and Russia last March.

On the walls of the staircase that leads to Mart Niklus' two-room dwelling in Tartu, Estonia, messages neatly printed in black implore the other tenants to leave the house and let him live in peace.

The upstairs of the large house was rented out during Niklus' absence. And since his return in 1988, he has been battling in the courts to reclaim what was once his.

Niklus left his home in 1980 after he was arrested for the fourth time in twenty-two years. His crimes were that he wrote and spoke against the Soviet occupation of Estonia, and protested his arrests and the searches of his home and person.

Until the last few years, such arrests were all too common in communist-controlled Estonia. No one was permitted to openly criticize the Soviet government, let alone publish articles in foreign newspapers.

But this once vibrant author and political activist is now a weak 56-year-old man in ill health as he leads his guests into the rooms. There is little space to walk because of the numerous books and papers stacked in piles on the floor and against the walls—articles written by him, newspaper clippings about Soviet and Estonian politics, books about human rights and injustices, memorabilia from his years as a prisoner.

A wreath of barbed wire hangs above the door to the second room like desecrated mistletoe. Those who enter under it will learn ugly truths about an unjust political system that attempts to dehumanize anyone who does not go along with it.

The second room is as cluttered as the first. A large desk is covered with papers. There is no bed, only a thin mattress rolled up in a corner. Books line one wall and are stacked all over the room. So many political posters and photographs cover the walls that they often overlap each other. One poster shows a black shoe and a brown shoe crushing two hands beneath them. Above are the English words "Hitler & Stalin 1939" with drops of red blood raining down from them.

A radio playing classical music



Above: Mart Niklus today at his home in Tartu.

At right: An earlier photo of Niklus in his prime was printed on postcards that were sent to Russian authorities calling for his release from prison.



is a soothing contrast and has the practical function of keeping out any distracting noises from other tenants. Now it also masks the conversation inside.

"I'd like very much to see independence, but I don't know. Some have just put a blue, black and white flag on their lapel," Niklus said, referring to the Estonian national flag that was, until recently, displaced by a Soviet version. "It must be built up by honest people with a pure past."

Niklus has seen some changes in his homeland in recent years. The push toward regaining independence from the Soviet

Union in the wake of *glasnost* has had many people who were once pro-communist or simply neutral now declaring their support for Estonia. Others, like Niklus, were always for a free Estonia.

At the time of his fourth arrest, Niklus was apprehended in the street. He was sentenced to ten years, plus five years exile, and was considered "especially dangerous" because of his previous arrests (1958 - eight years, 1976 - fifty-seven days, 1980 - 13 days).

His solitary cell at the gulag in the Yural Mountains was cramped and cold. The small hole in the green door was for his food

to be passed in. He sewed gloves all day as his labor, and was let out of the cell for a half-hour each day. He was allowed to have no more than five books in the room. Many people in the camps did not survive the harsh conditions.

"I have always been deeply convinced that I was right in my beliefs," Niklus said. "If I perished, it was not in vain."

During his incarceration, campaigns were waged throughout the world to secure his and other prisoners' release. President Ronald Reagan wrote letters, and U.S. senators signed a large scroll, which Niklus now has and treasures.

In 1988, some KGB agents arrived at the camp and told Niklus he would be pardoned if he would state that he regretted his actions. Niklus refused and didn't hear any more about the matter until three weeks later when he was informed that his sentence, of which he had already served eight years, had been reduced to three years, no exile.

With a train station full of supporters and well wishers, Niklus returned to Tartu in July 1988 and has been exonerated of all charges as if nothing had ever happened. He was invited to visit the United States shortly afterward and received wide media attention. He was even able to thank Ronald Reagan personally for his efforts during a stop in Los Angeles and proudly shows a photograph taken at that time.

Niklus now makes a meager salary as a freelance translator but may one day teach again after his housing dispute is settled. He continues to write and speak the way he believes, just as he always has. But even in the days of *perestroika*, he is sure his actions are covertly monitored. "The KGB hasn't been abolished," he said.

Yet even after all his years of imprisonment and persecution, Niklus admitted he can do no differently in the quest for an independent Estonia.

"That is my nature, (the) essence of my character," he said. "I can't find any compromise."

— Vanessa Faurie

The Exchange

By Ray Elliott

After attending the operetta *Krahvinna Mariza* in Tallinn, Estonia, the night before leaving for the United States, four of the Americans decided to stop by the hotel bar for a drink before going to bed. The bar was dimly lit and sparsely decorated with ottoman-type low stools or couches and nothing on the walls. Only a few glasses sat on the shelves behind the bar. Warm champagne seemed to be all anybody was drinking. The place looked like an American bar going out of business.

"How much?" one of the Americans asked the bartender and pointed to the lone bottle of champagne on the back bar.

The bartender looked around to where the American was pointing, then back. "Twenty-seven rubles," he replied in a heavy Russian accent.

"For a glass or a whole bottle?"

The bartender reached under the bar for a bottle, sat it on the bar and said, "Twenty-seven rubles."

The American put thirty rubles on the bar, pointed to the glasses and held up four fingers. Twenty-seven rubles, at the rate the Americans had been exchanging money on the street in the black-market system was slightly more than a dollar. From Tallinn to Leningrad, they had received about twenty-five rubles for a dollar on the street at the black market rate and about twenty-two rubles for a dollar in the banks at the official rate.

Twenty minutes later, the Americans finished the bottle and looked around to order another one. A waitress came around to collect bottles and glasses from all tables. She spoke to everyone in Russian and cleared the tables. It was only 11 p.m. but apparently the bar was closing for the night.

On the other side of the hotel lobby in an area that also served as the main dining room, a rock band played older American soft rock music to a larger, more cheerful crowd. People smiled and laughed and danced in the slightly brighter, simply decorated ballroom.

A young Estonian waiter rolled back a folding door after much discussion and showed the four

Americans to a table with a white linen tablecloth and silverware and china for four diners. They ordered another bottle of champagne. This time the waiter brought a cold bottle and four glasses, opened the bottle and filled the glasses.

The band began to play "Feelings," a slow, somewhat maudlin song from the early seventies. It had been a long time since any of the Americans had heard the song. One of them wasn't sure he had ever heard it. They laughed about the song and watched the crowd.

Fifteen minutes later, the waiter returned and asked in halting English if the Americans wanted another bottle of champagne.

"How much is it?" one of them asked.

The waiter stared at the wall for a few seconds and finally said, "Twenty dollars for both."

"Twenty dollars," the American said. "We just bought a bottle at the other bar for twenty-seven rubles. How many rubles?"

"Rubles very bad money," the waiter said.

"I know that. But how many rubles?"

"Rubles very bad money," the waiter repeated.

"You don't take rubles?"

"Rubles very bad money."

"How many marks then?" the American laughed and asked.

"Finnish marks."

The waiter stared at the wall again, counting to himself. "Fifty marks," he finally said. "Two bottles."

"Fifty marks?" one of the other Americans said. "At four marks to the dollar, that's a better deal, I guess. How many rubles, though?"

"No rubles. Rubles very bad money."

The Americans decided to get another bottle and paid fifty marks for the two bottles of cold champagne. "That's about \$6.25 a bottle compared to a little more than a dollar in the other bar," one of them said. "That's more than three hundred rubles for a bottle here."

"With the average worker here making less than that in a month, that's pretty expensive champagne," another of them said. "Imagine having to work for more than a month just to buy a



bottle of champagne."

Whether the local people worked for the rubles or the Americans changed dollars for them, the difference in perspective was a fast-paced lesson in the global economy and how years of the communist ideology affected it. Whenever the Americans had to pay for something, they always thought they were getting a bargain. Their Estonian hosts, both teachers and students alike from homes with above-average incomes, thought the Americans were "being foolish with their money."

Earlier in the day, the hosts had taken the American visitors on a tour of Tallinn, Old Tallinn and the surrounding area. At the harbor, the bus had stopped so everyone could walk down to the waterfront.

One of the Americans had seen a small concession stand on the other side of the bus and left the group to see what was cooking on the charcoal grill. He ordered a Pepsi and paid a ruble for it, trying to decide what kind of meat he smelled.

"What's that?" he asked and pointed to the small pieces of meat threaded on wooden sticks and sizzling over the charcoal. He hadn't had charcoal-broiled meat in months.

The man looked quickly at him and then back to the grill. "Bif," he said, picked up one of the sticks, held it out to the American

and pointed for him to take a piece.

Beef or whatever, the American thought, it's tender and tasty. "How much?" he asked.

The man hesitated, looked at his partner and finally said, "Six rubles."

The American handed him six rubles and took the plate with meat, kraut and slice of dark rye bread. Not bad for a quarter, he thought.

Later, the Estonians asked how much he had paid for the food. When he told them seven rubles for everything, they laughed and looked knowingly at each other.

One of them had been a teacher in the Tartu, Estonia, school system for nearly forty years. Her six hundred ruble monthly salary was comparable to the younger teachers. The year before, she and a group of four other teachers and twenty students traveled to the United States. At the time, the air fare from Moscow to Washington was about two thousand rubles.

Then on April 1, 1991, the air fare for the same trip was raised by the government to about five thousand rubles. Had the trip been a year later, few of the Estonians would have been able to go without financial sponsors. And the teacher's salary was more than double the average Soviet citizen's salary of two hundred seventy rubles.

"Yes," the Estonian said, "we may be able to travel more freely,

'Change money?' the black marketeers said, sidling up to the brightly dressed, loud-talking Americans. 'You buy watch? Russian officer's watch here.'

but how may we pay for this travel at those impossible prices?"

The woman, like most Estonians, walks or takes a bus practically everywhere she goes. She does take a train to a small country home where she keeps a garden. A car is a prohibitive luxury to her. Prices for a compact car rose from seventeen thousand rubles to thirty-five thousand rubles overnight. Such cars would sell for seventy to one hundred thousand on the black market. Far out of her range.

This Estonian has lived all of her sixty-two years without a washing machine. Before the prices rose, she had been seventeenth on a waiting list and thought that with the way things had been going, she might one day be able to own one and no longer wash her clothes out by hand. After the prices rose, the machine would cost her nearly two years' salary and was rarely available.

"I think I will be dead before I reach the top of the list," she said, then laughed slightly. "I have always said that if my name reaches the top of the list after I have died, then I will come back from the dead to claim my washing machine. Now, I am not so sure I could pay for it."

The Americans had heard that the Estonians' present economic situation was the result of the central Soviet government trying

to solve the problems brought about by more than seventy years of communism, searching desperately for ways to pay for its past sins and looking to the future for ways to survive.

Prices had been two hundred percent to three hundred percent on necessities: toilet paper, shoes, clothing—practically everything. The only thing that didn't seem to raise was a bottle of vodka.

Soviet citizens were rationed to three bottles of vodka, the Americans had been told, every two months. A bottle was 10.50 rubles but was readily available on the black market for a higher price.

And the black market is a way of life in many parts of the Soviet Union, especially for foreigners with hard currency. For the Soviet citizen, the black market is different. When the Estonian or Russian wants something, he or she calls the right people and buys what is available, affordable and necessary.

With the Americans, the black market offered a slice of Soviet life, a few souvenirs and some haggling. On the square in Tallinn, people with watches hit the Americans within minutes of their arrival. The black marketeers asked twenty to twenty-five dollars for the quartz military watches or the traditional mechanism watches with red stars and faces of Soviet political leaders and cosmonauts on them.

"That's too high," the Americans said. "We were buying those watches in Leningrad for eight to ten dollars."

"You have been to Leningrad?" the young black marketeer asked. "Prices there are very cheap. This good watch. Twenty dollars."

"Ten."

"You give fifteen. No lower."

When the watches and money exchanged hands, the Estonian hosts shook their heads, and the Americans smiled brightly as they strapped on new acquisitions.

"It will probably run until they are gone," one of the Estonians said half-jokingly. "They are expensive and do not last long. I think you would be wiser to invest your money in something that is made here and is representative of Estonia. That has value. You waste your money on those

Russian watches. They are no good."

No matter to the Americans. They wanted to do business.

At the hotel where the Americans stayed in Leningrad, a phlanx of enterprising Russians descended on foreigners almost the minute they walked through the door. Where one group was seen, the other was not far behind.

"Change money?" the black marketeers said, sidling up to the brightly dressed, loud-talking Americans. "You buy watch? Russian officer's watch here."

Besides a fair selection of watches, a few American bucks would buy military coats and Soviet flags and other souvenirs the American bought by the suitcase, much to the disdain of the Estonian hosts who not only thought the items too expensive but lacked respect for the culture producing the items.

"Vodka?" the black marketeers asked. "Champagne? Wait here."

It was the nearest thing to capitalism the Americans could see. They weren't sure where the merchandise came from. They saw items being taken from the trunks of cars. And they suspected that anything not readily handy, like the vodka or champagne, could be stolen nearby.

Sometimes when these men hovered too closely and too openly around the Americans, a Soviet militiaman would saunter through the area. Hands clasped behind his back and long brown coat buttoned to the neck, he would look at them and jerk his head toward the door. They would quickly move away without a word.

Still, it was possible to buy what was available. One American bought a Soviet military jacket from a man for ten dollars. The man removed the jacket from a bag on a blustery day, handed it to the American, stuck the ten dollars in his pocket and headed off into the late spring night.

Another American walked out of a book store just off Lenin Square and stood with his back to the wall and looked out over the streets while the others shopped for posters, cards and other souvenirs. He hadn't been on the street two minutes before he was spotted.



'You have been to Leningrad?' the young black marketeer asked. 'Prices there are very cheap. This good watch. Twenty dollars.'

'Ten.'

"You buy Russian officer's watch?" the young man asked haltingly as others spotted the man and came quickly through the crowd.

The American looked at the watches, all priced from seven to ten dollars, and shook his head. "A group of Americans will be coming out of here in a few minutes," he said and smiled. "They might be interested."

The first Russia mumbled something and walked away. Two other young men took his place.

"Change money?" one of them said.

"No."

"Buy Soviet officer's coat? Ten dollars."

"You buy American sailor's coat?" the American said, holding the lapels of his Navy pea coat out as the two young men gathered around and fingered the buttons, looking closely at the anchor on each of them.

"How much?" one of them asked.

"A hundred dollars."

"Hundred dollars?" both men said at once, their eyes lighting up. "Too much."

"Too much? That's what they cost in the United States. Well, seventy anyway."

The evening before, the Americans and their hosts had gone to see the opera, *La Traviata*, in the fashionable old opera house. On the way to the

door, people asked about tickets.

"Where did you find the tickets?" one Russian asked the Americans as they walked along. They weren't sure if he wanted to buy or sell.

"I just want to know where you find tickets," the man said, seeing their uncertainty. "I want to buy tickets but cannot find."

The Americans shrugged and went through the door. One of the Estonians told them they had come from an agency in Tallinn. The Americans watched the elegance of a society on stage. As they did, one of them remembered a story one of the Estonians had told them about riding a crowded Moscow rush-hour subway years ago. An old man, leaning over in his seat on his cane, stared at the floor and spoke aloud to no one in particular. "They say the Americans don't have it as good as we have it," he said. "But I wonder if they have it as bad as this?"

The American knew the Russians didn't have it as good as it was in the opera house and not as bad as it sometimes seemed.

The subways in Leningrad weren't crowded when the Americans rode later in the evening. They rode escalators a half-mile down so the subway could go under the river. And they paid the fifteen-kopek fare, equal to something like a penny in the United States, that anyone paid to ride anywhere in the

system and wondered how it was possible.

One of the Americans had just ridden the Washington, D.C., metro system from the outlying suburbs to the downtown area a few days earlier. It had cost \$2.40 one way for the trip.

On the way up to their rooms on the last night in Estonia, the four Americans saw a group of young Estonians and Americans. It was late and one of the four asked what everybody was doing in the lobby.

"Hanging out," one of the Estonians said dryly and smiled slightly.

It wasn't until next morning that the Americans learned that some of the Estonians had been "hanging out" all the time and had walked fifteen minutes to see if there were some tickets left for the operetta and that some of the young Estonian men had stayed in the lobby all night because there was only money for so many tickets and so many rooms.

There had been some unused tickets but the rooms were taken.

Some of those same young Estonians said they couldn't go to breakfast because there weren't enough prepaid meals. But since several of the Americans didn't come to breakfast, there were chairs sitting empty and plates unused.

Continued on page 18

Difficult goodbyes to new-found friends



The author, at left, enjoys a party with her Estonian and American friends.

By Grace Han

"See ya later," I said casually. "I'll see you tomorrow at school," the Estonian student replied.

I awoke the next morning at 6:30 to a windy, cold and overcast day. Typical for Estonia in March. By now I was used to waking to such days for this had been my eighth straight morning waking up in Estonia.

Breakfast, like the weather, was the same day after day—crusty white bread, dark rye bread, cheese, sausages, pimento loaf, pickles, canned apples, milk and juice. I filled my plate with bread, cheese and a sausage. My host mother urged me to eat more. How could I possibly tell her that what I was craving for was not pimento loaf but a chocolate doughnut?

The morning hustle seemed as though I was at home, getting ready to go to school in Urbana. But I was half-way around the world in Tartu, Estonia. As we hurried out the door, my host mother reminded us to take an umbrella, just as my mother would have.

My host, Kadi, and I maneuvered around the huge, muddy potholes in the dirt road in front of her house. We were late for the bus. Once at the bus stop, I noticed the people waiting. They peered at me from the corners of their eyes. I must have stuck out like a sore thumb. Not only did I look like a tourist with camera in hand, I also look Oriental. Some of the people were being very inconspicuous about their stares, not wanting me to know they

were looking at me. But others did not care; they just turned around and stared at me.

An elderly man and I engaged in a staring battle, and I was losing bitterly. After what seemed like an eternity, I thought it all was ridiculous and turned away. He, however, did not.

The bus finally turned to corner. But as it approached, I almost wished it hadn't come. It was packed inside, and there were at least ten people at the stop wanting to board. I gave Kadi a look of desperation.

"Just push your way in," she said.

I literally felt like a sardine. My face was smashed up against a man's coat, and a drunkard was slapped up against me, coughing on my neck. I could smell the hard liquor on his breath. I felt like I was on a New York subway.

The bus dropped us off near the downtown area. It was a good ten-minute walk to the school. Walking along the streets of Tartu, I couldn't help but notice that no matter how hard I tried, I could not make eye contact with anyone. My eyes only met cold, hard faces of people who only go about their business. With a quicker step and bundled up to protect against the bitter wind, they walk on by.

My host attends the Tartu Secondary School No. 2, the English language school. There they learn English beginning in the second grade, making my host and the other student hosts, who are in the eleventh and twelfth grades, fluent in English. The

school is structured differently than in the United States. Students can come and go as they please. There is no attendance system. Credit is issued on a test basis, which means that a student can attend class as many times as he finds it necessary to pass the final exam and receive credit for the course.

The first class Kadi and I went to was English. When the 7:45 bell rang and the teacher walked in, a silence fell over the room and students were immediately ready for class. The eleventh-grade class was taught entirely in English, and students consistently stayed within the language—something our foreign language classes do not do. For most of the forty-minute period, the class listened to taped dialogues and answered questions in English.

"Do you want to go now?" Kadi asked.

"What do you mean? Don't you have to go to class?"

"I don't really need to."

"O.K. Let's go shopping."

A group of us "skipped" afternoon classes to go to the town square where most of the shops are.

"What is that store over there?" I asked.

"It's a jewelry store. Do you want to go in?"

The jewelry store sold more than jewelry. It had vases, leather-bound books, Estonian national flags, stickers and pins. In another store there were T-shirts, wooden boxes, watch bands, scarves and even a sheet of Snoopy stickers. A hand-knit shawl sold for eighty-eight

rubles, which is almost half the average monthly salary in Estonia. In U.S. dollars, the shawl was about three dollars and fifty cents. In another jewelry store, I bought a necklace for about seventeen cents.

A 2 p.m. our hosts walked us to the University Cafe where we ate lunch (they call it dinner). Meals in the cafe always consisted of meat, potatoes, vegetables and dessert. Our hosts never ate dinner with us; their meals were not paid for. So they came back for us an hour later. Actually, we American students didn't even know who paid for our meals. Later we learned that local Estonian businesses and individuals paid for all of our meals, entrance fees, accommodations and other expenses during our two-week stay.

The other American students and I walked downstairs afterward to find our hosts sitting on a long bench waiting for us.

"How was your dinner?" they always asked me. It made me feel uncomfortable. "Fine" was all I could ever manage to reply.

"What do you want to do now?" the Estonians asked the Americans. They were always willing to do whatever we wanted to do, take us wherever we wanted to go.

"Let's just walk around," I suggested.

Outside, the afternoon sun finally revealed itself after a gloomy morning. A slight breeze rustled through the bare tree branches. It was still a bit chilly, but I could feel the beginning of spring. And so could everyone

else. People were out everywhere. The town square was filled with people casually walking along, children playing. For the first time, I saw people smiling and laughing as they walked on the cobblestone streets. No one was in a hurry to get anywhere. It was a beautiful day.

"What are those people standing in line for?" I asked Kadi, as I noticed a long line of people standing outside of a building.

"They are waiting to get into the new restaurant," she said. "It's called Bistro, the only Italian restaurant here. I hear that it's quite good."

"Do you want to get some ice cream?" asked Marko, another Estonian host. All the Americans were in favor of the idea. Marko and Kadi said something to each other in Estonian.

"We think the ice cream store around the corner would be best."

Once they mentioned ice cream, I noticed that practically everyone on the street had an ice cream cone in hand—a sure sign that it was definitely a nice day. So with our cones, we went to sit on the benches by the river that runs through Tartu. After taking a few photographs, we were tired and all decided to go home.

"O.K., come to my house at seven o'clock," Kadi announced. Then she turned to the other Estonian hosts and told them in Estonian.

"All right, guys. See you later," I yelled as I moved away from them. Kadi and I rushed home to prepare some food for the evening.

"What are we making?" I asked as we stood in her family's kitchen.

"I don't know," she said. "I never cook. What about a cake?"

"Well, if you never cook, how are we going to make anything?" I said and laughed. She gave me a sneer and then smiled. We attempted to make a chocolate cake from a recipe she translated from Estonian. Where's Betty Crocker when you need her? We got all the ingredients together in a bowl.

"What are you going to mix it with?" I said, thinking she'd whip out an electric mixer. No such luck. She held up a fork. I couldn't help but burst into laughter. Each armed with a stainless steel fork, we went at the batter. When we poured in into a pan, it came out in lumps.

"Is it supposed to look like this?" Kadi asked.

"I've never seen a chocolate cake look like this before," I said.

But we put the thing in the oven and hoped it would turn out all right.

"Let's go find some music to play."

"What do you listen to?" I asked, half-expecting her to say something like "polka."

"I really like Sting."

I was surprised. He is one of my favorites, too. We brought down the tape player and some other tapes for the party. And we listened to Sting while I introduced Kadi to Jell-O. She thought it was "very strange, but good." When I told her it had to be refrigerated to set, she laughed.

"It's so cold outside, we can put it there!"

The guests began arriving at 6:30. Alar, another Estonian host, started a blazing fire in the fireplace. It really was getting cold outside, and some people had to walk quite a while to get to Kadi's home. We all gathered around the fire and talked. We talked about everything.

"What do you want to study at the university?" someone asked Marko.

"I would like to enter university to study English. And you?" he said, shyly, and looked away.

"I'm not sure what I want to study exactly," the young American woman said. "But I am interested in sociology. That's why I came here—to learn about a different culture, you know, get first-hand experience on the way a different group of people live."

"Are we really that different?" Alar asked in a condescending tone.

"No," she said, unsure of what to say. "It's just that before I came here, I didn't know too much about Estonia and the Soviet Union, you know? I mean, I thought, 'Oh, the Soviet Union. Yeah, that's the country that doesn't have anything.' I just wanted to find out what it really is like."

"I think that's what a lot of Americans think about the Soviet Union and Estonia," he said. "Am I correct?"

"Yeah, I think they do, unfortunately. So what do you think about the United States?" she said, wanting to change the subject.

"It's nice. I liked it. I agree with Bush; Saddam Hussein is a madman and must be stopped."

A chuckle went about the room.

going to parties, going shopping, learning how to folk dance, faking how to folk dance, spending time with our host families and even having snowball fights made me stop and think where all the time went.

Before I knew it, we were spending our last night in Estonia's capital city of Tallinn. Built in 1980, the hotel was quite nice. But since it was expensive for one night's stay, many of our hosts stayed with friends and family in Tallinn or had stayed in the hotel lobby all night.

After breakfast, we headed for the airport.

At the airport, the glass doors slid open as I approached them, fighting a losing battle with my suitcase. I reached into my pocket and came up with my U.S.

a cold stare, making sure that I matched the picture in the passport. Then he stamped my visa.

"Fill out the customs declaration as best as you can," a loud, female voice said. "Leave the back side blank and don't forget to sign your name."

I filled out the customs declaration to indicate that I was taking nothing out with me, which was a lie. I looked up and saw Aija, an Estonian host, with tears welling up in her eyes until she could not hold them back any longer.

If I look at her anymore I'll just cry, too, I thought. So I won't look at her. I saw the American teachers giving their Estonian counterparts goodbye hugs. I knew it was time. I didn't want to leave my friends, but I had no

tip of my tongue, I realized just what I had said. I couldn't help it; it's just natural for me to say that because I say it all the time.

But Kadi simply smiled. We both knew.

"I'm not so sure of that," she said. There were tears in her eyes. "But we can always hope, can't we?"

I couldn't say anything. I just nodded, then gave her one last hug and turned away.

"Please keep in touch," I said. "I'll write first, O.K.?"

"You will write first?" asked Marko. "Can I believe you?"

"I promise I will."

"I promise to write to you, too. But if my letters don't go through and you do not receive them, please don't think that I am not writing to you ... because I am."

At that moment, I couldn't help myself. Uncontrollable tears streamed down my face. I watched as Alar hoisted my suitcase onto a conveyor belt. He turned to me and shook my hand. Then I looked at him and he laughed and gave me a hug.

"Have a safe trip back home," he said.

"I will," I said, practically forcing the words out because I was crying so hard. "Goodbye."

As I was about to walk through the glass panels, yet another person approached to say goodbye. He leaned over and gave me one last hug.

"I will write you a long letter."

I tried to say something, but I bit my lower lip instead and nodded. I turned and walked through to the customs desk.

"Are you taking any Soviet currency out of the country?" asked the customs official. I shook my head no as I felt the few rubles and kopeks in my pockets.

I stood by the glass panels for one last glance at my friends. Wiping tears away, I turned to get my passport stamped. As the official checked the passport over, I kept thinking, so long as he doesn't stamp it I am still in Estonia; I can still go over and be with my friends. Those few pieces of paper bound in leather were what determined that I could leave.

The official stamped my passport and visa.

Then from inside the booth, he opened up the gate and waited for me to walk through it. The gate looked like a turnstile in a subway station, but all I could think of was an iron curtain.

Continued on page 18

As the official checked
the passport over, I kept thinking,
so long as he doesn't stamp it
I am still in Estonia; I can still go over
and be with my friends.

"Well, how do you feel about (Mikhail) Gorbachev?" I asked.

"Gorbachev? Well, let me say we like Yeltsin a lot better than Gorbachev."

"Why Yeltsin?"

"Because he supports our (the Baltic nations') independence, and Gorbachev does not," he said directly. "We all hope for our freedom one day. It is difficult to be so hopeful, but we must be."

It was late before everyone left. "What time do we meet tomorrow morning?" I asked.

"Nine-thirty, I think."

"Great. Well, I'll see ya later," I said casually.

"O.K. Bye."

The hours we spent together soon turned into days, and days into weeks. Trips to Leningrad, south Estonia, visiting museums, going to concerts and the theater, going to school with our hosts,

passport and plane ticket. I looked around and saw the doors where, just two weeks earlier, I had walked through to meet my hostess and the other Estonians.

Just like in U.S. airports, there were some ads on the walls. There was one for Apple Computers. Just above it, shiny, red paneling covered the ceiling. I saw where we had to go through customs. There were large, long glass panels between where I stood and the customs agents. Through the panels I could see the black boxes where the Soviet officials check and stamp passports. Behind the partition, I saw what looked like a twelve-year-old boy decked out in a Russian military uniform. I could've sworn the image was out of a World War II movie.

I slid my passport underneath the window and watched as the young Russian looked at me with

other choice. I went over to Kristi.

"Well, I guess this is it," I said and let out a long sigh. "I'm gonna miss you."

"I will miss you, too."

We hugged. I went to every Estonian, whether I was particularly close to them or not. But I saved the closest ones for last. I went over to Kadi.

"Here," I said and handed her a letter. "It's for you and your family for being so nice to me and taking good care of me. Don't open it until you get home, O.K.?"

"Thank you. I am going to miss you very much. But we will keep in touch, right?" she said and gave me a hug.

"Yeah, we have to write to each other," I said. "Oh, I'm going to miss you." And we hugged again. "O.K., well, I'll see you later."

As soon as those words left the

Walesa

Continued from page 7

seen it in action."

Walesa has determination and a sense of humor, but he is equaling impressive in his diplomatic skills. Although he openly criticized George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev for some of their policies, he managed to persuade the crowd rather than alienate it.

At a time when it's almost impossible to find the words "hero" and "politician" describing the same person, one needs only to take a look behind the deteriorating Iron Curtain. Ten years ago, no one could have imagined that someone who could be considered an American-style working-class hero would one day be the leader of an Eastern Bloc country. But Walesa's charisma, dedication and conviction may cause Americans to realize that the people who were once trapped by the constraints of communism are not inferior, as many people believed.

"We are not backwards," Walesa said of the Polish people. "I think we all came down from the trees at about the same time."

Phillip Beth is a 1991 graduate of Urbana High School. He wrote about his grandfather, writer Hadley Read, in the last issue of Tales.

War

Continued from page 11

Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite and others kept listeners informed from across the ocean, and the news came into the American home at the touch of a dial.

Then during the Vietnam War, the president exercised no strict control over the media. Military censorship briefly faded from existence.

And Vietnam stands as the first war that took place in American homes on the small screen. Television brought the horrors of war into the comfort of people's living rooms. The press was somewhat indiscriminate in what it showed. For many, the pictures were all too real, and news from the papers and on TV swung American opinion about the war.

The press had not been so free to roam since the days before William Howard Russell. The question then became whether such open coverage was better than censorship and withholding information.

The recent Gulf War revealed an answer. Military commanders were not going to tell everything they knew, but the American people would know the facts.

"One lesson in press relations that American authorities took from Vietnam to the current war in the Gulf is that the less said the better," Arthur Lubow said in a

recent issue of *The New Republic*.

"The one thing I did become convinced of," General Schwarzkopf said in *Insight* magazine, "is that because there would be so much instantaneous reporting, it was incumbent on any commander to make absolutely sure that everything they said was the truth."

Journalists report the facts, but Americans still don't get a full picture. They saw Iraqis both dead and captured, and they saw Saddam Hussein's video of captured allies. But where were the American dead? Where are the charred, the disembodied, the corpses of the U.S. service people lost in the war? Hidden under that American flag and shiny casket is someone's son, brother or husband. That is also truth.

The words seem disrespectful and alarming, but they ring true. No war is as neat as pinpoint bombing or as clean as the press and the government have made this recent one out to be.

Looking at the history of war reporting and listening to the National Press Club panel discussion indicated that the role of the journalist is to make sure what is reported does not threaten national security or the public's well-being.

If reporting the truth will threaten military maneuvers, then the majority view among the media is to withhold that information. But what about the American casualties? In seeing the caskets, people feel compas-

sion for the families and a tear comes to the eye. In seeing a motionless, blood-soaked body lying in a desert, a queasiness stirs in the stomach and even breathing comes less easily. A mother's shriek fills a neighborhood when she sees her son's mangled body fill a TV screen. The truth lies in both pictures.

John Schomberg is a 1991 graduate of Urbana High School.

Exchange

Continued from page 15

Breakfast was quiet. It was hard for the Americans to figure. Everything in the country was uncertain. Nobody knew for sure how the economy would swing or what the future would hold.

"You will come to the United States again?" one American asked.

"How can I?" the Estonian said. "I have not been asked."

"I'm asking you."
"You must send formal invitation," he said and explained the steps necessary for him to travel. "You will come back to Estonia?"

"I'd like to."
"I will write you to come back. We will fish at my uncle's in summer."

"How will we pay for this?"
"With rubles," the young Estonian said and smiled.

"Rubles very bad money," the

American said and smiled.
"Dollars, too."
"Yeah. Dollars, too."

Goodbye

Continued from page 17

As soon as I walked through, the gate closed and I turned for one last look. Most of the females were crying, and the males just looked somber, trying to keep their composure. I walked through the metal detector. And when I turned around again, I could no longer see them; they could no longer see me. There was only a mirror, and I just saw my own reflection. I would never see my friends again.

I was thinking on the plane from Helsinki to New York: "It's been four hours since I saw them. I bet they're at home now. It only takes a couple of hours to get from Tallinn to Tartu."

I missed them already. In just two short weeks, I made friends whom I will remember for the rest of my life. We know that we may never meet again, but to quote one of the hosts as he referred to the Americans, I will remember the Estonians as "a sparkle that revealed itself for a moment and vanished."

Grace Han is a 1991 graduate of Urbana High School.

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The Last Word

A little Gypsy in every soul

By Chell Porqueras

One evening around midnight, after spending time with a friend, I walked through the streets alone, hurrying to get home safely. My heart sank as I approached a young woman not older than the mid-twenties sitting in my doorway shooting heroin into the veins of her thigh.

I faltered a moment and analyzed my options. Then I rushed forward, exchanging an apologetic look and asked to be excused. The woman shifted uncomfortably, giving me space enough to squeeze through and brush her worn cut-offs and T-shirt as I passed.

Our residence, which was on a convenient side street, attracted all of the drug addicts in the neighborhood. It was so ugly and so dirty, the syringes were scattered all over the street.

I had already spent two years in Barcelona, Spain, as an adolescent and felt a certain belonging to the city. But what I belonged to was an upper-middle-class neighborhood with laced trimming around everything. Sure, I had been downtown and had seen the decadence of society. But I had never actually lived in the midst of it all. My next stay in Barcelona came as a culture shock after I thought I knew every corner of the city.

When my father told me that we would be living in a professor residence, a kind of boarding house, in the most dangerous and active district in the city. I was delighted. I had wanted to live in the lively area ever since I knew it existed. The area is called the *Barrio Raval*, an extremely overpopulated fishing district.

It is also a major commercial center with small stores and businesses of all types—bakeries, hotels, restaurants, bars, hardware stores, practically everything imaginable. I could find anything necessary or desirable at a moment's glance. But also at a moment's glance, I could see the amazing amount of squalor and despair—from the dog waste at every step to the drug dealers waiting to make a sale to the prostitutes waiting to be a sale and the putrid stink of rotting garbage everywhere.

My father quickly set guidelines for my older sister and me, hoping to protect our vulnerabil-

ity. We were told to always take taxi-cabs after dark, never to give money to anyone begging, and we were given a curfew of 2 a.m., an early hour in the midst of Barcelona nightlife.

Despite the guidelines, we had an amazing amount of freedom. We explored the narrow, winding streets, finding underground, anarchist establishments full of long-haired, teenaged guys dressed in black down to their combat boots. There were hidden bars full of older men with unshaven faces and stained clothes that reeked of alcohol, night clubs and corner boutiques, occult record stores selling sinister music, and types of people I'd only seen in David Lynch movies.

Many of the people I saw were old, poor and begging. Many decrepit, hunchbacked women dressed in black were mourning their husband's death for maybe as long as my Spanish grandmother had—thirty years or more. I also saw young, glassy-eyed men and women wandering the streets like zombies. At first I was under the impression that they were merely insane until I encountered the young drug addict in my doorway.

Three massive dumpsters lined the street below my window. It was the site of a free-for-all shopping location for the residents of my neighborhood. After spending hours digging, they would come across many interesting things—broken furniture, torn clothing and just plain old scraps of junk. It made opening my window for a bit of evening breeze to escape the tremendous heat of summer very unpleasurable. The permanent smell of rotten food eventually became tolerable.

Two weeks into our stay, my sister and I started summer school, an intensive Spanish course which lasted a month. My father advised us to take a longer route to avoid the most perilous streets—the Red Light District.

Ignoring his advice, we would rush through the streets at 9 a.m. They were already lined with haggard-looking prostitutes, busy sex shops and bars full of drunken, perverted men who would often scream out insinuations that filled our faces with shame.

After class, around 1 p.m., was walked to the market, *La Boqueria*, to buy lunch. It was a maze of a place with more than one hundred meat, poultry, fish, fruit, vegetable, nut, bean and olive stands open to shop at comparatively. There were large slabs of meat hanging about, whole chickens stripped of their feathers and their necks broken, and enormous fresh fish in plain sight.

Women screamed out their orders and fought with each other over turn-taking. They nonchalantly made their way through the market with their handy denim-framed shopping bags on wheels, sweeping my ankles as they briskly shifted their carts.

After lunch and *siesta* hour, I would look out the living room window which had the view of the corner street. I could see my half-naked neighbors leaning out their windows and even got a good view of their homes. It looked like a scene directly out of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.

I watched the comings and goings of Arabs in their place of prayer directly across the street. The women were completely covered, and the men wore long gowns and wrapped their hair in white turbans.

If a neighbor's music got too loud or an argument in the street got a little noisy, no one refrained from screaming, "shut up," at the top of their lungs. Even I caught myself doing it a couple of times.

There was a gypsy band across the street. After dinner, sometime around 10 p.m., the members would start practicing. They had male and female vocalists, as well as an acoustic guitar, and they did a lot of loud, strong clapping. Gypsy music is emotional—full of screaming to near crying, and the clapping takes the place of percussion. It's like an opera in the way it captivates, and it was soul-soothing to me. They would practice late into the night, sometimes as late as 3 a.m.. And they were so loud it seemed like they were in my room.

When darkness came, the streets didn't sleep, but rather, life began. My sister and I already had friends in Barcelona and made new acquaintances during this stay. Nearly every night before school began and every weekend after that, we



would join a group of them at 10 p.m. to indulge in the nightlife.

The meeting place was in the center of town at a metro stop in front of a crowded cafe full of German, Italian and American tourists. Loud European fashions—halter tops with baggy denim, bell-bottomed pants and platform shoes brought styles of past decades back into the Nineties. The Americans dressed in college sweatshirts, blue jeans and tennis shoes were made to feel quite under-dressed.

More than anything, the area was a place to meet people and to watch strange characters go by. African musicians often came by to play reggae drums and sing some tunes. They would pass around their yellow, red and green hats to receive contributions.

After meeting our friends, we would walk down the *Ramblas*, a sidewalk lined with newspaper stands, floral shops, vendors of every kind, performers trying to make some money, Hare Krishnas chanting their melancholy song and handing out literature and invitations to their Sunday vegetarian lung, artists painting religious depictions on the sidewalk and others painting portraits.

We had many favorite cafes, bars, discos and points in town that we would frequent. One disco called Karma was located in the biggest drug-trafficking plaza within five minutes of our residence. The name suited the

place. Many of the customers were tourists, while the other patrons were the local freaks of the city. As I walked through the smoke-filled bar, I noticed tall, made-up women wearing leather mini skirts and having voices far too low for any female. My friends and I ended many evenings roaming the Gothic Quarter, admiring the beautiful stained-glass windows of the cathedral or other fascinating spots in the heart of the city.

The realities of life in Barcelona hardened me to a certain extent, but the education and experience I received just living the daily life was superior to any of my years in a protected environment at school. It was a continuous learning experience—how poor and desperate people survive in a large city. I wondered at times why they bothered to live such a harsh life. But the immense vitality and strong spirit they expressed through the shrill high and low sounds of the never-ending Gypsy music made me recognize and appreciate their way of life, which is as full of happiness, love and passion as any other.

What appeared to be a hideous situation of poverty and deprivation turned out to be a profoundly rich experience for me as I came to understand their culture and tradition.

Chell Porqueras just completed her junior year at Urbana High School.

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