

UNEVEN LIES



In courtrooms and conference rooms, the cause of gender equity in sports has been playing sub-par the last twelve months. But away from the media glare, people such as Erica Webster show how balance is becoming an everyday reality.

BY JOHN ALLEN
PHOTOS BY STEPHEN COLLECTOR

Maybe it's the Bermuda grass.

The stuff is tidy. Cropped to between half an inch and an inch and a quarter on the fairways, manicured to the low pile of new carpet on the greens; weeded, watered, and diligently policed for any itinerant atom of litter; pampered and protected until it's as green as money — Bermuda grass is orderliness made manifest.

Looking out from the broad swath of lawn that connects tee to green on any golf course, it's hard to imagine that such turf could become a battlefield, especially in the untidy wars of gender equity. Civility seems to be the law in golf, and nowhere is that more evident than at the Mountain Course in the hills west of Vail, Colorado, where head professional Erica Webster '93 manages the hooks and slices of the genteel members of the Club at Cordillera.

But every course has its dangers. "Here the typical hazards aren't traps and bunkers, but uneven lies," she says. "We have a lot of undulating ground."

Like most affluent country clubs, Cordillera is something of a temple to organized leisure, which may make it sound trivial. But then, in America, organized leisure has grown into a vital industry all its own — and golf is one of that industry's most thriving sectors. According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, there are now some 15,195 golf courses in the country, an increase of 33 percent from 1974. More than 27 million Americans play some half a billion eighteen-hole rounds of golf every year.

The Mountain Course, the first of four golf courses that Cordillera operates, opened for business in 1994. Webster joined the staff that summer as an assistant professional, when the

club had only sixty members. This year, there are more than eight hundred whacking tiny balls toward small holes in the thin Colorado air.

"Most of them are just picking up the game," says Webster. "They're typically successful vice presidents and presidents and company owners — self-made people for the most part. But because they've made their own money, few of them have had much time to play. Truthfully, a lot of them struggle with it."

But if their struggle isn't enough to break the sculpted peace of the fairway, then the conflict over college athletics might be. This year, a collection of coaches, athletes, celebrities, and politicians are all taking aim at Title IX, the law that governs sexual discrimination in education, and thus in collegiate athletics.

In 2002, Title IX marked its thirtieth year as U.S. law, and last August



Teaching is one of a head professional's main duties. Webster says she teaches "at least fifty, often more like seventy-five" different golfers each summer, spending at least four hours a day, six days a week on the Mountain Course's lesson tee.

Education Secretary Rod Paige appointed a commission to study its successes and shortcomings. But Paige wasn't motivated merely by an anniversary. The previous January, the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) had filed suit against the Department of Education, claiming that Title IX regulations promote "gender-conscious cutting and capping" that ultimately restricts opportunity for male athletes. The wrestlers' faction became an army when several other sports organizations, including the College Swimming Coaches Association of America, the College Gymnastics Association, and the United States Track Coaches Association, joined the suit in support of the NWCA.

Further, Paige's boss, President Bush, had obliquely expressed dissatisfaction with the way that Title IX is enforced in his 2000 campaign, criticizing "any quota system that pits one group against another."

In response to this political environment, the commission fractured. In early 2003, it issued a report recommending a variety of alterations to the

way that the Department of Education looks at Title IX. In particular, it offered suggestions for allowing schools more freedom to tailor the men's and women's athletic opportunities they offer to the necessities of the institutions' athletic budgets and to the interests of their student bodies.

But several vocal members of the commission issued their own "Minority Report," charging that the majority's recommendations would "seriously weaken Title IX's protections and substantially reduce opportunities to which women and girls are entitled under current law." In an editorial, the *New York Times* called the commission's work "The Attack on Women's Sports," and a variety of groups, including the Women's National Basketball Association, began circulating "Save Title IX" petitions to prevent changes to the law.

But as golfers say, you drive for show, putt for dough: when it comes to winning tournaments, the long shots that thrill crowds aren't as important as the short shots. The driving work of groups like the NCWA, the Department of

Education's commission, and the WNBA may take up all the press. But Webster, putting away in the hills above Vail, is a quiet victory for gender equity. People such as Webster, who make a career of playing, teaching, and organizing athletic activity, show that Title IX isn't merely a symbolic or a regulatory issue — it makes a difference in everyday life.

WHERE IT LAYS

Webster's road to Cordillera began at UW-Madison, where she golfed for the varsity women's team for four years. She went on to become an expert golfer, tying for second in the Colorado Women's Open in the summer of 2002. She's a direct beneficiary of the effects wrought by Title IX, and in her role as head professional, she's indirectly promoting gender equity for future generations of athletes.

According to the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, which recently released a study entitled "Title IX at 30," the purpose of the law isn't to build professional athletes. "The quest for equal opportunity in sports has

always been about the physiological, sociological, and psychological benefits of sports and physical activity participation," the group wrote. "Olympic medals and professional sports contracts are not what Title IX is all about."

However, professional golfers are somewhat different from other paid athletes. Though the sport does produce a few stars of the tournament tour — the Tiger Woodses and Annika Sorenstams — most professionals in the world of golf are local course pros. The PGA of America now has more than 27,000 members, which enables it to boast that it's the "largest working sports organization in the world." These pros are the teachers and administrators who enable others to participate in the game, whether for competition or just for fun.

"Actually," says Webster, "I don't get to play nearly as much as I would like to — maybe once a week in the summer, though I try to get into three or four tournaments a year." Instead, she spends her time giving lessons, managing a staff of up to seventy-five employees, including caddies, and helping prepare Cordillera for its member tournaments.

All this is typical work for a head professional. Still, in the world of golf pros, Webster is a rarity. She's one of only two female head professionals in all of Colorado, a state with 261 golf courses. The typical head pro, she says, "is male and over thirty." Young, female golfers in search of role models have to look a great distance to find one.

"There just aren't a lot of female professionals out there," she says. "It isn't a road that a lot of women golfers take. There's no reason why this should be true — being female shouldn't be an obstacle. I guess there's still a certain reluctance to hire them at a lot of clubs." Before she could take on the uneven lies at Cordillera, Webster had to find a more level playing field.

PLAYING NINE

Thirty years ago, it would have been difficult to imagine today's debate over the law that enabled her to do so. Though

Title IX is now discussed in heated terms — credited for the rise of women's ice hockey or blamed for the decline of collegiate wrestling — in 1972, the law was just one of several education amendments, and it appeared to have nothing to do with sports.

Title IX is Congress's attempt to outlaw sex discrimination (and, in an odd coincidence, discrimination against the blind) in schools. Its salient point is contained in just one sentence: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of

women; or by offering opportunities to men and women in a ratio that mirrors that of the student body.

UW-Madison follows the third measure. "We've got about 53 percent women in the student body," says Cheryl Marra, the UW Athletic Department's senior women's coordinator, "and we're consistently within 1 to 3 percent of that in terms of athletic opportunity."

Of course, this wasn't always the case. Until 1974, UW-Madison had no women's varsity athletic teams. That fall,

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sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Nowhere in any of the additional clauses and sections does it mention athletic programs or teams, though the authors of the legislation were careful enough to make exceptions for religious groups, military training programs, social fraternities and sororities, and beauty pageants.

Instead, the athletic controversy stems from regulations that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare — and its descendant, the Department of Education — started drawing up a few years later. In 1975, the department explicitly extended the law's enforcement to cover equal athletic opportunity, and in 1979, it created further guidelines for athletic compliance. Those guidelines were clarified most recently in 1996.

Essentially, a university can comply with Title IX in one of three ways: by showing that its athletic opportunities match the interests and abilities of its students; by demonstrating a history of expanding athletic opportunities for

it created its first collection of women's sports, including golf. In 1989, the drive to achieve gender equity became mandatory, when a Title IX complaint was filed against the UW, and the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights began to scrutinize the workings of the university's athletic department.

However, the desire to achieve gender equity doesn't combine easily with budget constraints, and eventually the UW had to make difficult choices. In 1991, the university dropped several low-revenue sports: men's and women's gymnastics, men's and women's fencing, and baseball, a men's sport. Since 1995, it's added three women's varsity sports: softball, lightweight crew, and ice hockey. The Office of Civil Rights gave the UW its seal of approval in the fall of 2001.

The NCAA complicates the friction that such changes created. NCAA rules govern how many athletic scholarships a school may offer for each of its varsity teams, and in part to help schools achieve a balance between the sexes, the NCAA weights the number of scholarships to encourage women to participate in



The Mountain Course is only open for four months, but Webster's duties run year-round. In the off season, the golf shop becomes a Nordic center, and Webster begins to plan for the next year.

certain sports. For instance, at a Division I institution such as UW-Madison, the women's golf team may offer six full athletic scholarships; the men's team receives only four and a half.

This presents a challenge for Dennis Tiziani, who coaches men's and women's golf at the UW. He notes that a full squad requires at least five players, so the men's team is always dependent on walk-ons. However, he credits the UW for its sincere effort to comply with Title IX regulations. "They took the issue and made it work," he says. "It's a strong pull for me, because it gives us credibility" when seeking out golfers.

AMATEUR TO PRO

It's due almost entirely to Tiziani's influence that Webster is in the golf profession today. Webster grew up in the affluent Madison suburb of Shorewood Hills, but she says that she felt little attraction for golf. "When I was a kid," she says, "I thought golf was about the worst possible thing I could do with my time. It was too long, too slow — I was much more into soccer."

But during her high school years, she began golfing with friends at Madison's Blackhawk Country Club, learning from head professional Mike Schnarr,

and then at Cherokee Country Club, where Tiziani was the director of golf. He saw potential in her and helped her work on her swing.

"She was a real strong girl who could play halfway decent," he says. "But more important, she always had control of herself, of her emotions and fears. Golf is a game of misses — you almost never get a perfect shot. If you don't want to be a psychological case, you've got to learn to deal with that. Erica never let it get to her."

But if Tiziani found a fine golfer in Webster, she found something more in him. Her father had died when she was only three, and she says that she'd been lacking a full sense of direction before she met Tiziani. "Our relationship was totally unique," she says. "He was exactly what I needed when I needed him. He was a coach, a mentor — he was like a father figure to me in a lot of ways. He gave me the love of the game and the tools to get me where I am today."

In the fall of 1989, the same year the Office of Civil Rights began taking a hard look at the UW, both Webster and Tiziani were on the brink of change. Chris Regenber had left as the UW's women's golf coach, and Tiziani, who'd coached the men's team since 1977, was offered the women's coaching job as well.

His daughter, Nicki, was golfing at UW-Madison, and partly to be her coach, he took the position. At the same time, Webster was starting her college career. She decided to follow Tiziani and joined the golf squad as a walk-on. By her sophomore year, she was on scholarship, and during the course of her UW career, she became one of the team's mainstays, at a time when the team itself was becoming more competitive, improving its standing both in the Big Ten and nationally.

"There were a lot of good players on those teams," says Webster, but none of them translated their collegiate game into their life's vocation. "Nicki Tiziani was a great player. Alissa Herron was a great player. But nobody from my team went professional. Alissa is working for a sports agency. But nobody followed the same path I did. There's a lot of stigma to this industry, that it's a male-dominated industry, a boys' club. Going professional isn't a road that everybody wants to battle down."

What helped Webster break into the "boys' club" was the aid of Pentti Tofferi, Cordillera's director of golf and her predecessor as head professional on the Mountain Course. It was Tofferi who not so much hired Webster as hijacked her for Cordillera in 1994. His human resource skills combine a talent scout's eye with a clever sense of business, and he saw how gender balance could be an asset. "She's one of the best golf professionals I've known," he says. "Her playing ability is a real differentiator, lifting her above a lot of others." But at the same time, it doesn't hurt that she's female. "Having a woman on staff as a professional is attractive for women who might want to play here. Ladies like to take lessons from another lady. Erica gives our professional staff a different set of experiences."

In 1994, however, Webster wasn't at all sure she wanted to be a professional golfer. She'd majored in marketing at the UW, and when she graduated, she felt her competitive golfing days were near their end. "I wanted to work with golf in one way or another," she says, "but the



For a woman, head professional can be a lonely position. Even though golf is one of the most popular sports among American women, Webster is one of only two female head pros in the state of Colorado. Golf, she says, is still seen as "a male-dominated industry, a boys' club."

road I was going down was that of a sales rep."

After graduation, she moved to Arizona, hacking around golf courses while she was looking for work. In the spring of 1994, her family convinced her to join them for a vacation in Vail and, while there, to apply for seasonal work at as many golf courses as she could. It was then that she met Tofferi and played nine holes of golf with him. "Then he left, and my brother and I played the back nine. When we were done, Pentti offered me a job. He'd even found me a place to live. To this day, he's never even seen my resume, but he made sure that every roadblock for me was gone."

With Tofferi's encouragement, Webster enrolled in the PGA's professional

certification program, forgoing the chance to join the LPGA.

"The LPGA course is primarily designed to produce teachers and coaches," says Webster. "I've always been interested in the business side of things, and the PGA program is much more well-rounded. It covers not just playing and teaching, but maintenance, shop management, running tournaments — the whole business. So that's the way I went."

The program can take as long as six years, but Webster shot through it in less than two. Cordillera promoted her to head professional duties — to running her own course instead of apprenticing under Tofferi — in 1997. "With her talents as a manager, business person, teacher, and player," says Tofferi, "she's

really earned the respect of the members of the club."

Still, her elevation to head professional met with some resistance. "At least one of the members actually told Gerry [Engle, Cordillera's president] that he was making the biggest mistake he'd ever made when he promoted me," Webster says. "I never asked Gerry who it was — I'm not sure I'd want to know. And fortunately he didn't tell me about the complaint until the end of the season, after I'd realized I could do the job without burning anything down or blowing anything up. By that time, I guess I was just bullheaded enough not to validate any of that stuff."

Six years later, Webster's still running the Mountain Course, and this summer, she'll take on a new role as the face of Colorado golf. The local Fox Sports Network affiliate has hired her to host a television program entitled *Golf Life*. "I'll be traveling to different courses around the state, playing a few holes with the local head professional, showing the places off," she says. Though taped in Colorado, she says the program may also air in four other states. And in small ways like this, at local courses, golf's uneven lies are becoming less of a hazard for the women who choose to follow.

Today, of the 27 million Americans who play golf, about 6 million are women. That makes golf the sixth most popular women's sport in the country, excluding individual exercise programs such as aerobics and jogging. Few of these women will ever have the opportunity to play at Augusta National, but each needs a course, and each course needs a head professional. With people such as Webster in that role, equity enters the world of everyday athletics.

Slowly, Webster is becoming less of a rarity. This year, she says, Cordillera will hire two female assistant pros. "This will be the first time we've had female assistants besides me," she says. "It's going to be fun to have more gals around." ♣

Like Don Quixote, John Allen, associate editor of *On Wisconsin*, finds golf very frustrating because he never can get past the windmill.

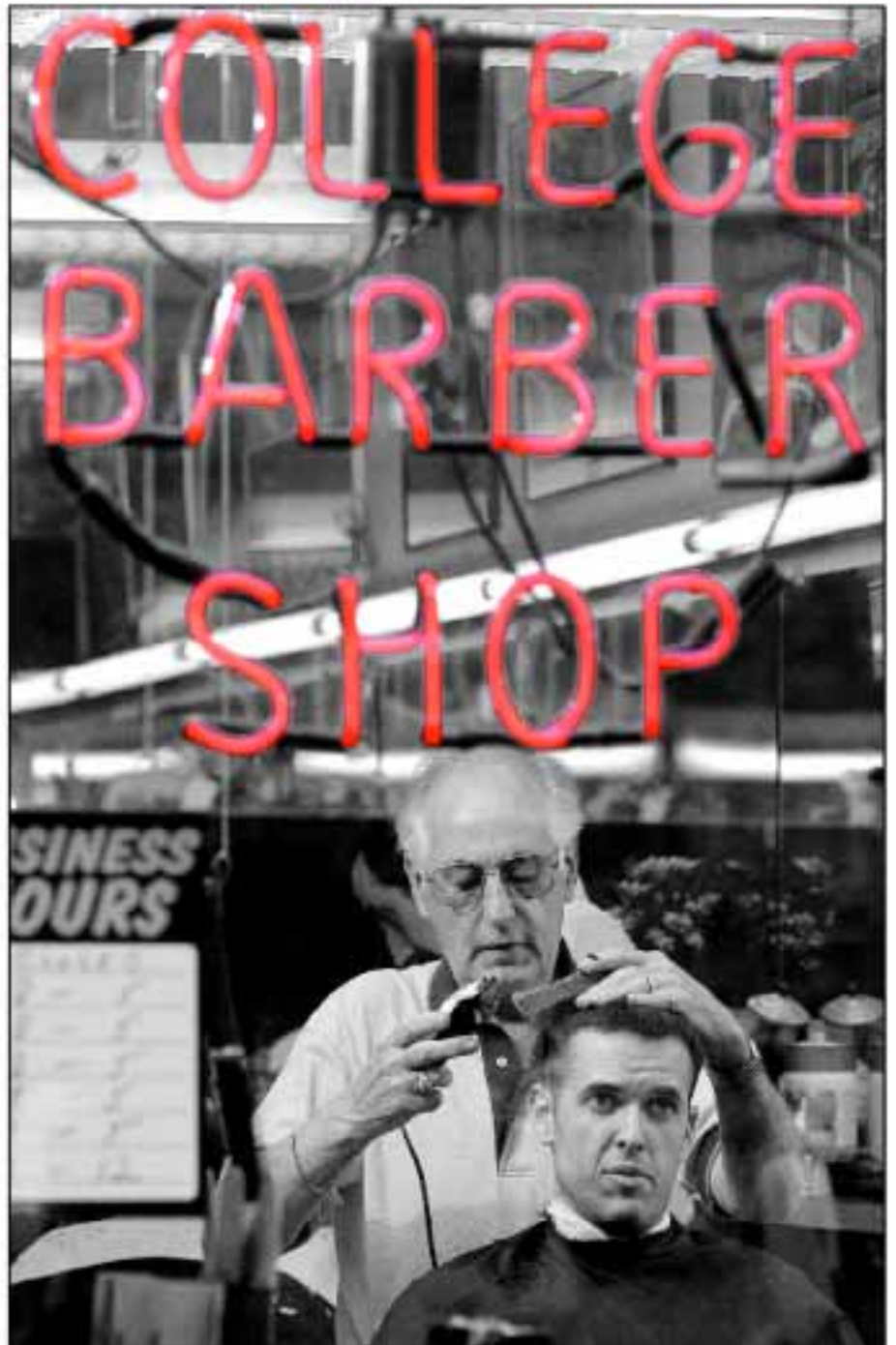
Fine & dandy

From longhairs to crew cuts, State Street's favorite barber, Don Fine, has done it all with style.

By Josh Orton x'04
Photos by Jeff Miller

It's possible that no one — not students, not the band, not even Bucky — has more to say about the style of UW-Madison than Don Fine.

Fine, the seventy-three-year-old proprietor of the College Barber Shop, at the foot of State Street, snipped his first head of Madison hair in 1953, and since then, he has seen campus life unfold from a prime spot at the window of his shop. A Mineral Point native who attended barbering school in Milwaukee, Fine started working at the barbershop when it was owned by Fred Lee. He bought the business in 1969, and although over the years he has seen the campus morph in both physical size and enrollment, his shop has preserved its classic attitude, even if a shave and a haircut in 2003 cost slightly more than two bits.



To passersby not in the know, the shop may seem rather unassuming: barber pole out front, a display of shampoos, and a handwritten sign announcing hours of operation (8–5, Monday through Friday, 8–noon on Saturday).

But inside, Fine heads a row of nine barbers who cut, style, and shave a steady stream of UW-Madison customers, from freshmen to emeriti professors. Students, who always have been Fine's favorite clients, know that sitting down in his chair is a minivacation: a great view of the action and a sympathetic ear for ten or fifteen minutes. Even today, before a recital, a big game, or a blind date, many people on campus know Fine can give them an outlet — and shorter hair.

"They tell me everything," Fine says proudly. "Exams, spring vacation, sports ..."

And during all those years of listening, he has done nearly 600,000 haircuts, Fine estimates.

While his quiet demeanor might not suggest a campus news hound, Fine has always kept his finger on the pulse. During the demonstrations of the late sixties and early seventies, Fine had a front row seat — although perhaps a precarious one. Yet he says the floor-to-ceiling windows of his shop have never been broken by students, even during the most intense of parties or protests.

Few things have changed for Fine during the past half century. He still arrives at the shop by six every morning to shave himself and get ready to open. He leaves at six each night. He gives



Don Fine has seen it all (from his front window overlooking State Street) and heard it all (from his steady stream of customers) since he began working at the College Barber Shop fifty years ago. Now the shop's owner, Fine, facing page, gives a haircut to UW student James Saewert, and, above, prepares Nathan Berg for an old-fashioned shave.

shaves with a straight razor, a rarity these days.

You could also mark time with Fine's deadpan humor. As he wraps a hot towel on the face of a customer before a shave, the famous tongue-in-cheek quips kick in: "Better enjoy it now — before the blood starts flowin.' "

But that doesn't mean he hasn't seen styles ebb and flow. Back in the day when a good trim was about a dollar, not everyone wanted a buzz. Fine says he misses the time when he had more work to do, when people invested more in longer hair, or at least still wanted a part. The style that held the longest, he recalls, was probably the Ivy League, or "Princeton" cuts — where the style was like a crew cut, but still parted in front. Even flattops presented more interesting challenges.

These days, Fine laments, "everyone just wants it real short, something they can just shove a hat on top of."

Given that its owner is a notorious Badger and Packer fan, the shop often


bristles with sports chatter above the intermittent noise of vacuums and electric razors. It boasts a sprawling collection of posters, programs, and autographs from players and coaches, many of whom are regulars in Fine's chair. But the barber doesn't get the inside scoop he once did during those cuts.

In the past, players and coaches often talked strategy with him. Now, says Fine, "coaches tell [players] to keep it undercover ... they won't tell me much."

But that doesn't mean he's out of touch. In fact, you get the sense that Fine relishes his role as the one who has seen it all. When a customer kids him by asking if State Street still had horses the year he started, he vehemently denies it.

"No way!" he exclaims. "That was the year *before* I got here." 🍷

Josh Orton is a UW-Madison senior and a Madison native. Fine hasn't had to ask him how he wants his hair cut since his freshman year in high school.

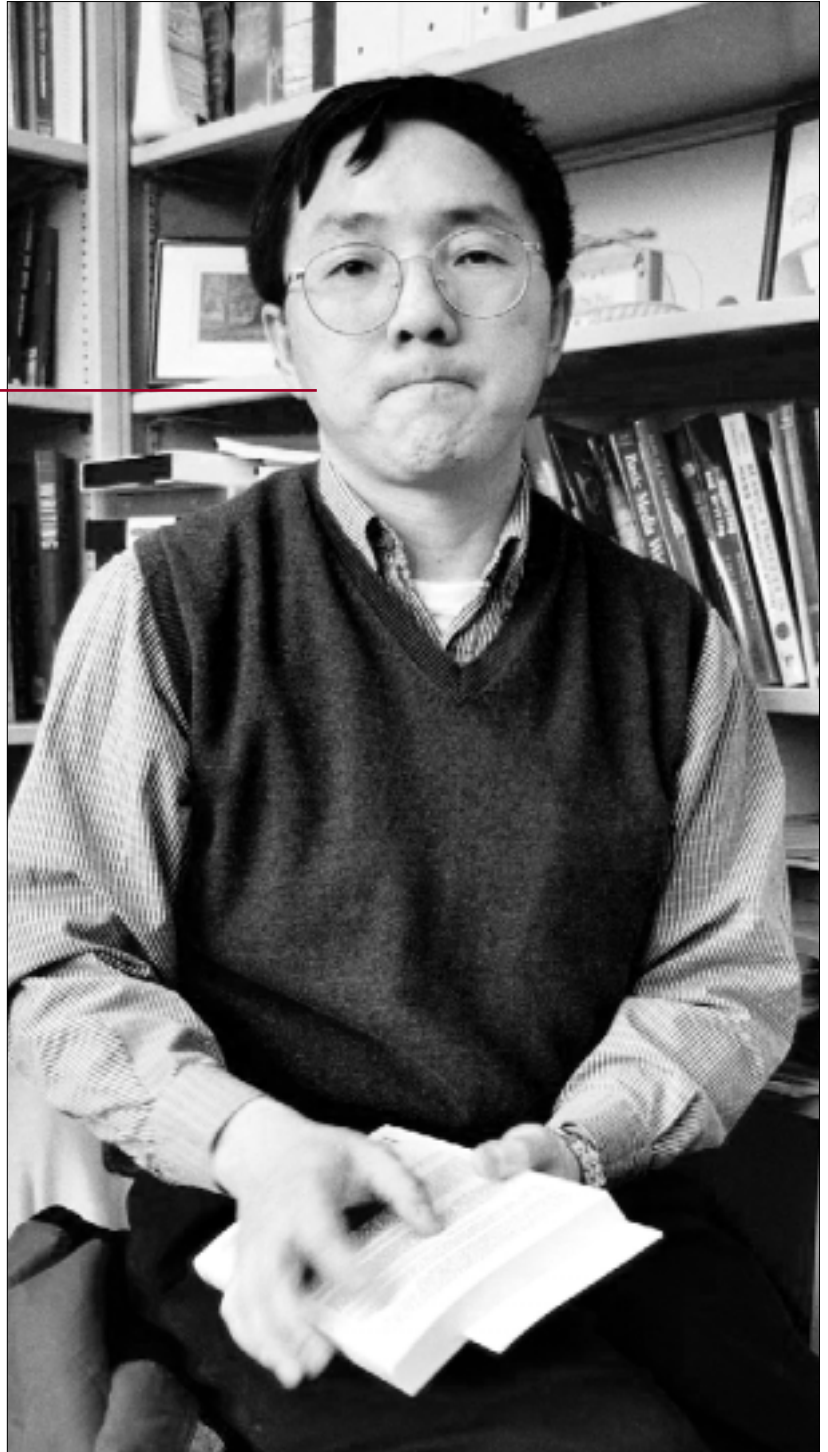


NOISE

at the edge of
silence

Professor **Thongchai Winichakul** has struggled to find words to describe the horror of Thailand's darkest day, but the photographs taken by a UW alumnus have spoken volumes.

by michael penn ma'97
photos by neal ulevich'68



Thongchai Winichakul, above, and Neal Ulevich witnessed a shocking massacre at Thailand's Thammasat University in 1976 — one as a student leader, the other as a photojournalist. Yet they had not met until Ulevich, a UW alumnus, recently returned to campus to speak to journalism students. He photographed Thongchai, who is now a professor of history, that same day. "People still see his pictures [of the massacre]," Thongchai says, "and they're much more powerful than stories."

When news of the riots reached his village

in rural Thailand, Jinda Thongsin rushed to Bangkok to find his son.

Jaruphong was a student there, at Thammasat University, and on October 7, 1976, he was one of perhaps hundreds of students whose whereabouts were unknown. In the wake of a bloody massacre that had erupted on Thammasat's campus the day before, with the nation's government in upheaval, information was tenuous. It was not clear how many people had died, how many had been arrested, and how many had escaped into the hills. At Jaruphong's apartment, Jinda found an unfinished plate of food and a cup of cold coffee. He went to the police, but his son had not been arrested. He checked every hospital, but his son had not been admitted. Nothing told him Jaruphong was alive, but neither did anything confirm that he was dead.

With a parent's hope, he searched on.

Twenty-six and a half years later, Thongchai Winichakul runs his fingers across the gloss of a black-and-white photograph that lies on his desk, on the fifth floor of the Humanities Building. A UW-Madison professor of history, he has the furrowed visage of a man who constantly battles the past — one who unearths it, who turns it in his hands, who works to discover its textures and blemishes. He speaks with a seriousness that conveys that history — his history — is not always pretty to behold.

The image on the page beneath Thongchai's finger tips is just visible. It depicts a young man being dragged across the ground by a piece of cloth around his neck. Somehow you know before the professor says a word that this is Jaruphong, that this is the evidence that Jinda hoped to find — and desperately hoped not to find. It is a hurried photograph, somewhat overexposed, no doubt taken on the run. But there is no denying the fate that it reveals.

In all the years since the photograph was taken, Jinda and Lin Thongsin have not seen it. For decades, even as it circu-

lated among Thongchai and the other survivors of the massacre at Thammasat University, Jaruphong's friends could not bear to tell them it existed. They heard news that Jaruphong's parents were still looking for him, were still hoping that one day he would return home. Their hearts broke, yet they still could not share the photograph.

Some truths are too painful.

Thailand is a generally beautiful country,

populated by generally beautiful people — a self-described “land of smiles,” where grace and serenity are closely held facets of the national identity. Thais, most of whom are Buddhists, strive for emotional pacifism as a religious and cultural ideal. As one Thai expression maintains, they seek always to “keep a cool heart.”

In the middle of the 1970s, however, this proved difficult. Thailand, which shares a peninsula with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, was a political island surrounded by a Communist sea. Its own democratically elected government, established in 1973 after a long series of military coups and dictatorial regimes, was hardly a rock of assurance. Insecurity led to fear, and fear led many Thai

Thammasat, one of the country's most prestigious public universities. A crucible during the 1973 uprisings that brought democracy, the campus maintained an activist image during the years following, and its walls were often peppered with fliers announcing demonstrations, lectures, and rallies. At the center of it all was Thongchai, then a nineteen-year-old sophomore and a native son of Bangkok. Thongchai emerged as a student leader, and by 1976, he had become vice president of Thammasat's student union.

Thongchai recalls a certain euphoria of those days. “We wanted to change the country, to uproot the social suffering and all the bad elements in society. The feeling was that we had power,” he says. However, not everyone shared their idealism. The military establishment — deposed, but hardly defanged — circulated rumors about student protesters being evil and having mystical powers. The stories tapped into a deep-rooted fear of Communism, as well as age-old superstitions common in rural Thailand. “The line was that they were blood-sucking vampires,” says Katherine Bowie, a professor of anthropology who was a research assistant in Thailand at the time. “And that fed right into a lot of village folklore.”

Meanwhile, it looked to those on the left that the ousted military government

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hearts to turn severely uncool. In 1975 and early 1976, the headlines were rife with political assassinations, power grabs, propaganda, and innuendo. Factions on the left and right swelled in ranks and rhetoric. Leftists turned to Marxism, while the forces of the right eyed a return to military control.

The political gale that swept up Thailand was particularly strong at

was plotting a coup. Two exiled leaders returned to Thailand under dubious rationale. Thongchai and his colleagues sensed a trap. “It was a kind of lose-lose situation,” he says. “If you don't protest, that means symbolically that the dictatorship is back. But if you protest — that's what they wanted us to do.”

They went ahead with plans for a rally, but on September 24, two activists

were seized and hanged as they posted leaflets for the event. “This is conspiracy,” Thongchai says.

The students staged rallies on October 4 and 5 — docile events, featuring speeches, music, and skits. In an unfortunate coincidence, one of the students who performed a re-enactment of the hangings bore distinct resemblance to the Crown Prince of Thailand. Word spread, primarily over military-controlled broadcasting networks, that the students had hanged the prince in effigy, an act that would have been both criminal and hugely divisive in a nation that reveres its monarchy. Anger

sound that almost all of the shots came from military-style weapons. Eventually, the raging masses, now numbering several thousand, encroached the gates and entered the campus. Thongchai repeated his plea.

“At first I thought that they could not hear me,” he says. “But when they came onto campus, I knew that they could.”

According to official reports, forty-three people died

on October 6. Most eyewitnesses consider that number appallingly low. One Chinese charity, which came in to

Even today, with a stable democracy that has embraced openness in many ways, October 6 remains a story significantly untold. Eight of ten textbooks that Thai schools use to teach their nation’s history make no mention of the massacre. In a country where children are raised on the triumvirate pillars of nation, crown, and religion, the events of 1976 still cut deeply into the very marrow of what many Thais believe it means to be Thai.

“It is a difficult event for them to remember because of the cruelty involved,” says Katherine Bowie. “Thais generally like to see themselves as easy-going, gentle, hospitable people, and it is very hard for them to be able to explain how their fellow Thais could have committed such inhumanity.” Even many Thais who supported the students at that time have resisted efforts to unearth the past. “Thailand has not, and may not be able to, confront it,” says Thongchai. “The event could be forgotten entirely.”

Yet it is not merely those who were outside the gates at Thammasat who leave the stone unturned. For decades, the former radicals themselves did little to raise the specter of October 6.

Captured that day as he tried to escape campus, Thongchai spent two years in prison, held without trial, and denied pen and paper during his first year in captivity. When he was freed, under pressure from international governments and human rights groups, it was into a changed nation. The radical movement had collapsed, and the military government was giving way to a democratically elected one. Although he returned to Thammasat and tried to resume his routines, Thongchai fought doubts about what had happened earlier. His friends had scattered, and he often felt invalidated and alone. Like many others who survived the massacre, he wrapped himself in a cocoon of guilt and shame, feeling somehow responsible for it all.

“The massacre was so bitter ... lots of my friends blame themselves,” he says. “Me, too. Not in the sense that we made people die. We are rational enough to

Photographs can be like the mortar of history, holding it solid where words can’t be trusted. And in the months and years afterward, photographs taken by Ulevich and others there that day became invaluable documents in a conspiracy of silence.

followed rumor much as fire burns through fuel. At dusk on October 5, Thai police and members of various paramilitary groups descended on Thammasat, trapping nearly four thousand students inside its walled campus.

Throughout the night, the students huddled in the relative security of Thammasat’s soccer field. The surrounding campus buildings sheltered them from the bullets that police periodically fired through the campus gates. At five-thirty in the morning, however, the shooting intensified. Someone fired a grenade over the buildings, onto the middle of the field. Eight students were killed, triggering a raid against the penned-in students that lasted nearly four hours.

From the speaker’s platform, Thongchai leaned into a microphone and urged calm. He pleaded with the police to stop shooting, repeating the message perhaps several hundred times as the hours passed. A few students who had guns tried to return the fire, but Thongchai says that he knew from the

tend to the dead, claims to have collected more than one hundred bodies. In the chaos of the attack, students were shot and hanged, pulled through gates and beaten, dragged across city streets, and bludgeoned with sticks and poles. A few escaped. More than three thousand were rounded up by police, stripped to their waists, and told to lie on their stomachs and await incarceration. By evening, the democracy was overthrown and martial law was enforced. Many of the bodies were cremated en masse. The true count of those who died will likely never be known.

Forty-three is an important figure, however, because it symbolizes the reluctance of Thai officialdom to consider the more horrifying possibilities of the massacre. A government investigation of the event has never been undertaken, nor has anyone been charged for the students’ deaths. More than two decades passed before the victims were publicly memorialized, and then only by Thammasat, not by the Thai government.

know that. But still, we are part of it.” Fear and indecision kept them from resolving past issues, including telling Jaruphong’s parents that their son was dead. “We were cowards,” he explains. And even if they had had the courage, they couldn’t find the words.

Although Thongchai did not know it at the time,

on October 6 he was within several yards of someone who could help him fill the silences. Neal Ulevich ’68 had spent four years in Vietnam, taking pictures for the Associated Press before catching one of the last helicopters out of Saigon in 1975. Long before he set foot on Thammasat’s campus, he was used to capturing history with a camera lens.

A journalism graduate and former staffer for the *Daily Cardinal*, Ulevich hopped from Saigon to Bangkok after the war, working for the AP’s regional bureau. The call to cover the goings-on at Thammasat came at seven o’clock on the morning of October 6, after the AP’s reporter had already come and gone from the campus. Ulevich was initially annoyed that he hadn’t been notified sooner. He couldn’t have known how opportune his timing would become.

When he arrived forty-five minutes later, he found a scene unlike anything he’d seen in combat. Mobs lined the gates of campus like frothing dogs, calling for flesh and blood. With the crowd in the grip of madness, he found it surprisingly easy to move around. It was like he was invisible — but not impenetrable. When a spray of gunfire sent him sprawling onto the grass of the soccer field, he understood the danger. He’d been around gunfights in Vietnam, but there they were shooting at enemies. This ... this was just wild. “They were just firing off at everything,” he says.

For a man who knew war, this was more bedlam than battle. Even considering Thailand’s history of political turmoil, the violence “was so un-Thai,” Ulevich recalls. As the melee deepened, packs of fiery-eyed youths dragged students off campus and hanged them from tree



Thai police and paramilitary groups descended on Thammasat University to stop a student protest. Superstition, anger, and rumor fueled the event until it turned into a horrific massacre. UW alumnus Neal Ulevich covered the chaos as an AP photographer based in Bangkok.

branches. One of his pictures captured a man attacking a garroted student, clearly dead, with a wooden chair. In another, a crowd watched as a student was beaten to death, seeming as approving and enthusiastic as if they were cheering on a soccer team. When he returned to the bureau, the Thai editors blinked disbelievingly at his account. This couldn’t be true, they said. Not here, not in Thailand. “Okay,” Ulevich said. “I’ll develop my film. If you need proof, I’ll show you the pictures.”

Bangkok to halt information from leaking out. Photographers were ordered to hand over their film, and reporters told to destroy their notes. Fearing suppression, Ulevich developed his film quickly and sent seventeen images by telegram to Tokyo. They appeared in newspapers around the world — but not in Thailand. A year later, when the collection won a Pulitzer Prize, the *Bangkok Post* reported Ulevich’s honor, still without publishing the photographs that earned it.

Even today, with a stable democracy that has embraced openness in many ways, October 6 remains a story significantly untold.

Photographs can be like the mortar of history, holding it solid where words can’t be trusted. And in the months and years afterward, photographs taken by Ulevich and others there that day became invaluable documents in what was otherwise a conspiracy of silence. Once it assumed power, the military government closed every newspaper in

As important as their official distribution, however, was the unofficial circulation. Slowly, surreptitiously, the photographs made their way back into Thailand. Students collected and shared dog-eared prints and fuzzy copies, held onto them like evidence. When

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Noise at the Edge of Silence

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the first underground accounts of the Thammasat massacre were published in the 1980s, they were essentially just pictures. No words, no testimonies. The images said enough.

“The photos are the one important means by which people know about the massacre,” says Thongchai. Their existence — the proof they provided — helped to embolden the former radicals, who began to comprehend that they were not alone in trying to keep the record of the massacre from being expunged. By 1991, Thongchai had earned his doctorate from the University of Sydney and was hired at UW-Madi-

exploring his country’s — and his own — ambivalence about remembering the massacre. He continues to doggedly turn up documents and push, albeit gently, for the full history of the events to be recognized. Two years ago, he uncovered seventy boxes of previously hidden material, and he plans eventually to write a full book about the massacre — a work that will flow both from academic and personal experience.

“I know what to write,” he says. “I just don’t know how to write it.”

In the course of his research, Thongchai had become well acquainted with the name Neal Ulevich. He had seen it hundreds of times — in books,

Thongchai says he wanted to meet Ulevich, in part, to thank him. “I just feel like he was part of that event, that he helped people know about what happened,” he says. “Ten, twenty years later, people still see his pictures, and they’re much more powerful than stories. I know that he wants people to know.”

On the day of Ulevich’s visit, Thongchai arrived at Vilas Hall an hour before his scheduled talk. The two exchanged a Thai greeting, and set immediately to reminiscing. It was a bit like two middle-aged chums, talking about the old days. Even though they had never met, they felt the bond of shared experience.

“I don’t have to ask him — he knows how terrible it was,” Thongchai says.

Thongchai brought a pile of underground publications, which over time have been cobbled together using photographs from Ulevich and others. As the two paged through them, they spoke sparingly, nodding and gesturing in a language that they implicitly understood. After several minutes, Thongchai reached into his pocket and unfolded an envelope containing a slide image of Jaruphong’s death, a picture that still pains the professor, reminding him of past inaction.

It has been more than seven years since one of Jaruphong’s friends finally told Jinda and Lin that their son was gone. Thongchai has met with them, as well, to share his regret. But these meetings were like the noise at the edge of silence. There is much more to be said about Jaruphong’s life and his sacrifice. With time, Thongchai hopes he can say it.

Thongchai handed the slide to Ulevich. “Did you take this?” he asked. Ulevich considered the photograph, then said that it wasn’t his. But it hardly mattered. To each, the photograph said something about courage. For one, it was about having the courage to record history. For the other, it was about finding the courage to live with it. ■

The two exchanged a Thai greeting, and set immediately to reminiscing. It was a bit like two middle-aged chums, talking about the old days, Thongchai says. Even though they had never met, they felt the bond of shared experience.

son. With the comfort of both academic and geographic distance, he took on more serious contemplation of the massacre. As the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy neared, he called for a public commemoration, and, surprisingly, found many ready to reconcile the past.

On October 6, 1996, the survivors of the massacre gathered at Thammasat to publicly acknowledge the tragedy for the first time. It was in many ways a cathartic release of old demons. Several hundred people attended, listening attentively to speeches, and slowly circling a large funeral urn erected on the soccer field to honor the dead. In the day’s keynote address, Thongchai stood on a platform, near the spot where two decades before he had begged police to stop shooting, and praised the dialogue. The commemoration, he said, was a “loud noise at the very edge of silence.”

In the years since, Thongchai has not allowed the silence to linger. He followed the commemoration with a book chapter

in newspaper articles, and attached to the dozens of old photographs that the professor keeps filed in his office. So it was with some surprise in March of this year that Thongchai saw Ulevich’s name again — this time on the UW’s calendar of upcoming events.

Ulevich, who now lives in Denver and works as a semiretired freelance photographer, was scheduled to speak to journalism students just a few hundred yards from Thongchai’s office. The two had nearly crossed paths in 1976: when the photographer first arrived at Thammasat, Thongchai was trying to get away from the campus, heading toward a river that ran alongside the university. Thongchai doesn’t appear in any of Ulevich’s photographs, and he doesn’t recall knowing that photographers were present. Yet here they were, brought together again on a university campus, more than eight thousand miles and nearly three decades removed from Bangkok. It felt like the closing of a circle.

Michael Penn MA'97 is senior editor of *On Wisconsin*.

CARRY US INTO THE UNKNOWN



by Emily Carlson

When the shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated above Texas skies in February, the future of the space program was threatened, along with that of a UW center dedicated to exploring science in this unfamiliar world.

As seven astronauts climbed aboard the shuttle *Columbia* in mid-January, preparing to launch a sixteen-day mission to conduct more than eighty experiments in space, they took along a part of Wisconsin.

Among the crew was mission specialist Laurel Blair Salton Clark, who had spent two years training for the flight. Clark had received two degrees from UW-Madison — bachelor's in zoology in 1983 and medical doctorate in 1987 — and she was grateful for the role her alma mater had played in her life. Aboard *Columbia*, she carried two medallions from the Medical School and a Wisconsin-made teddy bear sporting a College of Letters and Science logo.

Beyond the mementos was an even stronger tie to Wisconsin for Clark. During the mission, she took the lead on two scientific experiments — one that examined the effects of weightlessness on flower fragrance and another that investigated the feasibility of genetic transfer in space. Both projects were developed by the College of Engineering's Wisconsin Center for Space Automation and Robotics (WCSAR).

"At one point, Laurel hooked up the camera and said she called up 'to congratulate everyone at the University of Wisconsin,'" recalls Jessica Abba, the WCSAR payload training and operations engineer who trained the crew how to conduct the two experiments in space. "She said the plants looked great."

After just over two weeks in space, the shuttle crew members, along with dozens of scientific samples, headed home. The world knows what happened next. As they made their way closer to Earth, the shuttle began to melt. It broke apart upon re-entry. All was lost.

"It was a shock when the people I knew disintegrated, along with the experiments I had worked on. There is no definable feeling," says Abba, who,



Weijia Zhou, director of the Wisconsin Center for Space Automation and Robotics, says NASA recognizes that universities offer unmatched resources for space science research. And, in time, he says, "they were convinced that academics can be businesspeople, too." His center is developing plant experiments for use on the International Space Station, at left.

wearing a flight crew pin given to her by Clark, spoke at a memorial service for the astronaut hosted by the university.

"Our loss, compared to the families who lost their loved ones onboard *Columbia*, is insignificant," Weijia Zhou PhD'93, the principal investigator of the experiments and director of WCSAR, says today.

Advancing Life Here and Beyond

The full extent of what was lost that early Saturday morning above the skies of Texas remains unknown. Ripples from the wake of the *Columbia* disaster continue to reach NASA. The agency is addressing questions ranging from details about what caused the explosion, to the viability of manned space exploration, to whether we should invest in

space research at all. Whatever the answers, they are certain to rock NASA-funded programs and centers, including WCSAR.

As one of NASA's fourteen Research Partnership Centers, the Wisconsin center partners with industry to develop ways to improve life on Earth, as well as support life in space. In general, the projects answer fundamental questions about the future of human life both here and beyond. Experiments, for example, evaluate the performance of WCSAR-developed technologies and examine the feasibility of cultivating plants in space. Some have explored the ability to insert protective genes into plants — a process that appears to be more efficient in space than on the ground.

"When it comes to the life science experiments in orbit, what we learn about how weightlessness affects human biology will be one of the biggest contributions," says Bratislav Stankovic, a WCSAR plant scientist. "Humans will explore space, and there is a pressing need to develop measures for long-term support of human life in this unwelcoming environment."

On Earth, gravity does more than ground us — it's a force that touches nearly every aspect of daily life, from bone density and blood pressure to the movement of water and heat. But, because it is omnipresent, no experiment on the ground can adequately achieve the conditions of microgravity, or weightlessness. For example, if researchers who study osteoporosis want to know how microgravity alters bone loss in an effort to prevent it, they must send their science into space. To do this, they rely on centers like WCSAR.

Since its inception in 1986, WCSAR has developed space flight hardware and — working with research institutes and companies, including some in Wisconsin — has designed and conducted many



JEFF MILLER

The face of Jessica Abba is reflected on a door covered with mylar as she checks on the white ruffled stock flower growing inside a climate controlled growing chamber. Abba, who is a payload training and operations engineer at WCSAR, taught the *Columbia* astronauts how to care for the center's plant experiments on board the space shuttle. She felt a special loss when *Columbia* disintegrated during its return to Earth.

space experiments with the aid of NASA. The *Columbia* mission marked the eleventh flight that included experiments from the UW center.

"The reason NASA established [centers] inside academia is to fully take advantage of the capabilities and resources inside those institutions," says Zhou. He adds that WCSAR collaborates extensively with departments in the College of Engineering and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

In the beginning, though, NASA questioned the effectiveness of the commercial collaboration. "NASA wasn't sure academics could do the commercialization, pitching projects to industry," admits Zhou. "But after the first five years, they were convinced that academics can be businesspeople, too."

Currently, WCSAR receives about \$2.5 million from NASA and additional funding from industry partners and other federal agencies, but no money from the university or the state to support the research. By encouraging partnerships among universities and industry, NASA plans to move toward the commercialization of space.

Life science research in space — once receiving less than 30 percent of the center's annual budget — has now become the center's primary focus.

"NASA believes that space-based research will lead to the development of novel technologies, processes, and products that can improve the quality of life on Earth," says Zhou. More than a decade of industry-driven research conducted by the research centers in space has led to the development of cutting-edge technologies and systems, as well as new commercial products, he adds.

Over the years, WCSAR's mission has evolved in response to the funding agency's interests. In the early 1990s, when NASA decided to devote resources to manned space exploration, it asked the Wisconsin center to de-emphasize its earlier focus on developing technology to

automate space research. "NASA [had] encouraged us to put more emphasis on advanced life support research, using robotics and automation to accomplish that," explains Zhou.

When NASA changed course, so did WCSAR. Life science research in space — once receiving less than 30 percent of the center's annual budget — has now become the center's primary focus.

Space Experiments Lift Off

In 1995, as space shuttle *Columbia* lifted off for one of its missions, it flew a payload of tiny potato leaves from WCSAR. As the leaves sprouted red tubers, they represented the first time a potential food plant for astronauts was grown successfully in a NASA-controlled environment. The space spuds also provided valuable information: they were not significantly different in composition compared with ground spuds, suggesting that the potato could be a viable, nutritious crop for astronaut farmers.

But the plants' appeal didn't stop there. "Plants don't just produce food," points out Theodore Tibbitts, an emeritus professor of horticulture and lead investigator of the potato experiment. They recycle the carbon dioxide that humans release and convert it to oxygen. They can take up waste water, such as urine, and, during transpiration, release it into the air, where it can be turned into fresh water.

"Plants in a permanent station have tremendous value in recycling needed life support requirements," says Tibbitts, whose vanity license plate reads, "SPUDNIK."

Three years after the potato experiment, the center, along with its industry partner the International Flavors and Fragrance Company (IFF) in New York, launched flowers into space to determine if microgravity altered the plants' aromatic compounds. The results led to the creation of "Zen," a perfume developed by the cosmetic company Shiseido.

In 2000, WCSAR performed a second genetic transformation experi-

ment using germinating soybean seeds. On the ground, the insertion of desirable genes for crops, such as corn, soybeans, sugar beets, or bananas, is extremely inefficient — success rates are about one in one thousand. Weightlessness appears to improve these rates dramatically. Understanding exactly why could provide a significant payoff, helping Earth-bound researchers to develop more efficient techniques for genetic engineering, and making crops more resistant to pests and extreme climates, as well as more nutritious.

Now What?

As the families of the *Columbia* astronauts continue to grieve, WCSAR struggles with loss of a different kind. When *Columbia* broke apart, although some of the data from on-board experiments had already been transmitted to WCSAR, all samples for post-flight analysis were destroyed. The shuttle's disintegration, which cost the center an estimated \$500,000, has jeopardized WCSAR's relationships with industry, threatened its funding from NASA, and impelled it once again to evaluate its research efforts.

"After *Columbia*, I went to IFF twice to discuss issues concerning future collaboration," says Zhou, who considers the fragrance company to be one of WCSAR's "most generous" commercial partners. "The first meeting wasn't so smooth," he recalls. "I then spent weeks talking to the vice president of research and development by phone. At the second meeting, there had been a dramatic change. IFF made the commitment that they would continue to pursue space-based research."

The main focus of the IFF research, according to Zhou, is to investigate how the microgravity environment alters the compositions of volatile compounds, or essential oils, produced by aromatic plants. It's the volatile compounds that leave a scent. The earlier experiment, conducted onboard the space shuttle *Discovery* in 1998, showed that a rose

THE TOOLS OF SPACE GARDENING

The flowers the Wisconsin Center for Space Automation and Robotics (WCSAR) hopes to send to the International Space Station — the world's first international outpost in space — will bloom in a special growth chamber. Designed by the center and controlled from its headquarters at the University Research Park in Madison, the chambers, which are boxes smaller than a microwave, regulate environmental conditions essential to plant growth, including light intensity, water and nutrient delivery, carbon dioxide and ethylene concentration, temperature, and humidity.

Developing such a chamber presented many engineering challenges, considering that water and heat, for example, move differently in microgravity, says Bratislav Stankovic, a WCSAR plant scientist.

"One of the key questions is, 'How do you keep the seeds in place?'" he says. "The seeds must be shoved into the tiny slots so they don't budge during travel or a shuttle launch." Just like plants growing in a greenhouse, those in the growth chambers take root in rows of small starter pots filled with not soil, but with a mixture of crushed clay. The larger particle sizes, says Stankovic, are a safety measure — they're less likely to get in an astronaut's eye when the growth chamber is open.

Red and blue light-emitting diodes (LEDs), which are more efficient than other light sources, checker the ceiling of each growth chamber. The colors blend together, creating a pink radiance. "Plants see the world in red and blue," says Stankovic, "and these LEDs suffice for photosynthesis, development, and plant orientation in microgravity." He adds, "In space, they don't know what's up and what's down."

Growing plants in these chambers aboard a shuttle or permanent space station brings life to an otherwise mechanical environment. "Plants seem to have quite an amazing effect on astronauts in space," says Theodore Tibbitts, an emeritus professor of horticulture and lead investigator for the UW's first foray into growing potatoes in space. "They're living things, and they can watch them change," he says, adding, "My wife and I get excited each time another flower blooms on our hibiscus in the window sill. It's life happening right before our eyes!"

Crew members living at the International Space Station will watch flowers bloom beginning this October, when WCSAR is scheduled to send its latest plant experiment into space.

"The crew is really going to love this project," says Weijia Zhou, principal investigator and WCSAR's director, who explains that the project involves growing two plants from seed to flower and studying their production of volatile compounds, or essential oils. Besides collecting samples, the astronauts will see color, smell sweetness, and watch life begin. They will be able to open the door to the growth chamber, Zhou says, and appreciate the flowers' beauty.

— E.C.



JEFF MILLER

Plants grow under an array of red and blue LEDs inside a chamber that is smaller than a microwave oven. Designing a chamber that would allow plants to grow in the microgravity of space presented a special challenge. UW researchers hope to send their latest plant experiments to the International Space Station in October.

Carry Us into the Unknown

Continued from page 37

produced different volatile compounds in space, compared to on the ground. “IFF’s plan is to identify unique and commercially interesting essential oils in space and then reconstitute the findings in terrestrial labs,” Zhou explains.

Committed to continuing their partnership, WCSAR and IFF are collaborating on another essential oil biosynthesis experiment. At press time, it was scheduled for launch on October 1 of this year and headed for the International Space Station (ISS), an international project now under construction to create an inhabitable, space-based scientific laboratory of unprecedented scale. When completed, the station will measure about 356 feet across and 290 feet long, including nearly an acre of solar panels to power the station and its six labs.

The latest WCSAR project, like its predecessors, will study and evaluate the formation of volatile compounds produced by different aromatic plants in a weightless environment. But, unlike the others, this experiment will study the plants’ entire life cycle, from seed to flower. During a four-month period in space, the flower seeds will undergo germination, vegetation, pollination, blossom, and reproduction. As they bloom, essential oils from two flowering plants — the purple, yellow, and white viola and the white ruffled stock flower — will be collected, stored on the ISS, and then brought back to earth for genetic trait analysis. (See sidebar, page 37.)

Whether ISS crew members will be able to enjoy these colorful and delicate flowers will depend on NASA. After the *Columbia* tragedy, the agency grounded all shuttle missions as it re-evaluates the space research program.

“NASA is still reprioritizing itself, but the tone has been set,” says Zhou, who travels regularly to Washington, D.C., to meet with administrators from the space agency.

To be selected for launch, Zhou explains that experiments must accomplish at least one of following:

- Assure astronaut safety, such as by limiting radiation exposure
- Enhance hardware development for flight missions
- Improve astronaut health, such as by enhancing bone density and blood circulation
- Improve quality of life on Earth
- Raise public awareness about NASA’s program

Given the stiff competition among many projects for only a few opportunities, successful experiments must address multiple areas. “We need to realign ourselves with NASA to provide as many answers for a single experiment. We need to develop dual-purpose technologies not only essential to NASA’s manned space exploration, but also beneficial to the development of quality-enhanced and value-added commercial products on Earth,” Zhou says.

When developing commercial projects, he says, WCSAR takes NASA’s criteria into account, as well as scientific merit and the financial contributions from industry partners.

Charting a New Course

Meanwhile, the debate over the future of the NASA space program continues. Discussions include developing new space vehicles, conducting more unmanned explorations, and reducing the number of crew stationed at the ISS. Final decisions will ultimately affect research opportunities. A NASA plan to reduce the ISS crew from three to two people, for example, would cut time available for science experiments from twenty-nine hours per week to just twelve hours.

“If you’re betting a career on plant space science, it’s not a rosy picture. But I think exciting times lie ahead,” says plant biologist Stankovic, who calls himself a “skeptical optimist.” He bases his optimism on continual improvements in science and the opportunity to conduct long-term experiments once the assembly of the ISS is complete.

A renewed desire to develop automated technology to support experiments without human involvement may emerge. If unmanned space missions become NASA’s goal, the development of automated processes will require significant investment.

“Robots can’t replace humans, at least not in the near future,” Zhou says. “Cognition, dexterity, and decision-making processes are still not there.” Whether we ever achieve a “*Star Wars*-version robot,” he predicts, will depend upon how much NASA — guided by public opinion — is willing to invest.

As a relatively new field that has had limited opportunity to be tested, much about space science remains unknown.

“You can’t be wise about things you’ve never undertaken before,” says Tibbitts.

Many questions need to be answered — whether the ultimate goal is to create colonies for life in space, or to lead to more efficient technologies, more nutritious foods, and better pharmaceuticals here on Earth.

Amidst the uncertainty, one aspect is steadfast: space exploration captivates the human soul and spirit. “There’s a certain excitement about doing things in space that piques the interest of young and old alike,” says Tibbitts. For Zhou, missions into space spark national pride. “To me,” says the WCSAR director, who is originally from Shanghai, China, “manned space exploration represents technology, capability, and certainly resources. It’s a statue for the United States.”

Exploration of space also nurtures the dreams of many girls and boys, not to mention adults. Laurel Clark didn’t think about becoming an astronaut until later in her life. “I ... never thought about being an astronaut until I was in my thirties,” she said before she flew her first mission. “I feel very fortunate every day that I’ve been chosen to do what I’m going to do. I think that sometimes life takes you in very unexpected ways.”

Emily Carlson, a writer for University Communications, prefers to keep her feet planted firmly on the ground.

Camera

BY JAMES DUNCAN MFA'04



JOHN RIBBLE

Robert wanted to get out of there: he was sick of the room, the hospital, the camera, the woman. But nothing was happening, and all he could think was, She reminds me of you.

He was supposed to be filming this woman giving birth. That was the job. It was for an educational video. The woman's name was Elisabeth, and she'd been in labor for eighteen hours, and all they had so far was setup: dilation reports, contraction timing, nurses bustling in to press here and there under the woman's checkered gown, the husband bent over the bed.

The room was small, so Robert couldn't really get much else by way of variety. He was sick of the room. It was one-thirty in the morning, and everyone kept wiping their eyes like they'd all just come up from a cave into bright sunlight, although here it was just rows of hospital fluorescents running along the ceiling. He was sick of being cramped in a corner with all the equipment — the camera and the tripod, the lighting, the half-size audio board. He was sick of the white walls and the beeping gray heart monitor trailing away from the woman's left hand to the computer beside the bed. He was sick of the antiseptic smell. Above the door was a round green clock with birds for hands, and in the corner next to it, a television looked down on them from a set of steel arms, and he was sick of those, too. He had to keep making sure the television wasn't getting in his shots, because otherwise you could see him reflected in its screen, peering into the camera.

Okay, the doctor said, we'll wait it out. He was a bearded, competent-looking man with wire-rimmed glasses, and he came in occasionally to reassure the woman and the husband that things were proceeding normally and to say that if they needed anything, they should ask the nurse. He ignored the camera — he seemed offended by it. Robert had several shots of him going out and coming back in and saying these things.

The husband's name was Chet, or Chester — something like that. Robert couldn't remember. The man was a hulking giant. He had fit himself uncomfortably into the pair of black vinyl seats next to the bed and wouldn't stop tapping his feet. Robert thought he probably weighed three, three-fifty. He had on a blue baseball cap and a shabby gold sweatshirt. When he moved, it was like this colossal shifting in the room, and everyone was thrown off balance. It was like gravity. If he got in the frame, Robert had to pull back the zoom, because otherwise there was this wall taking up half the

CAMERA

shot, this big gold wall. He loomed over the bed when the contractions came, his hands enveloping hers, like he could contain what was happening, like he could hold it there for her.

There hadn't been a contraction in a while. It was one-thirty in the morning. Robert sat behind the camera on a plastic stool he'd brought with him and occasionally adjusted the tripod level. Carmichael, the producer, sat behind him and watched. Earlier he'd been reading a newspaper, but now he just watched. It was just them and the wife and the husband in the room right now, and nobody was saying anything. They all stared off in different directions and occasionally dozed off. The wife lay on the bed, damp blond hair spread out all over the pillow, eyes closed. She had pale, freckled skin that turned ghostly when Robert set the lighting too high, so now he was just using a couple of bulbs and a reflector, and that helped.

Robert was sick of the woman. She was in the center of the room, and most of the time he had to keep his camera on her in case something started to happen, and he was trying to be compassionate, sure, to put himself in her shoes and all that, but he was exhausted. Carmichael had said a couple hours, tops, and he couldn't stop thinking, feverishly: *She reminds me of you. She reminds me of you.* And he was trying like crazy not to think that.

It was the desperation, mostly. In that last hour the woman — Elisabeth — gripped the side of the bed, the husband, the sheets, anything she could get her hands on. When her eyes weren't squeezed shut, they were wide and unfocused, like she could maybe grab hold of everything else if she just looked hard enough. This was how Wanda, his wife, had been all the time. She was going to be a *famous actor*. She had eaten her food in great gulping bites and exercised furiously four times a week, and she threw herself into everything she did.

This was something he thought he loved about her, that she could want things so much, that she could want *him* so much. When they made love, she shrieked and thrashed around — she lost herself in it. He used to stare at her afterward while her eyes flickered with sleep. He thought she probably never knew that.

She had died almost a year ago. Robert had been at home, watching television in the dark and drinking a beer and thinking that this was nice, the quiet. He was thinking he was glad that Wanda had gone out to some audition and that he was alone. Lately things had been tense. They'd begun saying cruel things to each other. He

accused her of always condescending to him because he was just the cameraman and she was the soon-to-be-*famous actor*. He accused her of only loving him because he was there to watch *her* and admire *her*. She accused him of being cold and removed from the world.

He didn't know exactly what had happened to them, or if he meant the things he'd said. They'd been married for two years, and already there had been fights. She had thrown things. He had yelled. These cruel things had been said.

Then the phone had rung, and suddenly he was rushing to the hospital, where she lay gashed and broken under the glaring emergency room lights, and nothing was making sense to him. There were cops. They said she'd been hit by a car in a supermarket parking lot. They said they

had nine witnesses, but nobody agreed on anything — people said the car was blue, that it was green, that it was a sports car, that it was definitely a Ford, that it was definitely something German, that it was a sedan. They

said there was a guy with dark hair, the driver. They said there was a woman in the back seat, and one at least said the car was packed with teenagers. None of this made sense. One cop said, Look, eyewitness testimony can be unreliable in high-speed, high-stress situations. People think they know what they saw, but they aren't cameras, and Robert said, bitterly, Gee, you think?

The cops were young and seemed embarrassed by his reaction. He didn't care. He kept trying to picture how this had happened, how you get run over in a parking lot — a *parking lot*. The whole thing didn't add up. But there she lay: tubes running all over the place, feet splayed out past the edge of the table. The paramedics had cut most of her blue cashmere sweater off and replaced it with gauze wrappings and IV needles, and for some reason she had only one shoe on, a scuffed brown loafer.

He kept fixating on that. He wanted to know where that other shoe was. He felt that if he could find the shoe, she would be okay. Later this seemed to be the only thing he could remember: the shoe, and the blackened cotton sock on her other foot.

He rushed around, demanding things. He tried wildly to think of why he'd ever said anything mean to her, ever, why he'd ever thought he might not love her. A middle-aged nurse with squinty eyes came out and said things were still touch and go. Robert sat down and thought that was a ridiculous expression, touch and go. What did it even mean? He thought about that and made outrageous promises to himself about how he was going to change,

Robert didn't want to see these people having their Big Moment for the camera.

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everything was going to change, if she lived. Then there was a sudden commotion, shouting. She had flat-lined. The doctors and nurses crowded around, and Robert tried to see but couldn't. They kept him out. Then a doctor emerged: too much internal hemorrhaging. They were very sorry. They truly were.

Robert had spoken with the husband when he was first setting up the equipment. Chet-or-Chester had introduced himself and shook Robert's hand and said it was a pleasure to make his acquaintance.

So, Robert said. Having a baby.

Yep, the husband said. He smiled massively.

Robert hated him, briefly. He didn't want to see these people have their Big Moment for the camera. He didn't want to see them be happy. He hated them for having each other, for being here. He hated Carmichael for making him come and watch this and get it on film forever. It was just a freelance job, but Robert needed the money. He hadn't worked much in the last year. He was such a mess after Wanda died, and nobody hired mourners. They got too uncomfortable.

It was like when this guy Joey's mother had died. Joey was a cameraman, too, and he and Robert were shooting this cleaning product commercial together, which was actually the job where he'd met Wanda. She was the star. Joey had come in and seemed fine until he just started weeping halfway through the second take. They had to stop everything. They had to tell everyone to take five. Wanda put down her sponge. They said, Joey, what's going on over there? Your camera's pointing the wrong way. Joey spilled the whole story. They said, Hey, Joey, go home, why don't you, you big lug? Who comes to work the day after his mother dies? Then later they told him, Why don't you just take the whole week off? You don't just recover from that in a day, and we're just about wrapping it up anyway. We'll call you if we need you. But they never did. Robert shot the whole thing himself, Wanda and the sponge in the bright open kitchen.

Between takes, Wanda came over, and they flirted a little bit. He thought she was beautiful in the monitor, the way her brown hair framed her face, the way her eyes seemed to come through the screen and look right at him. A few months later, they were on a date at a street fair, and they saw Joey taking novelty pictures at this stand where kids could ride a camel.

For God's sake, Robert said to Wanda later, a *camel*. A big mangy camel. They giggled a little, and she clung fiercely to his arm. This was before they had begun saying cruel things to each other, and before he'd lost the chance to make anything better.

The husband was still talking. We're very excited about this, he said. He was pacing a little and was already breathing loudly, a thin sheen of sweat rising on his forehead. He couldn't pace very far and could barely squeeze himself past Robert's equipment, but it was like he couldn't stop hauling himself around. Robert wished the guy would just sit down and be quiet. He was thinking it was just a couple hours, and then he could go home and sit in the dark and try to understand what had happened to his life.

Then they wheeled the wife in, Elisabeth, and he saw the look in her eyes and the way she reached out for the husband, and he thought for the first time: *She reminds me of you.*

They still showed the commercial for the cleaning product. It ran on three networks during prime time, and Robert couldn't get away from it. In it, Wanda has these kids. They just run wild through the blue-and-white tiled kitchen, juice and mud and spaghetti sauce and finger paint. What's she going to do? She doesn't get mad. Kids are kids, is what her expression says. She just pulls out the product, and like magic, everything's clean and new. Then there's this closing shot, a close-up of Wanda with the product, smiling. This is the shot that always got him. He still remembered it. Joey was long gone, and he'd got her square in the monitor and almost forgot to make sure the product was there, too. She seemed so beautiful. She looked straight into his camera and gave this sly little smile, and even though Robert was across the room, it was like this was all he could see. He was almost glad Joey was gone so that his was the only camera she'd look at. He told her that on their third date, and she touched his cheek and said he was sweet, wasn't he sweet?

When he saw it now, he couldn't stop watching. It was like she had this whole other life on the screen, this life with kids and messes. Somewhere behind all that was Robert, watching, seeing what her life was really like. He was beginning to think he had no idea. Because after she died, he went to pick up her car, still parked at the supermarket, and in the passenger seat he'd found a small paper bag containing a white receipt and a box of condoms. They didn't use condoms.

It hadn't occurred to him before to wonder what she was doing at the supermarket. She'd said she was going to an audition, and all he'd said was, Okay, see you later. He used to wish her good luck and kiss her and see, in her eyes, how she wanted him, and then he couldn't wait for her to get back. This was before he'd begun to see, too, in her eyes, how hungry she was to be loved by *everyone*, how she would flirt with waiters at restaurants and other actors

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and even *other cameramen* when he was right there on the set. He'd become bitter and filled with the sense that he was being used in some way. He was angry that he loved her and that she seemed to see him as another member of her audience. But he hadn't thought that things had come to this: that somewhere on the night she died, some man was waiting, wondering what had happened and why she hadn't shown up, while Robert sat at home and thought he was glad to be alone.

Earlier they had pulled in a cot for the husband, and now he was lying on it, but Robert couldn't figure out how. The frame looked spindly, thin metal rods draped with canvas. It creaked whenever he shifted his weight around, as though it might collapse at any moment. The wife seemed a little more awake now, staring up at the ceiling, bag-eyed and pale. They'd dripped some Pitocin into her a few hours ago to try to speed things along, and the contractions started up again. But soon she was shrieking with pain, so they gave her an epidural, straight into the spine. Carmichael had Robert get a medium-wide shot so you could see the needle slip in under the skin and get everyone's reaction. The husband sucked in his breath sharply and turned away, but the wife grabbed him hard, and he came back. Now she seemed okay, but nothing was happening. The doctor was talking more Pitocin. When he said it, the husband got this look on his face, like he wanted this to be over but at the same time remembered the shrieking. Then he shifted and they all shifted with him, all on the same listing ship.

God, Robert thought, he's big.

In the monitor he had the wife's face centered. She was still watching the ceiling, hands on her distended stomach, fingers moving over the sheets. The desperate look was still there, and Robert was still trying not to think about Wanda. He was still trying not to think that this man, the man who sent her to that supermarket parking lot, might have been at that funeral.

Carmichael had gone out for a while, but now he came back and asked how everything was going. Robert said, Same deal.

It was two-fifteen in the morning. Robert asked how many establishing shots they needed. He'd gone out earlier and done the hospital from the outside and the hallways and the room so that they'd have some intro material. That was just part of the job. He didn't say how he'd stood in the parking lot with the camera off and tried to figure out how anyone could even get up to forty.

He'd spent a lot of time in the other parking lot, thinking that. Afterward. He'd stood there and thought about how he was *really* alone now, as he'd thought he wanted.

He'd looked across the concrete at the black skids where the car had peeled around the corner and wondered if she'd been thinking about him or this other guy, wondered if she, too, was just trying to figure out how to be happy. But of course he couldn't know, any more than the police knew who was in that car.

Carmichael sat down and said maybe Robert should take five, go walk around. Robert said sure.

Out in the hall, it was quiet. There was a little waiting area off to the right, and he wandered around in there, picked up a few magazines and put them back down again, stared at the colored candy wrappers by the vending machine. A man and two young kids were curled up in one of the chairs under a white blanket, sleeping. The reception desk was empty. After a few minutes, the husband came out, too, lumbering through the rows of upholstered chairs, and stood next to Robert at the vending machine. He exhaled heavily.

So, he said after a moment. Educational video, huh?

Guess so, Robert said. For schools.

Chet-or-Chester was quiet again, looking at the vending machine. This was my wife's idea, he said. She's the one who saw the ad and said we could get two grand for this.

Robert didn't say anything. He didn't really want to talk to this guy. He just wanted them to have their kid. He'd film the whole thing, and years later, they'd still be showing it to bored middle-schoolers in health ed.

You married? Chet-or-Chester asked.

Robert said yes. He still wore his wedding ring, and it was the easiest explanation.

Got any kids?

No, Robert said. No kids.

The husband shook his head. It was like a boulder moving. Taking a long time, he said. Don't know if that's good or bad or what.

I'm sure it's fine, Robert said, like he knew what he was talking about.

The husband leaned into the vending machine, head down. I hope so, he said. Look, I'm gonna tell you something here.

Robert waited. He didn't want the husband to tell him anything. There were so many things he wished he didn't know already.

The last one, the husband said. We lost the last one. He looked over at Robert. His eyes were red-rimmed and set deep in his flesh.

I'm sorry, Robert said.

It was a stillbirth. We were here twenty hours, and finally he comes out, and he wasn't breathing or nothing.

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They tried all sorts of stuff, but that was pretty much it, said it was just one of those things that happens. No reason. He put his hands in his pockets and looked back toward the room. Marriage is funny, you know? After that, I thought we were done. I thought we'd just fall apart. We kind of did for a while. But here we are, you know? Funny.

Sure, Robert said. Sure, I know.

We didn't say anything when we signed up for this. My wife's got it in her head now that this one has to be all right, that we're going to take this money and start a college fund and that God is looking out for us now, that this is what's going to happen. But look, he said, I've got a favor to ask.

Okay, Robert said.

I'm not stupid, the husband said. I know what could happen. If it starts looking bad, you've got to stop the camera. Because if this is just another stillbirth, I don't think she could stand having it all on tape somewhere. And I don't think I could do anything to help that. You know?

Robert thought about it, about how just the fact of the tape's existence would be too much. There shouldn't ever be a tape like that. He wondered what he would do if there was a tape of Wanda in that parking lot. Rip it out of the camera, take it outside, burn it. He thought about that cleaning product commercial and how he couldn't ever stop watching it, seeing her whole, knowing he was behind the shot.

Sure, Robert said.

So I'll see you back in there then, the husband said. And thanks. He started himself back toward the room. He still had his head down, his arms wrapped in front of him, as if he was just doing what he had to do. Somehow he looked smaller.

Chester, Robert thought suddenly. *His name is Chester.*

When he got back, the wife was sitting up, and the nurses were bustling again, and the doctor was back, checking the wife's dilation under the sheet. One of the nurses was examining the monitors and the long strip of printouts. Robert took his seat behind the camera, and Carmichael said, Now, be sure you get all this, this is why we're here.

The wife looked glassy but conscious, and the husband was back in the chair next to her, enormous hands in his lap. A couple times he started to reach out for her, but then he didn't, and every time she moved a little, he did, too, except in him everything was magnified. Robert had both of them in the shot — just barely squeezed in, but you could see everything. He could see how the wife relaxed a little when the husband got closer, how her desperation

was mixed with terror, how she thought that things would be fine if everyone was just there watching her.

Carmichael stood up and then sat down again. In Robert's monitor, the wife's eyes were shut, and the husband finally got her hands in his. He was leaning in, whispering something Robert couldn't quite hear above the nurses and the hum of the monitoring equipment, but his lips moved rapidly and soundlessly. The wife was staring up at the ceiling, her mouth in a thin, straight line. He couldn't tell if she was listening to what the husband was saying. Maybe the important thing was just that he was talking.

Robert wondered what was going to happen: if he was going to have to stop the camera, if this was going to save them or tear them apart.

Okay, one of the nurses said, here we go.

The wife had her legs up now on wide, gray stirrups and like before the nurses said *push* while the husband counted off to ten. Robert thought, *Is this where we were headed? Is this what we were trying for? I don't even know anymore. I don't even know what we wanted, what I wanted. I thought I knew, but I had no idea.*

The doctor waited at the edge of the bed. Through the monitor, it was like they were all actors and in a minute someone would say, Good take, everyone. Let's run it again from a different angle. But then he'd look up and see how the husband leaned in, talking, how the wife squeezed her eyes shut, and he thought no, there weren't any takes here. Whatever happened, they would all be picturing this in their heads for years. Maybe all over the country, eyes would study this, try to work out what was going on and how, not knowing that sometimes you don't even know what's happened much less what's going to happen. They'll watch it, but they'll still have no idea. How could they know a thing about it?

Ten, the husband said, and the wife released, fell back a little.

One more time, the nurse said, and that ought to do it.

One, the husband said. The wife strained again, face and arms and body clenched up, and Robert leaned forward even more, because he was rooting for this kid. He was rooting for the parents. He was rooting, *Let this work, please. For God's sake, let this one be fine.* He wasn't even watching the monitor anymore, and as the husband said seven, the head emerged, hairless and gray, and then all at once the rest poured out into the nurse's arms, and here he was, out in the world, slick and naked, and howling.

Look at that, he said. Will you look at that. 🍌

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