

# CON NOMBRE

With patient tenacity, a UW professor is linking the subjects of a famous photo collection to their descendents and, at long last, giving them names.

**By Michael Penn  
MA'97**

**Photos courtesy Library  
of Congress, Prints and  
Photographs Division,  
FSA-OWI Collection**

In February 1943, the photographer John Collier, Jr. tumbled off the chilly, high desert plain of northern New Mexico and onto the doorstep of a Spanish-American rancher. The house was warm, with sheepskins on the floors, and Collier was invited in. During the next several hours, he took pictures of the rancher and his family — photographs that eventually would become part of the archives of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a Depression-era federal agency that, under the pretense of government public relations, assembled one of the best-known collections of documentary photographs in existence. Along with such notable image-makers as Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, and Walker Evans, Collier traversed the country, making thousands of memorable photographs that would help to record the face of America emerging from economic hardship.

But the photographs Collier made that day are as striking for what they don't reveal as for what they do. His photograph of two of the rancher's young sons, for example, hints at a mystery that lies beyond the scope of Collier's lens. In the image, the boys stand side by side in matching embroidered sweaters. But while the older one regards the camera eye to eye, with a measured gaze, his little brother, who is perhaps nine, wears the impish grin of a boy who is hiding something.

The big secret, it turns out, is the boy himself. Like his brother, he is anonymous, unidentified by caption or history. The label on the photograph, which resides among 170,000 images from the FSA project in the Library of Congress, provides only this information: "Córdova (vicinity), Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. Sons of a Spanish sheepman."

Leafing forward or backward through the sheaves of black-and-white photographs in the archives bears out thousands of similar stories. From Alabama sharecroppers to Oklahoma migrants to Wisconsin mill workers, the faces of the FSA collection are earnest, compelling, and, with very few exceptions, nameless.



**John Collier's 1943 photograph of two young New Mexican boys was like a riddle to Cavalliere Ketchum. He studied the boys' faces for years, wondering if he would ever discover who they were.**

**This photograph, taken by Russell Lee in 1940, is captioned, "Wife of a Spanish-American farmer and her child, Chamisal, New Mexico." More than sixty years later, Ketchum located the woman, Matilda Lovato, still in Chamisal. When she saw the old photograph, she nearly fainted.**



**In 1943, students in eight grades packed the one-room schoolhouse in Ojo Sarco, an isolated village tucked into the New Mexico mountains. The school employed two teachers — one of whom now lives a few doors away and has helped identify many of her former students.**



Nearly six decades after John Collier snapped the picture of the rancher's sons, another photographer followed his path through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains north of Santa Fe. Driving a battered AMC Matador, Cavalliere Ketchum navigated along what locals call the "high road" — a series of snaking, dusty lanes that ascend from Santa Fe into the dazzling indigo of the New Mexico sky. His target was a remote collection of Spanish and Indian villages that are found only on the most ambitious of maps. He, too, was looking for the face of America. But the America he sought was one faded into the sepia of an old photograph, one that he wasn't sure still existed, and one that he had little idea how to find.

Ketchum, a professor of art and UW-Madison's primary teacher of photography for more than three decades, didn't go to the New Mexican highlands to recreate Collier's work. He went to finish it. For nearly half of his sixty-four years, Ketchum has been in a slow, patient quest, retracing the steps of Collier and other FSA photographers in an attempt to find and identify the people whom they captured on film. Grasping time in snatches whenever classes and other academic commitments allow, he returns to New Mexico to comb the dozens of tiny pueblos and Spanish-speaking communities between Santa Fe and Taos that Collier and Lee photographed years ago. With each visit, he totes a thick file of Xeroxed photographs — the collection of history's ghosts whom Ketchum calls, in their lingo, *sin nombre*, without a name.

Attaching names to those faces — and there are hundreds in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains alone — is a mammoth task, one that Ketchum can't hope to achieve in his lifetime. But he can't fathom leaving it undone, either. He is driven by a desire to complete the unfinished jigsaw puzzle of the FSA collection, which he believes yields a fascinating, albeit fragmentary, look at American lives and cultures.

Like many people of his generation, Ketchum recalls seeing FSA photo-

graphs first as a young and curious boy. Taken between 1935 and 1943, they were essentially a propagandist masterstroke of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration. Wanting to show the struggle of farmers and other rural Americans — and hence the need for federal support programs — the government commissioned the massive project, disseminating images widely to newspapers and magazines. FSA works appeared prominently in such national publications as *Look*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, as well as in exhibits at the Museum of Modern Art and at the 1936 Democratic National Convention.

An elderly woman referred to Ketchum as "the professor who brings us our history." Another at the table disagreed. "No, no," she insisted. "He is the professor who brings us our youth."

In a day before television, when photography provided the only visual imagery most people had of remote lands and unfamiliar lives, the photographs made a lasting impression. A 1939 special edition of *U.S. Camera Annual* called the collection "the most remarkable human documents ever rendered in pictures." Poet Archibald MacLeish wrote "Land of the Free" after seeing FSA images of American poverty, and countless other artists were similarly influenced. Ketchum believes that John Steuart Curry may have drawn upon an FSA photograph when painting the mural that hangs in the Biochemistry Building (see sidebar, page 27).

Some evocative FSA images — such as Lange's heart-rending portrait of a

migrant mother with her children or Evans's careful images of Southern sharecroppers — helped define urbanites' mental geography and ethnography of their nation, and have retained great recognition. The accuracy of the portrayals is debatable; FSA shooters followed specific scripts and were instructed to play up certain themes. But no one questions the artistic vision of those behind the lens, or their ability to bring life to two dimensions.

"What I saw in their work was a great sense of humanity," Ketchum says. Raised in Arizona, he vividly recalls the images of Southwestern ranchers and cowboys whose stories he felt he understood from shared life experiences. "I grew up among the people I saw in those photographs," he says.

The FSA works remained an influence as Ketchum pursued his own artistic career. During the 1960s, as a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, he traveled into many of the same villages the FSA photographers had documented, although he didn't know it at the time. His dissertation combined his photography from the small Spanish villages in the southern part of the state with samplings of traditional stories and folk music — something the FSA very well might have done if it had been born in a multimedia age.

It was only years later, after Ketchum had come to UW-Madison, that he began plumbing the FSA collection. He applied for a grant from the Graduate School to study at the Library of Congress, where he intended to pull images from the northern New Mexican villages between Santa Fe and Taos. While examining the black-and-white prints in Washington, he had a startling realization. He recognized several people in the photographs.

Ketchum has a photographer's eye for detail, and an extraordinary visual memory that can recall people and places he first saw years before. It may seem fantastic that someone could recognize in a thirty-year-old picture the face of a person whom he'd met perhaps once or twice, but for Ketchum it's nothing out of

the ordinary. That gift launched his career within a career.

He took the photographs back to Chamisal, a town high up among the cottonwoods and orchards sixty miles north of Santa Fe. "I asked around at post offices and grocery stores," he says, "and finally someone said to me, 'Ay, that's my cousin. Where did you get this? You should show it to him.'"

In Latino culture, to be *sin nombre* is a terrible consequence. It is to be more than just without a name, but without connection or culture. It is to be lost. In some communities, to take in a wandering stranger is to make that person *con nombre* — to give him or her identity. At that moment, Ketchum realized his mission. He wanted to bring all those lonely travelers home.

Although merely a remote corner of the bigger puzzle, New Mexico seemed a logical place for Ketchum to begin assembling the pieces of history. He returned to the Library of Congress and culled 450 large black-and-white prints from a collection of twenty thousand photographs taken across the American Southwest. He examined them closely, singling out 650 unique faces. Of those, eight were identified in captions.

Ketchum set to work on the rest, returning to New Mexico during summers, logging thousands of miles, and paying expenses out of his pocket. Given the scant clues offered by the photo captions, the process was strictly gumshoe diligence. For most of the photos, he had only the name of a town, leaving him little choice but to drive straight into it and begin asking anyone who would talk to him, "Do you know who this is?"

The world of the high road is one that functions by its own rules, almost entirely independently from mainstream ways. Villages like Penasco, Chamisal, Truchas, Ojo, and others in some ways more closely reflect the era of Spanish exploration than modern times. Many land rights are still governed by treaties

signed with the Spanish government after the Mexican War. Farmers still use the long ditches, known as *acequias*, that their ancestors chiseled into the mountains four hundred years ago to irrigate the same fields. Water or soil can be as important a currency as dollars and cents, and English, if spoken at all, is used only when Spanish won't suffice. It's not the sort of place that strangers can roll into — waving old pictures of relatives — without some risk.

"I feel my responsibility toward these people is that they're identified at the Library of Congress," Ketchum says. "They've been anonymous for too long."

Although he doesn't speak Spanish fluently, Ketchum, who has Latino roots, says, "I can speak English with a Spanish accent." He invested years warming up the long-established families of the mountains, winning their trust, establishing boundaries, and, eventually, learning their histories. He handed out copies of the FSA photographs and made judicious use of his own camera. He learned that in northern New Mexico, you can often still trade goods for *cuentos* — stories of life and customs, and so he traded photographs for information.

As the years went by, he began to learn to whom the faces in the old images belonged. He was surprised to discover — but perhaps shouldn't have been, given the constancy of the place — that many of the people he was looking for hadn't moved much at all from where Collier and Lee had first found them.

At times, when Ketchum arrived with his photographs, people were as

astonished to see their younger selves as they might have been to see a long-dead relative. Matilda Lovato, for example, nearly fainted when Ketchum introduced himself with a photo of her and her daughter, Elsie, taken in 1940 in their home in Chamisal. But soon, Lovato, who still lives in Chamisal, was spilling stories and fond memories. Passing through Questa, New Mexico, Ketchum wandered into a store he recognized from FSA pictures and found it being run by the grandson of the woman originally photographed. The young man became so excited that he left Ketchum to operate the store while he ran to find his grandmother.

"It can come as a great shock to have someone show up with these photos," Ketchum says. But he adds that most people express both pride at having been part of history and gratitude for having it restored. Rarely have the people Ketchum has found recalled the FSA photographs being taken, and none had copies of them. In those days, a camera would have been a rich person's toy, and certainly a foreign object on the high road, where to live well was to survive. The photos from the government archives are like pages from the family albums that they could never afford to keep.

Once, as Ketchum shared a meal with some people to whom he had given photographs, an elderly woman referred to him as "the professor who brings us our history." Another at the table disagreed. "No, no," she insisted. "He is the professor who brings us our youth."

Whatever he's bringing to the photo subjects, Ketchum is also indemnifying their place in the FSA files. He is now confident of the identities of more than 150 people who are not named in the FSA photographs, and he intends to pass along to the Library of Congress the names he discovers so that they can be appended to the images.

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Of all the photos Ketchum has found, Alicia Chávez likes this one the best. Taken in 1943, it shows her grandfather Blas, grandmother Fedelina, and aunt Faustina as they read news that Blas had won a contest for raising a prize ram. "It really captures so much, with the way my family are dressed and the details of the room," she says.



When Ketchum ran across this store, photographed by John Collier in 1943, in Chacon, New Mexico, it was well worn and missing its sign. He wasn't sure he had found the same place until he counted the number of planks on the roof, matching what he saw in the photograph. Later he found the old sign in the attic.



Despite some encroaching development from fast-growing Taos and its ski areas, the landscape Collier and Lee captured remains significantly unchanged. This vista, overlooking the Chávez family ranch, looks much the same today.

To a point, Ketchum's project is an answer to Shakespeare's musing, "What's in a name?" While FSA records don't offer a definitive rationale for why the subjects remained anonymous, it seems clear that it was no clerical accident. James Curtis, author of the FSA history and critique *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth*, suggests that the project's handlers were influenced by the social progressivism of the day. They wanted the FSA collection to have an everymanism that transcended the individual lives or circumstances of the people in the photographs. "Stripped of their identities," Curtis writes, "they became the common men and women whose plight the Roosevelt administration was working to improve."

Dorothea Lange's famous *Migrant Mother*, for example, appears to have been left anonymous on purpose. When Lange found the woman with her children in a California pea-pickers camp, she spoke to her briefly to ask permission to take pictures, but she made no attempt to learn her name. "It was not necessary," Lange later wrote, saying that the woman's face captured "the essence of the assignment."

It's plausible that the FSA photographers were following the norms of social science, which traditionally has kept the identities of its research subjects private. Few things are as public as a face, however, and few faces have been as public as the *Migrant Mother*'s. It seems reasonable that someone might eventually want to look for her. In 1975, photographer Bill Ganzel did just that, as part of a project to trace the lives of Oklahoma migrants featured in the FSA collection, which eventually became the book *Dust Bowl Descent*. He found Florence Thompson, the woman who thirty-nine years earlier huddled with her children for Lange's picture, living in Modesto, California. Thompson, who had ten children, died in 1983.

In *Dust Bowl Descent*, Ganzel writes that the project made him feel "more like a detective than a photographer." With such work, he and Ketchum have moved the FSA collection beyond artistry to

anthropology, which has opened it to a new school of researchers who are using it to tell new stories about life during the Depression — and about what can be revealed by photographic records. Ketchum's students, who have been weaned on healthy portions of cultural pluralism and respect for individuality, are generally less interested in seeing the FSA subjects as representative motifs for political agendas. More often, they're asking who the people are and what their lives were like. They're keen to hear the individual instruments that make up the symphony of FSA images.

It was quite a while before Tsai took her camera out of her bag. "If you want to document people's lives, you have to get to know their lives first," she says.

"It seems like [the FSA] just wanted to show a photograph," says Ya-Ling Tsai '01, one of four graduate students whom Ketchum took to New Mexico last summer. "They didn't pay that much attention to actually knowing people, to finding out who they are. I think who they are is a very important part of the photograph."

Tsai, a native of Taiwan who is pursuing an MFA in photography with an interest in visual anthropology, says she wanted to go to New Mexico "to get to know people's lives." In the villages, the students splintered off, following separate families for hours or days at a time. Tsai spent a day with a graying woman from Chamisal who taught her how to make tortillas and showed her the bleaching animal skulls she had in her backyard. It was quite a while before Tsai took her camera out of her bag, but she regards the time she spent listening

to the woman's stories as essential for making a picture.

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Lately, Ketchum's search has had a tinge of desperation. He's running out of time. Not only is he getting within a few years of retirement, but the people he's looking for are pushing the envelope of longevity.

The young boys in the matching sweaters, for example, would by now be entering their seventies. Their youth, frozen on silver nitrate for all these years, has silently slipped away. And if a camera shutter can't stop the march of time, then a professor nearing his own twilight surely can't.

"It really scares me," he says. "We can still find these people, but we have to do it fast. It's going to have to be done in the next five to eight years."

The clean mountain air seems to have preserved many of the people Ketchum has been seeking. He has found numerous FSA subjects — even those who were adults when Lee and Collier came through — still alive and alert in the towns that raised them. He has located a woman who is now 105, and others who are in their nineties. Enlisting students has also helped. Ketchum is able to work more quickly, and he has passed on some of the tricks he knows for reading the visual cues in photographs — such as using magnifiers to read fliers on the walls of churches or license plates on vehicles.

This fall, he and art professor Truman Lowe will take a group of students to the Smithsonian Institution, where Ketchum will lead a seminar on his research methods. One of the students' projects will be to identify and locate a family of Oklahoma migrants from a 1939 FSA photograph.

But there is a sense of passing in New Mexico, and it's not just the subjects that Ketchum worries will perish. The culture itself seems to be withering on the bone.

## something in his smile

With his rich farm scenes and vital plainsfolk, John Steuart Curry helped define what most people consider to be the quintessential Midwest. But who helped to define Curry? Is it possible that photographs in the Farm Security Administration collection may have provided Curry with some of the indelible images he translated to canvas?



UW art professor Cavalliere Ketchum is trying to learn whether Curry modeled a figure in one of his

murals after a young boy whose picture is among the famous FSA images. Teddy Saugstad was ten years old when Arthur Rothstein arrived on his family's farm in Vernon County, Wisconsin, sometime during 1942. About that same time, Curry, who was in residence at UW-Madison from 1936 to 1946, was working on a large mural titled *The Social Benefits of Biochemical Research*, which now decorates the Biochemistry Building.

Accompanying a group of students using scanning equipment there, Ketchum recently noted the resemblance between Saugstad and the young boy Curry painted in the mural.

"The kid in the mural — I think this is him," Ketchum notes, pointing at Teddy's distinctive smile in one of Rothstein's images. He doesn't know how Curry might have seen the boy or his photographs, but he wants to investigate one interesting coincidence. During 1942, the Memorial Union hosted the traveling exhibit of FSA photos known as "Faces of America." Do you think they're ... connected?

— M.P.

"Younger people are not staying," Ketchum says. "They want more than the ability to make a subsistence living. The *abuelitos* and the *abuelas* are there, but in most cases, their grandchildren have moved on. I don't know what will happen to these villages once they're gone."

Jennifer Price '01, one of the students who went to New Mexico, says that some of the elderly people she met seemed lonely, despite having raised large families. Price made photographs of a woman who lived alone on a farm outside one of the towns. Her barn, long ago retired and falling apart from disuse, is routinely pilfered by petty thieves, and her husband and most of her relatives are now buried in a graveyard beside the house. "She told me, 'I have all this land. I don't even know what I'm going to do with it,'" Price says.

The students also witnessed traditional festivals, some of which have been going on since before the Revolutionary War. They're still glamorous affairs of color and pride, although these days only small handfuls of people participate. In some years, villages have to choose their "Queen of the Acequia," the ceremonial

town princess of water, by default, since only one girl of the proper age lives there.

Alicia Fedelina Chávez, a professor of educational administration and a native of the region, says she knows firsthand the culture Ketchum is trying to record. Jobs and education have taken her away from the area, but she says she feels responsibility to preserve and promote her heritage from afar. The former dean of students at UW-Madison, she studies diversity in higher education, and says Ketchum's work "reminds me why I choose to study culture. It's so important to recognize how it defines people."

Chávez knows something about cultural ambassadorship. Her family settled near Taos in the 1500s and has tended sheep there ever since. When her aunts and uncles speak, you can hear traces of the original dialect their ancestors brought with them from Spain, untainted after four centuries. Her father, Gabriel, and uncle, Miguel, were the basis for the movie *And Now Miguel*, a semifactual account of Miguel's desire to become a man by joining his older brothers as they moved the family's sheep flock high into the mountains. Later a Newbery Award-

winning children's book, the story is well-known throughout the Americas; when he was nineteen years old, Gabriel Chávez won a Fulbright to travel around South America, showing the film and sharing the story of his young life with fellow farmers. For the son of a poor shepherd, the opportunity was unheard of, a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

That is why Alicia Chávez understands how important it is for Ketchum to find the people who were the FSA's nameless ambassadors. "My beliefs about research and scholarship are that we should try to contribute something to the lives of the subjects we study," she says. "I'm very proud that Cavalliere is contributing by giving back these memories. And what a wonderful gift he's giving."

"It's certainly the most rewarding thing I've done in all my years at this university," says Ketchum. "Frankly, I'd hang my photographs in Chamisal or Penasco before the Museum of Modern Art. [In those places], I have to deal with the people that they're about. They're not anonymous."

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## Con Nombre

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For all his success in locating the lost souls of the FSA files, Ketchum was for years frustrated by what should have been his simplest find. John Collier's photographs of the rancher's sons had him stumped. On many fruitless trips along the high road, he began to wonder if he would ever find that little boy and decipher his knowing smile.

The problem, ironically, was that some of the photographs Collier took were identified. The photo of the boys indicated that they lived in Córdoba, in Rio Arriba County. Another image named their father as Blas Sánchez. Ketchum went to Córdoba, a mountain town well south on the high road, but no one knew the man. Strangely, no one even recognized the house or the landscape. He searched the town's cemeteries, but not only did he not find Blas Sánchez, he encountered very few Sánchezes at all, certainly not enough to suggest a large family living there.

It was only in a speck of an outpost off the high road known as Llano de San Juan that Ketchum caught a break. A teacher there said the man in the photo resembled her fourth cousin. "But she said, 'He doesn't live in Córdoba. He lives in Los Córdovas, way up north,'" Ketchum says.

He got back in his Matador and drove seventy miles across the mountains to Los Córdovas, seated near Taos on the desert plateau below the range. It was there that a man looked at the photograph and pointed over Ketchum's shoulder toward a house. Although Ketchum didn't know it, it was the house in which Alicia Chávez's father grew up. The young boy with the devilish smile was Gabriel, standing next to his big brother Blas, Jr.

"You can see someone typing away in Washington, D.C., saying, 'Sánchez, Chávez, what's the difference?'" says Ketchum. The difference, it turns out, was the distance between anonymity

and the father of a UW-Madison colleague. The short stroll to Alicia Chávez's office — and to her father's name — might have taken Ketchum a few minutes at lunch one day. Instead, it took fifty-eight years.

In February, Fedelina Chávez, the wife of Blas Chávez, Sr. and Alicia's grandmother, passed away. Her death, fourteen years after her husband's, came just four months after Alicia first saw the family pictures that she had not known existed. To Alicia, the confluence of these events seems not simply a cosmic coincidence, but a grand stroke of fate.

Ketchum, who by this point in his work has grown used to coincidences, is equally flabbergasted by the bizarre

"We don't have photographs of our family. That was a wealthy person's thing to do." Looking at the photograph of her father as a boy, she smiled. "He has the same rascally look on his face as he does now."

circuit that led back to Madison. After being led to the Chávez house in Los Córdovas, Ketchum caught up with Alicia's uncle Miguel, a former master craftsman who now owns a vacation rental business in Taos and carves angels from cedar in his free time. Miguel helped Ketchum identify his relatives in the old images. Blas Chávez, Sr. evidently was a favorite subject of Collier's, and with Miguel's help, Ketchum unearthed more than a dozen

photographs of the Chávez family, taken during two separate visits. Casually, Miguel asked Ketchum, "What university did you say you're from?" — and thus was fit that last elusive puzzle piece that reveals the image.

Days before exhibiting the photographs on campus last October, Ketchum contacted Alicia and gave her copies. "You don't know what this means to my family," she told him.

"We don't have photographs of our family," she said later. "That was a wealthy person's thing to do." Looking at the photograph of her father as a boy, she smiled. "He has the same rascally look on his face as he does now. I think he must have been born with that look on his face."

Some years after posing for Collier, Gabriel Chávez became a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, serving in the air defense command. After retirement, he moved back to the ranch, where he now tends sheep and takes care of the many elderly people in his extended family and community.

After her grandmother's death, Alicia joined her father one morning as he strode purposefully up from the valley and onto the plain, taking in the same vista captured by Collier's camera. They walked silently, hoping to spot the family of coyotes that frequents the land, and enjoying the solitude of the desert. The altitude and the chill made the air as sharp as needles. The sky was so blue, Alicia says, that it hurt her eyes.

Gabriel told *cuentos* as they walked, recalling his parents and the forays he made as a child into the looming purple peaks. After a while, he fell silent, tending to his private thoughts. Alicia didn't pry or try to fill the open spaces with idle chatter. She was just happy to be home. 🐾

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Michael Penn is senior editor of *On Wisconsin*.

To see more images from the Library of Congress files, go to [memory.loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov) on the Web. Photographs taken by Ketchum and his students will be on display August 3-10, during the annual fiesta in Penasco, New Mexico. Ketchum will also exhibit his work, along with original images by Lee and Collier, at the University of New Mexico's Harwood Museum in Taos during 2003.

# THE King AND I

BY PETER GREENBERG '72  
PHOTOS BY ROBERT LANDAU

*King Abdullah II of Jordan invited travel reporter Peter Greenberg '72 to be his guest as they rode camels, raced Harleys, and climbed mountains — all for a Travel Channel special highlighting the wonders of this extraordinary country.*

A number of years ago, I was in Amman, Jordan, on assignment for the Travel Channel. In order to film at a number of locations, I not only needed permission, I needed help. To help us shoot aials of the expansive, legendary Wadi Rum Desert, my crew and I desperately wanted a helicopter.

A Jordanian friend told me it would be very hard to secure permission, let alone a chopper, but he would try to arrange a meeting with a person who could help: Prince Abdullah, the son of then King Hussein.

The meeting was set, and I headed out to an army base where I could find Abdullah, who as commander of the Jordanian Special Forces controlled the helicopters, among other things.

It was a successful meeting — I got my helicopter, and we got our shots. But most important, the prince and I became friends. We discovered much common ground, ranging from favorite movies (*Austin Powers*) to more substantive issues concerning peace in the region and the delicate balance of power in the Middle East.

On subsequent visits, I met the rest of his family, shared meals with them, and was able to get out and explore parts of the country not found in most guide books. And we talked often of my first visit to the area, one that was linked to the University of Wisconsin.

I was just twenty when I saw Jordan for the first time. In 1970, I was a junior at the UW, at a time when the *Daily Cardinal* happened to be prosperous enough to send its reporters overseas. The paper flew me to Israel to do a five-part series on life in the Middle East. Only three years earlier, Israel had captured Gaza and the West Bank in the Six-Day War.



**King Abdullah (in background) enjoys riding motorcycles and pilots his own helicopter. Greenberg (foreground) says that the monarch, who is only forty years old, is in great physical shape, "and he truly ran me ragged over five full days of shooting."**

Three years later, fighting would erupt again, in the Yom Kippur War. Even during my visit, Israel was in a technical state of war with every one of its neighbors. Borders were sealed. But one night, I stood on the beach in Eilat, on the Red

Sea, just a few hundred yards from Jordan. The view was intoxicating.

There, almost close enough to touch, was Aqaba. I remember watching the lights of the Jordanian seaport glistening against the calm sea, and I wondered if there would ever be peace — if I would ever get there.

During the following years, I traveled to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan. And of all these countries, the one that continually draws me back is Jordan. It exists at the threshold of a dream and at the crossroads of history and the Bible.

And yet, most of my friends won't go to Jordan. They're afraid of the Middle East, and I understand their reluctance. After all, this tiny kingdom is situated in a pretty tough neighborhood — surrounded by Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

Still, Jordan is extremely traveler friendly. It has an ancient history and some of the world's most significant archaeological treasures — from the splendors of Petra to well-preserved Roman cities such as Jerash. It is a modern Islamic state with a considerable Christian population. And it has always welcomed visitors with a social and religious tolerance that sets it apart from much of the Middle East — perhaps because the country's leadership has always had strong ties with the West.

Over the next few years, starting in 1998, the prince and I met again in Jordan, and we talked about the fragile peace and the treaty that his father had negotiated with Israel in 1994. We spoke about extremism, politics, security, and cultural and religious intolerance. He talked about his family, his hopes, and trying to maintain a somewhat sensible lifestyle given his responsibilities.

Born in Amman in 1962, the eldest son of King Hussein and his British-born second wife, Toni Gardiner, Abdullah was raised in an environment of both privilege and hardship. Wanting him to learn the ways of the world, Hussein sent Abdullah off to boarding school in the U.S. for his junior high and high school years.

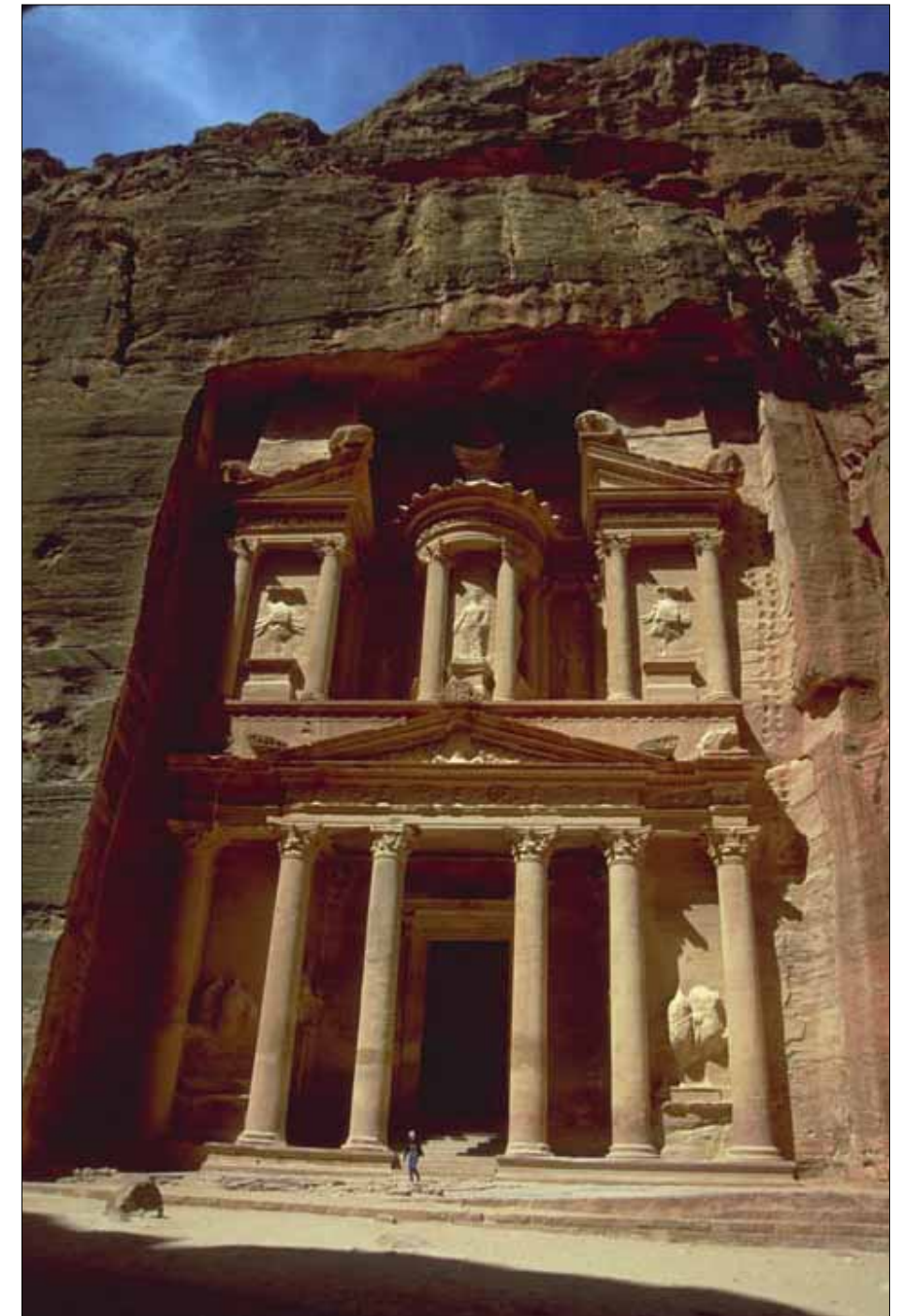
"I became very familiar with American thinking, American customs, and the way you deal with things," he told me, "to the point that I have two switches — I can put the Jordanian switch on, and then I can put on the American switch. To be able to at least switch your mind, to be able to understand another culture, I think is a tremendous opportunity that I'm very grateful for."

After a stint at Sandhurst Military Academy in England, Abdullah trained to become a career soldier in the Jordanian army. When he returned home, he promptly began his military career, commanding both tank and attack helicopter units, and rising to the rank of major general and head of Jordanian Special Forces.

"When people see members of the royal family carrying the burdens that they carry, and the ultimate burden of risking your life in defense of your ideals and your nation," he explained to me, "it's a way of breaking down barriers and bringing the royal family closer to its people, because you're willing to take the same risks that they are."

He took risks in his personal life as well. Like his adventurous father, the young prince had a passion for speed and daring. He was a champion rally car driver, skydiver, and avid scuba diver. But it was a beauty named Rania who would really capture his imagination. A Jordanian woman of Palestinian origin, she married Abdullah in 1993 and would soon bear him a son.

By the late 1990s, the young family was in for a shock. The world watched with sadness as King Hussein contracted lymphatic cancer, and though he traveled several times to the U.S. for treatment, the cancer proved incurable. In January 1999, knowing he didn't have long to live, Hussein returned to Jordan for the last time. Standing in the reception line on the tarmac was Hussein's brother, then Crown Prince Hassan, who had held the reins of power in the king's absence and was expected to inherit the throne. But in a surprising turn of events, Hussein announced that he was changing the line of succession,



**The desert city of Petra was lost from maps for 1,000 years. At its peak before the time of Christ, the popular oasis on ancient trade routes boasted 30,000 people, incredible architecture, and aqueducts cut into the rocks. The Nabataean people who built it grew very wealthy, but around A.D. 800, the trade routes changed, and Petra was abandoned to the blowing sands. It was rediscovered by a Swiss explorer in 1812. The Treasury, above, was depicted in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* as the temple that contained the Holy Grail.**

and the crown would instead pass to Abdullah.

"As my father was failing, we met often at the hospital in the U.S. and again in London," he explains. "He said he needed to talk to me, but there never seemed to be time for us to have that conversation."

And then, one day, King Hussein insisted they meet immediately, and alone. That's when his father told him of his plan. "It's a shock when somebody says, you know, 'I want you to have this responsibility.' I said, 'Well sir, this is something that I never wanted; it wasn't something that I ever aspired to.' And he



**Previous pages: King Abdullah, left, and Peter Greenberg, right, ride into the ancient city of Petra on camelback. These "ships of the desert" can easily walk 25 miles a day, carrying as much as 1,000 pounds on their backs, for months on end. Above, the entourage settles in to spend a night in the Wadi Rum desert, where the movie *Lawrence of Arabia* was filmed.**



In the Wadi Rum, sand boarding, a desert version of snow boarding, is becoming popular, and adventure travelers are also drawn to the spectacular rock climbing. Wadi means valley.

said, "That's probably one of the main reasons why it's got to be you."

Shortly after that conversation, Hussein died.

Abdullah's life was forever changed. "I had a wife and three children, and all of a sudden, I had a family of 4 million. And the tremendous responsibility of the burden was hard to swallow."

But this thoroughly modern monarch has risen to the task. He understands the challenges, and he confronts them every day with boundless energy and determination.

Unlike Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Jordan has no oil. Its economy depends to a great extent on tourism, which has been virtually nonexistent since 1998 due to conflicts in the surrounding region. Perhaps that explains why last year, at my suggestion, the king became my special tour guide, and for five days we rode camels, raced Harleys, and climbed mountains together. We went scuba diving in the Red Sea, and His Majesty flew me all over the country in his Blackhawk helicopter — all for a one-hour Travel Channel special, "Jordan: The Royal Tour." It marked the first time in television history that a ruling monarch had ever hosted a show of this kind.

We visited Petra, a UN World Heritage Site. (These sites are found in

118 countries and include landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon.) Though this city in Jordan's southern desert was lost for a thousand years, it's become a popular attraction, and parts of the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* were filmed



Bedouin tribesmen like those above still maintain their desert code of hospitality, offering food, drink, and shelter to strangers. "We Jordanians feel a fondness for the desert people," said the king in his television special, "Jordan: The Royal Tour."

there. A truly magical place with buildings carved from sandstone cliffs, Petra's early morning and late afternoon light transforms the location into a mystical, seductive experience. While there, we camped with Bedouins in the desert and rode with the desert police on camels. (Caution: camels are mean, angry animals that spit — not my favorite experience. Let's just say I don't enjoy the process of riding camels. In this case, I enjoyed having *ridden* them.)

Surprisingly, Jordan is full of medieval castles (holdovers from the Crusades), and perhaps the biggest surprise was a whitewater adventure in Wadi Mujib — in a country few people think even *has* water. It was a location where Abdullah had trained with the special forces, and one of the more beautiful places I've ever seen. In the meantime, he explained to me the short distances between his neighbors. In Aqaba, his palace is only a few hundred yards from the Israeli border. And as we flew in his helicopter, we could see Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia — each within just a few miles of our position. In the

event of another Arab-Israeli war, Jordan would likely become a battlefield.

And so the current tension over Palestine keeps Abdullah busy. My visit marked the first time since he became king that he had taken any time off. It gave us the opportunity to speak of many things, ranging from Palestinian rights to the environment; from negotiating and keeping a lasting peace, to his favorite television shows and movies. At night, out in the Wadi Rum Desert, where Lawrence of Arabia roamed, we often joked with lines from *Austin Powers*.

And then, just as quickly, the king would switch back to more important, compelling topics. We discussed the economic reforms and infrastructure needed to lay the groundwork for hope for the Palestinians, whether Yasser Arafat can control the very people he officially represents, and, of course, American fears of travel to the region.

"The perception of the Middle East is that if something happens in one country, it means that there's a sudden [U.S.] State Department travel ban on people going anywhere in the Middle East. If there's a problem or riots as you had recently in Cincinnati, it doesn't mean I can't go and visit Boston. In fact, I think the best line that anybody ever had was my mother. 'If it wasn't safe,' she said, 'I wouldn't want my son to be living in Jordan.'"

"Jordan: The Royal Tour" was originally scheduled to premiere on September 24, 2001. On the morning of September 11, I was at the *Today Show* preparing to go on the air; and the king was in the air over Nova Scotia, heading to the United States to appear at a number of events prior to the premiere. Then the first hijacked airplane hit the World Trade Center. Most transAtlantic flights were diverted to Gander, Newfoundland, but Abdullah's plane was one of the very few allowed to turn around in midflight and return home.

And almost immediately, Abdullah was back in Jordan, working the phones, talking with President Bush and other leaders as the world prepared for war in Afghanistan. Queen Rania



King Abdullah and his spouse, Queen Rania, enjoy spending time at the Summer Palace in Aqaba with their children Prince Hussein, baby daughter Aqaba, and Princess Iman.

increased her public presence, making impassioned, intelligent pleas to denounce the events of September 11 as well as to work behind the scenes to keep peace in the region.

As was the case with his father, Abdullah walks a fine, delicate line as a



These colorful pipes are part of a store display in the bustling city of Amman.

leading broker for peace in the region. Jordan is often the first stop that Secretary of State Colin Powell and other world leaders make in the region. It was Jordanian intelligence that uncovered the plot by Osama Bin Laden to blow up Los Angeles International Airport on New Year's Eve 1999. Jordan was one of the first countries to pledge support to America after September 11. And, as the Israelis and the PLO negotiate for peace, Abdullah — like his father before him — will likely be intimately involved in the process.

"My father worked all his life for peace, and he used to say he wanted it for his children and his children's children," Abdullah says. "Well, that's now our generation, and I'm in the same position. And I don't want to have to work all my life for the same goal. Our generation is perhaps the best generation to achieve that peace. And we cannot afford to wait for it. For all the obvious, and not-so-obvious reasons, we need that peace now." ■

Peter Greenberg is the travel editor for NBC's *Today Show*, and also the chief correspondent for the Discovery Network's Travel Channel, as well as editor-at-large for *National Geographic Traveler* magazine. Greenberg says that he and Abdullah continue to stay in touch, and that "the concept for peace for both of us is a 'when' — rather than an 'if' — proposition." "Jordan: the Royal Tour" first aired in April 2002.



*Anthony Shadid, journalist and UW alumnus, went to the West Bank to cover dramatic news of war and conflict. He never expected to become part of the story.*

# One Shot in Ramallah

By Michael Penn  
MA'97

On March 31, as *Boston Globe* reporter Anthony Shadid '90 walked away from Yasser Arafat's compound in the besieged West Bank city of Ramallah, a bullet ripped through his shoulder, knocking him to the ground and triggering an international controversy about who shot him, and why.

Shadid, who joined the *Globe's* Washington bureau in 2001, has covered events in the Middle East and the Arab nations for several years and is the author of a book, *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam*. But he has never endured a more eventful time in his career than in recent months.

Two weeks after being shot, he traveled to UW-Madison to accept the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's Ralph O. Nafziger Award for early-career achievement and to share his experiences with students, faculty, and staff. Shortly thereafter, he carried on an e-mail conversation with *On Wisconsin* senior editor Michael Penn.

**Probably the first thing on all of our minds is your health. How is your shoulder healing?**

My shoulder's feeling much better. I went back to work the first week of May and, while it's still pretty sore, particularly on deadline, I'm able to do pretty much what I want to do. I'll probably end up losing some strength in my right shoulder, but I keep telling myself it could have been far worse.

**Until recently, you hadn't really done much reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically. How did you end up in Ramallah?**

I was a correspondent with the Associated Press in Cairo from 1995 to 1999, a period in which I traveled occasionally to Israel and the Palestinian territories to help out. So I had experience there, even though I hadn't traveled to Jerusalem since 1996. In general, it's a story you can't help become familiar with if you cover the Middle East, and I feel comfortable writing about it.

Since September, I've focused mainly on political Islam, the subject of a book I finished in 2000. But given the *Globe's* size, the pool of foreign reporters is relatively small, so we end up helping out on a wide range of stories. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, I had traveled to Europe, the Arab world, and Afghanistan. Jerusalem was pretty much another assignment, one that was supposed to last just a few weeks. Once I was there, I basically followed the news, and the news quickly became Ramallah.

**Tell us about March 31. What had you been doing before the shooting?**

It was my third day in Ramallah. I had traveled there expecting an Israeli invasion after the suicide bombing at a Passover seder in Netanya, and we ended up pretty much getting stuck. While we couldn't leave, given the fighting going on, there was plenty of work to do, and that work was effectively around-the-clock.

On Sunday [the day of the shooting], I was reporting a story about the trouble Palestinian doctors and humani-

tarian workers were having in Ramallah. Israel suspected they were transporting fighters and that militants were hiding in hospitals, and there were repeated instances of Israeli soldiers firing on ambulances, detaining doctors, and searching hospitals. I had witnessed a particularly dramatic stand-off outside a hospital earlier in the day and was heading to the hotel to write the piece when I got shot.

**You've said you didn't hear the shot before you fell down. What went through your mind as you realized you had been hit?**

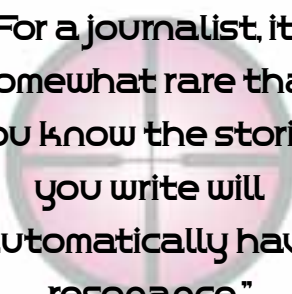
At first, I thought I was paralyzed and wondered if I was struck by a stun grenade. For two or three minutes, I couldn't feel my arms or legs, or move them. I got the feeling back in my arms first, reached behind my flak jacket, and felt the blood. The first few minutes were terrifying. I knew an ambulance couldn't reach us, so my first thought was, if I stay here, I'll probably bleed to death. Then I thought of my wife and daughter. After that, impulse pretty much took over, and we started walking.

**Where did you go?**

My colleague led me — at times, effectively dragging me. After a while, I fell down, and we fumbled around in the street. Then we got up again and made it to an Israeli checkpoint. The soldiers came at us with guns, and my colleague shouted in Hebrew, "He's wounded." They demanded that we show them, and he turned me around to display my back, which was soaked in red at that point. An Israeli medic then responded with remarkable professionalism, giving me first aid and trying to stop the bleeding. Within a half-hour, a stretcher from the nearby Palestinian hospital arrived, and I was taken there.

It was a tumultuous twenty-four hours that followed. Israeli soldiers

stormed the facility, looking for Palestinian suspects. I then had trouble getting out of town with my colleague. But a day later, I was taken to an Israeli hospital in Jerusalem, where I spent a week recovering.



**“For a journalist, it’s somewhat rare that you know the stories you write will automatically have resonance.”**

**Before you were shot — despite all that you knew about the violence in Ramallah — had you ever considered that you might be in danger?**

I thought it was a precarious situation, but I didn’t feel in danger. The first day, I stayed pretty much in the hotel, worried that it was too risky with all the firing. The second day, I got out a little more, but carefully and only with the permission of Israeli soldiers manning checkpoints. On the third day, I felt more comfortable. There was less fighting, and it was easier to walk around.

The irony is that I was shot when I felt safest. I was walking back to the hotel, I was laughing and, for the first time that weekend, I was at ease.

**You believe the shooting was deliberate. Do you think you were targeted because you were a journalist?**

I don’t know the answer to that. I was clearly marked as a journalist, with “TV” taped on my back. I was walking in the middle of the street to avoid looking suspicious. And I was up-front at

every checkpoint that I passed. It would have been hard to mistake me for a combatant. In the end, one shot was fired — in full daylight — and I was struck in the back.

**Your newspaper filed a complaint with the Israeli Defense Forces, but the IDF maintains Israeli soldiers weren’t involved. Their most recent statement suggests Palestinian fighters were responsible. As you’ve said, you didn’t see the shooter. What makes you believe it was an Israeli soldier who shot you?**

I was shot in an area that was under full and complete control of the Israeli military and had been for days. There was a tank behind me, an Israeli checkpoint ahead of me; snipers were everywhere, and Israeli soldiers had seized houses along the way. There was no army response to the shot being fired, and there was no attempt to find the shooter. I suspect if a Palestinian had got off a round — in that area and that time — the response would have been severe.

I have to add that I was by no means the only journalist targeted by the Israeli army over those few weeks, and the Committee to Protect Journalists, among others, has complained about the harassment.

**I imagine the IDF might say that journalists are putting themselves in danger by entering off-limits areas.**


The IDF has a point. The area was off-limits, though not to the reporters already there. At the same time, I think it’s dangerous when journalists aren’t on site. However limited, we do provide eyes and ears that wouldn’t otherwise be there, sometimes the only ones. And it’s difficult to overstate the importance of that.

**Did you find much compassion for the job you were trying to do?**

I found people remarkably compassionate about the risks we took in covering the story. While authorities on any story are ambivalent or worse about extensive or hard-hitting reporting, I found readers expressing their admiration and appreciation for what it took to file on a daily or semi-daily basis.

**Would it be possible to cover something like the situation in Ramallah without witnessing these events firsthand?**

Although not impossible, I think it’s extremely difficult to cover a story without being there. Ramallah is a good example. Covering it from Jerusalem would require almost total dependence on, one, the Israeli government account and, two, reports from residents reached by phone or e-mail. I think both were lacking, and in the end, the only way to determine that is to see it firsthand.



**“My sense is that few red lines are left in this war.”**

**Before you were shot, you were interviewing people about the boundaries of the conflict — about what was still considered out-of-bounds between these combatants. Do you now see yourself as an example of how little is off-limits in this battle?**

I was told by friends that the conflict was far “dirtier” than it had been ever before, and I shared that assessment as I left. I think there’s a certain degree of dehumanization that pervades the struggle, on both sides. It’s a dehumanization that allows suicide bombings to claim innocent Israeli lives, and it’s the dehumanization that allows the collective punishment inflicted by Israel’s occupation. In Ramallah, much of that came together. I had gone there to cover Israel’s response to a suicide bombing and the carnage it caused. Once there, I saw it played out — civilians killed, doctors arrested, hospitals invaded. My sense is that few red lines are left in this war.

**With both sides so willing to cross those red lines, do you think they’ve been erased for good? Is there any going back?**

That’s a tough question. Like I said, I think the situation has deteriorated remarkably from even a year or two ago. Can it return to, say, the optimism after the Oslo Accords were signed? I don’t know. Right now, I’m a little pessimistic. But the same thing might have been said after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. And in that instance, the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel were signed five years later.

**Your interest in this conflict goes back to when you were a student, correct?**

My desire to cover the Middle East was long-standing, even before I enrolled at UW-Madison. If anything, my time on campus bolstered that wish. I studied Arabic there, as well as journalism.

**So — even back then — you imagined having the sort of career you have now?**

While I obviously didn’t plan to get shot, I was drawn to the story, both in Israel and the Palestinian territories, and in the Arab and Muslim world. It’s a region that interests me, one whose stories have far-reaching repercussions beyond its borders. For a journalist, it’s somewhat rare that you know the stories you write will automatically have resonance.

**“Language offers a window on the culture and society that would be difficult to get otherwise.”**

**Is that what appeals to you about foreign reporting?**

There’s a sharp difference between reporting in Washington and abroad. Washington journalism is much more geared toward officialdom — the administration and the rest of the government and how policy is decided among those constituencies. Foreign reporting is far more subjective. You see and you interpret, and I find that far more enriching as a journalist. I think it’s important, as well, to convey how the rest of the world thinks and responds to the United States. Journalists aren’t always that successful in doing so, but it’s a worthwhile objective.

**You mentioned studying Arabic at UW-Madison. Has that been an important factor in your success as a reporter?**

I’ve found language crucial in reporting in the region. There’s an immediacy to interviews, and there’s a context from hearing and understanding that adds

texture to your stories. More importantly, language offers a window on the culture and society that would be difficult to get otherwise. Could you report well without Arabic? Probably. But the trust and the insight that come with speaking the language make the job easier and, often, richer.

**How do you think your time at UW-Madison helped shape your career?**

When I was a student at Madison, it was a city with freewheeling journalism. There were the two student newspapers, the two city dailies, and a first-rate weekly. There was so much opportunity, especially for a nineteen-year-old with little or no experience. Madison itself — both the university and the city — had a well-deserved reputation for critical thinking, and I’ve tried to carry that into my work. Skepticism, particularly in Washington, can be lacking, and I’ve appreciated that contrarian atmosphere that Madison offered.

**Obviously, the journalism school was impressed with you long before the events in Ramallah and would have been happy to mail you its award. Why, after all that you had been through, did you decide to come to Madison to receive it in person?**

It’s hard for me to overstate how important Madison was to the path I took for journalism. I learned how to be a reporter there, I grew up in Vilas Hall, and I came away with the skills, tools, and background that made journalism enjoyable. Plus, I still think my years at the *Daily Cardinal* were my best in journalism. It would be hard to turn down an invitation to show at least a little gratitude for all that. 📖



# SPY vs CI

the rules of modern business may be **live and let die**, but that doesn't give companies a license to commit **espionage**. The competitive intelligence industry is seeking to uphold its image as a **legitimate** – and more importantly **ethical** – practice.

by john allen



BOB RASHID

There are many things that Chetek, Wisconsin, is not. It's not the Big Apple. It's not the City of Light. It's also not the Emerald City, the Mile-High City, or the Eternal City. With only about 2,000 year-round residents, it isn't even the largest city in Barron County.

But for all it isn't, Chetek does have a few things going for it. It's the home of the Fish-O-Rama.<sup>1</sup> It's the training site for the Hydroflites Water Ski Team.

And until recently, it was the source of countless plans for global domination — created for loyal clients by the Aurora Worldwide Development Company. Though this spring the company sought out larger digs in Chippewa Falls, its road to success began in Chetek.

If Chetek is an enigma to most people outside Barron County, then Aurora was the mystery within the enigma. According to founder Arik Johnson '92, Aurora is currently one of the world's top five firms in its field — but with a name like Aurora Worldwide Development, it isn't immediately apparent what that field is. That's part of Aurora's strategy, however. Aurora's business is the creation of competitive intelligence — which is the riddle wrapped in the mystery beside the Fish-O-Rama.

In the broadest terms, competitive intelligence (or CI) is the field of business in which one company gathers and analyzes data about another (or several others) in order to find some advantage. But what that means in practical terms — how such information is properly and legitimately collected and used — is currently a fiercely contested issue.

Johnson tells of a discussion with a Czech colleague for whom the term intelligence brought up dark connotations. "There," he says, "when people hear intelligence, they think of spies — of rubber hoses and naked light bulbs. It's not like that at all." For Johnson, making sure that the industry is indeed legitimate —

and not merely an exercise in which executives get to play amateur spy — is both a personal and professional concern.

"Competitive intelligence," he says, "should be a coordinated and directed effort to understand the competitive forces in the marketplace. It's the legal — and more importantly ethical — collection and analysis of data. It isn't corporate espionage, which is the outright theft of property or information. If you want to make people in this business angry, just use the words *spy* and *espionage* to describe their work."

For the last five years, Johnson has been a member of the Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP), an organization devoted to promoting the CI industry as well as improving its image. SCIP maintains a code of ethics that defines how legitimate intelligence should be practiced. Its injunctions include that a CI operative should "comply with all applicable laws, domestic and international" and should "accurately disclose all relevant information, including one's identity and organization" while collecting intelligence.

Recently, however, times have been difficult for the defenders of CI's reputation as a legitimate enterprise. In 2000 and 2001, several major corporations made news for their colorful — but ethically questionable — intelligence operations. The software company Oracle has admitted hiring detectives to dig up embarrassing documents about competitor Microsoft, and Kraft claimed that food producer Schwan's hired away one of its employees with the intention that he deliver Kraft's trade secrets to his new bosses.

Then came the hardest blow. In September 2001, Procter & Gamble and rival shampoo maker Unilever settled a lawsuit over P&G's shady intelligence-gathering tactics. Although the terms of the settlement were not released, the *Times of London* reported that P&G had hired the Phoenix Consulting Group, whose operatives went digging through

Unilever's garbage to find useful trade information — a practice that, according to Johnson, wouldn't meet SCIP's code of ethics. Phoenix is chaired by John Nolan III, who, at the time, was the president of SCIP.

"Dumpster diving — that's private investigator stuff," Johnson says. "It's not what we do, and it really indicates a failure of CI, not common practice."

The image of competitive intelligence has gotten so bad, according to Johnson, that some in the field are desperate to distance the legitimate workers from the amateur spies. "At a conference not long ago, I met with a colleague, and he said some of his co-workers wanted to change the profession's name to 'competitive affairs,'" he says. "I don't think that'll catch on, though."

Part of the problem is that the romance of spy associations is more attractive to the public and potential CI clients than are the dry facts of market analysis. Thus, even Johnson speaks of his work using terms that might seem more appropriate, if not to James Bond, at least to Tom Clancy. CI is a tool to "inflict maximum pain on the competition." Among its practices is "war-gaming," and when such a war game is under way, the operation's nerve center is a "war room." And then, of course, there's that thing about global domination — the goal of a good CI firm, Johnson says, is to help its client achieve hegemony.

"It's the ultimate deliverable," he says. "We want to give a company the chance to completely dominate its own market and then move its products into any market of its choosing."

**D**espite the Machiavellian language, Johnson isn't a product of the FBI or CIA, but rather of L&S — UW-Madison's College of Letters and Science. By his own admission, he has no formal training in intelligence. Instead, he studied history and political science, and he left the university not knowing exactly what to do with his life. He took a job as a

<sup>1</sup> Catch specially tagged fish this summer, and win cash prizes ranging from \$25 to \$500.

business analyst with a major international consulting firm. After a year and a half, he felt he'd learned enough to start his own consulting business, so in January 1995, he left his job. In February he moved to Chetek, which lies about forty miles north of Eau Claire, and launched Aurora.

## **Stealing a trade secret – or even conspiring to compromise one – can lead to penalties of up to ten years in prison and a \$5 million fine for U.S. citizens, and fifteen years and \$10 million for foreign agents and entities.**

"My mother was a haidresser in Chetek," he says. "She said the twelve feet of space on the east side of her salon were mine. So I set up shop." Initially, Aurora offered general strategic consulting, but Johnson soon learned that businesses in Chetek — and even in the greater Chetek metropolitan area — lacked the kind of revenues that would enable them to hire consultants on a regular basis. He knew he needed to break into a bigger market, which meant finding a way to specialize his services.

"I decided on intelligence because there just weren't many people doing it then," he says. "I'd done some intelligence work for my former employer, and I figured I could act as a subcontractor, selling my services back to them."

For the next two years, he continued to act as a one-man operation, hiring freelancers when necessary and learning more about the trade. Then he discovered SCIP, and became the coordinator for the organization's Wisconsin chapter.

"Things really took off once I became involved in SCIP," he says. "In 1997, Aurora had just one employee: me. Now I've got a full-time staff of intelligence liaisons and analysts, and about 200 contract specialists who work on freelance projects."

To put their clients on the road to market hegemony, Johnson and his team offer a series of services, most of which center around collecting raw information and then transforming it into intelligence. This requires examining the client's business strategies and looking through all data about competitors, customers, and

suppliers to find out where threats and opportunities exist.

"Analysis is the real key," Johnson says. "You can collect 200 pages worth of information for a client, covering markets, specific competitors, technology advances, and so on. But no CEO wants to read 200 pages. They want to see a report that's about a half-page long, telling them what to do or giving them a playbook of options."

Still, few CEOs would follow Aurora's recommendations unless they knew that the 200 pages of data existed to back up those plans. Collecting that information is the work of Johnson's team of salaried and freelance analysts.

There are two ways to go about collecting intelligence, Johnson says: primary and secondary research. Secondary research comes from explicit, publicly available documents. It means reading newspaper and magazine articles, conducting Web searches, examining credit reports, and searching through patent applications. "Basically," says Johnson, "a five-year-old could get this stuff."

But though secondary research may be relatively easy to obtain, such data has its advantages. First, it runs no risk of violating trade secrecy laws or even codes of ethics. Second, as it's been pub-

lished in one form or another, a CI operative can assume it's likely to be accurate and can use it to confirm information found in other sources. And third, secondary intelligence tends to highlight the people who should be targeted in primary research efforts.

Primary research is where the questions of legitimacy and ethics enter the process. This is the collection of information that isn't in the public domain. It requires talking to actual people and trying to cajole them into giving you an inside scoop while you give up virtually nothing in return. In order to get the data they're looking for, CI operatives have to seem open and friendly. But in order to protect their clients, they can't reveal any of the reasons why they're collecting information or to whom it will go.

"It's called *telephone elicitation*, which I admit sounds kind of shady," says Johnson. "But the golden rule is never tell a lie to an interview subject — which isn't exactly the same as telling the whole truth."

This, he says, is one of the best reasons to hire a CI firm to collect intelligence. While an engineer at GM, for instance, might not talk about management structure or new engine designs to someone calling from Ford, there's a better chance that he or she would speak to a researcher from a firm with the innocuous name of Aurora Worldwide Development.

**T**here are those, however, for whom the difference between telephone elicitation and outright spying may seem cloudy, and popular culture doesn't make such distinctions any easier. In March 2002, for instance, *TIME* ran a pair of articles on CI, one of which, to the dismay of Johnson and his colleagues in SCIP, was titled "Spies Like Us."

"The trouble," explains Michael Sandman, a vice president for the CI firm Fuld and Company, "is that spying is more glamorous [than legitimate CI], and to many people, it seems less reprehensible."

Five years ago, Sandman joined the teaching team for the two-day course on

CI run by the UW School of Business's Fluno Center for Executive Education. Linda Gorchels, the center's managing director of executive marketing programs, created the course fourteen years ago as a primer on intelligence concepts, methods, and ethics. Sandman gives instruction on CI tools and techniques. Like Johnson, his information extraction tool kit doesn't include rubber hoses or naked light bulbs.<sup>2</sup> Instead, he advises participants on ways to get the most useful data using computers and the telephone.

"The basic guide for collecting intelligence ethically is this," he says. "Don't do anything you'd be embarrassed to see published in the newspapers."

Few of the class participants seem to desire lessons in devious spy techniques. According to Gorchels, of more than 400 executives who have taken the course, only one has ever asked about the methods for collecting illicit information. "Our participants are a highly ethical group," she says.

And that's a good thing, because U.S. law offers draconian punishment to illegal corporate spies. The Economic Espionage Act, passed in October 1996, protects companies from the theft of trade secrets. Gorchels says she tries to familiarize her students with the basics of the act, including exactly what it considers a trade secret: the legal definition includes "all forms and types of financial, business, scientific, technical, economic, or engineering information ... whether tangible or intangible," provided that information is worth "independent economic value, actual or potential."

"Essentially," says Gorchels, "any information that a company has a reasonable expectation of keeping secret, and makes a reasonable effort to keep secret, falls under the act's definition."

Stealing a trade secret — or even conspiring to compromise one — can lead to penalties of up to ten years in prison and a \$5 million fine for U.S.

<sup>2</sup>"I prefer thumbscrews," he jokes. "They're portable."

citizens, and fifteen years and \$10 million for foreign agents and entities. "Merely the gathering of information about another company's secret information is illegal," says Gorchels. "The law is based on the attempt to commit espionage, not on a spy's success."

**B**ut not every CI operative has taken the Fluno Center's course. Some are unfamiliar with the Economic Espionage Act, and others just plain don't care about it. So how can a company protect itself from the unscrupulous spies of the world who would invade them and ferret out their secrets?

To aid in the prevention of espionage, Arik Johnson and others like him are willing to violate their ethical pledge — after a fashion. Though only a small part of Aurora's business, the company does consult with clients on counterintelligence — on protecting information from other CI operations, both legitimate and illegitimate. For those clients who want to find out just how vulnerable they could be to unscrupulous snoops, Aurora's willing to help by snooping, then reporting back what they found and how they found it. And that's where Johnson gets the chance to have a little fun.

"We go after the crown jewels," he says. To determine whether a client needs to be more careful, Johnson and his colleagues might send operatives to dig through garbage. Or they might try to get an employee hired at the client's company, then act as a mole. "We wouldn't do anything that would put one of us in jail," he says. "But we use the same methods we believe that our clients' competitors are capable of using."

And some of those competitors are extremely capable. Johnson says that the governments of several foreign countries — especially China, France, Japan, and Israel — regularly engage in commercial espionage and tend to use methods that would violate the Economic Espionage Act. During one trade

show, Johnson said he was providing counterintelligence for a firm and discovered that his client's conference room had been infested with electronic listening devices. Such spy gear, he says, is easy to come by and hard to defend against. "You can buy bugs for twenty dollars."<sup>3</sup>

**E**ven while fighting to improve the image of CI, Johnson is following his own advice and seeking to establish a level of hegemony within the CI industry. In spite of the recession, Aurora found its research revenues tripling in 2001.

"Many companies that used to have their own CI departments couldn't see where CI was making a direct contribution to their bottom line," he says. "If something isn't contributing to the bottom line, then it looks like overhead. And what do you do with overhead in a recession? You cut it and outsource the function. We picked up a lot of business that way."

And this year, Johnson plans to spread Aurora's intelligence network even more widely. He's currently in discussions with a CI firm in the Far East<sup>4</sup> to create a joint venture, Aurora Worldwide Development Company Asia, which would combine resources to operate a research house out of Manila in the Philippines. With contacts in North America and Asia, Johnson believes this expanded network would not only serve Aurora's needs, but would be able to act as a subcontractor for other CI firms as well.

"I should be able to sell intelligence services to anyone around the world, including to all of my competitors in America," Johnson says. "My goal is to have a little piece of the action in everything that goes on." 📱

<sup>3</sup> He wouldn't say where.

<sup>4</sup> He wouldn't say which one. "That information is currently secret," he explains.

John Allen, associate editor of *On Wisconsin*, prefers the original Mission: Impossible TV series to the recent movies, 'cause, really Mr. Cruise, what's with the hair?