Summer 2009

The Classic, Summer 2009

Public Relations
Northwestern College - Orange City

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Changing Tracks
New career directions bring alumni fulfillment and challenge

Also
Loving God, Living Green
Service Masters
Top Geeks
Competing among the top 100 computer programming teams in the world, Northwestern’s team attended opening ceremonies at Stockholm City Hall, where Nobel Prizes are awarded.

Green Plea
Matthew Sleeth, a medical doctor who now is a creation-care missionary, talks about the connection between loving God and living green.

Committed Servants
John Greller and Carl Vandermeulen retire after a combined 42 years of student-centered service.

Unsung Heroes
Willing to tackle plugged toilets and pranked dorms, Northwestern’s maintenance staff restores order to the campus.

Changing Tracks
Moving from biochemical research to archival work and from the postal service to the pastorate, NWC alumni are charting new career paths—and having the time of their lives.

On the Web
Restoring Order
Against their better judgment, members of Northwestern’s heroic maintenance staff share memories of worst messes and more.

Your Turn
Add your comments to any article in this issue, including sharing ways you have changed your lifestyle to take better care of God’s creation.

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The Community of Christ

I conclude my last Classic column by stating that while the times we are experiencing may be economically uncertain, we serve a God who is unchanging, unshakable and worthy of trust. At the time, I had no idea how my own faith would be tested in new ways in 2009.

Over the holidays, my wife, Michelle, and I were hoping that after two years of significant transition we would be able to settle into some sort of normalcy in 2009. That desire quickly faded when on Jan. 5 we sat in a doctor’s office listening to the numbing news that Michelle had breast cancer. Since that day, we have been on a seemingly never-ending trip to see oncologists and other specialists. It has been a challenging first half of the year. However, as Michelle and I have been reminded often through this process, our God is sovereign. He knows every detail of our lives, including the journey we have been on. We know his grace is sufficient for us and that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. These truths are easier to claim, though, when not on the path we have been walking. This experience has given us a new picture of what it means to suffer. We have found much encouragement from Isaiah 41:10: "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my rightous right hand.”

While it has been a difficult journey, Michelle’s prognosis for a full recovery is quite positive. We’ve been reminded God can bring good out of any circumstance, including cancer. The genuine love, care and concern shown to us by the Northwestern community, our new church family at Trinity Reformed, and others in the local community have been overwhelming.

Board members, faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends have bathed us in prayer, provided meals, watched our kids and even cleaned our home. This has been one of the most humbling experiences of our lives as so many have served us with the hands and feet of Jesus.

On the day before Michelle’s last chemotherapy treatment in May, many of these same persons joined Michelle, me and our kids as we participated in the inaugural Race for the Cure in Sioux City, an event to raise funds for breast cancer research. With over 80 runners on Team Michelle, we had the largest team of any entered in the race. Before arriving in Orange City, Michelle and I had heard a lot about the distinctively Christian community of Northwestern. Now we’ve experienced it. We know its strong, loving power firsthand. What a blessing it is to serve here. We pray God for each and every person in the Northwestern family.

Greg Christy
President

From the Classic website
The following readers posted comments about Classic articles at classic.nwciowa.edu.

Classic Thoughts
Great article! I felt like I was on the boat with your family, feeling sick during your last chemotherapy treatment. I hate that you had to go through this, but it’s inspiring to hear how strong you are. It’s definitely a blessing to have a family like yours to help you through this time.

Dave

Tackling the issues
Anna Carlos wrote an excellent piece, “Land of Opportunity,” in your spring issue. She tackled a very timely topic and presented it as an issue of humanity, not just legality. I wish all local residents and our state and national leaders could understand the issue as well; perhaps we’d get more than posturing and inaction in actually addressing the 12 million undocumented who live among us—always in fear of a mistake, all too often the victims of prejudice, hearing the voices of those who say they’re Christians but then treat other human beings without humanity.

I receive several college publications, but the Classic is the only one that includes real issues and presents them in a thoughtful, well-researched manner. Please continue to help our young men and women become adults who will help solve the world’s problems as you educate more than just the mind.

Donna R. Hall

New Perspectives
Thank you so much for your cover article on immigration in the past issue. I greatly appreciated the nuanced, yet informative, writing. There were many issues brought up I had never thought of before, such as the difficulties of employers here in the United States and how much the trade industry affects the desire to come to the Midwest. I believe this article represents Northwestern well in that it is open-ended and allows readers to form their own opinions. This is exactly what I encountered at Northwestern. Thank you so much for covering this important topic, especially since it will affect us all—if it hasn’t already!

Carrie Mathiesen ’08
Putnam, Ill.

No Easy Answers
I read with interest the article, “Land of Opportunity.” It made me realize how complex the issue of immigration is and how overwhelming the policymaking decisions are. Perhaps the control should have been started many years ago.

Kristen Christie
Davenport, Iowa

We love getting mail
Send letters to: Classic, Northwestern College, 101 7th Street SW, Orange City, IA 51041; e-mail classic@nwciowa.edu; fax: 712-707-7370. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please include an address and daytime phone number.
Servant Scientist

Two years ago, every student in Organic Chemistry wore shirts with Randy Van Peursem’s face on them. And when the call went out for candidates for Northwestern’s 2009 Staff Recognition for Inspirational Service Award, 22 students submitted endorsements on his behalf—along with four nominations from faculty and staff.

Why do people describe the Coordinator of the academic support department’s science center with such phrases as “a phenomenal asset,” “the reason I’m passing O-Chem” and “nearly irreplaceable?” Robben Schat ’09 has the answer. “He has devoted himself to helping students succeed like no one else.”

Senior Erin Brogan clarifies: “Randy patiently and expertly explains answers to questions in class, and he teaches us to think for ourselves.”

Junior Erin Brogan identifies: “Randy patiently and expertly explains answers to questions in class, and he teaches us to think for ourselves.”

Perhaps part of the reason Van Peursem has so many admirers is they know what he’s overcome to help them.

Fifteen years ago, he had to leave medical school. He was frequently dizzy, continually nauseous and had dangerously fluctuating blood pressure. Diagnosed with allergy-related dysautonomia, a disease of the autonomic nervous system, Van Peursem was confined to his home for two years. After making drastic changes to his diet and surroundings, he was able to tutor at Northwestern three hours a week. Now full time, he works afternoons and nights because he doesn’t feel well in the mornings.

Yet Van Peursem is a firm believer in Romans 8:28. He often offers advice for people suffering from allergies, and he encourages pre-med students to be aware of similar cases when they become doctors. And he has discovered the joy of helping students understand a new concept.

“I love what I’m doing,” he says. "I love what I’m doing."
**Brain Camp**

**Summer Camp**
Northwestern Neuroscience Camp (for high school juniors and seniors)

**Camp Director/Instructor**
Dr. Ralph Davis
Associate Professor of Biology

Summer campers rarely get a lot of sleep. That may be true for participants in Northwestern’s Neuroscience Camp too, although campers do get an opportunity for a nap at least one afternoon during the week.

Of course, they have electrodes attached to their heads—and they have to try to snooze while someone studies their brainwaves.

When it started four years ago, Northwestern’s Neuroscience Camp was one of a kind. In fact, it has been cited among other unique summer camp offerings by both the New York Times and the London Times. Last summer Dr. Ralph Davis had nearly 50 inquiries from across the U.S.; the hometowns of the 20 campers he accepted included Kennewick, Maine; Nacogdoches, Texas; New York City; and Pella, Iowa.

After presentations on neurons, nerves and neurotransmitter signals, campers perform electrophysiology experiments on earthworms and dissect a sheep brain. In addition to recording each others’ brainwaves, they also volunteer for lie detector tests and take a field trip to a cadaver lab where they view a human brain and spinal cord. The teenagers also participate in traditional summer camp activities like bonfires, Frisbee golf, and perhaps pulling someone thinking, including:

- **The Lawnmower Man**, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest**, **Rain Man**, **Sleepy Hollow**.
- **Charly**, **Coma**, **eXistenZ**, **Flatliners**, **Awakenings**
- **Beautiful Mind**, **Lorenzo’s Oil**
- **The Secret Life of the Brain**, **Intelligence Films**

In addition to viewing PBS’s five-part series *The Secret Life of the Brain*, campers spend their free time watching flicks like *A Beautiful Mind*, *Learnsys* and *Awakenings*. Davis also provides titles of other movies that get viewers thinking, including:

- **S**
- **Of Course**, **T**
- **B**
- **g**
- **d**
- **N**
- **d**
- **k**
- **n**
- **t**
- **e**
- **r**
- ** Medieval Times**

Money for Medicine

Northwestern’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing program received a shot in the arm this spring with news it will receive a federal appropriation of $423,720 in fiscal year 2009.

Nursed along by Senators Tom Harkin and Chuck Grassley and Reps. Steve King, the appropriation will fund equipment for the college’s nursing arts laboratory, including additional human patient simulators, an electronic health record simulation program, hospital beds, a medication system, Jr training arms, and computer-based resources for nursing professors.

In addition, improvements will be made to Northwestern’s biology and chemistry laboratories, which are used heavily by nursing and other health care professions students. The appropriation will pay for the purchase of a spectrometer and other equipment. Renovations this summer will result in even safer student workstations and an expanded chemical stockroom.

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Program makes the grade

Northwestern’s teacher education program passed its latest tests with flying colors, earning continuing accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and approval by the State Board of Education after a joint evaluation visit last fall. Only three other education programs in Iowa—Graceland, Luther and Wartburg—are accredited by NCATE.

Laura Heitritter, instructor in education, says the reviewers were impressed by the department’s students, particularly by the fact that they led the first session of the site visit. The visitors also reported hearing very good comments from alumni and area educators and commended the program’s efforts to expand students’ understanding of and experience with diversity.

Evaluators said one of the teacher education program’s strengths is the amount of classroom experience students receive before they do their student teaching.

Top Teacher

You won’t catch students in some of John Vonder Bruegge’s NWC classes sleeping. “It’s all Greek to me,”’ he says. “Unfairly, they mean it as a compliment.”

“If he teaches, they can actually learn,” says senior Nathan Lefler. “He shows a great interest in helping students actually understand. He teaches in a way that shows his love for both Scripture and his students.”

Vonder Bruegge’s teaching style, concern for students and quirky sense of humor led to his selection as this year’s recipient of the $15,000 Northwestern Teaching Excellence Award. The religion instructor, in his fifth year at NWC, was selected for the award from among 27 nominees by a committee of students and faculty.

Sara Moser ’09 says after her first class with Vonder Bruegge, she made sure to take one of his courses each semester because she knew she would be passionate about it.

“He has the distinct ability to make any subject matter absolutely fascinating,” says Moser. “He has high expectations for students but is encouraging so students feel they can actually meet them. In fact, because he respects him so much, they really strive to meet his standards.”

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Healthy Report

Northwestern's Bachelor of Science in Nursing program has been given a clean bill of health by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), which granted the department an initial five-year accreditation. The checkup was the culmination of four years of program planning and implementation by Dr. Ruth Daumer, department chairperson, and a growing nursing faculty. It also came just in time for NWC to award degrees to its first eight B.S.N. graduates. A three-member team of nurse professionals from the CCNE visited campus last October. They interviewed nursing students, faculty, college administrators, community leaders and health-care professionals. They also observed nursing and other science classes, labs and clinics. The evaluation results affirm both the college's commitment to the nursing program and the nursing program's "great fit" as part of Northwestern's mission.

Evaluators noted the program already is "part of the fabric of the college" and praised "the unique character of the students and faculty with respect to their Christian ethos and values."

Chief fundraiser

When Northwestern looked for a new vice president for advancement to replace the retiring John Greller, the college found its best candidate in Greller's second-in-command. Jay Wielenga '82, NWC's director of advancement since 2001, succeeded Greller in leading Northwestern's fundraising efforts. He assumed his new duties July 1. "Jay brings to the position similar relational skills as John, as well as new ideas for how to further the mission of Northwestern. He's been a very loyal member of our advancement team and has done a great job of developing relationships with our constituents," says President Greg Christy.

Wielenga first joined the staff as alumni director in 1995. In recent years, he provided interim leadership to the office when Greller's health prevented him from working. Wielenga relishes his new role. "I love Northwestern College," he says. "To help make its mission possible through raising funds and strengthening relationships with alumni and friends of the college is exciting to me."

A graduate of the National Planned Giving Institute, Wielenga spent 10 years as a medical representative for Syntax Laboratories and three years in admissions and financial aid at the University of Sioux Falls before joining the advancement staff.

Lab Time

While some mow lawns, wait tables, mow lawns or babysit children this summer, six NWC students are honing their research skills in off-campus projects. Jordan Larson is conducting research at the University of North Dakota Medical School. He is exploring a lipid metabolic pathway's role in inflammation contributing to cell loss and memory dysfunction.

Josh Locker is interning at a lab at Sanford Health in Sioux Falls that is focused mostly on congestive heart failure. At Johns Hopkins University, Curt Van Wyk is working in the Centre for Language and Speech Processing. He is parsing textual data for acquisition of semantic knowledge that can be useful in search engines.

Three students are at the University of Iowa. Rachelle Pederson is studying the effects of depression on older patients' psychosocial behavior and cognitive abilities. Kelley Salem is working in a lab that focuses on DNA replication, repair and mutagenesis. And Alex Mensing is assisting Dr. Karissa Carlson, assistant professor of chemistry at NWC, in conducting fluorescence-based assays to investigate protein-protein and/or protein-DNA interactions. That research is part of a fellowship designed to form new connections between the state's scientists and the university.

Purposeful

Northwestern students are getting ministry experience—and churches and communities are getting a helping hand—from a summer internship program funded in part by a grant from the Lilly Endowment. The internships give students the opportunity to work alongside mentors in a variety of ministry contexts.

Eight students interested in pastoral or other roles in the church are serving in Reformed churches in Illinois, Iowa, New Jersey, New Mexico and Washington, as well as in a Baptist church on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation in Minnesota.

Another 13 students are at one of eight Christian Community Development Association ministries: Cary Christian Center in Cary, Miss.; City Mission in Detroit; Hope of Openness in Opelousas, La.; the John M. Perkins Foundation in Jackson, Miss.; Mile High Ministries in Denver; Mission Waco in Texas; Trinity Christian Community in New Orleans; and Urban Ventures in Minneapolis.

Bravo!

Senior Shorts, scripted by theatre professor Jeff Barker, continues to win awards. In April the musical's composer—Joseph Barker and Dr. Heather Josephson-Cramm, Northwestern music professor—received a special commendation from the national Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Barker's compositions included industrial rock, classic rock and folk songs. Josephson-Cramm composed the show's choral music.

Pam Vlieger

Friendly servant

Name something about your work you really enjoy. I like being able to serve others and help them go about their mission. I really enjoy interacting with others. And I have fun operating all these cool machines! I'm constantly learning.

What is one of your lesser-known responsibilities? I'm kind of the information booth person of Zornemer Hall. Since my office is close to the door, people naturally drop in and ask for directions or other information. I don't always have the answers, but I usually know someone who might.

Why did you want to work at NWC? When I started many years ago, it was because it was a better job than waitressing. As the years have gone by, the reasons I stay have included because I could be flexible with my family commitments and because I developed a better understanding about the mission of Northwestern.

What is one of the most common questions you're asked? Pam, do you have time to ...?

What are your hobbies? I love to cook. I don't mean just cooking, but baking and canning too. That has led to another hobby: collecting antique and old church cookbooks. I have well over 100. I also read as much as I can, listen to music, and like to play games.

What is your favorite time of day, and why? The morning is definitely my favorite time. It is like having a clean slate—a new day to do things differently or better, to help people with more of a servant's heart, to make them smile.
The world is a classroom for students who study abroad in countries like Russia, Ecuador, India, Thailand, England, Tanzania and Egypt. Some take a summer month to study with NWC professors. Others spend a semester in Romania, Oman or other nations. Wherever they go, students see and learn about the people and cultures God loves—and are better prepared to participate in his transforming work in the world.
In your book, you describe some pretty drastic lifestyle changes your family has made to live more in line with God’s plan for the planet. Describe some of those adjustments.

Sleeth: We started where most beginners do, with recycling. Now we also precycle, which means considering the amount Sleeth: that you buy something. Then we added more difficult things, like gardening, washing dishes by hand, and hanging clothes on the line—even in winter. Eventually we moved from a doctor-sized house to one that was smaller. Now we live in a house the size of our former garage, and we don’t own a clothes dryer or dishwasher.

Classic: Your family—your kids—went along with this?

Sleeth: My kids were spoiled doctor’s kids when we started, but now they think nothing of having to do the dishes. I’m lucky. My kids seem to like physical labor. It’s hard as a parent to tell your kids we’re going to do without things their friends have—we’re going to be a bit peculiar. But part of the Christian life is living in restraint. Recently a mom admitted to me they’ve gone to disposable dishes for every meal. Where is that kind of toe-in-the-grass lifestyle headed?

Classic: How do Christians, in particular, respond to your presentations about living more green?

Sleeth: Although many Christians have views on this (and some of them believe God doesn’t care about going green—it’s a political movement, they argue, not a faith issue), I find many of them have never gone to their Bibles seeking answers to environmental concerns. I’ve never encountered anyone who’s against what I share once they’ve gone to their Bibles themselves saying, “God, teach me about this.” Most of them have responded to your creation-care message?

Classic: What are some specific ways churches and colleges have responded to your creation-care message?

Sleeth: At one church, everyone agreed to forgo Christmas presents for one year, and they put that money—$290,000—toward a clean water project in Afghanistan. Another church raised money to buy all their households rain barrels. They also stopped using disposable dishes for church events. (All the men volunteered to do the dishes, which was unanimously endorsed by the women.) They dedicated the money they saved for feeding ministries. A college did away with trays in their cafeteria and saved 16,000 pounds of food waste in one year.

Classic: Some Christians don’t believe global climate change is real. Does it matter?

Sleeth: People use arguments over an issue like this so they don’t have to meet their responsibilities toward God’s creation. You don’t have to believe global climate change is happening to know water shouldn’t have dioxins in it or that the air as you drive into a city shouldn’t look like a dome of smog and haze. Christians can usually still agree we should be consuming less and freeing up more of our resources for the church’s work. Everyone—including Christians—can do something about caring for creation every part of the day. No excuses.

Classic: Given the current state of our economy, we’ve been warned not to severely limit our consumption or the U.S. and global economies could collapse. Thoughts?

Sleeth: Our economy may have to collapse. We’ve been heating the house by burning the furniture. There’s no way to dig yourself out of a hole; you’ve got to go a different direction. The planet will cease to exist if every generation lives only for itself. The Bible is all about considering future generations after generation after generation. God is not concerned with short-term economies. Focusing just on the immediate future is not a biblical approach to how to live on God’s planet.

On the Web exclusive

Visit classic.nwciowa.edu to comment on Dr. Sleeth’s views and share ways in which you and your family have changed your lifestyle to take better care of God’s creation.
Word Lover

Carl Vandermeulen’s voice is remarkably similar to that of Garrison Keillor, host of radio’s The Prairie Home Companion. Like Keillor, his speech is soothing, unhurried, thoughtful—and he, too, is comfortable with meanderings.

“Carl’s teaching is unique,” says Dr. Joanna Trapp, a colleague in the English department. “Rarely straightforward and direct, he finds himself wandering along paths of inquiry, inviting students to follow him.”

With Vandermeulen’s retirement after 25 years at Northwestern, students will have to follow someone else in more than one department.

Vandermeulen initially joined the college’s faculty on a part-time basis to teach communication studies courses. A year later, he began serving as the adviser for the Beacon, the student newspaper—a natural role for someone who taught News Writing and Editing, Feature Writing, and Layout and Design. Then came added responsibilities in the English department, where he helped establish a writing center, wrote the curriculum for its writing courses, and later was lead writer for the newsletter and layout design.

As varied as Vandermeulen’s roles have been, most have revolved around the written word: teaching journalism and literature courses, directing the English education program and supervising its student members and staff, and being the adviser for the student newspaper—a natural role for someone who taught News Writing and Editing, Feature Writing, and Layout and Design. Then came added responsibilities in the English department, where he helped establish a writing center, wrote the curriculum for its writing courses, and later was lead writer for the newsletter and layout design.

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“Tired of creating a community in the classroom where students were interdependent and learned from each other,” Vandermeulen says. “If they trusted the process and engaged in it, they finished the course able to do what they weren’t able to do when they started, with a different sense of who they were and what they were capable of knowing and being.”

Still after taking his classes, Northwestern alumni report that Vandermeulen—in his soft-spoken way—did just that.

VANDERMEULEN CLOSE-UP

Year hired by NWC: 1984
Education: Calvin College (A.B.), University of South Dakota (M.A.), University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Ph.D.)
Teaching career: Spent entirely in Orange City (Vandermeulen taught at Unity Christian High School for 14 years before joining NWC’s faculty, and at least 23 current NWC faculty and staff were at one time his students in high school or college.)
Estimated number of student papers read while at NWC: 12,500

Friend Raiser

Growing up in Washington, D.C., John Greller was expected to go to a good school, get good grades, obtain a good job, and earn good money. Instead he came to know Christ and dedicated himself to building God’s kingdom by helping others give their money away.

After 30 years in fundraising—more than half of which were spent at Northwestern College—Greller is retiring. Just as he felt called by God to NWC, he believes God is making it clear it’s time to leave. Plans to retire in a year and a half were moved up when he was recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease.

This isn’t the first health challenge Greller and his wife, Janes, have faced. A few years after becoming Northwestern’s vice president for advancement, John experienced kidney failure due to diabetes. He went through two transplants, the second time getting a kidney from his son Brian after his body rejected the first organ.

Throughout his illnesses, surgeries and hospitalizations, Greller has impressed others with his unwavering faith in and love for God. “His faith in the Lord is the first thing you see when you meet John,” says his colleague and successor, Jay Wielenga ’82.

Equally as notable about Greller is his deep love for people and for Northwestern.

“When John created new friends for the college, it was so genuine,” says Drew Vogel, Board of Trustees chair. “He showed what Northwestern’s mission is all about. He and Jano fell in love with Northwestern, and then he always said [his job] was easy.”

The Grellers are known for their hospitality, opening their home to students, colleagues and friends of the college. John regularly attended chapel, and Jano joined him for meals in the cafeteria with students and in cheering the Raiders at athletic contests.

Those familiar with John’s deep bass voice and hearty laugh also know he has a gift for listening to, caring for and encouraging people. In fact, it’s his people skills that made him so successful at his job. As Greller often pointed out, “Fundraising is really friend raising.”

With Greller’s retirement, both Northwesterns and its alumni and supporters are losing a true friend.

GRELLER CLOSE-UP

Year hired by NWC: 1992
Education: Kenyon College (B.A.), Oberlin College (M.A.T.)
Total raised for NWC during his tenure: $67 million
Most fulfilling fundraising accomplishment: Raising money for the DeWitt Theatre Arts Center

“One More”

Dr. Kimberly Utke Svanoe, professor of music, announced her retirement after the deadline for this issue. A feature on her will be included in the fall Classic.
"We went for a high-risk, high-reward strategy. The problem with high-risk strategies? The risk."

Ben Kester is explaining how he and teammates John Calsbeek and Curt Van Wyk should have tackled their first problem at the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) International Collegiate Programming Contest in Stockholm, Sweden, in April.

The question that required such an aggressive approach? You are an air traffic controller with a bunch of planes to schedule for landing. (The world competition question probably didn’t use the term “bunch,” but Calsbeek says “bunch” when he’s describing their first challenge.) All the planes are assigned an interval of time within which they can land. Figure out which plane can land when and where so all the planes are landing with the longest span of time between descents—because that’s the safest, obviously.

Now it’s time for brute force?

“Yes,” says Kester. “You brute force the different possibilities. That’s basically just programming the computer to try every single combination until you find one that works. Brute force is pure trial and error versus having a strategy that guides your trial and error. It’s like trying to open a padlock by trying every possible combination.

You couldn’t really do that, could you?

“No, but a computer could.” Or, a computer manned by pretty bright programmers.

So, did they get everyone on the runway safely?

“No, but a computer could.” Oh, a computer manned by pretty bright programmers.

All computer science majors, they argue they transcend “Geek Squad” stereotypes. Calsbeek gestures to the three of them with a “Do you see any pocket protectors here?” look on his face.

Nope. No pocket protectors.

Calsbeek, a senior, is also pursuing a literature degree. Van Wyk, another senior, is an athlete and has competed in soccer, football, basketball, baseball, wrestling and track. Kester, who graduated in May, is a social servant-leader—he was a West Hall RA and discipleship group leader and traveled to India as a member of the Summer of Service team.

Like other guys, they are gamers. But their programming prowess doesn’t make them any better than their peers at computer or video games like Tower Defense or Command and Conquer. Except:

“Sometimes it helps you figure out how to beat the system,” says Kester.

They don’t mind the term “geek,” though. “We like programming,” say Van Wyk and Calsbeek, with “no excuses” shrugs. And Kester, who also majored in actuarial science, had already landed a job at a Chicago consulting firm and passed seven of eight actuarial exams before he graduated. “Actuarial science is kind of its own nerdy world too,” he says, grinning.

Yep. They’re good with geek.
Students are the focus for a maintenance staff that keeps Northwestern running

by Amy Scheer

In the 15th century, the word maintenance was defined as the "action of upholding or keeping in being." Earlier, the word was thought of as the "action of providing a person with the necessities of life."

In 2009, Simmelink puts it this way: "We try to get things back to normal as quick as we can."

It takes 20 full-time staff, six part-time and seasonal workers, and some 25 summer student workers to maintain normalcy at Northwestern. Plumbers, housekeepers, groundskeepers, electricians, locksmiths, heating/cooling experts and carpenters make up the crew; there are also folks in charge of tasks from coordinating facility and vehicle rentals to keeping up on government regulations for all of the above.

"It might be easier to list what they don't do: classroom teaching. ('Can't do that,' says Simmelink.) Summers find the staff coordinating renovations, catching up on projects, and restoring dorms to their natural state through extensive cleaning and repairs. When chests of drawers show wear from being used all year as ladders to the top bunk, for example, that's just 'normal routine maintenance' in Simmelink's worldview.

Boone says cleaning never feels like work around housekeepers Pat Bruvouoet and Kathy Kleinwolterink. Jessi Post, a senior who has worked for the crew, says, "We've got great kids here," he says, momentarily forgetting about the prowls.

Job satisfaction? Check. The retention rate in the maintenance department is arguably the best at Northwestern: Nine of the full-time employees have served nearly 20 years each—some as many as 26.

"There's nothing like giving students a hand at 11 at night when they lock their keys in the car, or starting their cars when it's 20 below."

Um, yeah.

"There's nothing like giving students a hand at 11 at night when they lock their keys in the car, or starting their cars when it's 20 below."

Maintenance by the Numbers

26,496 rolls of toilet paper bought each year
9,450 industrial rags used yearly
121 gallons of floor cleaner and wax applied annually
276 muffins consumed each summer
Changing Tracks
Alumni find both joy and risk in taking new career direction
by Diane Beeson

The last time the jobless rate in the United States was as high as it is now, Ronald Reagan was proposing the Strategic Defense Initiative, Michael Jackson was moonwalking through Billie Jean, and Bill Gates was just starting to make money from Microsoft Word.


As whole industries hemorrhage and jobs continue to be outsourced to other countries, many Americans have been forced to consider a career change. Others are contemplating a new direction because of a specific passion or family considerations.

Many Northwestern alumni have successfully changed career paths. We share the stories of several as encouragement that—whether you have to or want to—you can do it too.

Pursuing a Passion

When pharmaceutical giant Pfizer purchased Pharmacia Corporation in 2003, it announced most of Pharmacia’s research and development work in Kalamazoo, Mich., would cease. Michael Swanson ’82, a research biochemist, had a decision to make.

Swanson had been experiencing a declining sense of fulfillment in his job. Decisions affecting his infectious diseases research were being made for business and marketing—not scientific—reasons. Uncertainties regarding long-term support of projects were growing.

The year before, he had enjoyed a moving experience in Sweden, walking the land his ancestors had farmed. It was his seventh trip to Europe, most of which involved visiting Swedish and Dutch relatives and conducting genealogical research. Long interested in history, he found genealogy offered a new way to apply his analytical skills.

Part of his severance package included assistance from a career consulting company. With their help, Swanson chose to pursue a master’s degree specializing in archives and records management. Now completing his first year as an archivist at the University of North Dakota, he says, “It just seems to come naturally to me—probably because I have a passion for it. I really enjoy helping people more directly. We work hard but in a relaxing environment. It’s a lot less stressful.”

Stress is one of the reasons John Liesveld ’00 left his law practice in 2006. He loved some aspects of the work—analyzing, researching, writing, competing in the courtroom. But the intense nature of many of his cases, such as child-custody issues, took a toll on him.

“When a lawyer answers the phone, there’s a 99.9 percent chance the person on the other line isn’t happy. That wore me out,” says Liesveld. “I took it home with me a lot.”

Liesveld enjoyed listening to talk and sports radio and often thought that could be his dream job. When the general manager of KLIN in Lincoln, Neb., called and asked if he was interested in joining the morning team, saying he had always been intrigued by putting a lawyer on the show, Liesveld couldn’t refuse.

Now “Jack Mitchell” on “Jack and John in the Morning,” he talks about state politics, national issues and Husker sports every day from 6 to 9. Liesveld works longer hours than he did as a lawyer—there’s a lot more to his job than just his on-air time—but he says he’s having the time of his life.
Family Matters

Suppose’s over at the home of Hope and Reed Friese ’95, and Elijah (7) and Iris (6) are helping dad at the family business in Parker, S.D. The kids make a good cleaning team for the Cherrybean Coffee Company. He sweeps, she mops while Reed roasts coffee.

The Friese’s moved back to their hometown in 2007 after he had worked a dozen years in production and management at an aircraft painting company near Seattle. Friese wanted a quieter, more predictable environment for their four children—especially Elijah, who is autistic.

“We have had to build dad’s confidence,” says Hope. “He can get our mail from the post office. We can give him a lot more freedom and allow for times of rest.”

Friese’s high-school obsession with coffee was stoked when he lived in Seattle. Returning home, it seemed natural to start a roasting company and coffee shop. Friese wanted it to be a true family business, so in addition to cleaning, the kids go along on deliveries and will have other responsibilities as they grow.

“I try to use all the flexibility I have as a small-business owner to be with the kids when other fathers might not be able to,” he says. “I work twice as many hours as before, but I’m more connected with my family.”

Exerting Influence

Working in public affairs for the Environmental Protection Agency for 10 years, Carrie (Van Hook ’87) Jasperse enjoyed her responsibilities and supported the EPA’s mission. But she yearned for more.

“I wanted to be involved in substantive decision-making, but the people who did that were either scientists or lawyers. I wouldn’t be a good scientist,” says Jasperse, who majored in English and French at Northwestern.

As a sophomore in 1968, he clearly heard God’s call to become a pastor. “It was the last thing I wanted to do,” he says.

Today Jasperse is an attorney for the Food and Drug Administration. She has been involved in legal work behind FDA warnings to companies marketing products said to cure H1N1 and the consumer advisory regarding potential liver damage from Hydroxycut dietary supplements.

A variety of projects compete for Jasperse’s time, and her work is more challenging than before. But she says the fulfillment she derives from helping keep the public safe makes up for the stress.

Timing it Right

Sitting in a law school classroom a couple of years ago, Fawzy Simon ’90 couldn’t believe what he heard from the dean: “They tell me many of you have never failed.”

“I’ve failed,” says Simon. “My grades at Northwestern were abysmal; I’ve been fired. Failure is a distinct advantage because I learned the sun will still rise and I’ll have another shot. Some of my 4.0 classmates couldn’t process failure.”

After working in theatre, restaurants, banking and inventory management, Simon became interested in law through a job as a title company clerk. Watching a lot of Law & Order also played a role.

In law school Simon vowed not to squander his second chance at higher education. “I was in a room full of really smart people who knew a ton about what I wanted to learn and were happy to talk it over with me. Being around people younger than me forced me to work harder.”

Now a public defender in Lebanon, Mo., Simon appreciates both the structured environment of law and the opportunity to work within it to help others who have failed. “Essentially, I play high-stakes poker with people’s freedom,” he says. “I’m motivated by my desire to get a good outcome.”

Leon Fikse’s NWC experience was similar to Simon’s. He loved the social life. Classes and mandatory chapel? Not so much.

As a sophomore in 1968, he clearly heard God’s call to become a pastor. “It was the last thing I wanted to do,” he says.

Suspended from Northwestern for skipping chapel, Fikse farmed almonds and sold used cars before beginning a 16-year career with the postal service. Through a variety of lay ministry experiences, he began to realize the pastorate “wouldn’t be so bad after all.”

The senior pastor at Bethany Reformed Church in Realland, Calif., since 1995, Fikse loves helping people grow spiritually. And he acknowledges God’s timing was perfect.

“I wouldn’t have been a good pastor in my 20s. I became wiser and learned many lessons about dealing with people that are so beneficial today.”

Career Leaps—and Links

For 10 years, Lou Bram ’86 preached grace and forgiveness at a Baptist church near Mason City, Iowa. Now he busts drug dealers and investigates thefts as a Cass County deputy sheriff.

He changed career tracks to bring home more money so his wife, Christy (Hullman ’96), could be with their children full time. His heart is still in the ministry, but for now his job meets their family’s goals.

While his career fields may seem disparate, Bram sees similarities. “This is about building relationships, just like being a pastor,” he says. “And I’ve had many opportunities for ministry most Christians don’t get because of the situations I’m in.”

Fawzy Simon, the public defender, also draws on past experiences in his new role. “My theatre training is paramount,” he says. “I learned how to use my voice, memorize lines, move in a space and get into character. I’m a different person in the courtroom. I use my words, voice and behavior to persuade.”

When the Rev. Troy Van Beek ’00 started his first pastorate at the age of 35, he found his previous business ventures created a connection with church members. “They sensed I had experienced the same things they had,” he explains.

Van Beek started at Northwestern in 1986 but left as a junior after switching from major to major. God used his 10 years working in implement and lawn care businesses, he says, to help him listen and prepare for ministry.

Help Wanted

Thinking about a career change? Here’s advice from alumni who’ve been there.

“Surround yourself with people you trust who will ask the right questions.”

The Rev. Troy Van Beek ’00, from landscaping business to ministry

“Seek advice from mentors in both your current field and the field you’re considering.”

John Linnell ’71, from law to talk radio

“Pray—and look for the signs the Lord puts in front of you.”

Karen Williamson ’78, from education to real estate

“Be patient. Be willing to take a part-time job to get your foot in the door.”

Lou Bram ’86, from ministry to law enforcement

“Be committed. Once you decide, work hard toward your goal.”

Michael Smoak ’82, from biochemistry to archives

Job Search 101

Bill Monich, Northwestern’s director of career development, offers these tips for alumni who are seeking employment or considering a career change.

• You have connections from the work you’ve been doing. Use that network, and don’t burn bridges.

• Take advantage of Northwestern’s free services. The Career Development Center offers self-assessment tools, a resource library, job postings, résumé reviews and interview coaching. Visit www.nwciowa.edu/cdc, e-mail cdc@nwciowa.edu, or call 712-757-7225.

• Update your résumé because formats and approaches have changed.

• Learn about Internet job searching.

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A coffee lover for years—he got an espresso machine for Christmas in high school—Reed Friese is now the proud owner of a roaster that can produce 5,000 pounds of coffee per month. He left an aircraft painting business to start the Cherrybean Coffee Company (www.cherrybean.net).
“I understood at a deeper level God is in control, and I learned things I probably wouldn’t have learned if I had completed school the first time,” he says.

Karen (De Boer ’79) Woudstra, an agent with Northwest Realty in Orange City, looks back on the last eight years with amazement and confidence in God’s sovereignty. She sees how her experiences in two previous careers—20 years as a kindergarten teacher and five as Northwestern’s director of alumni relations—benefit her and her clients today.

Her teaching skills come in handy as she helps first-time home buyers navigate pre-approvals, offers and closings. She uses the computer proficiency she developed at NWC to complete paperwork and post listings online. And the contacts from both positions have brought her many clients.

“I could do this for a long time,” she says, “but I’ve learned to be open to what God puts in front of me.”

Costs of Change

Karen (Goettch ’84) Fendick and her husband spent a year living off of his income so she could take computer courses. After 21 years as a nanny in the Washington, D.C., area, she knew she needed technological skills to pursue an office job. When she landed a position selling insurance, she was so motivated she became one of the fastest-certified agents in State Farm’s history.

Leon Fisk saved diligently to fund his education at Western Seminary. But when his California house didn’t sell, their nest egg was soon gone—as were borrowed funds from relatives. Unsettled if he could continue, he told God he didn’t know where to turn. “After we humbled ourselves before God, our house sold quickly. God has always taken care of us,” he says.

Reed Priesce is learning trust after the first year of his coffee business.

“My biggest surprise was how many lattes it takes to pay a light bill. I got way more business than I expected. I also made way less,” he says.

But he subleased some of his retail space to a flower shop, and he’s seen his roasting business perk up through the Sioux Falls farmers’ market. Ultimately he favors the positives this change has brought his family.

Michael Swanson, the biochemist-turned-archivist, followed financial advisers’ advice and had money saved in case he lost his job. He also benefited from a nontraditional-student fellowship that paid for a year of grad school.

John Liesveld knows he could be making more money if he hadn’t left radio for the lure of the microphone. But he doesn’t have any regrets.

“I love my job. That’s worth so much more.”

A former kindergarten teacher and NWC alumni director, Karen Woodruffe is now a real estate agent. “I love the challenge of matching a family with the right house,” she says. “I get great joy hearing a family loves their new home.”

Colleen Om CENTER

The Rev. Troy Van Beek, senior pastor of Bethel Reformed Church in Sheldon, Iowa, worked in business for 10 years before completing his undergrad degree and seminary. “I wake up every morning—even when in the midst of difficult things—and I can’t believe I get paid for doing this,” he says.

In the first varsity tennis season at NWC since 2003, the Raiders went 4–9 overall. They placed seventh in the conference with a 3–6 mark. Nessa Summers (No. 6 singles) and Kate Mannenbach (No. 2 doubles) earned All-conference honors.

Women’s Tennis

Back on the Court

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Women’s Golf

Third in GPAC

The Raiders finished third in the four-round GPAC championship, with Carrie Spree and Maggie Achterhof earning All-conference honors. Achterhof was medalist at the Briar Cliff Open, leading NWC to the team title.

Softball

Comeback

NWC lost 14 of its first 16 games but went above .500 for the rest of the season to finish at 13-24. The Raiders were 10-14 in the GPAC for 10th place. Rachel Harris received second team All-conference recognition.

Outdoor Track

Two at Nationals

Logan Ogden finished 11th in the discus and 23rd in the shot put at the NAIA national meet. Kyle Sauter was 16th in the 110-meter hurdles. Sauter and Charity Milos were named GPAC track athletes of the week after their performances at the Dakota State Trojan Relays. Sauter won the 110- and 400-meter hurdles.

Scholar Athlete

Smart Play

Twenty-three Raiders earned NAIA Scholar-Athlete honors this spring, including 31 in track. Recognized for the second year each were Ingrid Carlson and Janesem Guthmiller in track, Trevor Kipper in baseball, and golfer Anne Eberline, Jamie Jethro, Justin Pankuck, Kelsey Shafflett and Lisa Wirsma.

Baseball

Close Games

Four extra-inning losers in the Great Plains Athletic Conference—and another six league games in which the Raiders lost by one run—contributed to a 19-23 season. The squad was 10th in the conference with an 8-16 record. Brad Payne earned first team all-conference honors, with Austin Malone and Drew Nommacher named to the second team.

For more on Raider sports, visit www.nwcraiders.com

Miles captured the 3000-meter run. Fourteen Raiders were named All-conference.

Men’s Golf

All-Conference Again

Luke Vermeer earned all-conference honors for the third year in a row. He finished seventh individually in the four-round GPAC championship; the team placed seventh.

Women’s Golf

Naismith

Eberline, Jamie Jeltema, Justin Reed, Friday (No. 2 singles) earned all-conference honors.

Men’s Golf

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Soccer

New Coaches

Blake Wicking ’08, a two-time NAIA All-American honorable mention selection, has been named the new head coach for women’s soccer. Sara (Kernes ’06) Nessa, the program’s all-time scoring and assist leader, will assist.

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Red Zone

2010
Kathy Meendering bakes treats for NWC Bible study groups on a weekly basis.

Cookie Minister

Once a week, Kathy (Bonney) ’73 Meendering spends an afternoon in her kitchen baking 15 dozen cookies for Northwestern students.

“Call it my cookie ministry,” she says. “Kids are more likely to come to campus events if food is involved.”

The events Meendering wants students to attend have a spiritual focus: discipleship group meetings in the dorms or Bible studies led by resident assistants or NWC coaches.

The Orange City resident began giving away cookies in 2007—"the same year she started working as a checker in Northwestern’s cafeteria. Her church was encouraging members to support local college students, and Meendering signed up to donate a dozen cookies. Then she found out the recipient planned to use them for his Bible study.

“That just touched me,” she recalls, “and I figured there had to be more kids who would enjoy having cookies for their discipleship group.”

Word of mouth quickly had Meendering fielding more requests.

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Jon Slater is pursuing a master’s degree in leadership for education and mobilization from Columbia (S.C.) International University Seminary.

**09**

*1923: Albert Soni* is a personal career consultant for Penrose Bank in Lincoln, Neb.

Ben Crabtree, Aurora, Neb., is a deputy sheriff for Hamilton County.

Amanda (Dengler) Hayne, Lomrue, Minn., is a child protection social worker for Rock County Family Services Agency. Her husband, Nolan, is an after-school program coordinator for the Sioux Falls School District.

Sharma Nielsen, Holstein, Iowa, is a family service worker/advocate for Head Start Preschool in Cherokee and Ida Grove.

Deb Remmersade was inducted into the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union of Fame during the state basketball tournament in March. The all-time leading scorer in Iowa five-player history with 2,766 career points, she led Rock Valley High School to three consecutive state championships.

Slate Wang, San Mateo, Calif., is a marketing manager for Nextel International Transport USA in San Francisco.

Audrey Weger is a music teacher at Alum-Come Music in Burnsville, Minn.

*New Arrivals*

Shelley and Jeff Taylor ’83, son, David Henry, born Jan 5.

Beth and Paul Wendell ’97, daughter, Abby Louise, born Jan 5.

Jare and Dan Van Gorp ’92, daughter, Halle Jo, born Jan (6) and Nolan (9).

Bob and Anna Ofner ’97, daughter, Lily, born Jan (6) and Grant (6).

Laurellette (“Bob”) and bad ’92, son, Cailin John, born Jan (6) and Lily (4).

Eric and Missy (Van Klompenburg ’95) Stevens, daughters, Ryke Grant Robert and Abbie (Vis ’96) Roth, daughters, Sarah Elizabeth and Diana (Dennis ’96) daughter, Liana Keorl Elson, born Jan (6) and Jacob.

Jace Hendel and Sarah Tedich ’99, son, Carlin Jason.

Kevin and Mackenzie (Theoress ’00) Grandfield, daughter, Elisa Margarite Kiley (Fleming ’00) and Matt Mars ’09, daughter, Kayleigh, and Elizabeth (Jordan ’12) daughter, Jakel Day.

Javell and Cory Moss ’06, daughter, Giana Elizabeth, born Jan (6) and Sara (Kattenberger ’10) and Tom Scholtzen ’09, son, Joseph Thomas, born Jan (6) and Nate (6).

Eric and Carrie (Ostely ’01) Anderson, daughter, Natalie Dell, born Feb (6) and children, Katelyn (6) and Colby (3).

*Recharged*

On a Tuesday afternoon in a rec room in Zerfik, Mich., batteries are recharged. In a big demand. Jamie, a tall, husky teenager in a sleeveless shirt, revives his remote and sends the virtual bowling ball toward the remaining pins. Blake, who’s new, had Jamie show him around, and of course the tour ended here, near the PlayStations, Wii and air hockey.

“He’s a game-mete,” says Jamie’s mom. “People come to it, so he’s talking all the time, whereas normally he’s just home alone.”

Jamie admits he’s “Mr. Popular” here at Compassionate Heart Ministry, an after-school program for youth with disabilities. Donna (Herrespink ’84) Bunce began the ministry in 2007 when she saw that “they’re left out of everything,” Bunce says. “And now they feel like they’re their own private place.”

*Marriages*

Tracy Lindaik ’89 and Dennis Boeing, Chanhassen, Minn.

Gretchen Black ’03 and Ryan Erdgarten, Overland Park, Kan.

Ellie Bromman ’93 and Jason Vitamvas, Arlington, Va.

Jon Slater ’07 and Rebekah Giddings, Columbia, S.C.

Amanda Dengler ’98 and Nolan Hayes ’98, Lomrue, Minn.

The couple reside in the city listed.

David and Krista (Bolluk ’07) Pondergrass, son, William James, born June (2).

Kris and Don Robinson ’71, daughter, Hallie Jo, born Jan (6) and Nolan (9).

Beth (Debrun ’81) and Scott Swartz ’85, son, Devon Jude, born Jan (5).

Rachel (Netten ’02) and John Forrestum ’02, son, Isaiah Adams, born June (6) and Addison (7) and Kennedy (7).

Ryan and Alyssa (Hidost ’02) Rock, daughter, Nataria Hanyrei, born June (6) and Kathryn (5).

Eric and Abbie (Klinker ’03) DeProft, sons, Charles Howard and Bakky (Abney) ’03 and Jamie

Northcutt ’01, daughter, Lyna Adèle Okonkanwiyi

Philip and Sara (Rums ’07) Johnson, daughter, Paige Suzanne.

Ben and (DeWaal ’93) Khlum, son, Cauthen Jay, born June (6) and Jacie (7) and Angie (7) and Schruder (’02) Van Gorp, son, Noah Daniel.

Chad and (Enos ’03) DeProft, son, Calissa Jolie, born July (6) and Rasmussen ‘94.

Diana Buzza trained and directs Compassionate Heart Ministry, which provides a sense of belonging for youth with disabilities in the Zerfik, Mich., area.

*Well-Played*

Kris Kling ’97 is modest about his accomplishments, but not every actor can say he’s appeared on the big screen at Utah’s Sundance Film Festival.

“It was cool to hear something I did is getting good exposure and recognition,” he says.

The film is Mystery Team, a dark comedy about amateur sleuths solving a crime way out of their league. The film was well-received at the festival and earned Kling another on his IMDb.com profile, a public—and highly selective—database for commercially produced TV shows and films.

Mystery Team wasn’t Kling’s first film (he has appeared in a handful of shorts and one other feature-length film), but he says the process was a great learning experience—especially for an actor more accustomed to theater.

“It’s been on stage since I was four,” says Kling, who studied at London’s Guildhall School of Music and Drama and earned rave reviews for his 2008 performance as a British stiff in Storm Theatre’s The Magna Carta.

“We’d had a lot less experience on film, so I don’t have the technique and comfort that people learn from doing it for years and years. But it comes down to the same thing: Use your body, voice, intellect, emotions, instinct, imagination and spirit to tell the story the best way you can.”

*In Memoriam*

Dr. Paul Bolks ’35 died May 8 in Hall, Iowa, at the age of 92. He earned a Doctor of Medicine degree at Kansas State University and served for five years in the U.S. Army Air Force as a medical inspector. A longtime veterinarian in Hall, he also served the town as mayor and city council member for eight of his 33 years in the area. He was a member of American Reformed Church, where he served as an elder and deacon. Active in Kinawa’s and the American Legion, he served as Sioux County’s director of veterans affairs for six years. Survivors include his wife, Dorothy (Marsh ’71), a son, Marcia Hans ’73, and a daughter.

Dorothy (Mol ’73) Vande Berg, age 89, died March 30 in Orange City. In addition to farming with her husband in Newkirk, Iowa, she worked in the Newkirk Store and was a voting member. A member of Newkirk Reformed Church, she taught Sunday school, led Bible studies and was active in the women’s organizations. Among her survivors are three daughters, Judy Pecknett ’66, Gloria Helms ’74 and Debra Poppen ’79; a sister, Joanna Johnson ’74; and a brother, John ’55.

Myron (Mike) Van Pearson ’36, age 87, died Feb. 13 in Orange City. After graduating from Northwestm, he served with the Army Air Corps for two years. He then farmed, sold used corn and was a habitual rural mail carrier. He was a member of First Reformed Church, where he taught Sunday school. He also served the town as an elder and deacon of the American Reformed. He is survived by his wife, Lorraine, and four children, including Martin ’92 and Marie ’82.

John Aalberts ’39, ’43, age 81, died March 4 in San Dimas, Calif. After graduating from Northwestm, he earned a degree in accounting from Woodbury College in Los Angeles. He was administrator for Challenge Foods for 22 years and general manager for the San Joaquin Valley Dairymen for 17 years. He served on the board of directors for the American Dairy Milk Institute and the National Milk Producers Federation, and as president of the California Creamery Operators Association. His survivors include three sons and three sisters, including Betty Linder ’39.

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*By Sarah Asch Dole ’03*
Dick “Bob” Muilenburg ’52, age 76, and three brothers, including Michael ’84 (Lammers ’51, ’69); two sons, including Robert ’02; three daughters; and a sister, United Methodist Church and Kiwanis. He was a member of the American Legion, Jaycees for Farm Bureau. He taught in Atlantic, Iowa, and then spent more than 30 years as an insurance adjustor. He earned a bachelor’s degree at Iowa State University. Graduating from Northwestern, he earned a master’s degree from Western Theological Seminary for two years and later received a Master of Divinity degree from New Brunswick Seminary. The pastor of First Reformed Church in honored, Iowa, he previously served Reformed churches in California, Florida, Indiana and New Jersey. He is survived by his wife, Marcia (Driessen ’69); three children; and two brothers, including Bob ’72.

Elmer Van Wyk ’91 of Sioux Center died Feb. 18 at age 70. He owned and operated VanWyk’s Barber Shop in George, Iowa, for many years and was also a school bus driver at Hendrik Hudson Schools there. In addition to being a member of First Reformed Church in Sioux Center, he was also active in the American Legion, Jaycees and the George Chamber of Commerce. Among his survivors are his wife, Betty (Lammers ’51, ’56); two sons, including Michael ’94; and three brothers, including John ’57.

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Artful Poet

Ryan Pendell ’07 is an artist, but his work lines bookshelves rather than gallery walls. In fact, most of the time when he picks up a pen, it’s not to draw but to create poetry.

This spring Pendell graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) with a Master of Fine Arts degree in writing. It was art that drew him there. “Other creative writing programs are attached to English departments, whereas we do creative writing inside an art school,” he says. “It’s a different angle.”

A philosophy major at NWC, Pendell also studied art and creative writing. “By the end of my degree, I knew my interest was at the intersection of these subjects,” he says. “Poetry explores ideas and beliefs in a way that allows me to infuse philosophy, emotion and language.”

His first book—Say It in Three Bones: Live!, published by SAIC’s Ice Box Press—is a short collection of work demonstrating his passion for these connections.

“The poems all deal in some way with the question of resurrection,” says Pendell, who wrote them over six years. “Other creative writing programs are attached to English departments, whereas we do creative writing inside an art school,” he says. “It’s a different angle.”

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While Pendell hopes to write more books, he says publication isn’t what makes him a poet.

“The defining mark is loving to play around and tinker with words,” he says. “That’s when you know you’ll be a poet the rest of your life.”

by Emily Henninger ’06

40-Year Memories

Shirley (LaFem) Syvers, Darlene (Lagovan) Wensena and Joan (Brosgard) Hamminga, left to right, reminiscence during the class of 1969 reunion on May 14. They were among more than 40 people who participated in the spring reunions, which also included graduates from ’49 and ’59. The gathering coincided with Orange City’s Tulip Festival, and the alumni were featured in the afternoon parade.

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Destinations
by Josh Doorenbos and Ian Dudley

During spring break in March, we drove from Orange City to the coast of Maine and back as the experiential part of a course in pilgrimage writing. Purposefully meandering with no particular destination in mind, we explored the off-the-expressway towns we’re usually too hurried to notice, recording our reflections and insights along the way. We drove through towns like Reading, Pa., and Ohio City, N.Y.; we drove through mountains and forests and plains. We saw barns decorated with painted quilt patterns and a town that was clinging to one last bar for life. We wrote about sunsets and forests and plains. We saw barns decorated with Ohio City, N.Y.; we drove through mountains and expressway towns we’re usually too hurried to notice, destination in mind, we explored the off-the-

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The journey was lost in the destination. The living journey, the one that deals in steps and minutes as opposed to miles and hours, is never lacking for destinations. Grocery lists, to-do lists, guest lists, contact lists, reading lists, programs, goals, calendars, agendas—all are destinations. In 65-mile-per-hour living, one can get tired of the blurred roadside as the only view. “And so we walk,” Ian writes now. “Everywhere our feet touch ground—that is our destination. Everywhere asphalt reaches up to kiss the tires of our vehicle—that is our destination.”

down coffee as if it were the antidote to the poison they call sleep. Headlights staring like eyes and flickering like twin lamps, shuttered and aimed straight ahead, lighting a path before them and only before them. The destination seemed to be all that mattered.

And then it happened. We were the same. We were guilty of passing through miles upon miles of countryside without a glance to either side. The speed limit was 65, and yet the cars around us were going 75. We accelerated, boosting our speed to match theirs.

Is the journey so miserable that all we care about is ending it?

What happened to our conscious effort to meander—to take the time to see what is missed in our 65-mile-per-hour lifestyle, to breathe the country air, to examine every drop of water, every leaf, every hole in every tree?

We built, on those back roads and rundown highways, a new philosophy, one that allows for—nurtures, even—an appreciation of the moment. It was a philosophy not so much about speed and distances and destinations as it was about people and places and observations. The interstate bypassed that philosophy, took the soul of the journey away, and gave us our two lamps, shuttered and staring straight ahead. The journey was lost in the destination.

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Wanderers and wonderers, Josh Doorenbos and Ian Dudley are junior writing and rhetoric majors. Josh, from Bryden, Iowa, is also studying literature. Ian, from Barneveld, N.H., is also pursuing an art major.

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What’s Your Legacy?

It’s no surprise Char Van de Waa and her late husband, Carl ’37, established a scholarship for Northwestern students interested in health care. Carl graduated from the University of Iowa’s dental school after attending Northwestern Junior College. He and Char met when she joined his Sioux Falls practice as a dental hygienist.

A gift of stock enabled them to fund the Dr. Carl and Charlotte Van de Waa Scholarship, and last fall Char met the first two recipients at the college’s annual Scholarship Luncheon. A photo of the students hangs on Char’s fridge. “I like to look at that and keep them in my prayers,” she says.

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For the first time, Northwestern’s commencement weekend in May coincided with Orange City’s annual Tulip Festival. After the pomp and circumstance, many graduates and their families stayed in town to experience the festival’s Straatmarkt and Volksparade down tulip-lined Central Avenue.

Many faculty and staff exchanged cap-and-gown regalia for Dutch costumes and klompen (wooden shoes) and headed downtown to scrub streets, serve poffertjes (tiny pancakes), and serenade festival guests as the Fietsen Zangers (bicycle singers). Among those celebrating the end of the semester with a little Dutch dancing were Vice President for External Relations Ron De Jong ’71 (the festival’s town crier) and his wife, Bonnie (Mouw ’70).