

Foreword from the Editor

I recently spent some time with a group of guys I knew from high school, friends I hadn't seen in what seems to me now like a lifetime ago. It was one of those increasingly rare moments where old friends found time to reconnect somewhere other than Facebook profile pages—in this case the Lake Wilderness Village Starbucks in my hometown of Maple Valley. Conversation started off slowly, leapfrogging from topics as mundane as the prior week's episode of *30 Rock* to how creative our facial hair had gotten since graduation. Eventually everyone settled in and old familiarities returned, somehow leading to the topic of my looming creative writing degree.

"Why in the *hell*," says one of my friends as he leans in toward me, eyebrows suspiciously arched like some kind of gumshoe detective, "are you getting a creative writing degree at *Washington State*?"

I'll be honest when I say I wasn't really prepared for the question, didn't have a proper response ready at the hip. It's not that I don't know *why* I'm getting degree in creative writing that threw me off, it's that the question itself just seemed so *inane*.

When you live exclusively in Pullman, exclusively breathe Pullman air, it's easy to forget the reputation our campus maintains. Or, more specifically, the reputation it *doesn't* maintain. It's as if the rest of the world assumes anything related to the arts withers and dies anywhere east of the Cascades, as if Pullman itself acts as some sort of creativity black hole from where there is no mercy and definitely no escape.

I had forgotten in my four years of experiencing it firsthand that not everyone knows what I do about this campus, the dirty little secret so few people are actually aware of. What exactly is that secret?

That Washington State University is, in fact, a pillar of creative expression, overflowing with more talent and ability than anyone—WSU students and faculty included—gives it credit for.

This journal is a testament to that fact.

Those of you lucky enough to get your hands on the spring 2008 issue of *Land Escapes* will undoubtedly notice the past twelve months have affected the journal's design dramatically. Gone are the coffee table book dimensions and gorgeously glossed color pages, replaced by a subtle, trade book style—more akin to something you'd find tucked away in the fiction section of your local bookstore rather than prominently displayed as storefront window dressing.

In truth, this is partly due to the fact that the design of last year's journal was a bit *too* close to perfection. Any changes would be—at best—mere iterations on the previous product. Kudos go to Claire Mikalson, last year's chief editor, for putting out such a polished and beloved issue. A direct follow-up to such a release would be publishing suicide, an invitation to be compared to one of the finest undergraduate literary and fine arts journals ever put to press—a fate worse than scrapping this issue entirely for a hopeless narcissist like myself.

The other principal motivation for such a dramatic dimensional shift came in the form of a personal epiphany experienced last fall while the *Land Escapes* staff members were diligently working through contributor submissions. In helping design last year's journal, we had created a journal that was far more interesting to look at than it was to actually *read*, a complete and utter failure on our part considering that a large portion of the works were, in fact, short stories and works of poetry. The quality of writing evidenced by those early submissions demanded proper representation, and I was forced to comply. *Land Escapes* is, if nothing else, a journal in which the content not only influences its eventual form, but *dictates* it.

The journal you hold in your hands *right at this very moment* is the ultimate manifestation of these changes, the culmination of a grueling year-long process that has left me and the rest of the staff physically and emotionally scarred beyond any rational hope of recovery.

Please take special note of the improvements both subtle and apparent, changes I assure you I had nothing to do with. All of the credit goes to the staff of University Publishing. Without them we'd likely be forced to transcribe each of these journals by hand, though even this would prove difficult as the *Land Escapes* office has been missing its lone pen for several months now. I am eternally grateful for their hard work and sage advice, especially for their experienced practicality—dragging me kicking and screaming back to Earth whenever I started waving production money around and insisting we print

everything on sheets of authentic Aztec gold, which frankly happened far more often than I'd like to admit.

Thanks to the Washington State University English Department, who—against all conventional wisdom—gave us both an office *and* a working (I use this term loosely) computer. Also to Dr. Peter Chilson, our omnipresent faculty advisor, whose support and encouragement kept this boat above water no matter how many holes I managed to drill through the hull.

There are many others behind the scenes who deserve special mention but must be acknowledged merely by name because, like those cartoons featuring a failing stand-up comedian, I can already see the hook-end of the cane reaching out to drag me offstage by my neck:

Annette Bednar, Rebecca Goodrich, Buddy Levy, Christopher Arigo, Walter Schlect, Thomas Fortune, Rachael Nelson, Cayla Lambier, Heather Losey McGeachy, *Land Escapes* editorial interns Darrin Drader and Chelsea Pickett, God, all of the various members making up the *Land Escapes* business and marketing teams, every single member of the S&A Fees Committee who have supported *Land Escapes* from the very beginning, and my entire family save one Jereme Clark, who is seven years my junior but can still somehow beat me up whenever the mood strikes him.

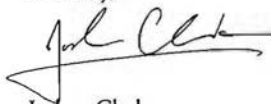
Thanks to all the readers who have followed *Land Escapes* for several years and to those who are picking it up for the first time. Hopefully you will enjoy reading *Land Escapes* as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Finally, thanks to all those contributors who submitted their work, whether it has been included in this journal or not. You are the reason *Land Escapes* exists. You are the individuals who will continue to make this campus' fine arts programs some of the best in the country. You are the answer to why in the *hell* I'm receiving a creative writing degree from Washington State University.

I now pass the torch to next year's chief editor, who I humbly and sincerely beg to continue carrying *Land Escapes* forward into new realms of content and design that I only dream of. There is so much potential within these pages, so much raw energy just waiting for the proper conduit. Good luck.

This was a triumph.

Sincerely,



Joshua Clark

Land Escapes Chief Editor, 2008–2009

