Renowned researcher Tebello Nyokong, PhD'87, carries hopes and dreams of her continent.
Western set to host the Times Higher Education Teaching Excellence Summit in 2019 and the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2020.

Warren Bongard, LLB’91, the new President of Western’s Alumni Association.

News and announcements from fellow alumni.

Moving away, growing up and gut-checking along the way.

Dr. Ken Bocking, MD’75, had to do something to bring attention to the issue.

Christine Elliott, LLB’78, Rod Phillips, BA’88, and Monte McNaughton, Ivey Executive Education 2010, were named among members of the new cabinet of Ontario Premier Doug Ford.

Natalie Rebot, BESc’05, has created Moonlite, a storybook projector that displays classics such as Goodnight Moon through a cellphone flashlight and app.

Stephan Moccio, BMus’94, earned success by investing in himself, his passion.

Carol Off, BA’81, finds a story in every moment.

F. Ross Pomersey, PhD’65, nurtures the science of possibilities.

Farah Mohamed, MA’95, LLD’18, lifts up a world of opportunity for millions.

On his journey to represent Canada to the world, Stephen de Boer, BA’86, LLB’89, started with the courage to go ‘down the road’.

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New $47-Million Interdisciplinary Research Facility Unveiled

Western’s new $47-million state-of-the-art research facility, the Western Interdisciplinary Research Building (WIRB), officially opened in April. It will house the Brain and Mind Institute, BrainsCAN and the Rotman Institute of Philosophy, as well as dry laboratories, teaching and research space and a public plaza.

“Western recognizes many of the significant problems facing humanity today are enormously complex, and the greatest advances made in solving them often emerge at the boundaries and intersection of traditional disciplines,” said Western President Amit Chakma. “Our response to this reality has been to promote collaboration and to build operational capacity for interdisciplinary research through a series of strategic investments in selective areas of excellence. WIRB will generate an extraordinary return on those investments by providing the infrastructure we need to conduct truly world-class research and scholarship across multiple disciplines.”

A significant percentage of building costs for Western’s newest signature seven-storey structure is supported by the Federal Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). With the SIF program support, WIRB was upgraded from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) silver designation to LEED gold. LEED is a rating system that is recognized as the international mark of excellence for green buildings in more than 160 countries.

WIRB, with a total gross area of 118,000 sq. ft., is located adjacent to the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre.

The Salamander Foundation gifts $1 million to Environmental Engineering Chair

Western Engineering will continue to lead the charge in mitigating the effects of pollution on the environment and public health with a new $1-million donation from The Salamander Foundation.

This endowed gift will be added to the existing endowed fund established by the donor in 1999 in support of The Salamander Chair in Environmental Engineering. The Chair oversees research activities in environmental engineering with a focus on water quality and processing, including wastewater treatment, resource recovery from municipal wastewaters and treatment of organic wastes. This brings the total funds donated by The Salamander Foundation to $2,811,000.

The Foundation’s latest gift was matched by Western, boosting the existing Chair fund and creating an endowment of approximately $3.4 million.

The current holder of the Salamander Chair, George Nakhla, is a professor in the departments of Civil and Environmental and Chemical Engineering. His research focuses on municipal and industrial wastewater treatment, biological nutrient removal processes and recovery of energy and resources from wastewater.

Western to Host Two Major Conferences in 2019

Western will host the Times Higher Education (THE) Teaching Excellence Summit in 2019 - the first time a THE World Summits event has been hosted in Canada, as well as the International Association of College Admission Counselling (IACAC) Conference.

Taking place at Western June 4 to 6, the Teaching Excellence Summit will be titled Degrees of Change: Forces shaping the teaching and learning of tomorrow and will explore themes of providing students educational opportunities beyond their borders; the impact and integration of technology and artificial intelligence on higher education; and the critical role post-secondary institutions must play in building a more inclusive society.

The IACAC Conference is the largest gathering of international college and university admission counselling/guidance counselling staff in the world, with an anticipated 1,200 to 1,800 attendees. Taking place at Western July 9 to 12, it marks the second time the Conference has been held in Canada.

Western Alumni’s 2019 Discover the World program offers travel opportunities for Western alumni and their friends and family, faculty, staff and friends of the University.

Join like-minded travellers on one of our journeys, enhanced by knowledgeable lecturers and tour directors, offering an exceptional cultural and educational experience.

To view all upcoming trips, visit alumni.westernu.ca/travel
Keys to his success

STEPHAN MOCCIO, BMUS’94, EARNED SUCCESS BY INVESTING IN HIMSELF, HIS PASSION

In an industry where less than one per cent achieve international success, Stephan Moccio has struck a chord with his piano serving as both muse and weapon.

A classically trained pianist, composer, conductor and producer, Moccio, BMus’94, began mastering the nuances of piano pop song writing shortly after graduating from Western, passing up a scholarship from the famed Berklee College of Music to sign with Sony/ATV Music Publishing.

Born in St. Catharines, Ont., and raised in Niagara Falls, he hails from a long line of pianists. Music is part of his DNA with his mother passing on a winning mindset as well.

“She taught me, from a very young age, if I have an idea, no one is going to make it happen other than me. It made me a big believer in investing in myself and my passion,” Moccio said.

It’s what drove him to send a demo tape to his idol, super producer David Foster, during his second year at Western. “He called me back, which was huge, and told...”
Moccio relocated there with his family in 2013 to better access the growing number of singers seeking his sound, and to further his aspirations to become a film composer. It proved timely, with Miley Cyrus’ Wrecking Ball dropping just days prior to their move, becoming a No. 1 hit on the Billboard Top 100 before their bed arrived from Toronto.

“Wow, was that ever a game-changer for me,” he said. “I had been spending tens of thousands of dollars on a computer, compressor and plug-ins.”

He requested Moccio for his break-out 2015 album, Beauty Behind The Madness, which featured Earned It, a track the two co-wrote and produced for the Fifty Shades of Grey soundtrack.

“The rest,” Moccio laughed, “is history. She asked us if she could share it with Miley, whom she knew personally, and Miley loved it.”

Moccio’s piano, which accompanied MoZella’s vocals on the demo, ended up on Cyrus’ final recording, and would soon be heard on tracks of artists including, Ne-Yo (Ballantine), Seal (Daylight Saving) and Gladys Knight (Need You, Love You).

Also looking for the Moccio touch, was fellow Canadian The Weeknd. He requested Moccio for his break-out 2015 album, Beauty Behind The Madness, which featured Earned It, a track the two co-wrote and produced for the Fifty Shades of Grey soundtrack. The Weeknd’s signature falsetto paired with Moccio’s suavity waltz on the piano earned a Grammy, as did the album.

“It also took The Weeknd from celebrated indie artist, to mainstream sensation with MoZella singing on stage to perform at the Academy Awards and on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon.”

“I love finding new talent,” Moccio said, having started on CTV’s The Launch, co-writing and producing Soldier of Love, recorded by the show’s winner, Sarah McLachlan, who goes by the stage name Poesy.

He’s currently producing material for “a new kid, Hudson Thames, who’s really incredible. He’s a big priority at Universal and I have a feeling he’s going to break globally. His vocal prowess is just effortless. I put him up there with Sam Smith and Adele. He’s a good-looking kid, too, which always helps.”

Moccio’s now the mentor, like Foster once was, the two becoming good friends since that first phone call back in second year. His relationship with Dion has evolved as well. They live in Canada, his presence is felt through Sportsnet. While he may no longer be on stage with her, he’s always working on tracks for her upcoming album, due out in 2018.

“T R U S C E L L O”

“Keep doing what you’re doing,” Moccio said. It was also at Western that he made a seemingly lofty promise to Celine Dion.

“It’s pretty remarkable the genesis of that relationship happened at Alumni Hall,” Moccio said of meeting her backstage before her 1993 performance. “I was in my third year. My friend, Gary McAuley (of the local quartet McAuley Brothers), and I managed to weasel in and introduce ourselves. I told Celine I would write her a song one day...”

Less than a decade later, he did, teaming up with Aldo Nova to write A New Day Has Come. The song topped the charts for a record-breaking 21 weeks, affording Moccio the opportunity to start his own publishing company and co-founded Bijou Records with long-time manager, James Porter, BA’86.

It also gave him time to record his first solo piano album, Exploise. He needed to return to the simplicity of the instrument he knew best. The album became the highest-charting instrumental release in Canada.

**“IF I’D BEEN BORN 10 YEARS EARLIER OR LATER, IT WOULD NOT HAVE WORKED OUT”**

Writing for Dion wasn’t the only dream Moccio manifested. He was just 16 when he heard Foster’s composition for the 1988 Calgary Games. “I promised myself when the Olympics came back to Canada, I would write the theme. I was so excited I managed to weasel in and introduce ourselves. I was in my third year. My friend, Gary McAuley (of the local quartet McAuley Brothers), and I managed to weasel in and introduce ourselves. I told Celine I would write her a song one day...”

“I was in my 20s, spending tens of thousands of dollars on a computer, compressor and all that gear,” he said. “I put it off. I was one of the few musicians able to make a living at my craft. It’s hard to succeed in this industry.”

After college, his future plans included a fourth solo piano album, as well as a fourth solo piano album, which he hopes to release in 2019. “I have it in my head. I’ve just been too busy making other people famous,” he laughed.

Until then, his fans can hear his work regularly on Sportsnet. While he may no longer live in Canada, his presence is felt through the themes he penned for Hockey Central, Hockey Night in Canada and Blue Jays Baseball. “There’s a lot of Canadian stuff I carry in my heart. It’s bittersweet because, despite the amount of success I’ve had here in Las Vegas, the global success, which has been incredible. I have so many things to be proud of back home.”
As it happens

CAROL OFF, BA’81, LLD’17, FINDS A STORY IN EVERY MOMENT

There’s no such thing as a frivolous story. Carol Off can attest to that. In a mere 90 minutes each weekday, the host of CBC Radio One’s As It Happens switches gears repeatedly and seamlessly. Every guest – be it a world leader, an innovative researcher or an ordinary person in extraordinary circumstances – is provided space for their story to resonate with listeners.

For Off, this space is a “cocoon” in which she is the conduit of the human experience. Some are goofy; some are lovely; some of them are simple; some are complicated and hard and of huge consequence. But they are all just pieces of the human condition.”

The feeling the media had failed to aptly show the human condition – from all sides – in its coverage of two civil wars in the 1990s led to Off writing a best-seller, The Lion, The Fox, and the Eagle: A Story of Generals and Justice in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Since that book came out in 2000, she has written three more, including the recently-published All We Leave Behind: A Reporter’s Journey into the Lives of Others, which won the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction.

For teaching her how to navigate the stories she tells, she credits her English degree from Western. What Off learned reading Shakespeare, she uses every day. Reading books, studying Canadian literature with renowned poet and playwright James Reaney, reading Greek and Roman classics, provided Off a “portal into the world.”

“It is a matter of being in a warp, being in a cocoon with the person you’re interviewing. Every time somebody is there, it’s their story and it’s a little piece of humanity. Every single one of those stories is a piece of the human experience. Some are goofy; some are lovely; some of

knowledge, that compassion, to appreciate humanity in its complexity – from the humanities,” Off explained.

“The most important thing we learn from studying literature is contradiction, that there can be contradictory ideas at the same time, that you can have them in your mind, that you can embrace contradiction. It’s a beautiful thing.”

Off was 21 when she walked into her first English lecture at Western. She was pregnant, recently married and had no plans of pursuing a career in journalism. She gave birth to her son during Reading Week of her first year, forging through to complete her degree in five years.

“The paper was there in the bin every day in the UCC and I was complaining to a friend saying, ‘It’s not even worth bending down to pick one up from the stack.’”

The Gazette, which the proud English student once snubbed, proved a fork in the road for Off.

“The paper was there in the bin every day in the UCC and I was complaining to a friend saying, ‘It’s not even worth bending down to pick one up from the stack.’ And my friend said, ‘If you feel that way, why don’t you do something about it?’ I said I was planning to be a creative writer, novelist, poet, whatever. I’m not going to be a journalist. But he persuaded me to either stop complaining or go and join – so I signed up,” she said.

Off started her career writing for the arts section of The Gazette; later becoming its editor. Things took off from there, she said. Working towards her degree, raising a child, while working part-time at the student paper paved her path. She went from The Gazette to a local start-up newspaper from which she was called to freelance for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

“By then, I realized I was never going to be the novelist I wanted to be; I was going to be a journalist. I guess I never looked back.”
From the high seas to high tech, Fraser Hall, BSc’99, has navigated his own path

BY KATHRYN KINAHAN, BA’86, MLS’93

Any claim to own an adventurous spirit. Fraser Hall, BSc’99, has the resume to back it up.

The computer engineer has travelled up and down the West Coast, spent time on the high seas bringing poachers to justice, started two companies and now, as a founder of Vancouver Founder Fund, is helping aspiring entrepreneurs get their big break.

Even choosing Western from his home in Kelowna, BC, was somewhat uncommon. After touring “out East” universities, Hall chose Western for its academic reputation and well-rounded people. Or, as Hall put it – a campus full of “not necessarily just super-nerds.” He also admits to being slightly influenced by his father, Edward, MBA’77. His sister Jennifer, BFA’98, followed him to Western later.

Graduating at the height of the tech bubble, he bought a Volkswagen camper and drove up and down the West Coast with his degree in hand.

“I’d just show up on the door of technology companies and say, ‘I’m a computer engineer. Do you want to interview?’” he said.

“I was pretty nerdy; I still am,” laughed Hall.

A year later, Hall became intrigued with the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a militant iteration of the Pacific for another year.

Hall’s next change took him back to school.

“I was very salty from life at sea. Once I got off the boat, I decided to go to the University of British Columbia and do my MBA, figuring school was the best way to transition back to land, friends, etc.”

While there, he and a few friends wrote a business plan for a heads-up display company – smart eyewear with an integrated computer display. Hall landed a day job in real estate development while he worked on the business plan at night.

“After that, he signed up as captain and expedition leader of a not-for-profit vessel with Reach the World, a program that digitally connects travellers with classrooms, and sailed from New York across the Atlantic and Pacific for a year.”

Hall’s next change took him back to school.

That is, until the next adventure comes calling.

Today, Article and VFF share office space in downtown Vancouver and for now, Hall is enjoying the mix of running Article while sharing his experience and expertise with upstart entrepreneurs.

That is, until the next adventure comes calling.

period, Hall was promoted to captain of the flagship where he served for two years throughout the Atlantic and Pacific hunting down poachers – whalers, turtle poachers, shark finners.

The award-winning, 2006 movie Sharkcoteur (by the late Canadian filmmaker Rob Stewart, BSc’01) documents one of their campaigns, a tense confrontation with illegal shark finners off the coast of Costa Rica, where they clashed with the authorities, uncovered possible links to organized crime and outran machine-gun-toting, coast guards until they reached international waters.

At 24, Hall left Sea Shepherd and became headmaster of a high school at sea called Class Afloat.

While there, he and a few friends wrote a business plan for a heads-up display company – smart eyewear with an integrated computer display. Hall landed a day job in real estate development while he worked on the business plan at night.

“After two years, he quit real estate and jumped full time into the business. He reassembled the group from business school and founded what was to become Recon Instruments in 2008.

Recon was the first technology company to design and develop smart eyewear products for sports and high-intensity environments. The company’s products delivered live activity metrics (location, speed, altitude, temperature), GPS maps, and notifications to a tiny screen in front of the user’s eye. Their first offering, a ski mask with an integrated display, was released in 2010, well before Google Glass made its splashy debut.

“After eight years of that, never drawing a salary, living off ramen, experiencing the ups and downs of the business, constantly battling to raise money, we sold the business to Intel Corporation in 2015,” Hall said. Terms of the sale were not disclosed but rumoured to be worth millions.

In the later days of Recon, Hall started another business, with a different set of co-founders, known today as Article, an online-only, direct-to-consumer furniture retailer with a modern aesthetic, delivered simply and efficiently.

Founded in 2013, Article promoted their brand on Instagram, where it now has more than 260,000 followers, and they tested their products with small production runs, refining plans based on what sold and what didn’t. Their strategy is working, with sales expected to double to $200 million in 2018.

This experience of starting, growing and ultimately selling a company gave Hall insight into the start-up process. He saw the venture industry was starved in Canada. Despite the presence of talented entrepreneurs, prestigious universities and a highly qualified workforce, there hadn’t been a surge in seed funding.

So he launched a fund to address the shortfall.

The Vancouver Founder Fund (VFF), a venture capital firm ‘built by founders for founders,’ leads early-stage financings for companies based in the Pacific Northwest. The fund typically supports start-ups focused on software, but considers a broad spectrum of companies and industries where they feel they can add tangible value – the only caveat being the potential for rapid growth.

Over the course of two and a half years, the company has invested in 10 companies.

“I couldn’t believe someone was just fighting for what’s right so firmly and putting themselves at risk,” he said.

Sea Shepherd is an aggressive group with a controversial reputation for battering whaling and fishing ships.

“If you ever hear of a ship being sunk by activists, it’s this group. Greenpeace has never sunk a ship. If someone is doing something illegal, like poaching, Sea Shepherd will go out and stop them. The intention isn’t to sink, but if it got to that, it wasn’t out of the question,” Hall said.

Within a very short
Pioneering researcher Tebello Nyokong, PhD’87, carries hopes, dreams of continent

It is difficult to know where to start the story – so far of Tebello Nyokong. Perhaps it should begin with the renowned chemist being named, alongside the likes of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, among the icons of South Africa for her pioneering research of photo-dynamic therapy as a cancer treatment.

Or, maybe with Nyokong’s current leadership of a joint Africa-Canada consortium, that could mean a new way of purifying drinking water for an entire continent.

It would be tempting to start with Nyokong’s connection to Western, where the impassioned scientist earned her PhD while raising two young children in a foreign land.

I

Instead, we will begin here:

In the mountains of land-locked Lesotho, 8-year-old Nyokong tended sheep. She carried her books with her because, on alternate days, she also attended school. Her classmates poked fun at her, with her bare feet and hand-me-down clothes. But no one mocked her sharp, sharp intellect as she rose to the top of her class. Nevertheless, in high school, her peers and teachers steered her away from maths and sciences – those subjects were too hard for a girl and led nowhere for a young woman destined for marriage and family. But she quickly grew bored in the arts and, three years into her studies, divided into the sciences – completing three years’ worth of study in two.

After graduation, her family needed her to work to support her sister and brother’s quest for education. So, even as Nyokong mixed mortar and laid bricks for her father’s construction company, her heart insisted she was meant for something more. She compromised. She would work until her sister finished high school, and then enrol in University of Lesotho. At 26, she graduated with a degree in chemistry and biology.

She was offered a position as lecturer at Rhodes University, which has attracted scientists from across Africa and around the world.

By the time Convocation took place in 1987, she was back in Lesotho working to change the world at a university that had few of the resources she needed.

“Let’s be honest, when you are in Canada, you have state-of-the-art equipment. You are thinking, your brain is forever thinking about new ideas. You are dreaming. Then you come back to Lesotho and there is absolutely nothing – no facilities, no allowance for that type of engagement. You become dry. I’m not the only one. People educated in Western schools return and they cannot continue their education because they do not have the facilities. In the sciences, we need help, we need an infrastructure. That was our greatest frustration – I could not exercise my brain.”

She was offered a position as lecturer at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. Her work and leadership there quickly earned her an appointment as a professor, then a distinguished professor.

Moving to South Africa, where the social and economic scars of apartheid lingered, had its difficulties. “But in terms of research, I can see potential. The current South African government put money aside to make sure we continue to do research, scientific research in particular.”

Nyokong holds a Department of Science and Technology-National Research Foundation professorship in medicinal chemistry and nanotechnology. She is also director of the DST Nanotechnology Innovation Centre at Rhodes University, which has attracted scientists from across Africa and around the world.

“We actually have brain gain. One of the staff members I have is Canadian. They came here to work in my country. We are getting brain gain because we have the facilities.”

Her interdisciplinary team is seeking to develop a specialized kind of photo-dynamic therapy to battle cancer. Instead of chemotherapy, patients would be administered a specific drug that would be activated with laser light – figuratively placing a molecular bull’s eye on cancer cells.

“A huge project” that includes a consortium of researchers in Canada and Africa working to find new ways of sustainable water purification. Where rain or watercourses are scarce, there needs to be a made-in-Africa way of recycling, purifying and reusing what little water is sometimes available. “We are chemists. The same principles used in killing cancer can, at the same time, be used in killing bacteria in water.”

In a real sense, that girl who started tending sheep in the Lesotho mountains shepherds young scholars and researchers.

More science needs to take place in Africa, by Africans, and not just for girls and women, she stresses. “Boys are removed from education very early so they can go and take care of their families. You can promote (science) to girls but you also need to be aware of the fact boys also need encouraging. I’m sincerely driven by promoting young people. That is my greatest passion. I feel we need to create leaders, particularly from the African continent, who are disciplined, who know the value of hard work, who are honest and are accomplished.”

Nyokong continues to be hands-on in the lab – and she sleeps little.

“Boys are removed from education very early so they can go and take care of their families. You can promote (science) to girls but you also need to be aware of the fact boys also need encouraging. I’m sincerely driven by promoting young people. That is my greatest passion. I feel we need to create leaders, particularly from the African continent, who are disciplined, who know the value of hard work, who are honest and are accomplished.”

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“Your brain should not be determined by your circumstances.”

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alumnigazette.ca
Nevertheless, at 87, the iconic Canadian stage, screen and voice actor of the last seven decades has found new life in a young person’s medium. His latest effort, “Sesame Street,” has not only introduced him to a new generation of fans, but reinvigorated this veteran actor in a profession he loves.

Raised in Toronto during the Depression, Soles’ father was a traveling salesman of infant novelties and children’s clothing who always spoke well of his trips to London. So when it came time for the younger Soles, an “average-to-lazy student,” to choose a university, he picked Western – sight unseen.

“I was an 18-year-old kid who had never been away from home. At Western, I learned about the whole world – and loved it. The discovery. The comrades. The spirit of the school. It didn’t take long to learn ‘Western, Western, Western’ as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. That led Soles to jobs as a radio announcer during summer breaks from university. In 1953, he started in television as host and producer of variety and current affairs programs for CFTV, the Forest City’s first TV station.

But it was on the CBC where Soles left his mark, as well as the Toronto Star – as one of the original hosts of Take 30 in 1962. Designed to be a light-hearted women’s show, the daytime series evolved into a showcase for serious journalism, airing documentary reports and interviews on social and cultural topics. Soles shared the hosting duties until 1978.

Soles always loved his Saturday afternoons at the movies and when a high school English teacher cast him in a one-act play, Soles enjoyed it. “But I am not sure I can tell you why,” he said.

Not big enough for football or hockey, Soles arrived at Western and gravitated to the London Little Theatre and the university’s long-standing production company, Purple Patches.

Humbly crediting his career success to “more good luck than good management,” his arrival in London was timed to the city’s cultural golden age. Broadway plays arrived in London almost to the same time as the runs ended in New York. The quality of the city’s theatre troupes and musicians, combined with the sophistication and wealth of the audience, made London a popular arts destination.

“There was an amazing legacy of top-quality facilities and work being done. It was an absolute stroke of my good luck to be there when all that was developing,” Soles said. “You had wealth, education, proximity to everything important, right there in London. Everything was arranged to give London a particularly rich heritage. What an exciting time.”

“Because of the CBC, people all over knew what a good pool of actors there were in Toronto,” Soles explained, crediting Canadian actor versatility to their American and British influences. “Orson Welles himself said the world’s best English-speaking acting voices were in Canada.”

Thanks to timing and location, plus incredible talent, Soles became a fixture in radio and television, as well as theatre and film, over the next several decades where his face and voice have become instantly recognizable. His credits are too numerous to list. He has appeared in nearly every major television series and film that has ever been made. It was an absolute stroke of my good luck to be there when all that was developing, I don’t want it to quit. Nobody. We hoped – sure. But we never expected to be talking about them years later.”

Recently, Soles teamed up with Ethan Cole, BA’06 (History), to star in My 90-Year-Old Roommate, a CBC Comedy online-only show. Think Pardon the Interruption meets The Odd Couple.

The show is shot digitally and produced in more of a freestyle, ad-libbed, guerrilla style than anything Soles has ever experienced. He has embraced the technological shift – although admits to wondering when it will all stop.

“How many times do I have to buy the White Album?” he laughed.

Just wrapping its second season, My 90-Year-Old Roommate is funny and a tad blue with language Soles still wonders what his mother would think of him saying. He appreciates its underlying message of both an old dog and a new dog learning new tricks.

“The idea isn’t just about what my character has learned about growing old, but also what he can learn from those who are young and don’t know what it is like to have had a another life, or another set of values or culture, different from the one they have now.”

The subjects discussed are universal – life, death, sex, frustration. Little is taboo.

But for an actor closer to the end of his career than the beginning, he has found a new appreciation in the work and the life it has afforded him.

“I have done things to myself that I suppose I am lucky to be 87. I have been lucky all my life to get up every morning, work a 12-hour day and enjoy it. Today, I am the so-called star of a show. I am the title role. If you can keep doing that, you are pretty lucky.

“Especially when you get to work, as I have, with some extraordinary good people. Once you have had that experience, you don’t ever want it to quit. “If you can, there is no job better – and I can always use the money.”

For veteran actor Paul Soles, BA’53, growing older is another performance to embrace.

BY JASON WINDERS, MES’10, PHD’16

Soles provided the voice of both Hermy, the Elf who wants to be a dentist... as well as the original voice of Spider-Man in the 1967 cartoon series.


For more information and updates on current and former alumni, staff, and faculty.

For more information and updates on current and former alumni, staff, and faculty
Even after a quarter century, Wendy Freeman, BA’86, is still drawn to the energy of the newsroom. “When breaking news happens, I get to go out into the newsroom and be part of the team, be part of history, and see it unfold first-hand,” she explained. “That’s my favourite part of the job.”

Having started at the bottom of the industry, Freeman is no stranger to the hard work of news. Today, as President of CTV News, she carries the lessons learned during those long hours and late nights to lead one of the nation’s largest news-gathering organizations into an uncertain future.

“The 24-hour news cycle means you are never offline as big stories break without warning,” she explained. “But if you are curious about the world, this is the job for you. It’s not glamorous and you’ve got to love breathing the news. But if you love to tell stories, if you want to see the world and witness history, it’s an amazing, amazing career.”

Originally from Montreal, Freeman was drawn to Western after visiting her brother, David Freeman, BA’83, who was working at CHRW at the time. “That was the visit. I fell in love with the campus,” she explained. “I thought, ‘I have to go here one day.’”

Deciding on a school was no problem; deciding on a program was another story. “I really started at the bottom, took on any opportunity and worked my way to the top,” she said. “I was someone who did it all.”

Named President of CTV News in 2010, Freeman presides over all Bell Media news editorial content and newsgathering efforts for television and digital, and oversees the newsrooms’ day-to-day operations. Since then, she has been responsible for news, information and current events programming, including the CTV National News, CTV News Channel, BNN Bloomberg and CP24, as well as Question Period, Power Play and W5.

Under her leadership, the CTV News division has been recognized with the Radio-Television News Directors Association Bert Canning Award for Best Newscast for CTV National News for four consecutive years, as well as nine Canadian Screen Awards since 2014.

Despite the success, however, it is the energy of news that keeps her going. “There is no ‘typical work day.’ You never know what’s going to happen in the news; no day is ever the same,” she explained. “I wake up and wonder, ‘What’s going to happen today?’ It’s like starting every day with a clean slate.”

Today, she finds herself leading an industry in transition as audiences shift from traditional television viewing to online and mobile devices. While daunting, Freeman finds this newest challenge invigorating. “We are in an age of disruption. I like a challenge,” she explained. “People are cord-cutting and not watching television anymore. But people will always be interested in big news-stories and live events. We need to be there for everyone all the time, on every platform, and in real time.”

People will always watch the news. What’s changing is how they watch it. We have to deliver the news in a way that’s compatible with the viewer’s device of choice – phone, television, iPad, computer, etc. Because the news is never going away.”
TAKING A CHANCE

Stephen de Boer’s journey to represent Canada on the world stage started with the courage to go ‘down the road’

BY ADELA TALBOT, BA’08, MA’11

Stephen de Boer felt brewing, as early as he can remember. Growing up in a small town with three of four children to immigrant Dutch parents, he sensed the restlessness early. It grew in tandem with a quiet self-doubt.

“I had what you would call impostor syndrome,” said de Boer, BA’86. “S I had no idea that I was going to be good at anything. I was certainly not sure I had the drive to succeed.”

He arrived on campus for a tour, de Boer knew Western was the right fit. “I got a lot of good vibes from student and staff,” he said. “I felt like I belonged. Originaly from Goderich, Ont., with grades that could take him anywhere, he felt almost obligated to follow his peers to co-op programs at other institutions.

He didn’t really consider “the school down the road.” But when he arrived on campus for a tour, de Boer knew Western was the right fit.

What he didn’t know was that he would find his legs – and a footing that would take him around the world – so close to home.

While he was in law school, the Canadian United States Free Trade Agreement was in negotiations; the 1988 election was looming and he saw Canadians starting to engage in discussions of free trade, though “not in any sophisticated way.”

While de Boer was interested in contributing to the conversation, his path to the WTO took a winding, global route with stops in Poland, Morocco, Argentina and India – among others – as he pursued a career in law, climate change and trade.

After a stint in the Ontario provincial government, de Boer joined Global Affairs Canada in 2005, working in Investment Trade Policy and North America Trade Policy Divisions. The following year, he was named Director of the Softwood Lumber Division, later shifting gears and serving as Director of the Oceans and Environmental Law Division and Lead Counsel for Canada’s international climate change negotiations. In 2010, he joined Environment Canada as the Deputy Chief Negotiator for climate change and the Director General responsible for Canada’s international climate change negotiations and partnerships. He took the reins of the Trade Controls Bureau in 2013, serving for two years before becoming the Ambassador to Poland, then Ambassador to Belarus. He has served as Canada’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the WTO for the past year.

“I haven’t made a lot of deliberate choices in my career,” de Boer said. “Most of the things that happened to me have been at the request of someone in senior management.

People say there are those secrets to success – but doing a good job is quite underrated. You can spend a lot of time making sure you get face time with your boss, you could be very political about it, or you could put your head down and do a good job and people will notice.”

“Most of the thing that happened to me have been at the request of someone in senior management.”

De Boer sees his career as united by the theme of multilateralism – which is increasingly presenting a challenge for Canada in both trade and climate change. For Canada to advance in either, let alone become a leader, collaborative approaches are essential. When it comes to climate change, if one party doesn’t pull its weight, everyone suffers, he explained. And when it comes to trade, the current political climate is not setting the stage for a promising future.

“We are facing some pretty serious challenges because the United States’ commitment to multilateralism is not as clear as it was; there seems to be a sense that ‘might makes right.’ If we are going to liberalize trade and pull all countries up, in aid in their development, we need to be working together,” de Boer noted.

“Canada will do good in the world,” he said. “The world needs to be working together.”

Canada’s economic dependence on the United States won’t change overnight, he added, though the government is working towards diversifying trade with the Canada-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. “There is a sense of promise, and there is momentum,” de Boer is responsible for building on that and creating markets for Canadian goods and services in diverse contexts.

He knows multilateralism is made possible by bringing and fostering international connections and hopesmathrm, a great believer in the United Nations, would take advantage of international opportunities.

“Canada will do good in the world to the extent that we engage with the world. We have to leave at some point and come back,” he said. 

I would encourage students to spend a year abroad, do a graduate degree abroad, and if you are at Western, you have the opportunity to do that. If you feel the calls, the thinking that may be this isn’t the right thing to do, but you should do it.”
Joelle Faulkner appreciates farmers—she also helps farmers appreciate their land.

Faulkner, BEng/HBA’05, is President and CEO of Area One Farms, an innovative private equity firm that has developed a new model for investing in Canadian farms. At the same time as Area One helps family farmers expand on and improve their acreage, it helps investors find partnerships that are secure, motivated, and growing.

Faulkner, who grew up in the city in a family with a long history of farm management, started the business five years ago, following a stellar postsecondary academic career that began at Western.

A Londoner, Faulkner finished a combined, five-year degree in Chemical Engineering and Business in four years—an accelerated pace that reflects both her drive and her focus.

“By the time you go to university, you either have work ethic or you don’t. That’s established before your 20s, and then you have a set of various opportunities to develop that,” she said.

Finishing her degree early, she applied for and received a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University. Faulkner studied law at Oxford for two years. Then, as a Fulbright Scholar, she earned a master’s in law at Stanford University in California and stayed there to work in medical device design before returning to Ontario.

After a brief stint as a design consultant, she became an advisor to the late Joseph Rotman, BA’57, LLD’09, chairman of investment firm Roy-L Capital Corporation and one of the country’s leading investors and philanthropists.

In 2013, Faulkner began Area One, a company predicated on the idea farmers and investors can each benefit from having equity in the land.

“I am building something that has to be good for the farmer and, if it is, then it will be good for everyone,” she says.

She calls it “third-child financing”—that is, financing that helps stretch the capacity for families who want to pass the farm along to the next generation beyond the first and second child, but who don’t have enough land and/or capital to make it happen.

“If you want to bring a kid home, if you want to tell them you have a place for them on the farm, relative to other options, you have to give them some predictability that they have a long-term option to stay. That’s the gap we work in.”

Now the company has invested in 100,000 acres, most in Western Canada. That’s where the land is highest in potential, far from urban centres, she says.

“The joke is, I go to a city you may not want to live in, and then I drive four more hours. It’s really, really great land that is primed for productivity.”

While some would-be investors have pressed for a larger share of the pie, Faulkner pushes back. Understanding how farmers think, and understanding both the economy of agriculture and the business of business, makes this work, she says.

“I am building something that has to be good for the farmer and, if it is, then it will be good for everyone. We’re trying to build a business that does the right thing.”

She attributes her success to setting the right goals and understanding the farmer’s perspective.
HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE TEQUILA?

BY JEFF RENAUD

In the early days of Tequila Tromba, Eric Brass, HBA’05, faced a huge obstacle. And knowing the formula for ‘discounted cash flow’ by heart wasn’t going to help. Thank god Ivey Business School also teaches students how to solve a problem or two—or maybe a million.

Fast-forward a few years. Tromba is now the No. 2 premium tequila in Canada and one of the fastest-growing tequila brands in North America, but at the time, Brass and his partners knew they had an exceptional product. They just lacked the resources (read: money).

Industry insiders told Brass he needed at least $1 million to get Tromba off the agave plant, but the most he could rustle up was $20,000 from his savings and some family and friends. So like any good Ivey grad worth a lick of salt, Brass got solving.

“A lot of really smart guys told me that we needed $1 million to launch a tequila brand in a major market like Ontario and they weren’t wrong,” laughed Brass. “The only thing to do was to go around and speak to the bartenders and have them taste Tromba and fall in love with it. And we did just that. We backpacked bar by bar, bottle by bottle, and we ended up the No. 1 tequila in bars and restaurants in the province. And we’re very proud of that.”

Problem solved.

I was going through Ivey. I just didn’t see the tangible benefit,” said Brass, who also mentioned his entrepreneurship class with Eric Morse as an Ivey highlight. “It’s not like taking a test and getting right and wrong answers. It’s a bit fuzzy. But even with my first job in investments and asset management, I understood exactly why and how it works. It trains you to become a great problem solver. And you start to approach problems almost subconsciously. Just take a step back and every problem is just like a case. You don’t even have to think about it. It’s kind of ingrained in your mind. It just clicks. Now I’m a really great problem solver and I credit Ivey with that.”

What isn’t a problem for Brass and Tromba is the quality of the tequila. That’s because one of his partners is Marco Cedano, the ‘godfather of modern premium tequila.’

While at Ivey, Brass studied in Mexico as part of an international exchange. One of the life-long friends he made during his stay was Rodrigo Cedano, the son of the legendary tequila maker. The elder Cedano was the original master distiller at Don Julio. Now, both Cedanos are partners in Tromba.

“Marco is really our big advantage. His son and I became friends when I was on exchange. When we came up with the idea for Tromba, we thought better be lucky than smart, so we pitched him on being our master distiller. That’s like asking Wayne Gretzky to play for your men’s league hockey team,” Brass said.

“We thought he would tell us to bugger off, but he actually said he was interested because he’d never been a partner. He’d always been an employee and never had full control of the production.
process. Well now he does. At Tromba, Marco and Rodrigo oversee every single step of the production process.”

When asked point blank the difference between a good tequila – let alone a premium one – and a bad tequila, Brass didn’t flinch.

“There is definitely bad tequila. Most people have had bad tequila because it’s a mix of 51 per cent agave tequila and 49 per cent sugar distillate, corn syrup and caramel and I had many of those when I was going to Western,” admitted Brass unabashedly. “That’s what I thought tequila was. Going to The Docks and Jim Bob’s, most people don’t have a good tequila story. They have a bad tequila story.”

Tromba, like other premium tequilas, is 100 per cent agave but even those tequilas aren’t created equal.

“Think of tequila like a steak,” offered Brass. “You can get a steak at an OK restaurant or you can get a steak at a fancy, top-of-the-line steak house like Morton’s. They’re both steaks but the meats are different grades; they’re seasoned a different way, they’re marinated a different way and they’re cooked in a different way. There are many, many things that separate one steak from another steak. And they’re priced accordingly. It’s everything from soup to nuts. Everything from raw materials to how they’re plated is different but they’re still both steaks. And the same thing goes for 100 per cent agave tequila. Some are good quality, some are not.”

Tromba is good quality. And it’s a good story. That’s a problem that doesn’t need solving.
Friday, October 19

WESTERN MUSTANGS SPORTS HALL OF FAME DINNER
5:00 p.m. Reception
6:30 p.m. Dinner
The Great Hall, Somerville House
Honouring extraordinary athletic alumni.
$75 per person. Advanced registration required.

Saturday, October 20

ALUMNI TAILGATE AND BBQ
10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Huron Flats Parking Lot, TD Stadium
Live music, children’s activities, a commemorative photo opportunity and free Homecoming giveaways while supplies last. Learn more about the purple perks program and receive special offers. This is a dry event.
BBQ lunch available for $5.

SOUTH END ZONE EXPERIENCE
11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. TD Stadium
Join us for eats and eats at field level in the South End Zone. Watch your 2017 Vanier Cup Champions play the Laurier Golden Hawks in what promises to be some great football action. Lunch takes place between 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and the game kicks off at 1:00 p.m.
Experience includes tented area, lunch off the grill, access to a private cash bar and a game ticket.
Lunch and game ticket prices:
Adult (13+): $45 Section D reserved seat/$40 general admission seat
Youth (12 & Under): $45 Section D reserved seat/$25 general admission seat

THE GAME: WESTERN MUSTANGS VS. LAURIER GOLDEN HAWKS
1:00 p.m. TD Stadium
Football tickets only:
Call 519-661-4077 or order online at westernmustangstickets.ca

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY DINNER
5:00 p.m. Reception
6:00 p.m. Dinner
The Great Hall, Somerville House
Join your classmates from 1968 and earlier for an elegant evening featuring a three-course meal and musical entertainment. Golden reunion pins will be bestowed.
Advanced registration required. Seating by reunion year. Complimentary for alumni celebrating their reunion year ('68, '63, '58, '53, '48, '43), $50 for guests or alumni in non-reunion years.

Explore Western’s new and iconic spaces
Building tours provide a chance to see campus changes close up

Saturday, October 20

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Official re-opening at 11:00 a.m. followed by tours until 12:30 p.m.
(Conron Hall)
Following four years of renovations, the home of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities has been restored to its grandeur. Don’t miss this chance to see how one of the first buildings to grace Western’s campus has been transformed.

NEW ENGINEERING BUILDING (THREE C+)
Annual open house and tours
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Atrium)
A project unlike any other in Western’s history, the new Engineering building is informally dubbed Three C+ for its spaces to connect, collaborate and create. A potential Platinum LEED building, Three C+ is a living laboratory and a showcase for intelligent and sustainable design.

MUSIC BUILDING
Tours 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
(von Kuster Hall)
Stop by to see the exciting new rehearsal, performance and classroom spaces as a result of a $23.5-million renovation project, including a five-storey tower in the courtyard space between the Music Building and Talbot College.

Come home and connect.
Start making plans to come back to campus for Homecoming – everyone is welcome!

Complimentary parking available in most campus lots after 4 p.m. on Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday during Homecoming weekend.

For more information, including a complete listing of all Homecoming events and registration information, visit westernhomecoming.uwo.ca, email alumni@uwo.ca or call our Homecoming Hotline at 519.661.2199 and let us help create your best Homecoming ever!

Join the conversation
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Tear out and take with you
**Breathe in, feel those lungs expand in your chest. Consider how remarkable it is your lungs reflexively continue that task – 15 or so breaths a minute, 20,000 a day.**

The unheralded hero of that story is a naturally occurring, micro-thin film that lines the tiny air sacs in your lungs and keeps them from collapsing when you exhale. Without this pulmonary surfactant – a slippery combination of proteins and fats that work together to reduce the surface tension of the fluid in the lungs – breathing would exhaust you. You’d be unable to take a deep breath, to draw in life-giving oxygen or to expel its waste product, carbon dioxide. Mere breathing would be as difficult as trying to inflate a dollar-store balloon.

That’s the life-threatening condition faced by many preemies struggling to breathe. No one knew pulmonary surfactant existed, much less that preemies lacking in it.

Ventilators; no one knew pulmonary surfactant existed, much less that preemies struggling to breathe were lacking in it. Ventilators; no one knew pulmonary surfactant existed, much less that preemies struggling to breathe were lacking in it. Edmond Possmayer, PhD’65, conducted all of his surfactant research around the world.

That was the genesis of his research into lung surfactants. He began working with Edward Neal Neergard, his PhD supervisor, hired him to examine the role of fetal insulin on brain development. He was quickly diverted to another problem: developing an amniotic fluid test to determine the maturity of fetal lungs. That was the genesis of his research into lung surfactants. He began working with Edward Neal Neergard, his PhD supervisor, hired him to examine the role of fetal insulin on brain development. He was quickly diverted to another problem: developing an amniotic fluid test to determine the maturity of fetal lungs.

The science of possibilities

Fred Possmayer, PhD’65, nurtures the science of possibilities

By Debra Van Breen, B’86, MA’87 (Journalism)

In 1971, he returned to Canada, where Western researchers Earl Plunkett and Kenneth P. Strickland, who was Possmayer’s PhD supervisor, hired him to examine the role of fetal insulin on brain development. He was quickly diverted to another problem: developing an amniotic fluid test to determine the maturity of fetal lungs.

That was the genesis of his research into lung surfactants. He began working with Edward Neal Neergard, his PhD supervisor, hired him to examine the role of fetal insulin on brain development. He was quickly diverted to another problem: developing an amniotic fluid test to determine the maturity of fetal lungs.

Unfortunately, there were no ventilators; no one knew pulmonary surfactant existed, much less that preemies struggling to breathe were lacking in it.

What they knew was keeping the babies warm and maybe jiggling them once in a while to get them breathing again,” Possmayer said. The young Possmayer excelled in the sciences and earned his PhD in biochemistry from Western in 1965. This was specialized basic science. “I had to be very independent at the time,” he recalled.

After graduation, he pursued postdoctoral training at the University of Cologne and the University of Utrecht. At the University of California, he specialized in plant biochemistry.

In 1959, American paediatrician Dr. Shou-Hwa Yu with developing a method for mass processing the science of possibilities

**If you give BLES, there’s an improvement breathing within 10 minutes and usually by 12 hours, surfactant function is normal.”**
They called it Bovine Lipid Extract Surfactant (BLES). With the assistance of Dr. Graham Chance, Director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, St. Joseph's Health Care London, they began their attempts to treat premature newborns.

“You need to treat them before the lungs are damaged. You’re buying them time until they can produce their own surfactant,” Possmayer said.

It worked. Testing showed the surfactant needed to be given early, immediately at the first sign of RDS. “If you give BLES, there’s an improvement in breathing within 10 minutes and usually by 12 hours, surfactant function is normal.”

Possmayer and Enhorning’s 1985 paper – the world’s first randomized, controlled clinical trial – demonstrated surfactant therapy saved premature babies’ lives. This proved a turning point in premature newborn care around the world.

The lab expanded to meet the newfound demand and included virtually every neonatal unit in Canada. “Other hospitals – Ottawa, Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, all over Canada – started using this stuff.” Morbidity and mortality rates among premature babies dropped.

Once Health and Welfare Canada approved BLES as a drug therapy, other countries signed on and BLES is now used in 20 countries. About 99 per cent of Canada’s neonatal intensive care units use BLES.

Now the process continues, as it is being investigated for use in adults suffering from acute lung injury. BLES Biochemicals, although no longer owned by Possmayer, continues to process and supply surfactant to hospitals around the world.

Possmayer, now retired but still active in the Western community, is quick to deflect praise to others, including the support of his wife Mary; and to Enhorning, Yu, Chance (now Paediatrics Professor Emeritus), Dr. Paul Harding, Obstetrics and Gynaecology Professor Emeritus and Dr. Victor Han, Western Paediatrics Professor and Canada Research Chair.

In 2009, the Canadian Medical Association Journal and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research recognized Possmayer with the Top Canadian Achievement in Health Research Award. In 2015, he was named one of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry’s Alumni of Distinction. His publication authorship contributions, numbering more than 320, have been cited almost 10,000 times.

Better than all the accolades, though, is the legacy of babies such as Tyler, born in 1988 at 26 weeks. Treated with BLES, then an experimental drug, the tiny infant recovered.

“Last I heard of him, he was a pre-med student.”

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From his earliest days on campus in the 1980s, to revolutionizing Canadian banking practices today, Rob Paterson, BA’90 (Philosophy), has never backed away from answering the hard questions he first learned to ask at Western.

“When I saw the difficulties these smaller companies were having automating, I knew I was able to come in and help them. And it wouldn’t just be one company; there were quite a few companies in London who needed this type of help,” Paterson said. “It was a great opportunity.”

Growing up in Paris and Hong Kong, Paterson was tech-literate before we knew what that meant. Between the computer lab at his international school in Hong Kong, the computer his dad brought home as CFO for IBM Asia, and an early Wozniak-days Apple in his bedroom, he was plugged-in long before he arrived on campus.

At Western, he used that knowhow to start a consulting company to help small London area businesses automate operations. He sourced equipment, built a curriculum for employee training and installed the hardware himself.

“When you are in large corporations, you can get by never knowing how much of success is you versus the infrastructure, the power of your brand or the big budgets they can put behind you.”

That was the attraction of the top post at Alterna. Among the oldest credit unions in the country, the organization was struggling to find its place in the modern banking world.

“There was this opportunity to come in and redo the entire organization from culture to capabilities,” Paterson explained. “I saw it as the ultimate test of myself. This was returning to my roots of running my own business – it was going to be up to me.”

Since taking the top spot in April 2012, Paterson has led a revolution in his organization...
and industry. He has radically altered fintech – financial technology – by shedding old thinking, developing creative partnerships and asking tough questions of his operation. He leverages the credit union’s nimble nature to create change; he embraces a loyalty to customers, not shareholders or analysts.

His successes are numerous, but it was his company’s decision to back a small medical marijuana company that woke up an entire industry.

Three years ago, an entrepreneur wanted to turn an abandoned Hershey chocolate plant in Smiths Falls, Ont., into a medical marijuana factory. Despite the almost limitless opportunity within the sector, and a firm legal foundation, big banks wanted no part of the business. Exhausting those options, the entrepreneur approached Paterson.

He passed. Then he paused. Why had he passed? “On surface, you hear ‘marijuana’ and people say, ‘Why would I want to be in that?’ But when you spend the time to problem-solve around it, you see this is something for Canadians who are in critical care. This was a real company the hard questions.

This was a business fully vetted by government, fully secured by law enforcement, and a needed product and service by customers. Paterson explained.

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The homes are filling up. That is not an ethical way to rationalize not providing these services. I had a problem if we didn’t do this. This was exactly what a credit union was to do.”

As for Alterna, that initial ‘yes’ has grown. The company now has $750 million in pot-related loans and deposits and relationships with two-thirds of the 100 licensed producers. It is a success Paterson attributes to asking himself and his company the hard questions.

“Who am I to say I am not going to provide them services when I know that the people who are going to benefit are the people in critical care,” he explained.

“When I look at what our roots are supposed to be – to exist for the benefit of our community, to aid and help our members from birth to death – there is not an ethical way to rationalize not providing these services. I had a problem if we didn’t do this. This was exactly what a credit union was to do.”

His board agreed – and what a success story they have to tell.

Today, Canopy Growth Co. is the world’s largest publicly traded marijuana producer, with a market value of more than $6 billion. On top of that, Paterson prides himself on the economic hope and life the company has injected into the once-tidying town. “They are providing quality jobs. The schools are filling up. The homes are filling up. That is what good banking is supposed to be. I am happy to say I had a part in that.”

As for Alterna, that initial ‘yes’ has grown. The company now has $750 million in pot-related loans and deposits and relationships with two-thirds of the 100 licensed producers.

It is a success Paterson attributes to asking himself and his company the hard questions. “This was the true test to see if we could be true to our roots. Here was something where we had to stand up and say, ‘Yes, all those things we said we are, here we are demonstrating them on an actual hard issue.’”

Ready to talk about retirement? Sun Life is here to help.

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Natalie Novak was no more than five years old and she was fearless. A grinning little girl. A Muskoka lake. A summer day. On the dock, she did not hesitate. She flew down the water slide into the lake, splashing into water over her head, making sure to do it when her parents, Dawn and Ed, weren’t looking. She was the opposite of most kids, who holler: “Mom, look! Watch me!” Not Natalie. She didn’t want to be told “no.” She didn’t want to hear she couldn’t do something. Several years later, when her parents were out for the evening, she and her adored older brother, Nicolas, got the idea to leap from the second floor of their house into a pile of pillows on the floor below. Natalie went first. And then there was the day she slipped on the ice as she got out of the car. She was four years old and there was no way she was going to admit she’d fallen. “I must have fainted,” Natalie announced as she popped to her feet.

That was Natalie. A bit of a rascal. Confident. Curious. Afraid of nothing, except perhaps looking foolish. “A fiercely independent girl,” her mother calls her. There are so many stories, so many memories. Dawn shares them while sitting in a chair by the fire in the living room. She smiles and laughs as she talks about her daughter. Her eyes fill occasionally. Ed can be heard in his studio just off the living room. He’s listening, always there for Dawn, but she tells the story.

There’s a watch on her wrist. It has a fashionably chunky silver bracelet and small, blue crystal face. It’s a good watch, one that Natalie had saved up to buy. Years later, it was found among 20-year-old Natalie’s things after she was murdered in 2006, stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend in the bedroom of her Toronto apartment. Now Dawn wears it.

How can Dawn bear to tell it again? There is such sorrow coming in this part of Natalie’s story, such heartbreak, frustration and anger about a death both predictable and preventable.

Breaking the uncomfortable silence

BY LINDA BARNARD

Natalie Novak was no more than five years old and she was fearless. A grinning little girl. A Muskoka lake. A summer day. On the dock, she did not hesitate. She flew down the water slide into the lake, splashing into water over her head, making sure to do it when her parents, Dawn and Ed, weren’t looking. She was the opposite of most kids, who holler: “Mom, look! Watch me!” Not Natalie. She didn’t want to be told “no.” She didn’t want to hear she couldn’t do something. Several years later, when her parents were out for the evening, she and her adored older brother, Nicolas, got the idea to leap from the second floor of their house into a pile of pillows on the floor below. Natalie went first. And then there was the day she slipped on the ice as she got out of the car. She was four years old and there was no way she was going to admit she’d fallen. “I must have fainted,” Natalie announced as she popped to her feet.

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How can Dawn bear to tell it again? There is such sorrow coming in this part of Natalie’s story, such heartbreak, frustration and anger about a death both predictable and preventable.
There’s a reason why her mother bears to keep on telling it. It’s all there for you to learn from happening to another woman and her family. To tell people this could happen to anyone, to warn and to educate.

It’s a peaceful message. We all think we’re special or smarter, that those things will protect you, or those things happen to other people,” Dawn says. Natalie met Arsesi Hindessa in her first year of college; they dated for a short time before her death. They had an off-and-on relationship. For 16 months, he abused her. Her violent relationship.

She was a slick fellow, Dawn thought when she first met him. Easy with the charm and quick to share information that could never be verified, he was older than Natalie. Dawn likened him to Leave It To Beaver’s insincere Eddie Haskell.

She had no clue that Hindessa was abusing and terrorizing her daughter for months before he murdered her in her apartment room. This wasn’t the same little girl who took ballet lessons, then jazz and hip-hop, or who, as a teen, tried to put up with abuse and look for excuses about why things happened or how to stop it. Her self-confidence eroded. At the same time, she felt responsible for helping her daughter for months before he murdered her in her apartment room.

It’s not for men and people to say how traumatized you’ve been, how destructive this behaviour is being to your personality. Natalie was really struggling,” Dawn says. “She was a frightened, confused young woman who thought she was doing better because she was leaving him. That was what happened the night she died.”

Since 1992, collaborative research at Western’s Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREWVAC) has been ongoing to understand and prevent relationship violence through education and awareness.

WESTERN’S RESEARCH SHOWS IN 80 PER CENT OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDES, AT LEAST SEVEN RISK FACTORS WERE PRESENT. NATALIE’S CASE HAD 21 WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE.

One of artist Ed’s many paintings.

The Novak house is on the crest of a wooded hill, up a curving driveway. Modern and cozy, it’s a light-filled space where you can warm yourself by the stone fireplace or watch the sun move along a curved wall, shining on one of artist Ed’s many paintings.

There is also a small urn containing some of her ashes. A photo of her intently examining a monarch butterfly in her garden.

There was no sudden loss to her family. To tell people this could happen to anyone, to warn and to educate.

It’s the blueprint of what it’s the mission is just to protect young people with awareness and education around domestic abuse.

Since 1992, collaborative research at Western’s Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREWVAC) has been ongoing to understand and prevent relationship violence through education and awareness.

The video that Dawn uses in her presentations to introduce Natalie is titled If Only... Nat’s Story.

She didn’t feel like a victim.

A sudden loss to her family. To tell people this could happen to anyone, to warn and to educate.

When Natalie was born, she came “in a flurry of bawling and hurry,” in a maternity waiting room in Hamilton, Ont. When she was an toddler, the Novaks decided to move just north of Bracebridge, where Natalie and Nicolas grew up. Their home family home Ed built largely by himself over a number of years.

Nearly all that exists of Natalie is what’s in my heart and my memories,” Dawn says. “So another reason I talk, is to not let her go.”

Alumni Gazette | Breaking the uncomfortable silence

Maybe she would run a hotel someday, but it had to be in a warm climate. She’d become fluent in Spanish.

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It’s the blueprint of what

If Only... Nat’s Story.

People don’t recognize the risk,” he says. They dismiss it, saying, “It’s only dating, they’re not married.”

The assumption is that it’s older women, those who are married or in partnerships who have kids that are at the greatest risk of relationship violence.

Western’s research shows in 80 per cent of domestic homicides, at least seven risk factors are present. Natalie’s case had 21 warning signs of abuse.

The Novak house is on the crest of a wooded hill, up a curving driveway. Modern and cozy, it’s a light-filled space where you can warm yourself by the stone fireplace or watch the sun move along a curved wall, shining on one of artist Ed’s many paintings.

There are crafts from Mexico on display. The family’s adventures there helped spark an interest in travel for Natalie that would lead her to study Hospitality and Tourism Management as a 17-year-old undergraduate.
EMPOWERING WOMAN

Farah Mohamed, MA’95, LLB’18, lifts up a world of opportunity for millions

BY KERI FERGUSON

I

In April 2017, Taliban assassination survivor, education activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai stood before the House of Commons and announced, “A Canadian will now lead the fight for girls’ education around the world.” She was speaking of Farah Mohamed. Mohamed, MA’95, LLB’18, became the CEO of the Malala Fund last July, overseeing an organization co-founded by Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin, to champion every girl’s right to 12 years of free, safe, quality education.

“All my life, I’ve been building up to this moment,” Mohamed said, referencing past roles in government, the social profit sector, and her most recent post serving as the Chief Empowerment Officer of Girls20, an enterprise that places girls and women at the centre of the G20 process.

“In my service to girls, I could have been any one of them. Mohamed was just two years old when her family fled Uganda under the expulsion order of dictator Idi Amin. “I have ended up,” Mohamed said. “I have gotten my master’s, and I don’t know where I would have gone. Right now, I’m giving you my notice. I have to do something in the development world. I can’t live in a condo on the water, drive a nice car, eat out all the time and never remember when I came from and not try to do something.”

Responsible for all aspects of the Stronach Foundation, Mohamed launched its flagship programs, including One Laptop Per Child Canada, an initiative that gives Indigenous youth access to educational technology and workshops, and the G(irls)20. “I was reading about the G20 Leaders’ Summit in the Toronto Star one night and at 4 a.m. I woke up and went, ‘Oh my god, we have to have a G(irls)20.’ I pitched it to Belinda and six months later we had our very first summit in Toronto.”

“It was my first really big risk in life,” Mohamed said of the program that invests in the entrepreneurial and leadership skills of girls around the world, allowing them to present their ideas on the global empowerment of women to leaders of the G20 Summit.

Mohamed also started the associated Girls on Boards, which trains and places civic-minded Canadian women between the ages of 18-25 on non-profit governance boards in their communities. Throughout her career, “I have been given an incredible opportunity to help people in the way I was helped,” Mohamed said, “and that now includes the 130 million girls around the world missing out on an education.”

While the 48-year-old Mohamed may quip about having a “21-year-old boss,” her respect for Yousafzai is serious. “Malala’s incredibly wise, has incredible values, an incredible family. She never loses sight of what’s important. She doesn’t feel the struggle for education is her own. She really does feel she is there on behalf of 130 million girls, and she does not take that lightly.”

“She is very involved in a good way. We don’t do anything without Malala, without being very clear, often metaphorically, we have a good board that includes Malala, who has given direction to the Fund, and my job is to make sure we do the work. Her job is to be a student at Oxford, my job is to run the Fund. And I’m very clear about that.”

With Yousafzai in exams, that stance meant it was Mohamed delivering Malala’s message at the recent G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Quebec.

“It is a global economic imperative that all girls, everywhere, are in school—that they stay there, they learn and they step out of school and into the workforce with 21st-century skills and capabilities. Simply stated, girls are the economic game-changer you need,” Mohamed said on Yousafzai’s behalf. The result of an appeal made by the Malala Fund and its many partners was a historic $1.3-million investment in girls’ education, and was more about economics than altruism, Mohamed explained.

“They have to create jobs, they have to make sure the economy works, they have to make sure their societies and their countries are safe. They have to make sure there is opportunity for all. Check, check, check. If you educate girls, you’re really working on the safety and security of the country.”

The first year working alongside Malala and her father, connecting with donors and expanding into Latin America has been “full of ‘wow’ moments for me,” Mohamed said, “because of the privilege of working on an issue I care so deeply about.”

Mohamed’s accomplishments have been recognized through both a Meritorious Decoration (2017) and a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award (2012) from the Governor General of Canada, and on lists including the World’s 100 Most Inspiring Women, BBC’s Top 25, Top 25 Most Influential Women in Canada, and RBC’s Top 25 Canadian Immigrants.

In June she received an honorary degree from Western, a particularly poignant occasion, given it was also World Refugee Day. “It is not lost on me that I, too, came here as a refugee,” Mohamed told the graduating class. “My parents had to flee a country where they were targets of discrimination. Thank god they arrived in a country that did not assume they were criminals first, and human beings second. Every day I am thankful they chose Canada.”

Generations have cheered for the purple and white for over a century. It’s time again to honour these student-athletes and supporters who have given their all for Western.

Nominate a former Mustang to the Western Mustangs Sports Hall of Fame.


Visit alumni.westernu.ca/athletic-awards for nomination information and forms.
Understanding what could be

JEFF STOBER, BACS’80, SAW BEYOND THE MOMENT TO CREATE THE DRAKE EMPIRE

BY ADELA TALBOT, BA’08, MA’11

something similar to the Hotel Chelsea in New York City, a space where artists and creative types could live and work and mingle. After $6 million in renovations, he re-opened the hotel in February 2004. Today, he has something of an empire, owning the hotel and its offshoots – the Drake One Fifty restaurant, five Drake General Stores, the Drake Devonshire Inn and the Drake Commissary – which collectively employ more than 500 people.

Stober opened Toronto’s iconic Drake Hotel in 2004, after three years and $6 million in renovations. In any case, when you have a vision, when you fall in love with the idea – as he did with that of the Drake – you have to take the risk, he added. When he toured the property, he saw a space begging for a new lease on life. He saw the kind of life he could create and just went with it.

“My attraction to the space in part represents a love of historic hotels that I’ve had since I was a kid, my love of artists, of culture in general, and in no small measure the relationship between the two, between artists and hotels. Artists have lived in hotels, died in hotels, bartered their art to sleep in a hotel; this had always fascinated me,” Stober explained.

“When I found the Drake Hotel, I found an opportunity for myself to reinvent a business model, a cultural community centre of sorts – kind of an oxymoron for hotels – where it would be a hotel as much for locals as for international travellers.”

He stressed that every step of the way is a leap of faith. When he and his team started creating the Drake model, which now has become somewhat ubiquitous in its foundational principles of culture, community and hospitality, it was a risk.

“Let’s say you have a vision for yourself and you have the opportunity to do something great, and you see a transformative space, and you have the opportunity to make that space part of the culture of a city, you have the opportunity to create a space that will become a kind of cultural hub – maybe even a cultural community centre of sorts,” Stober said. “That’s something that doesn’t come around often, and it’s something that doesn’t come along every day. That’s something that’s important to do. That’s what you do when you have a vision. That’s what you do when you have a dream. That’s what you do when you have a passion.”

He stressed that every step of the way is a leap of faith. When he and his team started creating the Drake model, which now has become somewhat ubiquitous in its foundational principles of culture, community and hospitality, it was a risk.

“The way we do it and the way we’ve done it is we’ve approached it with deep passion and deep faith. We always see something interesting, something different, something that we think is important and relevant and contributes to the world in a better way.”

In any case, when you have a vision, when you fall in love with the idea – as he did with that of the Drake – you have to take the risk, he added. When he toured the property, he saw a space begging for a new lease on life. He saw the kind of life he could create and just went with it.

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“How you build that bridge from where you are to where you are going is key, Stober said. Measured, attainable goals are a process. A challenge. A continual effort. Patience and resolve are essential.

“But you have to go into this Knowing the only constant will remain change, but also that, certainly, there will be one hurdle after another that you will have to resolve. The only way to do that is with a deep love and commitment to create from the get-go,” he added.

“If we have the blessing and opportunity to pursue our passions, to immerse ourselves professionally in something that is important and relevant and contributes to the world in a better way, I think we are doing a good job and that’s what we should all strive towards.”
Leave an Extraordinary Legacy

“An education at Western makes dreams possible. I know my bequest will assist those who otherwise wouldn’t be able to have the experience of a lifetime. For me, it’s paying it forward.”

Nanci Harris, BSc‘83, MLIS‘87
Western alumna and donor

How can you make an extraordinary gift?
Consider leaving a bequest to Western through your Will. No matter the size, your gift will help develop the next generation of leaders, ignite world-class discovery and inspire innovative teaching and research.

To explore planned giving opportunities, please contact our Gift Planning Officers at 519.661.2111 or call toll free 1.800.258.6896 or email alumni@uwo.ca

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Jane Edwards, ext. 88829 or email jane.edwards@uwo.ca
Mike O’Hagan, ext. 85595 or email mike.ohagan@uwo.ca

nominate an outstanding Western alumnus for a prestigious Alumni Award of Merit

Categories, criteria and nomination form can be found at www.alumni.westernu.ca/connect/awards/merit.html

The nomination deadline is November 30, 2018. Awards will be presented in June 2019.

For more information, please call Susan Henderson at 519.661.2111 ext. 85971

In conversation with...

Warren Bongard, LLB‘91, the new President of Western’s Alumni Association

HOME: Toronto, where I’ve spent my entire life with the exception of my three years at Western for law school.

FAMILY: I met my wife Kelly in 1997, got married in 1998 and had our first of three kids in 1999. We have 10-year-old son Jared, a 16-year-old daughter Carly and a 9-year-old son Harlan.

CAREER: After Western, I took a job on Bay Street as a corporate lawyer at Blaney McMurtry in 1998. Four years later, I got into the legal search firm business, establishing my own firm and then co-founding BSA in 1999, where I remain as President today.

TEAM: I’ve always been a Maple Leafs fan. I’m that guy who still believes the Stanley Cup will come back to Toronto! I was so in love with hockey that I started a player agency when I was practicing law when I had the opportunity to negotiate with some of my childhood heroes like Tony Esposito and Bobby Clarke.

CITY: I love to travel and recently returned from two weeks in Portugal and Spain. Madrid was amazing – such a great vibe. And I always like going back to southern California and Laguna Beach. The views are breathtaking and the weather is spectacular.

FONDEST WESTERN MEMORIES: Hosting the Western Law Games was right up there, especially one very early hockey game that had me going straight from a party to the rink at 6 a.m. Needless to say we lost that game. That, and also celebrating with my fellow students at the “Third Year Party”. It was such a great celebration of three years of intensive studies. Our class bonded so well and it was a chance to truly celebrate our accomplishments.

To learn more about your Alumni Association or to discover the volunteer opportunities available, please visit alumni.westernu.ca/get-involved/association or email alumni@uwo.ca

2018 Alumni Award of Merit Recipients

Dr. Barbara Vanderhyden, BSc’83, PhD’88
Dr. Scott Lowrey, BEd’93

Robert Collins, BA’77, St. John Smith Award

Sandra Khunj, BA’01, MSC’16, Young Alumni Award

Dr. Warren Lashey, LLB’91
Professional Achievement Award

Above: Bongard and his family call Toronto home. Below: Bongard and one of his hockey heroes, former Maple Leaf player Bobby Clarke.
KAVOO members:

Coulter Osborne, Ron Potter, Bob Race, Ralph Simmons and Charles Wells.

In 1958, spouses started joining the festivities. Thereafter, the annual gathering meets annually on the second weekend in June, to play golf and relive their university days. The friendships and fun enjoyed by Kappa Alpha fraternity brothers at Western in the early-mid 1950s inspired them to continue their connection long after graduation. Initially, a few brothers, mostly from Toronto, London and Kitchener, formed a monthly investment group. When travel and deposits & payments, TD Bank Group

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Dr. Andrew Benza, MD'87, FRCP, FRCPC 

Chair, Head of Consumer 

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and Drug Discovery 

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Dr. Robert Doherty, MD'87, FRCP, FRCPC, FRCOG 

President, Obstetrics & Gynecology, London Health Sciences Centre 

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1990s


1999

Paul Brazeau, B.Ed '99, was presented with the 2018 "Happy" Fraser award, given annually since 1975 to an acknowledged IABC member for their dedication to research, education and contributions. Called to the Bar in 1990, Antree C. Demakos has devoted his entire career to demystifying the law and helping millions of Canadians obtain better access to justice through Legal Line. This prestigious award in recognition of his lifelong commitment to making the law more accessible to Canadians.

2009

Vancouver to Ottawa (including 18 different geoscience societies, from regional or national level. Since 2007, the spread of land plants, and how sea level changes associated in part) by the evolution and in 360 million years ago, how the tour, he gave lectures about exploration Geophysicists, and pop music. The tour of Exploration Geophysicists, for 30 years...


Margaret Chen, BSc’72, MS’77.

Maxine, former Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) and former UN Under-Secretary-General, was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Baccarat Crystal Company in 2018.

Kevin Cheung, BSc’97, LLB’97, Certificate in Conflict Resolution, is a lawyer at the firm Allard & Partners in Vancouver.

Jeffery sieve, BSc’97, a senior advisor in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 2018.

Janet Jackson, 2004. MA’07, PhD’11, an Arts & Humanities professor and poet, and her husband Adam Yauch, 1964-2012, a successful recording artist, were married in 2004.


Gloria Gilbert, 2000-2010, a busy health care provider, was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association in 2004.

Katherine Beze, 2010, a lawyer at the firm Beze & Beze, was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Canadian Bar Association in 2010.

IN MEMORIAM
Grant Reuber, BSc’50, LLD’85, a Member of the Royal Society of Canada, died February 2, 2018, in London, Ont., at the age of 90.

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Moving away, growing up and gut-checking along the way

I recently read Ian McEwan’s 2007 book, On Chesil Beach. It’s such an astute observation of human nature and relationships that it takes things that are so familiar they’ve become invisible and spoils them out in a way that re-explains to ourselves. One of the protagonists, Edward, is a newlywed in 1962, mulling over moments in his life that have taken on the squirmish quality of memories acquire when you see them much more clearly in retrospect. At one point, Edward recalls his fondness for the visceral clarity of the occasional fistfight when he was a student at University College London.

One specific night, he was headed to the pub with a friend. Harold was short, bespectacled, “maddeningly talkative and clever” – exactly the type Edward would have tormented in his younger days but now appreciated. When they passed a couple of leather-clad rocker types in the street, one didn’t even slow down as he reached out to smack Harold across the back of the head. Edward immediately popped him square in the face, then returned to help his friend retrieve his broken glasses from the road. It took Edward several hours to recognize that Harold wasn’t grateful to him, and still more time to realize Harold was part of growing up, too – but there’s something about being in a place where basically your whole purpose is to sort things out. That’s not to say you kind of reckoning and stretching. That’s not to say you tend to shake it all out and scrutinize it anew.

A lot of this, of course, is simply about growing up, but there’s also something particular about being chacked together in a shared life with strangers who all have their own default settings that provoke that kind of reckoning and stretching. That’s not to say you become a human weathervane, perpetually twisting in someone else’s wind currents – moving past that is part of growing up, too – but there’s something about being in a place where basically your whole purpose is to sort things out that makes you inclined to, well, to sort things out.

Now, we have the Internet to be our Concrete Beach: a place where we can be constantly exposed to other people’s norms and gut-check our own notions that something must be a certain way because of course it is. But it hasn’t really turned that way, has it? Instead, suggesting to someone that perhaps there’s another way to see things is often the surest way to get them to double down on their own view, as we all cling ferociously to the baggage we arrived with.

We’d probably all be better off instead recapturing a little of that fish-out-of-water uncertainty that lends you a kind of naked openness, glancing around to see how everyone else is doing things and allowing for a personal reappraisal.

Shannon Proudfoot is an Ottawa-based staff writer for MacLean’s.

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Pelmorex Corp. founder Pierre Morrissette (MBA’72, LLD’10) forecasted the future by turning a handful of television stations into a weather data empire that includes The Weather Network. Today, Morrissette inspires other Canadian entrepreneurs to embrace change and think big. And his bold vision for the future started at Western.

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