

The background of the page is a blue-tinted photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling and holding a large, fluffy dog. The dog is looking towards the camera. The overall mood is warm and affectionate.

# The roa

**T**herese (Greene) Bartlett '91 BS calls her home a glorified doghouse. Located in Willow, Alaska, it's a single room—16x24—with plank flooring, no running water and, until just recently, no electricity. The furnishings are basic—an oil stove, refrigerator, bed, sofa, chair, and desk. Pots and pans hang from the ceiling, dog harnesses hang from the walls, and dozens of dog booties dry by the stove. Life in Alaska is simple by necessity. It's a life not many would choose. But if you ask Therese, she'll tell you she's living an ideal life in an ideal location. She and her husband, Peter, built their cabin and started Mawg-Dawg Kennel with the goal of becoming a competitive Iditarod kennel.

The Iditarod—popularly called The Last Great Race on Earth—was started in 1973 by Joe Redington, Sr., and is the longest sled dog race in the world. Although

the official length of the race is 1,049 miles, the true miles run around 1,150. The race is held the first Saturday in March and alternates annually between a southern and a northern route. It takes each team of 12 to 16 dogs and their musher anywhere from 10 to 17 days to travel from Anchorage, in south central Alaska, to Nome on the western coast of the Bering Sea.

The most common type of dog you'll find running in the Iditarod is the Alaskan Husky, which is the type of dog the Bartletts breed. While not a recognized American Kennel Club breed, many mushers think of the Alaskan Husky as more of a hybrid dog. Some call it a Siberian Husky with part setter, wolf, sight hound, or any other breed of dog that would give it speed and endurance for racing. Regardless of what goes into an Alaskan Husky, they all share two traits: they are all native to Alaska, and they all love to run—and run fast.

# d to Iditarod

By KAREN WALLINGFORD '02 MA

Had you asked Therese ten years ago what her ideal life would look like, sled dog racing probably would have been the furthest thing from her mind. After graduating from Northern with a degree in mathematics, she went on to get a master's in applied mathematics from Michigan Tech. While at Tech, she went to a talk about statistical research on whale populations off the coast of Alaska and thought that would be an interesting area to pursue, so she changed her concentration to statistics. She was well on her way to a career in mathematics education, working as a mathematics instructor at both St. Norbert's College in Wisconsin and NMU, when a seemingly arbitrary decision set her life on a very different course.

In 1995, she went to see the U.P. 200, just as hundreds of other spectators like her do each year. It was her first exposure to sled dog racing, but for Therese it became more than just something to do on a Friday night. She followed the race through and then volunteered at a local kennel to learn more about the sport. She learned about caring for and training the dogs and got her first experience riding on a dog sled.

"My adrenaline was pumping—I was amazed at how much power a dog team has," she said. "It always looked so easy, but those dogs are really strong and love to run. After I spent some time doing it, I was just hooked."

But it was more than just the adrenaline rush that drew Therese into the sport—it was also the symbiotic relationship she felt with the dogs.

"When you're out in the wilderness, it's quiet, and it's just you and the dogs. They're relying on you, and you're relying on them. Sometimes it just takes a look and you know you're communicating. And to have a whole team doing that is really awesome."

So in 1997, after Therese had learned that Libby Riddles was looking for someone to help manage her dog kennel, she packed up and headed north to Knik, Alaska.

With Riddles, she would be learning from one of the best. In 1985, Riddles became the first woman to win the Iditarod and has run the race a total of six times. In addition to her Iditarod experience, she has raced in Europe's largest

sled dog race, the Alpirod, and has done both sprint and mid-distance racing. Among the many lessons gleaned from Riddles' war stories, Therese learned the importance of preparation and foresight while out on the trail.

"You might think you are only going on an hour run, but in the Alaskan wilderness, anything can happen. I left Libby's place with an appreciation of Alaska and the beauty and diversity the state has to offer."

Three months after moving to Alaska, Therese met her future husband, Peter, who had just moved from Maine to start his own Iditarod kennel. Peter was also in impressive company, staying with Joe Redington, Sr., the father of Iditarod.

After working with Riddles for a year, Therese joined forces with Peter and started Mawg-Dawg Kennel in 1998. The couple was married in December of 2000. While some mushers will develop a kennel by purchasing an entire team, the Bartletts wanted to breed their own. They started by purchasing a few key dogs from some of the top mushers in the area and now have a thriving kennel of more than 60 dogs. Therese said it's a longer process, but definitely worthwhile.

"We start training the dogs from the time they're puppies," she said. "We play with them, take them for



Therese Bartlett with brothers Waylon and Willie.

# Meet the Mawg-Dawg Dogs

## Sting (lead)

*A 5-year-old, 45-pound wonder, Sting is the top dog in the kennel. He's the main leader along with Inca. He ran lead the entire Iditarod 2002.*



## Inca (lead)

*A 5-year-old, 46-pound leader, Inca is tough as nails with speed to boot. She and Sting make a great pair.*



## Dover (lead or point)

*A 3-year-old, 40-pound leader, Dover is a real crowd pleaser. She looks like a puppy, but works really hard. She's an exceptional young dog.*



## Emmie (lead)

*A 5-year-old, 47-pound leader, Emmie has run the Iditarod three times.*



## Gremlin (point)

*A 4-year-old, 47-pound, perfect specimen of a sled dog. He was a nice surprise on Iditarod 2002—the farther he went, the better he got.*



## Dog Naming

*In order to keep track of their growing number of dogs, the Bartletts developed a theme system to name each litter. Puppies from one litter, for example, were named after each of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.*

walks, develop their minds. We bond with them, so they know everything about us and we know everything about them.”

Training the dogs involves a combination of strength, endurance, and speed training. The dogs start running in harnesses when they are around 6 months old and generally are ready to participate in some of the shorter, one- and two-hundred mile races when they are between 1 1/2 to 2 years old. The ideal Iditarod racing dog is anywhere from 3 to 6 years old although Therese said it's not unheard of to have some 9-year-old dogs still racing.

Not only do the dogs need to be physically fit, the mushers have to be in top physical condition as well. Maintaining control of the team and maneuvering the sled around corners and trees requires both upper- and lower-body strength. Therese said the number one rule for any musher is to not lose his or her team, so maintaining control of the team is crucial.

“If you lose a team, it can be very dangerous for the dogs because then they have no resistance—they're going on their own momentum. If one of the dogs slips or gets tangled, it can do some serious damage, so you always try to hang on no matter what.”

“No matter what” means that occasionally a musher spends some time dragging behind his or her team. Therese admits that she has spent a fair amount of time dragging behind her team, but she has only lost a team once during a training run. The team was quickly recovered, and no damage was done.

After six years of breeding, raising, and training dogs, the Bartletts finally realized their dream and entered Peter in the 2002 Iditarod. While Therese also has her eye on running the race, financing the kennel, not to mention the race itself, has prohibited the couple from entering two teams. In addition to the \$1,500 the Bartletts spend each month on dog food, the combined cost of the entry fee, supplies, food, and equipment needed to run the Iditarod can total up to \$25,000. Most successful mushers have corporate sponsors to help defray the majority of the race expenses, and while the Bartletts are continually sending out proposals, they have yet to secure such sponsorship.

## Dog Mushing Terms

**Lead dog or leader:** The dog or pair of dogs that run in front of the others.

**Point dog:** Dog or dogs that run directly behind the leader. Sometimes referred to as swing dogs.

**Wheel dogs or wheelers:** Dogs placed closest to the sled. Wheel dogs pull the sled out and around corners or trees.

**Team dog:** Any dog other than those described above.

Once they are able to get a corporate sponsor, both Therese and Peter will be able to train full time with their dogs, which will also increase their chances for success in the Iditarod. In addition to a number of smaller sponsors, Therese helps finance the cost of the kennel, race entry fees, and the necessary equipment by working full-time as a paralegal in Anchorage. She trains with the dogs every night after work. Peter trains full time with the dogs in the winter, and during the summer, he supplements the couples' income by taking on construction jobs.

If there's one constant in the Iditarod, it's that anything can happen, and Peter experienced the cruelty of the unexpected first hand during Iditarod 2002. Part way through the race, he lost his team.

"There are some really dangerous stretches of trail in that race, and one of them is very icy—you're going back and forth on these switchbacks. He saw a tree coming and he knew he was probably going to lose the turn. He hit the tree, flew back about five feet, and the team was gone. Your heart just sinks," Therese said.

Fortunately a musher ahead of Peter saw his team coming with no driver and was able to secure his own team so he could stop and secure Peter's. Peter recovered and caught up to his team, finishing the Iditarod in 26th place—an impressive finish for a rookie.

The Bartletts are hoping to improve their standing in Iditarod 2003, but this year Alaskan mushers are at a distinct disadvantage. An unseasonably warm winter has caused the cancellation of a number of races that mushers use to train their Iditarod teams and has even resulted in moving the start of this year's Iditarod from Anchorage to Fairbanks. Right now, Therese said, it's a game of wait and see.

Developing an Iditarod kennel takes a lot of work and dedication, but Therese said she wouldn't have it any other way.

"When you get home and play with your puppies, pet your dogs, and go out on a run, you forget all that work, and it's just fun." ■

For more information about Mawg-Dawg Kennel, Therese and Peter maintain a Web site at <http://quicksitebuilder.cnet.com/mawgdawg/home/>.



### Max (wheel or team)

A 3-year-old, 60-pound powerhouse. Max is a great wheel dog with a hearty appetite. His vocal "cheerleading" was a real morale booster during Iditarod 2002.



### Raphael (team)

A 2-year-old, 47-pound dog. Raphael is one of the best of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle litter.



### Shredder (lead or point)

A 2-year-old, 50-pound dog, Shredder is fast and has a crazy attitude. He is learning to run lead, but is an asset anywhere in the team.



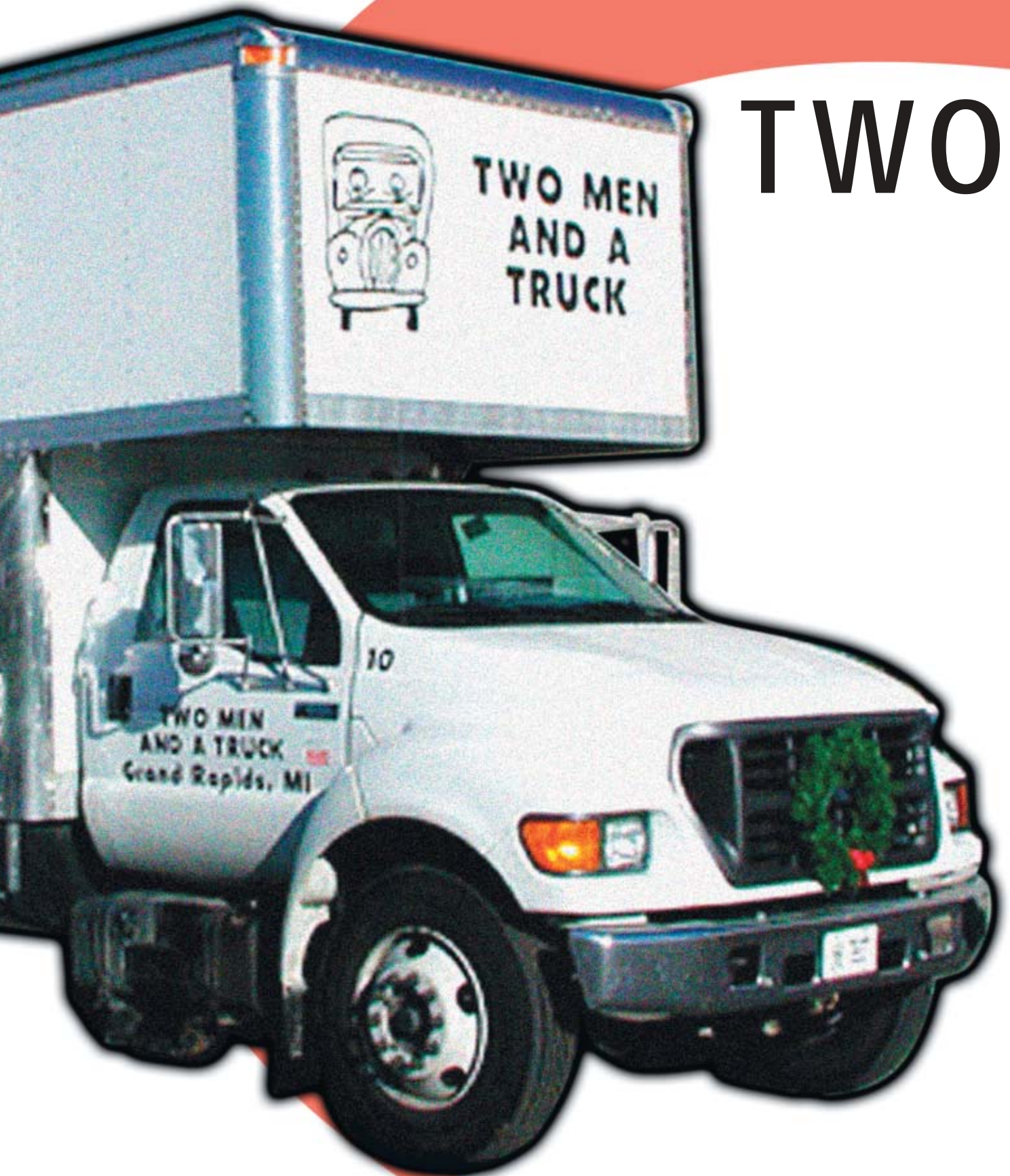
### Snap (team)

A 3-year-old, 54-pound team dog, Snap is the comedian of the kennel. He loves to "attack" his food bowl. He keeps everyone smiling.



### Tango (team)

A 5-year-old, 47-pound team dog. Tango is friendly and fun to have out on the trail. She is always doing her job. She finished Iditarod 2002.



# TWO

# MEN... AND A TRUCK

By KRISTI EVANS

**W**hen brothers **Brig '86 BS** and **Jon '88 BS Sorber** started hauling brush and trash to earn spending money in high school, they had little idea that their humble entrepreneurial venture would spawn a multi-million dollar residential and commercial moving company. Or that they would both attend Northern to pursue diverse careers, only to see their paths make a full circle back to the family business in Lansing. Or that a service originally carried out from the bed of a 1967 Ford pickup would expand to a fleet of 750 vehicles.

Perhaps you've seen their likenesses on the identifiable white trucks. Actually, they bear little resemblance to the stick figures in the company logo, but the Sorber siblings are the original Two Men and a Truck.



Most new business enterprises require some amount of start-up capital. For Brig and Jon, it was \$200 to purchase the green pickup from Michigan State University Extension.

“We used to have lawnmowers in back and people started asking us to haul things for them,” Brig recalled. “We put a sign up, posted an ad on a board at Meyer Thrifty Acres, and ran ads in the local paper. Originally we called ourselves Men at Work (after the '80s Australian band), then switched to Two Men and a Truck.



“Our mom hand drew the logo on a napkin and put it in a cookie jar.

After every job, \$3 went into that cookie jar for advertising.”

They had a winning formula: a cash business with very little overhead. Jon said he and Brig made better money than their friends who had paper routes, worked in restaurants, or held other typical school-age jobs. After hauling brush and trash for a year or two, they moved on to appliances and furniture.

“When we went to college, the calls kept coming in,” Jon said. “Our mom hired a couple of guys and bought a bigger truck to keep the service going. When we went home for breaks, we always had a job to go back to.”

Brig, who is the elder brother by three years, earned a geography degree in land use regulation from NMU. After a brief return to Lansing with lingering questions about what to do with his life, Brig moved back to Marquette. He worked at Prudential while his wife, **Francine (Balduc) '86 BS**, established Two Men and a Truck in Marquette. His mother had franchised the business in 1989. This was about the same time Jon began working for the General Motors loss prevention program after graduating with a dual major in law enforcement and security administration.

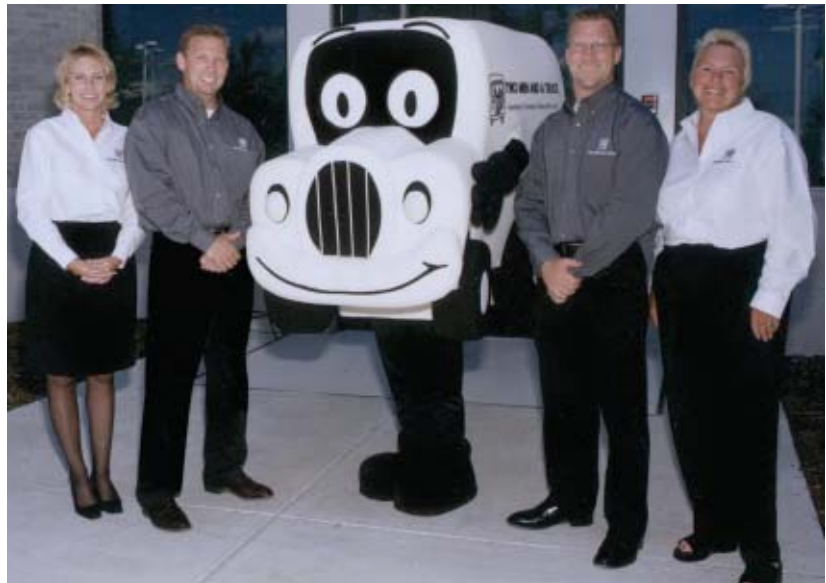
Both men eventually answered the call to return to the moving business, which had blossomed into a full-fledged family affair. Their mother was the CEO and a member of the International Franchise Association board of directors. Though no longer involved in the

day-to-day operations, she maintains a busy public speaking schedule. Their sister is the company president. Brig is the head of the licensing department, in charge of bringing in new franchises. Jon is president of the Lansing and Grand Rapids franchises. Each occupies a seat on the Two Men and a Truck board.

Brig said working in close proximity has strengthened, not strained, the family dynamic. “You have to have total trust in each other. We maintain that trust by being honest and keeping the lines of communication open,” he added. “We are constantly bouncing ideas off each other.”

service and two other factors: their knack for surrounding themselves with intelligent people who share their faith in the system; and a collective perseverance that enabled them to rise above the naysayers.

“There were a lot of people who said it couldn't be done,” Brig explained. “Jon and I got the business started. When my mom left her state job after more than 20 years, cashed in her 401Ks and got raked in taxes in order to invest in keeping it going, people thought she was crazy. When my wife Fran and I started the Marquette franchise, they said it wouldn't work.



Two Men and a Truck President Melanie Bergeron (left), Brig Sorber, Jon Sorber, and founder/CEO Mary Ellen Sheets. In the middle is the company mascot, “Truckie.”

Two Men and a Truck has grown to 118 franchises in 25 states. It will soon expand internationally to Taiwan, and officials are exploring similar options in Australia and New Zealand.

When asked what accounts for the company's steady ascent, the Sorbers credit the company's core philosophy of top-quality customer

“When the company reached a low point due to growing pains and other difficulties, my sister came on board to tighten up the franchise agreements. Basically, they thought our family didn't stand a chance of breaking into the moving market because it was so entrenched. But our goal was simple: take something and do it better. That's what we did.” ■

# Harvesting the entrepreneurial spirit

By KRISTI EVANS



While researching family farm operations in the Philippines several years ago, political science professor Bill Ball struck up a conversation with his motorcycle taxi driver. The man had obtained his cycle through a government training program but lived on a subsistence-level rice farm with 47 members of his immediate and extended families. He invited Ball for a visit.

"I told them they should consider expanding and starting a piggery because the government would give them the money for the first two breeder pigs," Ball said. "They followed through and were doing pretty well until a flood and pneumonia struck. The government doesn't usually offer welfare, but it is pretty lenient when people have a disaster. The family was able to keep the piggery going."

Such incentive-based entrepreneurial programs are not unusual in the region. Ball has traveled to Thailand four out of the last five summers to teach business administration and human resource management courses on a part-time basis. When he's not in the classroom, he shifts into political economist mode, studying government incentives for small-scale industrial operations.

Ball said that subsistence-level rice farmers in Thailand spend two months per year planting and harvesting, leaving 10 months when they could be doing something else to provide additional income for their families.

"Many don't because they lack the skills or the start-

up resources," he said. "The government recognizes this and offers training programs to teach them a new skill."

For example, many Thais are reluctant to master the craft of weaving because they cannot afford a loom. So the government began offering a week-long training session, dorm-style housing, and meals for about 50 cents a day.

"Not only do they learn the basics of weaving, the program also teaches them business and accounting skills," Ball said. "The government even gives them a loom when they complete the program. It's not entirely free; they have to pay the cost back gradually as they sell some of their products. But it gets them started."

Participation in these programs is not limited to farmers. In fact, virtually anyone is eligible to sign up. The initiative has been so successful in Thailand that it moved out from under the Department of Ministry umbrella and became its own entity: the Department of Small-Scale Industrial Promotion. The program now runs extension offices in different provinces, not just Bangkok.

Ball became intrigued with the region in college, but his specific interest in Thailand is not just professional—it's personal. Ball's wife, Phannee, is a native of the country. She was a university professor and came to the United States of pursue an educational doctorate degree. They met through a Thai student organization. Now a Marquette realtor, she still has relatives in Southeast Asia. ■