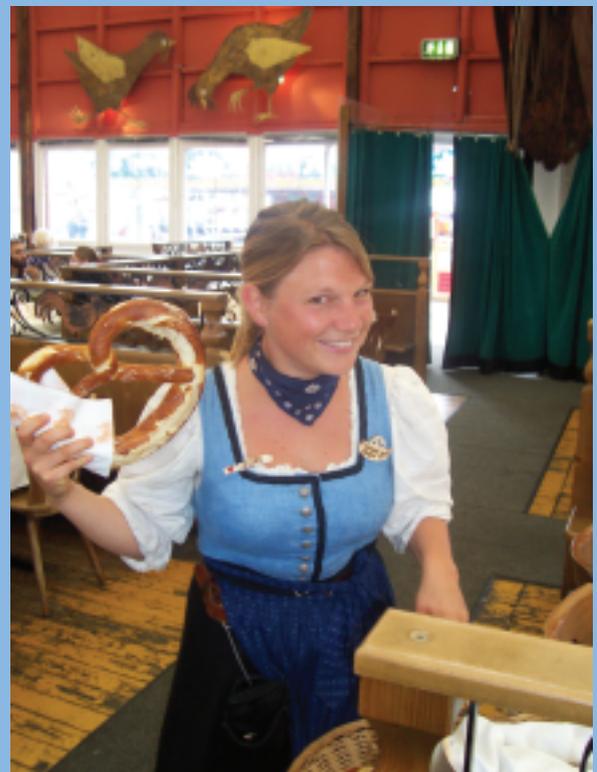
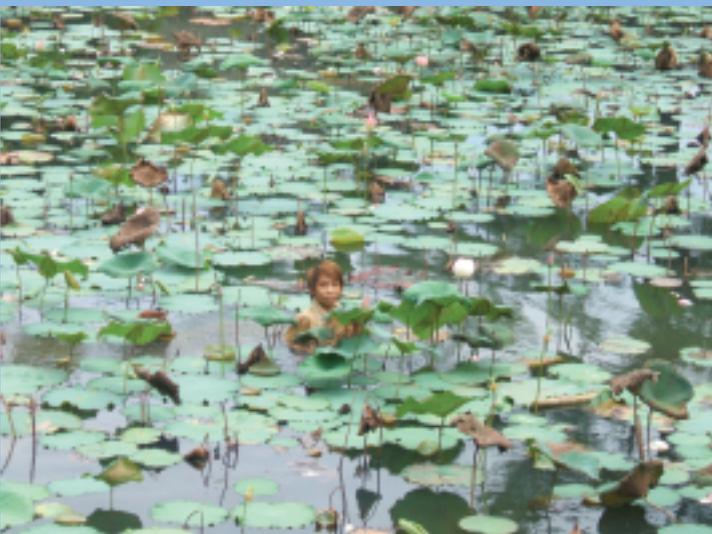
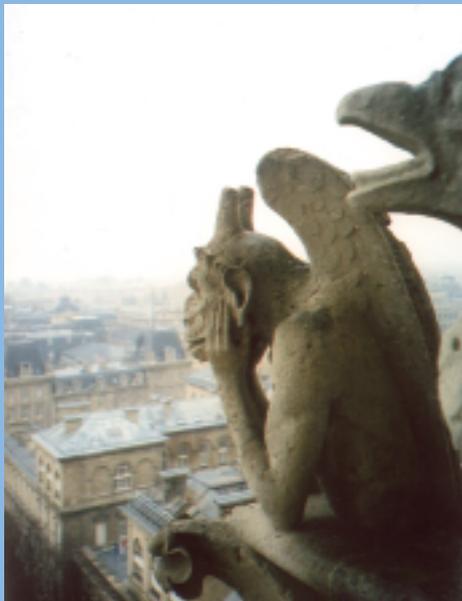


Picturing the World

Presenting a few of the winners of NMU's inaugural international photo contest, open to faculty, staff and students—and now open to alumni as well (details to come in a future issue).

On this page, clockwise: Quito, Ecuador, by Darcie Cook; Kibera, Nigeria, by Eric Hampton; during Oktoberfest in Germany, by Hans Gottsacker; at tomb of King Thu Duc, Vietnam, by Karl Mercer. Opposite page: Lake Moke, New Zealand, by Ashley Bartkowiak; Amsterdam, Netherlands, by Beverly Evans; Cusco, Peru, by Alana Stuart; Morelia, Mexico, by Alex Holley; Mashal, Iraq, by Jay Smith; Paris, France, by Deanna Hemmila. See all of the winners at www.nmu.edu/horizons.





Bringing NMU with Me



By Jason Harper
'99 BA, '02 MA

“Hey kid! How’re those Wildcats?” Regis Philbin asked me from his perch at the “Live” studio desk in New York City. Forty minutes later, he asked me for my résumé.

A year and a half after that, I was teaching business writing and ESL composition at Wichita State University, partly based on their familiarity with, and confidence in, NMU’s strong English master’s program.

Two years after that, while having coffee in a backstreet bar in downtown Asunción, Paraguay, a Peace Corps volunteer commented that she longed for a Starbucks’ mocha. I mentioned to her that the Starbucks CEO and I graduated from the same university: Northern.

And recently, when attending faculty orientation at Sias International University in Xinzheng City, Henan Province, China, a blonde woman amidst a sea of Chinese citizens said, “NMU? Wow! I’m from Norway, Michigan!”

New York

When I finished my M.A. in English at Northern, my self-congratulatory

gifts were an NMU sweatshirt and a round-trip ticket to New York City. Mesmerized by the contrast between Marquette and New York, I walked around the metropolitan streets endlessly in the frigid January air, having learned to layer clothing to stave off the U.P.’s cold weather. One morning I found myself in the crowd outside Rockefeller Center. An assistant was recruiting audience members for “Live with Regis and Kelly,” and I was chosen to attend. I sat in the front row, wearing my new, bright, green and gold NMU sweatshirt.

During the first commercial break, Regis looked directly at me, pointed at the sweatshirt, and said, “Hey kid! How’re those Wildcats?”

It took me a second to figure out what he meant—but I quickly remembered that Regis is a Notre Dame alumnus, and that Notre Dame and NMU are hockey competitors—and replied, “Ah, the Fighting Irish!”

Both Regis and the crowd chuckled. “Good answer, kid. So tell me. What brings you from Michigan to New York?”

“I just graduated from college and wanted to see the Big Apple.”

Regis encouraged the audience to cheer, and said, “Congratulations on your graduation! Maybe you’re in New York looking for a job. What’s your degree in?”

“A master’s degree in English.”

“A master’s? In English? Wa! You’re gonna starve, kid!”

The stagehand signaled for the show to resume and Regis asked me to see him during the next break, after the cooking segment, because he wanted to make sure I got something to eat. During the following break, “Reg” and I were talking about the tense competition between our alma-mater hockey teams, job hunting in New York, and sharing a delicious jambalaya dish from the cooking demonstration.

“You seem like a good guy, kid. Polite, outgoing, bright, recent graduate. Quality stuff! Do you have your résumé on ya?”

I froze; despite the layered clothing, I turned to ice. “No, I . . .”

“You don’t have your résumé on ya? Wa! You’re gonna starve, kid! Always have your résumé on ya! Always! Have! A! Résumé!”

By the end of the show, I’d gotten

my picture taken with Kelly Ripa, eaten a fantastic bowl of jambalaya, and collected a priceless piece of advice: always have your résumé on ya.

Wichita

Devoid of a résumé, the trip to New York was fruitless as far as employment. After working in Marquette for a while, I craved to be back in academia and applied to a few master of fine arts writing programs, gratefully getting recommendation letters from John Smolens, Katie Hanson, and Peter Goodrich. I was accepted into Wichita State University's Creative Writing program and awarded a teaching assistantship with full tuition waiver. Many English faculty members at WSU were familiar with *Passages North*, Austin Hummel and Ron Johnson. During the first semester there, I lobbied for and received financial support from WSU to fly in and host a reading by Smolens, whose novel *Fire Point* had just been released, and was able to bring part of NMU to Wichita.

The WSU faculty were very happy with the strong background in English I brought with me, and I was able to work my way up quickly, teaching classes such as business writing and English as a Second Language. I especially liked teaching ESL—it was incredibly challenging, fascinating, and rewarding...

Paraguay

...so much so, that the first teaching job I got after finishing the WSU MFA was for Pittsburgh State University's partnership program in Paraguay. This was the beginning of my teaching experience abroad, and despite my unfamiliarity with the Paraguayan dialect in my Spanish background, I was eventually able to get around and meet new people. One night while relaxing at an expatriate

pub in downtown Asunción, I met a Peace Corps volunteer from Chicago who was also only drinking coffee. She heaved a heavy sigh and expressed her craving for a hot-single-vente-five-pump-peppermint-caramel-sauce-top-and-bottom-no-whip mocha from Starbucks, so I brought up the fact that Howard Schultz, CEO and

Northern Michigan University, in my estimation and based on these experiences, is globally recognized.

chairman of Starbucks, and I both graduated from Northern Michigan University. "Oh. Great," she sleepily smirked, and quickly returned to the visions of mochas dancing in her head. After a peppermint moment or two, she exhibited a small spark of recognition and absently added, "My best friend from high school went to Northern."

China

When finished with the stint in Paraguay, I soon succumbed to wanderlust again and applied for another overseas teaching position, this time to Fort Hays State University's partnership program in China. FHSU appointed me to Sias International University in Xinzheng City. Xinzheng is in the center of China, more than 470 miles south and west of Beijing and 677 miles more or less due west of Shanghai. The international university hosts China's largest number of foreign teachers of varying ranks and nationalities. Among vast stretches of farmland cut with railroad tracks, this university has approximately 16,000 students. During the first foreign faculty orientation meeting and after introducing ourselves, a young, blonde woman approached me and said she knew NMU—she was from Norway, Michigan...

Throughout the fall 2007

semester, Dr. Alex Carroll, a new NMU professor of anthropology, and I developed a series of student exchanges via Skype Internet video between her introduction to socio-cultural anthropology class and several of my writing students. The videoconferences focused on differences in language, culture and ideas, as well as

the challenges and opportunities associated with learning new languages in an academic atmosphere. At the end, the discussion led to a trade of sayings and expressions, such as "Yoopee," "Ni hao," and "mien" ("hello" and "noodles" in Chinese).

NMU, brought to China.

Everywhere

Whether recognized by TV personalities during commercial breaks, university faculty members looking to fill higher-level positions, coffee-craving Peace Corps volunteers in back-alley bars in faraway cities, displaced Yoopers discovered in the heart of rural China, or students teaching each other bits of vernacular in virtual classrooms transmitted over the Internet, Northern Michigan University, in my estimation and based on these experiences, is globally recognized. This recognition is worldwide, and NMU will continue to get recognized more and more.

I recognize this, and am ever grateful for the experience, education and sense of self that Northern has provided. No matter where I am in the world, I bring NMU with me; it's a vital part of what, and where, I am today.

And NMU is proudly on the résumé I always have on me, too. Just in case Mr. Philbin ever happens to ask for it again. ■