

editor's note



I remember a sign that Professor Emeritus of Modern Languages **Pierrette Lovrién** used to have in her office. It said, "Eighty-eight percent of life is showing up." I liked that sign, though I often fail to live up to its admonition. In fact, I almost missed something great the other night, just because I was tired and cranky.

It was a Friday, the end of a long, difficult week, and I trudged to my car in the Hawthorne Hall parking lot feeling worn-out, fed-up, and ready for a 48-hour nap. I'd planned to go to a reading that evening in Weyerhaeuser Hall. The featured writer – this year's Endowed English Reader, Leif Enger – is the author of *Peace Like a River*, one of my favorite books of the past 10 years. I'd met Enger the day before his reading, when *W.T.* Assistant Editor **Julie Riddle, '92**, and I interviewed him. We were enchanted by the man. He's a Midwesterner, born and raised in Minnesota, and he has the quiet, self-deprecating demeanor that one expects of a writer from the land of Garrison Keillor. But he's also funny, thoughtful and smart as all get out.

No matter, though, how much I'd liked and admired Enger, no matter how much I wanted to hear him read from his wonderful book, I wanted even more to sink into my big soft couch with my big sweet puppy and just kick back after a tough week.

Halfway home, I noticed Religion Professor **Jerry Sittser's** copy of *Peace Like a River* on the passenger's seat in my car. Arrgh. I'd borrowed it so that we could scan the cover for the Enger story in this magazine. And I'd promised I'd return it before the reading. Now I was stuck. No wriggling out.

So I went. And I was enthralled again by Enger. His is so much more than just writing prowess, though his gift is, unarguably, prodigious. He has a talent for being around other people, for gently pulling them into the world of his novel, for making folks feel comfortable and entertained and even inspired. All of

those talents were on display that Friday night. And I nearly missed it.

In recent years, Whitworth has really upped the ante in terms of bringing big names to campus – not just people who are well known, but those who deserve to be so: authors whose books gain raves from the toughest critics and occupy lofty positions on the most prestigious best-seller lists; musicians whose names are mentioned regularly in *The New Yorker*; doctors and missionaries and ministers whose work has meant physical, emotional and spiritual revival – or even *survival* – to people in all types of trouble. But at the college we always keep in mind that one need not be famous to be great: There are many people at Whitworth who devote themselves to a quiet pursuit of "the antidote to doom" that Bill Robinson mentions in this month's President's Message. If they're not great, I don't know who is.

We at *Whitworth Today* don't pretend to greatness. But we write about people whose excellence in their fields is indisputable and whose dedication to changing the world is stirring. In this issue alone, we've included **Saisuree Chutikul, '56**, a world-renowned advocate for women and children; **Andrea Palpant, '00**, whose work as a documentarian addresses war, injustice, and the fight to carry on; the aforementioned Leif Enger, whose novel has been described to me, and by me, as "life-changing"; **Dale Soden**, whose research into religion in the Northwest is opening eyes to some heretofore unexplored theories; and a number of other people, who get up off their couches every day (or at least 88 percent of the time) to go out and improve the world.

The great thing is, on one of those days when you don't need to "show up," you can kick back in the comfort of your warm, cozy living room, cuddle up with the family dog, and meet and appreciate these people. It's a unique opportunity. Don't miss it.

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Fall 2004, Vol. 73, No. 2

Whitworth Today magazine is
published twice annually by
Whitworth College,
Spokane, Washington.

Send address changes to:
Whitworth College, MS 1903
300 West Hawthorne Road
Spokane, WA 99251