

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

TASTE:

FROM MOM'S
KITCHEN TO YOURS

NORTHWEST LIVING:

MOTHER-IN-LAW
APARTMENTS



Richard
White
gathers
memories
from his
family
for a
personal
history
of Irish
Americans

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST

On the Cover

Richard White's story starts with his mother's mother, Margaret Hegarty, who became Margaret Walsh. She came to America in her teens and worked as a domestic, later returning to Ireland with a small fortune she earned herself.

PHOTOGRAPH
COURTESY OF
RICHARD WHITE

Next Week

*Spring Home and Garden 1998.
Welcome back the season of light and take the time for living outdoors. Patios facing the lake, cottages by the shore and gardens with a tropical feel help celebrate the spring fever.*

No On Fitness this week. Molly Martin is on assignment.

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COVER STORY

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Not Forgetting

WRITTEN BY RICHARD WHITE

Richard White found more than the traces of his family past when he sat down with his mother to talk about her life in the old country. He found a new way to look at history.

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> Plant Life: Too Pretty To Eat

WRITTEN BY VALERIE EASTON

It's hard to believe that Space Age-looking garden spire is really an onion in disguise.

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> Taste: Original Copy

WRITTEN BY GREG ATKINSON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG GILBERT

Give credit where credit is due by putting your own spin on Mom's special dishes.

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> Northwest Living: When Mom (or Dad) Moves In

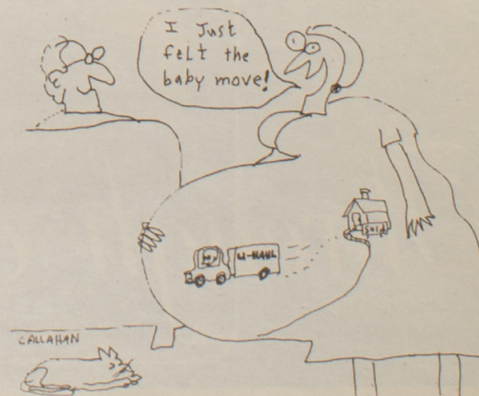
WRITTEN BY VICTORIA MEDGYESI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GARY SETTLE

The Porter-Clifton clan found the key to sharing living space with several generations: a little autonomy.

PLANET NORTHWEST
NOW & THEN

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CALLAHAN



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BY GREG ATKINSON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GREG GILBERT

Original Copy

The best way to compliment mom is to imitate what you like best about her cooking

IF THERE'S ONE THING everybody has, it's a mother. Even if we never meet them, their legacy is written in our cells. They influence our thoughts, our actions, and, for better or worse, our tastes. Our notions of what's good to eat are often straightforward reflections of what Mom told us, and especially what she served us.

But mothers don't cook forever, and too often their special dishes are forgotten. Or sometimes recipes skip a generation, and by the time the grandchildren try to pin down whatever it was that made a dish memorable, it's too late.

One woman I know wanted her Eastern Washington grandmother's old-time recipe for applesauce. Her mother didn't have it, and when she asked her grandmother, her grandmother said: "I don't remember what it was I used to do, dear, but I'll tell you what's good. Put a box of Red Hots in with the apples and your applesauce will be pink and cinnamon." It was not exactly the tip my friend was looking for.

My mother, who lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida, makes wonderful seafood gumbo. She learned to make it from her mother, but each batch is slightly different than the one before. Sometimes she uses fresh shrimp; sometimes she uses smoked oysters.

Over the years, her gumbo has remained delicious, but it has evolved into something that only slightly resembles the stuff my grandmother made. When I wanted to re-create the gumbo of my childhood, I had to make it from memory. But Mom's sense of adventure and her playfulness in the kitchen piqued my own interest in cooking.

Most professional cooks were introduced to cooking at their mothers' sides, and every chef owes something to Mom. It's no coincidence that Tim



A Dutch Baby pancake is a tasty treat for a Mother's Day breakfast or brunch.

Kelley of the Painted Table celebrates organic farmers on his menu and in his Pike Place Market tours. His "produce-driven" philosophy of menu planning stems directly from his maternal roots. Tim's mother, Barbara Kelley, is a well-known environmental activist, and Kelley was raised on vegetables harvested from the family's organic garden. "She used to make me carry my lunch in recycled bags, and it was embarrassing then, but now I appreciate it."

German-born Ludger Szmmania remembers his mother whenever he cooks certain old-world dishes for his restaurant on Magnolia Hill. "My goulash

soup was my mother's," he says. Made with melt-in-your mouth tender beef, green and red peppers, paprika and tomatoes, the hearty soup is finished with a lightning bolt of chopped caraway, lemon and garlic that elevates the lowly country-style soup to skyscraper heights.

"The Hasenpfeffer I make was also hers," Szmmania says. Braised rabbit, marinated in red-wine vinegar with nutmeg, allspice, cloves and a touch of cinnamon, it's another country dish. "The spices come from a time when the dish was made with wild hare. It was marinated in this strong mixture to hide the

Most professional cooks were
introduced to cooking
at their mothers' sides, and every chef
owes something to Mom.

gamy flavor and to preserve it a little." Now it's just for nostalgia.

One of the nicest things any cook can do for Mom is to make one of her signature dishes. Imitation is, after all, the highest form of flattery, and imitating Mom's best dish says that you like it well enough to make it part of your own repertoire. It says you always want the dishes she makes to be a part of your life. And best of all, it says that she deserves a break from kitchen duty.

Julie Hearne likes to cook for her mother every now and then. Julie, with her husband Harker, owns and operates the Hoopla! sandwich shops at Third and Marion, and at 1100 Fourth Ave. in Seattle. Her mother, Sharon Kramis, author of "Northwest Bounty," and "Berries a Country Garden Cookbook," is one of Seattle's most sought-after restaurant consultants.

Kramis grew up in Seattle, and studied for many years with the late James Beard at his home in Seaside, Ore. When her children were growing up, she taught them to appreciate the abundance of good things to eat in this part of the world.

"I've always loved to watch Mom cook," says Hearne. "And even as a kid I wanted to be able to make all the things she makes. When she taught cooking classes, I used to pretend I was sick so that I could skip school and watch her. I would sit behind her while she taught the class, and soak it up."

At Hoopla!, the menu is mostly pressed-grill sandwiches, but the Kramis influence is apparent in the flavorful combinations of sandwich fillings, such as lemon-rosemary grilled vegetables, and smoked turkey, artichokes and sun-dried

tomatoes. Kramis' good taste is also apparent in the soups and salads that Hearne serves at the Hoopla! shops.

"I love my Mom's soups, but I think my favorite thing to make for Mom is her recipe for Dutch Babies," says Julie, "with lemon juice and powdered sugar. We both just love it." Any mother would love this baby. **P**

Greg Atkinson, Canlis executive chef, is the author of "In Season" (Sasquatch, 1997). Greg Gilbert is a Seattle Times photographer.

SHARON KRAMIS' DUTCH BABIES

*(Makes 1 large puff
pancake that serves 4)*

4 tablespoons butter
3 extra-large eggs
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup milk

Topping:

4 ounces clarified butter
Juice of one lemon
1/2 cup powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a 10- or 11-inch cast-iron skillet set over low heat, melt 4 tablespoons butter.

2. In a blender, whip together eggs, flour and milk. Pour batter into skillet over melted butter, then bake 25 minutes.

3. As soon as the pancake comes out of the oven, pour on clarified butter, then sprinkle on lemon juice and powdered sugar. Serve at once.



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History professor
Richard White
goes to work on
his mother's
stories

BY ALEX TIZON

YES, EVEN BRILLIANT historians call their mothers on Mother's Day. It's the smart thing to do, and Richard White didn't win the MacArthur Foundation "genius award" for nothing.

So White, 50, a much-honored history professor at the UW, will call his mother, Sara, who lives in California, and they will have a conversation not unlike thousands of others occurring simultaneously across the land. But then Sara, 78, will ask as she's done so often lately, "So how's our book doing?"

This is where their conversation will deviate from the masses.

These two have gone where few mothers and sons have dared go together: on a journey through their family's history, now chronicled in the book "Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past." Mother and son worked on the book for five years, she as the guide through memory and landscape, he as the historian and writer.

The book can be read on many levels: as a story of a family, as a history of Irish Americans, as a meditation on the uneasy intersection of history and memory. White writes like a poet, but treats his subject with the same unsentimental scrutiny that marks all his work.

Books such as, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own" and "The Middle Ground," a finalist for the 1992 Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction, have earned him the label of "revisionist his-

Continued on page 16 ➤

BY RICHARD WHITE

Not Forgetting

ONE WOMAN'S FAMILY HISTORY GROWS INTO
A BOOK ABOUT THE IRISH-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE



Excerpted from "Remembering Ahanagan: Storytelling in a Family's Past," by Richard White. Copyright 1998 by Richard White. Published by Hill and Wang (\$24).

I ONCE THOUGHT OF MY MOTHER'S STORIES as history. I thought memory was history. Then I became a historian, and after many years I have come to realize that only careless historians confuse memory and history. History is the enemy of memory. The two stalk each other across the fields of the past, claiming the same terrain. History forges weapons from what memory has forgotten or suppressed. Few non-historians realize how many scraps a life leaves. These scraps do not necessarily form a story in and of themselves, but they are always calling stories into doubt, always challenging memories, always trailing off into forgotten places.

But there are regions of the past that only memory knows. If historians wish to go into this dense and tangled terrain, they must accept memory as a guide. In this jungle of the past, only memory knows the trails. Historians have to follow cautiously. When left alone with memories, historians treat them as detectives treat their sources: They compare them, interrogate them and match them one against the other. Memory can mislead as well as lead.

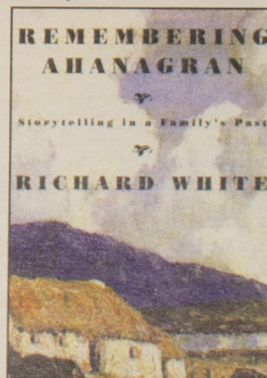
I have spent much of my adult life writing histories. My mother was proud of them because I wrote them. She tried to read them, but I think they seemed strange to her. They were what professors did. She preferred to display them. Then several years ago, she told me, half jokingly, but only half, that her life was more interesting than my latest book. Why didn't I write a book about her? I told her, not joking at all, that I would.

And so we have gone back to the stories and necessarily to my mother's memories. And, both together and separately, we have traveled to Chicago, to Dublin and County Kerry, and to Boston. I have talked to others who remembered what my mother remembered. But this time I was not just a child listening. I was an adult and a historian, and I could not take even my own mother at her word.



THE WINTER OF 1994-95 WAS one of the wettest the west of Ireland had ever seen, and when the ditch that drained the fields along

the road overflowed its banks, Gerard and Josie Walsh's house flooded for the first time in memory. The family's memory was a long one. Gerard had received the house in the town of Ahanagan from his father, Jack, who had inherited it from his parents. Gerard's grandfather had come to live in the house ➤



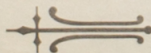


HARLEY SOLTES

Several years ago, Richard White's mother asked: Why didn't he write a book about her? So he did.

Remembering Ahanagran

In California, 7,000 miles from Ahanagran, my mother, Sara, cried over the phone to me as I sat in my kitchen in Seattle. "Ahanagran's gone," she said, collapsing the whole Irish townland into that house.



more than a century earlier when he married Ellen Carr.

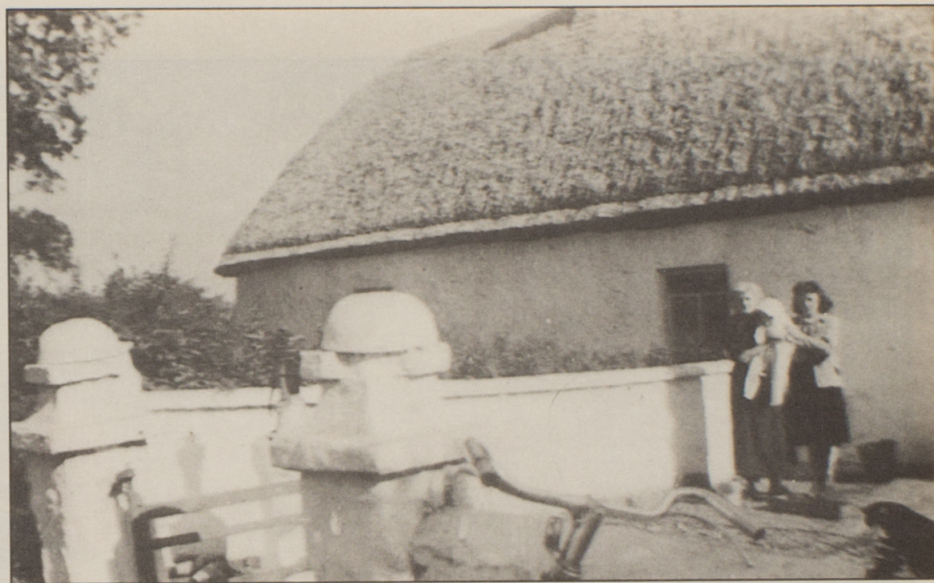
On a January night in 1995, it was not

the noise of a storm but the noise of a fire in the wall that woke Josie. She thought she was hearing her daughter Sal returning from visiting Nell, another daughter, married and living down the road toward Ballybunnion. It was near midnight, about the time she expected Sal home. Josie rose from the bed, her body as always heavy with pain. Arthritis had twisted one hand into a half fist. A knee was almost gone, and she was waiting for an artificial replacement. She had an open, ulcerated sore on one leg.

The pain and her 75 years show in her movements, but the impression she leaves is never one of pain or age. There is something transcendent about her.

Josie crossed the room and opened the bedroom door. She expected only to repeat an act performed so many times in that house, to greet a daughter returning home. But instead something happened that had never happened there before. Smoke and the heat from the flames met her. They threw her backward into the bedroom.

After that, everything is an astonishment, for, while everyone knows *what* happened, no one is quite sure *how*. Josie and her husband, Gerard, were two old people trapped in a bedroom where only one small case-ment window, narrow and at chest height, gave direct access to the outside. Gerard had got up as Josie opened the door, but the smoke almost immediately overcame him, and he passed out. Luckily, he fell forward, shutting the door against the fire. Still Josie could not rouse him, and she was too old and crippled to climb up and through that narrow window.



The family house in Ahanagran, pictured in the early 1950s. Richard White's mother was born there in 1919; her father was born there before her, and it sheltered his parents before him and his grandparents before them. The homestead burned to the ground in 1995.

That should have been the end of this tragedy. On an ordinary night, with, perhaps, another person and in a different house with a different history, that might have been true. But the particular death that she and Gerard faced did more than frighten Josie. It angered her. But how Josie got her crippled body and ulcerated leg out of that high, narrow window, no one, not even Josie, can understand. And how she made her way barefoot in the pitch dark on the pitted ground to her son John Joe's, none of her sons and daughters can understand. And how John Joe got his 6-foot-2-inch, 220-pound body back in that slit of a window, no one can understand. Avoiding death meant passing through a needle's eye that night, and somehow they did it.

In the smoke and the heat, John Joe luckily stumbled on his father passed out on the floor. In an instant, things you never imagine happen. The house in flames, you step on your father and save his life.

Gerard and Josie were saved, but initially what was lost was what mattered. The house had burned. When the firefighters arrived from Listowel, they were far too late to save the house. People were already mourning it.

Gerard's brother Johnny came across the fields from Gurtard and stood in the road crying and wailing. "Our home is gone, our home is gone." A man in his 70s watched his childhood home in flames. And although his own house stood safe not a mile away, it was still "our" home that was gone. He could not be comforted. In Chicago, his brother Bill, nearly 50 years gone from Ireland, wailed nearly the same words.

In California, 7,000 miles from Ahanagran, my mother, Sara, cried over the phone to me as I sat in my kitchen in Seattle. "Ahanagran's gone," she said, collapsing the whole Irish townland into that house. She had left that home nearly 60 years before. This was the house in which she was born.

The key to the past that my mother tried to tell me about in her stories lies in that house in Ahanagran. My mother was born there in 1919; her father was born there before her, and it sheltered his parents before him and his grandparents before them. The house had been there long before any Walsh knew it. It seems to have been there in 1841-42 when the English conducted their famous Ordnance Survey that mapped all of Ireland. It seemed, my mother says, that the house would be there forever.

The power of that house, visible to me only after it burned, had been always visible to Sara Walsh. It marked the distance she had traveled in the world, and it was the cause of her travels. Acquiring that farm and keeping it were the great collective work of my mother's family. That land was their home in a way I can never fathom; that land was a monster in a way I can understand all too well, for behind everything that happened — my grandmother's suffering, my grandfather's departure for Chicago, my mother's coming to America — was the power of that land.

After the house burned, three-quarters of a century after her own birth, Sara returned to Ahanagran. I went with her. She sat in Josie's new kitchen and talked with Josie and Gerard. Later, outside and alone, she tenderly examined the rubble of the old house as if preparing a body for burial. I watched. She gathered a few small stones and carried them with her when she returned to California. I could only wonder how so much stone could have burned so hot.



THERE ARE THREE STORIES THAT INTERLOCK. They are the stories of, first, Bridget Scanlon, the madwoman on Dowd's Road; second, Sara's own moth-



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Ireland		Dec. 26, 1919			
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RACE		EYES		PORT OF ARRIVAL	
blue		blue		STEAMSHIP	
DATE ADMITTED		STATUS OF ADMISSION		IMMIGRANT & SIGNATURE	
X		Sara Walsh		ORIGINAL	
IMMIGRANT INSPECTOR					

Sara Walsh was born in west Ireland in 1919. She emigrated to the U.S. at 16 and lived in Chicago. During World War II she married Harry White, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants, a graduate of Harvard and an officer in the U.S. Army. In Ireland she spelled her name with an "h" at the end. She changed the spelling once in the States.



Left - Sara with young Richard, who was born in May 1947. And in 1992, above, when mother and son visited Ireland.



In "Ahanagan," it's the memories of Sara Walsh (pictured here in the 1940s) that resonate, though her son does the telling.

er, Margaret Hegarty, who became Margaret Walsh; and third, Sara's uncle Tom Hegarty, who married Bridget Lynch. Each began before Sara was born. Each is about choice and consequence. Each is about what was involved in being a woman in North Kerry. Each story seems to be about love, but they are all really about land. Land was far more important than love in North Kerry.

When Sara Walsh was a girl, Bridget Scanlon lived off Dowd's Road in a house shared with her brother Eugene Scanlon, whom everyone called Euge. The Scanlons were distant relatives of the Hegartys, Sara's mother's family. They were distant enough that romance was possible between Bridget and Margaret Hegarty's brother Tom.

When Bridget Scanlon fell in love with Tom Hegarty, property eventually became an issue. But

for the relationship to get so far as property meant that Tom must have given her some encouragement. And when, to her at least, marriage seemed a possibility, property intruded. Tom had a farm to maintain and sisters to marry off. He needed to marry a woman who would bring a fortune, as a dowry was called. His bride's dowry would help improve the farm, and part of it would probably benefit his sisters by giving them a start on fortunes of their own. People with a farm could not risk it on love. A woman might be pretty and capable, but if, like Bridget Scanlon, she had no fortune, she faced desperate choices. She could stay and live a celibate life, dependent on her father and, after him, her brothers. She could endure demoralizing poverty. She could face the *drochshaol*, the bad life. Or she could choose America. What was certain was that a man with a farm

would never allow his son to marry a woman who brought no dowry. Love would always yield to a fortune. This remained true into Sara's generation.

Bridget Scanlon could never command a dowry. Bridget Scanlon could only bring herself, and in another time and place herself might have been enough, for she was a brown-haired, good-looking country girl. But Bridget Scanlon was poor, and she must have seen her chance in life disappearing as Thomas (as everyone but Bridget knew he would) chose a fortune over her love. Maybe Tom Hegarty loved her. She certainly loved him. Bridget's love came only to bitter feelings between the Scanlons and Hegartys.

Tom married another Bridget, Bridget Lynch, as anyone who thought about it knew he must. The

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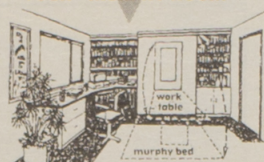
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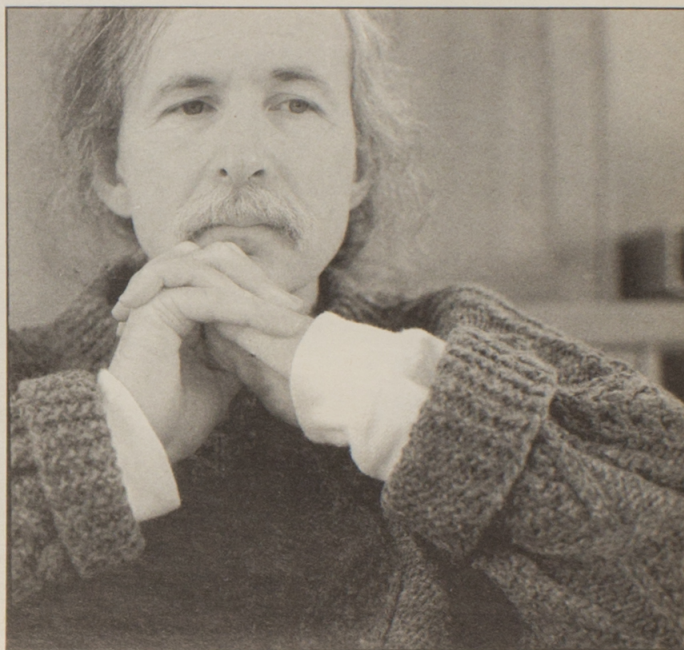
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One woman's family history



"The stance was that if I couldn't write honestly about my family, I lose the authority to write honestly about anybody's family," White said.

Continued from page 12

torian," but he says he tells history as it happened rather than how certain people would like to think it happened. Stripped of hero-making romance, history can bare unpleasant truths.

Even a mother's history.

Tensions arose between mother and son during the writing of their book. On many points of the story, her memory painted one picture while his research painted another. Sometimes he revealed things she didn't want revealed. Other times they settled on a very complex blending of versions.

Ahanagran is the name of the rural town in Ireland where Sara was born in 1919. The book essentially tells her story — her migration from Ireland to America and then back to Ireland — but embodies the larger story of Irish-American immigration with all its contradictions. The struggling Irish came to America, a land where fortunes could be made, in order to live in Ireland.

"We made a deal," White said. "We agreed that I'd write the book, and she'd get to say 'Yes' or 'No' to publishing it. But she wouldn't get to edit it. She agreed to that. 'Til the very end, I wasn't sure what she was going to say. She sat on it for about two weeks. Then she said, 'OK, go ahead.' But she's very clear there are

parts she would just as soon leave out."

Those parts include stories of a grandfather who went to prison, and another grandfather who immigrated illegally.

"The stance was that if I couldn't write honestly about my family, I lose the authority to write honestly about anybody's family," White said.

Through it all, White says he and his mother have become closer than ever. Lately, they've been talking on the phone almost every day. They talk about family. They talk about his impending move from the UW to Stanford University in the fall.

White did his graduate work at the UW in the 1970s, and has been teaching there since 1990. A gifted teacher and scholar, he's one of the most illustrious professors in the school of humanities. In 1995, he was given a \$295,000 no-strings-attached "genius award" from the MacArthur Foundation, one of a long string of honors he's collected over the years.

He says he'll miss Seattle, but the move will bring him to a great university and closer to his mother. Maybe next Mother's Day, he'll drive over instead of calling.

Alex Tizon is a reporter for the Seattle Times.