

# RIVER FALLS JOURNAL

Thursday, February 25, 2010

River Falls, Wisconsin

\$1.25

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## A Bloom of many colors

'Animals and people have lost a fine friend'

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN  
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River Falls is mourning the loss of a beloved family man, veterinarian, civic servant, gentle leader, compassionate caregiver, local columnist, avid outdoorsman, scientist, and all-around community man, Dr. Thomas "Tom" Bloom, 62.

Bloom died around 4:30 p.m. Saturday in a tree-cutting accident, prompting an outpouring of condolences, fond sentiments and an overwhelming appreciation for all he did.

His brother Denny said the best determination of "what happened" is that Bloom was felling an oak tree that started to fall wrong; he may have slipped trying

to get out of its way. Neighbors leaving via a shared driveway saw Bloom pinned and phoned authorities. The medical examiner told his family that death had been instantaneous.

A 32-year doctor of veterinary medicine, Bloom started Kinnick Veterinary Service in 1994, first practicing from a barn on his town of Kinnickinnic property. A few years later, he bought the familiar North Main Street property and built an office there.

Bloom touched the lives of many animals and their caretakers. He was very well known for kindly delivering the same tough-love speech to scores of human clients: "Your (insert pet name) weighs X, but I'd like to see that at X" (insert ideal number much lower than pet's actual weight).

Denny said Tom's family will bring in another vet to serve the practice, then see how things go.

Tom also led the Arrowhead Veterinary Association, loved operating his ham radio, support-

ed the local humane society, and volunteered at the Minnesota Raptor Center.

Bloom educated the community through an RFC-TV show called "At the Vet" and years of semi-regular columns in the Journal about everything from canine and feline surgery to tick control and feeding.

He told of spleens, hearts, kidneys, technology, gum disease, preventive care, obesity, disease, hypothermia, medications and more. Bloom told amazing stories of survival, precarious procedures, unconditional love, and concern for pet owners.

He shared a picture of what Gorilla Glue — apparently a desired snack — looks like after being inside a canine's stomach. He managed to describe explicitly detailed and graphic emergency surgeries but always in an appropriate, professional way.

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### Services set for Tom Bloom

- Funeral: 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 24, Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Ave., St. Paul.
- Interment: 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at Pleasant Valley Cemetery, County Road J at County Road W, town of Kinnickinnic.
- Shiva: 7 p.m. Wednesday at Shalom Home East, 740 Kay Ave., St. Paul.
- Memorial: 7 p.m. Thursday at Kinnickinnic Town Hall, County Road J at County Road JJ, town of Kinnickinnic.
- Cards: Please send to 325 Sherwood Forest Road/River Falls, WI 54022.
- In lieu of flowers: Memorials preferred to Haitian Relief Services, c/o River Falls Rotary Club, check payable to RF Rotary and mailed to P.O. Box 311/River Falls, WI 54022; or, donations to the giver's favorite charity.



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
Tom Bloom and his beloved old companion, Jergen. He later wrote a poignant column in the Journal about saying farewell to the dog.

## 'Things come out of my head'

Remembering John Swenson: Word for word, man of letters

BY PHIL PFUEHLER  
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John Swenson was a town of Kinnickinnic farmer for decades, but many people will recall that his named appeared often on the Journal's editorial pages.

Swenson, who died last week at age 83, was a prolific letter writer as well as a self-published author.

His four books were "My Navy Experience: 1943-1946;" "Just Looking out the Back Door;" "Stuff;" and "The Crew." Copies of each can be checked out at the River Falls Public Library.

Mary Murphy served briefly with Swenson when they were elected to the Kinnickinnic Town Board.

"John was a good teacher and mentor," she said. "I admired his sense of public

duty and how he understood the importance of participating in the democratic process.

"We all know he was full of interesting opinions and he researched them quite well. He will be missed as a good citizen in our community."

Swenson's writing was salty, practical, cranky, philosophical, provocative and, yes, not always easy to follow or agree with.

Agree or disagree didn't matter. Daughter Toni Christiansen, a Westside first grade teacher, said her dad "wanted to get people to think."

"That was his goal," she said. "He would even take the opposite point of view from what he sometimes believed, just for the sake of discussion."

Here are John Swenson letter excerpts that appeared over time in the Journal:

■ Can one improve a product so much it is no longer desirable or less useful? Consider the tomato — once so



John and Ardie Swenson at a grandson's wedding years ago at Coachman's Bar & Grill in Baldwin. While he retired from farming in 1989, Swenson worked in mid-life as a Sperry Univac engineering technician and did construction. Son Bob said his dad's favorite job was for the U.S. government when he drove a truck through the Midwest and followed high-altitude balloons equipped with sensitive data-gathering transmitters.

beautiful, juicy and tasty. Now you can play catch with them and ship them in bulk containers without fear of damag-

ing their newly designed skins...Did we go too far?  
■ The Cold War is over and the USA is now the largest arms dealer in the world! We are dispensing destruction to 70% of the nations, one of which could then become our worst enemy. This means one third of our G.N.P. is based upon keeping the hate parade going between ethnic groups of states in constant

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DEBBIE GRIFFIN PHOTOS  
Two UW-River Falls business management students installed a voluntary-use breathalyzer inside Bo's 'N Mine last week as a means of helping people determine if they've consumed too much alcohol to drive safely. Left to right: Alex Petersen, Bo's 'N Mine owner Cedric Ellingson and Rory Sampair.

## Blow to know

Voluntary breathalyzer seems to be catching on

BY DEBBIE GRIFFIN  
dgriffin@rivertowns.net

For \$1, three seconds, and a bit of breath, restaurant and bar patrons at Bo's 'N Mine, 110 S. Main St., can tell if they've had a few too many to drive safely.

Two enterprising UW-River Falls business management students, junior Rory Sampair and senior Alex Petersen, hatched the idea of installing a voluntary-use breathalyzer machine inside Bo's. Each works three days a week bartending there.

Bo's owner, Cedric Ellingson, supports the effort and said about the machine's readings, "It's a handy piece of information to have."

Sampair said the notion started after a bad experience one night. He thought he was OK to drive but was actually just over the legal blood-alcohol limit and ended up getting a DUI.

"It's embarrassing, it's humiliating and it's expensive," he said of the drunk driving incident.

So he went shopping online for a personal-use machine. When he came across the commercial-grade AlcoScan Bill/Coin-Op Breathalyzer, he and Petersen began talking.

Soon they formed Sampair & Petersen, LLC, and bought one of the \$2,500 machines.

The two say it went into



Bo's on Feb. 16 and required 12 screws for installation. Two and a half days later, 140 people had used the machine.

Sampair said, "I haven't had a single negative comment."

Ellingson and the young bartenders say about 85% of Bo's clientele walk to and from their establishment. But at least three patrons who used the machine, decided not to drive after seeing their result.

The breathalyzer meets standards of the Department of Transportation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Food and Drug Administration. Its makers guarantee results to be accurate within .01, and patrons are advised to wait until 20 minutes after their last drink to do the test.

"This is the newest technology as far as a breathalyzer," said Sampair.

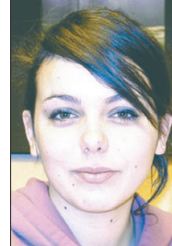
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2nd Class Mailed 02/24/10



**Education**  
International high school student Camelia Amour shares a comparison of teenage life in River Falls and her native country of France.  
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**Business**  
River Falls was without a bike shop for only a few weeks. A new one closely linked to The Route is set to open.  
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