



Jess (left) and Ralph Walter up close and personal.

One drawback to Eastern's recent athletic success is that it has allowed alumni Jess and Ralph Walter to write an ongoing (and somewhat ribald) series in *The Spokesman-Review* about their road trips with the basketball team to the first round of the NCAA Tournament in Kansas City and the football team to its I-AA football playoff game in Cheney.

Ralph Walter attended EWU from 1987 to 1991, where he was the sports editor of *The Easterner* and the architect of its nationally renowned coverage of the fictitious EWU baseball team. He graduated with a degree in journalism and worked as a sports writer in Victorville, Calif., and at *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane, before becoming an award-winning page designer. He currently is the deputy design editor of *The Spokesman-Review* and a freelance sports writer for the Associated Press. An avid golfer and basketball player, Ralph lives in Spokane.

Jess Walter majored in journalism and minored in English at EWU, where he was a humor columnist for *The Easterner*. After graduating in 1987, he worked as a reporter for eight years at *The Spokesman-Review*. He left in 1995 to write his first book,

Every Knee Shall Bow: The Truth and Tragedy of Ruby Ridge and the Randy Weaver Family, which was made into a miniseries for CBS. In all, he is the author of two nonfiction books, three novels and dozens of stories, essays and screenplays. His books are published in eight languages and among them are a *New York Times* notable book of the year and a finalist

for a PEN Center literary award. His latest novel, *Citizen Vince*, will be released in April. He lives in Spokane with his family.

Some time ago, we asked Jess and Ralph to interview each other for *Perspective*. (Editor's note: *What were we thinking?*) Four months after their deadline passed, we received in the mail a "donation" of two quarters and a breath mint, and a tape, a full transcript of which follows:

Perspective (Jess Walter): Okay, Ralph. I'll interview you first. So, what do you remember about your time at Eastern?

Ralph Walter: The state hospital? I'm really not supposed to talk about that.

Perspective: No. The University. The other place Mom and Dad sent you for seven years. Let's talk about your journalism professors



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Jess and Ralph Walter, Alumni Who Make Us:

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at EWU, Bill Stimson and Steve Blewett. What do you remember about those guys?

Ralph: Oh, you know what ... I'm not allowed to mention that I took classes from them. They got a court order.

Perspective: Okay ... Let's just look at your transcripts ... Wait, is this right? You took only three classes in seven years. Twelve credits? What the hell's the matter with you? What did you do with the money Mom and Dad gave you for college?

Ralph: College? No no. *Collagen*. I needed money for *collagen*. Look at my lips. See how full they are. Don't I look like Angelina Jolie with a goatee?

Perspective: Let's change the subject. You're currently the deputy design editor at *The Spokesman-Review* newspaper. What is that, exactly?

Ralph: Well, it's a collection of news, information and sports printed on thin paper and folded up into—

Perspective: I know what a *newspaper* is, (expletive deleted). I'm asking what the deputy design editor does.

Ralph: Oh, well, I get up early and ride around on a bicycle throwing papers on people's porches—

Perspective: That's a paper route. Are you telling me you're a (expletive deleted) paperboy?

Ralph: Paper man, my friend. Behold – the paper *man*!

Perspective: Oh, for God's sake. Pull up your pants! Okay, let's talk sports. In recent years, you've become a committed Eastern fan.

Ralph: I thought we weren't going to talk about the hospital.

Perspective: In the columns we've written about our EWU road trips, you are portrayed as a hard-drinking, skirt-chasing buffoon. Why would such an intelligent, thoughtful young man, a rising star in the world of newspaper design, allow himself to be the butt of so many jokes?

Ralph: Ha! You said butt.

Perspective: I'm serious. What do you say to people who feel that your sophomoric drinking humor reinforces the worst stereotype of the state college experience?

Ralph: Remember before, when you said butt? That was funny. Say it again.

Perspective: Ralph, this is a chance to show your serious side, the work you do with various charities, your interest in politics. Isn't there anything you want to say?

Ralph: Butt butt butt.

Jess: Here. You interview me now.

Perspective: Okay. How do you turn this on?

Jess: What?

Perspective: This tape player. How do you know if it's on?

Jess: Give that to me.

Perspective: Ah! Let go! Aah! Bad touch! Bad touch!

Jess: It's on. Now ask me some questions.

Perspective: I really don't think it's on. It's not doing anything.

Jess: No, look. The little wheels are turning. That means it's on.

Perspective: Huh, well look at that. That's amazing. How do they do that? Are there tiny mice in there?

Jess: Come on, Ralph. Ask me some questions. Here, I've prepared a list. Make sure you mention my awards and stuff so I look smart *and* humble. Here, read this review from *The London Times* and I'll pretend like I don't want to talk about it. Okay?

Perspective: Testing. Testing. One, two. No, I really don't think it's on.

Jess: I'll answer the first question in French and afterward, you just laugh and go on to the next question.

Perspective: Testing. Testing. *Pour some su-gar on me-e-e-e!*

Jess: Will you please stop singing and ask me some questions! Ask me number 26; it's a two-part question about the influences in my work. These names are pronounced Sar-truh and Cam-ooo.

Perspective: *Donobody gotto Mr. Robotto.*

Jess: At least ask about my favorite English and creative writing professors at EWU, (Don) Wall and (John) Keeble and (Ursula) Hegi.

Perspective: *I'm the happeee-est girl in the who-o-ole USA!*

Jess: Damn it, Ralph! Ask me something before we run out of—

