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Researchers find carriers of astronomical extinction line in presolar grains

BY TONY FITZPATRICK

A collaborative team of researchers has discovered what turns the lights out from space. Using sophisticated features on a transmission electron microscope, John F. Bradley, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Geophysics and Planetary Physics at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, has discovered that organic carbon and amorphous silicates in interstellar grains embedded within interplanetary dust particles (IDPs) are the carriers of the astronomical 2175 Å extinction line. Discovered by astronomers more than 40 years ago, the astronomical extinction line occurs at a wavelength of 2175 Angstroms, blocking light from stars reaching Earth due to the absorption of light by dust in the interstellar medium. One Angstrom (Å) is one-hundred millionth of a centimeter. Bradley analyzed interstellar grains from WUSTL's Laboratory for Space Sciences to make the discovery.

Last year, Frank Stadermann, Ph.D., senior research scientist in physics, and Christine Floss, Ph.D., senior research scientist in earth and planetary sciences and physics, both in Arts & Sciences, reported that some grains in leadership positions, including many years of service on the Board of Trustees and national councils. Both have not only contributed significantly to specific University projects, but also have been effective in inspiring funding-raising for many other projects. Both have made generous leadership gifts to the campaign.

Donnell is the retired chairman of the Board of McDonnell Douglas Corp. and currently is a director of The Boeing Co. and Zoltek Companies Inc. He was at the helm of McDonnell Douglas during the merger with Boeing, creating the nation's largest aerospace company. He is a former chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. In 2004, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Now a Life Trustee, McDonnell joined the WUSTL Board of Trustees in 1976 and served as chairman from 1999-2004; he now serves as vice chair. He and his wife, Anne, are Life Danforth Circle members of the Eliot Society. Other significant WUSTL leadership positions include serving as a member of the Arts & Sciences National Councils belonging to and found as a serving as a member of the International Advisory Council for Asia; serving on the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Now a Life Trustee, McDonnell is a board member of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center and co-chair of the committee on capital formation for the Coalition for Plant and Life Sciences. His passion extends also to the St. Louis Science Center, where he is a Life Trustee and past chairman of its board of directors.

Students end hunger strike; sit-in continues

On April 16, Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton walked briefly with the Student Worker Alliance protestors to reiterate that he is prepared to meet with them after they discontinue their sit-in at South Brookings Hall. — as previously agreed. He also told the protestors that the University has begun to implement its plan to address the issues they have raised and hoped they would become part of this process. This process started April 19 with an initial meeting of University employees who have responsibility for working with service contractors. On April 16, Wrighton met directly with four student representatives for the students conducting the sit-in at South Brookings Hall and Brookings Quadrangle.

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Fat may affect electrical impulses in brain, heart

By Gwen Ericson

Fatty molecules may modu- lize characteristics of nerve and heart cells by regulating the properties of key cell pores, according to School of Medicine research.

The findings suggest a novel mechanism in which dietary fat can attach directly to proteins, regulate bio-electricity. This can affect the performance of nerve and heart cells, with potentially broad-ranging health implications.

The researchers report in the April 24 issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that the proteins in specific electrical- ly responsive cell pores — voltage-sensitive sodium channels — can bind to molecules of palmitate. Palmitate is a saturated fatty acid previously linked to hardening of the arteries and obesity and is a common fat in unhealthy diets.

"In effect, the attachment of palmitate makes these potassium channels, called Kv1.1 channels, open more easily, and this can influence the transmission of electrical impulses among cells and the contraction of heart muscle," said senior author Richard Gross, M.D., Ph.D., professor of medicine, of chemistry in Arts & Sciences and of molecular biology.

See Impulses, Page 6

See Sit-in, Page 6

See Award, Page 6

Husband-and-wife research team Frank Stadermann, Ph.D., and Christine Floss, Ph.D., examine the NanoSIMS in Compton Hall; their recent discovery was reported in a recent issue of Science. Since 2001, discoveries using the NanoSIMS at WUSTL have appeared in five papers published in that journal. Collaborators on the discovery include...
Well to be honored in symposium today

The Department of Art History & Archaeology in Arts & Sciences will present "Exploring the History of Art," a symposium honoring Mark S. Weil, Ph.D., at 2:30 p.m. today in the Women's Building.

William Wellman, Diamond Le Proffessor for Collaboration in the Arts as well as director of the Sam Fox Arts Center and Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, is retiring in June. He has been associated with the University for 47 years, earning an undergraduate degree in art history & archaeology in 1961 and joining the faculty (after earning a doctorate at Columbia University in 1968. The symposium will open with remarks from Chancellor Mark S. Wainwright and Edward S. Macias, Ph.D., executive vice chancellor of Arts & Sciences and the Barbara and David Thomas Professor in Arts & Sciences. An introduction will then be made by William E. Wallace, Ph.D., the Barbra Murphy Bryant Distinguished Professor and chair of art history & archaeology.

"The presenters — all former students and colleagues of Wellman — include:

• David Butler, Ph.D., director of the Department of Art at Wichita State University;

• C.D. Dickerson, a doctoral candidate in New York University;

• Felicia Else, Ph.D., assistant professor of art history at George Washington University;

• Jennifer Urdaneta-Consejero, Ph.D., curator of prints, drawings and photography for the Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM);

• Lisa Paul, Ph.D., assistant professor at Southern Methodist University; and

• Carol Purtle, Ph.D., professor at the University of Memphis.

Social work school to host festival

By JESSICA MARTIN

From traditional foods to lively performances by artists from various countries at the George Washington University, a taste of the homelands at the 11th annual International Festival will be served from noon-9 p.m. today in Brown Hall.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will begin with an international banquet and art exhibition from 5-7:30 p.m., followed by the festival in Brown Hall Lounge. This year’s theme is “Crossroads: Celebrating Each Other and the Simplicity of Life.”

The festival is dedicated to the students and community at large, who will have the opportunity to celebrate each other and the similarities they share, as well as observing and accepting differences.

The entertainment, which includes dance, song and poetry from numerous countries, will start at 7:30 p.m. in Brown Hall Room 101.

For more information and to reserve a ticket to the cultural performances, e-mail the first-year social work student Shihan Shukar at infestival@wumail.wustl.edu.

Weil's native St. Louis, has been actively involved in both the university and greater St. Louis communities. He has chaired the university’s art history & archaeology for a total of 10 years and served two terms as a SLAM trustee. In 1998, he was appointed director of the Kemper Art Museum (then the Washington University Gallery of Art) and was named director of the Sam Fox Arts Center at its inception the following year. Weil's scholarship and teaching are often intertwined with his research interests, which include Italian Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture, and art connoisseurship. Publications include important contributions to the study of 16th- and 17th-century art history, notably The History and Descriptions of the Painters St. Angelo (1974). His numerous articles have appeared in The Journal of Garden History, the Bulletin of the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the University of St. Louis Encyclopedia. Weil's scholarly passion for the study of works of art is reflected both in his teaching, scholarship and connoisseurship and in his own curatorial activities. In 1982-83 he chaired the University's Brooklyn Planning Committee, for which he organized a symposium and an exhibition on Brooklyn theater and stage design, which was reviewed and produced an opera (Handel's Orlando, directed by renowned conductor Nicholas McGegan). In 1989, Weil co-curated (with Roger Wood) an exhibition of master drawings from the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Mo. In 1997, he collaborated with Barbara Burns and Jan Rasmussen on SLAM's exhibition and catalog Men, Women, and God: German Renaissance Prints From St. Louis Collections.

"Exploring the History of Art is free and open to the public. A reception will begin at 5 p.m.

For more information, call 955-9347.

March of Dimes WalkAmerica slated for April 30

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes supports programs of research, community services, education and advocacy to save babies. In 2003, it launched a multi-year campaign to address the increasing rate of prematurity.

For more information or to register for the walk, go to cdc.gov/walking or call Kristin Emahiser at 646-0049.

Wellman has been an active participant in the March of Dimes' fund-raiser and brings together from all neighborhoods and all walks of life to together to help fund the foundation's mission. The March of Dimes has targeted raising $1 million from the St. Louis event.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in the event. Registration begins at 9 a.m., and the walk begins at 9 a.m. Both short and long routes are available to accommodate all walkers.

After walk activities include a stroller parade, diaper derby, baby photo contest, sack race, tug-o-war, three-legged race, washers and washers competitions, and an over-all banner race.

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Nerve-cell development explained by two theories

BY MICHAEL C. PIRZUF

Our system in the fruit fly lets us look at these factors at the level of individual cells, but even at that level the harder you push, the more you uncover the complexity that underlies these developmental systems.

PAUL H. TAGHERT

For many years, two schools of thought have dominated neurobiologists' theories about how nerve cells develop specialized traits that allow the assembly of a mature brain.

One theory suggests that master regulators trigger the development of specialized traits in cells found across wide regions of the brain. The other theory attributes the development of specialized traits to interactions between many local factors.

In a new study of developing fruit fly brain cells, scientists at Washington University in St. Louis and Harvard universities showed that both models are valid and active. Surprisingly, they both appear to operate within single developing cells.

By learning more about the most basic mechanisms that regulate the creation of specialized cells, scientists hope to gain new insights into developmental disorders that damage that tissue.

"We really have to consider individual molecular properties and the complexity of the mechanisms that produce them," said Paul H. Taghert, Ph.D., professor of anatomy and of neurobiology. "Our system in the fruit fly lets us look at these factors at the level of individual cells, but even at that level the harder you push, the more you uncover the complexity that underlies these developmental systems."

Specialization of nerve cells is essential to healthy nervous system function. All neurons have certain properties in common, but as scientists have focused more closely on individual nerve cells, many variations have emerged.

Some cell types have arms that change in number and length with development, while other cells have few branches, but some of them have quite elaborate branching patterns," Taghert said. "This may help us understand the differences between these different types of nerve cells in the nuclei of retinotransmitters that they emit, for example — also vary tremendously.

Other variations include changes in the cell membrane responsiveness to stimulation and in the time period when brain cells are quiet and active. Taghert estimates that the fly brain contains several hundred different subtypes of nerve cells and guesses that the human brain may contain thousands.

Through studies of a fruit fly brain region containing five specialized cell types, Taghert and his colleagues showed that developmental factors could participate in the more intricate interactions of neurodevelopment.

In this way, local, many different sets of regulatory compounds interact in a nerve cell's nucleus to switch specialized traits on and off. The cells that are turned on and off are determined by which combinations of development factors are present in the cell.

But scientists also found evidence that some of the same developmental factors they study in fruit flies were producing a similar model of neurodevelopment, usually dictating the creation of the same specialized traits in many different cells across a wide region of the brain regardless of their interaction with other developmental factors.

"These mice allow us to isolate the complexity that underlies these developmen-

A diverse appeal

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

April 22, 2005

School of Medicine Update

Model offers insights into diabetic heart disease

BY GWYN ERICSON

In mice whose heart muscles take up high amounts of fat, the heart fills abnormally after each contraction, according to a study using a new model, many different sets of regulatory compounds interact in a nerve cell's nucleus to switch specialized traits on and off. The cells that are turned on and off are determined by which combinations of developmental factors are present in the cell.

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Tibetan monks to bring music, dance to Edison

BY LAM OTTEN

Monks from Tibet's legendary Drepung Loseling Monastery will present the Arts of Tibet: Sacred Music, Sacred Dance at 4 p.m. April 29-30 at Edison Theatre. The monks also will present an all-day event as part of the ongoing arms event for young people series at 11 a.m. April 30.

First launched in 1988, Sacred Music, Sacred Dance is co-sponsored by Richard Gere Productions Inc., with the blessings of the Dalai Lama. It features a dozen monks performing nine pieces believed to generate emer- gence conducive to inner peace andphysical balance. The performance highlights multilingual singing, in which the monks simultaneously intone three notes of a chord, as well as traditional Tibetan instruments such as 10-foot-long dungchen, drums, bells, cymbals and gong horns. Rich brocade costumes and masked dances, such as the "Dance of the Sacred Snow Lion," add to the splendor. The Drepung Loseling monks also have performed at festivals, universities and around the country, including such prestigious venues as the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. They have performed with artists such as Paul Simon, Sheryl Crow, Michael Stipe, Patti Smith, Natalie Merchant and the Beastie Boys, as well as in the premiere and low-profile presentations of Philip Glass Academy--nominated score for Martin Scorsese's film Kundun (1997).

The Drepung Loseling monks are also featured on the Golden Globe-nominated soundtrack for "Kundun." They have performed on "Seven Years in Tibet" (1997) starring Brad Pitt, as well as in their own recordings, the best-selling Sacred Tibetan Temple Music (1983) and Sacred Tibetan Dance Music (1993).

The Drepung Loseling Monastery was established near Lhasa, Tibet, in 1416 and was especially close to the Dalai Lama traditions: the Second Dalai Lama made his residence there in 1494, and subsequent incarnations maintained the link. In 1959, after China's invasion of Tibet, the monks re-established the monastery in Karnataka State, South India. In 1991, they also established a North American monastery, the Drepung Loseling Insti-

Mandala Sand Painting exhibit

In conjunction with their Edison Theatre performances, the Drepung Loseling monks will be resident at the Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM) April 26-May 1 for an exhibition/demonstration of "Sacred Art: The Mandala," a unique cultural, didactic, psycho- kalyh, or painting with col- or sand. (The term literally means "sand of colored powders.")

Mandala Sand Painting: The Architecture of Enlightenment will open with a ceremony at noon April 30 and will continue daily through April 30. A closing ceremony will be held at 2 p.m. May 1.

For more information, call SLAM at 721-4072.

Exhibits

Inside the Veil: Visions of Women's Health in Contemporary Art, Through April 29, Edison Art Museum. 930-4323.

Film

Saturday, April 30

Nov. Film & Media Studies Children's Film Symposium Series: "Big Movie and 'The Powerpuff Girls': Action, 0-7:44 pm., panel morn, Kids Unlimited on the humanities and the program in cinema studies. Brown Hall, Rm. 105. 935-5676.

Lectures

Friday, April 22


Children's Film Symposium • Evolving the Skeleton • Mind-Body Problem

Submission of "University Events" Subm it "University Events" Barn to determine specific of the request via: (1) web — submit form online via:

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Six Seconds in Charlack to debut April 28

By LIAM OTTEN

For St. Louis commuters, the small, inner-city suburb of Charlack, Mo., passes in the blink of an eye, its borders marked by a pair of signs set only a few hundred yards apart along Interstate 170.

Yet as Brian Golden's Six Seconds in Charlack reminds us, sometimes an instant is enough to change a life.

The drama — winner of the University's 2004 A.E. Hotchner Playwriting Competition — will be presented by the Performing Arts Department in Arts & Sciences April 28-May 1 in the A.E. Hotchner Studio Theatre. Performances will begin at 8 p.m. nightly at 30 and 2 p.m. April 30-May 1.

Six Seconds in Charlack focuses on Bard (junior Chasey Thomp- sons), a lapsed writer who has quit the local newspaper, and his girlfriend Penny (sophomore Lauren Dusky), a nurse who has encouraged Bard to join her father's law firm.

Yet Bard remains haunted by the ghost of Candy (senior Christena Doggrell), whose tragic story gradually unfurls in a series of short, dreamlike scenes that jump backward and forward in time.

"It's a play about someone trying to remember why they're alive," said Golden, a 2004 WUSTL graduate. "Bard is running from something, but his memories — repurposed through this wonderful, un- touchable woman — won't let him sleep at night."

The biennial Hotchner competition — endowed by alumnus, novelist and playwright A.E. Hotchner — is open to all WUSTL undergraduate and graduate students. Winning plays are selected by blind jury and undergo a year-long development process before debuting the following spring in full university production.

Director Jeffrey S. Matthews, senior artist-in-residence, ex- plained that the development process "really gives playwrights the space to work with their plays. There's a lot of support, and the process gives playwrights visibility."

In addition to debuting the following spring in the Hotchner Studio Theatre, Bard is running from some- thing, but his memories — repurposed through this wonderful, un- touchable woman — won't let him sleep at night.

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We think the attached palmitate molecule causes a defect in the closing machinery of the Kvl.1 channel because the palmitate has a different shape," Gross said. "This shape boosts the membrane-packing, changing the movement of the channel protein so that it is no longer able to open or close.

The researchers identified the specific site or amino acid in the Kvl.1 protein units that palmitate most often links to. They observed that a short sequence of amino acids on either side of the attachment site is found in several other proteins as well, arguing for an evolutionarily conserved function for this amino acid sequence. They also found that no acidic residue was adjacent to the attachment site, which showed that palmitate is not attached to fatty acids and can lead to an increase in alterations in the protein structure, not only in Kvl.1, but also in dozens or even hundreds of other proteins that possibly explain some of the many shapes of damage that result from having too much of a fatty acid burden," Gross said. "It's possible that's nature sending us a message, it's a warning, it's a call for help."

"We are the first to see that palmitate, or fatty acids, can be very dangerous to the cell and can cause damage to the cell if not properly handled," Stadermann said. "The cell needs fatty acids to function properly, but too much of it can be harmful. This is a new type of damage that we can identify and study."

"If we can understand the mechanism of this damage, we can develop new ways to prevent it or treat it," Stadermann said. "Our findings could lead to new treatments for diseases that are caused by an overload of fatty acids, such as obesity, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease."

"The work done by Stadermann and his team is groundbreaking," Gross said. "They have identified a new mechanism for how fatty acids can damage cells, and this could lead to new treatments for a variety of diseases."

"This is a major step forward in understanding how fatty acids can affect the cell," Stadermann said. "We are now able to study this process in detail, which could lead to new treatments for a variety of diseases."
School of Law to present alumni awards

BY JESSICA MARTIN

The School of Law will celebrate the outstanding achievements of six individuals today at its annual Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner at the Ritz-Carlton.

The awarding of the awards will be done Jan 4, followed by the reception and dinner. The alumni award recipients are Steven N. Rapaport, Barry S. Schleph and Ronald G. L. Martinez. Schleph and Linda A. Martinez will be presented Outstanding Young Law Alumni Awards.

Barry S. Schleph will be being recognized for his outstanding career accomplishments and contributions to the University community. He is a member of the law school’s national council and past chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Schleph has been an active participant in the development of bankruptcy law and speaks at national conferences each year. He has ruled on many high-profile cases, including joint ventures and syndications. Since 2000, Schleph has spent the majority of his time developing real estate projects.

In addition to his practice, Schleph served as an adjunct professor in the School of Law’s Graduate Tax Program from 1985-1995, teaching selected topics in the area of taxation. He is past president of Am. High, a children’s summer education program, and is responsible for the formation of the Sunnyside Scholars Foundation.

Schleph chairs the Eliot Society committee at the law school and serves as a member of the national council and sits on the advisory board for the Center for International Studies.

Martinez is being recognized for his extensive professional and civic endeavors. As a partner with Bryan Cave LLP in St. Louis, he focuses on development and related federal, state and local incentives. These include multiple public, private and public/private partnerships for public facilities, and real estate and infrastructure projects.

She has been recognized as the 2004 Woman of the Year by the St. Louis Daily Record, as a TCWA Special Mention Award winner, and as one of the St. Louis Business Journal 100 Leaders for the Millennium. Martinez has also been included in the Business Journal’s annual list of community and influential leaders since 2001.

American Indian Awareness Week

Notables

Association of Women Faculty bestows awards

BY ANDY CLENDENEN

The Association of Women Faculty presented its annual Grad- uate Student Awards to Michele Joan Biddle and Robert Schlarb on April 14 in the Mildred Lane Kirkland Center.

The award was designed to recognize outstanding students in their second year of graduate study or beyond who demonstrate scholarly excellence and leadership potential.

Biddle is a fourth-year grad- uate student in the Evolution, Biology and Population Program of the Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences. Jonathan R. Lisen, Ph.D., pro- fessor of biology in Arts & Sciences, nominated Johnson, writing that her research is "the forefront of evolutionary biology."

Biddle’s work addresses the role that habitat structure plays in determining the social organiza- tion of a species. In addition to her qualifications as a research scholar, the selection committee for the award was impressed by her active efforts to recruit women to the graduate program in biology and to involve the fac- ulty in such efforts.

Schlarb is in his final year of study in the doctoral program of the Department of Economics in Arts & Sciences.

Her work centers on macroeconomic fluctuations in the labor market, such as unemployment and personal contracts.

He has been an active participant in top academic conferences and is a member of the American Econom- ic Association Committee on the Status of Women in the Eco- nomics Profession. Steven Fazuri, Ph.D., profes- sor and chair of economics, and James Medoff, Ph.D., assistant professor of economics, nominat- ed Schlarb in a letter that she is an outstanding teacher and a leader among her fellow graduate students.

For more information, go online to arts.wustl.edu/~awf.

Obituary

Popkin, professor emeritus of philosophy

By NICK SHOISSON

Richard H. Popkin, Ph.D., pro- fessor emeritus of philosophy in Arts & Sciences, died Thursday, April 14, 2005 in Santa Monica, Calif., of emphysema complic- ations. He was 81.

Popkin was appointed as a vis- iting professor at the University in 1972 and became a regular mem- ber of the Department of Philo- sophy in 1973. He earned a doc- torate from Columbia University in 1950 with a dissertation titled "The Neo-Intuitionist Theory of Mathematical Logic."

Among his many honors, Popkin was the Clark Professor at the University in 1990-91, University of California Los Angeles, the Woodrow Professor at History Research University, was awarded the Nicholas Murray Butler Medal from Columbia University and was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Popkin was internationally known for his work in the history of skepticism that revolutionized scholarship on the origins of modern philosophy and science. Popkin was author of Philosophy and the Human Spirit with Ar- rum Stroll, The History of Skeptic- ism From Sceptics to Spinoza, The High Road to Pyrrhusism and Isaac Le Peyre (1596-1678): His Life, Work, and Influence.

He attracted mainstream read- ers with such books as his 1966 The Second Oxford: The Case for a Conspiracy Theory, about the John F. Kennedy assassination.


After retiring as professor effec- tive in 1986, Popkin published The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy and was a member of Skeptic- ism in the History of Philosophy and co-editor of Skepti- cism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

Survivors include his wife, Juliet; a son, Jeremy; two daugh- ters, Margaret and Susan; and five grandchildren.
Although he was born in the Far East, Dan Riew grew up in the Midwest. He lived in Korea until he was 7, when his parents brought their family to the United States because they felt it would be a better place to get an education. “When we first came, it was difficult because we couldn’t communicate with anybody,” he says. “Fortunately, it doesn’t take long to learn the language when you’re a kid, but when we got off the plane, none of us knew any English.”

Riew’s parents put a great value on education, actually moving the family thousands of miles in pursuit of educational opportunities. He believes American parents and educators place a greater emphasis on creating a well-rounded person, whereas the focus in Korea back then was on getting the best grades and making it into the best colleges. Riew did well in that department. He got into Harvard University. The lifeline at Harvard in Cambridge, Mass., was much different than life in the town of Akro, Ohio, where Riew lived. “There were lots of people from big cities like Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. I probably learned as much from other students as I did from my coursework,” he says. At first, Riew wasn’t sure what he wanted to be. He thought about becoming a trial lawyer and took pre-law courses, but thought the grading was somewhat subjective. Science, he reasoned, would offer a more objective approach, so he also took pre-med courses.

Now as an associate professor of orthopaedic surgery, he says he’s learned that science and medicine aren’t necessarily clear-cut, either. But he’s never regretted his decision to pursue medicine.

And that may have something to do with his family. Although he didn’t decide to study medicine until he was in college, Riew had a positive image of what it meant to be a doctor. His maternal grandfather had been a pediatrician and general practitioner in Korea.

“She was fantastic. She taught me what medicine was all about,” he says. “I remember people bringing her gifts because they didn’t have the money. She was a very kind man, and he taught me that medicine was a great profession.”

From heart to spine
Riew said he wanted to work in academic medicine, but he didn’t go into orthopaedic surgery right away. Although he liked orthopaedics during medical school at Case Western Reserve University, Riew also enjoyed an elective course that he took with a semi-retired cardiologist, and he spent his days looking at electrocardiograms and learning about the heart. The course convinced him to pursue the field.

After medical school, he did an internship in internal medicine and completed his orthopaedic medicine residency and cardiology research fellowship at Cornell Medical Center. He was planning to continue that research at Harvard when he realized he really didn’t want to be a cardiologist. “I had this epiphany,” Riew recalls. “I suddenly knew I should hone my skills in orthopaedics and do what I loved best. At first I thought it was too late, but then I started thinking that I had another five years of research and training ahead in cardiology, which was about the same length of time as an orthopaedic surgery residency.”

In retrospect, he says his training in both specialties has made him a better doctor. One of his former mentors, Henry Boldman, M.D., a shoulder and elbow specialist and associate professor of orthopaedic surgery at Washington University, agrees. “Dan is perhaps the finest physician I have ever met,” says Yasuo Goch, who was an orthopaedic surgery resident with Riew at George Washington University. “He has a unique combination of book smarts, inherent clinical judgment, surgical ability and compassion that allow him to excel in caring for patients.”

To complete his training, Riew did a fellowship in spine surgery with renowned spine specialist Henry Boldman, M.D., at the University Hospitals of Cleveland. About the same time, Richard H. Gelberman, M.D., the Fred C. Reynolds Professor and head of orthopaedic surgery at Washington University, was trying to recruit a spine surgeon. Because of the reputation of Boldman-trained spine surgeons, Gelberman was hoping to convince one of those trainees to become part of the new Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University. “This was described by my mentor as the most effective fellow he had ever trained,” Gelberman recalls. “He is an amazing technical surgeon, easily in the top 1 percent of surgeons I’ve ever been associated with.”

”Dan was described by his mentor as the most effective fellow he had ever trained. He is an amazing technical surgeon, easily in the top 1 percent of surgeons I’ve ever been associated with.”

RICHARD H. GELBERMAN

Dan Riew, M.D., associate professor of orthopaedic surgery and chief of cervical spine surgery, describes a case with an orthopaedic surgery resident with Riew at Washington University positions: Associate professor of orthopaedic surgery and chief of cervical spine surgery.

Dan Riew is slightly more modest about his skills. "If a person does the same operations over and over again, hundreds of times a year, he or she is likely to develop a level of proficiency," he says. "I’ve tried to sub-specialize in as small an area of the body as I can. Rather than have my back covered in different operations, I wanted to be very good at about 10. So I really work with patients who have cervical spine problems."

A pain in the neck
There’s a reason the phrase “a pain in the neck” is so frequently used. Neck and back problems are among the most common reasons for doctor visits. As chief of cervical spine surgery at the University and Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Riew spends many of those visits talking to his patients out of surgery.

“Surgery is the option of last resort,” he says. “I’d tell people to try physical therapy or medication or cortisone shots. Only in about 5 percent of cases will I tell a person to have surgery on the first office visit. Those are the patients who are at risk for paralysis or are particularly perilous by a neck injury.”

Riew’s research involves finding ways to preserve motion in neck surgery patients. In recent years, that pursuit has involved investigating artificial disc replacement rather than fusing surgery. It’s been two years since he implanted an artificial disc into his first patient. That patient is doing very well, as are many who have received artificial discs in the United States and Europe.

Riew says he expects the cervical artificial disc to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration by 2007.

FAMILY VALUES
Riew met his wife, Mary, on a blind date. After a friend met her at an engagement party, he told Riew he’d just met the woman Riew was going to marry. “He told me I had to call her, but I didn’t,” he says. “In fact, I lost the phone number, so my friend went back and begged to get her number again. When he came back to my apartment, he wouldn’t leave until I called to get a date with her.”

They’ve been married since 1992 and have three children: Bradley, 10; Grant, 8; and Julia, 6. When he’s not in the clinic or the operating room working with the more than 2,000 patients he sees each year, Riew cherishes the time he can spend with his wife and kids. “I make an effort to get away, but I also get together with Riew’s extended family. His parents and sisters also live in the Midwest. In fact, that was one of the reasons Riew wanted to work at the University. “I wanted to settle in Akron or Cleveland or somewhere in the Midwest because I like this part of the country,” he says. “St. Louis actually is a little further west than I would have chosen, but it’s been wonderful. It’s a great place to raise a family.”