From the Chair

This current edition of Clio’s Correspondence comes to you from Brennan II, the temporary home of the Department of History while Fiske Halle is being renovated. Getting used to our new home has taken some adjustment but we are settling in. We are building ties with our new neighbors in the Brennan complex, including Fire Safety, Career Services, Trio, and the WSU task force on the Fairmount Neighborhood.

We are not sure how long the rehabilitation of Fiske Hall will take. Estimates are that this process will take about a year so we will be here in the southwest corner of 17th Street and Yale for the upcoming academic year. For the near future, come by to Brennan II and say hello. Our classes, research and community engagement continue to take place, just from a new location.

The department remains active on campus and the community, in spite of the challenges. Our scholarship includes both monographs and academic articles, hosting speakers, participating in community discussion forums, appearing in our television series, Issues in History Today, speaking on KMUW, and publishing the student journal, The Fairmount Folio. To get to know us better, please consider joining us at the RSC Santa Fe Trail Room, on Thursday, October 27 at 5:45! See you there!

Regards,
Jay M. Price

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In Memoriam: William E. Unrau (1929-2016)

William E. Unrau, Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus, passed away on October 4, in Boulder, Colorado, where he had resided since retiring from the Department of History in 1996, after thirty years of teaching at Wichita State University.

A native of Kansas, born in nearby Goessel, he grew up on a Kansas farm near the historic Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church during the Dust Bowl years of the Great Depression. Earning a B.A. from Bethany College in 1951, before completing an M.A. at the University of Wyoming in 1956, he pursued a Ph.D. in Western American history at the University of Colorado under the direction of Robert Athearn, one of the most prominent historians of the field, and graduated in 1963. After briefly teaching at Bethany College, Bill came to Wichita State as Associate Professor in 1965. In 1989, he became Endowment Association Distinguished Research Professor of History. The appointment to an endowed professorship reflected Unrau’s national respect among the country’s most prestigious historians. His scholarship and professionalism influenced me and our colleagues throughout his career at WSU. He became a tremendous role model to younger colleagues like Craig Miner, his former student who became a colleague, and myself, among others. Just as his door was always open to students, so it was open to colleagues, and we benefited tremendously when we had research or teaching questions. But more than that, he often entertained us with side-splitting tales of research, conference, committee or classroom lunacy, most probably embellished in a way that only Bill could do.

Few knew the West as well as Unrau. He was by all accounts a great and memorable teacher who entertained, instructed and inspired. His courses in Western American History and Kansas History were immensely popular. Apparently, no one who experienced them can ever forget his map quizzes, and he taught far more about the West than cowboys and Indians. His graduate seminars and Advanced Historical Research class, which he initiated, were noted for their rigor. Indeed, he was instrumental in reinforcing the idea that truly great teachers are also good scholars with his latest scholarship inevitably percolating into his classroom. As Craig Miner often asked, would you rather take a class from someone who read the book or from someone who wrote the book? Bill wrote the book!

During a prolific career, he wrote or co-authored more than a dozen books and over forty articles, as well as countless papers delivered at professional conferences and book reviews published in the best journals in his field. His most important work centered on the relationship between Plains Indians, the Federal Government, and issues of tribal dispossession during the nineteenth century. In his books White Man’s Wicked Water (1996), and Indians, Alcohol and the Roads to Taos and Santa Fe (2013), he analyzed the factors that enabled the alcohol trade to expand between the Plains Indians, settlers, merchants, and government officials in the face of weak federal regulation. Other works such as Mixed Bloods and Tribal Dispossession (1989), and his early study, The Kansa Indians (1971), led to much legal consulting with the Kansa and other tribes that made a major difference in adjudicating Indian claims. He showed how deep research has practical application and he used to joke that judges would ask him to write briefs for both sides of the litigation, knowing that his findings would be accurate and fair. One of his last books, The Rise and Fall of Indian Country, 1825-1865 (2007), was vintage Unrau, concentrating on just one of the fifteen sections of the 1834 Act, that defined Indian Country, and showed how complex even seemingly simple tasks can be, not only in the development of the law but in its flawed implementation. Like his predecessors, Bill pursued an active “retirement,” publishing his latest book as recently as three years ago.

[...continued on page 10...]
Getting a Makeover: Fiske Hall gets some work done

Fiske Hall has been a mainstay at Wichita State University for over a century. And as the oldest surviving building on campus, every once in awhile it needs a little TLC. The past year has seen the building undergo considerable transformations.

Last year, work was begun on a new elevator to better accommodate students and teachers. As you can see from the many pictures throughout this edition of Clio, over the last few months the elevator move from design plan to reality. Construction went relatively smoothly with only some slight delays. But one of the biggest challenges was making sure that the new wing matched with the old building. And as you can see, the engineers and workers did an excellent job.

This year, now that the elevator wing is mostly complete, work is starting on renovating the rest of the building. The renovations include a new HVAC system, termite damage repair, a new upstairs restroom, and other cosmetic upgrades.

Once all this work is finished, the Department of History will enter the 21st century!

Fiske Hall gets ready for extensive renovation and a new elevator

Construction intensifies as the shell for the elevator is built

Brennan Hall II

New Digs: Brennan II

For 2016-2017, the Department of History is located in Brennan Hall II on the south side of 17th Street. Brennan Hall was named for S. Carnot Brennan. He was captain of the football team at Fairmount College. Brennan graduated in 1917 and then went on to serve as a Lieutenant during the First World War. After the war, he went into the insurance business and then worked for the Social Security Administration. During this time, he served for many years on the Wichita Municipal University Board of Regents. The first building in the Brennan Hall complex was a men's dormitory constructed in 1952. A design by Forsblom & Parks, the building featured "communal living" and even a telephone switchboard. Two other buildings, a women's dorm and an honors dorm, were added in 1962. The Department of History is located in the former women's dormitory.
The Local Is Where History Happens: The Local and Community History Program

This year is the first year in which the Public History Program has officially become the Local and Community History Program. It retains many of the applied scholarship features of Public History but also has a more concentrated focus on using the history of Wichita and Kansas as a laboratory and classroom to explore a wide range of topics and issues. More than just a title change, the program is a base of operations through which the department can connect with several activities. One part is a track within the master’s program that gives students the opportunity to study local history in depth. Another facet includes connections to the Museum Studies Certificate Program and now, the Great Plains Studies Certificate Program. Moreover, the program will provide a venue for publication, including a current project on the history of rock’n’roll in Wichita. Finally, the program reaches out to the community, helping community members get a better sense of the place in which they live and work.

Students in the program area have engaged in an astonishing array of efforts over the past year. Barb Myers, for example, is spearheading efforts to take care of the history at Highland Cemetery, and also launched the Facebook Page “Wichita History From My Perspective”. She is one of several students working on the Wichita history graphic novel project. Others are working with local institutions including the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame and the Sedgwick County Records Management, both of which have WSU History alums on staff. Several others have presented at local conferences, assisted with tours, and are conducting their own research projects that help bring “nearby history” to light.

Workers make sure that Fiske Hall’s foundations are solid—and dry!—before they start pouring new concrete for the elevator wing

FISKE BRICKS!

Last year, the Department of History began honoring the winners of the Ard Faculty Award with Fiske Bricks — original bricks from Fiske Hall which were salvaged from the building in the process of constructing the new elevator. These bricks speak to the strong foundations which our teachers hope to give our students through our classes, and which the study of the past gives to all students, young and old.

The inaugural Fiske Brick was bestowed upon Dr. Craig Torbenson for his many years of teaching geography and family history at Wichita State University—way to go Craig!
Lecture Series

The Department of History’s Speaker Series entered its fourth year in 2016. In the spring, the department welcomed Rebecca Miller Davis, Teaching Professor in the Department of History at the University of Missouri-Kansas City who delivered a very timely talk titled, “Dixiecrats, Dissenting Delegates, and the Dying Democratic Party: The Southern Right Turn from Roosevelt to Johnson, and Beyond.” The evening was well attended and Miller Davis also had time to spend with some of our students and professors during her visit to campus.

For Fall 2016, we are planning an exciting lecture on the evening of Thursday, November 10th. Timothy Dalton, Assistant Professor of History at Oklahoma State University, Tulsa will speak on the Islamization of Syria, 600-1500 at 7PM in 208 Hubbard Hall. Dalton will also work with students during a seminar in which they investigate digital access and linguistic boundaries.

For further information, please contact Dr. Robin Henry via email at: robin.henry@wichita.edu.

All lectures are free and open to the public.

Behind the Camera ... with Dr. Helen Hundley

Last year, the Department of History continued its television program, “Issues in History Today”. The episodes showcase topics of interest to the public, utilizing the expertise of WSU history faculty. Dr. Jay Price and Dr. Robert Owens discussed their new books in two informative and enjoyable episodes.

In episode 4, Dr. Owens introduced listeners to the complexities of colonial American and original nations relations.

In episode 5, Dr. Jay Price provided in-depth discussion and illustrations of the interesting post-World War II era of religious architecture in the United States. Episodes are available online through youtube at WSUTV, “Issues in History Today”.

https://www.youtube.com/user/WichitaStateTV/videos
Another busy year for George Dehner. In addition to the usual load of classes and faculty service, George conducted and transcribed several interviews related to his Legionnaires’ disease project, presented a public lecture to the Pachyderm Club, published a book review, submitted an article titled “Building a Better Word For You” to an academic publishing house, and this past summer made an archival research trip to Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Washington D.C. (which you can read about on page 8). With now two boys in high school (Brendan and Patrick) and one in middle school (Sean) Jodi, George and their dog Trooper have a lot to fill their days.

Modern Europeanist John Dreifort continues to teach a wide variety of courses in 19th and 20th century Europe. He has added a new course (for him) on the history of the Vietnam War for the fall semester which is enjoying a good and active enrollment. He has also been offering an adult education course each semester on widely differing historical and current topics—the 100 students actively engage him and keep him on his toes. He is also called upon to make frequent public presentations to various groups in the Wichita area. He continues to revise his article manuscript on Gene Bearden, and although his work on the World War II relationship of Generals DeGaulle and Eisenhower has been on the back burner, he has not forgotten it and looks forward to carving out enough time to return to it. With the recent departmental move from Fiske Hall, he was reminded of his many students whose papers he has kept over the years. He actually found some dating back to the 1970s! It made for an interesting move, and he wishes the best for his former students.

With another year in the books, Jeff Hayton is excited about the upcoming semesters. Last year saw him teach classes on modern European history, German history, the Interwar Era, as well as the department’s Introduction to Historical Research and Writing, a class all our history majors must take to prepare them for upper-level classes. In the Spring semester, he was also forced to pick up some extra classes on the Soviet Union and Imperialism—teaching five classes a semester is something that he does not look to repeat anytime soon!

In the last year, a number of publications that were in the works neared completion, including two book chapters, one on punk in East Germany (“Ignoring Dictatorship? Punk Rock, Subculture and Political Challenge in the GDR” in Dropping Out of Socialism: The Hidden Life of the Former Soviet Bloc, eds. Juliane Fürst and Josie McLellan with Lexington), and another on Nazism and the occult in digital media (“Beyond Good and Evil: Nazis and the Supernatural in Video Games” in The Nazi Soul between Science and Religion: Revisiting the Occult in the Third Reich, eds., Monica Black and Eric Kurlander with Camden House). Additionally, a special forum on music, space and Germany was finally completed (after four years!), and the series of articles will be coming out with Contemporary European History, vol.26, no.2 (2017), including his contribution “Crosstown Traffic: Punk Rock, Space and the Porosity of the Berlin Wall in the 1980s”.

The big news is that after spending the summer writing and revising his book manuscript, the proposal and sample chapters are now under review with an academic press—by Christmas there will hopefully be some good news.

During the Fall 2015 semester, Dr. Robin Henry was on sabbatical. During her semester off from teaching and university duties, she made progress on her second book manuscript, “The Progressives’ Lincoln: Reform and the Intellectual Life of Benjamin Barr Lindsey.” In addition to writing, she presented papers and commented on panels at the Western Historical Association and American Society of Legal Historians annual meetings. During 2016, Dr. Henry also had two essays published in collections and completed work on an essay forthcoming in January 2017 in the Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. In October 2016, she will attend a conference on Rockefeller and the National Parks at the Rockefeller Archives Center.

In addition to her research, Dr. Henry joined a consortium of professors across campus to create a new Law and Public Policy track for the Bill and Dorothy Cohen Honors College. As part of this group, she will teach honors sections of her history courses on constitutional history, civil rights, and legal history, as well as develop and offer legal history courses designed for the Honors College. Finally, she continues to serve on the Editorial Board of HSHGAPE, the online listserv for the Society of Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era; write and deliver historical commentary on KMUW; organize the Department of History’s speaker series; act as the humanities consultant for KMUW and the Ulrich Museum of Art; and serve as the facul-
Dr. Helen Hundley wrapped up a major project last year, her manuscript on the Mongol Empire. She continues her role as Faculty Editor for The Fairmount Folio, overseeing the publication of volume 17, which represented twenty years of journal history. Due to a bit of a ‘detour’ in the spring, Student Editor Ms. Felicia Hammons and Dr. Robert Owens completed the journal for publication. In addition to the hard copy, volume 17 is now available in an electronic version through Ablah Library at WSU. She also continued to produce the new departmental television program, “Issues in History Today”.


The past year has definitely been an active and rewarding one for Jay M. Price. The year began with a conference in Honolulu, Hawai’i, and has unfolded to include lively classes in U.S. and local history, the Kansas Association of Historians Conference, and a number of college, university, and community committees, giving a walking tour of the Fairmount neighborhood, and guiding the efforts of students in the Local and Community History Program. In March, he took on the additional responsibility of heading the Great Plains Studies certificate program. Later, he had the honor of conducting a three part interview with former mayor Bob Knight. The highlight of the spring semester was receiving the news that he had won the Liberal Arts and Science John R. Barrier Teaching Award. The summer did not prove to be any quieter, with summer school teaching, preparing the department for the move to Brennan II and a number of research projects that, like the Mayan calendar, seemed to align at the same time. Some projects include an analysis of ethnic entrepreneurship on Broadway, a work that includes colleagues Sue Abdinour and David Hughes in Business and

On the Bookshelf … with Keith Wondra and Barb Myers

Old Cowtown Museum originally started as a shrine to the pioneers and branded of Wichita. Over time, it began to play a role in the history of Wichita, and the museum has been a place to reflect Wichita’s agricultural history. However, in recent years, Old Cowtown Museum has become a nationally recognized and acclaimed history museum. A project of 1990s Old Cowtown Museum, it became one of the most beloved of all of Wichita’s museums and institutions, under the leadership of Gene Old Cowtown Museum President Ric Pitera. Old Cowtown Museum has become an integral part of Wichita’s past and present, reflecting the city’s history and culture. The museum’s activities include a 10-year history, including people, events, and stories, many of which have never been published before.

Keith Wondra is a history teacher and current graduate student in the Department of History at Wichita State University. Barb Myers is a research assistant and graduate student in history at Wichita State University.

It is with tremendous pleasure that the Department of History gets to promote some of its own—a fact that is becoming an ever-increasing reality!

Written by alum Keith Wondra and current graduate student Barb Myers, Old Cowtown Museum: Images of Modern America is forthcoming with Arcadia Publishing (2016). Detailing the many-sided history of the Old Cowtown Museum, this book makes a valuable contribution to the local history of Wichita and is filled with great photographs from the past half-century. If you are interested in cowboys, saloons and frontier life, check out what the Wild West was really like.
Faculty News, continued

Anthropology, respectively. The Broadway project became the springboard for several other activities, including being a co-producer of a Sunflower Journeys episode on Latino businesses in the North Market area and participating in a recent economic development conference. Another collaborative effort is a study of Mennonite church architecture with Keith Sprunger at Bethel College. The city of Bel Aire has commissioned him to write a history of that community. He has been active with the local committee commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Chisholm Trail in 2017, an effort that has resulted in writing a short history of the trail for the event and bringing together a team of students to produce a graphic novel of early Wichita told through the eyes of a fictitious longhorn named Luke. Perhaps the most dynamic project has been working with student Josh Rupp and others to write a history of rock bands in Wichita, to become a book that will be published through the Department of History. As fall unfolds, new projects come to the fore, including a history of southern religious traditions in Wichita.

Craig L. Torbenson submitted three articles in the past year and heard back on one that will be published in Telesaga and is titled “Migration of a Telemark Family: The Torbjornson Family of Sauland”. He and his wife Bonnie celebrated their thirty-fifth anniversary in August. Dr. Torbenson still serves as the department undergraduate advisor. And when not fighting injuries, he continues running and in this past year set personal bests in the 5k (25:45) and 10k (53:22).

Professor Robert E. Weems, Jr. had a very active 2015-2016 academic year balancing his teaching, service, and research/writing/public speaking.

One of the highlights of his teaching load was History 515 (Economic History of the United States), which is cross-listed with the Economics Department as Economics 627. This course provides History students with important information about the economic undercurrents of American History. Simultaneously, it provides Economics students with information related to the historic evolution of contemporary economic policy.

In the realm of service, Dr. Weems was active both on and off-campus. His on-campus service activities included the Graduate Council (which serves as an advisory group to the Dean of Graduate Studies) and the President’s Diversity Council (which serves as an advisory group to President Bardo on issues related to diversity). Weems also serves as the chair of the group’s “Benchmarking, Research, and Analysis” subcommittee. His off-campus service activities included membership on the Kansas African American Museum’s Board of Directors (as president) and serving on the Wichita chapter of the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce’s Advisory Board. In this latter capacity, Weems’ major contribution during 2015-2016 was helping the group to establish a Wichita Black Business Hall of Fame.

During 2015-2016 Weems continued work on a variety of pre-existing projects including: his “Wichita African American Business History Project” (where he’s gathering and processing information related to the history of black entrepreneurship here); his co-edited book project Building The Black Metropolis: African American Entrepreneurship in Chicago (which will go into production in late 2016 at the University of Illinois Press); a forthcoming article in The Journal of African American History (“A Man in a Woman’s World: Anthony Overton’s Rise To Prominence in the African American Personal Care Products Industry”); and a forthcoming book chapter in Africana Social Stratification, to be published by Lexington Books (“An Obsolete People? The Precarious Position of African Americans in the Twenty-First Century Economy”). He has also continued working on a book-length biographical study of the noted African American entrepreneur Anthony Overton. Professor Weems has recently submitted a revised book proposal for this project to New York University Press.

As the Willard W. Garvey Distinguished Professor of Business History, Dr. Weems is involved in a variety of “public intellectual” activities. During 2015-2016 he continued to provide periodic commentary to radio station KMUW as part of its “Past and Present” series. In the realm of public speaking, he was the keynote speaker at McConnell AF-B’s 2016 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Program. Another important Weems public presentation, during 2015-2016, was to the Rotary Club of Wichita on the topic “African American Entrepreneurship in Wichita: Past and Present.” In addition, Professor Weems spoke on the last year of Dr. Martin Luther King’s life at a Wichita community MLK celebration. The text of this presentation was later reprinted in the January 28, 2016 issue of The Community Voice (Wichita’s African American newspaper) along with another article—related to the negative impact of 1960s Interstate highway expansion on black neighborhoods-- that Professor Weems had submitted for the publication’s special Black History Month supplement.
In the Archive ... with Dr. George Dehner

“Become a Historian and See the Country!”

This summer I got the opportunity to indulge (an apparently long-suppressed desire) to pursue the life of a long-distance trucker. Although Jodi wouldn’t let me buy a CB radio—nor a chimpanzee companion named Bear—and I drove a Nissan Altima instead of a Peterbilt, I still got behind the wheel, loaded up on caffeine and headed east. My travels took me across the great mid-section of the nation and led me to some of the finest rest-stops I-70 has to offer including one on the border between Ohio and West Virginia where I practiced the trucker’s art of sleeping in my vehicle. The endpoint of the journey was archives in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Washington D.C.

The Pennsylvania archives, housed in the state archive in Harrisburg, provided a rich bounty of documents detailing the state’s response to the mysterious disease outbreak dubbed “Legionnaires’ disease.” The staff was efficient, professional and graciously granted me access to material that had been sealed.

The second destination was the National Museum of American History, part of the Smithsonian constellation of museums located on the Mall in D.C. I scheduled this visit as the result of a tip from the archivist at the David Sencer Museum on the campus of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I had lamented that the National Archives had been unable to locate the field notes and draft reports that usually accompany a CDC investigation of a disease outbreak. She said that it was rumored that the material was stored at the Smithsonian. Although Diane Wendt, Associate Curator for the museum, did not know why they had it, she did confirm that the Museum had a number of boxes related to the Legionnaires’ outbreak. The holdings turned out to be the notes, drafts, reports, and correspondence from some of the central CDC investigators in Philadelphia—material that will greatly add to my project.

The final stop was the city archives in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the archives had not been well-organized in the past as there was no box list, and the material was haphazardly deposited into cartons. The staff is currently at work seeking to catalog the material, so it looks like another trip to Philadelphia is in my future.

I’ll see you on the road and 10-4 good buddy!

Dr. Dehner proves historians will do anything for sources

As I have researched first Swine Flu and now Legionnaires’ disease, I have been surprised at the number of people who have written to researchers suggesting avenues to investigate, relating personal experience with similar ailments, and promoting a wide range of treatments. Even more surprising is how many of these letters receive responses from high organizational officials and scientists. In flipping through the files in Harrisburg, I came across the following letter from the Bureau of Laboratories of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to a concerned citizen. “I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter of November 21, 1976 with its enclosed nasal specimen, and to thank you for your interest and concern in “Legionnaires’ Disease.” It was “nasal specimen” that caught my eye. Yes she sent a “nasal specimen” to the laboratory. Yes the Chief of the Laboratory replied. Yes this exchange is stored in the archives. No, the sample was not still in the envelope ... Yes I did look.

Fairmount Folio

The Department of History’s publication for student writing, The Fairmount Folio, published volume 17 in May, 2016. Featuring essays on Carry A. Nation, Environmental Protection Law, comics in the 1960s and 1970s, Christianity among Cherokee and Iroquois women, race and racism within the French and US armies during WWI, and family accommodations for air force personnel, volume 17 was packed with insights.

Planning for the publication of volume 18 is now underway.

In addition to hard copies, the journal is now available electronically through the library and through the department website. All of the articles, from volume 1 in 1966 through the present, will be word searchable to allow ease of access.

Faculty Editor, Dr. Helen Hundley
Alumni News

Don Fisk is the Vice President of the board of directors The Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association. He works closely with the Ft. Phil Kearny superintendent and board members to create activities and publicity for the 150th anniversary of the years that the Bozeman Trail and its forts existed. He has raised funds for the Northern Cheyenne tribe for the monument they are constructing in memory of their ancestors who were killed near Ft. Robinson, NE in Jan., 1879. Don has also published his second of four articles in the Custer Battlefield Museum and Historical Association Journal, The Greasy Grass. He has spoken to several Sheridan, Wyoming civic groups regarding local history. He most recently attended a tour of the Dull Knife Battlefield, and has begun given tours of other sites.


Donna McCalla, BA (1971), MA (1973), retired and moved to Rhodes, Greece, in 2013. She is active in local and regional communities. Rhodes is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and offers boundless opportunities for research and study. With its close proximity to Turkey, living in Greece has also offered the opportunity to see history in the making.

Christine Simmons-Henkel, BA (1974), is the VP of Professional Development at Tinker Federal Credit Union in Oklahoma City, OK, where she manages employee and management training and development. Her department staff of 6 design and develop programs, projects, curriculums and resources for 650+ employees in over 30 branches and corporate offices across the state of Oklahoma. Recent accomplishments include the design and deployment of an employee portal to support the performance and communication needs of employees. Personally, my husband and I enjoy travelling and planning for the next stage of life outside of the workforce. History remains my hobby and passion and I watch with great interest the accomplishments of the WSU History programs.

In Memoriam

Stephen E. Kitchel passed away March 12, 2016. Steve appreciated his Wichita State education and its contribution to his career.

James E. Mahan, BA in Education (1969) passed away last summer, July 13, 2015. After earning his Masters at Emporia State University, Jim went on to have a distinguished 37 year career as an instructor of psychology and sociology at Mohave Community College in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.

Attention alums:

Update us on your news! Please email Jeff Hayton at jeff.hayton@wichita.edu with all your updates. Moreover, be sure to check out the “alumni” link on our web page: http://history.wichita.edu and please let us know if it is okay for us to include your activities on that page!

Memorial by Dr. John Dreifort

Unrau’s national reputation in the field of Native-American history and his place among the national elites in his field tremendously benefited his students. When Bill wrote a letter of recommendation, it carried great weight with those who read it. In fact, no member of the department directed as many graduate theses or had as great an imprint on as many students as Bill. He directed twenty-nine M.A. theses in history as well as serving as a reader on nearly forty others in other departments across the WSU campus. Many of his graduate students went on to successfully navigate Ph.D. programs around the country. Indeed, he also served on Ph.D. committees at the University of Kansas and the University of Northern Arizona, where he taught for a year as Visiting Distinguished Professor of History. Among his many professional activities, Unrau served on numerous boards, societies and associations over the years. While his list of service to the field is too long to recount, suffice it to say that Bill’s reputation among his peers kept him in strong demand.

As chair of the department for a dozen years, no colleague gave me greater pleasure or support than Bill. I could always count on him for wise (if colorful!) advice. His thoughtful comments during department meetings, laced with pithy humor, were legendary for keeping the departmental colleagues on task. When Bill spoke, colleagues listened! This was also true for the larger campus, for Bill often served on the most important committees of the university. His fair but penetrating questions and judgment on tenure and promotion, curriculum, and the Graduate Council made him a valuable member who defended faculty prerogatives and professional standards. I have no doubts that the reputation of the Department of History reached its peak during the years that Bill roamed Fiske Hall, for he was one of two or three members who “put us on the map” locally, regionally, and nationally.

Those of us who had the good fortune to have Bill Unrau as a teacher, mentor, colleague, or friend will miss him greatly.

He is survived by Millie, his wife of 64 years, as well as children Bill and Debbie.

Memorial by Dr. John Dreifort
Student Awards

The department was pleased to be able to offer a number of scholarship and paper awards this past year.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, the department distributed $12,500 this past cycle. For the paper award categories there were two undergraduate and two graduate selections. John Freeman received the Douglas Bendell award for the best paper in our History 300 (Introduction to Historical Research and Writing) course for his paper on the Beat Movement in Wichita. Vinh Nguyen’s paper was chosen for the John Rydjord Jr. award which is given to the best paper in an upper-division history course for his essay on Bitcoin mining and environmental impact. In the graduate paper category, Seth Bate’s entry garnered the best Fiske Hall Non-Seminar paper for his look at family life on McConnell Air Base while Aaron Peterka gathered in the best Fiske Hall Seminar paper prize for his study of race and racism in the French and US armies during the First World War.

In the undergraduate scholarship category, Ethan Arney was identified as the best sophomore history student and so received the Lee and Helen Kamen scholarship while John Freeman’s excellent academic performance was recognized with the Donna and Bill Ard scholarship. Sharon Huggins’ continued superior work prompted the re-awarding of the Dr. Henry and Minnie Onsgard scholarship. Ciara Mould’s work was recognized with the “Jed” Hurley award and Sherie Reamy received the Decker-Kansas Society of DAR grant. Amanda Underwood nabbed the Russell “Jiggs” Nelson scholarship and Adam John reeled in the Marie Graham Memorial Award.

The department was able to offer two graduate scholarships this year. Aaron Peterka’s continued excellent work merited the Anthony and Dana Gythiel scholarship while John Freeman’s excellent academic performance was recognized with the Donna and Bill Ard scholarship. Sharon Huggins’ continued superior work prompted the re-awarding of the Dr. Henry and Minnie Onsgard scholarship. Ciara Mould’s work was recognized with the “Jed” Hurley award and Sherie Reamy received the Decker-Kansas Society of DAR grant. Amanda Underwood nabbed the Russell “Jiggs” Nelson scholarship and Adam John reeled in the Marie Graham Memorial Award.

Fiske Looking Better Than Ever

Construction nears completion on the new elevator for Fiske Hall as workers integrate the old and new brick, as well as the roof.
WSU Department of History