



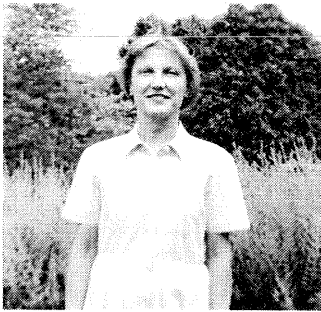
## ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Summer 2006

### Chair's Letter ~~~~

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Hello to all of you out there. This first newsletter is going to our graduates from Hawaii to Maine. It's rewarding to see there are so many alumni in so many places.



The Department has decided to launch a newsletter for several reasons. First of all, we have lots of news to share about the many changes here in recent years. Second, we are hoping you will reciprocate and share with us news about important events in your career. Finally, we are increasingly asked to assess our program's curriculum, requirements, effectiveness, and community relationships. We are hoping to build a network of alumni and friends we can consult to help answer these questions. In short, we think your input will help us to do better.

In this first issue annual letter, Dr. Orville Menard is the

featured author and subject. He is the senior emeritus Political Science Professor and has a wonderful retirement travel story to share.

Other articles update you on new faculty, the graduate program, and the British Politics study tour. We hope you enjoy our news.

Sincerely,  
Loree Bykerk,  
Professor & Chair



### Retirement Travels

*By Dr. Orville D. Menard*

Old professors don't fade away, they travel. Since retiring in 1998, my wife Darlene and I have taken some twenty trips, both international and domestic. Staying in a castle and renting a house in Southwest France, followed by a week's barge cruise paralleling Spain on the Canal de Midi was our first retirement journey. UNO graduate Maria-Jose (Humères) Hubert and her family stayed with us for a few days in our rental home, a restored 14th-15th century's structure. We have enjoyed apartments in Provence and Alsace, taken a French language immersion class in the Loire valley where we stayed with a French couple and their dog Copain (Pal), and sliced and

cooked in a Lyon culinary institute. There we spent ten days at our stove, but I cut class on a beautiful Friday afternoon when fish was on the agenda. For our 50th wedding anniversary, we had dinner on the Eiffel Tower, and for our 51st dined at Bloody Mary's on Bora Bora.

Venturing outside France, we listened to symphonies in Berlin, Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna on a "Heartland of Music" tour. Traveling in Italy from the Boot in the South to the Dolomites in the North, we learned about 9-11 when on Capri. On a Prague subway, I was the victim of a pickpocket.

Closer to home, we watched the waves and whales off the Oregon coast, and shivered on a cold April morning in Napa, CA, through our first balloon ride. Over Kauai, with a great view from our front row seats, we took our first helicopter ride. A few of our state-side trips were related to the Lewis and Clark commemoration as we followed the Corps of Discovery trail from St. Louis to Fort Clatsop on the Pacific coast by car and small ship on the Columbia River. A Cherry Blossom trip to Washington D.C. one April (couldn't do that while I was still meeting classes) brought us together for a Sunday brunch at the Smithsonian with UNO grads Susan Gaffney, Teresa Houser,

now back in Omaha studying for a master's degree at UNO, and Tugba Kalafatoglu, who has since returned to her native Turkey.

My teaching career is over, but my political curiosity goes along on our travels. The Lewis and Clark Expedition is a study in executive/legislative relations, leadership, secrecy, and commitment. A visit to Munich provides a view of the heart of Nazidom, including the building where the Munich Pact was signed (it is now a music school). Government buildings are generally tourist free (except the Reichstag in Berlin). In Paris, Rome, Vancouver, Dublin, the Bahamas, and Tahiti, we found people eager to tell us about their institutions and country.

A Greek ship Captain said to us, "You are not tourists, you are travelers." Be a traveler, pack a curious and open mind and acceptance of the ways others live and their pride in their culture. Who knows, even the French might like you.



*Menards Help Students  
While Being Honored  
by Others*



By Mary Bernier, Dir. of  
Development, University Foundation

Melvin Cohen of Cincinnati, Ohio mailed in his generous annual contribution again this year to honor Orville Menard, the teacher who Cohen said changed his life. Cohen, who received his BA and MA in political science at UNO, and his PhD at Pennsylvania State University, said at first he didn't think Dr. Menard even noticed him in class. This had changed by graduate school evidenced by the fact that Menard invited Cohen to work with him in France. That experience in France would forever alter Cohen's life. He would research and publish in the area of French politics, and later use his knowledge of comparative politics to develop expertise in African politics as well. He now teaches political science at Miami University Middletown .

The *Darlene and Orville D. Menard Political Science Scholarship* fund was established at the University of Nebraska Foundation by former students, colleagues, and friends of the Menards to support an outstanding political science student each year. The fund recently surpassed the endowment level through a generous gift from the Menards.

The Menards say they are "delighted" to be able to help a student each year. Dr. Menard received both a scholarship and a fellowship while he was a student and understands how meaningful financial assistance can be. While they appreciate being honored, of greater importance to them is that each year a deserving student will be relieved of some of the burden of tuition.

Teresa Houser, a 1991 graduate of the program and

another contributor to the fund, considered herself to be an average student until she met Dr. Menard. "My professional success and achievements can be traced directly to the lessons learned in his classroom and the limitless moral support and encouragement Dr. and Mrs. Menard so generously provided outside the classroom."

Houser continues, "Probably the most significant contribution the Menards gave me is that they believed in me. Time after time, they helped me to see my potential and to reach it. Their confidence in students is so contagious that we cannot help but believe in ourselves."

Perhaps Dr. Cohen summarizes why so many have given to the Menard fund "Orv has been a mentor to me in so many ways. He embodies integrity, self confidence, and humility. I would hope I have learned from him."

If you would like to contribute to the Menard fund, please contact Mary Bernier, 402-502-4108, at the University of Nebraska Foundation – Omaha Office.



*The Graduate  
Program's Robust  
Revival*

The Political Science Master's degree program is enjoying unprecedented growth after coming out from a moratorium imposed in an earlier budget cut. We are now very optimistic that the program's robust enrollments will yield enough graduates to meet administration standards.

The current program is more streamlined and versatile than before. Students now take a broad-based core of seminars in American politics, global politics, research methods, and political theory. There are both thesis and non-thesis options; students opting not to write a thesis may take a research tutorial and an internship. Up to half of the required 36 credit hours may be taken in other departments, depending on the student's interest.

There are now more than 50 students in the program; most will take 2 full years to finish. The high level of interest in the program mirrors an expansion of undergraduate student enrollment; this appears to reflect a growing concern with government and politics. Grants making the program available for secondary school teachers have also helped expand enrollment. In addition, a pilot offering of the seminars in a partially internet mediated format is beginning this fall semester.

For a University program, this represents a dizzying rate of change. The Department is still seeking additional resources for both undergraduate and graduate instruction and the interest shown in the re-born graduate program is exciting and encouraging!



### *British Politics Students Go to England*

Some of you probably took Political Science 4500: British Politics when you studied only in Omaha. But since spring of

2004, the course includes two weeks' travel in London and elsewhere in Great Britain. Led by Dr. Jody Neathery-Castro, our students have the opportunity to visit the Houses of Parliament, the American Embassy in London, the Prime Minister's residence at Number 10 Downing Street, the Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms, the European Parliament office, and other significant sites. Of course, plenty of extracurricular activities are included in the tour: day trips to see Windsor and Warwick castles and Oxford and Cambridge universities, a guided Jack-the-Ripper walking tour, and an authentic medieval banquet.

The Political Science component of the tour is in cooperation with Dr. Bill Wakefield of Criminal Justice; that program has been in place for about 30 years. Rounding out the Nebraska contingent to London are some UNO communication students and a group of legal studies students from Chadron State College.



Travel abroad is a mind-opening experience, and students often observe that their exposure to another culture and political system changes their outlook on life. While few are enamored of English cuisine or driving on the "wrong side" of the road, many are struck by the

depth of history, and are pleasantly surprised by London's many international cultures. The professors organize optional side trips on weekends to Paris, France and Edinburgh, Scotland. Enterprising students also make their own weekend travel plans to destinations like Dublin and Prague, to broaden their exposure even more.

There is often room for non-students to join the tour at the group rates, so interested alums or others should contact Dr. Jody Neathery-Castro at [jneathery@mail.unomaha](mailto:jneathery@mail.unomaha) or 554-3611. The course and trip begins filling in October.



### *Study Abroad Transformed Neathery- Castro's Career Path*

*by Dr. Jody Neathery-Castro*  
Like many of our political science undergraduates, I once had long-held plans to attend law school and pursue a legal career. Majoring in journalism and political science at my alma mater, Texas Christian University, I figured I would one day enjoy working as legal counsel, perhaps for a news organization. It wasn't until a study-abroad experience my senior year that my plans changed.

I spent the majority of 1989 overseas – first backpacking and riding the trains around Europe – then studying politics and art in London. I returned with a newfound sense of independence and a realization that I found European politics

more interesting than law. Who knew that the young, charismatic Member of Parliament in whose office I interned would find himself Prime Minister just a few short years later? I also fortuitously found myself on the sidelines of the most extraordinary political change of the era – the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the opening up of Eastern Europe. Just the previous week, the professor of my “Politics in a Nuclear Era” course had laid out his case that German reunification was in no one’s interest, so therefore was unlikely any time soon. Clearly the field of political science was ripe for new ideas, I thought. Even so, I still didn’t have a clear career trajectory. My biggest ambition when I returned home from my

overseas studies was to repack my backpack and set out to wander Europe longer – maybe for a year or so, as I discovered Australian and New Zealander travelers are apt to do. It was my wise undergraduate advisor who gently suggested that I had the traits of a college professor – wanderlust, curiosity about how the world works, an enthusiasm to share knowledge with others, and an actual keenness for conducting research.

While I don’t expect studying overseas to change everyone’s life plans the way it did mine, I’m thrilled to be able to extend to a small group of students the chance to experience a different culture when they take my British Politics course, which culminates in 16 days of experiential study in London.



## *Fund for Excellence*

Through this new special fund you may now designate your contribution to the University of Nebraska at Omaha to support the Political Science Department. Your tax deductible contribution may be sent to either the: Department or to University of Nebraska Foundation—Omaha Office 8712 West Dodge Road, Suite 100 Omaha, NE 68114-3419 Write “UNO Political Science Fund for Excellence” on the memo line of your check and your gift will be used to help us reach our strategic goals: focusing on students, promoting academic excellence, and engaging with the community.



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