

SIGNATURES

 | UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

Department of English Newsletter
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Editor Chuck Johanningsmeier
<jmeier@unomaha.edu>

New Faces in the Department of English

The English Department has added four new members over the past two years; some are completely new to UNO, while two others were promoted from adjunct instructor positions. All of them play important roles in meeting the diverse needs of our English majors and graduate students, as well as those of the College and University.

Tanushree Ghosh joins the department as a tenure-track Assistant Professor. Her field of concentration



is post-Romantic British Literature, with an emphasis on Victorian fiction. After receiving her Ph.D. from Syracuse University in 2011, Ghosh was asked to stay on and teach there before being hired at UNO. She recalls that what got her interested in literary studies was that for as long as she can remember, she has “always loved reading Victorian novels.” She adds, “Something about 19th-century British literature very much resonates with my experiences in India,” which is where she grew up and earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees.

At UNO, Ghosh’s classes are already proving popular. When asked how she sells students on

the idea of reading the long novels so characteristic of the Victorian era, she explains that she first eases students into the longer works with poetry and short fiction, focuses on one element of a novel each week, and has students “bid” for characters to follow and report to the class about. This, she says, gets them engaged in following the fortunes of all the characters. She reports, “I love how enthusiastic my students are, and how deeply they are engaging with the material.”

When not teaching and grading papers, Ghosh is also finding time to explore Omaha. A film buff, Ghosh enjoys viewing movies at Film Streams and the Dundee Theatre.

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Kathy Radosta’s path leading up to her being hired as a Full-Time Instructor at UNO in the summer of 2011



is definitely a long one, with lots of twists and turns. Born and raised in Little Falls, Minnesota, Radosta earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Minnesota - Minneapolis, where she learned to speak fluent Russian (and in fact taught Russian for two years as a graduate teaching assistant).

During one summer she had the opportunity to hone her language skills while studying in Moscow at the Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys (not a name likely to have been dreamed up by an advertising firm!) After earning her M.A., Radosta moved to Japan for two years, where she taught English. At that point, however, her husband’s Navy career brought Radosta and her two daughters, Kate and Caroline, back to the U.S. and a posting at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, north of Seattle. After eight years there, the family moved to Omaha when Kathy’s husband was transferred to Offutt.

In Omaha, Radosta started pursuing a teaching certificate in UNO’s College of Education in the fall of 2004. While pursuing a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) Certificate in the English Department, Radosta took classes with Owen Mordaunt and Frank Bramlett; the latter encouraged her to apply to the English Department’s M.A. program and to become a graduate teaching assistant. Earning her M.A. in May 2010, Radosta was in the right place at the right time when a Full-Time Instructor position opened up that summer.

When not teaching, Radosta most enjoys spending time with her daughters. She also started knitting this past summer,

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New Faces, continued

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and is an avid reader, exclaiming “there’s never enough time to read!” In December, she also reports, she baked 12-15 different kinds of Christmas cookies, a legacy of her Danish heritage. She is, she humbly notes, “practically famous in Bellevue for my cookies,” probably because everyone in her neighborhood knows that she keeps them in containers in her garage and is all too happy to hand some out to anyone who asks!

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KIM SCHWAB

Kim Schwab has a life story that has a number of similarities to Radosta’s.

She, too, was fascinated with language at an early age. As an undergraduate at UNL, she “stumbled” into studying classics and became fluent in Classical Greek. After graduating as a dual English / Classical Greek major, she taught English at two different high schools in Gifu, Japan.

Schwab says she thoroughly enjoyed her time in Japan, where she learned basic Japanese. Teaching English to non-native speakers was something she found challenging but also exciting; she saw conversations as “puzzles” to be solved. “The funnest part of living in Japan was learning all the cultural things,” Schwab reports; interestingly enough, while she was there she learned how to do traditional Taiko drumming.

When she returned to the U.S., Schwab’s first job was to manage

the Pinnacle Fitness Club; she did this for three years before leaving to start teaching part-time at UNO. With her language experience and dynamic teaching style, it was no surprise that Schwab was chosen over many other applicants for a Full-Time Instructor position beginning this past fall.

Schwab and her husband, Mike, preside over a menagerie at their home, thoroughly enjoying their two dogs and two cats.

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When the English Department’s long-time linguistics professor Frank Bramlett accepted an



BRETT MILLER

offer to teach at Stockholm University for the 2012-2013 academic year, numerous students had already signed up for his courses. Fortunately, the department was able to find and hire **Brett Miller**, who in July received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Cambridge, England. Miller has ably stepped in to teach Introduction to Linguistics both fall and spring semesters this year, as well as “Structure of English” and a graduate seminar on “Sound Systems” (this is Miller’s specialty: phonology).

A native of Colorado, Miller earned his B.A. from Colorado State University in Music (Piano and Theory) and his M.A. in Greek from the University of Colorado-Boulder. He is pleased to report that “The people here at UNO have been really friendly and welcoming.”

ESL News

As the entire University of Nebraska system strives to become more connected globally, it is recruiting a record number of international students. At UNO, international students make up approximately 10% of the student population. Many of these students are non-native speakers of English and thus need to enhance their language abilities. The UNO English Department is very active in providing such assistance, offering not only English 1090 (“ESL 1”) and English 1100 (“ESL 2”) but also staffing the Writing Center with instructors specially trained in ESL.

Over the past year, Kathy Boocker has been added as an adjunct instructor to the ESL staff, and Kim Schwab, who has extensive experience teaching ESL students, has been hired as a Full-Time Instructor. English Department ESL faculty have also begun to collaborate more closely with instructors from the Intensive Language UNO program (ILUNO), which is run by UNO’s International Studies & Programs. Instructors have conducted workshops in the Writing Center, too, to help faculty from across the university better facilitate the learning of international students in their classes.

Mike Skau Retires After 38 Years at UNO



The University of Nebraska at Omaha was a relatively recent creation when Mike Skau first set foot on the UNO campus in 1973; just a few years before it had been the University of Omaha. Skau joined the English Department when it was still housed in the Eppley Building, just down the hall from the university's library. He taught in portable classrooms set up on the east side of the Arts and Sciences building, and eminent domain had only begun to add land to the campus on its west side. Over the next decade, enrollment would swell and new buildings rise up to accommodate the new students. When he retired after the spring semester 2011, Skau could thus say that he was an eyewitness to the transformation of UNO from a local institution where many instructors did not have their Ph.D. degrees and research was not expected, into a university whose reach is global and whose faculty is conducting cutting-edge research and creative activity in many different areas.

Most graduates of UNO know Skau chiefly as "the Beat expert," due in large part to his expertise on the group of 1950s and early 1960s American writers collectively known as "the Beat Generation." For most of his years at UNO, Skau regularly taught a course entitled "Beats and Hippies" – one that filled rapidly almost every time it was offered.

Students were not the only ones enthused about this course and the materials taught in it. Skau, too, says that it was his favorite course to teach, not only because of the authors and works included in it but

also because of the diverse group of students the course attracted; as a 3000-level English course, it appealed to a wide spectrum of students who needed to satisfy their Humanities requirement – while simultaneously getting to read some fantastically exciting literary works.

Students who took this course may or may not have known that Skau is widely regarded as one of the country's leading experts on Beat Generation writers. His monographs *"Constantly Risking Absurdity": The Writings of Lawrence Ferlinghetti* (1989) and *"A Clown in a Grave": Complexities and Tensions in the Works of Gregory Corso* (1999), as well as over a dozen articles on the Beats, established him as a nationally-known resource on this group of writers. In recent years he has been interviewed by local and national news media to tap into his knowledge of the subject and has been asked to speak at a number of venues across the country, especially on the topic of the movement's best-known writer, Jack Kerouac.

While the Beats are popular subjects of academic inquiry today, however, readers might be interested to know that Skau faced an uphill climb when he told his professors at the University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign that he wanted to write his Ph.D. dissertation on the Beats. Most of his coursework had been in modern British Literature, but his passion was for the Beats. Only after knocking on numerous faculty office doors was he able to form a dissertation committee, made up of skeptics who wondered, "Is this really literature?" or who hadn't read anything by Beat writers.

Indeed, when Skau first came to UNO, most of the courses he taught were on modern British Literature. His only course on the Beats was a graduate seminar; eventually, though, he transformed this into

an undergraduate course offering. Over the years, Skau continued to ably teach courses in modern British poetry and fiction, as well as the British literature survey. He truly was (and is) a man of many interests and abilities.

One of his more impressive abilities, in fact, is his ability to write excellent poetry. He recalls with a grin that he first got interested in writing poetry in high school because he thought that would attract girls. But then he became interested in how complex good poetry is and worked hard at honing his craft; his first published poem came in the U. of Illinois's magazine *Voyeur*. Since that time he has published one chapbook entitled *Me and God Poems*; more significantly, perhaps, his poems have appeared in a wide range of prominent literary magazines over the years. His readings both at UNO and in the community have always been well attended.

Skau has much to be proud of in his career at UNO. Not only was he a scholar known widely for his keen analyses, and an excellent teacher whose high expectations produced many great writers, but he also served the university and the Department of English in many capacities. In October 2004, for instance, he arranged for poet Ted Kooser to read at UNO – which came just a few weeks after he had been named Poet Laureate of the United States. During his time as Chair of the English Department, too, he was instrumental in getting a number of "three-quarters-time" instructor positions turned into full-time ones, and in getting approval for a UNO Writing Center.

In retirement, Skau is doing lots of pleasure reading but is still continuing to write poetry and explore a number of academic projects on Jack Kerouac, William Blake, Hunter S. Thompson, and Richard Farina. It is, to pardon the pun, hard to keep a good man down.

John McKenna Retires



John McKenna and wife Barbara

Long-time professor of English John McKenna retired from full-time teaching after the spring semester 2012. McKenna came to UNO in 1970, after having completed his Ph.D. at Ohio University. During his 42 years of teaching at UNO he distinguished himself by publishing numerous critical and pedagogical articles, as well as poems, in highly-regarded journals.

McKenna is remembered best by many students as a highly dedicated and very effective educator and mentor. He summed up his teaching philosophy in a Department of English newsletter of 2003: "Great teaching should be a balance between the utilitarian and the enchanting, between the intellectually stimulating and the spiritually uplifting, between organized plan and felicitous serendipity." McKenna was especially well known for his courses on British playwright Tom Stoppard and on Keirsey's Temperament Theory, as well as "Modern Familiar Essay," which he began teaching in the late 1980s. During the past decade, he served as one of the founders of the Department of English's Graduate Certificate in Advanced Writing and taught courses related to it; just this past year he was honored

by the Kinney Foundation when it named a fellowship program for him. Given McKenna's dedication to his students, it is little wonder that many of them kept in touch with him over the years and recalled how influential he was in their educations. His presence in the department will be greatly missed.

McKenna, who as a Professor Emeritus taught a course this past fall at UNO, will undoubtedly make good use of his retirement. The future will almost certainly include lots of reading and writing, as well as travelling and hiking with his wife Barbara.

Big Things Come From Little Seeds

When Kristin Girtten attended a session of UNO's Service Learning Institute on P-16 learning, little did she know what she had set in motion. At that session she met Millard North Middle School reading specialist Linda Brablec and started talking. They soon discovered that they both had an interest in doing something with City Sprouts, a community garden initiative located near Joslyn Castle, as a Community Partner for their students' learning. Both, Girtten recalls, "Wanted to have students explore how gardens can nurture both creativity and community."

Girtten, Brablec, and another Millard North Middle School teacher, Marilyn Antley, began planning how to link their classes to each other and to City Sprouts simultaneously. Eventually, the 13 students in Girtten's "Introduction to Women's Studies and Literature" class took part in a collaborative

effort with 45 middle school students who were carrying out the service learning component of their International Baccalaureate program. Girtten and Brablec's students met five times at the middle school, during which time they discussed various literary works, using performance and visual composition to pursue their analyses. Through City Sprouts, the students met members of the Karen immigrant community from Burma (also known as Myanmar) and interviewed several of them. The transcripts of these interviews were then incorporated in a "Verbatim Theater" script for the joint project of the UNO and Millard students. They also met together three times at City Sprouts, where both groups collaboratively prepared a verbatim theater public performance. During the course of the project, the participants created an ornamental garden as well as two vegetable gardens; at the end, these two gardens were donated to two of the Karen families that had been interviewed. The culmination of all of this work was a well-attended potluck dinner, garden tour, and theatrical performance on May 2 at City Sprouts, where members of all the different groups involved had the opportunity to reflect on their accomplishments.

Girtten notes that her students benefited tremendously from participating in this service learning initiative, especially in the ways they learned how "cultural and ecological sustainability are linked." Making it all happen, Girtten acknowledges, "took a lot of work," but in the next breath she adds, "There was a huge payoff, and it was so worth it!"

Kinney Foundation Gift Strengthens Creative Nonfiction Program

Yvette Kinney, the first student to ever earn the UNO Department of English's Graduate Certificate in Advanced Writing (ADWR) Certificate, in 2003, found her studies so enriching that she seized the opportunity recently to give back to the program in a very big way.

Today, the fastest-growing areas of the Department of English are its Creative Nonfiction undergraduate concentration and its ADWR certificate program (the latter is, indeed, one of the largest certificate programs in the entire University of Nebraska system). In 2010, College of Arts and Sciences Dean David Boocker named the Creative Nonfiction Program one of UNO's Programs of Excellence. But when Kinney had first gone looking for a program to learn how to improve her creative nonfiction writing skills years before that, none had existed in the region. At that time she approached UNO Department of English member John McKenna about the possibility of starting such a program; McKenna in turn approached his colleagues Phil Smith and John Price about the idea. Thus, the ADWR certificate program was born. Many years later, Kinney thought about ways she could reward a program that had given her so much. The result was the announcement, in the spring of 2012, of a major gift from Yvette and her husband Doug, through the Kinney Family Foundation, to the Creative Nonfiction Program.

This gift strengthens – and will continue to strengthen – the program and the Department of English as a whole in many ways. For one thing, it has allowed the program to establish the

John J. McKenna Undergraduate Scholarship in Creative Nonfiction, which pays for up to 12 hours of tuition, covers the student's fees, and includes a \$350 stipend for book purchases. The Kinneys were on hand this past spring at the Seventh Annual Department of English Honoring Reception to present this award to two students: Holly Wilson and Kristi Sands. Additionally, it provides funding for the John J. McKenna Graduate Fellowship in Creative Nonfiction, which was awarded this past spring to graduate students Jin Ping Liu and Jason Brown. These Graduate Fellowships are quite generous, paying for all the student's tuition, fees, and books for one year. In addition, there are generous monetary awards for the runner-up and honorable mention students.

Furthermore, the Kinneys established the Yvette Kinney Program Fund in Creative Nonfiction that, among other program initiatives, supports student travel to professional conferences; last spring, this funding allowed five students to travel to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference in Chicago. The gift is also intended to fund visits to UNO of prominent writers who can, through visits to classrooms and presentations of their own work, enhance the quality and prominence of the Creative Nonfiction Program. The first such writer visit to be funded in this way was the editor, nationally-known essayist, and professor (at Ohio University) Dinty Moore, who came to campus on October 24 to visit a number of classes, talk informally with aspiring writers / students, and give a public reading.

Susan McCollum Retires

Long-time Staff Assistant Susan McCollum retired from the University in August of 2011 after fourteen years of service to the Department of English.

McCollum played a major role in keeping the Department running smoothly. She was instrumental in greeting students, ordering texts, and managing student advisees. She was responsible, too, for processing the massive amounts of paperwork involved with part-time and teaching assistant appointments, coordinating faculty travel and expense reimbursements, and helping make necessary arrangements for the twice-yearly M.A. comprehensive examination. McCollum helped craft several initiatives in the department, including the drop-add and retroactive credit policies that are currently in force.

McCollum's expertise was valued and acknowledged beyond the department. She was often tapped to train other staff assistants new to the job and was asked to serve on various university committees and councils over the years (including the university's Staff Advisory Council, a position to which she was elected and served as officer). In recognition of her outstanding performance, McCollum was chosen a few years ago as one of UNO's Employees of the Month.

Beyond her official duties, McCollum was perhaps best known as the department's chief diplomat, always offering a warm welcome to students, faculty, staff, and visitors alike. McCollum and her husband Al, after years of living in Council Bluffs, have retired to Sac City, Iowa, Susan's original hometown. In retirement, she greatly enjoys traveling to visit her children and grandchildren.

Teaching Awards

UNO's Department of English has long been recognized as having a number of excellent teachers among its ranks. In the past few years a number of teaching awards have confirmed this.

Chuck Johanningsmeier, received the University of Nebraska at Omaha 2011 Excellence in Teaching Award.

Matthew Marx was awarded an Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award for Best Instructor in the College of Arts and Sciences, and David Martin was honored with a Best Part-Time Faculty Award, both for 2011-2012.

Lisabeth Buchelt has recently learned she is the recipient of a 2012-2013 Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award in the College of Arts and Sciences.

FACULTY NEWS

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Essential to any top-notch university program is an active, highly-engaged group of faculty members. Conference presentations, publications, and other activities are a strong indication of faculty who keep current with the latest developments in their field and who are interested in learning more. The knowledge that faculty from UNO's English Department gain from their activities quite naturally informs their high-quality teaching, which students have come to expect in their courses in the department.

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Nora Bacon has completed work on the second edition of her widely-known book, *The Well-Crafted Sentence: A Writer's Guide to Style* (Bedford / St. Martin's), and it is due out very soon. She also continues to serve as the department's Writing Program Administrator and Director of the Writing Center.

Judy Boss retired from the department after the spring 2012 semester. A long-time member of the department, Boss was a recognized Milton and textual studies scholar. She also was one of the first to embrace the idea of making e-texts of various literary works available, and thus she did a great deal of important work for Project Gutenberg and the E-Text Center at the University of Virginia.

Frank Bramlett has over the past few years been very interested in investigating the intersection of linguistics and comics, making a number of conference presentations and teaching a well-enrolled class on the topic (English 2000: "Language and Comics"). The culmination of these activities is his edited collection of essays, *Linguistics and the Study of Comics*, which was published this past spring by Palgrave Macmillan. Over forty people turned out for a publication party on May 17, held at the Legend Comics store on Leavenworth St. For the 2012-2013 academic year he is a Visiting Lecturer in the English Department at Stockholm University, teaching linguistics and language analysis classes as well as directing numerous student theses.

Tracy Bridgeford has been extremely busy in her role as Graduate Program Chair, and she will be serving as interim Department Chair in the spring of 2013. In her "spare time" she continues to co-edit the journal *Programmatic Perspectives*, plays a major role in UNO's Women's Archive Project, and is currently co-editing two collections of essays.

Lisabeth Buchelt presented her paper, "Beyond Medievalism: The Deployment of *Dinnseanchas* in Bram Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*," at the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures conference this past summer in Montréal. Back in the spring of 2011, she also put together a panel consisting of herself and two UNO graduate students, Kathy Nelson and Kirsten Jensen, to present three papers at the American Conference for Irish Studies conference at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Maggie Christiansen defended her dissertation at UNL in October and received her Ph.D. in English in December. She has published "Forum on the State of Contingent Faculty: Issues Related to the Profession" in a special issue of *College English*. In the spring of 2011 she also co-planned a highly successful workshop at UNO (along with Kristen Girten and Tammie Kennedy) on "Embodied Learning" and presented her paper, "Embodied Rhetoric in Digital Writing," at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. More recently she helped edit UNO's new composition text, *From the Heartland: Critical Reading and Writing at UNO*. She also serves on the editorial board of the journal *The JUMP: Journal of Undergraduate Multimedia Projects*.

In addition to his duties as Chair of the Department of English, **Bob Darcy** found time to travel to Prague in the summer of 2011 for the World Shakespeare Congress, where his paper on Shakespeare's sonnets was so well-received that it was chosen for inclusion in the published conference proceedings. He has also attended two recent annual meetings of the Shakespeare Association of America, in Boston and Chicago.

Ken Flint frequently writes novels about Celtic myth and history; during the past two years, twelve of those novels have been made available in e-book form.

Tanushree Ghosh has an article forthcoming in the prestigious journal *Victorian Literature and Culture* entitled "Gifting Pain: The Pleasures of Liberal Guilt in *London, a Pilgrimage* and *Street Life in London*." She also recently presented her paper, "Liberal Publics and Their Victims: Late-Victorian Journalism and the Reformist Melodramas of George Sims and Andrew Mearns," at the annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in Austin.

Kristen Girten has had two full-length articles accepted for publication in *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretations*. They are: "Charlotte Smith's Tactile Poetics" and "Mingling with Matter: Tactile Microscopy and the Philosophic Mind in *Brobdingnag* and *Beyond*." She also presented her papers, "A Touching Sublime" and "States of Suspension, Mechanisms of Mindfulness, and the Power of the Self in Ann Radcliffe's Gothic" at the two most recent annual conferences of the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies, held in Vancouver and San Antonio. She was very pleased to be awarded a UNO Summer Research Fellowship in 2012.

Ramón Guerra in the spring of 2012 coordinated a service learning project involving his "Introduction to Latino/a Studies" class at UNO and El Museo Latino in South Omaha. In March, he presented his paper, "Latino Engagement and Empowerment in Omaha, Nebraska: An Ongoing Educational Development Program for Latino Detainees Awaiting Deportation," at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies conference in Chicago. More recently, he was invited to deliver a lecture at Creighton in September entitled, "Testimonios: Voicing Our History," as part of their Latino Heritage Month programming.

FACULTY NEWS, continued

Chuck Johanningsmeier was honored to be named by the English Department as the Jefferis Endowed Chair of English for 2011-2014, in recognition of his research activities. He was very pleased, too, to receive the University of Nebraska at Omaha Excellence in Teaching Award for 2011. Last spring he was further honored to be chosen as an invited speaker in the Joseph S. Schick Lectures in Language, Literature, and Lexicography series at Indiana State University; in April he delivered his lecture on "Realism, Naturalism, and American Public Libraries, 1870-1900." Johanningsmeier has also been elected to serve on the boards of governors of both the Willa Cather Foundation and the Nebraska Center for the Book; in both capacities he is getting UNO's faculty and students further involved in promoting literary culture in Nebraska. At the national level, he recently finished a three-year term as a peer reviewer of faculty fellowships for the Fulbright Program for the international exchange of scholars, based in Washington, D.C. Locally, he serves as a teaching circle leader for the MetLink program, sponsored by UNO's College of Education, which mentors high school English teachers in the early years of their careers. In addition to a number of conference publications, Johanningsmeier has published the following articles: "A Newly-Discovered Norris Newspaper Publication Sheds Light on His Work at McClure's" in *Studies in American Naturalism*; "Focusing on Cather's Readers, Past and Present" in the *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review*; "Understanding Readers of Fiction in American Periodicals, 1880-1914" in *U.S. Popular Print Culture 1860-1920* (Oxford UP, 2011); and "Naturalist Authors and the American Literary Marketplace" in *Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism* (Oxford UP, 2011).

Al Kammerer won the Willa Pilla Award for the best work of Western American humor presented at the Western Literature Association's annual conference held in Prescott, Arizona.

Tammie Kennedy has a number of recent publications to her credit. In

addition to her work on UNO's very own new first-year writing textbook, she has published "Reading, Writing, and Thinking about Disability Issues" in *English Journal*; "Mary Magdalene and the Politics of Public Memory: Interrogating *The Da Vinci Code*" in *Feminist Formations*; and "Dead Babies Photo" in *Brevity: A Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction*. See elsewhere in this newsletter for information about Kennedy's work with UNO's Women's Archive Project.

Jody Keisner not only wrote *NEBRASKAland* magazine's first published fiction, "The Grasshoppers" (July 2011), but has published three personal essays, "Stray Pets," "MORESOMES," and "Josie's Puppies," in the journals *Fertile Source*, *SNReview*, and *Left Hand Waving*, respectively.

Lisa Knopp's latest book, *What the River Carries: Encounters with the Mississippi, Missouri, and Platte*, was published in spring 2012 by the University of Missouri Press. One online reviewer commented positively about this work: "Insightful, personal, and informative of humanity's long interaction with flowing water." In addition to her usual busy schedule of readings and presentations throughout Nebraska, Knopp made a number of appearances last summer to read from her latest book. She also, last spring, was invited to lead a Creative Nonfiction Workshop at the Nebraska Book Festival, which was very well attended by aspiring local writers. Finally, Knopp has published a diverse group of essays, including "Catfish Bend" in *Natural Bridge: A Journal of Contemporary Literature*; "Missouri River Music" in *South Dakota Review*, and "Restorations" in *North Dakota Quarterly*.

Joan Latchaw gave a presentation at the Omaha Public Library on writer Maurice Sendak as part of a celebration of his works. She also last summer attended a conference / workshop at Western Gallilee College in northern Israel, one of UNO's sister institutions. As a result of that conference, she is partnering with Dr. Bethe Schoenfeld of

Western Gallilee College and Dr. Dina David from Indiana University - Purdue University - Indianapolis to create a month-long unit for their introductory composition courses, in which students from each of the three campuses will communicate with each other and exchange information. She also spent time in Nicaragua last summer, along with **Frank Bramlett**, strengthening UNO's institutional ties there.

Elizabeth Mack was awarded a Moondancer Fellowship for Nature and Outdoor Writing last spring, which afforded her a one-month residency at The Writing Colony at Dairy Hollow in the Ozarks.

Matthew Marx received an Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award last spring in recognition of his innovative course design work and the extremely positive reaction to these courses among students. Last March, he delivered a lecture for the UNOrthodox Speakers Series on how we can more fully understand the concept of Paradox by simultaneously studying poetry and physics. As a perfect example of the interdisciplinarity of his courses, Marx is currently teaching an Honors Colloquium on "The Nature of Truth," which explores how the concept of Truth is regarded from the viewpoints of philosophy, religion, history, psychology, mathematics, and physics. And in the midst of all this, he somehow had time to get married last May!

Owen Mordaunt has published two very different articles recently: "Bidialectalism in the Classroom: The Case of African-American English," in *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*; and "Vocalization of (and Vocalization on) Sandhill Cranes, in *Platte Valley Review*. In addition, he published two poems, "The Barn" and "The Delta," in *The Atrium: A Journal of Academic Voices*.

David Peterson, in addition to making a number of conference presentations, has published one article, a review essay, and a book chapter recently. "Neoliberal Homophobia: Heteronormative Human

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Capital and the Exclusion of Queer Subject-Citizens” appeared in *Journal of Homosexuality*; “New West or Old: Men and Masculinity in Recent Fiction by Western American Men,” which provides a valuable overview of the topic, came out in *Western American Literature*; and “Tragicomedy and Zikkaron in Mel Brooks’s *To Be or Not to Be*” (co-authored with Joan Latchaw), which was published in the collection *Jews and Humor*.

John Price was extremely pleased to see his award-winning literary memoir, *Man Killed by Pheasant and Other Kinships*, released in paperback by the University of Iowa Press last spring. His latest memoir, *Daddy Long Legs: The Natural Education of a Father*, will be published in spring 2013. In a departure from what most English professors do, he also wrote the script for a film, “The Iowa Loess Hills,” that is shown to visitors at the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway Interpretive Center in Missouri Valley, Iowa. What has kept Price especially busy has been his long list of invited readings and appearances at various conferences: in the past two years he has given 13 readings and made 6 conference presentations.

Barbara Robins was awarded a grant from UNO’s University Committee on Research and Creative Activity this past summer to travel to Washington, D.C. for her ongoing research project on Native American responses to 9/11. She also has been doing a good bit of blogging for Wellbound Storytellers, sharing her thoughts about the relationship between art and healing. She is currently working on creating an Elder’s Page on this group’s blog that will focus on wisdom shared by elders about health issues.

UNO Women’s Archive Project Celebrates Premiere

On September 14, over 70 people gathered at the Thompson Alumni Center to celebrate the official premiere of the UNO Women’s Archive Project, the culmination of five years’ worth of planning and hard work.

In 2007, Dr. Susan Maher, then Chair of the English Department, proposed that as part of UNO’s Centennial Celebration, the contributions of women to UNO’s history should be documented and disseminated for all to learn about. Originally the plan for what was then known as the “Women’s Centennial Archive Project” was to have 100 profiles of women at UNO, one profile for each year of the institution’s existence. Dr. Maher soon got others onboard with the project, including Dr. Karen Falconer Al-Hindi, Chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, and Paul Sather, Director of UNO’s Service Learning Academy. Other sponsors were soon enlisted, and the research began.

When Dr. Maher left UNO to take a Dean position at the University of Minnesota - Duluth in 2010, two of her colleagues in the English Department, Tammie Kennedy and Tracy Bridgeford, took over as co-editors of what has become the Women’s Archive Project. The new name and updated website design reflect the longevity of the project and a more impressive multimedia format. Kennedy and Bridgeford were able to get numerous English majors and graduate students, some from their classes, involved in learning about women’s history at UNO. As Kennedy notes, “Students

enrolled in my ‘Researching and Writing Women’s Lives’ course, or working as interns with Dr. Bridgeford, culled through UNO yearbooks, issues of the *Gateway*, alumni lists, and archival boxes,” and talked “to faculty, family, and community members to identify a UNO woman, alive or deceased, ‘famous’ or ‘ordinary,’ whom they wanted to profile on the WAP website.” Les Valentine, University Archivist, greatly assisted all of those writing profiles by helping them find what they needed in the UNO archives housed in the Criss Library.

The experience gained by these students in creating the website has been both exciting and valuable. Recent graduate Nicole White states that “It has been a thrilling adventure to study and recover a UNO woman’s story. I feel like I am capable of effecting change on the past and future simultaneously.” The WAP profile stories are wonderfully diverse, ranging from those about the first African American graduate to a Holocaust survivor, a children’s librarian, a Native American activist, and a deaf culture advocate. One graduate student in Technical Communication, Michael Williams, augmented his own credentials by designing a virtual photo gallery for the site with 3D animation software.

The legacy of all the editors’ and students’ work – as well as the contributions of numerous women to UNO – can be found at the Women’s Archive Project website: <wap.lib.unomaha.edu>. Check it out!

English Major Chosen to Speak at College of Arts & Sciences Commencement



Last spring, UNO held not only one large convocation ceremony for all those graduating, but also individual commencement ceremonies for each college. Highlighting the ceremony for the College of Arts and Sciences was the address of Erica Hengelfelt (now Trabold) to the graduates. She was chosen from among a good number of aspirants, all of whom had to give a “tryout” speech in front of a panel of judges.

In her address, Hengelfelt began by citing a quotation from writer Joan Didion, who once said, “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.” Hengelfelt opined that “our stories help us continue to *live* in a world filled with both hardship and constant wonder.” She also recounted her path to the English major, and noted that “With the help of my professors and faculty mentors, I took interest in new subjects and sifted through a mountain of passions to find my future career. . . . This kind of revelation is a significant moment in every story.”

“We are well on our way toward becoming what we once only dreamed,” Hengelfelt told the audience, and added that as they embark on creating their own new stories, “Challenges await, but don’t let that scare you. The most interesting narratives involve obstacles and the protagonist’s will to overcome.”

Student Achievements

Jeremiah Dohn published “A Beautiful Rose” in the online *Journal of Undergraduate Multimedia Projects*. He also won a prestigious FUSE (Fund for Undergraduate Scholarly Experiences) grant from UNO’s Sponsored Programs to support a research project, carried out under the supervision of Dr. Owen Mordaunt, entitled “An Attitudinal Study of Francophones: The Prescriptivist and Descriptivist Binary in Relation to Dialects and Identity.”

Bryce Journey reports that his poem “I Heard a Mighty Crash,” inspired by his cat Arwen, “the klutziest feline in the world,” was published recently in *Apropos* magazine.

Everett Levison won first place in the undergraduate research category at UNO’s 3rd annual Student Research and Creative Activity Fair for his presentation, “What Conversation Analysis Reveals about Turn-Taking Organization and Its Role in African American English.”

Linda Pawlenty (Rogge) published her essay, “The Songs of Things,” in the summer 2011 issue of *Fine Lines*.

Amanda Sheridan published “Jesse James and Me” in the online *Journal of Undergraduate Multimedia Projects*.

James Vnuk was awarded a Competitive Graduate Fellowship of \$1,000 for summer 2012 to support his studies.

Holly Wilson also was awarded a FUSE (Fund for Undergraduate Scholarly Experiences) grant from UNO’s Sponsored Programs, in her case to support a project entitled “The Interior Land of Chronic Pain”; her mentor is Dr. John Price.

Suzanne Withem was recently selected as UNO’s nominee for the master’s degree level Excellence in Teaching Award; although she did not win the regional award, this is still a great honor. To compete, Withem had to create a teaching portfolio that included numerous pieces of evidence that demonstrated her excellent teaching. In recognition of her achievement, Withem was selected to serve as the Graduate Student Marshall for the December 2012 Commencement ceremony.

A Life-Altering Field Trip

When M.A. student Kinley Hadden (M.A. 2011) and her husband Nathan went on a field trip in the spring of 2011 to Red Cloud, Nebraska, as part of Chuck Johanningsmeier’s graduate seminar on Willa Cather, little did even they know how influential that trip would be on their lives. Kinley recounts that the seminar – which included a trip to the Cather archive at UNL’s Archives and Special Collections – helped her “feel very connected to Cather.” Shortly after the seminar concluded, they learned that they would soon be welcoming a baby girl into the world. As Kinley relates, “I convinced my husband that we had to name our daughter Willela (Cather’s actual first name) with a promise that she would be called ‘Willa.’” Baby Willa was born in February 2012, and in early December, she was a hit at an event held at The Bookworm in Omaha on the occasion of Willa Cather’s birthday (Chuck Johanningsmeier shared his much less interesting collection of Cather first editions and read selections from her works). After being admired by numerous attendees, Willa Hadden had to leave (naptime awaited!), but Kinley states, “I look forward to sharing Cather’s works with her someday!”

Kudos to Our Presidential Fellowship Winner!!!

Scott Aichinger, a current M.A. student, was named as one of the University of Nebraska system’s seven Presidential Fellows for the 2012-2013 academic year. The Presidential Fellowship, which pays all of a graduate student’s tuition for an entire academic year as well as a \$12,000 stipend, is one of the most prestigious awards made by the University of Nebraska to students. UNO’s English Department has had great success in having its nominees become winners of the award: since 1993, eight of our graduate students have been named Presidential Fellows. This award has allowed Aichinger to work full-time on his thesis, entitled “Sediment: Brittle and Fallible Memory,” a collection of essays whose common thread, he says, is “celebrating faulty memory.” He plans to graduate from UNO in May 2013 and enter a Ph.D. program shortly thereafter in order to pursue his dream of becoming a professor. Way to go, Scott!

Fine Lines Literary Magazine Has a Long Tradition

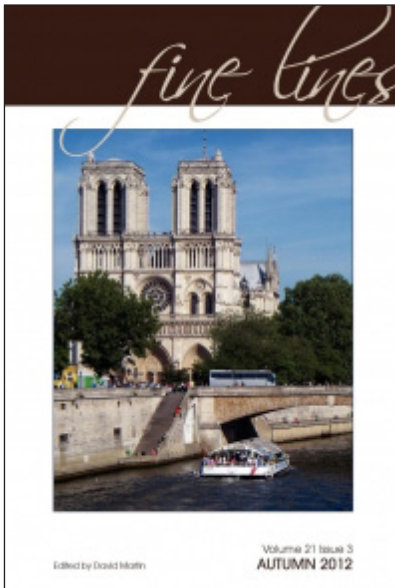
Not many literary magazines can trace their origins to a high school cross-country practice. But that's precisely where *Fine Lines*, one of Nebraska's premier outlets for creative writing, began. Dave Martin, now the editor of *Fine Lines*, was a cross-country coach at Central High in 1991 when his principal stopped by to tell him that he was being assigned to teach a remedial writing course, beginning in just three days.

As Martin recalls, this course had a reputation as the "class from hell," because "every hooligan and outlaw at Central was in it." Yet, Martin notes that teaching these students – all of whom had experienced difficulty learning in regular English classes – was, in the end, "an eye-opening and humbling experience."

Recognizing almost immediately that the techniques he was using successfully in his other English classes weren't going to work with the students in his new class, Martin decided to turn it into a writing workshop. He challenged the students to each write ten pages per week. In the workshop sessions at which they all shared their work with each other, Martin saw some real talent and wanted the students to know that their writing was valued. So, in an age when five of the nine computers in the school were in administration offices, he set out to learn a simple form of Desktop Publishing. Before long, he was publishing a two-page newsletter of his students' writings. Eventually, with support from a variety of sources and a growing list of contributors, *Fine Lines* began to expand: first four pages, then eight, then sixteen, and so forth. For the first 10-11 years of the magazine's existence, Martin himself paid all the publishing costs. Then he filed for non-profit 501(c) status, which has allowed him to solicit charitable donations from "angel" supporters who believe

in the mission of the magazine. More recently, *Fine Lines* has been published by WriteLife, LLC, a collaborative publishing company founded by Dr. Rodney Markin at UNMC (see <www.writelife.com>).

What makes *Fine Lines* so remarkable is its breadth and variety. Contributors are of all ages, from



students in elementary school to retirees. They come from all over the country and the world. And the 250 pages of each issue are filled, four times a year, with excellent examples of a wide range of genres, including poetry, creative nonfiction, expository essays, fiction, memoir, and photography, to name just some of the most prevalent.

The rationale for creating such an inclusive publication was forged early on in Martin's class at Central High. He believes that every person has a story to tell, and that telling this story will lead to writing fluency. This approach certainly worked with a great number of Central High students, many of whom, Martin says, have gone on to lead productive lives instead of dropping out of high school, which statistics show usually leads to a difficult economic future. What Martin is most proud of about *Fine Lines* is that it has given all of its contributing writers a forum to

tell their stories, and, in the process, feel as if their lives are important. Countless students, he says, have over the years told him how writing has changed their lives; "The process of writing is wonderfully transformative," he concludes.

Martin, not one to "retire" from championing this power of writing, has expanded his efforts to include a summer Writing Camp for Writers. It began in 1998, when eight young writers from the 4th - 6th grade met over the summer at the Barnes & Noble store in Crossroads Mall to learn writing techniques and share their writing with others. This past summer, 150 people, from 3rd graders to someone 75 years old, took part in the week-long Writing Camp, which is now held at Beveridge Middle School. Each day, these writers – divided into groups according to age and ability – met from 8:30 a.m. to noon not only to learn about writing and workshop their pieces with their fellow writers, but also to hear from guest speakers who are writers themselves. Martin has been keen to get UNO students involved in the effort; this past summer 5 of the 18 student workers at the camp were UNO students, and he also had a UNO student intern helping him.

Martin, who has been teaching part-time at UNO since 1982, even while holding full-time jobs at different high schools in Omaha, and who last year won a UNO Excellence in Teaching Award for Part-Time Faculty, is clearly a life-long educator who is dedicated to making as many people as possible aware of the importance of written language. We at UNO, as well as countless educators and writers, owe a huge debt of thanks to him for founding and editing *Fine Lines*, because it has given so many people the encouragement they have needed to tell their own stories and become more confident writers.

Joe Price, Master of Ceremonies

For UNO's graduation ceremonies last May 4th, it was decided to bring all of the events back to campus, thereby breaking a long tradition of having them take place at the Civic Auditorium downtown. As one might imagine, turning the vision of multiple ceremonies for all the colleges at UNO, as well as one large ceremony at Al Caniglia Field, into reality took a great deal of time and effort on the part of many people.

One of those people was the English Department's own Coordinator, Joe Price. Over a year before the ceremonies would take place, Price in the spring of 2011 started attending meetings of the College of Arts and Sciences Commencement Advisory Committee – made up of staff, students, faculty, and alumni – to help plan what everyone knew would be a huge endeavor. As part of this planning, Price was part of a fact-finding group that traveled to the University of Mississippi in May 2011 to see how they organized their graduation activities. Serendipitously for all involved, Price, who is working

on a Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies at UNL, needed as part of his degree program to complete an internship relevant to his field. This internship requirement stipulated that the student needed to carry out 135 hours of logged field work. He says now, with a chuckle and a smile, "I stopped counting at 240 hours."

Price became the "Graduation Point Person" for the College of Arts and Sciences (each college had someone playing a similar role). For the entire year leading up to the College of Arts and Sciences graduation in the Pep Bowl, Price served as the liaison between the University's Graduation Weekend Committee and the Deans' Forum, recruited a large group of CAS volunteers, and organized the three CAS receptions located in CAS's three buildings on Friday. In addition, he trained the volunteers, crafted invitations and informational letters to all graduates, documented the activities for future use, and made contingency plans for an indoor ceremony if the weather did not

cooperate.

In fact, that was one of Price's biggest concerns: the weather. Early May in Nebraska can bring quite unpredictable conditions. To get some idea of what to expect, Price looked at weather histories for Omaha on the first weekend in May for the previous 30 years. And then, when April 2012 brought lots of rain, Price worried about all kinds of things, including whether the folding chairs would sink into the ground. Thankfully, it didn't rain on May 4 – but weather was still an issue, as it was extraordinarily hot on that day. Nonetheless, thanks to the careful planning of Price and others, as well as the volunteer hours put in by people from the English Department such as Staff Assistant Jill Sutton and graduate students Scott Aichinger and Ryan Grandick, the ceremony was beautiful.

Price's final take on his year-long effort? "It was worth it to see it all go off without a hitch, and to see graduating students, their parents, and others so happy."

New UNO Course Takes Students to Ireland

The English Department launched a new study abroad initiative to Ireland this past summer. Co-taught by Lisabeth Buchelt and David Peterson, the course, "English 4960 / 8966: Irish Literature and Culture," took eight undergraduate (Rachel Brugman, Alexandra Finochiaro, Niki Holzapfel, Tiffany Jones, Margaret Novotny, Stephanie Parada, Erin Solheim, and Jordan Swett) and two graduate students (Deana Rainey and Pamela Wolford) through over 1500 years

of Irish literature, history, and music, culminating with a 14-day trip to Ireland. Students spent 15 days in class here at UNO before departing for Ireland, where in addition to attending a number of instructional sessions, they toured throughout the island. Drawing on the expertise of Hugh Reilly from UNO's School of Communication, the group visited Dublin, Killarney, the Dingle peninsula, Galway, Inis Mór, and Sligo. Highlights included seeing the Book of Kells,

taking a personalized tour through Connemara with the chair of the Irish Language Department at the National University of Ireland at Galway, and visiting Kilmainham Gaol, the National Gallery in Dublin, the Glendalough monastic site, the famine graveyard near Cobh, Yeats's grave, the 5000-year-old megalithic site of Newgrange, and the Cliffs of Moher. Students were universally enthusiastic about this exciting, innovative course, one that it is hoped will serve as a model for future course offerings.

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Alumni News

Amanda (Linder) Hackwith (M.A. 2007) has published her first book, *Freelance Confidential: The Whole Truth on Successful Freelancing*, with Rockable Press.

Travis Heermann (M.A. 2010) has published two novels in recent years. His first, *Heart of Ronin*, came out in 2009, and his second, *The Wild Boys* (co-authored with Kim Richards and Cinsearae Santiago) was released in December 2012; Barnes & Noble at Oakview Mall hosted a release event for the latter book.

Tyler Holzer (M.A. 2010) lives in Brooklyn, NY, where he not only works as a freelance editor but also teaches adult education classes at the New York City College of Technology and at the Fifth Avenue Committee, a nonprofit community outreach organization servicing south Brooklyn.

Andy Oerman (M.A. 2007) has also published his first book recently, under the pseudonym "A. Rex." The book's title is *The Big Wrap-Up*, and it is available as an e-book on amazon.com.

Kyle Simonsen (M.A. 2010) put his UNO internship at the University of Nebraska Press to good use; he was subsequently hired by the Press, where he now holds the position of Assistant Project Editor.

Michael Sheldon (B.A. 1973) is currently a Professor of English at Indiana State University. His much-anticipated biography, *Young Titan: The Making of Winston Churchill*, will be published by Simon and Schuster in March 2013. It is already garnering praise in advance of publication for the ways in which it documents Churchill's early years and shows how these experiences affected his later career.

Janet (Voelte) Staiger (B.A. 1968) earned her M.A. in literature at Purdue University in 1969, then returned to UNO to teach in the remedial English program, run by Virginia Frank, until 1972. She subsequently earned her Ph.D. in Communication Arts and went on to an illustrious career. Currently she is the William P. Hobby Centennial Professor of Communication at the University of Texas - Austin. In addition to noting that she was the editor of the final yearbook of Omaha University, she also writes that she has great memories of former English Department faculty members Robert Harper, Ralph Wardle, Virginia Frank, and Tom Walsh.

Hanna Starkel (B.A. 2009) is now living in San Francisco and doing public relations work for a Bay Area women's group. She also enjoys the very un-Nebraska activities of mountain biking and surfing!