

Pen & Ink: Notes from the NDSU Department of English

Greetings from the Chair.

I hope you are pleasantly surprised to receive a newsletter from the English department, because we plan to send you four a year. I've learned in my 14 years at NDSU that time slips away quickly, and we in the department would like to start doing a better job of staying in touch and keeping all of you connected with one another.

Of course there is Facebook for that sort of thing and you can search for our page under NDSU Department of English.

But a newsletter allows for stories like the Minard collapse, profiles, even if they have to carry the sad news about David Martinson's passing last spring, and the bigger picture of department activities, like the awards, accomplishments, and

events all featured in this first issue of *Pen & Ink*.

If you would like to request a story or profile for future issues, please contact our writer / editor (and alum), Tina Young. If you'd like to share any fond memories of the department, courses, friends and teachers, I'd love to hear

them. If you have stories to tell of how your degree in English or English Education has positively impacted your career and your life, I'd like to hear those stories too. We are always in the position of having to explain to others on campus the value of an English degree, and concrete examples from our own graduates are the best evidence we have to offer.

The best feature of the English department at NDSU has always been the quality people—from students to staff and faculty members. Let's keep in touch, share our news, and expand the sphere of influence of English majors everywhere!

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English Club Creates a Surrounding of Cultural Diversity Full Circles

of the idea's co-founders Michael Bashford and Joshua Anderson and the English Club President and members Jade Sandbulte and Vivek Mathew. Through their work at the Center for Writers, these four students saw the need to bridge the language gap between native and non-native English speakers. The function of these Conversational English Circles is turning out to be larger than their name implies and

since its inception date of Sept. 15, 2010, the Club has not only begun to build a bridge spanning the language gap, but they've found a way to crack through cultural barriers as well.

Josh Anderson and Jade Sandbulte believe miscommunication issues are amplified because we live in an electronic and digital age where there is a lack of face-to-face interaction. Sandbulte observes that "a significant part of understanding another person's communication is done through non-verbal cues and a telephone calls have no non-

verbal cues." This lack of non-verbal cues has become a main focus of their weekly meetings and is often explored using a game of "telephone."

Their meetings are held every Thursday from 7 to 9 upstairs in the Memorial Union, and a typical CEC gathering includes six or seven native English speakers and 40 to 50 non-native speakers. Their conversation topics range from "how-to" subjects and holidays to slang and cultural word phrases. For the duration of a meeting, each native English speaker monitors a smaller circle of non-native speakers on the weekly focal topic. Vivek Mathew clarifies the process using the subject of "Spring Holidays." A brief synopsis of Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Easter is given to the entire group. Mathew then explains they break into small circles for a round-table conversation "in hopes that the participants with a Chinese background would add their personal experiences or traditions about the Chinese New Year to the discussion. The discussion moves on to Diwali which is Hinduism's five-day Festival of Lights, and Ramadan, Islam's month of fasting followed by a discussion on the three-day festival of Eid."

While discussing holidays invokes a

different set of personal experience and knowledge than would a discussion on the subject of "how-to-dress for winter" or the idiom "cool," the discussions all serve the English Club's main goal: to learn as much as about the other participants as they are learning about you. The purpose of language and communication is to share ALL knowledge and experience, but when you have language differences, that sense of community sharing is hampered. CEC has begun spanning those language gaps and breaking down those cultural barriers in small circles. They've continued to grow those circles of students and faculty. They've now become circles of individuals, experiences and friendships. They've become full circles.

They come together from all over the world to speak; not for a panel symposium, not to a board room of executives, not in a political forum, but to merely speak to each other. Why? What keeps them returning week after week? Conversations – face-to-face conversations. Thanks to the NDSU English Club, groups of 50 to 60 undergraduates, graduate students and faculty shut off their iPods, iPads, and laptops and gather to talk in Conversational English Circles (CEC).

The creation of CEC was made possible through the cooperation

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His Passion for all things Poetic — *Our David Martinson*



David Keith Martinson
May 13, 1946 ~ May 9, 2010
"One of Ours"

David Martinson was passionate about the arts, in any form, and especially for those arts with ties to the region. His passion for the region made him stand out from it, yet also made him one with it. This region and its people belonged to David and in return, he became *one of ours*. For over 25 years, he was

our artist, our collector, our mentor, and was always *our poet*.

Poetry — publishing it, reading it, speaking it, teaching it, writing it — David's first passion was poetry. He allowed his poetry to reflect every aspect of his thoughts, his revelations and his observations. In his poems,

"Neglected Ladders," "Western Waters," a North Dakota "Windbreak," and especially in his "History of the Civilization I Walked Into" he finds a greater good. David writes, "Flame/cinder/ash // ah, tinder/laid low/you become/useful." He saw poetry in the mundane and used his powerful words to mirror his passion for the bigger picture. In his journal, *Aluminum Canoe*, David published many regional poets like Robert Bly and his mentor Thomas McGrath, but David did more than publish poetry; he lived his life as poetry, personified.

As McGrath was his inspiration, David inspired others through every course he taught, every reading he led, every word he wrote, and every book he collected. Great Northern Books, the small bookstore on Fargo's North Broadway, is the epitome of everything David valued: regional artwork, collectable books, regional writings and history. His friend and colleague, Jean Strandness recalls, "David was an exceptional man and the bookstore was filled with exceptional things." While he treasured all of his collections, David intended for the store to be one focus of his and, his wife,

Carol's retirement. It was a place to continue his collecting and his writing. This bookstore is a repository of regional book knowledge and history. Great Northern Books is the combination and accumulation of David's life passions. He loved his life, he loved his wife, he loved his heritage, he loved books, he loved art, and he loved poetry.

David's passion for life went beyond living it. He felt life should be more than seen and heard — that it needed to be experienced from every sensory angle and direction. Thomas McGrath writes in the forward to *Bleeding the Radiator*, that David Martinson "goes on searching for 'something not yet named.' ... which allows him to see unexpected relationships between things. All poets must have some of this—Martinson has a lot. We have to stretch to follow him."

Hours Alone

A small room in my chest
begins to move
out until it holds
a road into the winter.

It carried me, this road
to women, fire and storm.
Parallel dreams of leaf and root
pastured in this house.

This fire in the snow,
this needle in the river
gives me now these words:
burn the candle for another.

Room enough for more,
room for you, companion.
Together or alone
the road asks you to enter.

By David Martinson from
Bleeding the Radiator, 1974.

Flowerherding on St. Croix

I came to this place to love
the hollows with no light at all,
the night with no sound,
the river rising in my veins.

Heron on the water guide me here.
I let it happen. I love my life.
When the heron led me high above the water
I never once looked back.

Rain falls on the river,
steam rises from goatsbeard and onion,
and something not yet named
calls the crickets from sleep.

By David Martinson from *Bleeding the Radiator*, 1974.

2010 Awards, Honors, and Recognitions

Karen Sorensen, Graduate Teaching Instructor, was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi (along with Becca Hayes Mellem) in November. Phi Kappa Phi is an invitation-only academic international honor society which requires grad students to have a 4.0 and be in the top 10% of all grad students in all programs across campus. Sorensen was also a featured student on the NDSU homepage for January 2011.

The English Department Graduate Committee recognized Erik Kornkven, Graduate Teaching Instructor, for his dedication to student engagement and growth with the Graduate Teaching Award of \$100. They also awarded Rebecca Oster, the \$100 Graduate Paper Award for her submission

entitled, "Telling the Story: Searching for Home in Louis Owens's Dark River."

Professor Dale Sullivan was the recipient of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Educator Award. Dr. Kevin Brooks was awarded the AHSS Research Award, and Associate Professor Miriam Mara received the AHSS Teaching Award.

The NDSU Dakota Studies Initiative, whose members include English Department faculty Clifford Canku, Dale Sullivan, Bruce Maylath and Kelly Sassi, received the 2010 Impact Award, from the President's Diversity Council, which recognized their contribution to advancing diversity through

positive interactions with others, along with a respect and value for differing backgrounds and points of view inside and outside of NDSU.

Clifford Canku and Bruce Maylath have been receiving very good press for their work translating 150 letters written by the Dakota prisoners following the Dakota Conflict in 1862. Their work has been featured on Minnesota Public Radio and local television stations. Maylath and Canku plan to publish 50 of the letters in book form with the original Dakota language, the literal translation, and the contemporary English explanation.

Congratulations to all of those mentioned here! The department is proud of your accomplishments.

For Further Reading: 2010 Faculty Publications

The department congratulates the following professors for the publication of their research:

Mara, Miriam. "Almost There: The Search for Global Irishness in Nuala O'Faolain" *Redefinitions of Irish Identity in the Twenty-First Century: A Postnational Approach* eds Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Carmen Zamorano Llena. Peter Lang Publishing, November 2010.

---. "Just this *Once*: Urban Ireland in Film." *Irish Studies Review* 18:4 (2010): 427-438.

---. "Reading the Landscape for Clues: Environment in Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha." *Out of the Earth: Ecocritical Readings of Irish Texts* Ed Christine Cusick. Cork UP, 3 June 2010: 178-188.

---. "Spreading the (Dis)ease: Gardasil and the Gendering of HPV."

Feminist Formations (formerly *National Women's Studies Association Journal*), 22:2 (2010): 124-143.

Maylath, Bruce, John Humbley, Birthe Moustén and Sonia Vandepitte. "Learning Localization through Trans-Atlantic Collaboration: Bridging the Gap between Professions." *IEEE-Transactions in Professional Communication*. December 2010.

Sullivan, Dale, Bruce Maylath and Russel Hirst, eds. *Revisiting the Past through Rhetorics of Memory and Amnesia: Selected Papers from the 50th Meeting of the Linguistic Circle of Manitoba and North Dakota*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

Totten, Gary. "Naturalism's Histories." *Studies in American Naturalism*. Guest Ed. Gary Totten. Special Issue. 5.1 (2010).

Flash Forward: Upcoming Events

The 2011 David Martinson Broadside Workshop will run Wednesday, March 9 through Friday, March 11 and will feature poet, artist and press owner Dr. Stephen Frech. Become privy to the process of transforming poetry into a visual art form. For complete details go to: http://english.ndsu.edu/news_and_events/.

The 2011 Red River Graduate Student Conference: Finding an Audience will be held Friday March 25 and Saturday March 26. This is the 8th annual RRGSC hosted by the NDSU Graduate Students. Since it's modest beginnings, the range of participants has

expanded to include thirteen schools throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota as well as Manitoba and Massachusetts.

The Spring 2011 Departmental Awards Luncheon is slated for Thursday, May 5th from 12 to 1:30pm in Memorial Union's Arikara Room.

Each summer, the English Department invites a well-recognized national scholar to teach an intensive one-week summer graduate course.

In 2009, the summer scholar was Anne Ruggles Gere from the University of Michigan. Malea Powell of Michigan State University was featured in 2010. This year Rebecca Weaver Hightower, an Associate Professor of English specializing in postcolonial studies at the University of North Dakota will be teaching the course entitled, "Frontier Fictions." Her current work analyzes Australian, South African, Canadian and U.S. frontier literatures for how certain stories helped those cultures to process the guilt from the displacement of indigenous peoples during colonial settlement. Hightower's intensive course is scheduled for June 13 through June 25 and will include analysis of several different texts and film.



Minard Hall: Homeward Bound

For longer than most people can remember the English Department at NDSU has been at home in the building originally dubbed Science Hall. The structure's current namesake, Archibald Ellsworth Minard joined the North Dakota Agricultural College (NDAC) faculty for teaching English and Philosophy in 1904. A.E. Minard went on to become head of the English Department and also served as Dean of the School of Applied Arts and Sciences for 30 years. As A.E. Minard was one of the first instructors of English in the college, it's truly fitting for the physical home of the English department to be in the structure which, in 1951, was re-dedicated as Minard Hall.

Past professors and instructors may recall the brown-paneled walls, the circuitous hallway surrounding the central library and conference room, and the interior offices where few plants could grow. The teaching assistants might remember the tiny office spaces housing five to eight people and holding conferences in the hallway of 3rd floor Minard because of those spatial constraints. But what will stand out for most are the memories of the people: the people who shaped students into scholars, the people who shared confined spaces and made room in their lives for new friends and colleagues. It's those people who transformed a work space into a life space. And while the faces of those people changed, the space itself remained fairly constant.



Science Hall circa 1908
Photo courtesy of NDSU University Archives

Yet nothing remains unchanged forever. Originally built in 1901 and designated Sci-



Minard's north face after collapse in December 2009

ences, she doesn't look forward to going back to Minard while the construction is on-going, but "once Minard has been complete and there's no hammering, digging, etc. going on, then I imagine a move will be good, something that will bring the department back together — I feel a bit disconnected from my colleagues

ence Hall the building has undergone several remodeling projects and additions in the past 100 years, and to keep up with growing enrollment, the expansion of Minard Hall began again in the fall of 2009. However on December 27, 2009 change came crashing down on the NDSU English Department. For a department whose only other home in nearly 110 years was Old Main from 1891 to 1901, this change was incomprehensible. In one night, a visible crack formed, everything shifted, and the walls collapsed, thus exposing the heart of a home that had existed for over a century. It was traumatic for the entire department, but for those professors whose offices were exposed to the elements it was inconceivable, unthinkable, and nearly impossible to deal with. As former NDSU student, Brian Gill observed, "It's one thing for a student to say, 'the dog ate my homework.' It's something else for a professor to have to say, 'a building fell on your project.'" After about a week and a half, English Department personnel were allowed into Minard once, but there was no electricity at that time and very little removal was being allowed. Those with offices in the "red zone" were not allowed in their offices at all, so they couldn't even assess their damages. Everyone was homeless; their offices were inaccessible and they had no formal meeting area. Dale Sullivan, the department chair at that time, recalls, "we would come in, do our business, meet briefly in the union and then try to negotiate from home. This 'not having a

place' continued through the first half of January." The department was allowed to move into the unfinished spaces on 2nd floor Morrill Hall about a week before the semester began.

Every hardship seems to bring forth a hero, and Michele Sherman, the department's administrative assistant, rose through the rubble to become a heroine. She transitioned the department from the disaster area to its interim location despite the ongoing frustrations of the move along with the day to day needs of the department. Keep in mind, the beginning of the 2010 Spring semester kicked off at 4 pm on Monday, January 11th. Running a department smoothly under normal conditions is difficult enough, but under the extreme duress of this dislocation, Sherman showed unspeakable coolness, courage and charisma. For her efforts, Sherman received the 2010 University Service Award Recognition in Office Support.

The English Department was not the only one effected by the collapse. The Dean of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, along the History Department were moved to Putnam Hall, the Communications Department was relocated to the Ehly Hall (architecture building), and Modern Languages is now based out of the post office building located between the Alumni Center and the Bison Turf.

While a return to Minard is still planned, some of the staff are truly settled into the new surroundings. Professor Robert O'Connor is hoping the completion will take longer than proposed. With a sheepish grin he admits, "This is wonderful and I don't want to move." Assistant Professor Verena Theile, one of those hardest hit by the collapse, is torn by the move to and from Minard. She con-

at the moment although I do very much appreciate the quiet and the fact that I have an office and a door, unlike many of my colleagues from other departments, Communications and Modern Languages in particular." In early February, Michele Sherman and others were allowed to tour the renovated areas of Minard Hall she said with a sigh, "it was exciting to be back in the building — like coming home."

While the heart of the department now beats from the spacious second floor of J.P. Morrill Hall, the English Department awaits its return to its traditional home now tentatively slated for 2013. The return home brings with it a new location as the English Department will then occupy the space currently held by the Math Department. Some look toward that date with trepidation, others bubble in anticipation, but eventually, all will be homeward bound.



Minard Hall completed rendering slated for 2013