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Sandra Heller Retires After 28 Years as Geography's Secretary

(by Dave May and Fred Fryman)

Sandra Heller, the Departmental Secretary since July 7, 1976, is retiring June 30, 2004. When she came to the Department, Basheer Nijim was Department Head and there were seven faculty members: Murray Austin, Roy Chung, Bob Clark, John Gunter, Lowell Goodman, Jonathan Lu, and Basheer. The state-of-the-art equipment in the Department included: a mimeograph machine, a typewriter at Sandra's desk, and a portable typewriter. Producing exams was a tedious task at that time!

Over the years, the Departmental personnel changed; three physical geographers (Jon Efteland, Jim Hessler, and Brent Yarnal) came and went (eventually replaced by Dave May in 1985), as well as two GIS faculty members (Steve McGregor and Mike Emch). Sandra often jokingly asked new faculty when they came onboard for a sample of their hand writing. She found that reading the poor hand writing of some faculty made her job challenging at times. Not only did the faculty change over the years, but so did the office equipment. In the summer of 1985 all secretaries in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences received a new IBM XT personal computer. At the time, the College had to decide whether to purchase word-processing machines or personal computers. Once the decision to purchase personal computers was made and the computers were purchased, the secretaries spent four hours each morning for a week in a room learning how to use the new machines. The addition of a new computer to the Department Office created challenges and adjustments.

Sandra has found everyone within the Department easy to work with, and she has shared laughs with all. One of the legendary stories about Sandra is told by Fred Fryman. "Sandra can be very persuasive. In 1978, a temporary appointment had been offered to a relatively young J. F. Fryman. After several weeks had elapsed, he received a call from Sandra asking if he was going to take the job or not. She also noted that the Head of the Department, Dr. Nijim, was about to fly overseas and wanted the matter finalized. After several 'I'm still thinking about it' responses from Fred, Sandra said 'just take the job' and his response was 'Oh, OK'."

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Fred Fryman and Sandra Heller
Sandra fondly mentions that visiting faculty members have kept her job interesting. She recalls Mel Norris, Jim DeMeeo, Karen Lemke, Gazi Falah, Abdula and Chandra Kahn, Tunde Agbola and Jeremy Brigham. She enjoyed the expansion of the Department from seven to ten permanent faculty members that began with the hiring of Tom Fogarty in 1989, and subsequent hiring of current faculty members: Dennis Dahms (1990), Phil Suckling (1991), Kay Weller (1996), Tim Strauss (1999), Henry Owusu (2000) and Ramanathan Sugumaran (2002).

There have been tasks that Sandra has not enjoyed as much as others, such as administration of Student Assessments of Instructor. She does not like to stand and speak in front of a group! The conversion of record-keeping to the web-based MEMFIS system has also been a challenge. However, she has tackled this with the same determination that she has tackled all other tasks during her career.

Sandra has always enjoyed the beginning of Fall semesters when new students arrive in the Department and former students return. She has especially enjoyed watching students mature during their years at UNI, and always enjoys the spring banquet when many alumni return.

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Thank You!
A Special Message to Sandra
(from Phil Suckling)

I recall interviewing for the position of Department Head on my birthday in May of 1991. As part of the interview process, I had a one-on-one session with Sandra. It was quite evident that she was very concerned about who the Department hired! Since this was to be my first administrative position, I was equally concerned about the departmental staff. As it turned out, I could not have had a better co-worker than Sandra Heller! Her skill, knowledge and pleasant demeanor will be extremely hard to replace. Thank you for all of the lunch-time chats! Thank you for always being there for me, the students, and my colleagues! Thank you for keeping me in line!

I know that my colleagues and UNI's geography students will miss you. I know I certainly will. Best wishes to you and Marvin during your well-deserved retirement.

Sandra Heller and Phil Suckling
Tough Budgetary Times for Higher Education in Iowa

Throughout the nation, budgetary woes have plagued states in recent years. In Iowa, state appropriations for higher education have been slashed by an unprecedented amount. Despite large tuition increases over the past three years (collectively more than 50%), the total budget available to the University is much lower than in the past, resulting in significant cuts in services and to academic programs.

In last year’s Newsletter, it was reported that Geography had been awarded a new GIS Applications faculty position (our 11th faculty line), in support of the proposed new Geography Major with Geographic Information Science emphasis. Subsequent to publication of the Newsletter, this new faculty position became a casualty of budget cuts, and has been more or less permanently cut.

This year, in an attempt to replace Murray Austin who retired in May 2003, we advertised and interviewed three excellent candidates for our urban geography faculty position. Again, budget woes resulted in the cancelling of this search. The Department is currently down to nine full-time faculty positions. Recently, the Dean announced that the Department will be permitted to conduct a search for one new faculty member next year. We plan to combine the criteria from the previous two searches in order to recruit a specialist in urban geography and GIS applications.

Assuming no further budget cuts, this should bring our faculty strength back to 10 full-time professors by Fall 2005.

Given that the University has purposely reduced campus-wide enrollment thus resulting in less demand upon introductory liberal arts core courses, Geography feels confident that we will be able to move forward with the new GISc major. As a result of a re-organization plan for Geography faculty members’ teaching loads, the University Senate recently reaffirmed approval for our new major. The Department Head wishes to acknowledge the collegial co-operation of departmental colleagues during these difficult budgetary times. Due to their willingness to “step up to the plate and do more”, our program remains on track!

UNI Geographers Participate at the 100th Annual Meeting of the AAG

The centennial meeting of the Association of American Geographers was held March 14-20 in Philadelphia, PA. Papers presented by UNI geographers included:

Dave May: Post-settlement alluvium, buried Holocene landforms, and archaeology in Rapid Creek Valley, eastern Iowa.

Henry Owusu: Human factor development and spatial integration as critical elements in African development policy.

Andrey Petrov (M.A. student) and R. Sugumaran: Land cover change in growing counties in Iowa using remote sensing data and geostatistical analysis.

Philip Suckling: Tornado path directions in the Deep South.

Promotions: Dahms to Full Professor and Owusu to Associate Professor

Provost Aaron Podolefsky has approved the promotions of Dr. Dennis Dahms to Full Professor, and Dr. J. Henry Owusu to Associate Professor with tenure. Our congratulations to Dennis and Henry!

Dahms joined the UNI faculty in 1990 and completed his Ph.D. degree in 1991 from the University of Kansas. He was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 1996. Dennis has been a prolific researcher with recent publications appearing in the following journals: Arctic, Antarctic and Alpine Research; Earth Surface Processes and Landforms; Annals of the Association of American Geographers; Geomorphology; Catena; Science; Quaternary Research; and Quaternary International. Dennis continues to undertake extensive field research in Wyoming’s Wind River Mountains, where he owns a summer cabin near some of his research sites.

Owusu joined the UNI faculty in 2000 after serving on the faculty at the University of Connecticut for several years. He is a 1993 Ph.D. graduate of the Geography program at the University of Iowa. Recent publications have appeared in The Journal of Modern African Studies, The Professional Geographer, The East African Geographical Review, and the Journal of African Economics. Henry has also published several chapters in scholarly books about African development. As an example of the latter, his most recent article on "Structural Adjustment sans Spatial Integration: Another Sub-Saharan African Development Policy Debacle" appeared in the edited volume titled The International Development Program of Activities: What are We Doing Wrong? Henry continues to undertake research projects involving economic development issues, focusing primarily on Africa including his native country of Ghana.

Below: Dr. Dennis Dahms (left) on a field trip near Whiskey Mountain, WY
News from Henry Owusu

Dr. Owusu taught his two big sections the World Geography course in the Fall for the last time. Departmental needs dictate that he must now switch his introductory role to the Human Geography course. He continues to teach courses on cultural geography, economic geography, Africa and African Development.

Research-wise, Henry continues his work in the area of African development including the emerging paradigm called Human Factor Development. Dr. Owusu continues to be actively involved with the Africa Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. He also serves as a research associate with the International Institute of Human Factor Development (IIHFD) and as a member of the International Board of Directors of the International Institute for Human Factor Development Society (IIHFDS).

News from Sugu

Dr. Ramanathan Sugumaran ("Sugu") has had a very active year. He published an article in IEEE Geo-Science and Remote Sensing on "The Role Of High-Resolution Imagery For Identification Of Urban Climax Forests Using Traditional And Rule Based Classification Approach". He also won the Best Paper Award for his study presented at the 7th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics held in Florida last July in the session titled Information Systems Development.

Dr. Sugumaran currently has six research grants funded by: NOAA, NASA (2 grants), U. S. Department of Agriculture, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Iowa Department of Transportation (through the Midwest Transportation Consortium). Recently, a NASA-funded project, which employed graduate student Jimi Gerjevic, was completed on wetland mapping and modeling in Iowa. Several graduate students are supported with assistantships funded by Sugu's grants.

One of Sugu's newest projects will investigate the potential of hyperspectral remote sensing to quantify and assess various water-quality constituents of inland and coastal areas. The study will seek relationships between hyperspectral data classification and laboratory measurements using geostatistical analyses.
During the year, Sugu organized four workshops on ArcIMS, Color InfraRed images (CIR) and Fundamentals of GIS for professionals from local, state, and federal governments as well as from private companies.

Dr. Sugumaran continues to be in charge of the remote sensing component for the STORM project, which is housed in the Department of Earth Science. One product of this work was the AAG paper co-authored and presented by Andrey Petrov, Geography graduate student and a STORM employee. Andrey, who is from Russia, will graduate with his M.A. degree this May.

Sugu taught the GPS course for the first time last Fall, and he will develop a new course on Satellite Image Processing next year, as a followup to our existing remote sensing course.

Dave continues to work on Holocene (last 12,000 years) landform changes in the Loup River and Platte River basins in central and western Nebraska. Last summer he took time off from fieldwork to work on manuscripts and to work on projects at home. This summer he will work with Steve Holen, an archaeologist with whom he has worked for more than 20 years, on several geoarchaeology projects. These include an archaeological survey for cultural materials in the Arikaree River basin in eastern Colorado, and a shoreline archaeological and geomorphological investigation for the Bureau of Reclamation at Hugh Butler Lake (Red Willow Reservoir) in southwestern Nebraska. Dave and Steve have recently co-authored a book chapter on an archaeological site (La Sena) at Medicine Creek Reservoir in southwestern Nebraska that they worked on together between 1988 and 1998. Dave also had a paper published in 2003 in Geomorphology that included data he had gathered over the past 15 years on a buried floodplain throughout the Loup River Basin in Nebraska.

**News from Dave May**

After more than 15 years in the role, Dave May turned over his responsibilities as Graduate Coordinator to Tim Strauss in the summer of 2003. This semester, he is Acting Department Head, while Dr. Suckling is working on a research project as part of his first-ever Professional Development Assignment. Dave is learning first hand how much planning, how many meetings, and how much paperwork is involved in keeping the Department running smoothly - he looks forward to the end of the semester!
News from Tim Strauss

This year, Tim Strauss has become much more involved in the graduate program through his new position as Graduate Coordinator. He is also serving in his second (and hopefully last) year as Chair of the Comprehensive Examination Committee for the Masters in Public Policy Program. In this role, Tim solicits questions from UNI faculty members involved in the public policy program, drafts and administers the written exam, organizes the oral exams, and provides final grades to the students. Eleven students are scheduled to take the exam this semester.

Tim is also Education Director for UNI's involvement with the Midwest Transportation Consortium (MTC), part of a five-year grant from the US Department of Transportation. UNI is collaborating with Iowa State and several other universities in the region in this effort. At UNI, the MTC funds three geography graduate students and provides research funding opportunities in the area of transportation asset management.

This year, Strauss is Chief Reader Designate for the nationwide Advanced Placement Program in Human Geography and is scheduled to become Chief Reader in July. This involves organizing the reading of exams taken by high school geography students wishing to gain college credit. Tim is involved with the preparation of the multiple-choice portion of the test, but most of his efforts are oriented toward the content of the free-response questions, the scoring "rubrics" used to score the students' responses, and organizing the reading of these exams by high school and college geography instructors at a summer workshop. Last year, over 7,300 high school students took the exam, up from about 5,300 during 2002, and 3,200 during 2001.

This semester, Tim is teaching an unusual course that involves economic and political issues, with colleagues at Herzen University in St. Petersburg, Russia. Speakers in the two locations are linked via videoconferencing technologies and provide their perspectives on such topics as federalism, geo-politics, environmental policy, and economic development. In preparation, Tim visited St. Petersburg in the Fall, with a colleague from UNI’s Center for Educational Technology, to meet with Russian geography professors about the content and format of the seminar and to test videoconferencing equipment.

On the research side, Tim completed a study on the crash patterns of older drivers for the Iowa Department of Transportation, using GIS, spatial analysis tools, and Iowa's extensive georeferenced crash database. He is also completing a paper on the test development process and scoring procedures used by the Advanced Placement Human Geography Program, to be presented in August in Glasgow, Scotland, at the annual meeting of the International Geographical Union.
News from Phil Suckling

This semester, Phil Suckling is on Professional Development Assignment (PDA), the first research leave in his 27-year professorial career. Phil managed to get more research done this semester than in the previous four years. In March, he submitted his first research article for publication consideration since 2000.

Phil's PDA project involves analyzing the spatial and temporal characteristics of tornado path directions within the United States. In March, he presented a portion of this research at the AAG meeting in Philadelphia. He also participated in the Department Chair's luncheon and workshop at the meeting.

March was a busy travel month for Phil as he also went to Nebraska to serve as the external consultant for the Academic Program Review for the geography and earth science program at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Phil has visited several Midwestern comprehensive universities in recent years and finds the experience most rewarding and illuminating. In particular, he has learned that UNI is indeed a great institution by comparison to others in the region!

Beyond academia, Phil and his wife Cheryl are actively involved with their Newfoundland show dogs. Puppies may be "on the way" in late April sired by the breed's 2004 #1 show dog, who is a half-brother to February's Best-in-Show winner at the prestigious Westminster Dog Show.

Phil and "Gracie" in South Carolina

New Courses for Tom Fogarty

Tom Fogarty has taken on two new course assignments as part of the Department's course load reorganization. This semester, Tom is teaching a course on the Middle East as part of the University's non-western cultures program. He is also teaching an experimental course titled the Geography of World Democracy. This course may evolve into a new "capstone" course for the liberal arts core, likely in co-operation with colleagues from the Department of Political Science.
Geographic Alliance of Iowa Takes Iowa Teachers to India

(by Kay Weller)

The GAI received a Fulbright-Hays grant of $58,000 for a curriculum development project to India. Twelve K-12 teachers and three university faculty (Kay Weller from UNI, Rex Honey from the University of Iowa, and Ramesh Dhusa from Drake University) spent four weeks traveling throughout the country during the summer of 2003. Transportation on this adventure included planes, trains, cars, jeeps, buses, camel carts, elephant howdahs and of course foot. The field experience included the states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rahastan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Orrissa, Behar, Jharkand, Himil Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana and a tiny corner of Punjab. This was no small undertaking in such a short time! We visited Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata as well as numerous smaller cities and towns. Although the pace was rigorous it is doubtful anyone would have elected to eliminate any part of the trip. The group laughed together, got tired, got sick, got crabby and shared stressful times and relaxing times. Most of us discovered that despite economic status women in India are a rainbow of color in their beautiful saris. Never did we see any two alike.

The GAI website (www.uni.edu/gai) contains additional photos and curricular materials developed through this project. The materials are available for use by teachers and others free of charge. Please share this information with teachers and other educators.

Dan Walsh, one of our M.A. students, at the Taj Mahal.

Elephant ride to Amber Fort. On the first elephant are M.A. students Steve Oaks and Tami Huegel (in hat). Steve bought the elephant driver’s turban right off his head. Alumnus George Kuhter is on the last elephant.
Chicago Field Trip for Kay Weller's Historical Geography Class

Upon our return to the classroom we spent considerable time comparing Chicago neighborhoods to the neighborhoods we visited in Waterloo during our OSAE here.

Chicago "project" housing

During the Fall 2003 semester, the Historical Geography: African Americans class participated in a field trip to Chicago. The group spent a weekend in October doing an OSAE (a process of Observing, Speculating, Analyzing, and Evaluating a landscape) of Chicago's South Side.

The field trip traveled the Halsead Street corridor, visiting "the projects" that are in the process of being replaced. Also visited were the industrial areas and the DuSable African American Museum. There were also opportunities to visit neighborhoods in other regions of the city in order to compare and contrast with the Halstead Corridor (i.e. through OSAE).

While at the DuSable Museum, the class visited with a Dr. Black who is featured on the film Goin' to Chicago. That film had been shown earlier during class. The museum was hosting a book signing party for him and some members of our student group purchased autographed copies of his book. We could not have planned our timing for this stop any better.

Chicago stockyards

[Note from the Department Head: Special thanks to those alumni who have contributed to the UNI Foundation-Geography Discretionary Fund. This fund helps supplement the Department's limited travel budget, thus enabling field trips such as that described above.]

Geography Foundation Account

The Department of Geography has a discretionary account within the UNI Foundation to fund special field trips, external speakers, and the annual spring banquet. Individuals who wish to contribute to this account should mail their tax-deductible donation to:

UNI Foundation
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0282

Make checks payable to "UNI Foundation - Geography Discretionary Fund".
Geographic Alliance of Iowa (GAI) Activities
(by Kay Weller)

We welcome their participation in future years as Iowa teachers.

For the past few months Al Krantz (B.A., 2003) has continued to serve the Department by volunteering as the Editorial Assistant to the Journal of Social Studies Research and the GAI office assistant. He is the "new face" at GAI workshops where he serves as Kay's assistant (or conservator, whichever suits the situation best). He was available to greet the India workshop participants, make sure that all materials were distributed, and collect the many forms we use at these functions. The GAI and the Department of Geography want to extend our thanks to Al for his untiring efforts to keep the office running smoothly in the months we have been without student help. Thanks Al!!!!!!

Who are these three handsome fellows in saris pictured below? They are Geography undergraduate majors who attended the GAI India workshop this winter. Was the chai too strong? It appears that our students were enjoying the workshop and learning about Indian culture. Joining several Iowa school teachers, 5 undergraduate teaching majors attended the workshop with scholarships provided by the GAI.

Jason Siemens, Brent Zirkel, Tim Riley

Al Krantz busy at work!

The GAI is busy making plans for the summer of 2004. There are three in-service workshops for teachers scheduled for June. Topics of the workshops are: Iowa's Specialized Agriculture, Settling Mississippi River Communities, and Wagon Wheel Imprints on the Landscape. The latter involves an extended field trip to Kansas.
2003 M.A. Geography Graduates


Karla Leilani Suckling (Fall '03): Thesis: “Regional Patterns and Social Implications of Groundwater Arsenic Contamination in Bangladesh.”


2003 B.A. Geography Graduates

Spring '03: James Chung
Kelsey Junge
Alan Krantz
Dan Munden
Derrick Redhead
Leah Wilson

Fall '03: Matthew Burington
Elaine Cooper
Justin Flage
Ryen Lafrenz
Aaron Morley
Allison Wittrock


Alumni Album

In last year’s Newsletter, we included an extensive section of news from our Geography alumni. We wish to repeat this section in next year’s Newsletter. Therefore, please send your alumni news items to:

Dr. Philip Suckling, Head Department of Geography University of Northern Iowa Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0406

[E-mail: suckling@uni.edu]
Geography Club/GTU News

(by Tim Riley, Club President)

As some of you may have heard the Geography Club has been resurrected after being idle for the past few years. We have already made some big strides this year and are looking towards the next school year for even better things to come. At our first meeting this year there was an attendance of just four students, however over the course of this past year we have accumulated thirteen members. Thanks to Adam Ramthun, we have been able to start a website that is dedicated to the Geography Club. This has helped to get the word out to geography majors and minors plus give information about the organization.

There are a couple members taking a hiking trip along Lake Superior shore line in April. We are working with UNI's Outdoor Wellness Recreation Center on this trip and hope to have a similar activity next Fall. Suggestions for a good hiking or camping trip are welcome! Finally the Geography Club will be selling t-shirts in conjunction with sponsoring an informal picnic during the afternoon of the day of the banquet.

As you can see we have taken several steps to improve the Geography Club this year and have even more ideas for next year. For more information about the Geography Club, please send an e-mail to riley505@uni.edu or visit our website at:


New Graduate Students

Brian Bakker (B.A. 2003, University of Northern Iowa) came to geography from UNI’s Management Information Systems undergraduate major. Funded by the STORM project, Brian is interested in geographic information technologies. Dr. Sugumaran is his thesis advisor.

Leonard Bombom (B.Sc. 1994, M.Sc. 1999, University of Jos, Nigeria) joined the program in January. His interests are in transportation geography and he has an assistantship funded by the MTC.

Alexandra Bozheva (B.Ed. 2000, M.A. 2002, Herzen University, St. Petersburg, Russia) is working under the direction of Dr. Strauss. Her interests incorporate geographic information technologies.

Matthew Kajewski (B.A. 2001, University of Northern Iowa) did his undergraduate work in computer science. He is an MTC-supported transportation scholar working with Tim Strauss.

Brooke Kayser (B.A. 2003, University of Northern Iowa) has moved from art education to geography for her graduate studies. With broad interests, she is in the non-thesis program under the direction of Fred Fryman.

Ryan Lafrenz (B.A. 2003, University of Northern Iowa) is one of "our own". He entered the M.A. program in January.

Guang (Sunshine) Yang (B.S. 2002, Franklin University, Ohio) is a part-time student with interests in geographic information technologies. Sge has a full-time job is with Aerial Services in Cedar Falls.
Geography's 2004 Outstanding Alumnus Award: Bonnie Sines

Bonnie Sines (BA, 1983; MA, 1998) is Geography's 2004 Outstanding Alumnus Award winner. The award will officially be presented at this year's annual banquet.

Since completing her MA in Geography in 1999 Bonnie has played a central role in the Department as instructor for three different courses: Maps and Map Interpretation, World Geography, and Regional Geography: Iowa. She has responded enthusiastically to the varied needs of the Department when faculty were "on leave" or when a faculty line was vacant. Her success in teaching these courses is revealed by her high teaching evaluations and in the number of students who have declared Geography as a major after taking one of her classes.

Over the years, Bonnie has also undertaken considerable scholarship, co-authoring two refereed journal articles and presenting 11 papers at professional meetings of the North American Cartographic Information Society and the Association of American Geographers.

The Department looks forward to having Bonnie teach for us for many years to come.

Bonnie has been a tremendous asset to the Department for many years. From the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s, Bonnie was the Cartographic Laboratory Supervisor in the Department. She drafted maps for Geography faculty and students, as well as for faculty in other Departments across campus. In 1987, Bonnie began teaching Physical Geography laboratory sections as an Adjunct Lecturer. She met the challenge to teach the labs with enthusiasm, commitment, and a sincere desire to help students learn. Her willingness to take on the challenge of teaching the labs helped the Department through a period when enrollments in Physical Geography were growing and staffing the labs had become difficult.

Spring Awards Banquet: Saturday, April 17, 2004

The 24th Annual Geography Awards Banquet will be held during the evening of Saturday, April 17, 2004 at the Olde Broom Factory Restaurant in Cedar Falls. In addition to our traditional student honors, Bonnie Sines will be honored as the 2004 recipient of the Geography Outstanding Alumnus Award. Students, faculty, staff and alumni are strongly encouraged to attend this gala event. For further information about the banquet, contact Sandra Heller in the department office at 319-273-2772 or send e-mail to: sandra.heller@uni.edu