Highway 67 Revisited
looking back at activism

• New chairs hired for five departments
• New Lincoln Laureate named
• Kirk history scholarship
• Centennial Honors College anniversary
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Dear Friends,

This issue’s theme continues to focus on academic excellence and opportunities for our wonderful students because of our fine faculty, past and present. You will notice that there is an article devoted to the Centennial Honors College’s 30th anniversary in 2013. There are many reasons for this, especially given the mission of the CHC to provide “academically talented and motivated students an enriched academic curriculum and opportunities for leadership, professional growth, and service learning.” Another reason is to highlight the “roots” of CHC in the College of Arts and Sciences. And, in the spirit of full disclosure, I served as interim associate director for a year. It was a wonderful experience! The editors and I hope you enjoy reminiscing with us.

I want to thank Bill Knight, who retired in 2012 from teaching journalism, for his excellent leadership in developing, refining, and publishing FOCUS. We miss you, Bill! Also, a hearty welcome to our new editors, Lisa Kernek (whose father, Sterling Kernek, helped start the honors program) and Richard Moreno. Lisa and Rich, a couple of words please!

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A message from the editors:

It’s with great pleasure and some trepidation that we try to follow our former Journalism colleague, Bill Knight, in serving as the editors for FOCUS. One of the most gratifying aspects of producing FOCUS is having a vehicle to recognize the milestones and accomplishments of the faculty, staff and students in the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Illinois University. As the university’s largest college, teaching more than 70 percent of the general education curriculum, it truly is one of the school’s cornerstones. We look forward to continuing to spread the good word about the innovative and exciting work being done by and through the college. We would also like to extend an invitation to you to share your story ideas for future editions of FOCUS.

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New chairs hired for five departments

By Jodi Pospeschil

KEITH BOECKELMAN,
Political Science

Interim WIU Political Science Department Chair Professor Keith Boeckelman was named the department’s chairperson, effective July 1. He had served as interim chair since July 2010.

Boeckelman received his bachelor’s degree in economics and political science from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He received his master’s degree in political science and doctoral degree in political science, with specialties in public policy/administration, American government political theory and public finance, from the University of Illinois at Urbana.

Before coming to Western in 1998, Boeckelman was an assistant professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and Louisiana State University. He was also a visiting assistant professor at Texas A&M University and worked as a legislative analyst for the Illinois House of Representatives.

Boeckelman was a research fellow for Western’s Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. He has published and revised a book on Barack Obama, as well as numerous political journal articles and book chapters.

Boeckelman was awarded the 2007 College of Arts and Sciences Award and has been the campus co-chair for the WIU American Democracy Project. He also serves as adviser for the WIU Student Government Association and is on the board of advisers for the Project Vote Smart program “Key Votes.”

F. ERIK BROOKS,
African American Studies

F. Erik Brooks, formerly of Georgia Southern University (GSU), has been named the new WIU African American Studies Department chair. Brooks, who served as assistant to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at GSU, as well as an assistant professor, began at WIU July 1.

At GSU, Brooks also served as director of the master of public administration program in the political science department from 2004-2007. He began at GSU in 2002 as an assistant professor in the political science department and he also taught in the African studies department.

Brooks received his doctoral degree from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government at Virginia Commonwealth; a master’s degree in education from Alabama State; a master’s of public administration degree from Auburn University; a master of science degree in agency counseling and human development from Troy State University and his bachelor’s degree from Troy State.

Brooks was promoted to associate professor in 2009 and was previous an adjunct instructor at the Jepson School of Leadership at the University of Richmond from 2001-2002 and in Alabama State University Department of Advancement Studies. He has also been the student coordinator for the public policy and administration’s Ph.D. program at Virginia Commonwealth University from 2001-2002.

SIMON CORDERY,
History

Simon Cordery, the former chair of the history department at Monmouth College, has been named chair of the history department at WIU. Cordery, who was also a history professor at Monmouth, began at WIU July 1.

Cordery received his doctoral degree from the University of Texas at Austin, his master’s degree from the University of York, England, and his bachelor’s degree from Northern Illinois University.

Cordery began at Monmouth College as a lecturer in 1994 before coordinating the Midwest Initiative and serving as interim history department chair from 2004 to 2005. He became
Lydeard received his bachelor’s degree in zoology from Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts, his master’s degree in mammalogy from Memphis State University in Tennessee and his doctoral degree from Auburn University in Alabama.

Before joining the staff of the NSF in 2011, Lydeard was a lecturer in the American University’s Department of Biology, and he was the management director for the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, in Washington.

He has also been a development officer for the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, and he was a visiting scientist in the Mollusc Division and Evolutionary Biology Center at the Australian Museum in Sydney.

Lydeard has also worked as a professor and curator of mollusks and the coordinator of the ecology and systematics section of the University of Alabama Department of Biological Sciences.

He has received numerous grants and awards for his work from the NSF and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and his work has been published in science journals and magazines.

GARY SCHMIDT,
Foreign Languages and Literature
The new chair of the Western Illinois University Foreign Languages and Literature Department is Gary Schmidt, a former associate professor at the University of West Georgia.

Schmidt, who began working at his new post in the College of Arts and Sciences July 1, received his Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis; his master’s degrees from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Northern Illinois University, and his bachelor’s degree from Knox College.

Schmidt joined the faculty at UWG as an assistant professor in 2006 and taught a variety of courses, including German. At UWG, Schmidt served as the chair or co-chair of the Faculty Development Committee and the Committee for Responsible Sexuality; the acting director of the FLL department; the interim chair of the foreign languages department and the director of the Study Abroad program in Oldenburg.

Prior to moving to UWG, Schmidt coordinated the second- and third-year German program at the University of Minnesota and taught at Mount Holyoke College, the Monterey (Calif.) Institute of International Studies and at Luther, Grinnell and Knox colleges. He also previously taught German at Nazareth Academy in LaGrange Park and Amos Alonso Staff High School in Palos Hills, Ill.
Supporter of physics at WIU receives Distinguished Alumni Award

Frank Rodeffer, who has endowed two physics scholarships at Western Illinois University, received the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award for 2012.

Rodeffer was honored at the College of Arts and Sciences Sixth Annual Scholarship Dinner on December 8, 2012. Rodeffer has endowed one scholarship in physics in his name and a second scholarship for female physics majors, in honor of his late wife, Peggy.

Born and raised in Galesburg, Illinois, Rodeffer entered WIU in the fall of 1957 as a physics major in the School of Education. While taking the requisite courses for his degree, his science interests narrowed to the radio and electronics aspects of physics. Rodeffer graduated in 1961.

Following graduation, he joined the U.S. Air Force. While on active duty, Rodeffer served primarily in Strategic Air Command with one three-year assignment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

He later went to work on Intercontinental Ballistic Missile systems projects for Northrop Grumman and retired as a senior project manager in 2004.

In addition to the Distinguished Alumni Award, the following scholarships were presented at the Scholarship Dinner:

- The Frank E. and Peggy J. Rodeffer Scholarship in Physics: Daniel Halbe and Kinnary Patel

- Ruth Dexter Scholarship in Nursing: Aaron Jones and Megan Wallen, inaugural recipients

- Mila R. Allen Showers Memorial Scholarship for Gerontology: Jamye Taylor, inaugural recipient

- Carl B. Larson Scholarship in Archeology: Inaugural recipient Mary Alexis Volner

1961 graduate and distinguished alumni, Frank Rodeffer.
Armstead is Western’s 2012 Lincoln Laureate

By Simon Cordery

Being named WIU’s Lincoln Laureate surprised history teacher education major Lauren Armstead. Calling the prestigious award, which is presented annually to an outstanding senior from each of Illinois’ four-year degree-granting institutions, the “icing on the cake,” Armstead credited her work ethic and her drive to be the first member of her family to graduate from college with enabling her to earn the honor.

The Lincoln Laureate is granted to a student who exemplifies overall academic excellence and extracurricular activities.

As a historian and a self-professed “Lincoln lover,” Armstead sees the recognition as confirmation of her life mission. “I want to teach as my career and being awarded the Lincoln Laureate has ensured in me that pursuing that need for knowledge is important to continue not only in the classroom but for the rest of your life,” she says.

That thirst for knowledge has been evident throughout her career at Western. Styling her “a truly outstanding representative of this University,” Jennifer McNabb, a professor of history at WIU, calls Armstead, “an absolute joy to have in the classroom, as she possesses that rare combination of intellectual curiosity, an excellent work ethic, and a genuine desire to understand how history works as a scholarly pursuit.”

Armstead comes by her love of Abraham Lincoln honestly. Growing up in Auburn, a town of about 4,500 people thirty miles south of Springfield, she describes herself as a bookworm who particularly enjoys reading history. She says she liked learning about daily life at different periods of time, often finding the past more interesting than either the present or the future.

She adds that she was fortunate to have studied with what she calls “amazing history teachers” who introduced her to new subjects and kindled her desire to become a teacher.

Although she loves Auburn she does not lament leaving her hometown. Armstead calls moving away from home and living in a new town, “the best decision I ever made because it forced me to meet new people and jumpstart my education and career.”

Of course, when it came time to choose a major, she says it was an easy decision to study history education. Armstead says she decided to attend Western because of the quality of its history and education programs, and to enjoy Macomb’s hometown feel.

McNabb calls Armstead, “one of the most gifted students I have had the pleasure of having in the classroom,” someone gifted with “intellectual and personal maturity, an ability to balance work and education admirably, a capacity for academic achievement and engagement as a member of the broader University community.”

As a student, Armstead excelled in her coursework. WIU History Professor Febe Pamonag remembers a project she undertook for a History of Asia class.

Armstead researched and wrote an innovative study of Japanese narratives of survival during the bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945. Her work highlighted how images of the bond between mother and child helped show post-war Japan as peaceful and as a victim of World War II.

Armstead used her research as the basis for a poster, which earned first prize in history at the College of Arts and Science Thomas E. Helm Undergraduate Research Day in Spring 2012.

As a Peer Mentor for First Year Experience students, Armstead demonstrated initiative and resourcefulness while tutoring students and planning special extracurricular events. This experience helped prepare her...
for service as a volunteer tutor at Spoon River Community College and as a summer intern at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield.

Additionally, Armstead served as vice president and, later, president of WIU’s chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the international history honor society, and as treasurer of the Associated Students of History. As a student leader she earned a reputation for taking her commitments seriously and for devoting time and energy to the success of her projects.

Armstead’s aptitude for teaching and excellent classroom performance helped her secure the History Department’s Larry T. Balsamo History Teacher Education Scholarship. She has also earned a handful of other scholarships, including the Sheila and Paul Nollen Scholarship from Phi Kappa Phi, the Louis and Alice Schleier Memorial Teacher Education Scholarship, the Gretchen and David Miller Centennial Scholarship in Education, and the Nicolas and Joan Pano Scholarship.

Currently student teaching at LaHarpe Junior High School, Armstead is looking forward to the next phase of her life while still appreciating her time at Western.

“I came to Western expecting to just be one student out of thousands of others trying to earn a degree. The professors I have met changed that by proving that they care about their students and keeping in touch with them when they do move on after graduation,” she says.

“I will miss Western and Macomb when I graduate,” she adds. “But I will leave knowing that I earned the best education and learned many valuable life experiences when I venture into my career.”

Armstead is the daughter of Richard and Susan Armstead of Auburn, Ill.

Ethisphere, a leading magazine on business ethics, named WIU alumna Nancy Paridy to its list of the 2012 “Attorneys Who Matter.” The list represents the best individuals in a wide range of legal disciplines, according to the magazine’s website.

Paridy was one of 16 attorneys named in the Top General Counsel category, one of 15 categories on the list. The full list can be found at www.ethisphere.com.

Paridy is senior vice president, general counsel and government affairs/corporate secretary of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

She received the WIU College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award in 2011. Paridy was a history major and graduated in three years with a bachelor’s degree and with honors in 1980. She completed legal training at Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1983 at the age of 22.

“These attorneys have risen to the top based on their expertise, peer or client endorsements, participation in high-profile cases and overall litigation and administrative success,” according to a written statement from the Ethisphere website.

–Lisa Kernek

Former Distinguished Alumni Award winner named to list of Attorneys Who Matter

Nancy Paridy, one of the Attorneys Who Matter.
Western Illinois University American History Professor Emeritus Dr. Gordon Kirk has established a $2,000 four-year scholarship for incoming history majors enrolled in the Centennial Honors College.

“I want to encourage students to see the importance of working hard to achieve an education, then putting those skills and knowledge to use for the good of humanity,” Kirk said.

The Gordon Kirk Honors History Scholarship is designed for new students meeting the required ACT score (or grade point average) and class rank. The $500 annual scholarship will be renewable for up to three years, to assist history majors in the Honors Program during their time at Western.

“Western was very good to me; I enjoyed it and the wonderful people I worked with,” said Kirk. “I was fortunate to be able to do lots of different things. I was a professor and department chair, served on the Faculty Senate and the faculty union, and was assistant provost,” he added.

Kirk was also one of the most influential figures in the history of Western’s Honors Program (now called Centennial Honors College), serving as its first director when it became a university-wide program.

“I think Western does well with high-achieving students,” said Kirk, “and I would like to help with that.”

Kirk was on campus Oct. 30 to sign his $50,000 endowment agreement.

--Julie Murphy, WIU Foundation
African American Studies

Associate Professor Audrey P. Watkins was the keynote speaker at the 2012 Keep Freedom Alive Banquet sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Burlington, Iowa. Dr. Watkins’s talk was titled, “Funding Our Freedom in These Challenging Times.” Tickets for the event were $30 with the proceeds going to support activities and scholarships of the Burlington Branch of the NAACP.

[Associate Professor Jo-Ann Morgan presented a conference paper titled, “Using Ephemeral Visual Culture to Galvanize Black Power” at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC. The theme for the conference was The Fire Every Time—Reframing Black Power Across the 20th Century and Beyond. Dr. Morgan aims to turn this work along with her other research into a book-length manuscript.]

Professor Alphonso Simpson, Jr., traveled with the United Voices of Western Inspirational Singers (U.V.O.W.I.S) to the Illinois Gospel Workshop at Illinois State University in Bloomington, IL. Students met nationally known gospel recording artists, learned new songs and performed in a mass choir concert. Dr. Simpson is the founding director of U.V.O.W.I.S, a critically acclaimed gospel choir.

Professor and Chair F. Erik Brooks, Associate Professor Jo-Ann Morgan, and Ayesha Montgomery, a double major in African American Studies and Political Science, served on a campus panel discussing the 2012 presidential election. This trio and other panelists discussed voting trends, the history of partisanship in presidential campaigns, and the influence of fundraising in campaigns. The event was sponsored by the student chapter of the National Society of Black Journalists and the Department of English and Journalism.

Laurian R. Bowles, Assistant Professor of African American Studies and Sociology, and Associate Professor Jo-Ann Morgan have been selected as members of the new Presidents Institute at WIU. The institute is a think tank to create a forum for exploring a variety of issues at the university.

Biological Sciences

Assistant Professor Andrea Porras-Alfaro co-wrote “Fungal Communities Associated with Rock Varnish in Black Canyon, NM: Casual Inhabitants or Essential Partners?” for Geomicrobiology Journal. She also co-authored “Soil Fungal Cellulbiohydrolase I Gene (cbh1) Composition and Expression in a Loblolly Pine plantation Under Conditions of Elevated Atmospheric CO2 and Nitrogen Fertilization” for Applied and Environmental Microbiology.

Professor Eric Ribbens co-wrote “A Diet to Die for: An Exploration of Oxidative Phosphorylation” for the National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science Case Study Collection website. Ribbens also co-authored “Opuntia fragilis in Minnesota” for Cactus and Succulent Society Journal.

Associate Professor Brian D. Peer co-authored “Egg pecking and discrimination by female and male Brown-headed Cowbirds” for Journal of Ornithology.

Professor Richard O. Musser and Assistant Professor Sue Hum-Musser co-authored “Caterpillar Labial Salivy Alters Tomato Plant Gene Expression” for the Journal of Chemical Ecology.

English and Journalism

Alyse Marie Thompson (West Chicago, IL), Journalism and Spanish, is the College of Arts and Sciences Scholar, the Journalism Departmental Scholar and an Honors Scholar and graduated in December with highest academic distinction, Summa Cum Laude.

In Fall 2012, Thompson served as the managing editor of Western’s student newspaper, the Western Courier. She also served as the president of Western’s Society for Professional Journalists and served as a staff writer/photographer for Western Illinois Magazine, a student-produced publication published twice a year.

During her undergraduate career, Thompson has completed two editorial internships with Reflejos Bilingual Journal (Arlington Heights, IL) and with Candy Industry Magazine (Deerfield, IL). Her goals include pursuing a position at a newspaper or magazine, and she said she is considering applying for journalism graduate programs.

Associate Professor Roberta DiCarmine wrote a chapter titled, “Comedy ‘Italian Style’ and ‘Il Soliti
Ignoti’ (Big Deal on Madonna Street, 1958), for the book *A Companion to Film Comedy*, edited by Andrew Horton and Joanna Rapf (Wiley/Blackwell).

The Lola Case and Fred Ewing writer for fall semester was **David Gessner**. Gessner is the author of eight books, including *Return of the Osprey, Sick of Nature, My Green Manifesto*, and *The Tarball Chronicles*, which Publishers Weekly called “a brilliant and thoughtful book.” Gessner was on campus from October 8 to October 12. He met with students, did a public Q&A, and a public reading on October 11.

The English major organization Sigma Tau Delta brought to WIU the best-selling author **Bruce Littlefield**. On October 18 Littlefield delivered a talk entitled, “Arming Yourself for a Winning Career,” to students and other interested members of the campus community.

The first annual Writing (with a purpose) Festival was held on November 2. The Festival brought together area high school students to attend workshops, and create written work in multiple categories and genres.

**Dr. Stacey Peebles**, a Professor of English from Centre College, delivered the keynote presentation for the English Graduate Organization’s ninth annual conference on November 2.

Broadcasting and Journalism alumnus **Chris Ward** (2003) was the keynote speaker for Journalism Day on October 19 this fall.

**Foreign Languages and Literatures**

Assistant Professor of German **Weijia Li** presented a paper titled “German Reception of Chinese Fine Arts in the Weimar Republic: A Case Study of the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne” at the German Studies Association Annual Conference in Milwaukee, in October 2012.

Assistant Professor of Spanish **Munia Cabal-Jimenez** presented a paper titled “Usted-V and Usted-T: Social Dynamics of T/V system in Costa Rican Spanish: A Response to 19th Century Globalization” at the International Conference in Linguistics, “Experimental and Empirical Approaches to Politeness and Impoliteness,” in Urbana-Champaign, in August 2012.

Professor and Chair **Gary Schmidt** co-edited a volume titled *Thomas Mann: Neue Kulturwissenschaftliche Lektüren (Thomas Mann: New Theoretical Readings)*, published with Wilhelm Fink Verlag in Munich, and wrote the article “Childhood, Pedagogy, and Psychoanalysis from Der Tod In Venedig to Mario Und Der Zauberer” for the same volume.

**Geography**

Assistant Professor **Ranbir S. Kang**, wrote “Geomorphic Impacts of Riparian Understory Mosses in a Low Order Stream in Fairfax County, Virginia” for *Physical Geography*.

Assistant Professor **Marcus Büker** received an additional $55,061 for the continuation of the National Science Foundation grant “Collaborative Research: An Investigation of Dynamical Processes Driving the Genesis and Maintenance of Tornadic Vortices,” for a cumulative total of $126,521.

Professor and Chair **Samuel Thompson** co-wrote “Enterprise Zones in a Global Perspective: Socioeconomic Consequences” in *Faces of Social Geography: International and Indian Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, India.

**GIS Specialist Keisuke Nozaki** wrote “Working with ArcGIS Viewer for Flex” for *Illinois GIS Notes*.

**History**

Associate Professor **Jennifer McNabb** gave the 10th annual John Hallwas Liberal Arts Lecture on Sept. 4 on the Quad Cities Campus and on Sept. 6 on the Macomb campus. The lecture, titled “The Worth of Women and the Liberal Arts: Debates, Insights and Legacies from the Renaissance,” was sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences.

McNabb discussed how the origins of humanism during the Renaissance redefined masculinity at the same time it initiated scholarly debate on the capabilities of women, an exchange known as “the women question.”

**Assistant Professor Robert Mazza** published a new article, “For God and La Patrie: Antonin Jaussen, Dominica Priest and French intelligence agent in the Middle East,” in *First World War Studies*.

**Professor Lee Brice** published a new book, *Greek Warfare: From the Battle of Marathon to the Conquests of Alexander the Great* (ABC-Clio).

**Professor Peter Cole** published a new essay, “Industrial Workers of the World,” in the *Encyclopedia of...* Continued on page 18

Focus
‘Highway 67 Revisited’
Reunion Recalls Western’s Anti-War Past

By Bill Welt

The last time they got together, it was a time when war and protests tore apart the nation — including Macomb and Western Illinois University.

This time, however, there wasn’t any discord or clamor. Instead, there were merriment and fond memories. The occasion was “Highway 67 Revisited,” a reunion of about 35 Western alumni, who returned to Macomb last August to reacquaint and reminisce about their Vietnam War-era experiences.

“The memories are just so amazing,” said Mimi Williams, who organized the informal gathering of former student activists who lobbied for student rights and demonstrated against the Vietnam War on the Western campus in the late 1960s and early 1970s. “We certainly had our stories and so many of them.”

Williams, 64, credited the Facebook social networking site for making the reunion possible, as some came from the fringes of the U.S, including Williams who traveled from California. “If it wasn’t for this technology, we wouldn’t have gotten together,” she said.

Williams spent over a year putting together the event, named after Bob Dylan’s “Highway 66 Revisited” album.

“I started crying when I came back here last year,” she said. “I just came back to look at some places, where we could have dinner, which hotel is the best and give us the best deal, and I was coming from Springfield. I just saw it, and I got so weepy because I felt really safe here. “I was so happy because all these people got a chance to get back together,” Williams added. “They can tell stories and everybody is like, ‘Oh my God, I can’t believe we’re doing this.’”

Finally together after 45 years, the group consisted of Western Courier student newspaper writers, student government leaders and other “freaks” who attended Western Illinois during the Vietnam War.

“What’s kind of interesting about this whole group is everybody kind of said, ‘I’m willing to change the world,’” said Mike Blonder, a former Courier editor and self-confessed “freak.” “Just about all of the people here went into some kind of helping professions. There’s a bunch of teachers, social workers and stuff like that.”

Blonder, who served 10 years as a junior high school teacher, said he doesn’t remember much of his experience with the Courier. However, there was one thing that resonated. “I just remember the camaraderie of putting it together at night more than anything else,” he said.

Students take control

In the late 1960s, Blonder was one of many students at Western who championed student rights. In fact, he joined Rich Hoppe and the Merry Pranksters Party in 1969 to help bring the Western Courier and the student government body, then known as All University Student Government (AUSG), under student control. Hoppe, who coined his party after the book “The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,” won a three-way race with over 1,400 votes in the 1969 AUSG election. However, AUSG leaders refused to relinquish control to Hoppe on a technicality, which led to a standoff between AUSG and the Merry Pranksters Party in the University Union.

More than 2,000 students occupied the University Union in protest of the election in February 1969. During the occupation, Hoppe and his supporters formed a government in exile called the United Student Government to stop the second place finisher, John Gelling, from being seated. These actions led Gelling to call for a referendum vote in late February. This time, Gelling won the majority vote.

“It was a very big party,” Williams recalled. “Everybody knew each other. It was such a feeling of camaraderie in those days. I don’t see that today, and it’s really disappointing because there’s so much love out there.”

Although Hoppe lost the referendum, the dramatic event led the student government to rewrite its constitution to become the Student Government Association — as it is known today — and place the Western Courier under student control.

“Certain concessions were made to us after the election so that we would support them on student government, and so that’s how the radical left got control of the Courier,” Blonder said.

Western Courier takes a turn left

The Western Courier changed dramatically after a joint student-
faculty committee selected Paul Reynolds as editor in chief.

The Courier had formally been under the censorship of faculty advisor Reef Waldrep. With him removed, there was no holding back the outspoken leader Reynolds, who previously served as editor in chief of the far-left underground newspaper May West.

On the front page of the Courier’s first issue in fall 1969, Reynolds proclaimed, “Last year as editor of the May West I signed a ‘We won’t go’ statement. I signed it again this summer as editor of the Courier.” In fact, the Courier’s open stance against the war led to the creation of an alternative conservative newspaper called the Western Catalyst in October 1969.

After taking control of the Courier, Reynolds and his staff led the antiwar movement at Western. They promoted and participated in the national October Moratorium movement in 1969, leading approximately 600 students in a march from the Union to Chandler Park. Up to this point, the march marked the largest anti-war protest movement in Western Illinois history, which was highlighted by the planting of a peace tree in Chandler Park. The tree, however, was taken down later that day.

Western’s antiwar movement faltered, just as it did nationally, shortly after the October Moratorium. However, on May 4, 1970, tragedy struck Kent State University, when four students were shot on the campus by Ohio National Guardsmen.

The incident ignited fury across the nation — including Western Illinois. Approximately 1,000 students took over Simpkins Hall on May 4, targeting the building because it housed the ROTC program, in an effort to kick the military office out of campus. The number of students occupying the building fluctuated from less than 50 to more than 2,000 students during the five-day takeover.

Former student Joe Layng recalled meeting a future long-time friend, Neil Stegall, during the ordeal. “It was pretty shocking, and at that point we later became student body president, and where I met most of the people in this room, directly as a result from that interaction.”

Even during the occupation, approximately 2,000 students participated in a peace march to downtown Macomb. The march sparked outrage in the Macomb community. Conservative students and Macomb residents responded with a counter-march in the town square.

The student reaction led SGA President Harold Lotz to call for a student referendum to decide if the ROTC program should remain on campus. More than 6,500 students voted in the referendum. Unfortunately for the protesters, more than 4,300 students chose to keep the program. Despite the loss, some students remained in Simpkins Hall, sticking with passive resistance. University President John Bernhard and Vice President for Student Affairs Richard Poll remained patient and conceded to three demands made by the remaining protesters. The most lasting was the creation of the peace center, which lasted for a few years.

“His (Bernhard’s) low point was the Kent State part, but in retrospect, he handled it pretty well,” Layng said. “He did not send in the National Guard to get the students out. He understood (the source of anger).

“It was pretty crafty what he did,” Layng added. “But he could have been a little stronger supporting the effort.”

One last major event occurred...
in May 1972, when approximately 3,000 students participated in a second candlelight walk in downtown Macomb to protest President Richard Nixon’s continued Vietnam bombing.

**FBI lurking in Macomb**

Some of the activists recalled having federal agents following their activities during their time at Western.

Neil Stegall, who served as SGA president for two years and radicalized the student government body in support of the *Courier* after the Simpkins Hall takeover, said confidential informants followed him and other activists.

“We assumed most of them were students or posing as students,” Stegall said. “In fact, in one case, we identified one of them. Actually, he’s sort of cooperated with us.”

Stegall said he discovered the informant at a party in 1969.

“Everybody was starting to go to sleep or leaving or one thing or the other and he was still up,” he said. “I was wide awake, going, ‘This is not right.’”

He found out that the suspicious figure was working for COINTELPRO, an FBI program which targeted social activists across the nation.

“In fact at one point, (he showed me) tickets to fly to L.A. and we’re going, ‘For what?’ For debriefings, and he showed me things he did and the things he received, very basic instructions like, ‘Come to L.A. now.’”

He said some of his friends had filed Freedom of Information Act inquiries into the reports secretly filed against them.

“All of the people filed Freedom of Information Act inquiries, and the thing that’s common about all the interviews or what goes back into the inquiries is that everything in the Justice Department’s files was wrong, except the spelling of the names,” Stegall said. “They supposed the things we never did and the things we did they never found out.

“For one thing, they thought we were running guns,” he added. “It was supposed at one point some among us were shooting down insulators on telephone lines to take the phone lines out, which makes no sense at all. None of us had phones and at the time we lived in the country. We can’t discuss the things that were the case, but they got it wrong.”

President John Bernhard served Western Illinois from 1968 to 1974. Prior to his arrival, Bernhard served as a professor at Brigham Young University as a Mormon and later acted as a Utah state senator from 1961 to 1966.

He appeared on campus on September 1968, championing shared governance and shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators, a drastic departure from his predecessor, Arthur Knoblauch, who was characterized by students as a conservative and authoritative president.

When students took over the Union in February 1969, he took a “hands-off” approach. In an open letter to students, he even expressed appreciation for the students’ efforts. He said, “Frankly, I know that you would feel insulted were I to intervene in your present constitutional struggle. And you would be right! You SHOULD assume the burdens and responsibilities of adulthood, and lately you have been doing precisely that.”

He continued to cooperate with student activists following the Union sit-in as shown during the Simpkins Hall sit-in in spring 1970. Interestingly, he sympathized with the protesters’ efforts, as he openly opposed the war in the fall of 1969. For example, following the October Moratorium in 1969, he wrote in a letter, “Personally, I felt very proud of the students and their behavior.

*Continued on page 18*
Focus

By Richard Moreno

In 2013, Western Illinois University’s Centennial Honors College will officially celebrate its 30th anniversary as a university-wide program. Its roots, however, go a little bit deeper than that—specifically to 1975.

That was the year that Dr. Sterling Kernek, a history professor, proposed establishing the Arts and Sciences Honors Program, a precursor to today’s Centennial Honors College. Kernek, who retired in 2002 and still resides in Macomb, said he conceived the idea for an honors program as a means to attract and retain top college students.

“We didn’t want students coming here for two years, and getting frustrated and leaving,” he said. “We wanted to attract the more industrious and talented students to the college and to help them realize their potential.” He also believed that having more of these high-achievers on campus would enhance the education of regular students.

Kernek, who coordinated the Arts and Sciences Honors Program from 1975 to 1980, said he got the approval of Dean Paul Weller and then presented his idea to Bruce Carpenter, who was the University Provost and Academic Vice President at the time. Carpenter as well as Associate Provost Virgil Howe enthusiastically backed it, but they could not provide dedicated funding to initiate the program. “We ran on a shoestring in the early years,” Kernek said. Expenses such as the

Pictured are six former directors of the honors program. From left to right, seated: Jutta Helm and John Klasner. From left to right, standing: Eric Stiffler, Sterling Kernek, Gordon Kirk, and Thomas Helm. (University Archives collection)
cost of printing brochures or mailing letters to prospective students had to be covered essentially by donations from budgets in the College of Arts and Sciences. Moreover, the program could offer no material incentives for staffing the smaller classes designed especially for honors students or for providing honors students with more opportunities to work closely with their professors in regular classes or on individual projects. Thus, Kernek emphasized, the cooperation of department chairs and the willingness of faculty to devote substantial amounts of time to the program were crucial factors in its success.

In the beginning the program operated from the offices of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and involved 17 academic disciplines, predominately in the College of Arts and Sciences, ranging from English to chemistry. The Dean provided funds for a student worker, Susan Filar (now Jacques), who provided assistance, and the program soon raised enough private contributions to establish honors grants for entering freshmen. Putting a lot of time into recruitment—even traveling to high schools in the region—Kernek became increasingly convinced that the program made a difference in attracting good students.

In 1980, Kernek went on sabbatical, and Dr. Gordon Kirk, a colleague of Kernek’s in the history department, became director of the A & S Honors Program. It was Kirk who guided the program as it expanded into a university-wide honors program in 1983—a move Kernek applauded. This expansion incidentally included the creation of a University Honors Program office on the fifth floor of the Library. Kirk also succeeded in persuading all of the deans at WIU to give to the Honors Program Director responsibility for distributing some substantial undergraduate grants.

During 1984 Kernek stepped back into the role of director, but this time of a program that included disciplines in departments and colleges throughout the campus. A year later President Leslie Malpass and two of his Vice Presidents, Ralph Wagoner and Art Chown, figured out a way to substantially expand the number of scholarships for honors students. Private donations also enabled the program to support more of the growing number of student research projects. Enrollment continued to increase, reaching over 600 students by 1987, some living on floors in Thompson and Higgins Halls set aside for them. The number of entering freshmen reached over 170 that year, and their first year’s experience on campus included a course exclusively for honors students.

Looking back on his career, Kernek said: “The thing that gives me the most satisfaction was working with honors students and then seeing them get on and do so well (in life),” he said. For example, last year, Nancy Paridy Naughton, now a lawyer, who graduated from WIU as an “Honors Scholar” back in 1980, received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the College of Arts and Sciences. He remembers very well how hard she worked on her senior honors thesis.

In 1987 Kernek resigned from the directorship (to take another sabbatical) and was replaced by Dr. Eric M. Stiffler, a professor in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, who would supervise the program until 1989. Stiffler was followed by: Dr. Jutta Helm, a political science professor, who served from 1989-1993; Dr. John Klanser, a geology professor (1994-1998); Dr. Thomas Helm, a philosophy professor (1998-2006); and Dr. William Knox, an English professor, who was director from 2006 to 2011. Dr. Richard Hardy, a political science professor, currently serves as Interim Director.

In 1999, under Tom Helm’s leadership, the honors program evolved into the Illinois Centennial Honors College to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Western Illinois University (the “Illinois” was dropped from the name in 2004). At the same time, the program’s offices relocated from the library’s fifth floor to its present location on the second (ground) floor of the library.

Helm was also effective in giving the student research component of the honors program a much larger profile. He led in the establishment of an annual university-wide forum for faculty-mentored student research, scholarship and creative activity. Each April nearly 200 students participate in the annual event, which has been designated the Thomas E. Helm Undergraduate Research Day.

Kernek still clearly has a lot of pride in the program he helped to get started in the College of Arts & Sciences beginning about 37 years ago. “I take satisfaction that I put a lot of work into something that has survived and grown,” he said, “and I greatly appreciate the work of many colleagues who have nurtured and improved it.”

“We wanted to attract the more industrious and talented students to the college and to help them realize their potential.”
were really connected culturally and emotionally, and always will be here.”

Blonder, meanwhile, wondered how much of an impact they made at the national level. “We felt like we were trying to do something. It seemed like we did something. I don’t know. The war was over in ’75, right?”

More to come?

Organizer Mimi Williams said she felt good about putting the event together. However, she wished more could have attended. Among those who couldn’t attend were Paul Reynolds, who resides in Arizona, and Rich Hoppe, who is battling cancer.

Williams said about 40 percent of those she hoped to join the reunion made the trip. But she is optimistic she can reach more in the future and get those who couldn’t attend this year to go to another one in five years. She’s made it very clear that the second event will be in Macomb again.

“One person wants to go to Mexico, and somebody else wants to go to another state,” she said. “I said, ‘No, this is only happening in Macomb. This is where we came from and this where we come back to.’”

But as for Layng and Stegall, they said it’s probably their last trip to Macomb.

“It was fun,” Layng said. “Finally got to see the University one last time.”

Bill Welt, of Springfield, graduated in December with a master’s degree in history.

Looking back

The student activists remembered the Vietnam War as a very personal struggle, fighting to end the war and the draft.

“Americans were needlessly being killed in Vietnam; that kids our age were actually being killed for no reason and so we were very concerned about that and try everything we could to divert the country from that path,” Layng said.

Additionally, Layng believed their activism on campus led to some significant changes at Western.

“I think we made a lot of changes at the University that I’m not sure students could make today,” he said. “We were extremely involved, but what I found most interesting was the level of respect the students had for one another and the respect people in the community had for one another. We
By Alyse Thompson

Assanatou Sow has never been afraid to pursue her dreams. Already an avid traveler, she left her native Bamako, Mali, for Western Illinois University in 2007 to study one of her first passions: journalism.

“It’s a field I’ve always been passionate about — since I was 8, really,” Sow said. “I always would like watching the news and learning what’s going on in other countries.”

Her hard work has paid off. Sow earned a Centennial Honors Scholarship for fall 2012, her final semester before graduating in December.

“I was very happy because obviously I wasn’t the only one applying, so if you get picked for things like that, it’s always a nice feeling,” Sow said. But to do so, she had to realize one of her other goals first — learning English.

“When I was little, another dream of mine was to learn English,” Sow said. “Me and my brothers would always have conversations about the leading world language. We would compare, ‘Oh it’s French. No, it’s English. No, it’s this language, it’s that language.’ We’d do our searches, and then we found out that English was the leading world language. And I was like, ‘Oh, I want to learn that.’”

In her first semester, Sow took Western English as a Second Language classes before pursuing double majors in journalism and French.

While the English as a Second Language program emphasizes reading, writing, listening and speaking, it also helps students obtain a basic understanding of American culture.

“With those classes, you practice a lot,” Sow said. “They also have extracurricular activities to teach you about American culture, and they have conversation partner programs, things like that that will help you focus on English and not only speak to people you meet who speak the same language.”

Even with the extra support, Sow’s transition into an English-speaking culture was not trouble-free. But, her understanding Corbin Hall roommate helped her through it, Sow said.

“It was hard,” she said. “But, she was patient and nice enough. We used to communicate through gestures, and if I didn’t understand something, she’d write something for me, and I’d try to read it. It was very hard, but after a couple of semesters, it’s gotten easier and easier.”

Easier, indeed. In addition to serving as the vice president of the African Student Association, she has also served as treasurer for the Public Relations Student Society of America and functioned as the Student Honors Association journalist in spring 2012.

Additionally, Sow was active in Mortar Board and Phi Beta Delta, an honors society for international students. She did all of this while maintaining a 3.57 GPA.

“I can also consider myself as a leader,” Sow said.

Though her time at Western has come to a close, Sow still has significant plans for her future. Upon graduation, Sow wants to attend law school in France.

Ultimately, she hopes to combine her public relations emphasis and multilingual abilities and work for the United Nations.

“I’ve always had those big dreams running through my head,” Sow said.

Alyse Thompson, of West Chicago, double-majored in journalism and Spanish and graduated in December 2012.
Reflections
on the Life of a
Local Centenarian:
Olive Fite

Editor’s note: John Hallwas’s appreciation of Olive Fite originally appeared in The McDonough County Voice. Fite, a retired WIU English professor, died on April 26, 2012, in Macomb.

By John Hallwas
McDonough County Voice, May 5, 2012

A week ago [on April 26, 2012], Olive Fite died at age 100. She was a long-time resident of Wesley Village. Before that, she had been a professor at WIU for 35 years. And before that, she had been a grade school teacher in Oak Park. And in the beginning, she had been a poor farm girl—back when horse-drawn wagons and buggies were still common in rural Illinois.

Olive was a teacher of mine 45 years ago, and later a colleague in Western’s English Department, so I know a good deal about her. Of course, her long life prompts reflection on the changes that our older senior citizens have witnessed, but also, on the amazing inner growth that is possible in a lifetime—the kind of spiritual flowering that obituaries seldom reflect.

Olive was born at her parents’ farm near the hamlet of Berryville in Richland County, 15 miles from the Wabash River, in 1911. The Fites were members of the Moravian Church, a Protestant group that stressed spiritual unity and Christian tradition. Like many other youngsters before her, in that rural county, Olive started her education in a one-room country school.

When she was eight and World War I had finally ended, her parents moved to a farm several miles east, near Lancaster. That was a hamlet, too—but one that had a three-room school, which offered even some high school studies. Still, the Roaring ‘20s didn’t roar much in Lancaster, where limited education, conventional views and cultural narrowness prevailed.

That was in Wabash County, where bright, quiet, modest Olive was nevertheless able to finish her high school work at the county seat, Mt. Carmel, 10 miles away, on the Indiana line.

Wabash County was a long way from anywhere else, and life there was rooted in 19th-century traditions. One of them was that girls had to either choose one of the few careers open to them (teaching, secretarial work, etc.) or marry and raise a family.

In 1930 Olive made a momentous decision: she enrolled in a business college at Evansville, Ind., 45 miles away, working as a domestic servant during non-school hours, to pay her expenses.

Unfortunately, when she graduated, it was 1931, and the Depression had arrived. Jobs were hard to come by, so she just did more household work, as she later told me. But she also spent her spare time reading and writing. Realizing that she wanted to teach, she enrolled at ISU in 1933. To meet her expenses, she worked as a university switchboard operator, six hours a day.

When Olive graduated (with a bachelor’s degree) in 1937, she obtained a job teaching at an elementary school in Oak Park. Glad to be working as a teacher, and to be near the city, with its cultural advantages, she remained there for nine years. However, determined to advance her career and grow intellectually, she also studied at Northwestern, earning a master’s degree.

After teaching briefly at an Indiana college, she was hired at Western in 1947. She taught mostly composition, for men with doctorates dominated the English department and taught the literature classes. But not to be outdone, Olive took more graduate courses at Northwestern, and she eventually became the first female in that department to earn a Ph.D., in 1956.

Olive had chosen English as her
field chiefly because, as she told me, “literature fosters sympathy for the struggle of people in an often difficult world.” And like me, she loved the great sweep of American literature, reflecting generations of cultural change and probing insights.

By the time I met Olive, she was a full professor—the first woman in the department to achieve that rank. I took her class in Herman Melville (her specialty), for which we read seven or eight books. Even before I knew anything about Olive, I was intrigued that a woman would be so devoted to a writer of male-dominated works, like “Redburn,” “White-Jacket,” “Benito Cereno,” “Billy Budd,” and of course, the great, long masterpiece, “Moby Dick.”

As I got to know Olive and learned more about her, I marveled, too, that a woman from such a rural, traditional background—which did not promote intellectual individualism in young women—would become a teacher, and exponent, of works by a literary genius who was on a deep spiritual quest. Melville’s “Moby-Dick” is an expression of religious anguish, a depiction of humanity as alone and struggling for meaning, in a fearful, inscrutable, and tragic world.

Because Melville confronts troubling aspects of the universe and asks such deep questions—about the presence of evil, the complexity of human life, and the nature of God—he stands opposed to conventional views, traditional faiths, and comforting assumptions. To teach his complex books, and to write about them as a scholar, the woman from remote, tradition-bound Richland and Wabash counties had, intellectually, come a very long way from home.

That Olive also achieved the century mark before passing away is somehow appropriate for a person with such determination—not just to live, but to grow. And in her own way, like Melville, she confronted the tragic limitations of life, for at the end, she recognized that she had outlived her time, and realized her health was gone, too, so she accepted the coming of death.

Very soon, Olive’s body will be interred at the old Moravian Cemetery in the village of West Salem (population 1,000), near Berryville and Lancaster, in the remote locale that she had emerged from generations ago—and had, through such long effort, transcended so completely.

-- Author and local historian John Hallwas is a columnist for the McDonough County Voice.

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