

Professor of the Month: Jim Knox

James (Jim) Knox is teaching Geog 127 Physical Systems of the Environment and Geog 326 Landforms - Topic: Fluvial Geomorphology in this upcoming spring semester 2004

Where are you originally from?

Platteville, Wisconsin - a descendant from an original settler's family dating back to 1833.

What got you started in Geography?

A terrific physical relief map of the world on the wall of my one-room school house when I was growing up always interested me, as well as the many fossils I found on our farm.

What are you currently researching?

The natural history of the Mississippi River, especially involving floods and climate.

What passions you in your area of teaching?

I basically get to do my favorite hobby every-day when I go to work.

Do you have any advice for undergrads in Geography?

Don't let yourself be assigned by others to certain things, but always follow your own interests.

How many places have you lived and where?

Around the Midwest: Rochelle, IL; Iowa City, IA; Platteville, WI; in Grant County, WI; and, of course, Madison, WI.

What's your favorite place you have traveled?

New Zealand - it's a geomorphologist's paradise!

What's your favorite place in Wisconsin?

The geologically exotic Driftless Area.

What are some of your favorite movies?

"Dr. Zhivago" and "Lawrence of Arabia" - both good stories with great scenery.

What's your favorite food?

My wife's lasagna.

What's your favorite type of music and a favorite band or group?

The Eagles! I have 'The Best of the Eagles' CD in my van, and it probably drives my grad students crazy after a while...

What's your favorite animal? Do you have any pets?

Irish Setters; unfortunately none right at

the moment however, but that is subject to change.

Have you ever gotten lost before and where?

I once got lost in a tamarack swamp in north-western Wisconsin. I had to climb a tree to get a better view of where I was, and then figured out which way was which by seeing what side of the tree had moss growing on it.

Very clever, Professor! And finally, do you have anything in common with anyone who is famous?

I grew up within 15 miles of where the late, prestigious Glenn Trewartha, famous American geographer and former chair of the department at UW, grew up.

Thank you so much for the interview, Professor Knox. It is clear that geography is in your blood, and we are very thankful that you are part of the faculty here at Science Hall!

Interview and Text by Ben Spaiar

The Geography of ... Thanksgiving



Ahh, Thanksgiving... Turkey. Stuffing. Mashed Potatoes. Pumpkin Pie. And strange Englishmen dressed in buckles. The holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November is a long-standing American tradition, tracing its roots back to a feast supposedly held by the New England Puritans and the Wampanoag Indians in 1621. Although schoolchildren are taught that most of today's Thanksgiving customs originated with that one feast, but they are in fact a conglomeration of widespread influences.

That first Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims dined mostly upon native foods, and the Wampanoags played no small part in helping the Pilgrims celebrate their first successful year. Waterfowl, fish, berries, shellfish, and boiled pumpkin were the main dishes. Potatoes were avoided for many years because it was considered poisonous. There was no butter or cheese, as cattle had not yet been brought to New England. However, as the centuries progressed, an annual fall har-

vest festival emerged that slowly began to resemble the one we celebrate today.

When European crops began to be successfully grown, the festival became a continuation of the traditional English harvest festival that included three straight days of feasting and merrymaking. As immigrants from far-flung nations arrived in America, the festival took on a more religious and patriotic bent. However, as immigration from non-western European countries increased, many Yankee groups became concerned that their traditions might become forgotten. In order to "Americanize" the new arrivals, private organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution and even Ford Motor Company taught classes and handed out pamphlets to immigrants to teach them about the "American" way of life. Learning about the Pilgrims' contribution to American customs and partaking in Thanksgiving became a major right of passage for many immigrant families. Eventually, the festival became secularized

and entered the public schools, and was declared a national holiday.

Even so, Thanksgiving is hardly just an American celebration. Canadians celebrate their own version in October, and many Jewish people observe Sukkot in the fall, expressing thanks to God for the bounty of the earth. In fact, all the major world religions—including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam—have rituals, observances and liturgies that express thanks and gratitude to a higher power for continued life and abundant harvests. The Native Americans, too, had their own form of Thanksgiving. For example, the Seneca tribe of Iroquois praised their creator for continued natural abundance. In one form or other, Thanksgiving is celebrated all over the world. But only in America is watching football considered part of the celebration. Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

Story by Aaron Stephenson

MADISON GEOGRAPHIC

The Official Newsletter of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Geography Club • December 2003

Cheryl Murray, Department Administrator, Retires

On December 5, 2003, Cheryl Murray's career as the Geography Department Administrator will come to an end. The Geography Club would like to thank her for not only assisting the club, but keeping the department as a whole running smoothly. I recently talked with Cheryl, and learned of her long and noteworthy career at the University.

After attending school in Milwaukee, Cheryl started working for UW-Madison in 1966 as a stenographer in the economics department. She still recalls entering a professor's office and being "appalled" at its condition, with stacks of paperwork everywhere. Soon after this initial experience, she realized that this was the normal condition in university offices.

In her work as a stenographer, Cheryl typed theses that had complicated equations, sometimes up to a page long. The modern student must be reminded here that her work was completed on a typewriter, with the arms flying up and striking the page. (This modern student is having difficulties clearly explaining the mechanics of typewriters) Plus, since the xerox machine had not been invented yet, copies were made with carbon paper. There was little room for error, as any mistake was promulgated to every copy and had to be fixed!

Cheryl eventually left the economics department, working next at the Environmental Design Center, and then the departments of Philosophy, Theatre and Drama, Philosophy again, Physics, and then Geography in 1987. She has been here ever since. Cheryl mentioned that she has worked in "many interesting departments" and met many personalities, learning a great deal along the way. She recalls having fun times meeting graduate students early in her career, learning from their experiences and sharing her own. One night, she organized a smelt fry, introducing out of state students to the classic tradition of the Wisconsin fish fry. During her

time in the Theatre and Drama department, she got to meet many famous people, including the opera star Beverly Sills. While the administrator of any department on campus, Cheryl has never operated a department in the red. She feels this is one of her most significant accomplishments.

Cheryl has never directly witnessed any paranormal activity in Science Hall, although she can confirm that bones were once found in a closet. She also admits that opening doors into rooms with unknown contents was not her favorite activity; thankfully, nothing ever jumped out at her! This might be a relief for IES and Geography graduate students, who tend to work out of the more isolated chambers of Science Hall.

I asked Cheryl if she had any advice for students about to graduate, and she stressed that "money isn't everything" and "you need to enjoy what you are doing." Also, "don't think you know it all when you first start a job", for there is always more to learn. Cheryl said that you get an "education meeting other people", and encourages students to learn from their peers.



Cheryl has "seen many students come and go" and the geography club ebb and flow in turn. She would like to see the club have a permanent presence, and encourages younger students to get involved and carry on the club. She feels it is a great way to meet other geography students and share ideas, and is a nice resume addition.

Cheryl's immediate plans after retirement include "sleep, time to relax, and a little traveling." Wisely, she is considering spending a couple of weeks in a more hospitable climate this winter. After that, she will decide what lies ahead.

Again, the Geography Club would like to thank Cheryl for her dedication and congratulate her on a successful career at the UW. We wish her luck in her future endeavors.

Story by Nate Gauger

UPCOMING GEOGRAPHY CLUB NEWS AND EVENTS

Nov. 24 meeting will start at 6:30 p.m.

Please note that Monday's meeting will start 1/2 hour later than usual, but we will have Pizza-and-Grad-Students.

Photo contest in next month's edition!

Keep watch for our winter edition of Madison Geography, which will come out right before winter break. It will contain a photo contest, and the winner will take home a FREE COW T-SHIRT!

Meetings for the Fall 2003 semester will be held every 2nd and 4th Monday of every month. We meet at 6:00 p.m. (except for our next meeting) in the Student Lounge, 480-B Science Hall. Meetings are open to everyone.