

UMRA U NEWSLETTER

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

APRIL 2007

New U anthropology chair Bill Beeman will speak on Iran, April 24

During a visit to Japan, Bill Beeman was invited to dinner by a friend who wanted to impress his boss by bringing an American who spoke Japanese.

The epitome of a corporate sourpuss, the boss wouldn't loosen up at an elegant restaurant. Walking down the street afterwards, they paused in front of a high-class karaoke bar. "Professor Beeman is a singer," the friend said; and the boss asked, "Do you know Die Schöne Müllerin?" Taken aback, Bill said he did. "Then we're going in here so you can sing it!" the boss ordered.

During a pause in the music, Bill launched into the song cycle. In a creaky voice the boss joined in, and they sang all 20 songs in German to the utter amusement of all the denizens in the bar. "Ah," the boss said, smiling at last, "there is nothing better than Schubert."

William Beeman arrived at the University of Minnesota in January to serve as professor and chair of the Department of Anthropology. A linguistic anthropologist specializing in discourse analysis and performance theory, he has concentrated his primary



research in Iran and Tajikistan, and also carried out research in India, Japan, and Western Europe.

As part of his research on performance, Professor Beeman entered the Boston Conservatory to train as an opera singer, and performed for three years in an opera house in East Germany. Previously, he earned a Wesleyan B.A. with high honors in anthropology and a Chicago Ph.D. in anthropology in 1975.

He writes as fluently as he sings Schubert and has penned over 100 scholarly articles and 500 opinion pieces. Among his books are *Language, Status and Power in Iran*; *Culture, Performance and Communication in Iran*; *The Third Line: The Opera Performer as Interpreter* (with opera director Daniel Helfgot); and the latest, *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs": How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other*.

Because Bill regularly publishes in the print media and is a frequent guest on radio and television, he has taken the next step and created a blog. If you have not yet explored the blogosphere, now is your chance. Go to www.wbeeman.blogspot.com and savor his insightful and irreverent comments on current U. S. "diplomacy" toward Iran.

UMRA will welcome him warmly on April 24 to analyze and explore how the United States and Iran demonize each other.

—Frank Miller, President

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

APRIL
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday
April 24, 2007
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Featured Speaker
William Beeman, chair,
Department of Anthropology
**"The 'Great Satan' vs
the 'Mad Mullahs': How the
U.S. and Iran Demonize
Each Other."**

Location
Conference Room ABC
Campus Club, Fourth Floor
Coffman Memorial Union,
East Bank Campus, U of M

Cost
\$12 per person (tax included)

Reservation Deadline
Thursday, April 19
To reserve your place(s)
send a check, payable to the
University of Minnesota Retirees
Association, to Ben Zimmerman
at 2225 Folwell Ave., St. Paul,
MN 55108; call him at 651-
645-1662; or e-mail him at
zimme003@umn.edu.

Reservations requested after
Thursday, April 19, will be on a
waiting list. Cancellations must
be received by noon April 19.

Parking
With your UMRA membership
card, parking is available for
\$4 all day in the East River
Road Garage.

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

UMRA NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Bridal Veil Falls

photo by Cynthia Abbott Cone

Be part of UMRA's continuing progress

UMRA needs you! The Nominations Committee is looking for a few good women and men to serve as a board member or as president-elect. Committee chair Warren Ibele would welcome volunteers or suggestions about who might be encouraged to volunteer to take part in the leadership of our fine organization. Contact him at <ibele001@umn.edu> or 612-377-1075.

The Program Committee also seeks volunteers to pitch in this spring to help select speakers for the coming year. Please contact committee chair Gayle Graham Yates at <graha001@umn.edu> or 612-920-2501.

On a perfect Minnesota winter morning – fresh snow, zero degrees, bright sun, not a breath of air moving – Cynthia and I took our favorite walk in the Twin Cities: down the river from the River Flats parking lot. The most enchanting spot on the mile-and-a-half trail is Bridal Veil Falls (a block north of the Franklin Avenue Bridge), sculpted by the cold air into a massive, sparkling frieze. (I practice all forms of humor, even the lowliest.)

My mind drifted back to a day recounted in the October newsletter. While paddling a heavily laden canoe on Basswood Lake in the Boundary Waters and struggling against an unseasonably chilly rain driven by a south wind, I asked myself, “Why I am enjoying this so much?” Cynthia gave a Buddhist answer: “Dwell happily in the present moment.... keep the sun of awareness continually shining on all circumstances.”

A week later a small circumstance was to have larger repercussions. I discovered that President-elect Gayle Graham Yates is not listed in the U's online directory or on the American Studies website. Then I discovered that the Regents Policy on Faculty Emeriti (July 14, 2000) guarantees a directory listing.

Gayle and I began to ask others: “Does the U pay enough attention to its retirees?” We learned that some are closely involved with their departments and benefit from office and/or lab space and opportunities to teach and advise graduate students. At the other extreme, others feel ignored and forgotten. And then, there are still others who like being left alone.

We decided to launch an effort to guarantee equal access to information and opportunities for all retirees, including civil service and P & A retirees. Gayle prepared an article for the January Newsletter and drafted a proposal that was discussed and endorsed by the UMRA Board. On March 27 we presented it to the University Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs; we received some constructive criticism and an invitation to return.

Next steps will include discussions with the Civil Service Committee and the Council of Academic Professionals and Administrators (CAPA).

Exploration of programs at other universities for the pros and cons of retirement centers and emeriti colleges has begun. Please see the related article in this issue.

—Frank Miller

Is a Center for Retirees in UMRA's and the University's future?

For several years some UMRA officers and members have been exploring how retirees organize their activities in other universities. Presidents John Howe and Warren Ibele regularly told us about the arrangements at other institutions and Alan Kagan wrote about the subject in the January Newsletter this year. In this article we explore two rather different models of organization.

In December 2006 the University of Wisconsin-Madison Faculty Senate adopted a proposal for the establishment of a UW-Madison Faculty-Staff Emeriti Center. The proposal had come from the Senate Retirement Issues Committee, which included 10 members appointed by the UW-Madison Retirement Association. That association, 675 members strong, was created by the Retirement Issues Committee in 1999, and the association officers met with the campus provost just before the passage of the proposal and gained his support.

The mission of the UW center is, in part, "to provide an environment to encourage continuing contribution of retired faculty and staff to the university, to support the continuing personal/professional development of retired faculty and staff members as valued human resources, and to enrich and re-enlist the personal and professional participation of members in the university and its surrounding community..."

The plan includes details for a place (shared space in an already existing building, a new building, or a renovated on-campus site), fund-raising (university budget contributions; individual gifts; corporate, honorary or memorial gifts; program endowments or planned gifts), and programming. The center is envisioned as an umbrella on-campus organization for lifelong support of scholarship; awards and honors, both to others by the retirees group and for retirees themselves; social and educational programs, workshops, and classes provided by the center; volunteer opportunities; and for maintaining records and a database concerning retirees and retirement issues. Projected governance includes a director, program and administrative staff, and an advisory committee of both active and retired faculty and staff.

A different model of organization can be found at Arizona State University, where the new Emeritus College is defined as a college in a traditional sense of the word: "an assembly of scholars gathered together for their mutual interests."

The ASU proposal was submitted in July 2004, adopted that November, and in April 2006, the new college occupied permanent quarters in the former offices of the dean of the Graduate School. (If such a college were created here,

perhaps UMRA past-president Warren Ibele, a former dean of the Graduate School and professor emeritus of mechanical engineering, could engineer a similar arrangement.) The office houses Dean Richard Jacob, professor emeritus of physics (unpaid), an administrative assistant, and a secretary. There are also shared studies rooms that may be reserved for long-term projects and carrels for drop-in use.

The ASU membership is 280 and growing daily; dues are \$30 per annum. Members may apply for \$200 travel grants if they are presenting a paper or chairing a session at a conference.

A major thrust of the Emeritus College is the creation of seven centers to work on writing, mentoring, scientific literacy, and ASU history and traditions. The First Annual Symposium will be held in May and the Emeritus Journal will debut in October.

For more information about these university centers, go to: www.secfac.wisc.edu/senate/2006/1204/1958.pdf and www.asu.edu/provost/emerituscollege/

— Gayle Graham Yates and Frank Miller

Retirees who volunteer as Partners-In-English conversation mentors teach and learn

Mentoring foreign graduate students, postdoctoral students, and their spouses in conversational English is sponsored by Partners in English (PIE), one of the many programs offered by the University Retirees Volunteer Center. Although the young people who attend are highly intelligent and motivated to learn, and their knowledge of English in their specialties is excellent, their conversation skills and pronunciation are poor, so that they feel uncomfortable in contacts outside the classroom. Our efforts are directed to helping them understand and use colloquial English, and in the process to improve their pronunciation.

That knowledge of colloquial English is important was confirmed by a Korean student, who told us about a serious and embarrassing situation that he got into with the Minneapolis police. Having unwittingly committed some minor infraction while driving, he was told to "pull over" by officers in a squad car. Because the young man understood that phrase as meaning some kind of sweater, he responded by making a series of uncertain maneuvers that irritated the officers and unnecessarily aggravated his predicament.

Our approach to conversations often is to search the news-

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Mentoring — continued from page 3

papers for headlines that illustrate colloquialisms that would be useful for the students to understand such as “a grey area,” “clear the air,” “not cut out for,” and “scratch the surface.” Discussion of such phrases gets the students to forget their shyness and to talk, giving us the opportunity to try to improve their pronunciation.

Another approach is to take advantage of current events to promote conversation. Our session on February 14 provided the opportunity to talk about Valentine’s Day and for us to learn how analogous celebrations take place in the countries represented by the students. In that session we had 11 students (and three infants) from Colombia, Inner Mongolia, Iran, Korea, and Taiwan, and we mentors learned a great deal about lovers’ days in other countries.

In fact, learning is one of the usual recompenses of our mentoring. These students are very smart and are a real pleasure to work with. This kind of mentoring is a highly rewarding activity. For more information about participating as a mentor, call the Volunteer Center office, 612-625-8016, weekday mornings, 9 to noon.

— Connie and Richard Oriani

Invite a prospective member to an UMRA lunch

Remember that UMRA will pay the cost of lunch for guests who are potential members. Just give the names to Ben Zimmerman as you make your reservations.

The last lunch of the year is coming up on April 24, 11:30 a.m. Invite a prospective member to hear our next luncheon program speaker William Beeman, professor and chair of the Department of Anthropology, who will discuss “The ‘Great Satan’ vs the ‘Mad Mullahs’: How the U.S. and Iran Demonize Each Other.”

Upcoming date to mark on your calendars

May 22, 5:30 p.m., UMRA’s spring banquet

Speaker: Dr. Rusty Barceló, vice-president and vice-provost for Equity and Diversity, University of Minnesota
Watch for more information in the May Newsletter.

For additional information about UMRA,
visit www.umn.edu/umra
or contact President Frank Miller at 612-331-2145,
mille005@umn.edu, or 979 18th Ave. S.E., Mpls 55414

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