

FEBRUARY 2008

Richard Kain will speak on travels in Ethiopia: Cultures and Creatures

Ask Richard Kain about his latest trip, and his eyes will light up beyond their usual rather impish sparkle. He starts to speak, and within a couple of sentences, his listeners are in the middle of a setting that one often reads about only in National Geographic. Even without photographs, Kain brings to life countries and peoples and



cultures in a way that makes people want to learn more about them. Traveling extensively to all of the continents, he has explored Alaska, Antarctica, Aruba, Australia, Canada, China,

Egypt, Ethiopia, the Falkland Islands, Galapagos Islands, Iceland, Kenya, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Georgia Island, Spitsbergen, and Tanzania.

At the February 26 meeting, Kain will tell us about his 2006 trip to Ethiopia, where he camped on the Omo river for eight nights, visiting native villages. His presentation will include images of a national park, where he sat in the grass with Gelada baboons, as well as underground churches and members of five native tribes, with stories of their tribal customs. He will bring a copy of his trip diary and an alphabet book he has made to demonstrate how we might share our own travels or other life experiences with family and friends.

Professor emeritus Kain retired early, almost ten years ago, from the University's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, to spend more time on photography. He began his academic career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned B.S., M.S., and Sc.D. degrees in Electrical Engineering and became a member of the electrical engineering faculty. In 1966 he joined the Minnesota faculty, where he taught for 32 years, specializing in computer design. His interest in computer system architecture led him to publish *Computer Architecture: Software and Hardware*, 1989, and *Advanced Computer Architecture: A Systems Design Approach*, 1996.

Throughout this time—actually, for 60 years—Kain has been taking photographs. For more than 35 years, he has been active in camera clubs in the Twin Cities, using PhotoShop (when it became available) to improve images and construct slide shows. He enjoys sharing his photographs with others by hanging shows in public places, giving slide presentations for special groups, and by presenting a winter course under the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute entitled “Exotic Armchair Travels.”

A few years ago, he made an alphabet book of creature photographs for his grandchildren. He sells prints, the alphabet book, and calendars containing his images.

When he is not traveling, he resides (with his wife Kathie Simon Frank, retired undergraduate adviser for the Department of Sociology) in Southeast Minneapolis.

—Julie Medbery, Program Committee

FEBRUARY
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday
February 25, 2008
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Featured Speaker

Richard Kain, professor emeritus,
University of Minnesota
“Travels in Ethiopia: Cultures
and Creatures”

Location

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

Cost

Prepayment, \$12 per person;
\$14 at door for those not prepaid.

Reservation Deadline Thursday, February 21

To reserve your place(s) and take advantage of prepaid price, send a check, payable to UMRA, to Ben Zimmerman, 2225 Folwell Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. Contact him at 651-645-1662 or e-mail him at zimme003@umn.edu.

Reservations requested after Feb. 21 will be on a waiting list. Cancellations must be received by noon, February 21.

Parking

Parking is available in the East River Road Garage at UMRA's membership discount, \$4.50 for the entire day.

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

A Gracefully Aging Person

My neighbor Eleanor Falk Quirt is 92 years old. She is an artist. She could be a member of UMRA because her deceased husband, Walter, was a University of Minnesota professor and one-time chair of the Art Department. However, she declined to come to an UMRA luncheon with me once, when artist Clarence Morgan was speaking, saying she does not go out of the neighborhood much. At the time, though, when she was 91, she drove her car and often picked up her friend Lucy Bowron, who was not as mobile as Eleanor, to go to movies or to lunch together. Lucy has died within the past year; and when Eleanor's car was crashed by another car, one of her sons asked her not to get a new one and not drive any more and promised to do all her driving chores for her.

As faculty wives together, Lucy Bowron and Eleanor were a part of a marvelous faculty friendship group, which included American Studies founder Tremaine McDowell, a bachelor; Lucy and her husband, subsequent American Studies chair Barney Bowron; and Eleanor and her husband. Once Eleanor had me to tea at her home around the corner from mine and showed me her husband's art and her own art on her walls, and then she took me back to her little studio room and got out a packet of post cards from a drawer. All original drawings of hers, some cartoon-like figures, some pen-and-ink portraits, some lovely greeting cards—these were cards she had mailed to Tremaine McDowell over the years; and, when she visited him when he was dying, she told me, he pulled out this little packet of cards and “returned” all this splendid post card art work to her.

As young people, Eleanor and her husband were a part of the heady New York arts scene in the 1930s and '40s, and she can talk about prominent internationally known artists with the first names of acquaintances. The couple came to Minneapolis for his job at our university, but he died long ago. “He smoked all his life and had lung cancer,” she tells matter-of-factly, adding, “Poor lad!”

Both physically and mentally quite healthy, and very self-reliant, Eleanor says she needs an arm to hold onto to walk up steps—just an arm, mind you, not any other help. She says her legs are not obeying commands as well as they used to. After escorting her up the steps at our house one day, our son exclaimed, “How old is she? She is sharp as a tack!” Indeed. Intellectually, artistically, and practically, Eleanor keeps alert and lively around questions of art, education, current affairs, health, and the neighborhood; and she takes care of her home entirely herself. For several recent summers, she went to summer rehearsals of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and did pen-and-ink drawings of the musicians at work.

Eleanor tunes in to each situation in which she finds herself. When she has come to our house for parties where our grandchildren will be, she brings a different walking cane each time because our small-boy twin grandsons like to play horsey with her canes. And she likes to tell them where the canes came from and what the countries of their origin are like.

Once, bringing guacamole to a summer block party in our neighborhood, she tripped and fell on an uneven sidewalk and was momentarily rendered unconscious, her red blood from a cut on her forehead mingling with the spilled guacamole in a green-and-red mess beside her. Rousing just in time to protest against being carted off to the hospital in an ambulance ordered quickly by a doctor and a nurse among the block party-going neighbors, Eleanor was indignant, sure that nothing very serious was wrong with her. And there wasn't. On the phone the next day, she insisted that there was just too much fuss made.

Eleanor is a wonderful example of a 92-year-old woman—“going on 93”. She is sure of herself, yet very kind and gracious. She has the good fortune of being healthy, is talented and accomplished, and her life has been full. Yet she still seems to savor all the moments of the present. I admire her enormously and see her as a model of a gracefully aging person.

—Gayle Graham Yates, President

Menu for the February luncheon

Mediterranean Chicken (roasted with lemon, garlic, and oregano) served with an herb vegetable rice. Coffee or Tea. Baklava with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Vegetarian and gluten-free meals are available; please make this request when making your reservation.

What Gray Gophers are doing...

Joanne Eicher is serving as the general editor of a ten-volume encyclopedia of dress that will be published in 2010. She was recently awarded the Ada Comstock Distinguished Woman Scholar Lecturer Award, named for the University's first dean of women.

Ted Litman reports the release of the fourth edition of *Health Politics and Policy*, which he co-edited with James Morone (Brown University) and Leonard Robins (University of Illinois-Chicago) by Delmar Publishing.

Reports from UMRA liaisons

Enrollment figures in U retiree health plans

The results of this year's open enrollment are in, and they reflect little change from that of a year ago. Overall, some 2,171 University retirees, 65 years of age and over (1,549 individual and 672 dependent spouses/domestic partners) signed up for medical coverage under the U Plan for 2008. By plan, Blue Cross/Blue Shield remains the most popular option with 45.8 percent of the enrollment (down slightly, i.e. 1.5 percent, from last year) despite its increase in premiums, followed by Health Partners 65+ at 30 percent (up .9 percent), U Care for Seniors at 12.4 percent (up .7 percent) and Medica's Group Prime Solution at 11.4 percent (up 2.5 percent).

As for dental coverage (N = 2,183), Delta Dental Premier continues to be the leading choice among retirees and their dependents, comprising 55.8 percent of the enrollees, followed by Health Partners Dental at 14.5 percent; Health Partners Dental Choice, 9.2 percent, Delta Dental PPO, 9.1 percent and University Choice at 9.1 percent.

—Ted Litman, UMRA Representative,
University Benefits Advisory Committee

Regents hear reports on health care trends

At the December Regents meetings, the Faculty, Staff and Student Affairs Committee, chaired by Regent Frobenius, heard a comprehensive report on future health care trends and their impact on the University. The expert presenters were from the Health Buyers Action Group, Medica, and Health Partners and included Provost for Health Sciences Dr. Frank Cerra.

Subjects covered were market trends, federal and state innovations, and paying for health care. Market trends include high costs and an unsustainable system of variable quality and full of waste. Approaches to dealing with these trends include delivery innovations such as retail clinics, increasing use of nurse practitioners, and care packages by providers for certain illnesses.

Several participants agreed that paying for health care should change from a fee-for-service basis to accountability for the health of patients, which should be shared by patients, providers, and third-party payers. For example, a shift toward employers' management of premium costs would include efforts to modify employee behavior with fitness club memberships and incentives for participation in weight loss and smoking cessation. Individuals will be asked to take greater responsibility for cost and quality by budgeting for health care, buying policies with high deductibles, and using spending accounts.

Federal initiatives to deal with health care issues are focusing on value-driven care with concentration on transparency in quality, cost, and incentives for high-value care, as well as health technology. State initiatives to keep costs down use the leveraging power of the state as a purchaser.

— Hal Miller, UMRA President-elect and alternate liaison to the Board of Regents

URVC offers opportunities to volunteer for U and community programs

The University Retiree Volunteer Center (URVC) *always* needs volunteers. In the coming months, we will need:

- Judges for high school science fairs
- Jury members for mock trial juries to train prospective lawyers at the Law School
- "Partners in English" to visit with foreign-born graduate students to help them with idiomatic English
- Greeters for the Red Cross Bloodmobiles
- Many, many ushers for Rarig and Ted Mann Theaters, positions that confer free admission, of course
- Tutors for schools all over the Twin Cities, particularly those with a lot of foreign-born youngsters
- Even some prosaic tasks that need doing (envelope stuffing, perhaps), if that's your thing!

And many other interesting and useful projects for the U and for non-profit agencies.

Special need: scientists to mentor budding scientists

The URVC has received a specific request for scientist-mentors to volunteer for two projects at St. Anthony Village High School.

- "Team Robotics" is funded by a Medtronics grant and 40 students have signed up. Specialists in engineering, artificial intelligence, computer programming and physics are especially needed. This project runs through March.
- "Science Olympiad" is a repeating project at the high

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Volunteer Opportunities — Continued from page 3

school and scientist-mentors in various fields will be greatly appreciated. This is a great opportunity to meet enthusiastic high school students and initiate a science mentoring program.

Please contact URVC for further information or to indicate your interests. Call the office, 612-625-8016, or, if you prefer to use e-mail, send your inquiry to our office manager Alan Kagan at kagan001@umn.edu.

—Helen Briggs, Communications Secretary

Upcoming dates and programs

The programs for the remainder of the 2007-2008 year, held at the Campus Club at 11:30 a.m., as usual, are:

March 25—Bill Dougherty speaking on families

April 22—Ann Pflaum and Hy Berman on 150 years of Minnesota history

The Annual Meeting and Festive luncheon will be May 27 at 1 p.m. at the Weisman Art Museum. It will feature a musical performance by tenor Clifton Ware, accompanied by Bettye Ware. Please make note of it on your calendars.

Invite a prospective member to the next UMRA lunch and program — UMRA's treat!

Join in recruiting new or renewing members by inviting fellow retirees to an UMRA luncheon meeting. Let them see what we're all about.

It's easy and completely without cost to you...it's UMRA's treat! Just include their reservations with yours; give secretary Ben Zimmerman your friends' names for the nametags, and UMRA will cover the cost for that lunch and program.

It's well known that personal contacts are the most effective way to add new members and grow our ranks. Be an ambassador, and give your friends the gift of an opportunity to benefit from UMRA fellowship and membership.

Reminder to all: Be an early bird—send prepayment with your reservations and pay \$12 per person, rather than \$14 at the door on the day of the luncheon program.

Visit the UMRA Web site,
www.umn.edu/umra

to see photos from past events and read about UMRA's proposals for U retiree recognition.

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