He's run shotgun with Marlin Perkins, dropped thousands of balloons across the Midwest skyline, made a great big rolling railroad sing and had lunch in a diner with a waitress named Mavis.

An Omaha advertising pioneer, Galen Lillethorup has watched his craft evolve over a career that began after earning a journalism degree from Omaha University in 1956. He's helped create some of the most memorable commercials ever produced in Omaha, all with his same trademark for clear, simple communication.

But years before writing his first ad copy, Lillethorup was a newsman for a new medium called television. Two weeks after coming home from the Air Force in 1956 (he was stationed in San Antonio throughout the Korean War) Lillethorup got a call from KMTV, Omaha's local NBC television affiliate. "Mark Gautier, a classmate at North High, had gone to work for KMTV two weeks before I did. He gave me a call and got me involved with the station."

Lillethorup spent 10 years with KMTV, three of them working in the news department and seven in "continuity" — the station's in-house advertising agency. As a promotion and marketing manager, Lillethorup created the station's commercials and events.

One of the most memorable: The promotion for KMTV's 10th anniversary in 1959. "We had a huge balloon drop over parts of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and South Dakota," he said. "We'd worked it out so one of four planes working the event was over a different town every 15 minutes. We constantly broadcasted a message across TV screens saying where the drop was taking place."

Fifty nitrogen-filled balloons containing a prize certificate were dropped over each town. Prizes ranged from small trinkets to three $800 color television sets.

"The grand prize was a brand new Buick," Lillethorup says. "That prize balloon was dropped in Council Bluffs and the winner had to cross into a neighbor's yard to get it. Of course, there was a lawsuit."

Not just one, but many, along with trodden soybean fields in Wahoo and a damaged car in Fremont. Despite the lawsuits and damage, the promotion was a success and is remembered by many.

When one of Lillethorup's collaborators, Bill Fries, left KMTV in 1964 to work for Bozell & Jacobs — then the biggest advertising firm in Omaha — Lillethorup went with him. Together, they worked on a program for Mutual of Omaha called "Wild Kingdom."

"Bill and I travelled with Marlin and Jim (Marlin Perkins' irascible sidekick) on a number of adventures, including a shark show in the Sea of Cortez. Perkins was easy-going, nothing shook him."

While at B&J, Fries and Lillethorup created a number of memorable commercials, including a series of spots for Union Pacific Railroad. The UP commercials weren't targeted to sell the railroad's services, but boost employee morale.

"This was just after UP had discontinued its passenger service and many thought the railroad was a dying business. UP Chairman John Keneckick wanted us to create something to get employees to feel good about their jobs again."

Spots often showcased UP employees singing the Union Pacific company song (written by Fries) while doing such tasks as laying rail in the dessert.
From the Chairman’s Desk

Department in need of additional computers

The enrollment at UNO reached record numbers this fall with more than 17,000 students, and I’m sure, though we don’t have final figures yet, that the Department of Communication also has another record enrollment. The demand for courses in journalism, public relations/advertising, broadcasting, speech communication and the graduate program in communication is greater than ever and consequently we have had to turn away more students than ever. We could certainly use more than the 20 full-time faculty that we currently have, but it appears that any optimism here is going to be seriously tempered by the state’s budget problems over the next several years. Consequently, we will continue to accommodate as much of the excess demand as possible with part-time instructors.

Which leads me to my main message here. In last year’s CommUNO I mentioned that the 18 computers in the writing lab had, after almost nine years, become obsolete and that we needed new ones. We still do, and the need has become more urgent. But because we don’t anticipate much help from state funds for equipment (in fact, even in “normal” years our annual state allocation for equipment averages only about $10,000), we have — with the invaluable help of John Erickson and Deborah Kohler of the University of Nebraska Foundation — approached a number of private corporations that have hired our graduates and/or student interns, and we have had some success. ConAgra has given us a donation of $4,000, and several others have made verbal pledges to help us in the near future. The names of these firms will be displayed on a plaque in the writing lab in Arts and Sciences Hall. (See separate story on ConAgra on page 4.)

We are seeking up to $65,000 to install state-of-the-art equipment that will enable us to teach desktop publishing in the lab as well as writing and editing courses. The current lab equipment is limited to word processing, and we have only three Macintoshes, housed in another room, with which to teach the new course in publication design and graphics — with a limit of not more than about 15 students a semester.

In last year’s letter I thanked those of you who have designated the Department of Communication as the recipient of your annual donations to the UNO Alumni Association. In a few weeks I plan to write you a letter which will solicit your support in our effort to update the lab. I have never made a direct request before, which might tell you something about the urgency of our need. We have certainly appreciated your support in the past; your generosity has helped to fund such annual projects as this newsletter, the communication awards luncheon, the high school newspaper competition and the Gateway Alumni Group Scholarship.

There is a positive note about the future of state appropriations. The planners have told me that the current blueprints for the remodeling of Arts and Sciences Hall specify significantly more space for the communication department, including a much-needed second writing lab to accommodate the growing enrollment. But this will also mean, of course, a need for 18 more computers. Although the money for the remodeling phase will probably not be appropriated before 1994-95, it is a good idea to be thinking about it now because we don’t know where the money for that equipment will come from. (That’s another way of saying that I might be writing you another letter.)

Before this decade is over the department hopefully will be able, according to the planners, to look forward to more.

See COWDIN on page 4

CommUNO is published annually by UNO’s Department of Communication for the department’s alumni and friends. It is written by volunteer alumni and financed by contributions made to the Department of Communication via the UNO Alumni Association.

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   Kim Hansen
   Kim Kavalec
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   Tim McMahan
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Omaha World-Herald
Freelance Writer
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Creighton University
Freelance Writer
Papillion Times

Student Assistants: Kris Fredenburg, Tim Riley, Timothy Sibbel and Todd Moothart.

CommUNO welcomes correspondence from alumni and friends of UNO’s Department of Communication. If you have something you would like to see in CommUNO or would like to help with the next issue, contact Hugh Cowdin, Department of Communication, Arts and Sciences Hall Room 150, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Neb. 68182-0112.
1992 Comm UNO Annual Awards

Alumni Achievement
• Henry Cordes  
  Omaha World-Herald
• Todd F. Simon  
  Michigan State University

Communication Achievement
• Benito Salazar  
  Nuestra Mundo
• Rosalee Roberts  
  Bozell Inc.

Lifetime Achievement
• Walt Kavanagh  
  KFAB Radio

Distinguished Service
• Ellen Gast
• Gunnar Horn

Outstanding Communication Student
• Steven J. Hanlon

Forensics team does well
The Forensics team went to 15 tournaments and won more than 80 individual and team awards last year. It also hosted the 34th Maverick Individual Events Tournament in October 1991, which 21 Midwestern colleges and universities attended.

Outstanding Speech Student
• Cynthia Buxton

Outstanding Journalism Student
• Julie Condon

Outstanding Broadcasting Student
• Mary Lou York

Outstanding Graduate Student
• Linda Moorman

Omaha Press Club
Panko-Roberts Scholarship
• Nadine J. Vodicka

Omaha Press Club John F. Davis Scholarship
• Thomas G. Elser

Omaha Press Club Paul N. Williams Scholarship
• Barbara J. Farho

Gunnar Horn Talent Scholarships
• Lisa Tosoni
• Kelli Smith

Hartman Memorial Journalism Talent Scholarship
• Beth Watson

Sue Francke Memorial Scholarship
• Trish Newell

Paisley Family Newspaper Scholarships
• Kris Fredenburg
• Eric Francis
• Jill Degan

Merrill Lynch Foundation Mass Communication Scholarship
• Deborah Marie Chick

Gateway Alumni Group Scholarship
• Elizabeth Merrill
• Shannan Johnson

“Best of…” Gateway Alumni Group
• Lori Safranko, Best News Story
• Tara Muir, Best Personal Column
• Tara Muir, Best Feature Story
• Eric Francis, Best Photograph
• Daren Schrat, Best Sports Story
• Chad Crouch, Best Cartoon

International Association of Business Communicators/Omaha Scholarship
• Sally Foss

Public Relations Society of America/Omaha Scholarship
• Tara Muir

Outstanding Forensics Team Members
• Laura Penney
• Rich Jones

Bertha Clark Hughes Memorial Scholarship
• Craig Phemister

Allwine Forensics Scholarship
• Rich Jones
• Tim Cich

Achievement Award winners
Henry Cordes, class of 1985, and Todd Simon, former faculty member, were the recipients of the 1992 Alumni Achievement Award. “It was an honor to win this award and I’m proud of my UNO roots,” said Cordes, the Lincoln bureau chief for the Omaha World-Herald.

“I’ve always been very impressed with both the faculty and students at the university. There are so many students who are working while they attend school and most of the students are paying their own way,” he said. “Those students are there because they want to be there. That’s what sets the UNO student apart from other schools,” Cordes said.

After graduation in 1985 Cordes became a full-time news writer for the Omaha World-Herald covering the police beat. In 1986 Cordes moved to Lincoln to cover the state legislature and the governor’s office for the Omaha World-Herald Lincoln Bureau and then, in 1987, Cordes became the bureau chief.

“I owe all of my success and recognition to the faculty and students at the university,” Cordes said.

Simon, who is an associate professor and head of the Ph.D program at Michigan State University, has authored a number of articles on communication and co-authored Mass Communication Law, one of the three leading communication law books in the market today.
The creative duo also came up with a series of 60-second television ads for Old Home Bread. In them, fictional Old Home truck driver C.W. McCall and his loveable hound dog, Sloan (named after Sloan, Iowa), would drop by the Old Home Filler Up and Keep on Truckin’ Cafe where Mavis, a lovable gun-chewing waitress, would serve up a cup of coffee and some tasty Old Home donuts.

The commercials garnered a national reputation, and Fries, under the guise of C.W. McCall, wrote the single “Convoy,” which became a top-40 hit and a movie.

In 1980, Lilletterup left B&J and formed Galen and Nellie with partner Nellie Macallum. Their firm concentrated on local commercials for the likes of Northwestern Bell, Mid American Long Distance and Opera/Omaha.

Then in 1989, Galen struck out on his own, forming the Galen Group. There, he oversees a small staff that count radio and TV production, print advertising, media planning and desk-top publishing among their many services. His staff includes his son, Tim, who has garnered a reputation for his computing and desk-top publishing know-how.

“This small organization allows me to do a lot of the writing and producing,” he says. “I no longer want to be part of a big company and its complexities.”

Though times have changed, Lilletterup still believes the best communication is simple and based on ideas.

“Advertising has changed,” he said. “It’s must faster, both visually and sound-wise. The messages are more compressed and there’s a lot of clutter. I still believe a good commercial should only have one message; to be effective, the audience must remember it.”

Hugh P. Cowdin

UNO grad helps department obtain much needed computers

The communication department was the beneficiary of alumni generosity recently through the help of ConAgra and a UNO graduate. The department received $4,000 from The ConAgra Foundation, Inc., as a donation toward the purchase of new computers for the writing lab.

The lab is used by students for hands-on experience using different computer programs such as Aldus Pagemaker and Freehand.

“The Foundation is the vehicle we use for charitable contributions to improve the quality of life in the community,” said Lynn Phares, president of The ConAgra Foundation, Inc. and a UNO graduate.

Phares said the Foundation has a $6 million budget for this fiscal year for charitable contributions.

The Foundation’s contributions fall into four areas: health and human services; civic and community betterment; education; and arts and culture.

Phares is also the vice president of public relations and community affairs at ConAgra. She received a master’s degree in communication from UNO in 1987.

After receiving her bachelor’s degree in journalism from Louisiana State University in 1971, Phares moved to Omaha where she began her career working as a bank marketing assistant.

Phares has worked at ConAgra since 1983. She started out as a manager of public relations, then moved to a director position, then finally to her current position as vice president.

Before ConAgra, Phares worked as an associate director of public affairs at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for three years.

See PHARES on page 12

Two UNO alums bid final farewell ...

Kenneth “Casey” Randall

Kenneth “Casey” Randall died May 18 at his home in Omaha. He was 33.

Randall was diagnosed with Burkitt’s lymphoma just 13 days before his death.

Randall, who graduated from UNO in 1987, was the executive director of Radio Talking Book Network, a service which provides readings of books, news and other information for the visually or physically impaired.

M. Charlotte “Chuck” Murphy

Mary Charlotte “Chuck” Murphy died Sept. 23 in her home in Lincoln after a battle with cancer. She was 36.

Murphy received her bachelor’s degree in journalism from UNO in 1978 and later earned her master’s degree at UNL.

While at UNO, “Chuck” was an active member of the Gateway staff in 1975-77.

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Bingham never thought she’d end up teaching

Public speaking class. The mere mention of those three words can be more chilling than a February morning in Nebraska. But for Sheree Bingham, assistant professor in UNO’s communication department, those words were a springboard toward an academic career that eventually led her to Nebraska and those February mornings.

During the late 1970s, Bingham was taking classes at a community college in Marin County in California. “I took a public speaking class, mainly as self-help, to improve my skills. Then I took more interpersonal communication classes and discovered how interesting communication studies is,” she said.

Bingham transferred to the University of California-Santa Barbara, where her interest was piqued when she volunteered to assist a professor in a study.

Bingham found herself videotaping non-verbal communication sessions, then assessing the tapes. “It really sparked my interest,” she said.

Although she became more and more enthused about communication as a field of study, “I never imagined I’d be a professor. I had never really thought about being a teacher at the university level,” she said.

Bingham received her BA in speech communication at the University of California-Santa Barbara in 1980, and continued her graduate studies there. She completed her thesis, “Empathy — A Link Between Communicative Competence and Interpersonal Intimacy,” and received her MA in 1982.

At this point, Bingham’s enthusiasm for communication studies hadn’t waned and she began doctoral studies at Purdue University, balancing graduate teaching responsibilities with her academic endeavors.

Initially, her research interests involved assertiveness, then evolved and gelled, focusing on interpersonal responses to sexual harassment, the subject of her doctoral dissertation. She served as a lecturer and academic advisor in the department of communication at the University of Maryland-College Park from 1987 to 1988, and in 1988 completed her dissertation.

Bingham joined UNO’s department of communication in 1988 and now teaches interpersonal communication, public speaking, organizational communication and gender communication at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level, she teaches a seminar on gender communication and organizational communication.

Bingham’s expertise in sexual harassment issues has had wide-ranging impact on the UNO campus. She was instrumental in adding gender and communication to the department’s curriculum, which became effective during the 1992-93 academic year.

“The literature on gender issues has been expanding rapidly, and it would be nice if gender issues were included in all classes in the university. To the extent that they’re not, it’s important to have gender studies classes in every department of the university. Overall, I think UNO instructors are becoming more sensitive to these issues,” she said.

Bingham has also been a member of the university’s Women Studies Faculty since 1990. She has been a member of the Women Studies Executive Committee since 1991 and served on the Chancellor’s Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) from fall, 1989 through spring, 1991.

Bingham played an instrumental role in a major study of sexual harassment on the UNO campus. She was the principal investigator of a study in cooperation with the CCSW on “Evaluation of Sexual Harassment Awareness Training.” Bingham and co-investigator Dr. Lisa L. Sherer, assistant professor in UNO’s department of psychology, studied the responses of a survey distributed to 1,200

See BINGHAM on page 12

Native American interest leads to four books

Bruce Johansen has taught communication at UNO since 1982, but next fall he’ll teach, for the first time, the subject about which he has written four books.

Johansen plans to teach a course in 1993 in UNO’s new Native American Studies program.

“The people I go to speak to are always surprised to find out I don’t have a job back here as a professor of the things I write on,” Johansen said. “For the first time I’ll be able to say I teach it also.”


All his books, except for “El Pueblo,” involved the Native American culture. Johansen said his interest in Native America began during his career as a newspaper reporter for the Seattle Times.

“I was on staff at the Seattle Times and I started to do articles in that area on fishing rights,” he said. “The interest just kind of added up.”

The fishing rights involved the Native Americans’ right to fish in Washington’s coastal waters, rights which were granted in treaties with the state’s early settlers.

Johansen said his interest in Native Americans prompted him to seek his doctorate.

“I actually started out the Ph.D. with the object of trying to

See JOHANSEN on page 11

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1950

John Duncan — Retiring Nov. 1992 after 25 years as the President of Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and 42 years as Chamber Executive in Broken Bow, Neb.; Shangriolah and Council Bluffs, Iowa; Muskegon, Mich.; and Milwaukee, Wis. John is living in Delafield, Wis.

1951

Joan E. French — Chairman of Buckman Tavern in Lexington, Mass., where the minute men met before the historic battle on April 19, 1776.

1952

Julie Zelenka — Staff Writer at the Omaha World-Herald.

1953

Barbara Magnuson — Has been retired from advertising and says she is loving it!

1954

Lee Nelson — Vice President, Director of Publications for Merrill Custom Communication in Corcoran, Minn.

1956

Betty J. Davis — Founded the National Associations of Soda Jerks in 1990 and says it continues to be her trademark in the public relations world. “We’re planning regional reunions, showcasing our skills at Omaha and national events.” She said she is also seeking an Omaha location for a soda fountain headquarters. Betty is also planning to write a book in 1993 and organize a national convention in Omaha in 1994. “In between, lots of other good things are happening in the PR contractual routine!”

1958

Gary L. Johansen — Has been the Managing Editor of the Hastings Tribune in Hastings Neb. since 1986. Gary was previously Public Relations Director at St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha from 1981 to 1986. From 1960 to 1981 he worked at a variety of jobs: the Omaha World-Herald copy desk, Entertainment magazine and the now defunct Magazine of the Midlands. Now he has three grandchildren and a new puppy.

1961

Carol Sue Wilson (Child) — Is a secretary at Central States Insurance of Omaha in the Direct Marketing Division.

1962

John L. Slane — Now lives in Humble, Texas and sends his thanks “for remembering me”

1963

John Ritner — Still working with KETV Channel 7 news in Omaha.

1964

Dick Fletcher — Has celebrated his 13th year as the Chief Meteorologist for WTSF-TV in Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla.

1965

Robert C. Cords Col. USAF RET. — Recently retired after 26 years in the Air Force.

1966

Jim Gember — Director, Public Affairs for Health Midwest. Jim is based at Baptist Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo. Health Midwest is a regional health care system consisting of 11 hospitals in a 10-county Kansas City metro area.

1969

Alan Babbitt — Says he producing and directing high quality commercials and corporate videos and films in Fairfax, Calif.

Robyn Carmichael Eden — Is the Associate Director of Public Relations for Creighton University. She is married to Jack Eden and has two sons: Andrew, 10, and Devin, 7. She and her family also own and operate a small hunter-jumper horse stable in Ponca Hills north of Omaha. Robyn is a licensed steward officiating at American Horse Shows Association shows.

Editor’s Note: This information was obtained from responses to the Communication Awards Luncheon announcement in spring 1992. Companies are located in Omaha unless otherwise noted. Contrary to AP style, but respectful of alumni’s roles in life, titles are capitalized. We’d really like to hear from you! Please fill out and return the information card you get in the spring for the Annual Communication Awards Luncheon — then next year you’ll get to see your name among all of your classmates! Readers who want addresses of persons listed may write or call Brenda at the UNO Department of Communication, UNO Department of Communication Arts and Sciences Hall Room 189 60th and Dodge Omaha NE, 68182 (402)554-2520
John Prescott — Moved from magazine editor to Video Services Supervisor at Union Pacific Railroad in Nov. 1991. Swan-song print story involved a trip to Poland where UP RR is helping the Polish State Railways adapt to the evolving free-market economy. In the personal column — well, John says he’s divorced, eligible and seeking meaningful female relationship. (Such a joker!)

1970

Randy Owens — Is an attorney for the Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha. In 1991 he was inducted into the Omaha Benson High School Hall of Fame.

Susan Saxenmeyer (Kruse) — "Despite attempts at federal government micro-management of our business, I am still enjoying the cable television industry after 11 plus years." Susan says she is still married to Bill and has a 13-year-old daughter. She is living in Tyler, Texas and says she is enjoying it — "especially when I travel elsewhere!"

1971 & 1973

Nancy Bunker — Is a part-time instructor at Southwest Baptist University in Missouri teaching freshman composition and introduction to speech which she says are alive and well in Ozarkian form. "Ellen Gast (Distinguished Service Award Winner 1992) was my journalism instructor at North High School. I was her year-book editor in 1966-67. She is and was a gem!"

1971

Paul Critchlow — "Everything is status quo here in the Big Apple!"

Dan Kaecher — Editor of Midwest Living Magazine at Meredith Corp for the past 6 years. Dan is living in Urbandale, Iowa and bids greetings to everyone.

Mike Riessien — Received his masters degree in Health Care Administration in May 1992 and is a member of the American College of Health Care Administrators. Mike is living in New Hampton, Iowa.

1972

J. Patrick Anderson — "I've recently become Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Douglas/Quikut and am now living in northeast Arkansas. Our family is excited about the move."

1973

Bob Knudson — Found a new calling at Home & Away magazine at AAA Motor Club as Marketing Representative and occasional writer of travel pieces. "Family includes two young ladies: Cassie, 10, and Missy, 7, a wonderful wife, Chris and a funky cat named Spot."

1974

Michael Holmes — Says he is still covering Texas politics and waiting on Ross Perot to run for Boss.

Judith J. Kirchhoff — Received her Ph.D. in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland-College Park in Aug. 1991 and accepted the position of Assistant Professor and Director of the Public Administration Program at Long Island University-Brooklyn Center in Sept. 1991.

1975

Rick Roffman — Production Manager for WJRT, the local ABC affiliate in Flint, Mich. where "News Comes First."

1976 & 1991

Karen Weber — Received her master's in communication from UNO in 1991. Teaches part-time in UNO's department of communication and also teaches part-time at Metropolitan Community College. In addition, Karen sings with Nebraska's professional chorale, Soli Deo Gloria Cantorom.

1977

Roger Catlin — Still writing about music for the Hartford Courant in West Hartford, Conn. His daughter, Lillie, turned one year old on May 27, 1992.

John Fey — "I'm finishing up my fourth year as a Sports Writer for the Omaha World-Herald and still enjoying it. What a life!"

1978

Sharan Wilson — Was promoted to Executive Vice President, Telecommunications Inc. (TCI) the world's largest cable television company; also President and Chief Operating Officer of Netlink, TCI's satellite division. Sharan is living in Englewood, Colo.

1978

1979

Norman J. Cratty — Celebrated 7 years in business April 1, 1992 operating a support services business in Lincoln Park, north of Chicago's Loop. He says he continues to love Chicago and is still in contact with a number of UNO friends. "Looking forward to doing a little traveling this year and am also heavily involved in Senate and Aldermanic political races."

Bruce Edwards — Is currently a Sales Representative for Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals.

David M. Fairl — Is currently Manager of Communications for the Omaha Division of the United States Postal Service. "I recently returned from Royal Oak, Mich. where I coordinated media relations following the tragic shooting of postal employees by a former co-worker. It's great to be home!"

Jae Fender Kisgen Gilbert — "Graduating from college in my late 20s was exciting. Promotions here and there and corporate travel was fun in my 30s. And, now, in my early 40s, I'm waiting the birth of my first child — a boy. Now, that's a thrill!"

Joni Pugh Wolf — "Marty and I are living in suburban San Francisco with daughters Abby, 5, and Jessica, 2."

Kathryn Blunk Gustafson — Lives in Overland Park, Kan. and is a Medical Marketing Specialist for St. Paul Insurance Companies.

Mike Hendricks — "In 1991 I won the John Hancock Award;
won the Gerald Loeb award; won first in Associated Press Sportswriters award, even though I am a business writer. Got a lousy raise and some gratitude." Mike works for the Kansas City Star and lives in Lenexa, Kan.

Norman D. Medland — As a civilian employee of the Army, Norman says his five year stay in Heidelberg, Germany ends in fall 1992. "We witnessed the fall of the 'Wall' and the end of communism. My office supported public affairs efforts — boy, am I pooped!"

1980

Deborah Denny-Kohler — Recently joined the University of Nebraska Foundation as Assistant Director of Development. Deborah re-entered graduate school in the fall of 1990 at UNO and is working toward a master's degree in public administration with a focus on non-profit management. "Still active in Republican politics at the county and state level, also serve as a volunteer at Brownell-Talbot school and the Nebraska Humane Society."

1981

Eroca Gabriel — Is currently working at Rex Hospital in North Carolina and is in charge of the management and organization development programs. "I teach and consult with intact work groups within the hospital, as well as supervisors and managers."

Michael Kohler — Mike is married to Deborah Kohler (1980) and is System Communication Manager at Cox Cable. He graduated from UNO’s Executive MBA program in Aug. 1992.

Becky Vohoska — Is the Director of Marketing for North Carolina Travel and Tourism. "I get paid to promote this beautiful state!" She is also currently on the Board of the National Tour Foundation.

1982

Bernie Williamson — Bernie says advice from Todd Simon convinced him to go on to law school. He is practicing with the largest legal firm in the Riverside, Calif. area.

John Benker — Owner of "It’s a New Day," an exclusive Omaha catering service.

Renee Crosby — "I just finished teaching juggling for a week in Bee, Neb. through the Nebraska Arts Council. I’m an artist in residence with their artists in schools/communities program. I work full-time at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, but juggle professionally on the side."


Anne Shurtliff Halsey — Works as a Senior Technical Writer/Group Lead at Storage Technology. Anne will complete her course work for a master’s degree in technical communication in May 1993. She is living in Northglenn, Colo.

Jeff Heineman — Is now an Omaha attorney.

Tom Pascale — “I am the Operations Manager at Multimedia Group in Omaha. We produce videotapes for corporate communication, specializing in sales, marketing and promotional presentations.”

Mary Kenny — "I’ve been Assistant Manager of Media Relations for the health science schools at Creighton since Feb. 1990 and am working on my master’s degree in communication at UNO."

1983

Marge Peterson — Is the Managing Editor of AAA’s magazine Home and Away.

Matt Smolsky — Matt is in communications at Mutual of Omaha. He has recently become a father.

1984

Paula Thompson Lukowski — Publications Editor at Omaha Public Power District. In 1991 she received the "Outstanding Service Award" for writing from the Nebraska Special Olympics; Paula has served as volunteer newsletter editor for the organization for six years and currently serves on their public relations committee.

Ernie May — Ernie is writing for Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Society.

Steve Penn — In St. Louis, Mo. Steve is Creative Director at the Atkinson Group Advertising Agency. He has a two-year-old son.

Pat Stibbs — Pat has worked the radio circuit in Omaha and in August moved over to Sweet 98.

Anne Pritchard Walsh — “Said goodbye to John Prescott as Info Magazine editor at Union Pacific Railroad. Not to worry, he just moved across the hall to video services. But hired Anne Johnson Steinhoff in his stead. So, the former co-editors of the 1983 Gateway are together again after nearly 10 years.”

1985

Patrick R. Saylor — “I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Sue Francke. I hope Warren and family are doing well.” Patrick is living in Williamsburg, Va.

Nancy Ferrara Toner — Is currently the Advertising Manager for Kids, Kids, Kidz magazine.

1986

Henry J. Cordes — “I just got a deal on a good used car.” Henry is also the Lincoln Bureau Chief for the Omaha World-Herald.

Beverly F. DiMauro — Is the Executive Director for the Omaha Literacy Council and was featured on two programs which aired on KMTV in March.

Cindy Gonzalez — Has been a reporter for the Omaha World-Herald since 1985.

Tom O’Connor — Tom is the Master Controller — which means he keeps KPTM Channel 42 in Omaha on the air.

1987

Dick Ulmer — Was recently named counsel at McCutchen law firm in San Francisco, Calif. Dick adds that he was interviewed by Dave Krajicek for a story on Americans who have visited Czechoslovakia.

1988

Tim McManus — Currently working as a free-lance writer in Omaha.
Graduate program grows, gets new chairman

More than 120 active graduate students in the Communication Department have a different friendly face to turn to as chair of the graduate program.

Dr. Warren Francke, who has been teaching at UNO for 28 years, took over as chairman of the department's graduate program in the spring of 1992.

According to Francke the number of students in the communication graduate program grew rapidly between May and September. While university records for last year show fewer than 60 communication graduate students enrolled in classes, Francke said his files show more than double that when thesis students and new admissions are considered.

"We now clearly have more than 120 graduate students who are somewhere between admissions and graduation," he said, adding that required graduate seminar classes closed during pre-registration for the fall 1992 semester.

One of the key duties Francke deals with, especially now when enrollment is increasing, is evaluating those seeking admission to the graduate program in communication.

"We turn down as many or more than we admit," he said of the evaluation process. Roughly twice as many people apply for admission to the program as are accepted. Francke said if the department continues to have admission requests like it has had the last year more stringent standards may have to be set to limit the incoming flow of new graduate students.

The process for deciding which applicant is accepted and which applicant is rejected is not an arbitrary decision. Francke said as a starting point he looks at the academic record of the applicant using a flexible guideline depending on whether or not the applicant's undergraduate major was in communication or a related field. For those who majored in fields related to the department's graduate program, such as journalism, speech and broadcasting, Francke said he looks for students who have at least a 3.25 overall grade point average (GPA). For those who majored in other subjects, he looks for a 3.0 overall GPA or significant improvement in GPA in their last two years as an undergraduate.

However, it is not as simple as checking the GPA of applicants. Francke said frequently an applicant has been out of a school for a time working professionally; then he also looks more closely at the accomplishments of the applicant.

People interested in the graduate program in communication are required to submit an application not only to the Graduate College, but also to the department. In addition to the application itself, applicants must also complete a personal reference form which includes writing an essay explaining their graduate school goals. Francke says that is an important process because it helps him better evaluate whether or not the department's program is going to meet the needs of the applicant.

"We certainly look at their personal reference form." Francke said while he is the person who decides if an applicant is accepted or not, he does consult other faculty members for their input and ideas if he has a difficult application.

The graduate program in communication offers two routes for graduate students to go: thesis and non-thesis. For those who write a thesis, 24-credit hours of class time are required in addition to 6-credit hours of thesis work. Non-thesis students are required to take 36 credit hours of classes which include 3- to 6-credit hours in the department on a research or creative project.

"The faculty, in general, encourage students to do a thesis," he said.

No entrance exams are currently required for the department's graduate program. In the past, he said, applicants were required to take the Miller Analogy Test. Francke said some exam may be reinstated in the future to help control enrollment into the program.

Another duty that comes with the position of being chairman is setting the agendas and meetings for the Graduate Program Committee and constantly examining the graduate program and making necessary changes. Francke said the committee is always reviewing curriculum and the requirements for graduate students. For example, over the past year a new approach has been taken to administering comprehensive exams.

Francke, who is one of a dozen who teach graduate courses in the department, said it is important to have diversity among instructors. The faculty in the department have a good variety of interests and that, he says, is a strong point of the graduate program, especially when a student is deciding on a thesis topic.

Francke said it is important to note that the graduate program is not a professional degree program that is designed to develop basic communication skills; rather the program is designed to give students a broad understanding of how the communication process works and ways to study, do research and solve communication problems. In essence, he says, "It's devoted to theory, planning, research and problem solving, rather than to more work in writing, editing, broadcast production and other basic communication skills."

Former chairs of the communication graduate program include Dr. Hugh Cowl, now the department chairman, and Dr. Michael Sherer, a communication department professor. Francke said the position is one that is intended to be rotated among different faculty members.
To heck with the coasts, the Midwest is best

When Dan Kaercher graduated from UNO in 1971, he felt the pull of the coasts. But he decided to stick around in the Midwest, and he’s found his place: as the Editor of Midwest Living Magazine.

Sure, oceans are nice. And there’s excitement in the bright lights of the big cities. But there’s also a lot to be said about the Midwest life, enjoying the change of seasons, the variety and the community orientation.

“We’ve always played up that the No. 1 aspect of the Midwest is friends, sense of community and family values,” he said.

Kaercher said Midwest Living appeals to people who share those beliefs, but without the political schmaltz so common these days. What he’s produced is a lively, colorful, friendly magazine that’s also an unqualified national success story.

Since he helped start it in 1987, the Des Moines-based magazine’s circulation has grown to 750,000, translating into a readership of well over a million. It’s won a national award for circulation performance, has made the list of the 10 hottest small magazines three years running, and was recently recognized by Temple University as one of the most successful magazine startups in the last 10 years.

For Kaercher it all started at UNO. He came to the campus in 1967 when it was still called Omaha U. It was a time when protests and tumult were breaking on college campuses across the country, but Kaercher can’t claim to be an activist. “I remember all the turmoil of the era, but I mostly had my nose in the books or was working,” he said.

Like so many UNO students then and now, Kaercher worked his way through school in a variety of jobs: he was a fry cook at a drive in, he clerked for a shipping company, stocked at a gift shop and compiled pages for a book bindery.

But before he graduated, with the help of mentor and fellow Council Bluffs native Warren Francke, Kaercher got his first big break: a job with the Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil.

One of Kaercher’s duties was the Saturday night shift, when he was the only person in the entire newsroom. When a late-breaking story would develop, he had to go out and report and shoot the picture, come back and develop the film, write his story, make a print of the photo, lay it out on the page, make the engraving and get the whole thing put to bed.

“You can never get better experience than that,” he said. “I really have to thank Warren Francke.”

He stayed at the Daily Nonpareil for six months after graduating before landing a job with the Meredith Corp. in Des Moines, the publisher of numerous magazines, including Better Homes and Gardens.

He started out in the promotion department of Better Homes, but went on to become editor of two other Meredith publications, Remodeling Ideas and Wood, a woodworking magazine.

In 1987, Meredith launched Midwest Living, with Kaercher as editor. He said he pretty much knew at the start they had a winner. Its staples include features on things to see and do on a Midwest driving weekend, food and recipes, and some home and garden stuff.

Kaercher said he likes his job and feels very fortunate to have it.

“If I stay at Midwest Living the rest of my life I’ll be real happy,” he said.

He also likes his own life in the Midwest, which includes wife Julie, a former UNO student, and two high-school-aged kids. To heck with the coasts.

“I’m delighted I didn’t leave.”

Slater now teaching full-time at UNO

Jan Slater, who joined the communication faculty this year as a temporary full-time instructor, received her bachelor’s degree in 1978 from Hastings College.

Slater has worked for two advertising agencies: Bailey Lauer, and Swanson, Russell & Associates in addition to having her own agency in Omaha, which she gave up when she decided to get her master’s degree. Slater graduated from the University of Illinois with a master’s degree in advertising in May.

Slater teaches principles of creative advertising; advanced creative advertising; corporate communications and public relations case studies. She taught advertising at UNO as a part-time communication instructor from 1986 to 1990.

“I think the biggest challenge is to try to bring the real world experiences into the classroom; to give the students a feel for what it is like to do this,” she said. Slater says her future goal is to begin work on her doctorate degree, but for now, her immediate challenge is teaching at UNO.

Knoepfler to leave UNO after 21 years

Professor Donald Knoepfler came to UNO in the fall of 1972 after teaching and working on his doctorate at the University of Iowa. Now, after 21 years, he is retiring. Knoepfler has taught a variety of courses in the broadcast curriculum, plus photography, film history, speech and the history of mass communication.

The one thing that has been important to him over the years has been his relationships with his students. He watches them learn, grow and mature. “Some even liked me,” he jokes.

Upon his retirement, Knoepfler says he and his wife Annette ultimately plan to move to Williamsburg, Va. “Although I grew up in Iowa City, and despite the fact that we don’t have any family living in Virginia, we simple like the place, along with all its history.”

What will he do with his new free time? He plans to print limited edition books on his antique 19th century presses. The books will be hand-set and hand-bound.

Knoepfler’s interest in teaching began when a high school teacher brought the idea to his attention by suggesting he consider it as a career choice. Later, Samuel Becker, a professor of his at the University of Iowa, made a similar recommendation. “I never had to really work at my career; I always enjoyed what I did.”

The one thing he hopes his students will remember from his classes "... is to strive towards a level of professionalism and compassion for their chosen career."

Knoepfler will officially retire in May of 1993. Although occurring earlier than he originally had planned, he opted for the tenure buy-out program offered by UNO after, as he describes it, his "close call with mortality" in 1989. "It just seemed the better part of wisdom to quit while I was ahead.”
get the skills that would enable me to do things on that scale," he said. His original thrust involved the influence Native Americans have had on the shaping of the United States’ concepts of government. “Forgotten Founders” evolved out of a dissertation on the subject, he said.

Johansen said that kind of intense interest in a subject is important when choosing a topic about which to write a book.

“It has to be the kind of idea that kind of eats you up. It has to be the type of thing that you feel you have to do because if you don’t, it won’t get done.”

That kind of commitment is necessary for an author who works at least 20 hours a week on a book while maintaining full-time teaching responsibilities, as Johansen does. Nor does the work stop once the actual writing is finished, especially for the scholarly press, Johansen said. “Exemplar of Liberty” involved about 800 footnotes, all of which must be double-checked before hitting the presses.

“By the time we got the book out, I was footnoted out,” he said. He swore his next book would have no footnotes, but his editor for “Mohawk Valley” had different ideas. “The editor said, ‘You have to have footnotes.’” “Mohawk Valley” ended up with about 400 footnotes.

Johansen said he harbors no secret desire to discard his teaching job and become a full-time writer, in part because full-time writers do not produce a steady income.

“Besides, I like interacting with students. I think if all I did was act as an author, I wouldn’t have all that much interaction,” he said.

Besides their subject matter, Johansen’s books involve the input of Native Americans as well. The artist for “Exemplar of Liberty” was a Mohawk Indian and a visit to his home led Johansen onto the subject for his next book, “Mohawk Valley.” “Exemplar of Liberty” was almost totally Indian-produced — with the notable exception of Johansen himself.

Currently, Johansen is in the process of writing a textbook, in conjunction with Dr. Grinde, titled “Indigenous North America: New Perspectives.” While he hopes to sell the textbook for publication, he said it is difficult to predict which books will do well.

“The book that was the hardest to sell has been the book that has been the most successful,” he said, referring to “Forgotten Founders,” which he sent to more than 50 publishers. With ‘El Pueblo,’ he said, ‘I got a contract the first time out. It came out and it didn’t do anything.”

Johansen said he hasn’t made plans beyond writing the textbook and next fall teaching the subject which consumes so much of his life.

### Small group is the ‘bread and butter’ for Glaser

For those who have ever sat in a classroom pondering the relevance of academic theory in the “real world,” Hollis Glaser’s approach to the three courses she teaches is simple and practical: You will need to use this.

Glaser is currently teaching courses in persuasion, small group communication and public speaking. This semester, her persuasion course offers a built-in supply of relevant and timely election year examples. “Persuasion should be an important concept to every U.S. citizen,” she said. “Everything from political campaigns to advertising — the more we know about the element of persuasion, the better.”

She calls her favorite area, small group communication, her “bread and butter.” It offers key concepts that can be applied to virtually any business situation. “Small group teaches you how to work with people, the power structure within a group and how and why things go wrong,” Glaser said.

The same practical approach is used to combat a common student aversion to public speaking. “I tell them it’s a matter of functioning at a professional level. It’s a skill you can’t do without to get ahead in today’s world.” The interactive atmosphere of a speech class provides students with another benefit, Glaser says. Watching other students give speeches “gives them the chance to teach each other.”

This is Glaser’s first semester of teaching at UNO. After earning her bachelor’s degree from Washington University, she earned her master’s degree from the University of Illinois, where she also taught communication courses.

One of the most exciting courses she led, she said, was one on eco-feminism, which combined the study of feminism, ecology and women’s spirituality issues.

“It was one of the very few courses that allowed students to analyze broad social trends as well as personal issues,” she said. “It’s a very powerful way to critique modern society.”

For the past year, she’s been working on her doctoral dissertation, a study of egalitarian groups and how they function. According to Glaser, an egalitarian group must promote equal distribution of rights in four key communication areas: conflict resolution, decision making, feedback and knowledge sharing.

Glaser is enthusiastic about the communication dynamics these types of groups promote. “These groups work in a way where there is no boss,” she says. “People rotate jobs and everyone has a hand in the decision-making process. Nobody has a lock on knowledge or power. As you can imagine, it’s a very verbal kind of system, with a lot of face-to-face communication.”

Work on the dissertation and teaching three courses makes for a busy schedule, but Glaser says she is enjoying UNO. The mix of traditional and non-traditional students at UNO has also added to her high opinion of the campus. “I haven’t been here long, but already it’s been an enriching teaching experience.”

### Story by:

**Kim Kavalec**

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UNO faculty and staff members.

The team conducted two studies on the data. The first study focused on the responses of employees who had experienced unwanted sexual communication, how they responded and how satisfied they were with the situation outcome.

The second study assessed the effects of a videotaped speech by UNO Chancellor Del Weber on the subject of sexual harassment. The survey responses of employees who had seen the videotape were then compared with the responses of those who had not. Bingham and Sherer presented their findings last spring at the International Communication Association’s annual meeting.

Bingham says she enjoys the challenges of teaching. “The students are diverse in terms of age and their level of interest in learning. In interpersonal communication and public speaking, classes that are often taken by non-communication majors, part of the challenge is to get people interested in and excited about the subject,” she said.

But, Bingham said, the most challenging is the undergraduate course in gender communication. “The subject matter shakes people’s values. Part of my mission is to get them thinking about what their values are in relation to gender issues,” she said.

“It’s very challenging to them. They are very hesitant to let go of ideas that challenge their belief systems. The dynamics of the class can be volatile.”

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, and advancing the awareness of sexual harassment through research and lectures, Bingham is in the initial stages of editing a book geared toward professors and graduate students. “Conceptualizing Sexual Harassment as Discursive Practice” is an examination of the ways sexual harassment is sustained, perpetuated and contested through discourse, Bingham said. Publication is scheduled for 1994.

Now, almost 15 years after her first communication class, Bingham’s interest and enthusiasm remain strong. “I’m constantly learning,” she said.

She also worked for Smith, Kaplan, Allen and Reynolds Advertising Agency, Inc. in broadcast production and copy writing for nine years.

Phares began her studies at UNO working towards a master’s in communication because she was “very interested in parts of communication not covered in my undergraduate degree.”

Phares divided her study between business and communication courses.

“The business courses were very practical. The communication courses have given me a better understanding of the communication process,” she said.

“I’m much better able to do my job.”

Phares’ job is divided into several parts. She spends part of every day working in either media relations, employee communications, image and influence, or investor relations.

“I love what I do here at ConAgra,” she said.

Editor’s note: The department gratefully acknowledges the donation.