

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS

Alumni & Friends

SUMMER 2004

ALUMNI PROFILE Stuart N. Brotman

GUESS WHO?



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Hint: Da Video



Bucky bangs out in Vilas Hall with grad student Joe Abisaid.

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A Badger in the Museum of Television and Radio



Stuart N. Brotman (MA '75) was appointed the president of The Museum of Television & Radio (MT&R) in March. The museum is the premier trust of television and radio's heritage, offering the public the greatest collection of television and radio programs and advertisements available. Currently, the collections include over 100,000 programs in television, radio and advertising from over 70 countries. The earliest materials date from 1918, and more recently, MT&R has started collecting materials from the Internet.

As the president of MT&R, Brotman plans to re-orient the museum's extensive collections to attract the next generation of patrons in the 21st century by converting many of the old radio and television programs from analog to digital formats. Brotman would also like to make these digital collections available on-line to patrons who cannot come to the museum's two locations

in New York and California. Brotman also plans to travel throughout the country and around the world to promote MT&R's growing collection. He wants to convey the message that "the museum is a terrific resource for anyone who is interested in television and radio."

Brotman feels that his education at UW-Madison connects in a central way with his work at the museum. Recalling his life as a young student in the 1970s, Brotman believes that the academic environment at UW gave him a strong foundation in the history of broadcasting from radio to television, as well as an early appreciation of new technologies like cable. He has fond memories of his former professors and says that he is very pleased to be working with current faculty members in the Department.

Extending a warm invitation to fellow Badgers, Brotman says, "The museum's collection will help you get a solid grounding in various aspects of media and communication." For information on membership and admission, you may visit the museum's website at www.mtr.org.

STUDENT PROFILE Michelle LaVigne

Water-Ballet

Water is a source of political and social conflict, not only in the Middle East but also in the United States. Discussions about water allocation establish more than policies; they assign certain values to water and in doing so create, sustain, and rupture relationships between countries and people.

My master's thesis analyzes water rights negotiations between the U.S. and Mexico in 1944. These negotiations produced a treaty between the two nations and established an international commission that continues to mediate water issues dealing with quality and quantity. Thus far, I am focusing on how debates over water rights produce and use various definitions for this commodity and what these definitions tell us about how people understand and value it. More generally, I am interested in using this specific case to raise questions about how definitions function rhetorically.

To continue my research in this area, I have been invited to participate in the International Water Demand Conference in Jordan. At the

conference, I will share communication strategies that promote water conservation programs that I began developing while working as a consultant in water resources management.

Besides water rights, I have an abiding interest in art and aesthetics, which stems from my past experience dancing for ballet companies from Connecticut to Nevada. I have danced in productions of Cinderella, Giselle, and, of course, the Nutcracker, while working with noted choreographers. Here at UW, I performed in the faculty dance concert last November and look forward to performing on campus again. The Department of Comm Arts and the greater university community have enabled me to combine my academic interests and my life's passion into stimulating research and artistic enjoyment.



A MESSAGE From the Chair

In August 1974, I came to Madison to begin graduate studies in communication arts. The Department gave me an education that was second to none and set my career in motion.

I'm thinking of that experience now because Professor David Bordwell, the teacher and scholar who has had the most profound influence on me (and many other students of film and media) is retiring this year, ending a brilliant thirty-year career at UW. The opportunity to study with faculty like him brought me here, and the presence of other colleagues like him makes it a pleasure to continue my career here.

David Bordwell, the most productive and influential film scholar in the profession over the last three decades, with some twelve books and scores of scholarly articles to his credit, is often credited for



Melissa Ripp (BA '03) and Vance Kepley (PhD '78)

helping to establish film studies as a serious academic discipline. He has also been one of our Department's finest teachers, an energetic lecturer who brings cutting-edge research—often his own—into the classroom.

His retirement encourages me to reflect on the contributions of other outstanding Communication Arts faculty who have since retired, but who helped make this the leading communication department in the nation. Professor Joanne Cantor, the nation's authority on the effect of television viewing on children, retired from UW in 2000, but she shows no signs of slowing down. She continues to produce research that influences social policy on this important issue, and she has just published a children's book, *Teddy's TV Troubles*.

Our emeritus ranks include some of the most important scholars of modern rhetorical and communication studies. Professor Ed Black, whose great career in communication arts included service as department chair and associate dean, wrote one of the fundamental books of modern rhetorical studies, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*. Professor Winston Brembeck (MA '35, PhD '47) taught at UW from 1946 to 1984 and helped found the study of social influence. His book *Persuasion: A Means of Social Influence* remains one of the discipline's foundational texts. Professor Richard Lawson, who retired from UW in 1990, helped create the Department's excellent broadcasting program, and he trained scores of students for successful careers in the media. He also shared his expertise with the public by serving as director of broadcasting at WHA-TV.

These are just a few of the splendid Communication Arts faculty I had the privilege of knowing, first as a student and then as a colleague. Through the Comm Arts newsletter, we try to keep our alumni updated on the accomplishments of our current faculty. But those of us who are Communication Arts alumni also like to think back on the pleasures of studying with the distinguished faculty of past decades. I expect that readers of this newsletter can think of other Communication Arts emeriti who especially shaped their educations. Let us hear about them.

Your Gift is Appreciated

The Department of Communication Arts has a tremendous number of exciting programs, initiatives and research under way. Opportunities are plentiful for you to participate in the life of the Department by staying in touch with us, providing student internships with your company, and donating to the Department. Private gifts are increasingly critical to ensuring our excellence. Your gifts help us attract top faculty and graduate students, provide scholarships to outstanding undergraduates, upgrade our technology/facilities, and so much more.

Please consider a contribution today. For more information on making a gift to the Department of Communication Arts or including the Department in your estate plans, please contact:



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You will receive a receipt for your gift. We appreciate your support!

Professors Dillard and Solomon Bid Farewell

After a combined 33 years of service to UW-Madison, Professors Denise Solomon and James Dillard are leaving for Pennsylvania State University, starting in new positions there in the fall of 2004. Dillard said, "Our time here in Madison has been delightful and we have the highest respect for the university. But, we also welcome the challenges and opportunities that await us in the Penn State Department of Communication Arts & Sciences." Solomon added that she would particularly miss working with UW's terrific undergraduate students: "I've had the most wonderful students in my classes, and I've been particularly fortunate to work with some excellent students on my research team."

Professor David Bordwell: Closing Credits

In September 1973, when I began teaching in Communication Arts, I thought I was unbelievably lucky to have been hired by Wisconsin. I still do. Thanks to my remarkable friends in film studies—Tino Balio, J.J. Murphy, Vance Kepley, Don Crafton, Lea Jacobs, Ben Singer, and Kelley Conway—my research has become broader and more nuanced. I've also enjoyed being in a department with a healthy mix of different disciplines. And our staff is tops—as anyone who's worked with Debbie, Sandy, Linda, Lynn, Paddy, Erik (BA '89), Kevin (BA '98), Matt, Chris, Boyd, and Maxine knows.

With generous support from Letters and Science, our film area has grown stronger. We have a weekly colloquium and presentations by visiting artists. I've also been encouraged by the success of outreach efforts like the Wisconsin Film Festival, thanks to Mary Carbine's (BA '86, MA '88)

beyond-the-call-of-duty efforts, and the Cinémathèque. Above all I've found continual excitement in working with eager, gifted students. From my first years here, my grad students—Brian Rose, Maureen Turim, Diane Waldman, Jim Benning, Doug Gomery, Serafina Bathrick—and impressive undergrads like Reid Rosefelt have gone on to terrific careers. In the last couple of years, I've enjoyed undergrads Colin Brooker, Evan Pesses, Jason Gendler, Tiffany Funk, Fei-Fei Wang, and so many, many more. To them, and everyone in between, I want to say thanks for a great thirty-one years.



Bordwell with former and current students

My wife, Kristin, and I will be staying in Madison, and I hope to continue my involvement with the Department, on many levels. When alumni come to town, I'd love to hear from them.

Understanding Misunderstanding



One of the many advantages of attending the University of Wisconsin–Madison is that students are educated by professors who lead their fields of study and truly love their work. That advantage is

exemplified by Professor C. David Mortensen. Professor Mortensen is completing his 33rd year as a member of the UW faculty and, when many professors might be slowing down and eyeing retirement, he is looking forward to the publication of yet another book. The book is currently under contract

and, according to Professor Mortensen, “The findings are the most significant of my career.”

Professor Mortensen has spent the majority of his career investigating the communicative nature of how understanding and, conversely, misunderstanding occurs in relationships. His research probes the essence of human interaction, focusing on the elements that at times make communication simple and efficient and at other times highly problematic. His latest book not only summarizes the entire body of research currently available on those subjects, but also presents conclusions that are particularly illuminating.

Professor Mortensen's data came from 400 people who provided a total of 1600 personal accounts of prototypical events in

which agreements, disagreements, understanding, and misunderstandings occurred. These accounts were then transcribed and computer analyzed to determine the vocabulary, themes, and structures inherent to the process of human interaction. Thanks to the results of his current study, Professor Mortensen says that “we now have solid evidence of what people think, feel, say, and do to produce working agreements and solid understandings. We also get strong evidence of what people do to subvert or undermine relational ties.”

You can start looking for the book soon. In the meantime, there is no question where you will be able to find Professor Mortensen—he'll be here working on his next discovery in interpersonal communication.

HONORS & AWARDS

Professor Michael Curtin (MA '86, PhD '90) was selected as the incoming director of the University of Wisconsin Global Studies Program, leading a faculty of 183 professors from eight schools across the university. Professor Curtin also received an honorable mention for best essay of the year in the field of media studies for his article, “Media Capital: Towards the Study of Spatial Flows.” The article was recognized by the review committee of the Kovacs Essay Award Competition of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Professor Ben Singer was named as a Vilas Associate. This award provides summer salary and an additional stipend to further his research.

Academic staff member **Jim Ferris** won the 2004 Main Street Rag Annual Poetry Book Award for his collection *The Hospital Poems*. This major award was announced and decided by noted poet and columnist Edward Hirsch following a nationwide competition.

Professor Susan Zaeske (BA '89, MA '92, PhD '97) has been appointed as a research

associate and visiting professor in the Women's Studies and Religion Program at the Harvard Divinity School for the 2004–2005 academic year.

Professor Stephen Lucas received both of the Text and Academic Authors Association's top book awards for 2004: The Texty Award for the best new book or edition published in 2004 and the William Holmes McGuffey Longevity Award for excellence over a sustained period of time for his text *The Art of Public Speaking*, eighth edition (McGraw-Hill, 2004).



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The Madison Connection



William Immerman and Tino Balio

Communication Arts Professor Tino Balio inaugurated an innovative class this semester by bringing back successful alumni in the entertainment business to participate in a course he taught titled “The American Film Industry in the Age of Television—The Madison Connection.” The course met weekly and began with lectures by Balio on a facet of the contemporary film industry followed by informal talks by UW alumni who majored in history, English, political science, economics, or communication arts. They began their presentations by describing the impact of their UW education on their careers. Explaining an objective of the course, Balio said, “We

want to promote role models for students to show them what they might achieve after they graduate.”

Jim Abrahams (BA '66), the director, screenwriter, and producer who collaborated with UW alums David and Jerry Zucker in the making of such mainstream comedy hits as *Airplane!* (1980), *Top Secret!* (1984), *Ruthless People* (1986) and *The Naked Gun* (1988), led off the series with a presentation titled “15 Rules of Comedy.” He was followed by Sidney Iwanter (BA '71), a former vice-president of Fox Kids Network, who discussed animation and children’s Saturday morning cartoons. Broadway producers Rocco Landesman (BA '69) and Rick Steiner (BA '68), the originators of *The Secret Garden*, *Smokey Joe’s Café*, *The Producers*, and other hit musicals, talked about the current Broadway musical scene. They were followed by Deborah Schindler (BA '77), head of Red Om Films and Julia Roberts’ producing partner, and Richard Schickel (BA '56), film critic for *Time* and producer of television documentaries on film history, who talked about producing romantic

comedies and the rise of film culture in the 1960s, respectively.

Rounding out the speakers list were: William Immerman (BS '59), a specialist in entertainment law who serves as vice president and chief operating officer of Crusader Entertainment in Beverly Hills; James Hirsch (BA '69), an award-winning writer-producer responsible for more than 100 television movies, mini-series and series; Edward Greenberg (MA '76), managing director and global telecom strategist for Morgan Stanley; Lee deBoer (BA '74), media consultant, who spent 19 years as an executive at Home Box Office where he helped the cable network grow from its infancy; Jerry Zucker (BS '72); and Walter Mirisch (BA '42), one of Hollywood’s most creative producers who in partnership with his brothers Harold and Marvin Mirisch were responsible for such Academy Award winners as *The Apartment*, *West Side Story*, and *In the Heat of the Night*.

Balio worked with the UW Foundation to help bring the alumni to campus. More information about the UW Foundation is available at : www.uwfoundation.wisc.edu.