

April 20, 1996

Dear Alumni and Friends of Geography:

Greetings to you from the University of Utah. I have prepared this edition of the Department of Geography letter to inform you of alumni and departmental news and the upcoming recognition dinner. The recognition dinner is dedicated to the many outstanding years of service given the department by **Professor Albert Fisher**, who will be retiring in June, 1996. We would like those of you who know Al as a teacher or colleague to be involved in this evening of recognition. Please attend and/or send your thoughts and stories regarding Al's career to Merrill Ridd at the departmental address.

**Musings of the Chair-** The discipline of geography is in the best condition that I have ever seen during my career. The essential nature of geography in all levels of education is being recognized and endorsed, even in these difficult economic times.

Our historic blending of the physical environment with human activities across geographic space is a foundation for modern environmental analysis, both on the local and global scales.

The geographic perspective, and geographic analysis using the GIS methodology, are sought after by policy makers in business and government. Unlike the past, my impression is that we are placing almost as many graduates in business as in government and education. Imitation is flattery and many other disciplines are flattering us by adopting a geographic spatial perspective in their activities.

Perhaps the most tangible signs are the university geography programs that undertook expansion in 1995. These include new Ph.D. programs at Florida State University, University of Connecticut, Kansas State University and a greatly increased university administrative commitment (new faculty, buildings, labs) for geography programs at Michigan State, Dartmouth, North Texas, Western Michigan and South Carolina. Many community colleges are offering geography courses and programs for the first time.

A department transcends individuals. As we honor those retiring, we must embrace the change and renewal that will and must take place. Our department is committed to a course of actions that will continue the solid academic traditions of the past, while preparing our students and ourselves for the new opportunities of the future. Our responsibility, as faculty, is to make our programs and your degree from this department increasingly valuable as this renewal takes shape. Your responsibility, as alumni, is to speak up for geography, our department and the University of Utah to legislators, school boards, public officials and university administrators. As has been said, the only thing that is constant is change. Please support us in taking advantage of change in a manner that is valuable to all.

**Departmental Recognition Dinner-** On Thursday, May 16, 1996, we will have the annual departmental recognition dinner at the Little America Hotel, Arizona Room in downtown Salt Lake City. In addition to a program honoring Al Fisher, the evening is to recognize several individuals for their academic

and service contributions to the Department. Awards will be given to the outstanding undergraduate geography major, graduate student and adjunct faculty member. Also we announce the recipient of the **Lewon Scholarship in Geographic Studies**. This award is for a \$2000 scholarship for 1996-97 made possible by the generosity of geography alum Donald Lewon and his family.

The event will begin with a social time at 6:30pm and dinner at 7:00pm. The cost is \$15.00 per person, which includes a buffet dinner featuring roast beef, salmon, ham and chicken, vegetables, salads, dessert, and gratuity. If you would like to attend, please contact Susan or Lisa at 581-8218 for details. **All payments must be made by Friday, May 3.** We expect 50-60 students, staff and faculty. **Please try to attend and lend your presence to an enjoyable evening.**

**Faculty/Student News-** **Don Currey** is making major contributions to earth systems history and global environmental change through his research on paleolake environments in Utah, Canada and Bolivia. In the last year, Don and several graduate students have been invited to participate in two symposia on these topics sponsored by NSF.

**Elena Kambitsi**, who is completing her third year, had two journal articles published on her research on European population migration. She is adapting some aspects of this research to Utah. Her high level of knowledge of mathematics and statistics make her a very valuable component of the geography program.

Governor Leavitt and the State of Utah are honoring Professor **Chung Myun Lee** for his dedicated work to building closer ties between Utah and the nations of Asia, particularly, Korea. Chung was given the "Leadership of the Community Award.

**Harvey Miller** has had a very rewarding year. Harvey was selected as a research fellow with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Transportation in Washington, D.C. He was given the Springer-Verlag Award for the best paper at the 1996 meeting of the Western Regional Science Association. His involvement in transportation and GIS has led to our department being selected to host the national workshop on "Enterprise Location Referencing Systems in July, 1996. This workshop is sponsored by the U.S. Transportation Research Board, UDOT, the USU Dept. of Civil and Envir. Engineering and the U of U Department of Geography.

**George Hepner** was appointed an editor of the journal, *Earth Interactions*, devoted to global environmental change. He serves on the national steering committee of the GIS/LIS conference and is a trustee for the International Geographic Information Foundation. Also George was co-author on three journal articles published in 1995.

**John Storm**, the new Director of the DIGIT Lab, has done an excellent job in redirecting the Lab after the departure of Brian Haslam and several staff to the private sector. John has obtained new projects with several organizations and guided the renewal of the computing infrastructure necessary for the lab to maintain state-of-the-art instructional and research capabilities. John has found that while administration and budgets may not be his favorite topics, he has developed a knack for handling them.

**James Hipple**, Ph.D. student, was awarded \$300 and membership in ASPRS as the recipient of the 1995/96 ASPRS Intermountain Region's best research proposal award. Also Jim, working with Merrill Ridd, was awarded the EOSAT prize of \$4000 in satellite imagery to assist in his dissertation research.

**Michael Hernandez**, Ph.D. student, has been selected as one of only four U of U graduate students to receive a Presidential Graduate Fellowship for 1996-97. This award provides a \$10,000 stipend and a waiver of tuition to allow Mike to pursue his degree program.

**Mark Finco** received a grant from the National Center for Geographic Information Analysis (NCGIA) to present his research at a summer institute on future trends in GIA.

**John Lowry**, a master's degree recipient in 1995, collaborated with Harvey Miller and George Hepner on a paper that was awarded the ESRI Award of \$500 for the best GIS paper published in the journal, *Photogrammetric Engineering and Remote Sensing*, in 1995.

**David Wilkins**, Ph.D. student, received the Jonathan O. Davis Scholarship presented by the Desert Research Institute, University of Nevada, Reno for research in quaternary science. Additionally, David obtained a research travel grant from the American Quaternary Association.

**Scott White** has received dissertation support from the USGS for his research on the use of GIS in modeling the 1993 Mississippi River floods. Scott and Jim Hipple received NASA funding to attend a NASA-sponsored conference on global change last summer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

**Geographic Movie Review-** There was one, or was it two, favorable comments regarding my previous film review of "Mountains of the Moon," the British movie about the quest of geographer, Richard Burton, for the source of the Nile River. Given that high level of endorsement, I am trying it again with the movie, "The Englishman Who Climbed a Hill and Came Down a Mountain." This film involves a cartographic team surveying and mapping a hill/mountain in Wales. The townsfolk want their hill to be classified a mountain on the map, but it lacked a bit in elevation. They make a concerted effort to modify both the local land form and the judgments of the mappers. Although some geographers and a few normal people might find this an interesting and passionate plot, most others do not. The film has some notable scenery. Hugh Grant is one of the leads. To be sure, his acting is not up to the standard that we expect for those playing geographers on film. He is not nearly the romantic hero that we could admire in the geographer in Mountains of the Moon. As it turned out, Hugh's search for the divinity of place in Wales only yielded him a whale of a problem in a later encounter with Devine Brown in the backplaces of LA.

**Homepage-Internet Addresses-** Many people are hooking up to the Internet. Some of you may be more inclined to contact geography faculty or me with news, questions or comments if you can do it via the Internet. The Department of Geography has a standardized addressing scheme, which uses "the first name of the individual, period (.), the last name, @geog.utah.edu". For example my address is `george.hepner@geog.utah.edu`. Please drop us a few electrons.

Thanks largely to Scott White, we have a Department of Geography homepage on the WWW. You can reach it at  
<http://www.geog.utah.edu/geography/geog.html>

---

The DIGIT Lab is the only mapping, remote sensing and GIS laboratory associated with the academic and research programs of the Department of Geography. The university does not pay for many of the costs of operation of

this instructional and research lab. We must supplement our funds and also provide meaningful hands-on project experience and financial support for our students. If your firm or agency has need for geographic information systems, computer cartography or satellite imagery services, please contact me or John Storm for more information.

I hope to see some of you at the Recognition Dinner on May 16. Take care and send me your comments and information, or stop by the department. Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

George F. Hepner, Chair

**What about you??**

Please send us current information on your family, employment, outlook on life and views of education. I would like to begin to compile these items for a later newsletter. I believe it would be quite informative for all of us.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Year graduated/degree \_\_\_\_\_

Current activity/employment \_\_\_\_\_

Are you happy with your education? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Which faculty member had the most influence on you? \_\_\_\_\_

Other items regarding family, interests, etc. \_\_\_\_\_