Fiske Hall, continued from page 5

The construction of Fiske Hall reflected the selfless work of President Morrison—who often forfeited his salary and at times dined on milk, water and grapes in order to keep Fairmount College financially sustained—and foreshadowed what lay ahead. During the dedication, Morrison suggested the campus would continue to grow and prosper and indicated where a library, chapel, science building and women’s housing would stand in the future.

From dormitory to office building

Students used Fiske Hall as a men’s residence until 1926. Since then Fiske has had many other roles and once served as the primary source for the influenza epidemic of 1918. Fairmount College and Wichita personnel converted Fiske Hall to Army barracks during World Wars I and II, respectively. Fiske also has housed the ROTC program, public relations, student services programs, the president’s office, the music department and variety of liberal arts departments over the years.

During a major renovation in 1986, workers removed the first floor central common area, and the east-facing staircase, entrance and sidewalk. Roofers installed a new red tile roof in 1995, and in 2000 remodelers made alterations to bring the building up to code. Fiske is now entirely classroom and office space and is home to the history and philosophy departments. They hold the record for the longest term of residence, calling Fiske “home” for almost 50 years.

As the campus cornerstone, Fiske Hall anchors Fairmount College and Wichita State to its past and serves as a reminder of Nathan Morrison’s vision. Should the rededication become a centennial event, imagine what changes may take place in Fairmount College, Wichita State University and the city of Wichita in the meantime. In the words of Hon. C.L. Davidson, a speaker at the dedication, “In its final realization Fairmount is proving a noble success.”

Randy Brown, senior fellow in the Elliott School of Communication, has a favorite quote: “Mushrooms thrive in the dark, but democracy needs sunshine.” Brown is at the center of the new partnership between the Elliott School and the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government. The non-partisan organization strives to inform public officials, the media and citizens about the public’s legal rights for open meetings and access to government records in Kansas.

In August 2005, the Elliott School will become the official headquarters of the Sunshine Coalition.

Brown, two-term president of the coalition, will serve as secretariat in a one-quarter-time position. He will provide management for the organization and promote its services. Brown will also continue to teach Elliott School courses in broadcast news, public information writing and writing for the mass audience.

“My goals for the coalition are to expand membership, put a public face on the organization and secure funding to create educational programs and materials about open government in Kansas,” said Brown.

The coalition has a broad membership base, consisting of citizens committed to the principle of open government, media outlets, professors and attorneys. Coalition sponsors include the Kansas Broadcasters Association, the Kansas Press Association and the Kansas professional chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

“This is an important step forward for the Sunshine Coalition, the Elliott School and Wichita State University,” said Brown. “The Elliott School will be the place to go to find out about open government in Kansas.”

This association (with the Sunshine Coalition) fits the Elliott School’s identity as a strong academic unit and as a professional school committed to community engagement,” said Susan Huxman, professor and director of the Elliott School. “Our faculty have expertise in communication law, open government and freedom of information. We will be partnering with the citizens, media and public officials to strengthen the democratic process in local government.”

A flicker becomes a ray of light

Vernon Keel, professor of communication and first director of the Elliott School, had a vision: one that would aid the public in understanding freedom of information and aid journalists in their responsibilities. In 1999, when he was involved in founding the Sunshine Coalition, he envisioned a future educational joint venture between the organization and the Elliott School of Communication.

“This partnership is a natural part of the evolution. From the very beginning I saw the potential to involve the EDC,” Keel said. “It’s really exciting and part of me regrets I can’t be a part of it.” Keel is in his last year of phased retirement from WSU.

The coalition has a long-standing history with Wichita State.

“I operated the coalition for the first few years out of my office,” said Keel. In addition to Keel’s and Brown’s leadership, Jahres Anderson, associate professor of communication and associate director of the Elliott School, has also held board positions. Wichita State joins a select group of universities with centers for freedom of information and open government. The University of Missouri is one such institution in this region.

As senior fellow of the Elliott School, Randy Brown has plenty of expertise to share with students. Brown spent 14 years at The Wichita Eagle as managing editor, editorial page editor and editorial columnist. He also spent seven years at KAKE-TV, serving as news anchor, operations manager, senior reporter and managing editor. Prior to his move to Wichita he was managing editor at The Omaha Star. Brown was part of a five-member team that investigated and reported on the large financial resources of Boys Town, Nebraska. The article won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

His current community involvement includes the City of Wichita Library Board, Episcopal Social Services, WSU-LINK and the Sunshine Coalition. He also serves as the 2nd Vice President for the Kansas Associated Collegiate Press.

Brown earned his bachelor of science in journalism from the University of North Texas. He enjoys sports and especially loves to golf. He also is a big fan of horse-racing. Randy is married and has two adult sons.
Burke to direct Center for Environmental and Human Health

Collette Burke, associate professor of geology, is concerned about the environment and human health, and she wants Kansas residents to be able to find the information they need on these issues. The Center for Environmental and Human Health is filling that void, supported by a $50,000 professional grant from the Kansas Health Foundation. Burke will be the center’s director.

“The center came about from discussions we started three or four years ago,” said Burke. With Bill Howard, a retired rancher and businessman, and Jay Barnes, former director of the Kansas Resource Council, Burke started kitchen meetings similar to those behind the beginning of WSU’s Self-Help Network. The group of colleagues and friends met regularly to discuss issues of the environment and human health.

“After all the kitchen meetings we had with representatives of various environmental groups, it was clear that nobody really knew what the average Kansan thought about linkages between health and the environment, or if they were even concerned,” Burke said. With the help of Wichita State’s Interdisciplinary Communication Research Institute and the support of two recognition grants from the Kansas Health Foundation, the group sponsored a statewide stratified phone survey to assess Kansans’ perceptions of health and the environment.

“We found some fascinating tidbits of information,” said Burke. “For instance, approximately 66% of the 707 respondents said they would pay higher taxes if it would keep Kansans, including themselves, from getting sick because of environmental pollution.” They also learned that concerns about the environment and its effects on health, but there is no coordinated place for people to go to get health information.

The center will provide outreach programs educating the public about the center’s role and a Web site, making environment and health information easily accessible and detailed by county. The survey results also will be published on the Web site.

“Users will be able to see what kinds of environmental threats exist in their county and learn what’s being done about it—or not—and where they can go for more information,” Burke said. The center also plans to create a listserv for individuals and organizations wanting to learn more about these issues.

The RHF grant provides the major support for the center, but not all of it. Wichita State dedicated a research assistant to help Burke start up the center and the geology department hired a Web designer. Burke, Barnes and Hoewe are also developing an advisory board to help shape the center’s purpose.

Why a geologist? Burke was asked with the issues of environmental health might question why a geologist is involved with this type of center. Burke had this answer:

“Geology is a beautiful segue and dovetailing of the environment and health,” she said. “Kansas has great air but fewer water, and few recognize how bad the soil is. These are subjects that geologists may study and improve, and students need to know more about the issues. The center will also be helpful for introductory geology courses where students need to know about links between health and the environment.

For more information about the Center for Environmental and Human Health, please contact Collette Burke at (316) 978-3140 or collette.burke@wichita.edu.

Van Stipdonk research update

It took a few days to produce the first ever experimental infrared absorption spectrum of gas phase uranium complexes, but Mike Van Stipdonk, assistant professor of chemistry, and his colleagues succeeded. Van Stipdonk and two colleagues traveled to The Netherlands last fall at the invitation of FOM (the Dutch Foundation for Fundamental Research in Matter).

“Our methodology worked. The mass spectrum told us we had the right combination of molecules, and the vibrational spectrum matched what we would have expected for such a species,” said Van Stipdonk. “We start to show how electron distribution in uranyl complexes, what is holding them together and why, it’s proof that uranyl can be detected in the air.” This finding is important for several reasons, but most notably in that it will allow scientists in understanding how uranium may be present in the environmental.

Van Stipdonk plans additional trips to FOM, and will participate in experiments similar to the one involving gas phase uranyl complexes. In April, Van Stipdonk returned to the Netherlands and studied how sodium, potassium, thallium, and silver bind to proteins by showing their vibrational features.

From the front lines—WSU social work professor on active duty in Iraq

By Amy Geiszler-Jones

When convoying American soldiers pass through a military truck stop in southern Iraq, Cathleen Lewandowski is there to lend a listening ear. Having served as an Army Reserve combat stress consultant for nearly a year, Lewandowski, a WSU associate professor and licensed social worker, has been on active duty with the U.S. Army Reserve combat stress team for nearly a year. A lieutenant colonel, Lewandowski has spent most of that time at a camp between An Najaf and Al Kut.

“Meaningful is the best way to describe it,” Lewandowski said about the work she does. “At times it’s difficult. The best way I can describe it is that it’s like living in an emergency room 24/7 for 12 months.”

As a team chief with the unit, she’s responsible for combat stress operations and works primarily at Camp Scania and the camp’s surrounding area of operations. The camp, surrounded by 12-foot cement barriers, serves as a sort of military truck stop — providing a place for convoying soldiers to rest, have a hot meal and refuel their trucks.

Lewandowski and her colleagues are there to help the soldiers refuel their minds. “It’s a perfect job for us,” Lewandowski said in a recent interview with issue WSU via e-mail, “since we are available to all soldiers coming on convoy.”

Because her unit’s primary mission is to look after the mental health of soldiers and be sure they remain ready for combat, she and the unit’s staff consult with commanders about the impact operations have on the soldiers’ level of stress and about combat stress-related trends they see.

They provide classes on stress and anger management, suicide prevention and relaxation. Lewandowski also teaches tobacco cessation classes, which many soldiers take. While it may seem surprising that a soldier in a combat zone would want to quit smoking, she said, “it makes a lot of sense. There are so many things out of our control in this environment. For soldiers in the program, quitting smoking is one thing they can control. It’s also something positive they can do for themselves while they are deployed.”

She and her team also are crisis counselors, conducting debriefings after any difficult or exceptionally distressing events. “She’s also there to provide individual therapy. Besides hearing about the soldiers’ combat stress-related concerns, she hears about operational stress, such as discontent about long hours and relationships with fellow soldiers in the home front has always played a major role for those in the military. But the way soldiers and families are communicating has changed. Internet access and easier access to telephones can be a good thing, said Lewandowski. But too much of a good thing can be bad.

See Iraq, page 6
Remembering James Sours, Fairmount College Dean, 1962-1965

In their professional roles, administrators have the opportunity to leave a lasting influence upon an institution. James Sours, Fairmount College dean, and Harry Corbin, University of Wichita president, stood at the forefront of the prolonged battle for the University of Wichita’s admittance to the state university system. They also were irreplaceable for much of their professional careers. Sours and Corbin shared an abiding friendship. They met while Corbin was a lieutenant in the Navy’s Chaplain Corps in Point Barrows, AK, during World War II. Sours served as his assistant. Corbin talked Sours into coming back with him to Wichita to complete an undergraduate degree in political science. Sours then went on to complete master and doctorate degrees in public administration at Harvard University. The University of Wichita hired him to teach political science and later promoted him to professor and chair of the department. Sours went on to become dean of Fairmount College, which was the highest academic position on the campus at the time Corbin was president. Corbin described Sours as having “great energy and drive, nicely...cloaked in an easy and unhurried manner whose moral character and ethical standards are above reproach.” Sours also had held several “first” posts at the university—as dean of University College, dean of students and director of student services—reflecting not only his affinity for students, but the progression of the institution.

Two years after Sours assisted Corbin with the fight for Wichita State University, he resigned as Fairmount College dean and accepted a position with the American College Testing Program. He announced his resignation from Wichita State, observing that he’d been associated with the university for 17 years as a student, faculty member and administrator: “Therefore, one withdraws from it reluctantly and only physically—never spiritually,” said Sours.

Former Fairmount College dean and emeritus associate professor David Farnsworth remembers Sours as a professor and colleague. “He was a very strong piece of the campus fabric. He was fair as a teacher and colleague. ‘He was a very strong piece of the campus fabric. He was fair as a teacher and colleague. ’” said Sours.

Former Fairmount College dean and emeritus associate professor David Farnsworth remembers Sours as a professor and colleague. “He was a very strong piece of the campus fabric. He was fair as a teacher and colleague. ’” said Sours.

Sours' last administrative post was as President of Southern Oregon University, where he retired in 1979. During a memorial service for Sours in January, SOU administrators included the dedication of the James K. Sours Student Leadership Center. Sours died December 4, 2004, at his Medford, OR, home. He was 79.

Fairmount College faculty perspectives 1964-2005

Fairmount College is inextricably linked with the history of the Kansas State University, and coursework from the college remains the core of all undergraduate degrees. A small group of Fairmount College faculty have a lengthy association with Wichita State University and its early years as a Regents institution. A few share below their perspectives on Fairmount College and Wichita State’s growth and development since that time period.

Physical growing pains and the core curriculum

“I began my employment in the physics department in January of 1964. The university had just become state-supported, and the enrollment jumped from 6,400 to 9,600 students,” said Skip Loper, associate vice-president for research and associate professor of physics. “As you can imagine, space was the most immediate problem, because there was a pentagon on new building. Physics was located in the basement of what is now the Geology building, but we also had to teach classes in several other buildings on campus, whereby space could be found.” At the time, the university’s focus was primarily teaching. 17 During this transition, Craig Miner, William W. Garvey Distinguished Professor of Business History, was a student. He admits to being fairly unaware of the process throughout his student years, but he was one of the first faculty members hired during the time of expansion.

See Faculty, page 7

Fiske Hall: Cornerstone of Fairmount College

As the oldest building on campus, Fiske Hall is an edifice of the past and a reminder from where Fairmount College and Wichita State have come. Fiske has borne witness to the human condition during health, war and illness, and through its halls thousands of students have passed on their way to their lodgings or, as is now the case, on their way to classes. It was the second building constructed on campus. On October 26, 2004, descendants of President Nathan Morrison, and WSU faculty, staff and students came together to celebrate the significance of Fiske Hall in the history of Fairmount College and of Wichita State University. More than 200 people attended the ceremony in the Beren Gallery of the Ulrich Art Museum.

Fiske Hall as it appears today.

Books about Fairmount College and Wichita State University

To learn more about the history of Fairmount College and Wichita State University please visit Wichita State University Libraries, Department of Special Collections, or read the following books by Fairmount College faculty:


Following remarks by President Donald Beggs and several university members, Morrison’s great-grandson, David Teergarden spoke of the meaningfulness of the ceremony for his extended family, and thanked Wichita State for recognizing Morrison’s contributions. The Wichita State A Capella choir wore period costumes and performed skits and songs reflecting student activities and attitudes of the time. Beggs and George Platt, emeritus associate professor of public affairs, unveiled two plaques now affixed to Fiske Hall. One recognizes those responsible for the solicitation of funds and construction of Fiske Hall; the other gives a brief history of the building and its relationship to Wichita State University in its various stages of governance and name.

A man’s residence

Workers laid the cornerstone for Fiske Hall, a men’s dormitory, October 28, 1904, and Fairmount College dedicated the building June 6, 1906, with much fanfare and celebration. Named in honor of Charlotte Fiske, one of Fairmount College’s two
WSU, Dr. Heather Desaire’s laboratory at the University of Kansas, and Dr. David Harvey’s laboratory at Oxford University. The ultimate goal is to tie into larger databases, such as those supported by the Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEX) program.

In a multidisciplinary partnership, Will Parcell, geology, and William Vanderburgh, philosophy, have been working on a "Fuzzy Geology: Using Many-Valued Logic to Represent Uncertainty in Stratigraphic Datasets."