Museum, continued from page 3

said Martin. In the meantime, a few pieces will go on display periodically in the Holmes Museum in Neff Hall.

Already the 30-foot soul ship, known as a “wuroman,” is mounted above the doorway of the museum, for the simple fact that there was no other place to store the item while it’s being cleaned.

“Those things don’t look so big in the jungle, but you get them in a building and it looks huge,” Martin said.

The Downing collection will be the largest U.S. university collection of Asmat art and one of the largest such collections in the United States. Martin estimates the collection is worth more than $1 million.

WSU has the unique distinction as the first American university allowed in the region to collect tribal artifacts.

Other large collections can be found at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whose collection was gathered by Michael Rockefeller, who disappeared in the Asmat region in the 1960s; the American Museum of Asmat Art in St. Paul, Minn., with pieces collected by the Catholic Crosier order which has sent missionaries into the area since 1958, and the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mass.

Another important distinction the WSU collection will have is that Martin meticulously collected the provenance, or history, of each piece, tagging individual pieces with a number that corresponds to his notes. This will make a very valuable research collection.

“We were very, very careful. For each piece we know who made it, why it was made, and for what ceremony if it was used for, if it was used in ceremonies, and what ancestor spirit was called into the object,” Martin says.

The Asmat strongly believe in ancestor spirits and items usually are dedicated or have ancestor spirits “called” into them. The making of most items are marked by ceremonies. For example, during a mask ceremony witnessed by Martin and his expedition, the village had created seven body masks. Once the masks were made, dancers donned the masks and became “spirits” of ancestors, dancing into the night. In the morning, the spirits led a single-file procession through the village, viewing all the changes that had happened since the last ceremony, about 10 years prior, and since their death.

Martin’s photographs of the ceremony, along with numerous others he took during the expedition, will become part of the collection. An interpreter for the group, who has filmed a video for MTV Indonesia, recorded tribal music for the collection, as well. Patti Seery, an Indonesian cultural expert who led the Downings on a trip to the Asmat region, handled most of the logistics of the trip.

Martin, seven locals and two interpreters, including Seery, visited four major Asmat areas, stopping at a number of villages to buy items. Sometimes they stayed in the village’s ceremonial house, offering donations of tobacco and Indonesian currency, called rupiah.

“We didn’t want things that they thought tourists would buy,” Martin says. “We wanted things they used in their culture, whether it was for daily use or ceremonial use.”

Now that the collection has arrived, students in Martin’s “Museum Methods” class have the daunting assignment of cleaning and curating nearly 950 items. “Item by item, inch by inch, they’ll need to be inspected,” said Martin.

The collection has some damage, as expected, from being shipped to Wichita. Half the drums suffered extensive damage during the first leg of the trip from Irian Jaya to Java. Cockroaches ate holes in the drumheads made of dried lizard skins. A number of the wooden items are infected with bore beetles, evidenced by the sawdust found when some of the items were unwrapped. Mold also has set in on some of the items.
By Cheryl K. Miller

“I am Wichita State,” said M. Lee Pelton, president, Willamette University, during his spot in one of the University’s “Thinkers, Doers, Movers, and Shockers” TV commercials. A graduate of Wichita State with degrees in English and psychology, he believes that “I learned from the professors in my department that caring and committed people can make a real and lasting difference in the life of an individual. It is a lesson that has made all the difference for me in my work and commitment to social justice and equality.”

Pelton’s comments on the influence of faculty testify to the importance of professors’ involvement in the lives of students and their presence in the community. These connections are significant. Fairmount College faculty contribute to society through their work and the expansion and sharing of knowledge. They promote and support lifelong learning on many different levels.

International: French professor made honorary knight

Students in Ginette Adamson’s French classes won’t have to kneel before her, but they may be in awe of the respect given to her by the government of France. She is a member of Chevalier de L’ordre des Palmes Académique, an honorary knighthood.

The French ministry of education bestows the recognition, which is France’s highest academic honor. Mr. Olivier Boasson, French cultural attaché of the Chicago consulate, made the award presentation during a ceremony in November on the Wichita State University campus.

In explaining the significance of the award Boasson said, “This distinction does not only acknowledge great educators but it is also awarded as a testimony of the gratitude of France to all those who have spared no effort to maintain and enhance the appreciation of French and Francophone languages and cultures.”

Adamson decided when she was a young child that she wanted to become a teacher and, at age 15, she decided to teach French. “Some of the best moments of my professional life have occurred in the classroom. I am deeply touched by this award. You have honored me. In the name of the French government, I will wear the insignia of Chevalier de L’ordre des Palmes Académiques with great pride, with a deep sense of gratitude.”

See Fairmount, page 4
DEAN’S MESSAGE

We have many things to celebrate as we reach the end of the current academic year and look toward the next. We celebrate increased college enrollment for the Spring 2002 semester. Total credit hours for Fairmount College are 73,485, an increase of 4,171 credit hours, or six percent, from last spring. The student head count for LAS is 5,697, an increase of 194 from Spring 2001. Psychology and anthropology were among the departments with the largest percentage of growth in credit hours, with increases of more than 25 percent. Enrollment increased in nearly all departments and schools in LAS.

A new dean will lead Fairmount College beginning July 1. At the time of this writing, the dean’s search committee is progressing through the selection and interview process. The committee, chaired by Ruth Jackson, dean of libraries, is working diligently to select the appropriate person.

The committee includes excellent representation by LAS faculty, classified and unclassified professionals, and graduate and undergraduate students.

We celebrate the awards our faculty have received this year. In addition to international awards (see the article about Ginette Adamson, professor, MCLL-French), our faculty have earned several university-sponsored honors. Erach Talaty, professor of chemistry, received the Academy for Effective Teaching Award, based on student comments and his teaching portfolio. Associate Professor Stephen Brady, mathematics, won the Board of Trustees Excellence in Teaching Award, acknowledging his exceptional teaching methods. Paul Rilemma, professor of chemistry, received the Excellence in Research Award for work he has done in the design of supramolecular electron and energy transfer models, and in photophysical properties of coordination complexes, solar energy conversion.

See Dean, page 8

Professor studies wintering bird survival strategy

By Cheryl K. Miller

As you drink your morning coffee and watch the black-capped chickadee at your backyard birdfeeder, conventional wisdom holds that birds such as these try to get as fat as possible to survive during the winter.

One assistant professor, Christopher Rogers, biological sciences, disagrees.

“I am analyzing the question of whether or not winter fat reserves closely reflect the food supply, and examining the factors affecting fat reserves in small birds during winter,” said Rogers. “I am studying the combination of food and predation effect on winter fat reserves in wintering birds.”

See Birds, page 6

WSU poet wins unprecedented second

Albert Goldbarth, Adele Davis distinguished professor of humanities, has won a second National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry for his book Saving Lives. Goldbarth, who teaches in WSU’s creative writing program, is the only poet since 1981 to win the award for a second time.

Goldbarth’s Heaven and Earth won the 1991 National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry.

In Saving Lives, Goldbarth uses familiar cultural icons in his poems that examine the saving of lives through medical procedures, archaeology and book conservation.

The 2001 winners in fiction, general nonfiction, biography/autobiography, poetry and criticism were announced during a ceremony at Tishman Auditorium at New York University Law School in New York City. The National Book Critics Circle, founded in 1974, consists of nearly 700 active book reviewers.

Fairmount College degrees will be conferred upon graduates at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 18 at the Kansas Coliseum, 1229 E. 85th St. North. Approximately 20 doctoral, 250 master, 400 bachelor and 30 associate degrees will be awarded.

The commencement speaker, Alan Schroeder, interim director, School of Journalism, Northeastern University, is a 1977 WSU alumnus with a degree in journalism. Well-known for his analysis and commentary on political speeches and debates, his 2000 book, “Presidential Debates: Forty Years of High-Risk TV,” gives an account of the history of televised presidential debates from 1960-1996—from a behind-the-scenes point of view.
History Day at WSU

Wichita State University and the Department of History hosted the Region 6 National History Day competition on March 9. Students from 15 Kansas counties met on campus to present individual or team projects with the hope of advancing to the state competition held on May 4, 2002, in Abilene.

Approximately 250 contestants in grades 6-12 participate each year. Entrants create research-based papers, documentaries, exhibits and dramatic performances for evaluation at local, state and national levels. Students use archives, libraries, museums, historical societies and oral history interviews for their research sources. This year’s theme is “Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History.”

Benson Tong, assistant professor of history and Region 6 coordinator, believes in the power of the skills participants gain. He said, “Students learn not only methods of research and writing that they can apply to other endeavors, but they also sharpen their social skills. They learn to meet deadlines, compromise with each other and appreciate the importance of tolerance of diverse opinions. And of course, they also expand their appreciation of the past.”

According to Tong, educators benefit from the program, too. “For many teachers, part of the joy of participating comes in the satisfaction of having guided students through a variety of tasks with end products that are shared with the general public.”

Typically 25-30 Region 6 students go on to compete at the state level and may advance to the national competition. Kansas students finished in one of the top ten national slots in the National History Day competition. Kansas students have received recognition for their accomplishments.

Great things happen when students and faculty work together! Geology graduate students Michael Bruemmer and Monica Turner-Williams along with WSU Assistant Professor Dr. Wan Yang won the prestigious A.I. Levorsen Award for best oral presentation at the 2001 American Association of Petroleum Geologists Mid-continent meeting in Amarillo, Texas. Bruemmer gave the presentation, “Deltic progradation during maximum marine transgression, the Heebner Shale member of the Oread Limestone Formation (Virgilian), Southeastern Kansas and Northeastern Oklahoma.” The presentation showcased the results of Yang’s ongoing research project “Depositional cyclicity of the Oread Limestone Formation, Southeast Kansas and Northeast Oklahoma.”

Graduate student honors also include significant fellowship support. Raheel Allauddin, computer science, won the Dora Wallace Hodgson Outstanding Master’s Level Student Award; Benjamin Bunck received the Dora Wallace Hodgson Outstanding First Year Graduate Fellowship-Doctoral Level; and, Roksana Noor Khurshid, liberal studies, earned the Michael P. Tilford Graduate Fellowship.
An alternative explanation
Rogers thinks small birds maximize their winter survival rates by using adaptive strategies to efficiently manage fat storage and usage in a cost-benefit tradeoff. They put on enough fat to survive the winter nights, but not so much as to make them inefficient flyers—a condition that would make them more susceptible to predation. Fat reserves are necessary to fuel the body for basic life functions and help insulate birds against the cold.

This position, along with his research, earned Rogers an invitation to speak at the prestigious Birds of Two Worlds 2002 symposium hosted by the Smithsonian Institute. The ornithological meeting examines current cutting-edge research on the evolution and ecology of migratory birds. Rogers is especially interested in migratory birds of the Nearctic and Neotropic regions.

Wintering birds can lose 10 to 15 percent of their fat reserves overnight. Birds have to eat enough to gain back all this fat the next day, every day, throughout the winter until migration or breeding dispersal occurs. (In human terms, this would mean a 200-pound person could lose 20-30 pounds of fat overnight.) This weight maintenance is necessary for survival on a daily basis.

Wild birds aren’t exactly willing participants in Rogers’ study. He must capture and release them without harm and record data in the process.

“My main concern is for the safety of the bird from the time of its netting to its release. This process is much more stressful for humans than it is for the birds. Birds bite in self-defense—cardinals are the worst. They greatly resemble flying pliers. They can draw blood,” he said. To reduce the birds’ stress, he moves quickly, but gently, through the handling process to minimize the amount of time they are captive.

Getting the data: an afternoon in the field
On an early February afternoon, Rogers and two students, Rejeana Heath-Coss and Amy Zavala, set up 30 mist nets at a tract on private property in Sedgwick County. The nets are set in a variety of habitats—a dam near a pond, in a small tree grove, where grasses meet a field, and where a wooded area meets grassland. Rogers moves along the circuit and begins extracting birds.

Once the bird is out of the net, he bands it, using both celluloid and aluminum rings sized to fit the bird’s leg. Unique, individual numbers are stamped onto each band, giving the wearer an identity no other bird in the world has.

Rogers collects body fat data by observing and recording the amount of subcutaneous (below-skin) fat deposits on the birds’ undersides. He grasps the bird in his hand and spreads his fingers over either side of its back. He turns it over, blows gently on its underside to part the feathers, and looks at the fat deposits. He then assigns a score of 0-5 (with five being high) based on the amount of fat deposits.

Rogers reads off other data. The students record the band information, the bird’s weight, notes about the bird’s condition, and the length of the wing. The average handling time per bird is 20 to 30 minutes. As he releases the first bird, a black-capped chickadee, it flies into a nearby cedar and gives a rapid scolding “dee-dee-dee-dee” call.

“If fat is a complex cost-benefit tradeoff, as I think it is, then fat condition cannot simply reflect food abundance,” said Rogers. “Birds must find the best balance for survival.”

If Rogers is right, his research will have great influence upon the assessment of habitat quality and how winter events influence breeding events. “This will change our perception of what ecological factors birds have to deal with when surviving on the wintering grounds.”

Spanish students go south of the border

Students, teachers, and other interested individuals with six weeks free this summer will head across the border to Mexico.

The Puebla summer program is an immersion experience for participants to study the Spanish language and live among Mexicans for a six-week period. Students improve their fluency through interaction with native speakers and among themselves. In fact, hotel personnel and host families speak only Spanish during the entire visit. Puebla and WSU instructors speak only Spanish until 4:30 in the afternoon.

Coordinated and led by Rob Phillips, director of the language laboratory and assistant instructor of Spanish, he first participated in the program as a student in 1983. He said, “we are known as a group of students and teachers whose chief goal is to improve our knowledge of Spanish and Hispanic culture. We are known for our desire to know the Mexicans and their customs, to share briefly their homes and their way of life, to convivir with them so there will be mutual understanding between them and us.”

Participants earn college credit toward an undergraduate or graduate degree. They may also apply the credits toward teacher certification. In addition to class meetings, students have plenty of time to visit points of interest such as la Pirámide del Sol (Pyramid of the Sun) at Teotihuacan or stroll the streets of México City or Veracruz.

For more information, visit the Puebla Summer Program Website at mcll.wichita.edu/puebla.

Christopher Rogers earned his PhD from Indiana University-Bloomington, his Master of Science degree from Michigan State University, and his Bachelor of Science degree from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He completed two post-doctoral programs, one at the University of British Columbia; the other, with the U.S. Forestry Service, Alaska.

His academic programs focused on avian biology with a strong field emphasis. He began studying birds as a young child and honed a strong interest in nature. As a scientist and naturalist he likes stimulating interest of the natural world in his students.

A Wisconsin native, Rogers is an avid fly fisherman, and especially likes to catch trout. He also is a cyclist, and enjoys riding his bike to nearby small towns for exercise and relaxation.
Carving a place in museum history
Wichita State becomes one of few places in U.S. with extensive Asmat art collection

By Amy Geiszler-Jones

With the arrival of nearly 950 pieces of Asmat artifacts from Irian Jaya, all of it collected by a WSU museum director, WSU has become one of the few places in the United States to have such an extensive collection of carvings and other items crafted by the Asmat culture.

The pieces range from small woven bags, made from the fronds of the sago palm tree, to a 30-foot “soul” ship used in initiation ceremonies for young men to honor deceased ancestors.

The collection also includes more than 100 drums of varying sizes with the largest being six feet tall, more than 60 large, intricately carved shields, everyday items like a fish net, 39 body masks and 16 elaborate ancestor, or “bis,” poles. It’s extremely difficult to collect authentic bis poles because of their length. They are carved from the trunk of a mangrove tree, with a part of the tree root forming a sort of wing. The poles depict ancestors in various poses.

The Asmat are a Stone Age culture of semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers whose most enduring tradition is elaborate woodcarvings. They live in the coastal tidal swamp area of the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya. The province is the western half of the South Pacific island of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world. Few visitors are allowed into the region.

The pieces collected by Jerry Martin, director of the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology, during a six-week expedition this summer recently arrived at WSU in two containers, measuring 40 and 20 feet long.

The expedition was funded by an undisclosed gift from community members Barry and Paula Downing, who have visited the Asmat region and have collected a few pieces.

“It will take about three years to inspect, clean, curate and mount a major exhibition of the Downing Collection of Asmat Art,”

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Fairmount, continued from page 1

appreciation for the unknown colleague(s) who nominated me. I will remain faithful to my commitment,” she said. “I have spent my professional career here and it is very meaningful to share this distinction with friends and colleagues. It is a special occasion to be recognized by President Beggs and by Mr. Boasson.”

Former students, many of them high school French teachers, attended the ceremony. One, Brett Humburg, gave a student testimonial.

“I first thought of language as a requirement for a diploma. However, it opened a gateway to an entirely new world, a new culture, and a new history. Ginette taught me that French is not an immovable, static language. French lives and breathes ... it should be lived, experienced, and enjoyed. But most of all it should be shared,” said Humburg, a 1998 graduate with a major in communication and a minor in French. His experience with the French language and Ginette’s mentoring led him to earn a master of political science degree at the University of Strasbourg.

The Quebec government also honored Adamson in March 2001 with recognition in the Ordre des Francophones D’Amerique. This award acknowledges those who encourage “the growth and cultural development of French in the Americas.”

“It probably is quite uncommon for the same individual to have received both awards. They recognize an exceptional contribution to the promotion of the French language and culture, in my case, in the United States,” said Adamson.

During her 30-year career, Adamson has created several unique courses including “French Caribbean Literature,” “Contemporary Quebec Literature,” and “French African Literature.” She held various executive positions with the Conseil International d’Etudes Francophones, an international scholarly organization of university faculty, writers, and publishers. She was the co-creator of the first annual North American conference on non-Anglophone women writers and served as the literary executor of the French writer Pierre Emmanuel. For the latter, she collaborated with Mike Kelly, Ablah Library special collections curator, to create one of two of the most complete special collections of Emmanuel’s work in the world. Naturally, the other collection is in Paris.

To support his research, Vanderburgh recently won the 2002 Herbert C. Pollock Award, given by the trustees of Dudley Observatory, in Schenectady, N.Y. The $5000 award also will allow him to fulfill a larger role of bringing interesting historical scientific knowledge to life and assist the public in understanding science. As a historian and philosopher of science, his research will carve a niche unexamined by his colleagues.

Regional: Anthropology professor assists with mysterious discoveries

Peer Moore-Jansen, associate professor of anthropology, is not only an asset to WSU, but also an asset to the local and regional community for his background in forensic anthropology.

His expertise in skeletal biology and human variability make him highly sought after in solving mysteries involving discovered human remains, historical sites and unmarked cemeteries. It’s a multi-faceted process peppered with lessons in cultural anthropology, geology, chemistry, biology, ecology, computer science, engineering and sociology. He also considers archival histories, census data and oral traditions for insight.

Often he answers one question only to uncover more questions. Sometimes his work
is “inconclusive,” which is, at times, an important finding in itself. Moore-Jansen said his work is “fascinating from a cultural/historical perspective and in helping others understand the community.”

A new development in his ongoing research involves the study of unmarked burial sites in Southeast Kansas. One particular site is allegedly the mass graveyard of late 1800s African-American coal miners who may have died in a riot or as a result of multiple homicides. Complicating the issue is local history indicating that mine explosions and disease also killed a group of black miners. However, Moore-Jansen warns that nothing so far indicates the actual presence of this particular site. Were such a site found, declaring homicide is premature. Such a discovery warrants further study in order to address many possible explanations.

Community openness to solving the case is high. “One of the reasons we can do this is because of the extraordinary cooperation of people in the local communities. They want to know what’s happened and what their community is about,” said Moore-Jansen.

A preliminary scan of a site near Scammon, Kan., took place last fall. Disturbances in the soil stratigraphy (layers) were reason enough to schedule a second visit this spring. However, finding something is not always a reason to dig.

In deciding what area to excavate, he has to do a preliminary survey and assess reasons to continue. This raises basic questions: Will the chosen methodology work? Do results indicate anything? Will the landowner cooperate with further study?

If the site is determined appropriate for further research, he and a crew will first seek permission to dig an exploratory trench pit. However, new questions arise: Is anything there? How long has it been there? Has it moved? How has it moved? Did it decay or decompose? What is above or near the ground of the site? Are there fireplaces, graves or floors close to the surface? How has the vegetation changed or been affected? Are there unusual changes observed in the soil?

Students will accompany him on all future visits to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom. They will gain practical experience using testing methods, recognizing when they find something of significance, and correlating historical documents (e.g., newspaper reports) with physical evidence.

As a result, students will gain confidence in what they are doing. Some may seek employment in anthropology careers following graduation; others may decide to pursue unrelated opportunities.

Much of his work gives him a view into the dark side of humanity. Moore-Jansen has been involved in many criminal trials to present forensic evidence he has gathered. However, one case stands out vividly. Nancy Shoemaker, a nine-year old Wichitan, was abducted, raped and murdered in 1990. Moore-Jansen examined the recovery site of her body and collected evidence. The process required complicated interpretation of the data, ranging from classifying fragmentary skeletal pieces to understanding farming practices. In his role, he was able to discern what happened in the chronology of events at the site, her sex, race, age and possible manner of death. A profoundly moving case for the local community, it included in-depth cooperation with the Sedgwick County Coroner’s Office, the WSU Anthropology Department, a dentist and several local and county police units.

Local: Elliott School partners with Price-Harris Communications Magnet

“Thank you WSU, especially the Elliott School of Communication,” said Tamara Cotman, USD 259 assistant superintendent, elementary schools. “You have stepped up to the plate and been open to helping Price-Harris in its endeavors.”

Cotman was referring to KidConnect, a partnership between Price-Harris and the Elliott School of Communication (ESC) to develop a media/communication curriculum that is standards-based and rigorous for all students enrolled at the K-5 school. Shirley Staples Carter, ESC director, said “We view the partnership as an opportunity to enhance the lives of young people and encourage them to pursue further study. This is an opportunity to promote lifelong learning for students as critical producers and consumers of news and information in a global society and digital information age.”

The unique collaboration includes participation beyond the Elliott School and Fairmont College. Media partners include KMUW, Watermark Books, The Wichita Eagle, KPTS, Heartstrings and UPN/Fox Kansas. Each partner will be involved with a specific grade level, assisting students with experimenting and using their medium.

Young children are natural learners and open to new experiences. In their curriculum, kindergarten students will explore the different types of communication. First-graders will learn public speaking skills and the power of radio to reach a broad audience. For second-graders, Watermark Books will focus on publishing and the influence of books to enhance imagination and create understanding. Third-graders will learn critical thinking and questioning skills through their experiences with The Wichita Eagle. Public television station KPTS will help fourth-graders understand television production and variety in programming. By the time fifth-graders move on to junior high school, they will understand the importance and function of computer technology in providing users with timely, interactive and accurate information.

Elliott School faculty members will assist Price-Harris teachers with developing lesson plans based on media-driven communication and participate as mentors in the use of media technology. Cooperative Education students from the Elliott School will participate in the classrooms, gaining applied experience in their majors.

Fund raising for the partnership, equipment, staffing and staff development continues through application for external grants and the assistance of the Price-Harris PTA, Fairmont College and the Elliott School. The new communications curriculum will be completely implemented by fall 2003.