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End of an Era: Two Linfield Legends Step Down

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END of an ERA

Two Linfield legends step down

It is the end of an era at Linfield College. Ken Ericksen, professor of English, retired after 45 years in the classroom and as an integral part of the college's life. Dave Hansen, professor of economics for 40 years, is stepping down as dean of students after 22 years and returning to the classroom.

BRINGING LITERATURE TO LIFE

A TRIBUTE TO KEN ERICKSEN



Early in Ken Ericksen's teaching career, a visibly bored young woman sitting in the first row turned, looked at the clock, and seeing that 20 minutes remained in class, said in a pained voice, "Can't we go?"

Ericksen dismissed the class, went home and contemplated leaving the teaching profession.

Instead, he returned the next day and for thousands of days after that. There are hundreds of students who will testify to the impact Ericksen has had on their lives.

His enthusiasm is as contagious as his laughter, which rolls from deep in his chest. He has electrified classrooms with his passion for great literary figures such as William Shakespeare, Jane Austen and Samuel Johnson and brought them to life for students in London and alumni in Ashland. Traci Johnson '04 echoes countless students who call Ericksen their favorite professor.

"I went out of my way to make his classes fit into my schedule," she said. "We had eye-opening conversations that not only changed the way you read certain pieces, but changed the way you viewed your surroundings in general." While Ericksen loves all literature, Shakespeare is his great passion.

"I want to say all my classes are my favorite, but of course, the one that is the richest and longest running is my Shakespeare course," he said. "I have been teaching it now for four decades and it has always remained fresh."

Ericksen served under seven presidents (Dillin, Bjork, Siemans, Walker, Bull, Henberg, Hellie). He came to Lin-

field when dress was more formal but salary equity, tenure and hiring practices were much less structured.

Eugene Gilden, professor of psychology and long-time friend, said Ericksen has been a voice for moderation and brought a long institutional memory to the table. "He has gone along with things that he didn't want to do, but he understood that sometimes it's important to do things that are right for the institution and for the students.

"He is among the brightest people currently on the faculty. He has a huge range of knowledge about the things he teaches and a phenomenal memory of performances he has seen and plays he has read."

Katherine Kernberger, professor of English, has taught with Ericksen for more than 30 years and called his retirement the end of an era in the English Department.

"He has worked to show students the importance of clear and vital writing and to encourage them to engage the literary text and its historical context," she said.

In May, more than 100 people packed Jonasson Hall to hear Ericksen's "last lecture." With the whimsical title "Waiting for Godot or Obtain from the Brook or Jam Yesterday, Jam Tomorrow, but Never Jam Today," he used the White Queen, Estragon and Vladimir, and a one-line poem to teach lessons about literature and about life.

"'Obtain from the Brook' has curiously enough stuck with me and become a rich metaphor for my life experience," Ericksen said. "The brook of knowledge that runs beside me, that runs through Linfield College, that runs through all aspects of my life, into which I have dipped my bucket, has provided great richness for me on my journey from birth to death...I am enjoying the jam tonight and hope to enjoy the jam tomorrow as well."

— Mardi Mileham



BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

A TRIBUTE TO DAVE HANSEN

Sometime before Christmas, small, random items began showing up in offices around the Linfield College campus – a 1985 Linfield student ID card, a bag of keys from the old College Inn, a student employee of the year trophy and myriad other things. They were left on a chair, slipped under a door, propped up against a desk. No note, no explanation.

And as the gift giving escalated, one office has slowly emptied of more than two decades of possessions.

Dave Hansen, vice president for student services and dean of students since 1988, in a remarkably stark office, will step down from the role this month. An economics professor since 1969, Hansen will continue teaching.

He summarizes the past 22 years as “interesting, educational and rewarding,” and says the most memorable experiences have been beginnings and endings. He is well known for his high-energy comedic presentations to students and parents at orientation, which acknowledge the mixed feelings typical of the transition and bring the audience to both laughter and tears.

Weaving in his love of trivia, he would ask questions such as, “Which happened first in history? Custer’s last stand or the founding of Linfield?” The answer, of course, is Linfield (founded in 1858, and Custer’s stand came later in 1876).

“I really love orientation week and I also love to see people cross the stage at commencement and accept their diplomas,” Hansen says. “Some of those are real success stories that represent a lot of growth.”

Hansen has worked closely with student leaders over the years, including Keith Mays '91, former Associated Students of Linfield College president and now mayor of Sherwood. According to Mays, Hansen provided a solid foundation for young leaders.

“Dave helped put things in perspective and context,” Mays says. “He was always positive, always encouraging,



always smiling. As a result of my positive experience with ASLC, I gave politics a try and I am glad I did.”

As dean of students, Hansen has mastered the calm air of a father figure in dealing with student discipline and crisis situations. Some call him unflappable.

“It’s not that I’m unflappable, I’m just at a loss for words,” he says. “I’ve learned to be a little slower to respond until I’ve had a chance to think things through. The first story seldom turns out to be the whole story.”

Hansen will also step down from his role as “voice of the Wildcats.” For more than 30 years, Hansen has spent his fall weekends as commentator for the football team – he can recall missing only three games.

Frank Bumpus, retired psychology professor and counselor, came to Linfield the same year Hansen did, and the two became friends as well as colleagues. According to Bumpus, Hansen combines the best of the academic and administrative roles.

“Linfield is in Dave’s bone marrow,” says Bumpus. “He personifies this college. He can see the big picture, over historic time and current time, as they relate to each other.”

Does he have plans for his free time?

“No, but my wife does for me,” Hansen deadpans. “I expect I’ll travel, read, be at every practice of every sport at Linfield. I will triple the amount of golf I do... I’ll play three times a year.”

— Laura Davis