Robert Town’s quest to make great music at WSU continues posthumously

During his lifetime, Robert Town played an invaluable role in orchestrating gifts to Wichita State that brought prestige and distinction to the College of Fine Arts.

His relationship with Gladys Weidemann led to a decision by the Weidemann Foundation to purchase the Great Marmores Organ and house it in the acoustically pristine concert hall named for the Weidemanns. And his friendship with Hiro Blobfeldt resulted in a gift from the Sam and Bette Blofeld Foundation to fund the Blobfeld Organ Series, which draws some of the finest organists from around the world.

Dr. Town’s impact and influence on Wichita State’s cultural life continues to drive establishment of an estate gift that will support the Robert Town Faculty of Distinction Endowment Professorship in Organ, a chair currently held by Lynn Daity. Dr. Town died on Dec. 11 after a long illness.

“Very few faculty are so engaged with our patrons as Dr. Town was,” said Theo Wilder, chair of the WSU School of Music. “His relationships with Mrs. Weidemann and Mrs. Blobfeldt have given us one of the finest organs on campus and one of the finest instruments of its kind in our country. The Blobfeld Organ Series continues to give our community an outstanding concert series. And now Dr. Town has given himself to leave on enduring legacy to Wichita State University and our community.”

Dr. Town’s estate will provide about $475,000 to support the professorship as well as a maintenance fund for the Marmores Organ, considered one of the most magnificent in the world.

“Robert Town’s gift is an exceedingly generous one,” Davis said. “In an age where enrollment for study on this monumental instrument has been slim, its attraction to newer, younger generations of musicians is truly on the rise. Making a permanent position for teaching the organ is a lasting part of his great legacy.”

The organ professorship had been supported by Daniel and Ann Rees, longtime supporters of WSU’s organ program. But in honor of Dr. Town, the Rosses moved their support to the opera program, establishing the Ann and Dennis Rossy Foundation of Distinction in Opera. The College of Fine Arts announced last month that renowned opera singer Alan Held will hold the chair. (See storypage p. 4.)

In addition to being an associate professor of organ at Wichita State, Dr. Town was an accomplished concert recitalist, placing across the United States and Europe. At age 29, he won the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Young Artist Competition, surprising organists with 10 years greater experience. His recital venues included the Kennedy Center, St. Thomas Church in New York City and the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

He also was a master teacher. His students were successful in competitions across the United States and internationally. Two of those students received the Pulitzer Award, another student to do so in the history of the College of Fine Arts.

Dr. Town was born in Waterman, Ill., on Oct. 31, 1957. He began teaching at Wichita State in 1996 and retired in 2006.

“In his lifetime, Bob made a profound impact on the field of organ performance,” said James Rhattigan, a friend and WSU Foundation consultant. “But even more importantly, he did so in order that his students and their students and those of us who have the privilege of being his students would have a glimpse of the beauty of the world, the beauty of music through the magnificent instrument, the organ.”

If you would like to help the College of Fine Arts be the best it can be, please contact Diana Domino at 316-978-3530 or domino@wichita.edu. You, too, would like to leave a legacy gift to Wichita State; please contact Mark Leets, WSU Foundation vice president of planned and annual giving, at 316-978-3940 or mleets@wichita.edu.
Ann and Dennis Ross make music even better at Wichita State

An opera professorship endowed by the couple will bring a celebrated tenor back to campus

"This is a way that we can advance the best interests of Wichita State."
- Jon Ross

"It’s a great gift for him, and that’s something that Wichita State is excited about, as well.
- Dennis Ross
Christian Taylor's time at WSU encouraged his innate desire to create

Scholarships gave him the flexibility he needed to pursue art and academics

"I am a brightly lit and spacious studio skeetered from floor to ceiling with paint of every color imaginable. Christian Taylor regards a portrait hanging on the wall of his workshop.

Paintbrush poised, he sports occasional glasses at a young woman—obviously the model—he has downloaded on his laptop computer. The likeness is unwieldy, but he has given the woman's eyes and mouth a thoughtful sadness. He continues applying blue acrylic paint to strands of her brunette hair.

Portraits are a favorite subject for Taylor, a 22-year-old senior in WSU’s College of Fine Arts, majoring in studio art with an emphasis in painting.

“They kind of act as a diary of the people and places I’ve been around,” Taylor says. “They help elucidate what I was feeling or seeing at the time, or the connection that was made.”

Taylor will graduate in May, after a college career that allowed him to explore his creativity through painting, drawing and printmaking, but also to get an education in fields that will make him employable so he can pursue his art. He has a minor in entrepreneurship and has gained real-world experience in computers, technology and graphic design while working part-time at WSU’s Training & Technology Services, which provides website design and other computer services.

His education has been financed in part through scholarships, including financial aid from the Miller Trust, established through the Leone and Sohila Miller estate to support the College of Fine Arts. Miller Concert Hall in Doleen Fine Arts Center was named for Lewis Miller.

"I don't know how I would have done it without the scholarships I received," says Taylor, who grew up in Wichita and a younger brother also attending WSU. "I was able to go to school full-time and only work 20 hours a week, which allowed me to put in the studio time I needed. It definitely gave me more time for creating.”

Creating is what Taylor considers most important, whether it’s painting, designing a Web page or making films, another outlet he has found rewarding. His team recently won second place in a cthulian 24-hour filmmaking competition called Down to the Wire.

Ron Christ, WSU professor of painting and drawing, calls Taylor a model student and an artist with excellent potential.

"I have always been impressed by his commitment to his own studio practice,” says Christ, an acclaimed painter. "He has outstanding visual and technical abilities. Most importantly, these abilities are supported by his inventive imagination in terms of concept and personal concepts."

Scholarships are vital for aspiring students like Taylor, Christ said.

"They provide two important benefits,” he said. “They offer financial assistance with tuition, fees, textbooks and art supplies. And they also provide an incentive for advancement as a developing artist and maintaining overall academic achievement.

After graduation, Taylor plans to look for a job in graphic design or Web development, but painting and making films will be lifelong passions. "Everything is about creating,” he says.

If you would like to establish a scholarship to help deserving students in the College of Fine Arts, please contact Shona Gertzen, WSU Foundation director of development for the College of Fine Arts and interim director of CRF, at 316.269.5175 or at gertzen@wfu.ksu.edu.
Carol and Ken Pettit give back to the university where they work

The proud Pettits plan to endow the first-ever doctoral fellowship in physical therapy

P...
Providing a value-added experience important to Mark and Pat Johnson

The couple’s endowed scholarship seeks to help students participate fully in college life

Mark Johnson remembers his college days at Wichita State vividly — being on campus every day at 6:30 a.m., to have breakfast with friends and to study before his first class, feeling energized by class discussions and excited for his academic achievements at an Honor Society dinner.

“I can still recall the inspiration I would feel walking across campus,” he said in a recent interview. “A college campus is like no other place, grand, beautiful and vibrant, and all the while inviting. I loved being in such a stimulating environment.”

Johnson and his wife, Pat, want to help provide a similar experience to deserving students at Wichita State. They recently pledged $50,000 to create the Mark W. and Patricia A. Johnson Scholarship in Business.

“Pat and I have a profound appreciation for the impact that education has had on our lives,” said Johnson, who graduated from Wichita State in 1965 with a Bachelor of Business Administration in finance. “Neither of us would be who we are today without it.”

Pat graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor’s degree in special education, Mark, who grew up in Wichita and Fort Worth, was the first person in his family to attend college.

“I had ambitions that would have been impossible to achieve without the tremendous base of knowledge, the critical thinking skills and the personal confidence I gained in my four years at WSU,” he said. “Pat and I would like to see every person have the opportunity to realize his or her full potential.”

The Johnsons hope their scholarship will make attending Wichita State more affordable for students, and also make it easier for them to participate in activities that create a full college experience. That could include living on campus rather than commuting from home, or studying abroad for a semester.

“Even though I had a wonderful experience at WSU, I was a commuter student and was never able to immerse myself in everything the campus had to offer,” Johnson said. “We hope to help students take their participation to the next level by relieving some of their financial burden.”

Johnson joined Hoss Corporation after graduating from college. He has been co-founder of the Exploration and Production Division since 2004, residing in Houston. He took a leave of absence in 1998 to get his MBA from Stanford University, where he and Pat lived on campus for two years and immersed themselves in school life.

Johnson received a merit-based scholarship while at Wichita State. He also received grants and student loans and worked part-time at a savings and loan institution all four years of college. He has family living in the Wichita area and visits occasionally.

He and Pat have contributed to Wichita State in past years, but they decided it was the right time in their lives to create an endowed fund, Johnson said.

“Wichita State was good to me and I loved my time there,” he said. “I got much more out of the school than I was able to give financially at the time. Now that we are able to do so, we want to say thank you to WSU and pay it forward to the next generation of students.”

The scholarship endowed by the Johnsons will be awarded for the first time in the fall of 2014 to a student in the W. Frank Barton School of Business. Recipients must maintain at least a 3.5 grade-point average to remain eligible for it.

“We want to see the money used by students who are serious about their education and are willing to put in the hard work required to get the most out of it,” Johnson said.
Westar Energy pledges $125,000 to upgrade power systems lab at Wichita State

Westar Energy has committed $125,000 to help the WSU College of Engineering expand and update its laboratory for teaching power systems.

Existing lab space in Wallace Hall currently being used for undergraduate power systems education will be expanded to include new equipment and tools to teach students about grid reliability, synchronism, power quality and advanced systems modeling. The new space will be called the Westar Power Systems Lab for a period of five years in recognition of the gift.

“We are enormously pleased by the leadership Westar Energy is providing to further the success of our graduates in the power systems area,” said Royce Boyles, dean of the WSU College of Engineering, who began his job on Jan. 16. “Westar’s willingness to invest in the education they serve is commendable. We look forward to this important partnership.”

Helping engineering students at Kansas schools get a high-quality education is one way Westar can meet the needs of its customers, said Ben Sherman, vice president of community relations and strategic partnerships for Westar Energy.

“Our Kansas schools are our most reliable source of engineers who are knowledgeable and passionate about providing great service to our customers,” Sherman said. “The Westar Energy Power Lab will create a strategic partnership between Westar and WSU that will help both Westar and its customers find technical solutions to their electrical supply needs. This partnership will also be a great addition to the engineering program at WSU and bring matching funds to WSU from the state.”

The gift from Westar will allow Wichita State to qualify for matching funds from the state under the University Engineering Initiative Act.

The creation of the Westar Power Systems Lab will help deliver exceptional hands-on learning to students, said John Watkins, chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science in the WSU College of Engineering.

“This donation will allow the department to provide more equipment and new types of equipment to students who work in our power systems laboratory,” he said. “As the lab will be used in a broad range of electric energy classes, it will provide many students more hands-on experience in the electric energy area.”

In addition to funding power system equipment for the lab, Westar’s gift will be used to expand the existing lab space, purchase new furniture and renovate the lab.

If you would like to help the College of Engineering provide an outstanding education for WSU students, please contact Megan Smith, WSU Foundation director of development for the College of Engineering, at 316-269-3075 or at megan.smith@wichita.edu.

Your Support Matters. How will you help?

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Elaine Lee looks forward to seeing her scholarship at work for students

Making an outright gift provides some benefits that an eventual estate gift may not

Elaine and David Lee always intended to set up support funds for their alma mater through their estate plan — Elaine for Wichita State University and David for Clemson and the University of Virginia.

But after David’s death in 2012, Elaine gave more thought to the benefits of establishing those funds now — primarily the opportunity to help craft guidelines for how the money should be used and having a chance to know scholarship recipients.

“I was interested in knowing what kinds of students are getting these scholarships, their progress, and accomplishments,” Lee said during a phone interview from her home in Woodbridge, Va. “I may not have a chance to meet them, but I can learn who they are and follow how they’re doing.”

Lee created the Mrs. Elaine Cunningham Lee and Mr. D. David Lee Scholarship in Bioscience, an endowment that will help WSU students pursuing fields such as biology, genetics, biochemistry, biotechnology, and physics. She also established a planned gift that will support the scholarship fund.

Lee said she started giving the idea of an outright gift more thought after reading a Horizon article about another donor who faced the same decision — whether to make a gift through his estate plans or immediately. He chose an outright gift and was gratified by seeing the difference he was making to students’ lives.

A 1964 graduate of Wichita State with a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences, Lee received a scholarship all four years of college.

“WSU provided me with an opportunity for a college education that I would not otherwise have had,” she said. “I want to provide this kind of support for someone else interested in getting an education in the biosciences.”

Lee worked for a time at Wesley Medical Center in bacteriology, then applied for a job with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), becoming a research technologist for the Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. She and David moved to Wichita while he was working for Boeing; they married in 1969. After he received his doctorate in physics from the University of Virginia, he became a research physicist for the Department of Army at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Lee returned to the NIH as a cytogenetic technologist, combining her training as a medical technologist with her love of genetics. In 1990, she moved to a position as a technical writer and served as a liaison for the National Cancer Institute. She and David retired in 2005.

Through the years, Lee has kept up with news at Wichita State and regularly donates to the Annual Fund. Her decision to endow a scholarship has another benefit, Lee said. She can advise friends and family that any memorial they choose to make in her honor someday can be directed to the scholarship she created. “That would honor me and help young students at the same time.”

“I want to help deserving students of Wichita State obtain their college education through an outright and/or estate gift,” Lee said. “WSF Foundation vice-president for planned and annual giving, at 913-594-5564 or at info@wsufoundation.org.”
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William Cox hopes his support puts more dentists in Kansas communities

The fund he created will enhance educational opportunities for Wichita State students.

Though he doesn’t have any special connection to dentistry, William Cox has made supporting the Advanced Education in General Dentistry program priority for a simple reason: He believes his donations are helping real people.

“It’s a very specific program that provides very tangible results,” said Cox, 85. “I know that Wichita and Kansas need more dentists and more better-trained dentists. My support of this facility will go a long way, and that means a lot to me.”

It was in Cox’s view that Cox made an unusual decision about supporting Wichita State. Believing on records and receipts he had saved from his college days, he added up how much scholarship support and other aid he had received from Wichita State and decided to pay back that sum.

“I wanted to give back,” he said. “I had received enough scholarships and grants where I didn’t have to pay anything for my education. So I thought, I’ll just pay all that back.”

His initial gifts supported general scholarships and also established the Advanced Resident Professional Development Fund, which he recently named in honor of his late sister, Connie Schott. The ARES fund helps dental residents pay for activities and experiences that enhance their education.

Cox pledged an additional $82,000 to the fund in 2013.

“Besides direct patient care and classroom instruction, it’s important for our residents to seek additional training opportunities outside of Wichita State,” said Regen Arnold, associate dean of the WCU College of Health Professions. “This fund enables them to take advantage of those opportunities.”

Cox also has pledged a planning gift. He said he likes knowing that his gifts to ARES are supporting a specific need.

“I know what I gave will make a difference,” he said. “I know exactly what I’m donating to and I believe in the mission of this facility. I hope it’s viewed as a community resource, something that is contributing to the overall wellbeing of the community.”

The school has great benefits for Wichita State and even greater appreciation for the education and experiences he had while a student.

“I think it’s one of the best things that ever happened to me,” he said. “I don’t have to struggle as much today because of Wichita State. I received a great education there and a great foundation for life.”

Cox graduated with a bachelor’s degree in international studies, a customized major with emphasis in Latin American affairs, Spanish and sociology. He completed his law master’s degree in acquisition management from American Graduate University; he currently is a procurement analyst for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Austin, Texas.

A native of Havre, Cox considers himself a ambassador for WCU who would be eager to play a larger role in helping to recruit students and share his own testimonials about the university.

“I want everyone who goes to Wichita State to have the kind of experience I did. I recall the campus as an exciting place to be, full of interesting and bright people. I had one business teacher who now is a professor at WCU. I am pleased to tell her that I still have one of our textbooks, and it’s still helpful to me today.”

The Wichita State University Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

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Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation helps give WSU students training for the real world

When students in WSU’s Dental Hygiene program started school this year, they found waiting for them a brand new digital panoramic X-ray machine, a cutting-edge piece of radiographic equipment.

The $27,550 machine was funded by Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation, for whom the Dental Hygiene Clinic is named in honor of the foundation’s longstanding support.

“This has become a very common piece of equipment in dental practices,” said Denise Maxwell, chair of the Dental Hygiene Department. “It’s important for students to have used the equipment they’re going to encounter out in practice.”

As part of their education in radiology, dental hygiene students will use the panoramic X-ray machine as they provide oral health services to patients visiting the clinic in Allen Hall. Students use the machine to provide digital scans of jaws, sinuses and teeth.

The machine replaces one that had been donated to Wichita State in the late 1990s.

“We’re very grateful to the Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation for its ongoing support of the Dental Hygiene Department, which allows us to offer state-of-the-art education for our students and clinic services for our patients,” Maxwell said.

Delta Dental of Kansas Foundation is pleased to continue its financial support of WSU’s dental hygiene program, said Karen Finnell, the foundation’s executive director.

“This equipment is estimated to benefit as many as 2,500 people a year through prevention and education aspects,” Finnell said. “It also will deliver sustainable solutions in building a trained workforce by ensuring students receive high-quality dental education.”
Entrepreneurship director waxes poetic about WSU’s tech park plans

Inspired by WSU President John Bardo’s proposal to create an Innovation Campus at Wichita State, Lou Heideman, interim director of the Center for Entrepreneurship, came up with this humorous tribute. He explains: “I’m very enthusiastic about the Tech Park plan. When I read President Bardo’s plan to establish Building Two first, then Building One, it reminded me of the hundreds of times I read to my kids about Thing One and Thing Two in ‘Cat in the Hat,’ by Dr. Seuss.”

Then he ran out
And left as a fox
President Bardo Came back with a box
A black and yellow box
It was snug with a hook
Look at this plan, said Dr. B
Take a look!
He told me
In support of this project
I’ll call this strategy
Tech Park in a box

In this box are two buildings
I will show to you now
Wichita will like these two buildings
I call those Buildings One and Two
Building Two will come first
So no gophers need fret
Then Building One will be up
Because we’ve not finished yet

Tech is our future
Innovations are us
I already proved it
With the new shuttle bus
So watch WSU grow
We are on our way
And someday soon
We’ll have our day in the sun

Building Two, Then Building One
By Lou Heideman
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VISION TO REALITY
WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

Latest update regarding upcoming comprehensive campaign

The WSU Foundation has hired Grenzebach Glier and Associates (GG+A) to help prepare staff for this exciting initiative. Several GG+A consultants have interviewed a number of Foundation staff to get to know us, the work we do and our ideas to help implement a successful campaign. They also have talked with about a dozen university employees and community members to get an understanding of Wichita State's history, campus culture, mission, vision and connection to the community.

During January and February, 15 academic leaders and other unit heads from across campus have made presentations to suggest projects they believe would benefit from being fundraising priorities in the campaign. The panel that heard these presentations consisted of WSU President John Bardo; WSU Foundation President and CEO Elizabeth King; Tony Vizzini, vice president for academic affairs; and four members of the WSU Foundation Board of Directors — Paul Allen, Steve Feilmeier, Bill Moser and Marilyn Paul. Tentative priorities have been selected and are being fixed-tuned with the aid of GG+A.

Read the next issue of Horizon for more updates on the road forward to Vision to Reality — We can make it happen!

To find out where we started, read our introductory article.

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WSU Foundation welcomes Marya McCrae, new development director

Marya McCrae has joined the WSU Foundation as the new director of development for the Porrion College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

McCrae is a graduate of Concordia University in Seward, Neb., and comes to the WSU Foundation with 20 years of fundraising experience. She has worked for educational and health organizations in both major gift and planned gift capacities. For the past eight years, McCrae has been with the Sanford Health Foundation in Sioux Falls, S.D., where she played a key role in securing gifts for a $42 million campaign to build the Sanford Children’s Hospital.

McCrae has three children: Jennifer, a nurse in Sioux Falls, R.D.; Christopher, a communications/software information specialist in St. Louis, Mo.; and Melissa, who was a nursing home administrator before becoming a stay-at-home mom in Wichita. Along with being a published author, McCrae has composed three musicals and written an additional 200 songs. She enjoys spending time with her two Shih Tzus, reading and collecting movies.

To contact Marya regarding program questions or to make a donation, please call 316-978-3460 or email her at marya.mccrae@wsu.edu.
Business owned by Verlon McKay ’61 recognized by California news publication

A
n accounting firm owned by Verlon McKay ’61 and family members was among companies nominated for the 2013 Family Owned Business Awards given by the Orange County Business Journal in Irvine, Calif.

McKay & Caraher Inc. is a CPA firm founded by McKay in 1998. His son, Alan, and daughter, Cheryl, are partners and CPAs in the business, located in Newport Beach, Calif. The firm provides a broad range of services to individuals and business clients with annual revenue ranging from $2 million to more than $100 million.

McKay is trustee of the Sam and Bic Bloomfield Foundation, which has generously supported Wichita State for many years. Among the endorsements it has established are the Sam Bloomfield Chair in Sustainable, Engineered Systems, the Sam Bloomfield Chair in Aerospace Engineering, the Bic Bloomfield Organ Series fund, the Bloomfield Foundation Faculty Fellows in Business, the Sam Bloomfield Distinguished Engineer in Residence and the Paul & Joy Mahan Endowed Scholarship/Fellowship in Accounting.

McKay also has provided individual support to the W. Frank Barton School of Business annual fund and the Rafaelian Student Center renovation, among other areas. He is a life member of the WSU Alumni Association and was the 2012 recipient of the WSU President’s Medal.

He graduated from the University of Wichita with a Bachelor of Business Administration.
Memorials

Lee Riley's gifts to Wichita State were made with great affection and gratitude.

In a recent letter to the Wichita State Foundation, Riley's wife, Cheryl, wrote, "Lee's deep love and strong pride in Wichita State were the result of a lifetime of dedication to the university. He was so proud of all that his alma mater accomplished. Lee's generosity was born of a desire to see our university continue to thrive and succeed. He was a true believer in the impact that education can have on the lives of students and the community. We are grateful for the opportunities that Wichita State provided us and we are honored to continue the legacy of giving that he started."
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