

CONTACTING US

NEWSROOM: (541) 346-5511  
 ADDRESS: Oregon Daily Emerald  
 P.O. BOX 3159  
 Eugene, Oregon 97403  
 E-MAIL: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu  
 ONLINE EDITION: www.uoregon.edu/~ode

# PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
 Sarah Kickler  
 EDITORIAL EDITOR  
 Mike Schmierbach  
 NIGHT EDITOR  
 Nicole Krueger

## Bookstore backbones

Two of the people behind the University Bookstore's service have much in common

**W**hat do Robert Canaga and Jim Williams have in common? Things that matter like time in a war, a philosophy, a passion, a commitment to their alma mater and a resolve to give back to the larger community from which they have received so much.

Who are they?

You may not know them personally, but they have affected you — unless you have been able to perform the impossible and have not stepped foot inside the University Bookstore. They may not know you, but believe it or not, they care about you and deeply about the University and its widespread community.

Robert is the stalwart engager responsible for the bookstore's art department, and Jim has been the steadfast, creative hand at the helm of the bookstore since 1976. Both are Vietnam veterans and grew up a leisurely car ride from one another — Robert in Lebanon and Jim on the coast in Taft, now part of Lincoln City. They graduated from this University, Robert in anthropology with a B.F.A. and Jim in business with a marketing focus. Their work is a finely fitting reflection of their educational disciplines, natural talents and passions.

My father has often said that he is one of the few luckiest men in the world because he loved his work, and he was astounded that he got paid for doing what he loved, which he looked forward to every weekday of the 40 plus years he did it. When we were kids, he advised my brothers not to go into the newspaper business. Lowering his register as if to impart an inside scoop, he told them that it was tough, certainly didn't pay well enough and chewed up most only to spit them out. So both of them did, which was my father's point and another for reverse psychology.

Robert and Jim consider themselves members of the lucky few. Such a regard has been instrumental in nurturing the very heart of the bookstore, which is the unwavering determination to serve the customers and thereby the community in the best possible way.

Robert says, "Make your avocation your vacation. If you do what you love, what you love will come to you. Money is tertiary." And Robert loves watching people's eyes light up when they discover the right art tool, when it works for them, and when

they come back in to tell him and to say thank you.

After Robert finished his B.F.A. in 1991, he told himself that if the day came when he said, "I have to go to work," that would be his last day of work at that particular place. He claims that he has never had a day at the bookstore when he has had to go to work. He hasn't had to go to work for five years. Such an attitude offers the kind of confidence where he can tell the customer, "No, you don't want that tool or material. ... This is what you want." It also moves him to say yes to customers. "Yes, we have it. Yes, we can get it. Yes, there are alternatives."

Robert built his own studio and paints every night and sometimes in the morning. He says there are so many wonderful West Coast artists, especially in Eugene and its environs. He loves to network in the art world, making connections and bringing together artists who might not know one another, but should. He enjoys reading, talking and listening about the latest art materials in the industry and takes home everything that comes into the bookstore from the manufacturers to try them out. Robert offers that he is extraordinarily opinionated about, and highly encouraging of, non-toxic practices. Turpentine and paint thinner are banned from his studio.

The bookstore's *raison-d'etre* is stated in its articles of incorporation and by-laws. It is owned by the students, faculty and classified staff of the University of Oregon, and its purpose is to provide the benefit of non-profit purchasing and merchandising to them. The board of directors is composed of students and others who are elected to their positions. It is ultimately responsible for the operation of the bookstore and is Jim Williams' boss.

Since the bookstore's beginning in 1920, there have been only three general managers. Jim Williams began as a stocker while a student. He believed that it was important to do your very best no matter what you undertook because whatever you did had your signature on it, you owned it. His parents inculcated in their children a positive approach to life that helped him cultivate an "eternal optimism" and taught him to see the possible. He says, "If you have positive energy radiating out, you can accomplish amazing things."

Jim found that he loved the retail side of things and that his forte was in organizing and marketing. He was also good with people and enjoyed motivating them. Before he headed to Vietnam, the assistant manager of the bookstore asked him if he had given any thought to a bookstore career. He hadn't but was passed the torch at the age of 28 in 1976. "Why me?" Jim inquired. He was told by the retiring manager, Jerry Henson, that he had seen Jim's potential even while he was a stocker. Jim still sounds a bit incredulous

when recounting the story. Nevertheless, he feels that it was somehow his destiny to take charge of the bookstore, and when he did, he assumed his vocation. The 22 adventurous years of it has been his affirmation.

Jim believes that his leadership has provided stability and continuity to the bookstore but that it is vital to be vigilant against complacency, and so he likes to have the place constantly shaken up. Risk taking is a quality that Jim applauds and encourages in himself and in bookstore employees. By trying new ways and offering new expressions, people are more able to find their gifts even though there is also the increased risk of failure. To fail is only to have risked.

Jim manages from the heart and operates by the tenet of the Golden Rule. He has been known to let one more customer in after closing time because it is that customer whom the bookstore has sought to serve for 78 years. "We are there when they [students, faculty, university community] need us, we do our very best, and we are continually trying to get better."

The desire and ability to give back to the community is vital for both men. Robert and his wife, Linda, have begun a fund at the University to bring visiting artists into the art department. Robert also goes to middle and high schools to teach bookmaking and to instruct in the uses of art materials. His memberships on the board of directors of the Natural History Museum, the Museum of Art and its acquisitions and earned-income committees have been a way of offering himself back to the community.

Jim's environmental work is a major part of his life. When three dams were being proposed on the north fork of the Willamette River, Jim, his fly-fishers group and the writer, composer and musician Mason Williams were instrumental in defeating the plan they were informed was a *fait accompli*. They amassed support against the proposal by staging a concert at the new Hult Center, which proved decisive. Jim strongly believes that a person can make a difference through the use of his or her gifts. He went to D.C. to testify on behalf of the Oregon Rivers Bill and was President of Oregon Trout for four years, which champions the genetic diversity of wild fish. He was also head of the Environmental Concerns Task Force for three years. "I'm green," he smiles.

The next time you are in the bookstore, look these gentlemen up. They are an essential ingredient of the expansive heart and soul of the place. They are about hospitality, and their stories are about grace. No doubt it already is, but wish them a fine day anyway.

Hannah Dillon is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



Hannah Dillon

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Study the contract

This is in response to Jeff Shaw's open letter to University President Dave Frohnmayer (ODE, Jan. 28). False opinions are like false money, struck first of all by guilty men and thereafter circulated by honest people who perpetuate the crime without knowing what they are doing.

With regard to the situation the foreign students are facing due to a drop in their home country's currency, one must look at the structure of the contract that allows them to study here in the first place.

In the issuing of a non-immigrant student visa, more commonly known as an F-1 visa, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service emphatically states that students must have proof that they will be able to support themselves while full-time students in the United States. This proof can be attained in one of two ways. It may take the form of a sponsor who is a U.S. citizen who signs an affidavit of support stating that he or she will support the student in the form of the documentation of funds already held in the full amount in U.S. currency. If the students are now having financial problems, they have technically defrauded the INS, for if their F-1 visa was obtained legally, then their financial support would be covered.

I am myself a foreign student. As well, I am a foreign student from a country with a very unstable currency. I am married to a U.S. citizen and plan one day to become a citizen of this country. One thing I will not do is defraud its government. I have come here with the intention of following the specific INS rules. Any deviation of this would be illegal.

It would appear to me Shaw is guilty of one or of perhaps two things. Either he is asking Frohnmayer and the Nike company to defraud the U.S. government or he has not researched his opinion with the attention it so dependently needs.

I want to remind Shaw of the wise words from a journalist from my home country, Agnes C. Laut: "The ultimate umpire of all things in life is — fact."

Thank you for your attention.

William Holbrun  
 Journalism

CORRECTION

The article, "Frohnmayer asks board to review cases" (ODE, Feb. 2), reported inaccurate information. University President Dave Frohnmayer recommended to the University Appeals Board that they allow Danta Graham-Preston to return to campus while the cases are being remanded. The board meets first on Friday.

DRAWING BOARD

