Damon Keith to Deliver Commencement Address
College Names Honorary Degree Recipients and Other Awardees for 1988

Damon Keith, United States Court of Appeals judge for the Sixth Circuit, will receive an honorary doctor of law degree from Oberlin College at the College's commencement exercises May 25, when he will deliver the commencement address. The other honorary degree recipients this year will be Denyce Graves, Jerry Greenfield, and F. Champion Ward. Francine Toss will receive the Award for Distinguished Service to the Community, and Albert McQueen will receive the Alumni Medal.

Damon Keith has been a United States Court of Appeals judge for the Sixth Circuit since 1977. Earlier, he was chief judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He is most cited for his opinion in United States v. Sinclair, which had to do with illegal governmental wiretapping and is commonly referred to as the Keith Decision. Keith chaired or was a member of several important committees concerning the bicentennial of the Constitution; he was appointed to the committee posts by...

Paula Richman Receives Guggenheim Fellowship

Paula Richman, Hauk Professor of Religion, has won a Guggenheim Fellowship that will enable her to spend eight months next year completing a book about the Ramayana, one of the two most sacred texts for Hindus. Through translations and analyses of Tamil-language tellings of the text, her monograph will consider the religious presentation of three issues: notions of the perfect Hindu state, constructions of "demonic" behavior, and ideals of good wives and sisters.

Having completed most of her research between 1994 and 1996 at archives and libraries in South India and London, Richman will spend only three or four weeks of her fellowship in South India, where she will collect more tellings of the Ramayana from "grandmothers and other great storytellers," she says. She will do her writing in Oberlin.

"I was inspired to apply [for the Guggenheim] by [Artz Professor of History] Marcia Colish," says Richman. "She has always encouraged me in my research and has, herself, received many grants."

Richman has been translating and writing about the Ramayana since 1989, when she began research for Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia (University of California Press, 1991), which she edited. Her work has been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, her Hauk professorship, and an Oberlin College sabbatical. For the spring semester of 1998-99 Richman will teach a new 200-level course that includes a unit on the Ramayana: Indian Religious Epics.

The Ramayana appeals to Richman partly because it is what she calls "a fluid tradition," one that "can absorb new ideas, unlike some other religious canons." As far as Richman knows, no one else has studied the Ramayanas of India's Tamilnadu region as a whole, where the variety in the stories is greater than in the north. One of the tasks she sets for herself is to account for the differences in the tellings.

Other faculty members who have received a Guggenheim include Richard Spear, Jay Professor of Art, for 1987-88; Marcia Colish, Artz Professor of History, for 1989-90; Wendell Logan, professor of Afro-American music, for 1991-92; and Jeffrey Hamburger, former Hauk Professor in the Humanities, for 1997-98.

The John Simon Guggenheim Foundation awards fellowships based on demonstrated accomplishment and strong promise for future achievement.

Richman leans on Ramayana texts to carry out her work.
Faculty and Staff Notes

Donaldson ‘Donald’ Byrd, who taught jazz trumpet at Oberlin between February 1987 and June 1988, is artist in residence at Delaware State University. He gave a concert at the university with the Delaware Brass and others January 28, and recently performed diatonic and chromatic center and Lincoln Center. The Wilmington, Delaware, Sunday News J journal called Donald “one of the most influential trumpeters on the East Coast.”

New Faculty and Staff

Nashville, the Northern Arizona University. Between June 2 and July 7 Richard and master classes at the Sydney Opera House. He gave a second concert at the Debra Bonner Speech Level Acade-

Richard Miller, professor of piano at Oberlin, has taught a course of vocal techn-que, members of the faculty, students, and friends of the College, and paid subscribers. All Oberlin College Office of College Services may be recycled with office paper.

The Observer
The Observer is the student newspaper of Oberlin College, published 17 times a year, is delivered to employees, and mailed to all students on campus. Copies are mailed to former students, certain alumni, and friends of the College, and paid subscribers. The editor welcomes off-campus readers but does not always provide background informa-

Deobhupathi ‘Deo’ Upadhyay, associate professor of biology, will hold a master’s degree from Columbia University, and has additional support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The fellow-

New Faculty and Staff

Bree Banks (Miami University B.A. 1997) is a departmental assistant in the conservatory's dean's office and as-

Transitions

New Faculty and Staff

W. Dean Holdeman, Former Dean of Men

W. Dean Holdeman, Former Dean of Men. W. Dean Holdeman, 81, who worked in the Office of the Dean of Men from 1949 to 1965, died March 9 in Naperville, Illinois. A graduate of the Class of 1938, he began his Oberlin career in 1945 as as-

Willis Ludlow, Former Campus Minister

Willis “Willie” Ludlow, campus minis-

Sylvia Watanabe: Junior Faculty Fellow

Sylvia Watanabe, assistant professor of creative writing, has received a Junior Faculty Fellowship for 1998-99, which will provide her with a one-year leave of absence from her teaching duties and duties in the Graduate School of English. The fellowship is designed to support the young scholar and will be used for research and writing. The recipient will be in residence at the University of Pennsylvania for the Fall semester and at the University of Virginia for the Winter semester.

Honorary...
**Stationary Engineer Fred Adkins Looks Forward to Fishing**

From the top on down, says stationary engineer Fred Adkins, "we've got one of the best groups of guys I've ever worked with." Adkins, who has worked at Oberlin for 46 years, retired at the end of the month. "I never left a place really wanted to leave," he says, but he thinks now "the time's right" to leave Oberlin, while his health is good and he can travel with his wife of 46 years, Isolene. The two plan to "go wherever we want to go." he says. The couple's seven children, "scattered around" (except for Shirley Adkins, ID checker in the student union), offer some destinations. This summer's itinerary also includes trips to Tennessee, Missouri, Mississippi, and Texas.

Born in Kentucky, Adkins has spent most of his work life, and all his married life, in Ohio. He was with U.S. Steel in Lorain for 9 years, until the coke oven shut down then, Aircos in Huron for 13 years, until the company stopped operating in the area, then the Columbus Gas/SNIG plant in Greenings, Ohio, where Adkins was active in the local shop stewards council and the gas plant for 13 years, until the company shut down the facility.

"This was a lot of fun," he conveys. "I was in charge of the heating plant, which also supplies electricity to College buildings. "Twenty-four hours a day you've got to run this heating plant." What will he do on his travels? Fish. "I have a fishing boat," he says. "I fish. I like to fish. I like to fish with my wife, too." Not only do the Adkins fish, but they also make their own recipe of beer-batter fried fish for 108 people. And what will he do when he's not fishing and traveling? "I agreed to help my wife around the house. She's already handed off the jobs she doesn't like."

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**Two New Grants Boost Watershed Education in Area**

By Mark Graham

With recent grants from the Stocker Foundation and the Bill Long Foundation, the Watershed Education Project will soon publish a report on the Black River Watershed and host a bioregional teach-in for area teachers, students, and residents. The Watershed Education Project began in spring 1996 after the Orion Society, a nature-literacy group, began in 1978 after receiving A's from a company he and cofounder Ben Cohen and vice chair of the board of directors of the Ben & Jerry's Foundation, which offers the Ben & Jerry's Foundation, which offers the general public on the World Wide Web. The $750 Bill Long Foundation grant will help fund a bioregional teach-in this coming fall that will feature John Elder, Stewart professor of English and environmental studies at Middlebury College. Elder established the water-education approach to learning about ecology and one's community.

"The teach-in will stand for general layers of the Black River Watershed," says Masi. To raise local interest the group will give the report to school teachers, government officials, and citizens' groups. It will also be available to the public generally on the World Wide Web. The $750 Bill Long Foundation grant will help fund a bioregional teach-in this coming fall that will feature John Elder, Stewart professor of English and environmental studies at Middlebury College. Elder established the water-education approach to learning about ecology and one's community.

"The teach-in will serve as a high-profile, inaugural event" that brings together area teachers, community members, and College students and faculty, says Masi.
Snippets from A Dictionary Of Local [Oberlin] Usage
Compiled by participants in English 339, Fall Semester 1997

Some Notes on the Dictionary
By Robert Longsworth

I first tried assembling a dictionary of local usage in 1989 as an exercise in a course I teach called History and Structure of the English Language, currently English 339.

As a practical task for the class, the purpose was multifold:
- to provide an experiential perspective on the cultural diversity of English usage.
- to heighten an awareness of how linguistic change takes place.
- to offer a case study on the nature, limitations, and problems in constructing a dictionary.

In terms of those objectives, I thought that it worked fairly well; and it has become a fixture of the course. In 1993 Christopher LeCluyse ’95, now a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Texas, produced a carefully researched and edited pamphlet based on the version of the dictionary compiled by the class in 1992. That publication (a Winter Term project for Chris) sold briskly at the Co-op Book Store, but is now out of print. The other versions languish in my files, except for the one excerpted below, the entire dictionary is on line at www.oberlin.edu/~english/syllabi/fall97/english339/dictionary.html.

I suspect that the data may one day have a historical interest: as most faculty and alumni can attest, collegiate slang is both imaginative and evanescent; and these compilations furnish some specific evidence of both those qualities in fine detail.

The entries were subjected to the editorial scrutiny (or, as some students might have thought it, the whim) of the instructor—and occasionally to the editorial views of other members of the class. The result of this project might best be thought of as the introductory sample of words and phrases that were thought by about 40 contemporary students to have some distinctive local flavor.

Robert Longsworth is professor of English.

All kinds of (adv. phrase) an intensifier, roughly equivalent to "very": can be used to modify any adjective or any phrase that acts adjectivally, as in "flying bums are all kinds of good."

Aural Thrills (n.) nickname for courses in music theory for which the official titles are Aural Skills.

beauty-head (n.) a student who is stereotyped as an aesthete, used especially by English majors and professors; in contrast to "theory-head" (q.v.)

Big Daddy Grimm (proper n.) an affectionate name for Robert Grimm, professor of philosophy, used by his students.

bit hockey (n.) term for Computer Science 210 (Computer Organization), used by a student majoring in computer science.

[the] Bunny (n.) a strange and esoteric quasi-religion/philosophy way of life with membership confined largely to certain residents of East Hall—members of the Bunny can be recognized by their use of the sacred Bunny mantra in (appearance similar to) a "victory" sign with two fingers placed to the forehead; also, the deity worshipped by members of the Bunny.

chutes and ladders (n.) a nickname for Mathematics 329, Rings and Fields, widely supposed to be the most difficult course offered in that department; from the name of a child's board game.

[the] clouge (n.) the student lounge in the Conservatory of Music: a slightly derogatory pun, involving the shortening of "con lounge" to resemble the word "down."

collie (n.) a student enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, a form paired with "connie" (q.v.), with the further pun on the name of a variety of dog.

connie (n.) a student enrolled in the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music.

D.G. (n.) a student who lived in the all-female wing of Dascomb Hall during 1996-97, or a student who associated frequently with those who did live there 2. (adj.) characterized by the participation of such students (as "a D.G. party"); an acronym for "Dascomb girl."

freshling (alt. freshling) (n.) a student in the first year of collegiate study; perceived as offering a non sexist alternative to the old-fashioned word "freshman," but without the cumber some ness of "first year;" "freshling" conveys a tone of greater slang usage than "freshling."

F.T.L. (n.) a derogatory term for a person who has received a diploma from Oberlin College but has continued to reside in the town of Oberlin after graduation; an acronym for "failure to leave," presumably from the jargon of space exploration.

gaydar (n.) the ability to detect the sexual orientation of another; a portmanteau term combining "gay" and "radar.

hit (esp. predicate adj.) feeling exhausted after a long weekend or by arduous school work, as in "I'm so hit..."

I got your hot sauce, a phrase, meaning "I know what you mean," imported from elsewhere for use by the seven members of a residence known as Firestorm House, now thought to be spreading in general usage among Oberlin students.

Moons for Goons (n.) jocular name for Astronomy 100 (Introductory Astronomy); or Astronomy 118/Geology 118 (Planets, Moons, and Meteorites); in either case, reflecting a perceived lack of difficulty in the course.

Oberhood (n.) the less affluent part of the city of Oberlin; used by students who live off campus; a blend of Oberlin and hood, a widespread slang term for an urban ghetto.

octagon (n.) name for the cement platform in front of Warner Gymnasium; used, with reference to its shape, especially by students in the Theater and Dance Program and by skateboarders.

[the] Pollock in one's drawer (n. phrase) a bad situation that one tries to ignore; used by preservationists employed in the mendery of Mudd Library; derives from an incident (in june 1997) in which a preservationist discovered, after performing intricate repairs on a book about Jackson Pollock's art, that the work had been upside down—and therefore stowed the botched repair job in a handy drawer.

pomo (n.) a person who studies Postmodern theory; or a person who is associated with such study, based on use of shoulder bags and black and navy blue clothing, with an appearance that is both unpretentious and highly fashionable, a contraction. (adj.) possessing the quality of ostentatious self-consciousness.

resident male (also, sometimes, R.M. (q.v.)) (n.) a heterosexual male (usually) who, because of his constant or long-running association or friendship with a given group of heterosexual women, has been in effect desexualized in the minds of the members of the group. Such social groups often include no more than one male; his participation is accepted as a matter of course, but he is not permitted to indicate a romantic interest in any other member of the group.

R.M. (n.) acronym for "resident male" (q.v.)

Rocks for Jocks (n.) jocular name for Geology 118/Geology 118 (Planets, Moons, and Meteorites); particularly notable for employing the widespread American slang term for an athlete (jock); of "Moons for Goons." (The term has also been applied to Geology 160 [Physical Geology] by a physics major.)

sketch out (v. tr.) to behave in a strange or disturbing way toward other persons; often used, for example, in the form of a past participle, as in "I was sketched out"

sketchy (adj.) tenuous, questionable (mostly used to describe the actions and perceived intentions of other people)

snark (1. (n. intr.) to bitch, to gripe, or to complain; 2. (n.) a complaint)

spicy (adj.) sexy and even a little kinkily without being tawdry; risqué

tone-head (n.) a student who is stereotyped as having an obsession with contemporary literary theory and its jargon, used especially by English majors and professors in contrast to "beauty-head" (q.v.)

ver (inten.) a shortened form of "whatever," used to express scorn, cynicism, or disregard as a response to a statement made by another person.

wack (adj.) inappropriate, offensive, or misguided; used especially of persons and their opinions—as in "his opinions on capitalist patriarchy are wack"

The weather control device (n. phrase) a spire atop the Wright Laboratory of Physics to which some students have been wont to attribute responsibility for producing good weather on occasions that are important for purposes of public relations (e.g., Parents Weekend, All Roads Week)