

COLLEAGUES SHARE PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON FOUR ST. OLAF FAREWELL,

RICHARD BODMAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHINESE

By Robert Entenmann

This spring Richard “Dick” Bodman retires after 25 years at St. Olaf, where he built a strong and viable Chinese program. It’s hard to imagine Asian studies here without him.

When Dick arrived at St. Olaf in 1980, Chinese still seemed like an exotic language to our students. The college had long had ties with



China through its heritage of mission work. Some older faculty members — Ansgar ’34 and Gertrude Sovik, Omar Otterness and Alice Burton — had first-hand experience in China. But in 1980 they were close to retirement, and China had been closed to the United States for most of

three decades. Merle Metcalf, who had introduced the Chinese language to the curriculum in 1973, had also left. Along came Dick to revitalize the St. Olaf–China link. A second-generation China specialist — his father taught Chinese linguistics at Cornell — Dick had spent part of his childhood in Taiwan. For a quarter of a century, Dick drew on his early background and passions to introduce the Chinese language and culture to countless students. He made the exotic familiar and the incomprehensible understandable, opening the door to wonderful friendships and opportunities on both sides of the globe.

In 1985, St. Olaf established an exchange agreement with East China Normal University (ECNU) in the city of Shanghai. Exchange agreements take a variety of forms, from student-to-student exchanges and faculty-to-faculty exchanges to visiting scholar arrangements. The most common element in all agreements is the exchange of students who, on both sides of the exchange, rank the semester or year spent abroad as a life-changing experience. Dick has been central to the ECNU exchange, preparing our students for study, selecting recent graduates to teach there as China Fellows and hosting dozens of Chinese visiting scholars. In 1988–89, the turbulent year of the Tiananmen incident, Dick was a visiting scholar himself at ECNU. He married Lang Hongyuan, from Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, in 1995. (Hongyuan’s sister, Hongyu, was St. Olaf’s first student from the People’s Republic of China.)

Teaching Chinese language, literature and culture were not the only gifts Dick brought to the college. A member of the Fulbright Committee and a keen reader of students’ application drafts, Dick helped St. Olaf achieve its extraordinary success in the program. He also promoted Asian studies outreach, at St. Olaf and nationally. As director of the ASIANetwork China faculty seminar, Dick helped faculty from colleges across the country develop competence in Chinese studies. On campus, he directed the Freeman Foundation faculty seminar, a program of curriculum enhancement and faculty development for non-Asian studies faculty.

Dick will retire to his beautiful home in the countryside near Cannon City, where he will enjoy the company of his wife and their grandson, Benjamin, and his extraordinary library.

Robert Entenmann is professor of history and chair of the Department of Asian Studies at St. Olaf.

JAMES CEDERBERG

PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS

By David Nitz ’73

James “Jim” Cederberg, an accomplished and widely admired teacher and scientist, retires this spring after 42 years as a faculty member in the St. Olaf Physics Department. Jim grew up in the northwestern corner of Kansas, where wheat farming and a strong family fostered many admirable characteristics for which he is known and appreciated: patience, resourcefulness, frugality, a strong religious faith, a love for the land and a curiosity about the natural world. The latter carried him from his one-room rural school all the way to Harvard University, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1963 working with Norman Ramsey (a 1989 Nobel Laureate) on a project that would lead to a fruitful career of teaching and research at St. Olaf.

Jim has taught nearly every course in the physics curriculum. Over the years, students have consistently praised him for the clarity of his teaching and his interest in them as individuals. Jim’s teaching strengths lie in part in his depth of understanding of physics and mathematics and in his ability to size up a problem and quickly zero in on its key issues. Perhaps more important, though, is his kind, generous and unassuming nature.

Jim spent 10 years as Physics Department chair and six as chair of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. He was St. Olaf’s first Grace Whittier Professor of Science, holding that endowed position from 1992 to 2005. Beyond St. Olaf, Jim has been a visit-



ing lecturer, an outside evaluator of physics programs and a founding member of the physics branch of the Council for Undergraduate Research. He spent sabbatical leaves at Duke, Harvard, the University of Washington and the University of Canterbury in New Zealand.

A hallmark of Jim’s career has been his research in the field of molecular beam spectroscopy and his commitment to introducing students to scientific research by inviting them to participate as partners in the project. Jim has mentored more than 70 students in this way, of whom at least 60 have gone on to earn advanced degrees or are in the process of doing so. Jim has published 26 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals — most co-authored with St. Olaf students — and will go out with a flourish this year as he submits four more articles. Jim’s outstanding research work was recognized in 2002 by the American Physical Society, which awarded him its prize for research in an undergraduate institution.

Students’ memories of working with Jim go beyond the classroom and laboratory. He took them to conferences, on canoe trips and to his home to plant seedlings on his wooded land or to enjoy picnics with his wife (and fellow retiree), Judy, and their daughters, Anna and Rachel. Jim’s colleagues applaud his tireless work for the long-term good of the department and the college and are grateful to have had the pleasure to know someone so wise and steadfast and so effective as a leader by example.

David Nitz ’73 is a professor of physics at St. Olaf College.

F R I E N D S

JUDITH CEDERBERG '66

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS

By Paul Zorn

Judith “Judy” Cederberg retires this spring after 39 years on the St. Olaf mathematics faculty. Her unfailing kindness, knowledge, wisdom and experience have touched us all. For decades, present and past department chairs (including myself) have beaten the path to Judy’s office door, seeking her unique blend of good listening, sound advice and common sense. All of us will find her leaving especially painful.

Judy was raised on a dairy farm near Albert Lea, Minnesota; both of her parents had business degrees and had worked in banking before taking up farming. As the oldest of three sisters, Judy was very precociously promoted to the position of her father’s chief assistant. This



high office entailed driving a horse-drawn wagon and a tractor-drawn baler and pitching hay bales to cows. These experiences, along with her parents’ repeated reminders to “use your head, not your feet,” surely helped develop Judy’s trademark

resourcefulness, dependability and get-the-job-done attitude. Farm work may also have sparked her academic career, as she soon discovered that plenty of homework usually meant fewer farm chores.

Judy’s education began in a one-room country school, where in a good year she had two classmates. From seventh grade on she attended school in Albert Lea. The next educational stop was Northfield, where her long St. Olaf association would begin. Here, Judy majored in mathematics and acquired a teaching minor in physics. If such a course of study was unusual for a woman, Judy didn’t know it then. She did her graduate work at the University of Michigan and Duke University, and she spent sabbaticals at the University of Washington in Seattle and the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Judy credits many of her St. Olaf mathematics professors, including Dick Kleber, Loren Larson and Lynn Steen, for helping her begin her own St. Olaf career.

St. Olaf offered Judy yet another important benefit. Here she met her husband, Jim, then a newly minted Harvard Ph.D. and a St. Olaf physics instructor. Their twin daughters, Rachel and Anna, have continued the family’s strong academic tradition: Rachel is associate director of admissions at Colorado College; Anna and her husband, Nate Heard, are both doctoral students at Harvard’s School of Public Health.

Teaching is, in the end, about students. Judy has always known and lived this precept, and generations of students have sensed her commitment and have flocked to her classes. Tenure and promotion at St. Olaf depend on quality of teaching, and the “Cederberg standard” has become the goal to aspire to. Like every born teacher, Judy has set high standards for her students and colleagues and has helped us all to achieve them.

Paul Zorn is a professor of mathematics at St. Olaf and chair of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science.

JO ANN POLLEY '73

PROFESSOR OF MUSIC

By Timothy Mahr '78

As the first full-time woodwind faculty member in the Music Department, clarinetist Jo Ann Polley '73 has had an incredible influence on performances given by St. Olaf instrumental ensembles over the past quarter century. Since arriving in 1981, she has honed her skills as an artist-performer and masterful teacher. She has also been a tireless, effective recruiter: Her success in attracting to St. Olaf some of the finest student clarinetists from across the country is legendary. I recall my predecessor, former St. Olaf Band conductor Miles “Mity” Johnson, telling me, “You’ll never have to worry about the clarinets.” He was right!

Jo Ann earned her Ph.D. in performance, music theory and music literature from Michigan State University and her master’s of music degree from Northwestern University. She is a mainstay within the Twin Cities area as a performer on the clarinet and bass clarinet, appearing with the Minnesota Orchestra, Minnesota Opera Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra and a variety of chamber ensembles. She recently released a CD recording, *French Music for Clarinet and Piano*, with St. Olaf pianist Lori Ronning Folland. Currently, Jo Ann serves as the north central chair of the International Clarinet Association.



A number of Jo Ann’s clarinet students have gone on to very successful professional careers. Karrin Meffert-Nelson '91, now an instructor in the clarinet studio at St. Olaf, recalls meeting Jo Ann when she visited St. Olaf for the first time as a high school senior. “She was welcoming and eager to help me pursue a degree in music and helped guide me through the peaks and valleys of wanting to improve,” says Meffert-Nelson. “I have been fortunate to have been her colleague for the past five years and to see her through the eyes of my experience. It makes me all the more appreciative of the impact she had on my life.”

During the 1983 January Interim, Jo Ann and I shared the St. Olaf Band podium as guest conductors when Mity was on sabbatical. It was readily apparent to me that a formidable force had been added to the faculty. Not only was she a great teacher and clarinetist, she was also a very fine conductor. She proved this again when she was asked in 1994 to take over the reins of the fledgling 47-member St. Olaf Chamber Orchestra. Her visionary leadership and sensitive artistry enabled that ensemble to grow into what it is now — the 82-member St. Olaf Philharmonia, a full symphony orchestra that rivals any college or university orchestra.

Jo Ann and I also share a special bond in that we both married our spouses on August 15, 1987 (one of the hottest days of that summer). Although I was very happy for Jo and her husband, Mark Ulmer, that day, I was also quite jealous that Mity and Myrna Johnson went to their wedding and not ours!

Timothy Mahr '78 is a professor of music and conductor of the St. Olaf Band.