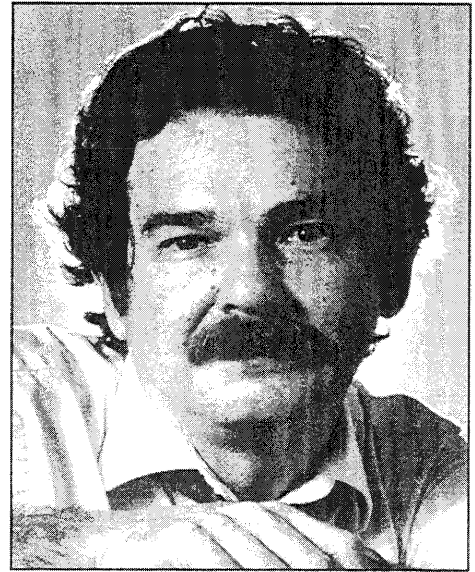


Roger Wetherington died July 26, 2009;
memorial set for Aug. 16 in New York
Contact: Andra Miller <andramm@juno.com>



ROGER V. WETHERINGTON JR., Ph.D.
Photo: 49er Publications Manual 2001

Roger V. Wetherington Jr., Ph.D.

From: 49er History Update 2006

Roger V. Wetherington, Ph.D., a former Cal State Northridge Sundial adviser, was Forty-Niner adviser in the '70s and late '80s.

A former New York Daily News city editor, Wetherington joined the faculty of St. John's University in New York and also worked as a copy editor and national edition editorial writer for The New York Times, after leaving the Forty-Niner.

(In a letter back to the Forty-Niner before its 50th anniversary, Wetherington said all his editorial writing knowledge had been learned from the opinion editors of the Daily Forty-Niner.) He presently teaches at St. John's and is the adviser to its student newspaper this semester.

* * *

Students loved Roger, Roger loved students

From: 49er Publications Manual, A Reflection on 50 Years, 2001;
Nov. 11, 1999, Publisher William A. Mulligan's address

All of us must consider that for 50 years this publication has not missed a scheduled publication during a regular semester. The hard-working Forty-Niner staff produces a new product with every single issue. No one can understand the amount of work that is involved in producing a newspaper unless you have done it. And, unlike no other business in the United States, the paper enjoys protection specifically mentioned in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

With that in mind, I would like to recognize ... [those who] had visions that are taking us into the 21st century. ...

Dr. Roger Wetherington contributed a tremendous amount of his expertise as news editorial adviser of the newspaper. A former city editor of the New York Daily News, he worked on campus here at different times, in the '70s and in the late '80s. In between, he worked at the Sundial [Cal State Northridge]. Dr. Wetherington was a coach of the first rank. A better journalist would be hard to find anywhere in the United States. Students loved Roger and Roger loved students. He left a few years ago to take a job at St. John's University in New York and to write editorials for the national edition of The New York Times.

In a note back to us after he joined the Times, he reminded us that he had never written an editorial in his life and had no experience other than what he had learned from the editorial page editors of the Forty-Niner. Today, Dr. Wetherington continues his teaching at St. John's and now works on the copy desk of The New York Times.

He sends his best wishes on our anniversary.

* * *

Journalism Professor Roger Wetherington Teaches Freedom of the Press in Kazakhstan

From: St. John's University, New York, Jan. 5, 2006

A free press may be something Americans take for granted, but journalism students in the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan were unfamiliar with how it operates, says Professor Roger Wetherington, Journalism Program Director in the College of Professional Studies at St. John's University. He was a visiting Fulbright Scholar last year at the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research, which is part of KIMEP, a 3,000-student, English-language university in the commercial capital of Almaty. Encouraged to go to Kazakhstan by his St. John's colleague, Professor Jay Nathan of The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, who has been there twice as a Fulbright Scholar, Professor Wetherington spent a sabbatical year there, believing that he could make a difference.

And he did. After teaching 60 undergraduate and master's degree students in journalism, and lecturing in the community, he received an award from KIMEP for his efforts on behalf of freedom of the press in Kazakhstan. He not only revamped the university's journalism curriculum, he helped transform the school newspaper from a newsletter to "a pretty professional weekly or biweekly KIMEP Times."

"We covered the fall of the government of neighboring Kyrgyzstan," he says. "Two of my students were in the capital [Bishkek]—one as a reporter for Agence France Presse. Not many university newspapers get stories from their own foreign correspondents. Kyrgyz students at KIMEP also produced a story about local reaction."

Professor Wetherington found that his knowledge of Russian was helpful in managing throughout the year in the ethnically mixed, but overwhelmingly Muslim "of a very relaxed kind" country, although he taught his journalism courses in English. He had also been to the former Soviet Union several times, but not to Kazakhstan.

"The media in Kazakhstan aren't self-supporting," he says. "They depend on the government to print their newspapers and provide financial support. It's difficult for the people to criticize the government [in this former Soviet republic] if they don't have an independent press. I knew that the Communist era was over, but I didn't realize before I went how ingrained Communist ways were in their society. We're talking about 70 years of Communist indoctrination!"

"Non-Western concepts of single-party rule remain strong," he explains, and he's concerned that since his return to the U.S., the Kazakhstan government is cracking down on the various nongovernmental organizations (Soros Foundation, Eurasia Foundation and others) that are trying to nurture democracy.

He Revamps the Curriculum

“The first thing I did [as a professor there] was to revamp the journalism curriculum,” he says, about the three-year old program. “I made the writing courses required. Some of the students slowed us down with their command of English, but others would be ‘A’ students anywhere.”

His most serious problem there was a lack of journalism books at KIMEP. “I arranged over the year to send just about all the books I had in my office—textbooks, journals and reference books—including about 20 copies of the Associated Press Stylebook. I was able to donate my books only because Fulbrighters are allowed to send books through the U.S. Embassy. I left all these books to KIMEP when I left, and they formed the core of a good library for faculty and students.”

The other thing Professor Wetherington did in Kazakhstan was to learn how to hitch a ride. “Private citizens would stop and take you where you wanted to go in their cars for a few dollars.” He described Almaty, a city with a population of one million, as “a beautiful city with lovely parks and architecture,” but adds that “I was never so cold in my life, even though I was at least hundreds of miles south of Russia, including Siberia. In January, I got frostbite on both hands because I continued to dress as I do here. I gained a new respect for hats and gloves.”

A professor of journalism at St. John’s since 1990, Professor Wetherington has been an assistant city editor at the Daily News and a copy-editor at The New York Times.