MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

The College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah has announced the establishment of the Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy.

By the time you receive this newsletter, one of our most important topics such as peace, nonviolence, human rights advocacy for many years, and their daughter, Deb Sawyer. In reference to the direction the center will take, Sawyer says, “The mountain will teach us how to climb it.”

The center is directed by George Cheney, professor of communication and director of the undergraduate minor in Peace and Conflict Studies. As part of the College of Social and Behavioral Science’s Institute of Public and International Affairs, the nonpartisan and nonpolitical center will also work closely with the College of Humanities.

“As our college goes through changes for the new century, the pursuit of peace is near the top of our list,” says Steve Ott, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science. “This new center is an important piece of the puzzle—another way to put social science at the epicenter of responsible citizenship.”

In collaboration with the Institute of Public and International Affairs and the S. J. Quinney College of Law, the center’s inaugural forum will be held March 1 and 2. The forum theme is Values and Violence: Intangible Aspects of Terrorism. Featured speakers will include Martha Nussbaum, professor of law and ethics at the University of Chicago and Amartya Sen, professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University.

Several center programs began fall semester at the U, including a course in human rights and nonviolence advocacy through the political science department. Local, national and international internships, which focus on peace, nonviolence and human rights advocacy, became available for U students starting in January 2007. Students are being recruited through the U’s Hinckley Institute of Politics and the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center. In addition, public and private school teachers will serve as fellows of the center. Materials will be included in center activities, and receive teaching packets as well as access to the center’s annual forums.

“Our family is delighted with the opportunity provided by the University to put this center together. We believe the world needs peace and human rights and people can be educated to meet these universal human goals,” notes Barbara Tanner.

Currently, the center is supporting research fellowships and collecting peace, nonviolence and human rights media, including films, books, recordings and pamphlets, which are available to students. For more information on the new Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy at the University of Utah, call Aleta Tew at (801) 587-3536 or e-mail questions to aleta.tew@csbs.utah.edu or george.cheney@utah.edu.
Before I ever attended the University of Utah, the campus was Earl Skidmore’s playground and recreation center. “I grew up less than two blocks away from campus so you might say I had the best backyard around,” said Skidmore.

Skidmore remembers watching the construction of the Lerner Taylor School of Engineering as a child. One day, he observed men working a steam shovel who invited him to join them and actually operate it.

On another occasion, Earl was riding his bike across campus and noticed a swarm of flies near the anthropology building. Ever curious, he wandered toward the flies and came upon a dead grizzly bear. Earl shouted through an open window asking a professor if he was aware of the bear. The professor replied that the zoo had dropped off the bear to be examined by U students.

“I was always extremely curious and I was fortunate in meeting people that didn’t chase me away,” remarks Skidmore.

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As a U student, Earl majored in sociology and anthropology and earned a minor in zoology and chemistry needed the sciences,” explained Skidmore. “I could read about it one day then go into a lab and put my hands on it the next.”

Upon graduation, two things tore at Earl—going to medical school to work in the oil and gas industry and finally to creating his own company. Just about the same time he began working for Phillips Petroleum, Earl married his college sweetheart, Elise. The two met at the U—she, the “sweetheart of Sigma Chi” and he, a member of the fraternity.

Skidmore’s company, Pressure Vessel Services specialized in handling chemicals and creating a variety of chemical solutions. Three examples illustrate the array of work Earl did at PVS. His company created a wash—a cleaning solution, which is still used by grocery stores to clean produce such as lettuce and spinach. When Boeing constructed the 747, PVS provided a solution in which landing gear struts were primed. Perhaps his most interesting task was test- ing, the company worked with NASA to improve the performance of panels on the space shuttle as it reenters the earth’s atmosphere.

“No one else was doing these types of things when I started the company. Handling chemicals was too big of a risk for big companies at that time,” explains Skidmore.

Earl’s success has circled back to his backyard. Last fall, Earl and Elise gave $542,000 to the College for an endowment that will provide six honor roll scholarships.

“I got so much out of the U. That’s why Earl and I decided to give back,” said Skidmore. “I’ll just one recipient gets themselves prepared for this old life, we’ll be happy. Hopefully they’ll learn to love the school like I do.”
By the time you receive this newsletter, one of our most important events this year will be upon us—the inaugural Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy Forum: Values and Violence: Intangible Aspects of Terrorism, starting in January 2007. Students are being recruited through email and are available to students. For more information on the new programs, please call (801) 587-3556 or e-mail questions to Aleta Tew at (801) 581-8620.

The Hinckley Institute has arranged, and is providing scholarships for, the first annual conference of The Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy. The forum will be held March 1 and 2 at the University of Utah. There is an article about the Center and the Forum in this newsletter. This will be a “world class” gathering of scholars and practitioners. Please join us for any or all of the lectures and panels.

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