The Harrington Lectures: An Historical Overview

A. Truman Schwartz (B.A.1956)
About the Author

Albert Truman Schwartz was born in Freeman, South Dakota, and enrolled in the University of South Dakota in 1952, soon deciding to major in chemistry. Under the influence of excellent teachers, he broadly immersed himself in the liberal arts and sciences, completing minors in mathematics, history, English, and German. This breadth may well have been an asset in his successful application for a Rhodes Scholarship in 1956. Although Truman’s formal study at Oxford University concentrated on chemistry, the environment there was definitely in the liberal arts tradition. That was not the case at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned his Ph.D. in physical chemistry in 1963. After three years as an industrial research chemist, Schwartz heard the siren song of the liberal arts and accepted a faculty position at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He taught there from 1966 to 2004. In addition to his chemistry courses, he co-taught some 20 interdisciplinary offerings with colleagues from at least 15 academic departments. One of his goals has been to integrate chemistry into the liberal arts, especially in courses for nonscience majors. He is the author or co-author of three textbooks for this audience, and he has published over 60 invited or refereed papers in professional journals. Truman’s contributions to education have been recognized by a dozen local, regional, and national awards, but he reports that he values most highly the honorary doctorate granted by USD in 1991 and his Alumni Leadership and Alumni Achievement Awards. Truman is married to his USD classmate, the former Beverly Beatty, and they have two children and four grandchildren. In 2003, the Schwartzes established and endowed the Truman and Beverly Schwartz Distinguished Faculty Award at the University.
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One of the greatest honors that can be bestowed on a faculty member at the University of South Dakota is to be asked to deliver the annual Harrington Lecture. Together, these lectures provide an invaluable overview of the status of the liberal arts and sciences at this university and, more broadly, within American higher education. The lectures also reflect the anxieties and concerns of their authors and their times, and thus we have a mini-history of the past nearly seven decades. Hence, the Harrington Lectures are worth revisiting.

My reasons for this review are very personal. The 1952–53 academic year was my freshman year at USD, and the first speaker in what came to be known as the Harrington Lectures was Arthur McCay Pardee, one of my beloved professors. I have read Pardee’s lecture so many times that I cannot remember whether I actually heard it live, but I have not forgotten its profound effect.

The origins of the lectureship are sunk deep within the College of Arts & Sciences. In the early 1950s, the College Committee on Teaching of the College of Arts & Sciences, chaired by Glen Driscoll of history, proposed the establishment of a “College Lecture,” to be given annually by a faculty member who exemplified the liberal arts and demonstrated exceptional teaching. The charge states: “The lecturer shall be one whose record as a scholar and teacher is in the best liberal tradition, and whose achievement warrants recognition by the entire college.” The speaker is directed to “prepare a non-technical lecture on some phase of liberal education in which he (sic) shall relate part or all of his own subject matter field to the whole concept of the liberal arts.” Elbert W. Harrington, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, enthusiastically embraced and supported the proposal, and it is thus appropriate that the lectureship was renamed after him on his retirement from the deanship in 1967. (Incidentally, Dean Harrington delivered the 1956 lecture; and the non-exclusivity of the male pronoun became obvious in 1958, when Grace Beede presented the sixth lecture.)

It might be instructive to reflect on the state of USD, the nation, and the world in 1953. The enrollment for the first semester of 1952–53 was 1,403: 355 women and 1,048 men. I still have a tuition bill (paid, I assure you), for $42, covering a semester of undergraduate instruction. The president of the university was I. D. Weeks, having been appointed in 1935 as the youngest president of an
American state university and well on his way to becoming the longest serving president of a state university. In 1953, memories of World War II were still vivid, and the United States was engaged in a bloody “police action” in Korea. Indeed, there were a number of Korean War veterans in my class. The year began with Harry Truman in the White House, but he was soon replaced by Dwight Eisenhower. “Ike’s” inaugural address on January 20 was the first such address televised to the entire country.

Many of the early Harrington Lecturers worried about the arms race, and 1953 has the dubious distinction of being the year in which both the United States and the USSR announced their development of the hydrogen bomb. Joseph Stalin died on March 1, and Fidel Castro started a revolution in Cuba. Queen Elizabeth II was crowned, John Foster Dulles became Secretary of State, and Earl Warren was named Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. On the home front, Joseph McCarthy was ardently looking for communists in unlikely places; a fact that did not go unnoticed by future Harrington Lecturers. And on July 31, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare was created.

It was a good year for science and technology, with Jonas Salk’s development of the polio vaccine, the first use of a heart-lung machine in open-heart surgery on a human being, and the publication of Crick and Watson’s paper on the structure of DNA. The first private nuclear reactor went on line in Raleigh, North Carolina, and President Eisenhower gave his “Atoms for Peace” speech. Also in 1953, Charles Townes developed the first maser, a precursor of the laser, and the Kinsey Report was published. Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norkay became the first humans to climb Mount Everest. Elvis Presley graduated from high school in Memphis, Tennessee, Senator John F. Kennedy (age 36) and Jacqueline Bouvier (24) were married, and Barak Obama was 8 years from being born.

The selection committee made a brilliant choice in designating Pardee as the first College Lecturer. In 1953, he was near retirement, after serving as professor and chair of the Chemistry Department, director of the Graduate School and dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. His talk, “The Making of a Teacher,” did not disappoint, and indeed it served as a model for many of the lectures that have followed. It included a little history of his discipline, some reminiscences of his own education and career and an emphasis on the responsibilities of the “teacher-artist” as exemplified by Chaucer’s Clerk of Oxenford.

Pregnant of moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.
The distinguished men and women who succeeded Pardee at the podium constitute a corps of individuals who have provided intellectual and spiritual leadership for the university for well over half a century. Their names are known to a host of graduates. For one thing, the talks reflect the then current state of the disciplines, as viewed by their practitioners: 22 from the social sciences, 22 from science and mathematics, 19 from the humanities and one from the fine arts. But by design, most of the lecturers transcend disciplinary specificity and meditate on the common enterprise called liberal education.

Throughout the entire history of the lectureship, the faculty members selected for this honor and obligation have taken their responsibility very seriously. No summary can do justice to the series and capture the insights, the eloquence and the occasional bafflement that they present. It would be unrealistic for me to attempt such a review. But perhaps a few decidedly non-analytical personal observations and generalizations might prompt some of my readers to turn to the original documents.

The diversity of the Harrington Lectures makes it very challenging to classify or organize them. Nevertheless, I have made such an attempt. Please recognize that this classification reflects what I take from the text. It may not have been what the speaker had in mind, and of course there are many other ways to divide this treasure. Some lectures could be included under several headings, and I have been unable to classify a few. The entire list of lecturers, their disciplines, and their lecture topics is appended.
**Harrington Lectures: General Themes**

**Particularly Strong Emphasis on Liberal Education**

As a group, the lecturers have taken very seriously the charge to integrate their disciplines and the liberal arts, but only four of them have used “liberal arts” or “liberal education” in their titles: Thomas C. Geary, Government, “Liberal Education: Useless or Useful?” (1963), Nancy Noble Skeen, Philosophy, “The End of Liberal Arts Education” (1979), R. Alton Lee, History, “Sputnik and the Liberal Arts” (1982) and Jan Berkhout, Psychology, “Science, Psychology, Politics, and the Liberal Arts” (1998). Similar emphasis on the aims of the liberal arts runs through the paper by Barbara Yutrzenka, Psychology (2006), and Tina Keller, Physics (2013) specifically links her discipline to higher education and the liberal arts and sciences.

**Liberal Education and Ethical Responsibility**

A number of the lecturers reminded their listeners that one of the ends of classical liberal education was to promote virtue. According to Edward Churchill, Zoology (1955), John Milton, English (1983), Norman Miller, Chemistry (1989), Michael Roche, Political Science (1999), Leroy Meyer, Philosophy (2002), and Dean Spader, Political Science (2003), it still is.

**Strongly Autobiographical**

Although the great majority of the lectures are very personal statements, a few of them are strongly autobiographical—a *lebenslauf* tracing the intellectual development of the speaker. I would place in this category the lectures by William O. Farber, Government (1959), Edward Ehrensperger, English (1961), Henry Cobb, Psychology (1975), Sylvester Clifford, Communication (1976), James Heisinger, Biology (1996), Cindy Struckman-Johnson, Psychology (2001), Norma Wilson, English (2004), Churchill and Meyer.
USD Specific
A few of the lectures are very USD specific, notably “As it was in the Beginning: The University of South Dakota” by Cedric Cummins, History (1966). Marjorie Beaty, Mathematics (1965), R. Alton Lee and Heisinger also draw heavily on the local scene.

The Role and Responsibility of Teachers
Not surprisingly, the role and responsibility of teachers has been a popular theme, especially promoted by Alan Clem, Government (1974), Pardee, Churchill and Roche.

Academic Administration
The lecturers who also served as academic administrators, e.g., as dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, typically used the forum to reflect on their administrative experience. Included in this group are Wayne Gutzman, Mathematics (1971), Howard Connors, Mathematics (1972), Donald Dahlin, Political Science (1995) and Elbert Harrington himself. Their perspectives are very revealing.

Politics
Political issues enter a number of lectures, notably those by Herbert Schell, History (1954), Farber, Heisinger, Wilson and Berkhout. Most speakers appear to be further to the left than the average South Dakotan.

Science and the Humanities
At the University of South Dakota, the arts and sciences cohabit in the same college. Some may find these to be strange bedfellows, but I am convinced they belong together, for historical, intellectual and pedagogical reasons. Nevertheless, there have been instances of dissent and science envy, especially when science seemed to be getting the lion’s share of resources, as in the post-Sputnik period of increased Federal funding. These themes appear in four lectures by faculty from the humanities: Grace Beede, Classics (1958), Alexander Hartman, Modern Foreign Languages (1964), Raphael Block, English (1978) and R. Alton Lee. For the most part, the speakers treat their scientific colleagues with respect.
The Limitations of Science
Four lecturers from science departments have been far more critical of their disciplines. Perhaps this is to be expected, because scientists know more about the strengths and weaknesses of science and about its benefits and risks. Therefore, the warnings by Edwin H. Shaw, Jr., Biochemistry (1960), Edgar Rothrock, Geology (1962), Charles Estee, Chemistry (1969) and Gottfried Moller, Physics (1977), are well worth heeding.

The Interdisciplinarity of Science
Two recent lectures emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of scientific research. Both Karen Koster, Biology (2012) and Tina Keller, Physics (2013) begin with fairly technical descriptions of topics from their own disciplines. Koster focuses on plants that exhibit high degrees of desiccation tolerance and Keller explains neutrinos and the search for these ubiquitous but elusive subatomic particles in the former Homestake Mine and elsewhere. Both faculty members skillfully illustrate how multiple scientific disciplines elucidate these problems, and then they find important lessons for the broader intellectual enterprise that embraces the liberal arts and sciences.

Environmental Issues
Harrington lecturers have not neglected contemporary problems, as evidenced by five who addressed environmental issues from the perspectives of their respective disciplines: Theodore Van Bruggen, Biology (1985), Duncan McGregor, Geology (1986), James Schmulbach, Biology (1988), Frank Einhellig, Biology (1991) and José Flores, Mathematics (2008). Schmulbach was especially prescient in his warnings about global warming and the response to it.

Linked Lectures
Two of the lectures I have classified as environmentally focused, those by Van Bruggen and McGregor, were part of a linked triumvirate. The third member in this group was Gilbert French, Psychology (1987), who added human resources to the previous discussions of the biological and geological environments.

Changes in Communication
Three lecturers, all from departments relating to communication, looked into the future and speculated on changes that technology might bring about. They
were Elmer Trotzig, Journalism (1957), Harold Jordan, Communication (1970) and Martin Busch, Communication (1981). All proved to be insightful and perceptive.

**Historical and Cultural Studies**

The strength of history, anthropology and related disciplines at USD is evidenced by a large number of lectures that address what I have loosely termed historical and cultural studies. This is perhaps the broadest of my categories. One common thread is an interest in the human condition and the interactions between and among individuals and cultures. I include Larry Zimmerman, Anthropology (1992), Herbert Hoover, History (1993), Judith Sebesta, Classics (1994), Thomas Gasque, English (2000), Dean Spader, Political Science (Spring 2003), Lawrence Bradley, Anthropology (Fall 2003), Norma Wilson, English (2004), Dona Davis, Anthropology (2007), Timothy Heaton, Earth Sciences (2009) and Randy Quevillon, Psychology (2011).

**Strong Disciplinary Emphasis**

Over the years, the Harrington Lectures have become more focused on the disciplines of the speakers and less general in character. This trend may be explained by the university’s growing expectation for scholarly work and publication. Representative of this trend are the lectures by Carl Sipprelle, Psychology (1980), Herbert Hoover, History (1993), Judith Sebesta, Classics (1994), Michael Roche, Political Science (1999), Thomas Gasque, English (2000), Cindy Struckman-Johnson, Psychology (2001) and Robert Hilderbrand, History (2005). A lecture by Clayton Lehmann, History (2015), is one of the most scholarly; but it is also remarkably interdisciplinary, using the methods and materials from history, mythology, religion, linguistics, literature, archeology, philosophy, geology, geography and fine arts criticism to study the ways in which Greece has been imagined. Lehmann took advantage of technology to incorporate many illustrations which no doubt enhanced his
presentation, but probably created challenges to reproducing it. It is reasonable to expect that future Harrington Lecturers will continue this technological trend.

Artistic and Idiosyncratic
There are a few lectures that stand out as being significantly different in style from all the others. Four out of the five in this category are by lecturers from the arts and reflect their careers as creative writers, poets or theatrical directors: Warren Lee, Theatre (1967), Wayne Knutson, English (1972), John Milton, English (1983) and Brian Bedard, English (2010). Indeed, Bedard’s contribution is a fine short story. But the most idiosyncratic and enigmatic lecture in the entire lot is by George Scott, Chemistry (1984), another of my teachers and a very original individual.

Together, these 64 lectures constitute a treasure trove that captures the nature of learning, the responsibilities of teacher/scholars and their students, the personal enrichment and true vocational preparation that come from the liberal arts and sciences, and the manifold contributions of the men and women who have shaped this great university. The first 40 lectures have been published by the university in book form: The First Score: The Harrington Lectures 1953–72, Dakota Press, 1974; and The Second Score: The Harrington Lectures 1973–1992, University of South Dakota Press, 1993.
Weavers of Fate: Symbolism in the Costumes of Roman Women .................................................................1994
Herbert T. Hoover, History, Research in Historic Sioux Country: The Art of Regional Scholarship ..............1993
Larry Zimmerman, Anthropology, The Past is a Foreign Country .........................................................1992
Grace L. Beede, Classics, The Classics in the Geophysical Year ............................................................1991
Susan J. Wolfe, English, A Question of Semantics ..................................................................................1990
Norman E. Miller, Chemistry, This is Your World ....................................................................................1989
Edward C. Ehrensperger, English, The Odyssey of an English Teacher ..................................................1988
James Schmulbach, Biology, Our Prairie Heritage .....................................................................................1987
Gilbert M. French, Psychology, The Challenge of Science ......................................................................1986
Martin Busch, Communication, Television News: Writing on the Wind ................................................1985
Howard W. Connors, Mathematics, Around the Corner ...........................................................................1984
Wayne S. Knutson, English, A Narrow Escape into Faith .........................................................................1983
Edward Perry Churchill, Zoology, I'd Rather be a Professor ...................................................................1982
Harold M. Jordan, Communication, To Speak as Men .............................................................................1981
Wayne W. Gutzman, Mathematics, Speak to Us of Teaching ...................................................................1980
Martin Busch, Communication, Nostalgic Hamburger ..........................................................................1979
Raphael H. Block, English, The Shoulders of Giants ..............................................................................1978
Nancy Noble Skeen, Philosophy, The End of Liberal Arts Education ......................................................1976
Carl Sipprelle, Psychology, Stereotypes and Alternative Life-styles in Aging .............................................1975
R. Alton Lee, History, This is Your World ..................................................................................................1974
Edward C. Ehrensperger, English, A New Beginning: The University of South Dakota ........................1973
Wayne W. Gutzman, Mathematics, This is Your World ..........................................................................1972
Henry V. Cobb, Psychology, Confessions of a Rolling Stone .................................................................1971
Wayne W. Gutzman, Mathematics, A Narrow Escape into Faith ..............................................................1969
Edward C. Ehrensperger, English, The Odyssey of an English Teacher ....................................................1968
Charles R. Estee, Chemistry, Nostalgic Hamburger .................................................................................1967
Wayne W. Gutzman, Mathematics, A Narrow Escape into Faith ..............................................................1966
William E. Ekman, Mathematics, The Mathematical Tree of Knowledge ................................................1965
Cedric Cummins, History, As it was in the Beginning: The University of South Dakota ........................1964
Marjorie H. Beaty, Mathematics, Progress and the Professor .................................................................1963
Alexander P. Hartman, Modern Foreign Languages, Literature in the Space Age ...................................1962
Edward C. Ehrensperger, English, The Odyssey of an English Teacher ....................................................1961
Charles R. Estee, Chemistry, Nostalgic Hamburger .................................................................................1960
Henry V. Cobb, Psychology, Confessions of a Rolling Stone .................................................................1959
Wayne S. Knutson, English, A Narrow Escape into Faith .........................................................................1958
Wayne W. Gutzman, Mathematics, Speak to Us of Teaching .................................................................1957
William E. Ekman, Mathematics, The Mathematical Tree of Knowledge ................................................1956
Edward Perry Churchill, Zoology, I'd Rather be a Professor ...................................................................1955
Harold M. Jordan, Communication, To Speak as Men .............................................................................1954
Nancy Noble Skeen, Philosophy, The End of Liberal Arts Education ......................................................1953
Donald C. Dahlin, Political Science, *On Garbage Cans, Parking Lots, and Herding Cats* .......................... 1995
Michael P. Roche, Political Science, *A Pedagogy of Compassion and Hope* ............................................. 1999
Thomas J. Gasque, English, *The Power of Naming* ............................................................................ 2000
Cindy Struckman-Johnson, Psychology, *Sex, Violence, and Research* .................................................... 2001
Dean Spader, Political Science,

Lawrence Bradley, Anthropology,

*Sticks, Stones and Broken Bones: Interpreting Traces of a Long Forgotten Past* .................. Fall 2003
Norma Wilson, English, *Millennium Heartbeat* ............................................................................. 2004
Robert Hilderbrand, History, *Out of History, into History* ............................................................... 2005
Barbara Yutrzenka, Psychology, *Reasons, Rights and Raspberries* ..................................................... 2006
Brian Bedard, English, *Dreaming Dakota: Image and Story* ........................................................... 2010
Randy Quevillon, Psychology, *Scholars of Community in the Community of Scholars* ..................... 2011
Tina Keller, Physics, *Counting What Counts* ................................................................................. 2013
Clayton Miles Lehmann, History, *Imagining Greece* ...................................................................... 2015
David Swanson, Biology, *Metabolism Explains (Almost) Everything* ............................................ 2016