

In memoriam: Robert 'Doc' Snyder

by Joshua Ranger - Monday, March 31, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/691/in-memoriam-robert-doc-snyder/>

Dr. Robert “Doc” Snyder, professor emeritus of communications (radio/TV/film) who guided two generations of broadcast professionals as well as provided decades of jazz education to listeners to his weekly radio program, “Doc’s Jazz City,” died Thursday, March 27, 2008, at Froedert Hospital in Milwaukee. He was 79.

Snyder came to what was then Wisconsin State University-Oshkosh in fall 1964 to create a radio/TV/film program where none had existed before. What he ultimately produced was a nationally respected program that has graduated hundreds of students currently working in broadcast and film careers.

In 1966, Snyder created WRST (Wisconsin Radio Station of the Titans) out of a former lumber company office near the Fox River. The station produced occasional programming from a 10-watt transmitter. Today, as a partner with Wisconsin Public Radio, WRST broadcasts 24 hours a day at nearly 1,000-watts as well as worldwide on the Internet.

Throughout his career, Snyder was active in using the power of television in education and won numerous awards and accolades from his peers. His students particularly valued his historical anecdotes that could relate coursework to real-world examples. His excellent memory of names and faces made him a powerful advocate for his students.

Snyder played a large part in the design of his program’s facilities in the Arts and Communications building, areas that remain an important laboratory for broadcast and theatrical efforts of UW Oshkosh students.

Snyder’s voice belonged to the golden age of announcing. For more than 20 years, Snyder read the names of each graduating student at commencement exercises and was the play-by-play announcer at Titan football and basketball games. Despite these past times, Snyder kept a lifelong commitment to his original research: the career of the early documentarian Pare Lorentz.

Through his dissertation and book on the filmmaker, Snyder and Lorentz became fast friends. A product of this friendship is the Pare Lorentz Collection, part of the Polk Library’s special collections department. The collection contains rare prints of Lorentz films, the filmmaker’s library, photographic stills from films and hours of radio and television interviews, including a substantial oral history made with Snyder.

Snyder earned a bachelor’s degree from Wartburg College and a master’s and doctorate degree at the University of Iowa.

Snyder and his wife, Irene, were very active in university activities and groups. Neighbors of the university, the two raised four children in the 500 block of Amherst and watched the neighborhood change from a very family-oriented street to one with increasing more college rental units.

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Most recently, Doc lent his voice to the History of UW Oshkosh video distributed along with NCA accreditation materials.

Robert Snyder is truly one of the legends of UW Oshkosh's recent history; his absence from our community will be sorely felt.

Submitted by UW Oshkosh archivist Joshua Ranger.