

Retiree profile: Doug Jirovetz

by Sheryl Hanson - Wednesday, May 28, 2008

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/932/retiree-profile-doug-jirovetz/>

When Doug Jirovetz joined UW Oshkosh's staff as a computer programmer in 1971, the campus had one computer.

"It was a big box in the basement of Dempsey," said Jirovetz '67 and MBA '78.

Little did he know how small computers would become by the time he retired from UW Oshkosh as director of institutional research in 2000.

Originally from Maribel, Wis., near Manitowoc, Jirovetz came to UW Oshkosh as a college freshman in 1961. In May 1966 — just shy of graduating with a mathematics degree — he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

"I was in my fifth year of college, and I had used up my five years of exemption, so I was told my name would be first on the list the next month," he said. He didn't even apply for graduation at the time, but he did complete that final step during his Army service.

Jirovetz joined the military for two reasons: to avoid being drafted and to have a choice in his specialization. The decision to become an Army medic meant a year of service in Vietnam, where he worked in two field hospitals similar to those portrayed on the popular television show "M.A.S.H."

When his tour of Vietnam ended in 1969, he spent a year working at a burn center in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, before being discharged and returning to Wisconsin. Soon after, he enrolled in a six-month computer training course.

"I decided I would get into the computer business," he said. "I figured the math background should help."

He took the State of Wisconsin employment test and scored better than 100 percent.

"I got bonus points for being a veteran, so I actually ended up with a better than perfect score."

Returning to UW Oshkosh

Jirovetz said he was so broke that he decided to take the first job that was offered. Although he had applied for positions around the state, that offer came from UW Oshkosh.

Soon he was promoted to a programmer/analyst and later to a systems analyst. He also found time to earn an MBA from the University in 1978.

"Except for the time I was in the service, I have been on campus in some form or another since I started

college here in 1961,” he said.

In the mid-1980s, Jirovetz became coordinator of the new data management office on campus.

“No longer were we dealing with designing, coding and programming, but with the outputs of the various systems,” he said.

In the 1980s, the Office of Data Management became the Office of Institutional Research, and Jirovetz became its director in 1998.

During his more than 40 years on campus, Jirovetz was very active in Titan athletics, playing intramural basketball, water polo and softball as an undergraduate and later serving on and chairing the Faculty/Staff Athletics Advisory Committee. He also serves as a member of the Titan Booster Club.

He was active outside of athletics, too. For nine years, he served as a board member of the UW Oshkosh Credit Union, including a term as chairman. As of 2008, he is president of Learning in Retirement, UW Oshkosh’s continuing education program for older adults.

Starting a scholarship

Spending so many years as a student and staff member at UW Oshkosh has inspired him to give back to the University in the form of an endowed scholarship — the Douglas C. Jirovetz Scholarship — for full-time undergraduate students who have completed at least 30 credits and have maintained a minimum 3.0 grade-point average.

Jirovetz said he began the scholarship because he also needed financial help in college.

“My family was, by today’s standards, very poor,” Jirovetz said. “None of us could have gone to college, much less graduated, without the financial support of loans and grants.”

The scholarship, he added, is a small thank you for the many ways UW Oshkosh has touched his life and the lives of his family members. Two of his sisters also earned bachelor’s degrees from UW Oshkosh. More recently, a nephew became an alumnus, too.

Running the bases

Jirovetz’s dedication to his alma mater is perhaps trumped by only one other pastime — baseball. He started playing fast-pitch softball at 14 and continued through his mid-40s.

He also played during his Army days, including a stint in El Paso, Texas, where he was part of a fast-pitch, city league he describes as “top-notch softball.” He even played on a Texas all-star team that played in the Regional Army Tournament.

Over the years, he also has managed some local teams and worked as an umpire.

Now retired, Jirovetz is an avid fan of all Wisconsin teams and personally organizes Timber Rattler

outings for UW Oshkosh alumni, Learning in Retirement and his own family and friends.

“I’m a diehard guy,” he said, laughing. “I’ve got to have a ball game, so I have created my own outing.”

For more information on this year’s UW Oshkosh Timber Rattler outing on Thursday, June 19, visit www.uwosh.edu/alumni/about/calendar.php or call the UW Oshkosh Alumni Relations Office at (877) UWO-ALUM.