Korean to Menominee: Grad hopes to save his language

By Sarah Mann, College of Letters & Science

Corey Schaeffer wants to revitalize his people’s language with another one entirely.

Schaeffer, who graduated from UWM earlier this month with a major in Linguistics and a minor in Japanese, is a member of the Menominee Indian tribe. His life’s goal is to revitalize the Menominee language, which he estimates is fluently spoken by less than 100 people of the Menominee nation’s 8,700 members. To do that, he hopes to help his people adopt a different alphabet – Korean.

“(In Korean, a character) stands for a certain sound,” Schaeffer explained. “You can put together an innumerable amount of sounds, and people can still read it.”

Schaeffer’s grandparents left the Menominee reservation before he was born, and Schaeffer was raised in Milwaukee. He attended Indian Community School of Milwaukee through grade school and learned Menominee vocabulary in his studies. Like most tribe members, however, English was his first language and that could make learning Menominee a bit difficult. Menominee does not have its own alphabet, so Schaeffer had to learn his native words written with English letters.

“The way that you pronounce the words feels awkward. It takes a mental adjustment to read Menominee English characters and think, ‘Oh wait, that sound isn’t the same sound as it is in English, but it’s the same character,’” Schaeffer explained.

Instead, Schaeffer wants to push for his people to use the Korean orthography, where virtually any word in any language can be spelled out by using the specific characters that correspond to the sounds of the word. He was inspired after reading about an Indonesian tribe that was considering adopting the Korean orthography to preserve their own oral language. That same article prompted him to begin learning Korean in addition to his studies in Japanese.

In fact, much of Schaeffer’s education at UWM can be traced to his desire to preserve his people’s language. He initially began taking Japanese to fulfill a language requirement, but found himself admiring the culture and its implications for the Menominee.

“I’d always really enjoyed that to the outside, Japan is this very traditional, very old society, yet is making new technology. It would be really cool if we could figure out how to do that,” Schaeffer said. “Our people, and Native Americans in general, want to find a balance between doing what needs to be done to be a successful economy and people, but also keep all of our traditions.”

Using a new alphabet to teach an old language is just such a balance, and Schaeffer is encouraged by the small experiments he did while he was studying abroad in Korea earlier in his UWM career.
Chances are that the last time you were at General Mitchell International Airport (MKE) in Milwaukee, you weren’t thinking about how much it cost to replace the carpet, or when the sign for Gate 9 was last cleaned. That’s okay – alumnus Timothy Pearson was. He was thinking about those things in such a novel way that he won the equivalent of his industry’s Nobel Prize.

Pearson graduated with his Master’s degree in Geography and a certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) from UWM in 2003 after an injury cut his military career short. Even before he graduated, he was working at MKE first as an intern, then as a GIS Specialist, and now as the GIS Coordinator.

GIS allows users to query data, analyze spatial information, edit data in maps, and present all of the results in a map.

“It now allows you to do so many other things with that piece of data,” said Pearson. “You can analyze it, you can sort it, and you can compare and contrast all at the same time. You can represent it spatially, so you can show it on a map.”

Over the course of his 18-year tenure with Mitchell International Airport, Pearson convinced his bosses to adopt GIS-based software to do things like map the airport’s utilities, its terminal infrastructure, and more. His real triumph, though, occurred four years ago when he oversaw the airport’s implementation of Cityworks, a GIS-centric asset-management system that was originally designed for the maintenance departments of local governments and municipalities. The software allows them to keep track of work orders, labor, equipment, and materials.

What people didn’t realize, Pearson added, was that an airport is basically a small city – it has utilities, maintains pavement and equipment, and rents property just like a municipality does. Mitchell was the first airport in the nation to leverage the capabilities of such a system.

“That changed our entire world. That’s when the work that we were doing here became very significant, and that was probably when I started to really have fun at work,” Pearson said. “Now we’re able to map, for example, lights or signs on our airfield. We can apply costs to each one of those assets – what does it cost the airport to put them in? What does it cost us to maintain those assets? Using the data that we’ve developed, we can track labor, materials, and equipment used on each one of them.”

That applies to much more than lights and signs; everything, from the airport’s navigational aids to the pavement to the carpet in the terminal, can be tracked and managed in the same way.

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JAMS puts a face to Vietnam fallen

By Kathy Quirk, University Relations

When the grainy, black and white photo from a 1966 obituary popped up on her computer screen, UWM junior Amanda Porter reached out and touched it. “Well, there you are at last, Nathaniel Merriweather.”

Porter is one of 27 UWM Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies (JAMS) students helping locate photos and tell the stories of Wisconsin soldiers killed in the Vietnam War.

It’s a project of local significance and national relevance. UWM educates more military veterans than any college or university in Wisconsin. The Faces Never Forgotten program is part of a national effort to find approximately 18,000 missing photos for a digital Wall of Faces planned for the new Vietnam Veterans Education Center at The Wall in Washington, D.C. Organizers hope that photos will be found to accompany all 58,300 names listed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

(The photos found so far are online at http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces.)

Andrew Johnson, publisher of the Dodge County Pioneer in Mayville, is spearheading Faces Never Forgotten in Wisconsin. Jessica McBride, senior journalism lecturer at UWM, got her JAMS 320: Integrated Reporting classes involved after meeting Johnson in February 2015.

“I thought it was an excellent way to teach basic research and storytelling skills, as well as the role the media can play in communities,” says McBride. “I want students to work on stories that matter. It’s moving how they have embraced this cause.”

Johnson has two very personal reasons for getting involved. The Education Center at The Wall also will project photos of the nearly 8,000 service members killed in action since Sept. 11. One of those soldiers is U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Johnson, who was killed in Afghanistan in January 2012. Andrew Johnson says Vietnam veterans, like those in the Patriot Guard, have been supportive of his family as they mourned David’s death. Patriot Guard members helped lead his son’s funeral procession and accompanied Lt. Johnson’s casket up until his burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

“Photos are so important in making a person ‘real,’” Johnson explains, adding that there are few photos of many of the soldiers who fought in the unpopular Vietnam War. Further compounding the problem is the 1973 fire at the National Personnel Records center that destroyed approximately 16-18 million official military personnel files.

When Johnson started the Wisconsin project a year ago, 400 Wisconsin soldiers killed in Vietnam had no photos on file. By the time UWM student journalists got involved in winter 2015, the list was down to 63. Each student took two, and McBride took the remaining seven. When Johnson visited the two classes in late April, the count was down to 18. (As of publication, the count is down to one.)
Lee Ann Atkinson has fought forest fires and marveled at gila monsters. She’s driven jeeps up mountainsides and searched for abandoned mines. She’s not a modern-day Indiana Jones; she’s a District Geologist and Minerals Administrator with the U.S. Forest Service.

Atkinson graduated from UWM in 2003 with her Bachelor’s degree and again in 2005 with her Master’s, both in Geosciences. She went to work for the Forest Service, first surveying gravel pits in the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, and then to her current job in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona. Each national forest, she explained, is divided into ranger districts, and Atkinson works in the Globe Ranger District.

Atkinson’s days are mostly spent working with mining companies extracting minerals from her district.

“When there’s exploration or mining on the forest, the Forest Service is the land management agency. I make sure they’re (the mining company) doing what they said they were going to do,” Atkinson said. “I make sure that any conditions that we applied to the permit are followed through with. I do a lot of field-checking.”

In Arizona, that could mean gold or silver mines, but most active mines are for copper. There are abandoned mines too, mementoes from an older era, and it’s Atkinson’s job to find them. Her training in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) from UWM comes in handy there; she can use maps to find the locations of the old mines and attach data to those points in the map so others have information about the type of mine, its size, and more.

Much of her work is a balancing act between mining companies and others who want to see the land untouched.

“The Forest Service is a land management agency. There’s a lot of different land uses that are going on that are being managed. There are not only minerals, but there’s wildlife habitat and rangeland management. It’s a coordinated effort to keep those things productive and beneficial to everyone that uses it. There’s people out there using the grounds for recreation as well as mineral activity or cattle grazing,” Atkinson said. “Sometimes, people don’t really understand what I do so they don’t see a lot of value in it. I think it’s important because I’m looking at how is this going to help the land.”

One of her many enjoyable job duties is when she can directly help the land by fighting forest fires with fire crews in her district. She completed training and passed a physical test to qualify to ride out on the engines. During one fire, she rode in a helicopter and used her GIS skills to map the the flames for crews on the ground.

While she loved her time at UWM and her current job, Atkinson has some advice for students who are interested in a similar career track: Take classes outside of your area of expertise, because you need more than just geoscience skills.

“Of course, I’m a geologist, a minerals administrator. I use those skills all the time, but one thing I took that was outside of that area was GIS. I’m able to make my own maps. That’s been really helpful,” Atkinson said. “I think if I want to move up, probably a business class or two would have helped. … Probably a couple of biology classes would have been good. I spent a lot of time learning how to identify plants because they’re associated with certain types of soils or geology.”

The classes she did take led to some grand adventures.

“I’ve seen gila monsters several times, which it’s kind of rare to see those. I drive a Jeep, and that was a learning curve. Out here, it’s a dirt road on a mountainside. One side is up the slope and the other side is a steep drop. That took a while to get used to,” Atkinson said with a laugh. “I’ve seen a lot of cool things.”
Every other month, Letters & Science honors a donor who has made a contribution to the college. This month, we salute alumna Diana Ahmad, who earned a Bachelor’s and Master’s in History from UWM in 1974 and ’79. She is now settled as a professor of History at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. She took a roundabout path to get there – by way of the Marshall Islands, Guam, and Japan, among other places. Her journey started in the UWM History Department.

“I think I’m really lucky. I’ve lived all over the world. … I’ve done things that I always wanted to do. I’ve gotten to spend nine years in Asia,” Ahmad said. “My brother says I’ve lived a life people dream about. I had never thought about it because that was just how life went.”

She always knew how her life would go, however. Ahmad laughs when she admits she knew her career and academic interests starting in elementary school. Inspired by her first-grade teacher, Ahmad wanted to be a “teacher of teachers” (“I didn’t know the word ‘professor,’” she said). She also knew that she wanted to study the American West, and that she would attend UWM after growing up just blocks from campus.

She found mentors in History professors Reginald Horsman and David Healy, who fostered her love of the subject and showed her how fun it was. Horsman’s laugh frequently echoed down the hall, and Healy she recalls as having a dry sense of humor.

“I always loved history, but I didn’t know that you could vocalize like (they) did,” Ahmad said. “Those guys were impressive, and I thought, I want to be like them.”

After she earned her Master’s, Ahmad began teaching for the University of Maryland – specifically the school’s Asian Division, which sent traveling teachers to U.S. military bases in Asia to teach the troops during their downtime. For almost nine years, Ahmad traveled the continent, and even earned a black belt in karate in Japan.

“At the time, you got two suitcases and a backpack. That was your life. Your backpack had your school notes in it and your suitcases had all your clothes. And then you had to make room for sheets and pillows,” Ahmad recalled. “It was phenomenal.”

After nine years, she went back to the United States to earn her PhD and began teaching in her current position. She has won numerous teaching awards, had one book published in 2007 and has another due out in 2016, and left an indelible mark on hundreds of students over the years.

Through it all, Ahmad has retained an abiding love for UWM and the History Department, and even returned to Milwaukee in April to deliver the UWM School of Continuing Education’s annual Osher Lecture. She has supported the Friends of History Fund for the past 15 years.

“I know that professors need money to do whatever it is they do – research or even buy cookies for a meeting. And they need to have scholarships,” Ahmad said. “I hate the phrase ‘paying forward.’ You give money because you want them to do good things, and you want them to use it as they need it, and sometimes they need that extra $20 or $100 bucks, and that’s it. I want the quality of the department to remain as awesome as it always was.”

Alumna Diana Ahmad, pictured here with two mules, has donated to the Friends of History Fund for the past 15 years.
Competition takes the cake

By Kathy Quirk, University Relations

Hundreds of students stopped by to eat dessert and learn about other cultures at UWM’s Second Annual International Dessert Competition in April. Among the dessert entries and tasty samples: Tiramisu, Algerian Almond Crescent Cookies, Dracula-Gugelhupf and Persian Sweets with Tea, a big winner at the event.

“It’s a fun way to explore culture as well as languages,” says Kristin Pitt, associate professor of French, Italian & Comparative Literature, who organized this year’s event along with colleagues from UWM’s international culture programs and 21 language programs. “Food is one of the central components of culture, and this event allows students to engage with international studies and languages in a different context.”

With nearly 30 bakers from across campus participating, guests were able to eat their way from Argentina to Algeria to Japan, with stops in between.

Some students mixed up their cultural approach.

Cuauhtemoc Tenorio is of Mexican background and studied Irish Gaelic during his study abroad experience, but he chose to make Romanian Easter bread because his girlfriend was adopted from Romania. The combination of cake, custard and a touch of lemon seemed to be a big hit with tasters and the judges, who awarded it fourth place in the individual category.

Monica Fuentes took first place in the individual contest with her Chocoflan, which she made in honor of her late grandmother. Her recipe is an old family secret that can’t be shared, she says. First place in the team competition went to Fereshteh Bashiri, Mehrnoush Motamedi and Fahimeh Salehpourchadgani for their Persian Sweets with Tea. Bashiri said the delicacy was made in honor of the trio’s recent New Year’s celebration.

For a complete list of winners, judges, sponsors, mouth-watering photos and some recipes, visit the competition’s website, http://bit.ly/1INTbKd.

Studying with Sweden

Assistant Professor of History Christine Evans is teaming up with Lars Lundgren, a professor at Sweden’s Södertörn University, to study broadcasting – but not just any broadcast. The project, funded by a grant from the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, will analyze and compare transnational television infrastructures in Cold War Europe. In other words, the project looks at how different countries handled satellite broadcasts from the end of World War II up until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Evans will help analyze the emergence of satellite systems like Intersputnik, headed by the Soviet Union, and Intelstat, originally founded by the United States, and look at satellite broadcasts in Europe. Evans will help examine how the divided but interacting satellite infrastructures relate to the evolution of broadcasting.

The project should take about three years, and will likely result in at least six articles published in peer-reviewed journals, as well as presentations at several conferences and workshops.
It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Professor Walter England of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry on March 23. Walter was born in the small town of Hallettsville, Texas, on Aug. 23, 1942. Despite having spent most of his life in the midwest of the United States, he remained a Texan at heart.

Walter obtained a BS in Chemistry in 1965 and went on to study for his doctoral degree at Iowa State University, obtaining his doctoral degree in 1973 for work on the bonding in acyclic hydrocarbons. After a brief postdoctoral position at the Colorado State University, he moved to the midwest and obtained a staff position at the Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago. Here he worked on the quantum properties of solids and embarked on his lifelong interest in using quantum mechanical calculations to provide precise models for simple molecular systems.

Walter joined the Chemistry Department in 1978 as an assistant professor in the newly-formed Laboratory for Surface Studies. He continued his work on using quantum mechanics to obtain precise energies for small molecules and collaborated with the organic chemists of the department to help them understand their experimental results. After his promotion to Associate Professor, he continued his work to obtain more precise results for the energies of small molecular systems and developed an accurate perturbation method based on a proposal by the Nobel-prize-winning theorist Richard Feynman.

Walter’s chemical versatility allowed him to teach both freshman chemistry courses and senior-level physical chemistry courses. Over the years he probably taught General Chemistry more than any other faculty member in the department. He also taught both courses in the physical chemistry sequence and virtually all of the graduate physical chemistry courses offered by the department. Walter took on the onerous duty of serving as chair of the department from 2003-06, where he helped steer the department through difficult budgetary times.

Walter was always helpful and supportive of his colleagues and could always be counted on to give sage advice on most matters. He was an extremely talented theorist who strove to obtain increasingly precise quantum-mechanical solutions for small molecules, eschewing the urge to follow others in their quest to develop not-so-accurate solutions to bigger systems. He often argued that “if you can’t do the little things properly, there is no point in trying to do more complex problems.” Walter had strong opinions about most things; his arguments were always carefully and logically thought out, but firmly anchored in his Texan libertarian roots. He was always a great person with whom to discuss any subject on earth. His friendship, advice and wisdom enriched us and will be missed.
Korean to Menominee

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“When I had a firmer grasp on writing the language, I started to write Menominee with Korean orthography. When I went to study abroad in Korea, I asked some Korean people to read these words that were written in Korean orthography, but I didn’t tell them how to pronounce it. When they saw it, they thought it was Korean,” Schaeffer said. “When they said what the word was, they didn’t try to pronounce it any differently … and their pronunciation was really close to what we want for the language. I found that so fascinating.”

He knows there are drawbacks and challenges to his plan – many people Schaeffer has talked to expressed doubts about learning a new orthography or pushed back against using a different culture’s alphabet to read their own language. Teaching a younger generation would probably be easier than convincing older generations to buy into it too, he added.

Even so, Schaeffer thinks the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, especially when he thinks about cultural identity.

“We really struggle as native people in general to find individualism from American society in regards to the fact that we are a different people, just like anybody from South America or Europe or Asia,” Schaeffer said. “If you saw (the language) in some really different orthography, you’d be like, ‘These are definitely different people.’ I feel like we would feel a sense of pride from that.”

Schaeffer’s goal is still a ways off. In the meantime, he’s applying for internships to teach English in Korea. He hopes an internship will help him learn more about teaching languages to others.

GIS at Mitchell Airport

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Using the Cityworks application revolutionized the way Mitchell does just about everything, including completely eliminating duplicate work orders and a number of reports, saving the airport about $150,000 in paper costs alone. The most significant improvement was the automation of reports to the Federal Aviation Administration. In September 2013, MKE became the first airport in the nation to have their automated reporting functions utilizing Cityworks approved by the FAA. Other airports around the nation took notice, and Pearson said he knows of at least 15 other airports, including hubs like St. Louis, Charlotte, and Atlanta, that have adopted or are considering Mitchell’s methods. His efforts have also been recognized elsewhere.

“We received the Exemplary Users Award award from Cityworks last year and about a month later we received the Special Achievement in GIS award from Esri (GIS software company), and that award is given to one tenth of one percent of their clients,” Pearson said. “For a GIS guy, that’s like winning the Nobel Prize.”

Now, Pearson presents Mitchell’s methods at software and aviation conferences. His most recent trip was to Madrid, Spain, to speak at the Esri European Aviation Summit. It’s nice to be needed, but he’s well aware that his time in the limelight is limited – especially when GIS programs with the caliber of UWM’s exist.

“I’m very proud of the awards and the success and the articles, but I’m much happier knowing that a year from now, there will be a dozen of me out there. There will be a dozen other airports doing what I’m doing.” Pearson said. “The way the (educational) programs are set up today, a student coming out of a university like UWM, which has a very, very reputable GIS program, one of the best in the country, (makes it so that) your experience and your understanding, the experience that you get will far exceed and take you further than the degree that sits at the end of your name.”


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**Alumni Accomplishments**

Shannon Dosemagen (MS Anthropology and Certificate in Museum Studies, ’09) has been awarded an Ashoka Fellowship. Ashoka is the largest network of social entrepreneurs worldwide. [http://bit.ly/1KirARE](http://bit.ly/1KirARE)

Tim Elliott (BA Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies, ’07) was hired as a morning news anchor for WISN 12. Catch him on air from 4:30-7 a.m. He was featured for his new job in an OnMilwaukee.com article. [http://bit.ly/1di9m5v](http://bit.ly/1di9m5v)
In the Media and Around the Community

Mark Schwartz (Geography) was chosen to give the 2015 Commencement Address at Lyman Briggs College at Michigan State University. He also received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Lyman Briggs College. In addition to those honors, he was interviewed on WUWM about his spring indices which have been developed into an online tool to track the beginning of spring. [http://bit.ly/1QJTv8m](http://bit.ly/1QJTv8m)

Jessica McBride’s (Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies) JAMS 320 class was featured on WTMJ radio ([http://bit.ly/1Q2GeNo](http://bit.ly/1Q2GeNo)) and Fox6 News([http://bit.ly/1HVgJMj](http://bit.ly/1HVgJMj)) for their work in helping to track down missing photographs of American soldiers whose names are written on the Vietnam Memorial wall.

Anne Pycha (Linguistics) is one of 20 academics from the U.S. and Europe chosen to participate in the 2015 Kavli Scientist-Writer Workshops.

Marc Levine’s (History) study about black unemployment in Baltimore was referenced in a New York Times article detailing the effects of poverty and joblessness in Baltimore neighborhoods that experienced protests. [http://nyti.ms/1JUOE73](http://nyti.ms/1JUOE73)


Luke Jenkins and Deborah Hannula (Psychology) presented “Representational similarity predicts gist-based false recognition in a DRM paradigm” at the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society held in San Francisco.

Karyn Frick (Psychology) presented “This is your brain on estrogen: How estrogen affects learning and memory” for the American Association of University Women, Racine Chapter.

Christine Larson (Psychology), Terri deRoon-Cassini, Lauren Taubitz, and Emily Belleau presented “Neural markers of emotion dysregulation in acute trauma survivors predict chronic PTSD” at the annual meeting of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America held in Miami.

Whitney Qualls, Racheal Wandrey, R. Zander, and Katie Mosack (all Psychology) presented “Generativity among lesbian-identified breast cancer survivors in an online support forum” at the Association for Psychological Science annual convention in New York. At the same conference, “Big personality traits, religiosity, and conservative beliefs are not uniformly related to negative attitudes about gay men in two samples from a mid-size Midwestern city,” was presented by Enrique Gracian, Matthew Austiff, Ashley Billig, Racheal Wandrey, Ed de St. Aubin, and Katie Mosack (all Psychology).

Ciera Lewis and Katie Mosack (Psychology) presented “African American emerging adults’ experiences with mental health care” at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research held in Cheney, Wash.

Noelle Chesley (Sociology) had her research into stay-at-home fathers featured on the Huffington Post website. [http://huff.to/1HsEuvy](http://huff.to/1HsEuvy)


Joel Berkowitz (Jewish Studies) wrote Yiddish dialogue for The Merchant of Venice, starring Jonathan Pryce, currently being performed at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. In May, he presented a paper at a conference on “Yiddish Culture in Past and Present Scholarship: Histories, Ideologies, Methodologies” at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Katherine Rafferty (Communication) presented “You know the medicine, I know my kid: Taking on the parent advocate role while managing a child’s chronic health condition” at the DC-area Health Communication Conference in Fairfax, Va.

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Kathryn L. Fonner (Communication) presented several papers at the European Association of Organizational and Work Psychology Congress held in Oslo, Norway, including “The power of control: Evaluating job autonomy, teleworking frequency, and home-boundary strength in relation to employee well-being”; “How inclusive are work-life policies and practices from the perspective of single/childless employees?” presented with graduate students Michael Blight, Michelle Fetherston and Megan Lambertz (all Communication); and “Supervisory, coworker, and job design support for work-life balance: The impact on employees’ organizational identification and turnover intentions” presented with Blight, Fetherton and Lambertz.

Fonner also presented “The practical paradox of technology: The influence of communication technology use on employee well-being” at the International Communication Association Conference held in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

A number of Communication students and faculty members presented papers and served on panels at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA) Conference held in Madison, Wisc.:

- DeAnne Priddis - Social exchange theory versus investment model: An application in grandparent and college grandchild relationships. (Top Student Paper – Communication Theory Interest Group)
- Kristine Nicolini and DeAnne Priddis - Forging connections: The power of intergenerational mentoring
- Kim Omachinski, DeAnne Priddis, and Kristine Nicolini - Converging student groups: Integrating non-traditional students in the classroom and in the campus community
- C. Erik Timmerman and Sang-yeon Kim - Dynamic communication richness: Refining the work relationship predictors and richness outcomes of channel expansion theory

In the Media (continued from page 10)

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Photos of the fallen (continued from page 3)

Finding photos and information about soldiers dead for 45 years or more proved challenging, so students pored over cemetery records, checked phone directories and yearbooks, looked through memorial sites, and tracked down surviving family and friends any way they could.

Some family members barely remembered a long-dead relative. For others, the pain was still fresh. McBride located soldier Michael Bohrmann’s 95-year-old father in Delafield. He still hasn’t opened the box of his son’s belongings sent home from Vietnam, but he kept Michael’s candy-apple red Corvette. The 20-year-old was killed three days before the end of his tour.

After locating a photo of her first soldier, George Anthony Chapman, 19, in a John Marshall High School yearbook, Porter began looking for 23-year-old Sgt. Nathaniel Merriweather, killed in 1966. With hundreds of people with that last name in Milwaukee, she didn’t have much luck until she began searching cemetery records. She found his grave in Stanton, a small town in Tennessee. Cemetery and funeral records didn’t go back to 1966, but she talked to Stanton Mayor Allan Sterbinsky – a Racine native happy to reconnect with his home state.

With Sterbinsky’s help, Porter made contact with Larry Knapp, an army buddy of Merriweather’s, now living in suburban Chicago, and Jim Ackerman in Stanton, who sent her a copy of Merriweather’s obituary from the brownsville States-Graphic.

Both wrote her encouraging emails. Knapp and Merriweather had been close friends, and Knapp had posted about him on a veteran’s memorial site: “Luco and I cried when we read that you had been killed in this battle.”

“When we started this project, I thought about these Vietnam soldiers as old men, but they were my age, or my brother’s age,” says Porter. Touching that obituary photo of Nathaniel Merriweather on her computer screen, she says: “It gave me a warm feeling, but really sad. I’m grateful that they are going to be remembered and I was part of that.”