

# Thanks, Will

By CHARLYNE BERENS

*Will Norton hired me in 1990, only a few months after he had arrived in Nebraska, to be assistant to the dean. I became full-time faculty in 1995 and have been teaching ever since. I also was editor of the J Alumni News from the time Will founded it in 1991 until the current issue. I'm honored to write this farewell story about Will and beg your indulgence of its personal tone.*

On his first day on campus in summer 1990, Will Norton parked behind Avery Hall, then the college's home. When he came out of Avery some hours later, his car was gone — towed because he didn't have a UNL parking permit.

Nineteen years later, as he prepared to leave UNL for Ole Miss, Will still spluttered about that incident. "My first day on campus and someone has my car towed!" he cried.

That half serious, half joking rant was just one of Will's characteristics that became familiar to journalism faculty, staff and others in the UNL community — along with a tenderheartedness that sometimes brings Will to tears, a laugh that can get totally out of control, a love of puns that borders on the manic, a work ethic and energy that won't quit and a determined vision for what this college can and should be.

Will Norton became the founding dean of the journalism school at the University of Mississippi this summer. He insists he is an ordinary, innocent, straightforward man. His friends and colleagues know better. He is a complex visionary, a leader who has fostered the college's traditional commitment to its students and has pushed, pulled and inspired the program into international prominence.

Will had a hard act to follow. Neale Copple, the dean he succeeded, had taken the program from department to school to college. When Will came, he repeatedly told everyone he wasn't going to change a thing. But, of course, he did. He recognized and built on the foundation Neale had laid for the college. He knew if we didn't keep moving, the world would leave us behind. So he planned ahead.

He also took full advantage of opportunities that dropped from the sky or popped out of the ground in front of him. For example, Oyvind Aadland, then with Gimlekollen University in Norway, was

looking for a U.S. journalism school to help develop journalism education in Ethiopia and Kosovo.

Aadland had attended Wheaton College in Illinois as an undergrad and remembered a professor named Will Norton — Will Norton Sr. Aadland got in touch with the retired professor to ask which schools would be likely partners. Not surprisingly, Dr. Norton told Aadland his son, Will Jr., was dean of the journalism college at Nebraska. Aadland got in touch with Will, who saw the opportunities the partnership presented. Off we went on this new, international adventure to make the world safe for journalism.

While the university's capital campaign of 2000 didn't exactly pop out of the ground, Will took full advantage of the



Dean Norton visits with a student in the newsroom

chance it offered to revolutionize the college's physical facilities. The goal was to purchase the Security Mutual building on Centennial Mall between P and Q streets and get it renovated. Will joined with the University of Nebraska Foundation and community leaders to raise the bucks.

Will was known in the college and elsewhere on campus as a prodigious fundraiser, although he liked to say he thought people gave to the college just because they felt sorry for him. Regardless of the reason, they did give. The building was purchased, renovated and furnished entirely with private money.

We moved here in August 2001, awed by the quality of our new surroundings. We hadn't realized how ratty things were over in Avery Hall until we got to Andersen. Thanks to a major donation from and other donations in support of Harold and Marian Andersen, the building was named Andersen Hall. Even eight years later, Will

still eagerly showed visitors around our college's first-class home.

Under his tenure, faculty numbers increased from 18 to 33, allowing us to offer more classes and more intense instruction. We're among a dozen journalism programs in the nation that are part of the Carnegie Knight Initiative to help journalism schools help their students adapt to the new media world. This fall we'll become part of ABC News' campus news bureaus network. You can see more of Will's achievements at [www.unl.edu/journalism/cojmc/alumni/jnews.shtml](http://www.unl.edu/journalism/cojmc/alumni/jnews.shtml).

As emeritus faculty member Bud Pagel said in a note to Will, "There's not a single category in the college that you haven't lifted to a new level — the building, the equipment, the endowment, the curriculum, faculty publication, faculty governance, the caliber of our students, the caliber of our teachers, our national and local reputation, our sense of institutional pride, our ... well, you know the list."

As Pagel notes, one category that has risen to a new level is faculty research and publication. But it's research and publication on our own terms, not those imposed from on high. This faculty does some traditional academic research but mostly not. We write books and magazine articles, we mount photo exhibits, produce video documentaries and advertising campaigns. And, thanks to Will's tenacity, the university looks at that as evidence that we know how to practice what we teach and says it qualifies a faculty member for tenure and promotion.

Rick Edwards became UNL's senior vice chancellor in 1997, arriving with what he calls "a great spurt of enthusiasm for ramping up high-powered research on campus. ... Will, wily dean that he was, knew to keep his head down in the midst of this administrative storm, because he had a different idea. Will had perhaps the most definite vision for his college of any dean I ever worked with, and it did not turn on the research model." Will kept insisting that "it is quality, not its form, that matters," Edwards said. And that notion prevailed.

But it wasn't just chancellors and vice chancellors who felt the strength of Will's vision and determination. During his 19 years, Will has built strong partnerships with other parts of the campus. Jack Oliva, dean of the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts, said he has appreciated Will's "willingness to forge new and interesting collaborations with others, and of course, in particular, our college. He is a terrific colleague."

Mary Garbacz, head of Strategic Discussions for Nebraska, housed in the J school, seconded that notion. "His leadership style allows individuals to develop their own abilities, providing guidelines as necessary," Garbacz said. "He is able to see individuals' abilities and helps to cultivate those abilities beyond the individuals' wildest dreams."

All that takes time, of course, and at UNL Will was in his office pretty much every day, including weekends — when he was in town. He conscientiously answered his e-mail from airports and hotels and international universities and from various time zones and at various times of day and night. Always full of ideas. Always excited about the next thing. Always in a hurry.

Faculty member Trina Creighton traveled with Will to Ethiopia in 2005. She remembers changing planes in Frankfurt, Germany, in a huge, crowded airport thick with cigarette smoke. Both she and Will were loaded with video equipment and luggage, but the dean snaked his way through the crowds so quickly that Creighton could barely keep up. "Thank goodness he was wearing a red Nebraska baseball cap," she said. "I never took my eyes off that red cap."

Barney McCoy, another faculty member, also has fond memories of that red Nebraska cap. McCoy had landed in Kosovo on a cold, drizzly night, prepared to teach a stint at the journalism program in Pristina. He was waiting outside the airport when "it suddenly dawned on me that I could barely speak any Albanian. I had only a vague idea about how I'd get to my hotel," McCoy recalled.

But then, "From across the airport street, I spotted this bright red baseball cap. It was emblazoned with a big Nebraska 'N' logo and appeared to be floating and bobbing its way through the crowd.

"When the baseball cap was about 12 feet from me, the man beneath it was revealed. He broke through the crowd and welcomed me to Kosovo. He had a big, toothy grin and sturdy handshake. That man was Will Norton. Suddenly, Kosovo became a familiar place."

For Will, Memorial Stadium was also a familiar place. The man fell head over heels for Nebraska football. Not that it always made him happy. In fact, it often led to some of his famous rants about what was wrong or what should be fixed, who should go and who should stay.

Faculty member Joe Starita remembers those discussions: "My conversations with Will ultimately ended, without fail, in discussions of Nebraska football. They may

have begun with a brief overview of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia, wandered across the evolution of rhetoric in ancient Greece, slipped into First Amendment issues pending in Kosovo or slid through the contemporary economic policies of Kyrgyzstan, but in the end, all roads led to Memorial Stadium — where it wasn't unheard of for him to spend hours, sometimes days, analyzing the potential impact of a fifth-year, fourth-string walk-on tight end from Benkelman."

Ah, the energy required to be a Husker fan! But energy is something Will does not lack.

It was when she accompanied the dean to Ethiopia that Creighton realized just how much energy Will has. "He just kept going and going," she said. "I never saw him tired. I never saw him pause. I never saw him turn down an invitation. This man has more energy than 10 men."

Will was known for arriving in Nebraska from Kyrgyzstan or Ethiopia at midnight and showing up in the office before 8 the next morning. Michelle Hassler, assistant to the dean, said she was always amazed by Will's ability to bounce back from international travel.

"One time when we were discussing the difficulty of sleeping on long flights," Hassler said, "he related how he once took four Benadryl to ensure some shut eye. But when it came time to disembark, he had a very hard time walking and — as he described it — he did a slow-motion, high-step march off the plane and into the terminal."

Undoubtedly, Will told that story with plenty of self-deprecating laughter. He loves to laugh and to make other people laugh.

Dane Stickney, an Omaha World-Herald reporter, was a freshman in 1998. He said he thought the dean would be a serious, academic sort of guy. "I did not expect someone who always had a smile on his face, who told jokes, who seemed to love every single second of his job. But with Will, that's exactly what I got. ... What we do is serious, to be sure, but Norton helped remind everyone journalism is supposed to be fun."

So Will Norton has vision, determination, fundraising skill, energy, the leadership abilities of a successful politician and a boundless sense of humor. But those of us who have worked with him will also miss Will, the character:

■ The man who sings hymns — or "There Is No Place Like Nebraska" — as he works in his office, sometimes loudly enough to be heard in the lobby.

■ The man who is constitutionally unable to pass up a chance to make a pun.

■ The man who takes your pile of mail and, while you're talking to someone else, moves it to a different part of the office and then can't keep a straight face when you confront him about it.

■ The man who chokes up when he talks to the seniors at the graduation reception about the education they received here and what they must remember for the future.

■ The man who doesn't cuss and so, instead, has to wave his arms, wrinkle up his face and rant to show his frustration.

■ The man who can get so caught up in something funny that he laughs until he doubles up and can barely breathe.

■ The man who gets teary-eyed just hearing about an act of kindness or compassion.

■ The man who adores little kids and will immediately get on his knees to talk to any little person who comes to Andersen Hall.

■ The man who does an outlandish imitation of the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

■ The man whose office is loaded with photographs of friends and family from, literally, all over the world.

■ The man who simply cares, deeply, about people near and far. As Trina Creighton said, "He has one of the biggest hearts I've ever seen."

Matthew Hansen, now an *Omaha World-Herald* reporter, graduated from the J school in 2003. He remembers an incident from that year's graduation reception:

"My grandmother was there, and Norton always remembered her because she had an identical twin. Except her twin, my great-aunt, had just died. Norton heard that news, and he stood with my grandma for a long time.

"There were a million other people there Norton needed to gladhand. I would've forgiven him had his eyes been darting around, looking for a way out. Instead he held her hand and he listened.

"I'm sure Norton doesn't remember this. I bet my grandma doesn't either. I do, though, and it's weird how a simple act of compassion can stick with you forever."

Compassionate, driven, talented, funny, visionary and sometimes just a little weird. Will is all of that, and it is all of that that we will miss. But as he leaves Nebraska, he takes with him the gratitude of hundreds who have benefitted from his leadership, his humor and his kindness.

Thanks, Will. And we're really sorry your car got towed. ■

# Oh, how the years go by!

## Dean predicts bright future for CoJMC

It seems like just a few years ago in mid-afternoon on a Sunday in August 1990 that I pulled into Lincoln with a trailer full of books and moved into a small apartment on South 17th Street.

I was not a national figure like the three administrators who preceded me. Indeed, faculty wondered what kind of hire this was. I realized it would be difficult, but I wanted to be in Lincoln at the University of Nebraska. Dean R. Neale Copple had established a national reputation for the college. He clearly was the alpha administrator in journalism education, and his college was the place to be.

I knew there had only been three administrators of the school since 1946. Bill Swindler had been director from 1946 to '56 before leaving to join the faculty of the School of Law at William and Mary. Bill Hall had served for 10 years until 1966. His prize hire was a fellow named Neale Copple, and Neale had been director of the school until 1985 when he was named dean of the newly created college.

No matter what others thought, I believed I could be a good steward of the values of the college. I believed in the principles and values Hall and Copple had established.

### THE IDEAL MENTOR

Copple was a mentor. He gladly offered his services and advice because he wanted to improve journalism education. He had helped the Department of Journalism at the University of Mississippi to integrate broadcasting into its curriculum, and he had promoted that program. He had helped me become a member of every major journalism committee on which an educator might serve. At national meetings, we always had talked for hours. He devoted a lot of his time to talking with young administrators.

He communicated a broad vision of



what journalism education should be. He had helped me understand that the goals he had expressed were achieved through an uncomplicated and basic curriculum that was in place at the University of Nebraska and

in the dedicated faculty who had been hired. I took in every word and became a true believer.

That is why, despite faculty anxiety about a change in administrators, I thought my stewardship at Nebraska would be effective. We had led in solid improvements at Ole Miss. So I was sure the faculty eventually would realize that I shared their values and would be successful as their advocate.

### OH, HOW THE YEARS GO BY!

I had first learned of the School of Journalism at UNL during the fall of 1972 after the school had received a glowing accreditation review from a visiting site team chaired by Ed Bassett of the University of Kansas. I had been at the University of Iowa when the School of Journalism had lost its accreditation. In November 1975 two professors, the editor of the *Daily Iowan*, a Ph.D. student and I were sent to Lincoln to see what made the Nebraska school so special.

Unfortunately, we hit a blinding blizzard in Newton, Iowa, and barely made it to Des Moines before the freeway closed. We were able to get a place in a motel for the night, and by the time the roads were cleared we had to head back to Iowa City.

### OH, HOW THE YEARS GO BY!

In the 19 years since that late August afternoon when I arrived in Lincoln, faculty advancement has been significant, and the university is establishing itself as a center of excellence on the Great Plains. Those benchmarks have been met by following the values articulated by Director Hall,

Dean Copple and their faculties.

Indeed, Copple's faculty members were unwavering in their commitment to principles that produced outstanding graduates whose professional achievements enabled the school to continue to advance.

We hired several outstanding graduates of UNL:

**TIM ANDERSON**, former news design editor of *The New York Times*;

**RUTH BROWN**, newspaper and magazine editor and radio staffer who has taught for many years at the University of Nebraska-Kearney;

**KATHRYN CHRISTENSEN**, former managing editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, former director of "ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings" and former vice president of TV for the *Wall Street Journal*;

**CARLA KIMBROUGH**, former associate editor of the *Denver Post*;

**MARY KAY QUINLAN**, former reporter and editor at Gannett News Service;

**JOE STARITA**, former investigative reporter for the *Miami Herald*; and

**SRIYANI TIDBALL**, owner of two advertising agencies in Sri Lanka.

The faculty made other great hires of outstanding professionals with intellectual depth:

**CHARLYNE BERENS**, former editor of the *Seward County Independent*;

**SUE BURZYNSKI BULLARD**, former managing editor of *The Detroit News*;

**TRINA CREIGHTON**, former TV reporter in Omaha;

**MARY GARBACZ**, reporter for newspapers and television stations in Nebraska;

**FRAUKE HACHTMANN**, former staff member in marketing for the Huskers;

**MICHELLE HASSLER**, former reporter and editor at the *Lincoln Journal Star*;

**BARNEY MCCOY**, former TV reporter and anchor in Detroit and Ohio;

**BRUCE MITCHELL**, former videographer with Snitily Carr in Lincoln;

**LUIS PEON-CASANOVA**, former staffer at Nebraska Educational Telecommunications;

**LAURIE THOMAS LEE**, with experience in radio;

**BRUCE THORSON**, former photo chief

of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*;

**JOE WEBER**, former Chicago bureau chief of *Business Week*;

**PHIL WILLETT**, senior art director at BBDO in New York and other major agencies in Boston and New York; and

**SCOTT WINTER**, a former newspaper reporter in North Dakota.

Outstanding faculty members had been hired by Dean Copple and continue to be part of our college:

**RICK ALLOWAY** from KFOR and Bailey Lewis in Lincoln;

**JOHN BENDER**, from small newspapers in Missouri and Kansas;

**NANCY MITCHELL**, from Harte Hanks newspapers in Texas;

**JERRY RENAUD**, from radio stations in Florida and Nebraska;

**LINDA SHIPLEY**, from an ad agency in New York; and

**LARRY WALKLIN**, directly from Ph.D. graduate work at Michigan State.

The faculty members hired during Dean Copple's and my tenure have as much experience and work harder than any faculty I know. They are incredible.

### OH, HOW THE YEARS GO BY!

They have been a source of strength and productivity that is recognized throughout the world, and this June 30 when I turn off the lights and close the door of my office for the last time, I will think of Swindler, Hall and Copple, and, oh, how I will miss this faculty.

Nebraska has been our family's home. Our children have advanced from kindergarten and second grade to graduate from the university and stand on the threshold of professional careers.

I love this place and will miss the sun rising over Centennial Mall as I scurry to a meeting in the Union. I will long remember watching youngsters visiting the neighboring Lincoln Children's Museum running and tumbling in front of Andersen Hall on the grass of Centennial Mall. I will treasure memories of drinking coffee while sitting at the Holman Plaza. I hope to get back every year to savor the mounting tension before a big game in Memorial Stadium on a cloudless October afternoon.

Nebraska has become our identity. When I travel I usually wear a red baseball cap with a white Nebraska "N." Aggressive parents and friends often stop at my chair in airport Red Carpet Clubs and ask how to help their field goal-kicking son or bruising running back get an evaluation from the Nebraska staff.

On the road, I often break out singing "There is no place like Nebraska." It may be on the Great Wall of China, along the walk in front of the Kennedy Library at Addis Ababa University or in a park in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. I love this place, and I am bullish on the University of Nebraska. I believe Chancellor Harvey Perlman has it advancing at an unimaginable pace, and I believe the current capital campaign is going to be exceptionally successful.

I have no doubts that the College of Journalism and Mass Communications is set to move to the next level. The students are among the best on the campus. The faculty is the envy of programs throughout the nation. The endowment is solid, and the facilities are attractive and truly functional.

Now we move on, but Nebraska always will be with us. While I no longer will be dean this fall when classes begin, my thoughts will be with the college and the faculty.

As the years go by, Susan and I will be watching your investment in the future. And we will applaud your peerless commitment to excellence.

We are so proud of this university. We are so proud of this college.

We will never forget you.

Oh, how the years go by!

*"And when the storms came through  
They found me and you,  
Back to back together.  
And when the sun would shine  
It was yours and mine,  
Yours and mine forever."*

— Composed by  
Will Jennings and Simon Climie



## Berens named interim dean

Professor Charlyne Berens was named CoJMC's interim dean, effective July 1.

Berens has taught journalism full time at UNL since 1995. She holds a bachelor's degree from Concordia University in Seward, and an M.A. and Ph.D., both in political science, from UNL.

In announcing the appointment, Barbara Couture, senior vice chancellor for academic affairs, noted Berens' long tenure in the college, her leadership style and strong reputation among faculty and media professionals. Berens' connections with students and strong teaching credentials also are important for the college's future, Couture said.

"Having served as a sequence head in the college, Charlyne has demonstrated her commitment to the success of the college," the vice chancellor said in an e-mail to faculty. "She will bring to the position a broad knowledge of the college's programs, challenges and opportunities."

Berens replaced Will Norton Jr., who is leaving for the University of Mississippi. The search for a permanent replacement for Norton will begin in August.

"I'm honored but also maybe a little bit shell-shocked," Berens said. "I appreciate the confidence the chancellor and senior vice chancellor have shown in me, and I also appreciate the support I've received from my colleagues in journalism. This was not something I sought, but I'm very happy to do whatever it takes to help the college continue to move forward."

Her colleagues lauded the appointment. "Dr. Berens embodies all the characteristics of a great leader," said associate professor Barney McCoy, who taught a class with Berens last year. "She is hard-working and talented, firm, yet fair. She brings people together." »

Professor Joe Starita called Berens “the consummate team player.” She “is superbly well-organized, has a ridiculous work ethic, genuinely loves the profession and the students and has the patience of Job – a critical quality when called upon to oversee a herd of high-strung, overwrought adrenaline junkies posing as journalism professors,” he said.

Students also were pleased. “I think Dr. Berens was a smart choice,” said Emily Ingram, a senior news-editorial and advertising major. “She will no doubt keep things running smoothly and continue the progress made by the college to adjust during a time of great change in our industries.”

Berens has taught news writing and reporting, editing, freedom of expression and writing for online publications as well as a media survey course for majors and non-majors. She helped produce “Renovating the Republic,” the depth-reporting magazine about Germany published in August 2007, and “Fabric as Narrative,” a magazine about international quilting published in 2008. Berens was editor of the journalism alumni magazine from 1991 until this spring and is director of UNL’s Dow Jones Newspaper Fund editing internship boot camp each May.

She taught junior high English before spending 14 years as editor and co-publisher of the community newspaper in Seward.

Her 2006 book, *Chuck Hagel: Moving Forward*, is a biography of Nebraska’s former U.S. senator. She has also written two books about the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature.

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications’ invites nominations and applications for the position of Dean.

A description of the position can be found at: <http://www.unl.edu/journalism/ADjournalism.pdf>.

Applicants must complete the faculty/administrative information form at <http://employment.unl.edu>, using requisition #090355.

Applications should be received by September 30, 2009.

Send nominations and applications to:

Giacomo Oliva, Dean  
Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts  
c/o Jelena Gude at [jgude1@unl.edu](mailto:jgude1@unl.edu)  
Telephone: (402)472-3751  
Fax: (402)472-4929

# Remembering Will Norton

*J Alumni News* asked faculty, staff, students and other UNL administrators to tell us some of the things they especially remember about Will.

## TRINA CREIGHTON FACULTY MEMBER

My fondest memories of our dean began when I had the good fortune to accompany him on my first trip to Ethiopia. That’s when I began to understand the caliber of the man I call Dr. Norton.

We were in the crowded Frankfurt airport, which is huge and thick with cigarette smoke. I’m loaded down with video equipment. Will and I are trying to make our way through the crowd. Thank goodness he was wearing a red Nebraska baseball cap because that was the only way I could keep up with him. He snaked his way through that thick crowd of people so quickly, I was huffing and puffing. I never took my eyes off that red cap; otherwise I would’ve been lost. That’s when I understood how much energy our dean has. He just kept going and going.

He would get up early in the morning, and go full speed all day. His day would start with teaching a couple of classes at the Addis Ababa University. Then he would meet with Ethiopian dignitaries throughout the day, then spend the evening at a professor’s home, having dinner with his or her family, which was where he treated all of us to his “corny” humor. When I would hear one of his puns or corny stories coming, I would groan out loud and roll my eyes. That didn’t seem to bother him, because he never lost a beat, and just kept entertaining the group. I would tell him to his face, “Oh, Will, you have to stop this.” He would laugh and continue on.

I never saw him tired. I never saw him pause. I never saw him turn down an invitation. This man has more energy than 10 men, and he has one of the biggest hearts I’ve ever seen. He truly loves helping and supporting others. He’s amazing. And I will miss him.

## RICK EDWARDS ECONOMICS PROFESSOR FORMER SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Will was already at Nebraska when I arrived in 1997 to become senior vice chancellor. I arrived, as Chancellor James Moeser had arrived before me and two energetic vice chancellors for research after

me, with a great spurt of enthusiasm for ramping up high-powered research on campus. Will, wily dean that he was, knew to keep his head down in the midst of this administrative storm, because he had a different idea.

Will had perhaps the most definite vision for his college of any dean I ever worked with, and it did not turn on the research model. Unlike Columbia and Missouri and some other J schools where all the energy is poured into graduate, even Ph.D., programs, Will’s college would live for undergraduates (and some master’s students), and it would focus on preparing people to practice their craft in the real world of journalism. His faculty would, of course, do research and publish, but Will’s vision meant that the college kept its focus tightly on its students. A bold idea, when all the top brass were shouting “Research!”

But Will kept to his vision, patiently building his college and enlisting support for his insistence that it is quality, not its form, that matters. It meant hiring faculty who didn’t always have traditional academic credentials, but they had something more valuable — real talent and a commitment to seeing their students excel. He enlisted me. Pretty soon Will, who was going upstream when everyone else was going downstream, convinced everyone that his way was right for his college. The stunning record of achievements by the college’s students and the college’s bright reputation today show his vision was right.

## MARY GARBACZ, HEAD STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS FOR NEBRASKA

What first comes to mind is the Hunchback of Notre Dame imitation, which, the first time I witnessed it, totally shocked me and made time stand still.

But there are other things. Just this June Will and I were part of an incredibly intimidating meeting with the chancellor, several vice chancellors, NU Foundation brass and other high-profile folks in which Will was able to pour oil on troubled waters, see “agendas” that no one was supposed to know existed and react immediately to them, creating a favorable outcome for everyone.

I have always said Will is a visionary. Those of us in lower orbits may not immediately understand the distance or extent of his vision, but his insight is always proven to

be correct. His leadership style allows individuals to develop their own abilities, providing guidelines as necessary. He has always had an ability to use his sense of humor to calm ruffled feathers and move issues forward.

He is a leader, mentor and friend. He is able to see individuals’ abilities and helps to cultivate those abilities beyond the individuals’ wildest dreams.

## MATTHEW HANSEN 2003 GRADUATE

I wandered into Dean Norton’s office maybe a dozen times over the years and never left disappointed. I would go in with a question, maybe, or a specific topic to discuss. Within minutes Norton would be bemoaning the fate of Nebraska football, expounding on Nebraska Press Association v. Stuart, opining on Africa, Mississippi, those bastards at Northwestern and Missouri. Usually all of these, all at once.

During one of these visits he repeatedly called a certain former Nebraska football coach, “that midget.” I wondered: Had Will Norton never stood still long enough for someone to measure him?

So Norton sometimes reminded me of Joe Pesci in “Goodfellas” (except without hair) but he also showed a calmer, sweeter side at my final J school banquet. My grandmother was there, and Norton always remembered her because she had an identical twin. Except her twin, my great aunt, had just died.

Norton heard that news and he stood with my grandma for a long time. There were a million other people there Norton needed to gladhand. I would’ve forgiven him had his eyes been darting around, looking for a way out.

Instead he held her hand, and he listened.

I’m sure Norton doesn’t remember this. I bet my grandma doesn’t either.

I do, though, and it’s weird how a single, simple act of compassion can stick with you forever.

Thanks, Hugo.

## MICHELLE HASSLER ASSISTANT TO THE DEAN

I was always amazed at Will’s energy, especially his ability to bounce back after traveling overseas. One time when we were discussing the difficulty of sleeping on long flights, he related how he once took four

Benadryl to ensure some shut eye. But when it came time to disembark, he had a very hard time walking and — as he described it — he did a slow motion, high-step march off the plane and into the terminal.

Andersen Hall won’t be the same place without him. He was a terrific boss who always kept up our spirits with his wonderful sense of humor.

## BARNEY MCCOY FACULTY MEMBER

Unflappable. The word describes Will so well. His zest for life, his optimism, his willingness to do whatever it takes for our college to succeed. I’m not sure the word “no” is in Will’s vocabulary.

Whether it’s leading a UNL delegation to meet with foreign dignitaries or picking up spent cups and plates after a Husker pre-football game lunch, Will has always led by example.

I landed in Pristina, Kosovo, three years ago, to teach in one of CoJMC’s many outreach initiatives. It was a cold, windy, drizzly December night. I was tired after a long trip.

After clearing customs and retrieving my luggage, I stood outside the dank Pristina airport waiting for my ride in a throng of strangers.

It suddenly dawned on me that I could barely speak any Albanian. I had only a vague idea about how I’d get to my hotel.

From across the airport street, I spotted this bright red baseball cap. It was emblazoned with a big Nebraska “N” logo and appeared to be floating and bobbing its way through the crowd.

When the baseball cap was about 12 feet from me, the man beneath it was revealed. He broke through the crowd and welcomed me to Kosovo. He had a big, toothy grin and sturdy handshake. That man was Will Norton. Suddenly, Kosovo became a familiar place.

## JACK OLIVA, DEAN HIXSON-LIED COLLEGE OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

What I always admire about Will is his sincere passion and advocacy for his faculty as well as his focus on providing meaningful, real-world experiences for the students. I also appreciated his openness and willingness to forge new and interesting collaborations with others, and of course, in particular, our college. He is a terrific colleague.

## SHANE PEKNY 2003 GRADUATE

Will is a pretty high-energy leader — always moving, always thinking. But he didn’t hesitate 10 years ago to slow down and discuss with me the future and my place in it. I still value that conversation; Will started me on a path that, given another chance, I would take again and again.”

## CHUCK PIPER EMERITUS FACULTY

Every time I walk into Andersen Hall, I am grateful anew for the difference you’ve made in the lives of our students and faculty. You tend to be self-effacing about your contributions. I think you need to take ownership of your accomplishments and justifiable pride in them. You’ve made a tremendous difference.

I want to thank you for making our students and our faculty realize that they are better than they imagined they could be.

I want to thank you for sharing so many years of your life with us, for sharing your extraordinary children. I especially want to thank you for sharing Susan with us. She is a great lady in the finest old Southern definition of that phrase.

Most of all, I want to thank you for being my friend. You will always have a special place in my thoughts and my heart. I know that you will make the same wonderful difference in the lives of students and faculty in Mississippi that you’ve made in ours.

## JOE STARITA FACULTY MEMBER

My conversations with Will ultimately end, without fail, in discussions of Nebraska football. They may begin with a brief overview of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia, wander across the evolution of rhetoric in ancient Greece, slip into First Amendment issues pending in Kosovo or slide through the contemporary economic policies of Kyrgyzstan, but in the end, all roads lead to Memorial Stadium — where it’s not unheard of for him to spend hours, sometimes days, analyzing the potential impact of a fifth-year, fourth-string walk-on tight end from Benkelman.

Imagine, then, his reaction six years ago when, while supervising a depth-reporting project in Cuba, he encountered a wily socialist sympathizer who had developed a Big Red fever by listening to pirated »

radio broadcasts of Husker games on the isolated island. Imagine the pure joy when he learned that this subversive soul mate also believed that Tommie Frazier got jobbed out of the Heisman. Imagine the unrestrained, unbridled euphoria when he discovered that both the dean of a major U.S. journalism college and a communist cartoonist for a Havana newspaper marched to the same revolutionary anthem: It was time for a regime change in Lincoln. I've never seen him happier.

#### DANE STICKNEY 2002 GRADUATE

At some point early or maybe even before I started at the J school, I heard someone talking about the dean. As a wide-eyed, soon-to-be freshman from little ol' Kearney, I had an idea of what a dean would look like — you know, regal, upstanding, maybe wearing tweed and horn-rimmed glasses. I didn't expect Will Norton.

I did not expect someone who always had a smile on his face, who told jokes, who seemed to love every single second of his job. But with Will, that's exactly what I got. Have you ever met someone who loves what they do more than Will? I don't think I have. As a student — and, I assume, as a faculty member — that's infectious. What we do is serious, to be sure, but Norton helped remind everyone journalism is supposed to be fun. And I think most of us had plenty of fun — with the obvious exception of photo J.

But Will's not one-dimensional. Anyone who's passed through the J school recently knows it's highly regarded nationally. Its students — many times smalltown Nebraskans — tackle international issues. Will deserves a whole bunch of credit for that. His efforts have made my degree more valuable. (As long as newspapers continue to, you know, exist.)

I am truly forever indebted to Will Norton. Not for academics. Not for his sunny outlook on life. But for getting the J school moved from Avery Hall to Andersen Hall. I only wish he'd moved a little faster. I had to spend two years in Avery Hall. As much as I love prison-issue metal classroom doors, that place wasn't exactly high class, if you know what I mean.

But, of course, leave it to Will to make us happy. Despite all those smiles, I'm sad to see him go.

#### ADAM WAGLER FACULTY MEMBER

The best/worst pun I've heard was

when Dean Norton asked Mary and me if we had heard about the cure for the swine flu? When he got nothing from us but puzzled looks, he informed us that it was oinkment.

#### LARRY WALKLIN FACULTY MEMBER

Will has always had an interest in acquainting current students with the mass media world "before they hit the earth" by preserving the "tools of the business" with the Andersen Hall displays [of antique equipment]. To the best of my knowledge there are relatively few university JMC programs that blend high tech with history.

#### STEVE WALLER, DEAN COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE/NATURAL RESOURCES

Unique to the "International Punters of the World" (an informal organization which must claim Will as one of the charter members) and as a tribute to Will's versatility and range in "punning," all of his puns qualify as his worst — in fact, they are all uniformly witty and bad. I am convinced that the new in phrase "my bad" was actually created as a closer for every one of Will's puns.

## The Norton Era

Will Norton became dean of the J school in 1990. Following are some of the highlights of his tenure.

- Through the university's capital campaign, an insurance company's building was purchased, renovated, furnished and equipped for the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at a cost of slightly more than \$7 million. The college moved to Andersen Hall on Centennial Mall in 2001.
- The full-time faculty increased from 18 to 33. That does not include the teaching positions for Business Communications and Technical Communications.
- The college's endowment increased more than 2,000 percent before the current economic downturn. Not all of that endowment is with the University of Nebraska Foundation. Some remains in banks or other foundations but is committed for college use.
- The faculty voted in 2004 to restructure the college by eliminating departments. The intent was to create an administrative structure that more readily deals with convergence.
- Departmental and college staffs merged into a business center operation in the early 1990s.
- Faculty members with strong professional and intellectual credentials were hired, and their scholarly production has enhanced the reputation of the college.
- A sophisticated distance-learning program was established with a significant number of students earning M.A. degrees without taking classes on the campus.
- Graduate program specializations were added, and graduate enrollment increased significantly.
- Service to the state media increased and intensified. Beginning reporting students do reporting for two newspapers each semester, and students regularly do depth reports for newspapers in the western part of the state.
- Work with the Nebraska Press Association and the Nebraska Broadcasters Association has intensified. For example, distance-learning workshops are offered to members of the Nebraska Press Association and the Nebraska Broadcasters Association.
- A professional advisory group was established to help the college evaluate graduating seniors.
- *J Alumni News* magazine has been published for more than 18 years.
- A public relations emphasis was estab-

#### JUDY YECK OFFICE STAFF MEMBER

I remember Will's walking around back by his office and elsewhere singing, in a deep voice, "There is no place like Nebraska." He was so easy to work for. Anytime I said he had a phone call, he took it. When I said he needed to see a person, he did so. He took time out of his busy schedule, along with two other professors, to nominate me for the Floyd Oldt Sliver Pen Award, and I won. He also took the time to attend the award ceremony. Outside of work he came to my nephew's organ recital, my birthday party in Wilber (ate the Czech

sausage) and attended my father's funeral. Through Will, I became good friends with Susan, and I will miss the Christmas gifts from Will, which I am sure she picked out.

#### VICKY WHEELER BUSINESS MANAGER

I had been told that I had a growth in my lung, which doctors wanted to remove. I found out on a Thursday, and the surgery was scheduled the following Tuesday. The surgery went fine, the growth was not malignant and I was in recovery mode.

My husband then told me that Will had come to the hospital to wait with him through my surgery, but he was gone when

I was back in my room. Grad assistant Zenebe Beyene later told me that Will had been pacing back and forth in his office that day, then announced to Zenebe that "I can't let Kim wait up there alone" and went to the hospital to sit with him.

Kim told me that when the doctor came out and told him "I have no bad news," Will was one big grin, told Kim he was going back to the office and left. I would never have known he was there or that he had done that for Kim. That was the most thoughtful, touching thing I've ever encountered and one that will always remain in my heart. Will is a very special man with a heart as big and caring as the whole outdoors. ■

lished 12 years ago in the advertising department to meet student demand. It is now integrated in the strategic communications major.

- An annual phone drive was developed at the NU Foundation to provide the college with unrestricted endowment funds. Giving has totaled about \$30,000 a year, significantly more than the \$3,000 donated in 1991, the first year of the phone campaign.

- Our J Days program has been polished and refined and includes alumni and media professionals. Prominent speakers come to campus each year to address the honors convocation.

- The Department of News-Editorial and the Department of Broadcasting have merged and are devising new courses and multimedia news publications to meet the needs of the industry.

- Technical Communication and Business Communication have been added to the college curriculum. These two programs have increased student credit hour production to more than 7,000 a semester from about 3,000 student credit hours a semester in 1990. These courses are required of business majors, engineering majors and agriculture majors.

- A partnership was developed with the School of Journalism and Communication in Kristiansand, Norway, to create a Graduate School of Journalism at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia in 2004. This partnership also enabled the UNL faculty to begin working in Pristina, Kosovo, teaching at the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication in 2006. KIJAC is an independent graduate school that is pursuing possible accreditation by ACEJMC.

- The college began co-sponsoring internships with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications and the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts in 2006.

- In 2007 the college began consultation with the American University of Central Asia, helping the program to obtain nearly \$400,000 in equipment for a media center to serve the university and media professionals in the area.

- Discussions are under way to initiate similar graduate programs at the Universidad Xavier de San Francisco, in Sucre, Bolivia, and an independent entity like KIJAC in Tbilisi, Georgia.

- The college was selected to be one of 12 programs in the Carnegie Knight

Initiative in 2007. Other members: the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University, the Pulitzer School of Journalism at Columbia University, the Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, the Newhouse School of Journalism at Syracuse University, The School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of North Carolina, the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State University, the Annenberg School of Journalism at the University of Southern California and the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley.

- The college was selected as a site for a campus bureau of ABC in spring 2009.

- The college became a partner in "Planet Forward," a Web page vehicle for presentation of news and information on energy and the environment, in 2009.

- A four-course sales emphasis was initiated for students who wish to pursue careers in sales. It was implemented with the support of Lincoln broadcasters Dick Chapin and Roger Larson.