

In Remembrance of David Woodward

Of Mentors and Madison

Ph.D. 1984, University of Wisconsin, Madison
*Color on Choropleth Maps: The Effects of Color Scheme
 and Number of Classes on Map Communication*

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I did not commence my graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin with the specific aim of studying under Arthur Robinson or David Woodward, yet these two men became the most significant and influential mentors for my own professional career. Their ideas, attitudes, and character affected me deeply and as the years pass I appreciate more than ever the privilege I had of completing my graduate work under their tutelage. Many of the practices and approaches that characterize my own teaching and advising style were shaped by my experiences with these two eminent professors.

I spent nearly five years in Madison (1977-1981), where my academic home base became a desk in 470 Science Hall overlooking Bascom Hill. What a fertile environment that office was with dozens of cartographically-minded graduate colleagues always available to share ideas, offer support, and of course, partake of the occasional beverage across North Park Street on the terrace. It is a great pleasure to still hear from many of these individuals and to meet up with them at conferences or on my travels.

In the initial semester, all students in the cartography program (there were about 30 of us including both the thesis and non-thesis streams) were required to take *Geography 765: Research Methods in Geography*. This course, coordinated by Phil Muehrcke, seemed designed to incite terror in the hearts of all new grads, primarily because it required the dreaded *oral presentation*. In fact, it required three of them: a literature review essay, a book review, and a research proposal. For the literature review, we were assigned our topics. Here's a sample: Negative Scribing (Doug Bedell); Cartographic Psychophysics (David Seldon); History of Cartography since 1900 (Bob Marinaro); Photo-Mechanical Map Production (Harry Epp); Development of Map Use Skills (Anne Geissman); Marine Cartography (Mike Rynish); and Cartographic Communication (Jan Mersey). Somehow, we all survived (although not all our topics did).

In the same semester, I completed my first course with Arthur Robinson (*Mr. Robinson*, on the course syllabus) - *Geog 572: Graphic Design in Map-making*. I was immediately impressed by his calm and composed manner, his extensive knowledge of the subject matter, and his considerable organization. Each week we would receive a detailed mimeographed outline containing all the key elements covered in lecture. Other than the outlines, he used few props. Instead, all eyes were on him as he introduced us to ideas like the design comprehensive, non-verbal thinking, and the visual variables. I can still hear his resonant voice as proclaimed "simplicity in design is always desirable" or "excellent design will not be apparent ex-

cept by contrast with poor design". I later had the opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant for this course, and came to realize just how many students decided to pursue cartography as a career because of Robbie.

Despite the admiration and respect students had for Robbie, he was always approachable. His office was also on the fourth floor of Science Hall and he kept quite regular hours. I recall timidly dropping by his office one time to ask a question, when he picked up a rolled-up map and whacked it down on his desk. This he told me, was the trick to making a map lay flat - it "startled the fibers into alignment". It has the same effect on students.

On another office visit I remarked to him about how nervous I was about having to deliver my research proposal orally to our seminar class. He surprised me by telling me this was exactly the way one should feel before public speaking, since it meant that you were taking the occasion seriously and would prepare with the necessary care and attention. The worst presentations, he related, happen when the presenter is too casual, even flippant, and handles the subject matter in a nonchalant, cursory manner. Sitting through many conference presentations in years to come, I found his remarks proved true time and time again.

I witnessed Robbie angry on only one occasion. It was during a lab session in a cartography course where I was the teaching assistant. A student was furious with the grade I had given him on an assignment and was hurling a barrage of expletives at me. Robbie happened to walk by, noticed what was going on, and intervened. He quickly became the receiving end of the verbal storm (I still recall the student's exact words but can't repeat them here). I stood there completely mortified that someone would speak that way to Professor Robinson! Robbie (not a small man, remember) took the student's assignment, got within about two inches of his face, and boomed "I agree with these grades!", while jabbing a pointed finger on the pages. The student withered and slunk off. Robbie calmly turned to me and asked if everything else was going ok in the course. We never mentioned this incident again, but his unquestioning confidence in my assessment of this student's work meant a great deal to me. He taught me how important it is to show support for your teaching assistants, especially in front of students, and to handle inevitable disputes in a way that does not compromise their authority.

Robbie, along with the other cartography faculty at the time, strongly encouraged students to participate in conferences, and I was invited to help staff the University of Wisconsin booth at an upcoming ACSM meeting. So, in March 1979, a group of students, including Marian Clark, Mark Riggle and myself, set off to Washington DC in a university station wagon. This was my first conference, and it was pretty exciting. The highlight for me was a session on "Map Design and Perception", chaired by Carleton Cox and Ted Steinke, which included three papers related to the infamous "equal value gray scale". Robbie had kindly arranged for me to meet with several cartographers from the Census Bureau, and they provided me with some two-variable maps I subsequently used in my own Masters research.

On April 11th, 1980, it was an honor to attend the retirement dinner and ceremony for Arthur Robinson, at the Inn on the Park in Madison. Henry Castner presided as Master of Ceremonies, and remarks were delivered by ten speakers including Patricia and Stephen Robinson, George Jenks, Barbara Petchenik and Joel Morrison. Robbie himself concluded the event with a gracious appreciation speech. The evening was particularly significant for me, as I not only had the chance to personally thank Robbie, my mentor and M.Sc. advisor, but to meet "the



Robbie teaching a cartography class in Science Hall, March, 1979.

new guy" - David Woodward, who was to become my Ph.D. advisor and future mentor.

When David joined the Geography Department in 1980, he inherited me as his graduate student, as I had just completed my Masters degree and had been accepted into the Ph.D. program. Although we didn't exactly choose each other as partners in our student-advisor relationship, this arranged marriage turned out to be an excellent one, and the beginning of a life-long friendship. David quickly earned my respect for the meaningful guidance and support he provided as I struggled to develop my thesis proposal. With his gentle humor and unassuming manner, he was a pleasure to work with, and his implicit unspoken expectation of excellence made me want to do my best.

David was a wonderful teacher. Naturally, the history of cartography course was his specialty, but most memorable for me was his teaching of *Geog 570: Problems in Cartography - Map Lettering* in the winter semester of 1981. In the labs, David tried to teach us calligraphy but no one could come close to matching his beautiful handwriting. David was passionate about fonts, and his descriptions of the grace of Palatino, and the "chumminess" of Souvenir, and the timelessness of Times Roman have stayed fresh in my mind. How often I think of him when I see a badly kerned sign or headline!

I was impressed with how eagerly David embraced new technology in his teaching. Even in the map-lettering course, we were sent off to MACC to use a new computer-typesetting program called UNADS to create sheets of stick-up lettering for a mapping project. When the new digital imaging lab opened in the Helen C. White library, David was first in line to book it for his history of cartography course with a scheme in mind to scan old maps and measure distortion. Remember, this is still long before laptops!

Visits to David's home were frequent and wonderful. A houseful of Airedale terriers, a working printing press in the basement, delicious homemade meals (with great wine!) and Roz's warm hospitality made for some memorable evenings. We continued to keep in touch over the years (I always welcomed those custom Christmas cards) and during a brief sab-

batical stay in Madison in 2002, it was enjoyable to once again inhabit an office in Science Hall, and see David regularly at his desk.

Upon his retirement, David generously sent me several CDs containing his cartography lecture notes and illustrations—they have proven to be a valuable resource indeed. It was a rewarding occasion for me when David, myself and Andrew Millward, one of my own graduate students, took turns at the podium during a cartography session at the NACIS conference in Portland, Oregon, in October 2001. The cycle of educational succession continues. How fortunate I was to have studied with two of the best!

David Woodward, An Appreciation

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*Mapping and Empire: British Trigonometrical Surveys in
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I suppose I had the best sort of student-advisor relationship with David. I went to Madison to study with him, but I went on the advice of my undergraduate advisor and with no idea of what kind of work he did. I did not work on the same sorts of research questions as David did, so there was less chance of disagreements and disputes over my work. Our relationship was therefore based on a shared interest in the history of cartography and friendship. Because David had always treated me with respect, my transition from being his student to being his colleague was seamless. Our interactions were of course fewer after I left Madison, but he always remained generous with his advice, support, and understanding.

But David was not necessarily the best advisor. He was much more of a listener than a talker. His ability to listen was, perhaps, the crucial element of his professional success: he cultivated colleagues and potential donors alike by listening to and affirming their fascination with maps; he was rarely aggressive in putting forth his own ideas and convictions. But such reticence is not good in an advisor, who must on critical occasions be a dictator. He had a very much hands-off approach and he expected his students to be self-motivated. When they weren't, he could get quite discouraged. At the same time, however, they could bring forth his humor and keen appreciation for the absurd. We were on the front deck of my second-floor apartment during a summer party when an especially recalcitrant and unproductive graduate student arrived in the street below, carrying an offering for the party; David leaned over the railing and lightheartedly called down, "is there a thesis proposal in that watermelon?" But if the student came through with the goods, David was a wonderful supporter, both intellectually and materially. Moreover, he was always thoroughly honest in all of his dealings; he always despised and refused to play the power-games that seem to permeate so much of academia.