

## NEWS FROM ALUMNI

Many thanks to those of you who liked our Facebook page. Keep your comments coming! (Simply search “Oberlin Philosophy” on Facebook). If you’re not a Facebook fan but would like to share news, please email the newsletter editor: Katherine.Thomson-Jones@oberlin.edu.

**Jeff Dean '90:** “Our boy Oscar is thriving (a tornado of speech and movement in the blurred form of a 3.5 year old), and indeed my wife and I have only just announced to the world [in February 2016] that we’re having another boy, due in late July. I’ve recently left Focal Press to join Harvard University Press, now going completely AWOL from philosophy and publishing books in the physical sciences and technology (OK, I’ll be doing some history and philosophy of science/technology and some STS stuff, so I guess I still have my foot in).”

**Chad Grossman '10:** “I recently completed my graduate studies at Columbia University Teachers College in speech-language pathology and currently provide services to infants and toddlers with developmental delays throughout New York City. I continue to be engaged in research and was recently invited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association to present my research on the differentiation between a language difference and language disorder.”

**Will Jaffee '06:** “I’m finishing my first year as a physician. A crazy, crazy ride it has been. I’m in residency in internal medicine at Baystate Medical Center/ Tufts U. School of Medicine in Springfield, Mass., living in Northampton, which

*continued on page 2*

## A Note from the Editor

*by Kate Thomson-Jones*

**G**reetings Oberlin philosophers! I hope this finds you enjoying your favorite summer activities and eager to hear news from your fellow alumni. Here in the Oberlin philosophy department, we are relishing the summer calm after an eventful year with our students. We had a good variety of philosophy courses on offer in 2015-16, at different levels and in different areas. In the fall, we offered four sections of introductory philosophy. Owen King taught two sections of Problems of Philosophy, and I taught two sections of the Nature of Value. Both Owen and I had long waiting lists for enrollment, suggesting that Oberlin students still see philosophy as integral to their liberal arts education (hurrah!). Also at the introductory level, and as part of the college-wide First Year Seminar Program, Tina Botts taught Hate Speech: An Interdisciplinary Approach, and Todd Ganson taught Making Sense of the Senses. At the 200-level, our fall courses included Deductive Logic, taught by Martin Thomson-Jones; Philosophy of Language, taught by Dorit Ganson; and Ancient Philosophy, taught by Todd. At the 300-level, Peter McInerney taught his seminar, the Cognitive Science of Rationality and Morality.

In the spring semester, Todd and Owen taught several sections of Problems of Philosophy. At the 200-level, Dorit taught Reason and Argument, Tina taught Philosophy of Race and Gender, Martin taught Metaphysics, Peter taught Existentialism, and I taught Philosophy of Film. Martin also offered a new seminar at the 300-level called Happiness, Death, and the Meaning of Life.

Philosophical learning extended beyond our courses with an excellent departmental speaker series. Thanks to Martin for his tireless work in organizing every detail of the speakers’ visits. In the fall, Peter Carruthers (University of Maryland) spoke to us about consciousness, and Nico Orlandi (UC Santa Cruz) spoke to us about perception. In the spring, Jason Leddington (Bucknell University) spoke about the aesthetic experience of theatrical magic, Susan Wolf (UNC Chapel Hill) spoke about aesthetic responsibility, and Michael Strevins (New York University) spoke about the irrationality of science. Thanks to Jason Leddington, we had our first ever philosophy talk that also featured a magic trick!

The makeup of our department was a little different this year: Tim Hall was on leave in the fall and spring, but we look forward to welcoming him back this fall. Tina joined us on a one-year postdoctoral fellowship with the Consortium for Faculty Diversity. Owen continued in his position as part-time replacement for Peter during Peter’s phased retirement. Congratulations to Tina who accepted a permanent position at California State University at Fresno. Congratulations as well to Owen, who successfully defended his doctoral thesis in April.

Despite these happy events and the achievements of our students, the spring was also a sad time for the department, with the deaths in March, just three weeks apart, of our emeritus colleagues, Bob Grimm and Dan Merrill. Below you will find many wonderful memories of Bob and Dan shared by colleagues and former students.

## ALUMNI NEWS, cont.

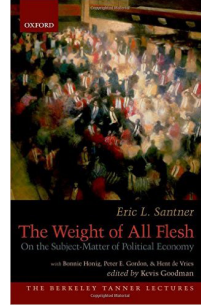
happens to be populated by a number of Obies, including my fiancée, Taylor Fey, who was not a philosophy major, but everyone has their faults. I greatly enjoy the ethics end of my job, especially regarding end-of-life decision-making, autonomy of the patient versus what their health care proxy wants to do, etc. There is plenty of ethical training to be used in medicine, and I think I have a much clearer thought process on these topics than most, thanks no doubt to the OC philosophy department. I look forward to hearing what others are up to as well!”

**Jon Kleinman '91:** “I work as an academic advisor at SUNY Old Westbury, a four-year college serving a culturally and economically diverse student body with a large population of first-generation college students. I specialize in advising students majoring in the social sciences (psychology, sociology, and criminology) and serve as editor-in-chief and contributing writer for the magazine of the School of Arts and Sciences. I also ‘moonlight’ as a music critic, writing for *Living Blues*, *Elmore Magazine*, and *No Depression*. I recently reviewed new releases by Sturgill Simpson and Charles Bradley and am currently working on a feature story about Todd Snider and *Hard Working Americans*. Oberlin was instrumental in developing both my writing skills and broad musical palate.”

**Ed Mooney '62** published *Excursions with Thoreau, Philosophy, Poetry, Religion* with Bloomsbury in 2015. He continues to write on Kierkegaard and has contributed a weekly commentary to the interdisciplinary blog Zeteo on everything from Israel to Bach to Wittgenstein to the CIA to the good life in laid-back Maine. He has settled into Portland with a view of Casco Bay after two years living and teaching at Tel Aviv University and Hebrew University in Israel. He teaches an occasional course in Maine and plays chamber music (violin and viola) and sings (bass) weekly. In a breakaway moment, he delivered two sermons at a local church. His email is [efmooney@syr.edu](mailto:efmooney@syr.edu).



Jon Kleinman '91  
at the Americana  
Music Association  
Conference in  
Nashville.



The Weight of  
all Flesh by Eric  
Santner '77



Jonathan Westreich '88  
with his son Nathan

Send us  
your news  
via Facebook  
or by email:  
Katherine.  
Thomson-  
Jones@  
oberlin.edu.

**Joe Rouse '73:** “In November, the University of Chicago Press published my new book, *Articulating the World: Conceptual Understanding and the Scientific Image*. This defense of a stringent but highly revisionist naturalism in metaphysics and the philosophy of mind and language also develops a significant reconception of philosophical accounts of scientific understanding. The aim is to show how we can adequately grasp scientific understanding as itself a scientifically intelligible natural phenomenon. In developing this project, the book draws extensively on recent work in evolutionary biology, along with a wide range of philosophical work on scientific practice and on conceptual normativity.”

**Eric Santner '77** gave the Tanner Lectures in Human Values at Berkeley, which have now appeared as a book: *The Weight of all Flesh: On the Subject-Matter of Political Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

**Meredeth Turshen '59:** “My new book, *Gender and the Political Economy of Conflict in Africa: The Persistence of Violence*, was just published by Routledge. The first chapter has a long, philosophical meditation on the meanings of violence. The last chapter considers moral and ethical questions of social justice. See details at [www.routledge.com/products/9781138795228](http://www.routledge.com/products/9781138795228).”

**Jonathan Westreich '88:** “I continue to run my own law practice in Alexandria, Va., handling a wide variety of work, from recovery of stolen domain names and trademark litigation to prosecuting abuse and neglect and protecting children. I am married to Grace with three children, Linat (15), Shirite (13), and Nathan (almost 2). Life is good, if hectic!”

## CONGRATS 2016 GRADS!

### *Philosophy Majors:*

Meredith Bloom  
Waylon Cunningham  
Perri DiChristina  
Vernon Fleming  
Adam Gittin  
Emma (Qian Wei) He  
Barrett (Kevin) Kelly  
Michael Ninassi  
Ian Poper  
Topaz (Ryan Ross) Kelso  
Justin Ruiz

### *Philosophy Minors:*

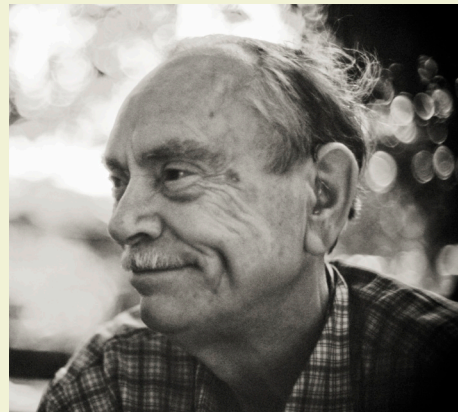
Matthew Fox  
Caitlyn Grubb  
Ines Ibarra  
Emma Leiken  
Benjamin Shepherd

## IN MEMORIAM



JOHN SEYFRIED

DAN MERRILL



ABBY NARDO '91, JUNE 2008

BOB GRIMM

## AL MACKAY, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT OBERLIN, REMEMBERS HIS COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND BOB GRIMM:

I first met Bob Grimm about 50 years ago when he interviewed me for a job teaching at Oberlin. I was a new PhD straight out of graduate school at UNC Chapel Hill, and Bob recommended my hiring. He himself had done his undergraduate work at the University of Miami and his graduate work at Duke University, where he earned both his MA (1959) and PhD (1963). After teaching at Duke and at the University of Iowa, he joined the Oberlin faculty in 1965. He spent the rest of his career at Oberlin, from which he had a sabbatical leave in Israel then served as director of the GLCA Program and visiting professor in philosophy at the Hebrew University School of Overseas Students in Jerusalem. At Oberlin, his teaching and research focused on metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, and the history of philosophy. He published essays in leading philosophy journals, as well as editing or coediting several volumes of the proceedings of the Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy. Bob and I coedited *Society: Revolution and Reform*

(CWRU Press), the proceedings of the 1969 Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy. I worked most closely with Bob Grimm from, say, the late 1960s through the middle 1980s, when I left teaching/research to become dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. For the next 30 years or so, Bob and I remained friends and would occasionally exchange philosophical thoughts. The last such exchange was in March 2014 when we were both retired, he living in North Carolina, me in Oberlin. I had sent him a draft of a paper I was working on regarding some issues concerning skepticism in David Hume. Grimm conceded he could see what puzzled me about the points at issue, but was not persuaded by the substantive merits of my approach. As usual, my respect for Grimm's philosophical talent put that on hold for some more thinking. I will definitely miss consulting with Bob Grimm about things philosophical. He was a good friend. I especially admired the rapport he developed with his students.

## FUTURE PLANS OF SOME OF OUR 2016 GRADUATES

**Vernon Fleming** plans to take a gap year in Chicago and during that year apply for graduate school in international business.

**Emma He** will be working with Apelles Entertainment in Los Angeles from September onwards. Depending on how that goes, Emma will then apply for graduate school in film or law.

**Barrett Kelly** has accepted a category management job at Wayfair in Boston.

**Emma Leiken** has received a Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship for a year of research in India. With the fellowship, Emma plans to study Ambedkarite Buddhism with a focus on the intersections of caste, class, gender, and religion in the experiences of Ambedkarite Buddhist women.

**Aaron Pressman** will teach middle school math or science in Cleveland as part of the Teach for America corps. He will attend a summer institute to receive teacher training and then start teaching his own class in the fall.



## MARTIN REMEMBERS DAN WITH REMARKS AT MEMORIAL SERVICE

I came to Oberlin in 1998 as Dan's replacement in the philosophy department. The apartment I moved into had been turned into faculty housing in 1965, and the people who started living in it that year were... Dan and Marly. (I know it's a small town, but still...) Anyway, just before moving here, I got an email letting me know that, although Dan had donated many of his books to the library, he'd asked that they be held in reserve until I'd had a chance to go through and take anything I wanted. (I got lots of lovely books out of it!) What was telling about this gesture was the spirit behind it: it was clear, somehow, that what lay behind it was a genuine and entirely selfless desire to see the department and its future members flourish—a desire that expressed itself in many other ways over the years to follow. For one thing, Dan would always ask how everyone in the department was doing when we talked at any length.

Once I'd started teaching here, Dan made a habit of passing on quotes and stories that I still use in my teaching. I quote him every year, when I teach Deductive Logic, on the origin of the term "material conditional"—the history of logic being one of Dan's great intellectual loves. And when I'm teaching the philosophy of science and we're discussing the work of Thomas Kuhn, I make the point that Kuhn's notion of a paradigm has permeated the culture quite thoroughly by showing the students a clipping Dan gave me from the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*—it quotes a designer of jeans, at Levi's, some time ago, saying that the shift towards slimmer jeans "isn't just a fad, it's a paradigm change." I often tell students, too, that when the *New York Times* needed to cite an authority on the correct use of the phrase "begging the question," they quoted Dan. And then there was the time he reassured everyone in town that test results at Oberlin High School were actually above the state averages, not below, once you divided things up the right way—a real-life case of Simpson's Paradox. (I'm telling these

stories, with allusions to their arcane details, because if they were about someone else, Dan would have enjoyed hearing them.) So Dan is still a presence in the philosophy classroom at Oberlin, and will be as long as I'm teaching here.

It's true to Dan's character, I think, that in passing on books and stories to me, he wasn't thinking about his legacy. But leave a legacy he did. His love for the college meant that he wanted to serve it in many ways; and his fair-mindedness, kindness, and patience meant that he was often asked to. Maggie Robinson in the dean's office describes Dan as possessing a "gentle authority" when his service to the college took him there; something I didn't witness, but can easily imagine.

And Dan's legacy extends beyond Oberlin, too, through the lives of his former students. [Editor's note: Martin then read a selection of the memories of Dan shared by alumni below.]

I've always felt honoured to have been Dan's replacement in the department (and after all these years, I still think of myself that way!). Dan's were big shoes to fill—metaphorically, too. But I'm even more grateful to have known him as a friend. Philosophers place great value on critical acuteness, on the ability to spot errors in reasoning, to root out fuzzy thinking, and so on. Unfortunately, too many in our profession seem to think that you can't have those qualities and be kind. Dan was, as we philosophers would say, a walking counterexample to that idea—his existence proved it false. He was always so supportive to me, and to my wife, Kate, who also teaches in the philosophy department, in ways that extended beyond our professional lives. And one of my happiest memories of Dan is of seeing the delight he took in talking to our 6-year-old daughter the last time he and Marly came to our house for dinner; that gave me small glimpse, too, of how lucky his children and grandchildren are to have had Dan as a father and a grandfather.

We will all miss you, Dan.

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS



Graduating philosophy major Emma He with her Honors thesis advisor, Kate Thomson-Jones, Commencement Weekend Philosophy Open House, May 21, 2016.

### Honors

Emma (Qian We) He received High Honors for writing and defending her thesis, "Transparency and Realism in the Photographic Arts."

### Essay Prizes

This year's Dahl Prize for an outstanding essay in any area of philosophy went to Emma He for her paper (excerpted from her Honors thesis), "Transparency and Realism in the Photographic Arts."

First place in this year's Rhoden Prize for an outstanding essay in ethics went to Isabel Canfield for her paper, "Addiction, Responsibility, and Will."

Second place in the Rhoden Prize went to Emma He for her paper, "Restrictions on Marriage: Polygamy."

## Congratulations Emma and Isabel!

## ALUMNI MEMORIES OF BOB AND DAN

**Matthew Baxter '99:** I was a philosophy major at Oberlin College, graduating in 1999, and now am a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University. I took three classes with Dan Merrill: Modern Philosophy, Logic, and a seminar on Wittgenstein. Dan's Wittgenstein seminar was among the most influential courses I took at Oberlin, providing an essential part of the undergraduate foundation upon which I built my scholarly interests in graduate school. I work on political thought in Tamil-speaking South India; because of Dan's course, I brought Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* with me during my first years in India, from 2000-2002, as I tried to learn the Tamil language game. Dan was also gracious enough to write letters of recommendation for me to graduate schools. I applied not once, but twice, and each time Dan generously spoke with me on the phone and helped me refine my nascent interests. Dan Merrill was an outstanding teacher and mentor.

**Karen Bennett '93:** I'm grateful to Dan Merrill for encouraging me. He went out of his way, on more than one occasion, to explicitly praise my work in ways that went beyond banal 'nice job' comments on a paper. He made it clear to me, face to face, that I was actually good at both philosophy and writing. Twenty-plus years later, I'm a philosophy professor too. Now, some alumni might not know that philosophy is nearly as male-dominated as math and physics. There is a lot of discussion at the moment about why this is the case, and what we can do about it. What can we do at the undergrad level to attract and retain majors? How can we get more women to go to (and not drop out of) grad school? Well, here's one small thing to do: explicitly tell promising female students that they are promising. Dan Merrill did that for me. It mattered a lot to me then, and it still matters to me today.

**Stephen Braude '67:** I was very saddened to learn about the passing of Bob Grimm and Dan Merrill. Dan's course in the history of modern philosophy was the most substantive, thorough, and helpful class of my entire undergraduate career. And Bob's *Theoria* paper on Descartes' "Cogito" made a big impression on me in those days. Bob was also very supportive after I started teaching and publishing, including bringing me back to Oberlin to give a talk.

**John Chamberlain '85:** I really loved classes with Professor Merrill. He was able to talk about complicated and confusing topics with clarity and serious topics with humor. My most vivid memory: he was talking about divine command theory and illustrated its biggest problem with this example: "So if we believe that what is right is right simply because God says it is right, then what are we to think if God commands us to boil little babies in oil?" Dang good question. And Kuhn's paradigm

shift concept, nicely illuminated by Mr. Merrill, has been central in my thinking about science and the mind ever since. I also appreciated Mr. Merrill's open-mindedness about how to conduct his classes; he let my classmate Robert Potter and me write our final papers as a joint effort, a debate in which we took turns writing entries. Probably the most fun I ever had writing a paper.

**(Jon) Mike Dunn '63:** I was saddened by the losses of professors Bob Grimm and Dan Merrill. Bob came to teach at Oberlin a couple of years after I graduated, but I met him at various conferences. Both Bob and Dan were wonderful people and excellent philosophers. I owe a lot to Dan. I recently had to write an autobiography for a book about me and my work: *J. Michael Dunn on Information Based Logics*, ed. Katalin Bimbó, *Outstanding Contributions to Logic*, Springer, 2016. Dan played an important part in my education as a logician and in the autobio I tell how I took a number of "private reading" courses in logic with Daniel Merrill, and how under his supervision wrote my senior honors thesis on "Logical Behaviorism," i.e., the question whether logical connectives can be defined by their role in inference. I feel certain I would not have had the career that led to such a book in my honor, if it weren't for Dan.

**Emily C. Francomano '92:** Dan Merrill was a great advisor and an inspiring teacher. When I was graduating and had the crazy idea of applying to grad school in philosophy and told Mr. Merrill (as I addressed him back then), he looked at me and said "No, graduate work in philosophy is not for you, you're interested in how language carves out the world. You should study comparative literature." Indeed, I would have been miserable in a philosophy PhD program, had any school actually accepted me. He was gently telling me that I probably

*continued on page 6*

## WE WANT TO KEEP IN TOUCH!

Please register for the TAPPAN Network, your new Alumni Online Community, and update your contact information so you can receive important communications from Oberlin and locate classmates and friends. Your unique alumni ID (required for initial login) can be found above your address on this newsletter. Access TAPPAN at <http://alumni.oberlin.edu>.

## ALUMNI MEMORIES OF BOB AND DAN, cont.

did not have much of chance getting in anywhere, but he was also pointing me in what he thought would be the right direction. He was right. Life as a professor of Spanish, medieval studies, and yes, comparative literature, has been rewarding, challenging, and even fun most of the time. I'll never forget that meeting or the tutorial in Philosophy of Language he offered to do with me in the Oberlin-in-London program. Rest in peace.

**Nat Gordon-Clark '93:** I was a former student and advisee of Daniel Merrill. My favorite memory of him was when I took a feminist theory class with him. He started the class on the first day by announcing what the class was, as all classes at Oberlin started, and then addressed some administrative concerns. Then he comments, "Now you might think it is strange that a man is teaching a class on feminist theory... but it is no stranger than the fact that I am also the chair of the Women's Studies Program!"

**Justin Hughes '82:** In the 1980s, the Oberlin philosophy department was populated with professors whose surnames (sort of) identified mental states—Care, Grimm, Love. Dan Merrill (and later Peter McInerney) were the exceptions. For reasons I no longer know, I dove into the department's offerings as a freshman. Bob Grimm taught me the intricacies of Aristotle—I still have the beautifully bound McKeon edition of Aristotle's works that we used. And Dan Merrill was my guide for Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. As a sophomore I was enraptured with Spinoza's *Ethics*: Merrill cultivated—then had to tolerate—that enthusiasm. In seminars, Bob Grimm was all seriousness with a dose of gruff; Dan Merrill was the more avuncular—I think I learned the word 'avuncular' trying to describe him. His puns were sometimes awful and often memorable. I grew up on a horse farm, and he once reminded me to never to put Descartes before de horse. They were both wonderful at including students in the intellectual life of the department.

In later years, I spent more time with Dan and Marly Merrill, often visiting them in their home when I passed through Oberlin. But between the two, it's fair to say that I had more of my philosophical "training" with Bob Grimm. He was my faculty advisor for an honors thesis on the "identity of objects over time" (or something like that). I thought of him as a chain smoker—I wasn't a smoker, but in those days people who smoked did so indoors and in the presence of others. We would sit in his office for long honors thesis sessions discussing the metaphysical issues with which I grappled. I would make a point or ask a question. Before responding, he would puff on his cigarette, blow the smoke upward, and gaze into the

distance through the haze he created—as if he could dimly see some possible answer. He'd pause, speak, and we would repeat this process for 60 or 90 minutes at a time. I thought these sessions were utterly exhausting—and thrilling—and scary. A weekly mental rock climb.

These days, when Steven Nadler's 2013 book, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* pops up on the "maybe you would like" section of my Amazon webpage—well, that's Merrill and Grimm still present in my life. When I head off to a conference on philosophical approaches to intellectual property or write a book review on philosopher Leif Wenar's new *Blood Oil*, Grimm and Merrill are sitting with me.

I am aware of Dan Merrill and Robert Grimm's influence in everything I do as a scholar—and, I hope, a good part of what I have done as a policymaker. I do not expect to graduate from that influence. I do not want to.

**Doug Litowitz '85:** I want to extend my condolences to Dan Merrill's family and to the Oberlin community. Dan was my advisor. He wrote my recommendations for law school and graduate work in philosophy. I took several courses with him, but what I remember most fondly was the day I walked into his office and mentioned that there was no course on American pragmatism—and he immediately made time for me to do a private reading, with one-on-one meetings every Friday. It was a selfless gesture from a man who really liked to see students develop into independent thinkers. I can remember our talks as if they were yesterday. He was always professional, reserved but with humor, never doctrinaire, and had a gentleness that resonated with students. There are scores of students whose lives are better for having studied under him.

**Phil Longman '79:** Professor Merrill had a poster in his office that I found very intimidating but also valuable in its implied message. Hung behind his chair so that you couldn't miss it during student conferences, it showed a cute tiger cub in comfortable repose with the tag line: "It's my opinion and it's very, very true." It was a warning against intellectual arrogance that I very much needed at the time and still try to take to heart today. Over the last 40 years, my appreciation for the wisdom of his philosophical stance has only deepened.

**Abby Nardo '91:** I'm so sorry to hear about Dr. Grimm. I was a double-degree student (vocal performance and philosophy). He was my philosophy advisor. He had a dry sense of humor and was my first introduction to philosophy (he taught my 101 class). I remember being amused and a bit shocked at how he always referred to God as "her." He was a bit square but

## IN MEMORIAM, cont.

also subversive in his own way. My favorite class with him was probably Philosophy of Science. I actually ran into him several years ago in Carrboro, North Carolina. He was about to retire there. I live in Raleigh and was on a photo walk with some friends. When I first took the photo, I posted it to Flickr. Here's what I said: *Professor Grimm was my undergraduate advisor at Oberlin. I hadn't seen him since 1992, and there he was, just sitting outside Weaver Street with his wife. I spotted him at first and definitely felt a sense of recognition, but it didn't really register. Later, when I went inside to get some jam for my bread, I saw him again, and I KNEW it was him. What a sweet guy. He and his wife are retiring down to Carrboro from Oberlin. They were just in town for a week to deal with the house they are buying and visit their future home. I can't believe I ran into him like this. What a treat!*

**Geoff Sayre-McCord '79:** I am one of the many professional philosophers who had the tremendous pleasure and benefit of studying with Dan and Bob. I remember vividly the regular senior-year evening meetings at a faculty home where students and faculty would get together to talk philosophy. That was thrilling, challenging, and intimidating all at once. I remember also Dan's carefully crafted lectures making clear, for instance, not only that monads had no windows, but why, and Bob's intense Socratic seminars on ancient philosophy and on metaphysics (where we wrestled with the form of the good and the nature of existence). I went off to graduate school wonderfully well-prepared thanks in no small part to their dedication and care. Dan and Bob were both relentlessly patient, insightful in their feedback, and generous along every dimension. The intellectual culture they played such a role in creating at Oberlin has, ever since, served as a model for me.

**Happy Sayre-McCord '79:** Mr. Merrill was my Honors thesis advisor in 1978-79. I remember he was very patient, always kind, and adept at bringing me along the unfamiliar path toward the more in-depth research and scholarship of a year-long project. I was a double major at Oberlin, and while biology was something I had fallen in love with and took immediately to in high school, when I got to college I decided philosophy was something I should like and that I should be better versed in the rigor of philosophical argument and analysis, because it was so far out of my ken. Mr. Merrill was generous in his mentoring of this duck out of water, and along with Mr. Care and the rest of the department, rooted in me a lifelong love of philosophical pursuits. Mr. Merrill's Philosophy of Science course was excellent, and he elicited from me the best paper I ever wrote on any topic in his Philosophy of Religion course. Thank you for helping us remember this estimable man, and my condolences to his family and to the Oberlin community.

**Brad Skow '98:** I probably owe my philosophy career to Dan. I was an English major taking philosophy classes on the side when Dan told me I was good at philosophy (unfortunately I cannot remember his exact words). I was good at English too, but Dan's comment was a turning point for me. He was encouraging and generous with his time. He happily did an independent study with me on the philosophy of artificial intelligence, even though he didn't know much about the topic; he also supervised my learning logic over the summer. As I didn't declare philosophy as a major until the end of my junior year, I'm not sure I would have been able to finish the major if he hadn't done these things. I still have clear memories of sitting in his office talking about Dennett, or Haugeland, or whomever. Through my experiences in graduate school and beyond, he remained my platonic form of a philosophy advisor and mentor. Dan said, when he retired, that he was a "company man," which I took to mean that he really did care about Oberlin and about being at Oberlin; it wasn't just a job, as good as any other, for him. I think that Oberlin is the greatest college in the world, and I think that, for the (long) time he taught there, Dan was essential to its greatness.

**David Smith '81:** Shocked and saddened at the news of Bob's passing. He was my advisor and one of my most thoughtful teachers. My then-girlfriend, now-wife, babysat Valerie, his daughter, during her four years there. We visited Bob and his wife, Linda, with our three kids some 15 years ago. Bob played basketball in his backyard with my two small boys, garnering a scraped and bloody knee in the process. He laughed it off and wanted to keep playing. Such a kind and wonderful man will be sorely missed.

**Clark Wolf '86:** I am so sorry to hear this news of Bob Grimm and Dan Merrill. I worked with both Bob and Dan during my time at Oberlin. Over the years I saw both of them when I came back to visit Oberlin. Seems like the passing of an era for the Oberlin philosophy department.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS

Dr. David Bayless '72

Dr. Robert & Mrs. Eileen Kleps,  
parents of Christopher Kleps '04

## OBERLIN PHILOSOPHY

**Editor:** Kate Thomson-Jones

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Martin Thomson-Jones

Katherine Thomson-Jones (*chair, fall semester*)

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