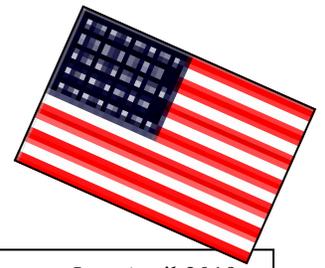


# JOTTINGS



A publication of the Danish American Archive and Library

Jan.-April 2019

## INTERNS AND THE DANISH AMERICAN ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY Energy and Enthusiasm Bringing History to Life



*Heather Hannaford, the DAAL's first intern.*

An exciting development took place at the DAAL in 2013 with the establishment of a vital and popular college internship program. An increasing number of students are participating in the ever-expanding program.

The DAAL's intern program began when Board Member Dr. Timothy Jensen began working with a University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) history professor Kristin Girten to set up an internship opportunity for Heather Hannaford, our first intern.

Since then the DAAL has hosted eight volunteers from UNO, Midland University in Fremont, Nebraska, and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. A special case is that of Kate Garrett, who came in on her own to volunteer the summer between her freshman and sophomore years at Blair High School in 2013. More about her later.

Most of our interns earned college credit for their time here, but others have worked simply because of the experience it provided and their interest in history in general, or certain aspects of history that our collections contain.

**Heather Hannaford** was assigned to sort and organize what was then a recently acquired collection of Elna Nielsen Smith Melvin, an extraordinary woman who had a remarkable career in an age when many women didn't have careers. Among the things Heather discovered were letters that Elna had exchanged with Eleanor Roosevelt and Aldous Huxley, author of the dystopian novel, *Brave New World*. Through the sorting process, Heather says she fell in love with Elna and looked forward to coming in and discovering more about her life. She also appreciated the welcoming atmosphere at the DAAL, and feels she learned as much from talking to the other archivists and volunteers at our regular 10 a.m. coffee breaks as she did from working on the materials. She is currently a PhD candidate working on a dissertation about the Lake District in England. She says, "I gained so much insight from my time at the Danish American Archive and Library that informs my current research methods, and I hope to work in a literary foundation, trust or archive when I graduate."

**Neil Polzin**, who was working on his master's degree at UNO, came to the archive that same year. His focus centered on the Sophus Keith Winther collection. Winther, a Danish immigrant, wrote and published several novels about the pioneer experience in the Great Plains. Like Heather before him, Neil became fascinated with his subject. Especially intriguing was a reference to some letters to Winther from noted author Eugene O'Neill that he found on the O'Neill Foundation web site, and he hoped to be able to dig deep enough into the collection to find the actual letters. But as far as we know, that didn't happen. However, the work he did for us changed the whole focus of his studies from British literature to American regionalism. He is currently working as a political copywriter.

**Fun fact:** Heather and Neil met and fell in love through their internships at the DAAL and were married in 2015.



*UNO intern Neil Polzin uncovered a treasure trove of materials in the Sophus Keith Winther collection.*

(Continued Page 3)

## FROM THE DANA ROOM

### When the Don Shirley Trio Played at Dana . . .

by Ann (Harms) George

Last fall, the name of Don Shirley caught the attention of a number of Danians in Blair – and elsewhere, as well – when they heard it mentioned in the television trailer for the movie “Green Book.” The Don Shirley Trio had played at Dana on October 12, 1985, a Homecoming weekend, and they were in the audience.

With Shirley at Dana for the benefit concert were Trio members bassist Ken Fricker and cellist Jüri Täht, a 1952 Dana graduate – it was through Täht's urging of Shirley that the Trio performed at the college. In 1949 and '50 Dana students had raised funds to help pay the college expenses of several young World War II refugees, and Täht, an Estonian, was one of them. Deeply appreciative of this assistance, he has said that “I didn't find Dana, Dana found me,” and he considered Dana his first home in this country. When he arrived in the U.S. he was already an accomplished cellist – he'd studied cello in Estonia and in Germany, at the Conservatory of Music in Stuttgart – who played in the Omaha Symphony while at Dana.

It was through Fricker that Täht became a member of the Don Shirley Trio. After graduating from Dana, he joined the U.S. Air Force and for four years played in its symphony orchestra, where he met Fricker, who was also in the orchestra. Helen Christiansen, a Dana alumna who married Fricker in 1990,\* said, in a phone conversation from Madison, Wisconsin, that in 1957, Fricker, who had recently become the bassist with Don Shirley, saw Täht in New York City and suggested that he audition for Shirley.

Although Täht and Fricker are fictionalized in “Green Book,” they were with Shirley on his 1962 tour of the South depicted in the film. (How to identify characters is, of course, a screenwriter's prerogative, and “Green Book” isn't a documentary.) In an online Time magazine article (Feb. 13, 2019; updated Feb. 24, 2019) titled “What to Know About the Controversy Surrounding the Movie 'Green Book,’” Andrew R. Chow, through a phone interview with a Shirley friend from the early '60s, confirmed their participation. He writes, “. . . the other two members of the Donald [sic] Shirley Trio also appear throughout, in concerts and stops along the road. In the film, they are named Oleg and George. But at the time, Shirley's real bandmates were the bassist Ken Fricker and the cellist Jüri Täht. Both played with Shirley over the course of several decades.”

“Green Book” went on to win acclaim in many categories, including “Best Picture” by Critics Choice and at Golden Globe and Academy Award ceremonies. (There are reports of Shirley fans, among them Dana alumni, who have seen the movie more than once. And an aside: Christiansen says that she's been in Shirley's Carnegie Hall apartment, and “it looked very much like what was shown in the film.”)

Three years before the Dana concert, in a November 12, 1982, New York Times article, Shirley told interviewer C. Gerald Fraser, “The three are . . . not a trio. Basically, the reason for my instrumentation is that I'm an organist.” Summarizing Shirley's comments, Fraser noted that he wrote “for the bassist in the cello range and for the cellist in the viola range.” Explaining further, Shirley said, “I write in the tenor clef, alto clef and soprano clef for my cellist, giving me a whole range. Therefore, we are not really a trio. . . . We are three men trying to be one instrument.”

A classical pianist, Shirley began the concert at Dana playing solo piano works by Buxtehude, Handel, and Bach. After Fricker and Täht\*\* joined him on the Madsen Performing Arts Center stage, the Trio played Shirley's arrangements, including Bernstein's “I Feel Pretty,” Berlin's “Blue Skies,” Ellington's “Suite,” and Gershwin's “The Man I Love.” A full house gave them a long and enthusiastic standing ovation, and an encore followed.

Don Shirley died at his home in New York City on April 6, 2013. In an obituary in the New York Times on April 28, Bruce Weber writes that Shirley “produced music that synthesized popular and classical sounds. He often melded American and European traditions by embedding a well-known melody within a traditional classical structure.”

(Continued Page 7)



*The Don Shirley Trio. Photo by Wayne Behling from the collection of Jüri Täht. L-r: Jüri Täht, Ken Fricker, Don Shirley.*

## Interns (Cont.)

It isn't often that a student who has just finished her freshman year in high school contacts us to see if she can come in and volunteer. In fact, it's only happened once—and the student was our industrious **Kate Garrett**. Being at loose ends and wanting to find out more about her own Danish heritage, Kate decided to volunteer. She was put to work on the Walker-Johnson collection, a massive collection spanning more than a century and containing a wealth of documents detailing that family's history. As part of an essay that she wrote for school, Kate described the process of opening each new box and discovering the history found within. "The first envelope reveals a series of letters between a new wife and her husband, who is in the South Pacific during World War II," she wrote. "The correspondence instantly reels me in, and I am transported to a different world in the 1940s." Kate continued to be transported that summer and the next. But the summer before her senior year, we budgeted for Kate to come on board as a paid administrative/financial intern, a position she kept for two summers before entering Ohio State University. She has completed her CPA exams and now is gaining the practical experience she needs to earn her CPA certification.



*Volunteer and Intern Kate Garrett.*

Our most recent intern, **Chantal Powell**, is one who was able to earn college credit for her work at the DAAL. Chantal is in her last semester at UNO, where she will graduate with a double major in Creative Writing and English. After that she will be spending a year with Americorps working with disadvantaged children. During her time with us, Chantal not only performed some regular archive work of organizing materials, but she also wrote and submitted articles to two separate publications. The first was an article about a women's rights pioneer, Tiny Loveland, mother of long time archive volunteer, Dody Johnson. This article appeared in the February 2019 issue of *The Danish Pioneer*. More recently she submitted an article on her experience as an intern at the DAAL to the magazine *The Bridge*, a publication of the Danish American Heritage Society. Toward the end of that article, Chantal said, "One consistent thing I found, no matter whose archival box I looked through, was the sense of community the Danish people have."

The other interns the DAAL has hosted are Sara Wheeler and Daniel Harkins, from UNO, Courtney Gendreau from Midland University and Nancy Hansen from UN-K. We are expecting two more interns from UNO to start this summer, and have just had an inquiry for 2020. Each of these capable interns made significant contributions to the work we do at the DAAL. We value their energy and enthusiasm, and they continue to express how much they value the experience they gained from working at the Danish American Archive and Library.

Referring to the overall intern program, Tim Jensen said that it has been a learning process. "We have learned to make the assignments more focused, so an intern can complete a project or projects within the allotted time. That makes for a more satisfying experience both for them and for us." ■

## F.W. THOMSEN MOSAIC COMES TO THE DAAL

A beautiful mosaic by former Dana College art professor and artist F.W. Thomsen now resides at the DAAL, thanks to Dorothy Wright of Blair, who along with her late husband Harold, originally commissioned the artwork. Dorothy worked in the Dana College humanities department, and both she and Harold were DAAL volunteers.

The evolution of the mosaic is interesting. According to Thomsen's son, John, Thomsen worked on a series of paintings for each line of a poem titled "The Colors" in the 1960s.

*Gold and green are the fields in peace  
Red are the fields in war  
Black are the fields when the cannons  
cease  
And white forevermore.*



The Wrights were so taken with the painting that they commissioned him to do the mosaic.

Thomsen once said of the painting on which the mosaic is based, "[It] is really a re-creation out of the old. The old has passed, the wars have been here, the heat of the fire has been here, human suffering has been here, and then there's rebirth. And this could be man and woman, like the Garden of Eden."

We are so honored to have this brilliant piece of work and grateful to Dorothy Wright for the gift. The mosaic with its metal frame measures 40" wide by 28" high and weighs more than 150 pounds. The Wrights had a wall reinforced in order to mount it, and we will have to do the same.

We would welcome designated donations toward reinforcing one of our walls in order to enable us to display this beautiful work of art. ■

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



*Executive Director  
Jill Hennick*

I was so glad Sandra decided to do a lead story about our robust intern program. I love remembering all the students who have contributed to its success. The internship program is very important to us and we look forward to watching it grow.

The program is mutually beneficial. Students enthusiastically work at their assigned tasks, while we strive to offer them experience that will interest them the most and enhance their resumes.

Many people are surprised to learn that we can tailor internships to virtually any discipline. Our goals are always the same, to organize and protect the materials, to create finding aids for names and subjects, and to interpret the materials for the public. But we can often choose the collection or the work based on the student's major and goals for future employment.

Some of the obvious areas we can use interns are in library science, archival practices and history. Surprisingly, most of our interns have been English majors. That works out very well, because the archive is full of stories. Some of them are already in story form,

while others are waiting to be written.

We are a small non-profit business and have had one accounting intern. We have also had one student in non-profit management use our organization for her case study.

There are other possibilities that we haven't tried yet. A graphic design student could lay out a new traveling exhibit. An art student could design a new in-house exhibit. A film student could create a video to introduce people to the archive. An education student could use our materials to write a curriculum requirement, perhaps in social studies.

Our biggest goal is to create an internship program with emphasis on technology. We need to stay up-to-date with hardware, software and saving data in new formats before current formats become obsolete. Digitizing is crucial. If we could save one hard copy and one digital copy of everything in the Archive, it would give us the best chance to save each unique item and to share them with researchers.

We can also open up opportunities for instructors to put theories into practical use. The best areas for that would probably be technology and archival practices. Instructors could also work on a large collection with individual students over a number of years or with a number of students in a workshop. Music classes could work on the Lauritz Melchior collection. Political science classes could work on a number of different politicians. General religion or Christianity classes could make use of our vast collections from pastors.

Another interesting thing that often happens is that interns find research topic for future study, whether it be for Master's theses or PhD dissertations. We have a wealth of primary source

documents waiting to be used.

What started as an experiment to bring a new generation into the archive has developed into an important part of our operation. We plan for it to continue and grow, benefiting both the students and the DAAL. ■

## DAAL

### Danish American Archive and Library

**Dedication to our Ancestors,  
Appreciation of their Lives**



*Possible class projects top to Bottom:  
Lauritz Melchior Collection, Politician  
L.H. Lincoln Collection, Rev. P.P.  
Thisted Collection.*

**VOLUNTEERS:** 1,925 hours by 42 volunteers from Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

**VISITORS:** 71 visitors from California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.

**USERS:** 44 users from California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, the District of Columbia, Canada, Denmark, and email.

## ACQUISITIONS

### Materials:

**The following are the donations of materials we have received from January through April. The Archive could not continue to document the history of Danish Americans without these wonderful materials including complete family collections, photos, books, periodicals, music and obituaries. We appreciate your financial donations to support the processing and storage of your materials.**

Becky Bryant (West Des Moines, IA)  
 R.B. Christensen (Ottawa, ON)  
 Jane K. Geddes (Cheyenne, WY)  
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## FINANCIAL REPORT

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 John W. & Elizabeth Nielsen's 70th Anniversary  
 David Nielsen (Winfield, KS)  
 Corinne Robinson (Minneapolis, MN)  
 Eleanor Schou (Albert Lea, MN)

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### 2019 Thrivent Choice Gifts:

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 James Ruden (Littleton, CO)  
 Sandy Sonderup (Blair, NE)

### 50/100 Club:

**The name of the 50/100 Club was inspired by the idea that if 100 members gave \$50 per month, most of our operating expenses would be met. Members sustain DAAL by giving a minimum of \$600 per year (given monthly, quarterly, or yearly according to the donor's preference). Those at the Founder's Level give at least \$2,000 per year. An added benefit of being part of the 50/100 club is receiving one donation acknowledgement for tax purposes in January reflecting a yearly total of all donations, rather than getting a separate acknowledgment for each financial contribution. These donations are part of the General Fund.**

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## FINANCIAL REPORT

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 John W. & Elizabeth Nielsen  
 LeVern\* & Marilyn\* Nielsen  
 W. Clayton Nielsen  
 Larry & Palma Plume  
 Joan Sorensen ■

## AROUND THE ARCHIVE

- ◆ We continue to benefit from our corps of volunteers—we welcomed 16 new ones in 2018. Our volunteers are our life blood, and we would not be able to progress without their help.
- ◆ A significant collection has recently been added to the Collections page of our website. Palma Plume is a long-time volunteer and member of our board. The Hansen-Nielsen-Plume collection is a rich and detailed collection of letters, postcards, photos, and a wide variety of other materials.
- ◆ About a dozen volunteers from states as far away as Texas, Colorado and Massachusetts came in to work during our annual Spring Volunteer Week the first week in April. As usual the volume of work they accomplished was astounding, and we are so grateful for their contributions.
- ◆ The Blair Area Community Foundation granted \$600 to the DAAL which we used to purchase a moveable, adjustable-height table. It provides flexible work space in that it can be set up in different areas of our building for different uses. We were so pleased with the first table that we have already purchased another one in a smaller size. We would like to buy at least three more tables and will be using a donation from Danish Brotherhood Lodge #1 in Omaha to cover part of the cost.



*Sarah Meldrum from Massachusetts is able to sit while working on the Norman Bansen collection.*



*Betsy Anderson from Blair is comfortable standing while she works on the Dana College collection.*

- ◆ Ron Vig visited the DAAL last October to bring materials to add to the Vig Family collection. Ron is the grandson of P.S. Vig (1854-1925) who was one of the pioneers of Trinity Seminary and Dana College. The vast Vig Family Collection came to the archive after the death of P.S. Vig's son, Einar. Ron is Einar's nephew. The Vig Family Collection is one of our larger collections containing letters, papers, clippings, documents, pictures, scrapbooks, notes, obituaries and family records for people buried in Washington County, Nebraska. It is extremely valuable to genealogists looking for information



about anyone who ever lived in Washington County. During Ron's visit, we captured a photo of him with his ancestor. The family resemblance is hard to miss! ■

## Would you like to help?

Please cut out this card and send it in with your charitable contribution.

A check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. (Please make payable to the Danish American Archive and Library.)  
Or to pay by credit card:

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**Thank you for your ongoing support of the Danish American Archive and Library**

## When the Don Shirley Trio Played at Dana . . . (Cont.)

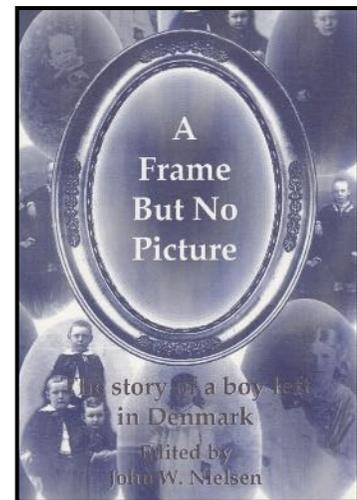
The concert made a fan of Nathan Kramer, who was a Dana sophomore at the time. In an interview at his Omaha home that appeared in the November 6, 2018, Washington County Enterprise, he described his pre-concert anticipation to reporter Teresa Hoffman, "I knew something special was happening because I was friends with the switchboard operator, and she said something has just happened because the switchboard was being flooded with calls from back east. People from all over the place were trying to get tickets."

Since then he's collected Shirley's albums and memorabilia and created a tribute to Shirley on his website. Also, over the years he and Shirley exchanged occasional e-mails and spoke on the phone. It was during a phone conversation, Kramer wrote in an e-mail, that Shirley "remembered the Dana concert when I mentioned it, and almost off-handedly, said, 'Oh, I did that for Jüri.'" ■

\*Helen (Class of '56) and her sister Margaret (Christiansen '53) Madsen were in the concert audience. Margaret had met Ken Fricker through her friendship with Jüri Täht, and she introduced Helen and Ken that weekend. On Ken's invitation, Helen, Margaret, and her husband, Frank, attended a May 1986 Don Shirley Trio concert in Carnegie Hall, and what Helen describes as "an off-and-on romance" followed. After their marriage in 1990 they lived in an old former church in the Hudson River Valley until 2003, when they moved to Florida, where Ken's only brother lived. Ken died in 2013.

\*\*After what Jüri Täht described in "Dana College Alumni Today 2014" (published by the Dana College Foundation) as "25 wonderful years participating in the musical life of New York City," in 1983 he and his wife, Carmen, who was also born in Estonia, moved to the Washington, D.C., area. There he worked for the Estonian Service of Voice of America, and, in the four years before he retired in 1996, was Estonian Service chief. Several years ago he and Carmen returned to Estonia to be near their son, Mark, a 1999 Dana graduate, and his family.

## ***A FRAME BUT NO PICTURE*** *The story of a boy left behind in Denmark*



***A compilation of letters forming a picture of a little boy who had to be left behind when the family left Denmark and the immigrant mother who had to leave her youngest child behind.***

You can order this books for just \$5.00 plus \$4.00 shipping. (Nebraska residents add 7% sales tax.)

A complete list of Lur books is found on our website at:  
[www.danishamericanarchive.com](http://www.danishamericanarchive.com).

1738 Washington Street  
Blair, Nebraska 68008

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## IN THE STACKS



*Dr. Anderson (seated background) watches as Dr. John W. Nielsen addresses his history students in the DAAL at Dana College.*

### **“That’s An Interesting Topic”: Using the DAAL for Research**

By Michael Hennick, Library Assistant

Archive collection STR-2004 includes two boxes of Dana College student research papers from Dr. Iain Anderson’s class, “Immigration History.” This upper-level history course was offered at Dana on alternating years from 2004—2010. Students were to use the materials in the DAAL for their research. During those final years of the college’s existence, the archive was located on the lower level of the Dana library. This was an ideal situation when student researchers could access the DAAL on their college campus. In the four semesters that the course was offered, some thirty students conducted their research using our excellent primary and secondary sources. It was thanks to Dr. Anderson’s interest in our hidden treasures of history that made the class a reality.

The titles of the papers cover a wide variety of subjects and give us an idea of what can be gleaned from the collections of the DAAL. As a class dealing with immigration, it is not surprising that many papers dealt with assimilation into American society: “Danish Immigrant Assimilation through the American Military...”, “The Acculturation of Danish Farmers in America” and “Dannebrog and Solvang: A Look Into How the Danes Settled and Assimilated in Similar Ways.” Danish American institutions were of incalculable value in helping Danes become American. This is revealed in such titles as: “The Evolving Mission of the Danish Brotherhood” and “Danish American Folk Schools: Assimilation in Disguise.” The role of the church in the lives of many is looked at in “Danish Lutheranism in America: Effects of the Great Schism of 1894 on Dana College and Grandview College” and “Pastor Knud Larsen: Fighting Danish Assimilation.” The experience of the world wars affected everyone, and there is a great deal of material in the DAAL concerning what people went through. The history students approached this with such titles as: “Changing Attitudes Toward Danish Americans during World War II” and “Americanization, Danish Americans and World War I.” A great deal of material about the German occupation of Denmark during World War II has come into the DAAL, and this inspired one researcher to write “A Sort of Fairy Tale: The Rescue of the Danish Jews.” Finally, something about the Danish love of Christmas appears in “Danish Christmas Keeps Ethnicity Alive.”

This is just a sampling of the papers available in this research collection, but it gives us an idea of what has been studied in the past at the DAAL. Since we moved out of Dana College, our collections have expanded by about one-third, so even more is available concerning the Danish American experience. This is an experience of interest not only to those of Danish descent, but also to others such as the vast majority of students in Dr. Anderson’s Immigration History class who bear no recognizable Danish names. ■