

Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies



ONLINE NEWSLETTER

April, 2004

17th Season of Sunflower Journeys —by Dave Kendall, KTWU Public Television

The KTWU-produced Sunflower Journeys series wrapped up its 17th season at the end of April. Exploring various topics related to territorial Kansas, these shows included a number of CKS Fellows who shared expertise on matters of Kansas history. These programs will be rebroadcast in the fall and by the summer they will be available at local libraries. KTWU has also been collaborating with CKS in the production of a series of 60-second TV spots focusing on territorial history.

KTWU has also enlisted the assistance of CKS Fellows in the production of "Black/White & Brown: Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka." Scheduled to premiere on KTWU at 8 p.m. on Monday, May 3rd, the program is being distributed nationwide by American Public Television. DVDs of the program along with additional video segments of historical interest are also being prepared for distribution.

The Civil War and More

Roy Bird, English Department, has a new book coming out this spring, *Civil War in Kansas*, which is part of a state series of small (112 pp.) books from Pelican Press, Gretna, LA. The artwork is by Professor **Michael Almond** of Washburn's Art Department. Bird will also make a presentation at the statewide Kansas library conference called "Publishing Trends Among Kansas Authors." His article, "What Pioneers Read," was in the Western Forum of Journal of the West this spring, and Bird was mentioned in Library Journal in an article called "Shelf Life," about professional librarians who are also professional writers.



Geology Field Trip Planned

Will Gilliland, Geology, will be doing the field trip for **Historical Geology of Kansas** on April 3 and again on April 4. The stops will include points of historical interest, in addition to those of geologic interest.



May 17, 2004 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the landmark "Brown v. Topeka Board of Education" Supreme Court decision ordering the desegregation of U.S. schools. In conjunction with the other celebrations being held in Topeka, Kansas, Washburn University is hosting an interdisciplinary academic conference May 18-19, 2004.

The conference will be held in the Kansas Room of Memorial Union on the Washburn University campus.

Telling the Tale: Narrating "Brown v. Board"

Tuesday, May 18, Conference Program

	Registration
8:00-8:50 AM	Welcome Remarks
8:50-9:00 AM	Revisiting Brown: The Legal Case
9:00-10:15 AM	The Legal Context: The Challenge to Segregation
10:30-11:45 AM	Lunch
12:00-2:15 PM	Screening of KTWU-produced documentary “Black/White and Brown: Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka”
2:30-3:45 PM	The Cultural Context: Broader Meanings and Consequences
4:00-5:15 PM	Keynote Speaker: Dr. James Boyer
5:30-6:30 PM	Viewing of the Walter O. Evans Collection, Mulvane Art Museum Wine Reception in the Courtyard
6:30-8:30 PM	Dinner Effect of Brown decision on Public Administrators

Wednesday, May 19, Conference Program

	Registration
8:00-8:50 AM	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Carol. Ascher
9:00-10:15 AM	The Social Context: Topeka and the Midwest
10:30-11:45 AM	Lunch
12:00-1:30 PM	Meet the Playwright: Dialogue with Marcia Cebulska, playwright of “Now Let Me Fly,” commissioned for the 50th anniversary celebration
1:45-3:00 PM	Echoes of Brown
3:15-4:30 PM	Novelists and Poets Use the “Brown v. Board” Case in Their Work

[Link to Directions to Washburn University](#)
[PDF downloadable file showing location of Memorial Union](#)

On Getting Snookered—by Tom Schmiedeler, Geography

Fred and I sensed that some thing was amiss shortly after entering the Idle Hour Tavern on the square in Clay Center, but we couldn't fathom what it was. Fred is a "tube bender," that is, a neon artist and sometime sign-maker from Salina, and he and I were enjoying idle hours on one of our bi-annual trips from Salina to Clay Center to shoot snooker.

For those ignorant of this pastime, snooker is a pool game shot on tables that sometimes appear to be the size of airport runways. The game starts with red balls in the rack and numbered balls from two to seven on designated spots. For most of the amateurs who play it, snooker is not a challenging game; it is an impossible game—a cantankerous and hard-headed old man of a game that rarely reveals the sunny-side of its disposition. There are no "ducks," that is, easy shots in snooker. Every one is contested by narrow pockets, lots of "green" between cue and object ball, and rules as rigid as a straight jacket. Penalties for infractions make the Inquisition seem like a slap on the wrist: at least four and up to seven points can be potentially deducted for each foul. And there are many ways to foul, not the least of which is the situation associated with the game's namesake: when the path from the cue to the object ball is blocked by other balls, you are SNOOKERED!

In fact, according to Fred Ferretti writing for *Gourmet* magazine (May, 1990), the term "snookers" was a slang corruption of the French word "neuf," or new, and was descriptive for greenhorn cadets in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, England. This usage was applied by Sir Neville Chamberlain (no, not the statesman who got diplomatically snookered) to a modification he had made to the game of "black pool" while at a British officers' club at Jubbulpore in a tea-growing region of southern India. Chamberlain related the story: "One of our party failed to hole a coloured ball close to a corner pocket and I called out to him, 'Why, you're a regular snooker.' I had to explain the definition of the word, and to soothe the feelings of the culprit I added that we were all, so to speak, snookers at the game, so it would be very appropriate to call the game 'Snooker'" (*Gourmet*, May 1990, 146).

Still, there is much about the game that rises above the level of frustration imposed on the hapless souls who seek to master its challenges. For example, near the end of the game only numbered balls, worth twenty-seven total points, remain to be shot in rotation and pocketed for the last time. If one can go on a "run" at that time, there is the possibility of being like the long distance runner who just catches the leader at the wire. A run at any time is very

In fact, television, along with VCR's and video games, has probably played a role in the decline of the game specifically and of snooker halls generally. Just as in Britain where many rural pubs have gone by the wayside because people prefer to now drink their beers and watch the "telly" at home instead of having a "chin wag" in the pub, community activity has focused less on traditional community places. Or maybe the decline, suggested by the title of Robert Putnam's book *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of an American Community*, can be attributed to the inability of a changing culture to express community in traditional ways. In this context the appearance in the 1960s of stubby, coin-operated eight-ball tables with pockets the size of mine entrances should have come as no surprise. Admittedly, there is a level of skill associated with playing games on these tables, but because the games usually last about as long as a trip to the restroom, they are more exemplary of the instant gratification associated with today's fast-paced lifestyle, as well as the desire for higher proprietary profits, than with meritorious expertise.

Whatever the reasons, the traditional snooker or billiard hall (a general term for businesses with a variety of pool tables, though billiards itself is a carom game played on a table without pockets) is barely hanging on in Kansas and elsewhere. Salina, Minneapolis, North Topeka and Clay Center (*The Farmers*, formerly located on a lateral street west of the square, was another billiard hall in Clay Center), are places where snooker halls have closed in the past twenty years. There have been many others over the decades. Sanborns Fire Insurance maps from the late nineteenth century show multiple billiard halls in nearly every large town; even small places of a few hundred had at least one. Most snooker halls were highly standardized, conditioned as they were by 25 x 125 foot business lots that had become characteristic features of urban planning in Midwestern and Plains towns after the Civil War. With such dimensions, the bar was placed near the front along one of the long side walls, with booths directly opposite along the other side wall, and perhaps some table seating between bar and booths. Beyond were pool tables of all types placed laterally across the remaining space; proprietors usually crammed a cubby-hole restroom in one of the back corners. Wooden floors, which required a periodic swabbing with linseed oil, were underfoot.

And, oh yes, there was the ceiling—which gets me back to what Fred and I quickly realized was different about the Idle Hour when we walked in some years ago. Above us was no longer the familiar suspended ceiling with its grimy acoustic tiles of

satisfying for most players because with this game one can be shooting relatively well, that is, consistently rattling the rims of the pockets, but having little in the way of points to show for it (consistently making red balls worth one point each and not the obviously higher-value numbered balls, which can be shot only after a red ball is pocketed, is another way of not filling one's pockets). Snooker, too, teaches and demands concentration. Televisions oozing slime and juke boxes blaring obnoxious music are piranhas eating voraciously at the game's continuity and enjoyment.

ground, pulped and pressed cardboard, but the magnificent original pressed tin tastefully painted a bronze brown. Newly painted walls, whose upper thirds were exposed for the first time in decades, and close to original light fixtures accentuated the ceiling. A popcorn machine along with Boulevard wheat beer are recent additions that help make the Idle Hour not only a Clay Center landmark but increasingly a Kansas treasure awaiting discovery.



Faculty Colloquium on Food Studies



In the Fall of 2004, the Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies will co-sponsor a Faculty Colloquium on Food Studies. The colloquium, to be run by Center Fellow Tom Averill, will consist of ten weeks of common readings, faculty presentations, critiques of papers and discussion of this relatively new field of scholarship. Averill notes that, "The Center for Kansas Studies seems a natural sponsor because we are an agricultural state, because many of the ethnic groups in our state have such rich food traditions, and because Fellows from the Center have expressed an interest in participating in the Faculty Colloquium."

Although faculty are still in the application process, topics of papers might include a psychologist's interest in food-related disorders, a biologist's study of genetically altered food, an artist's use of food as art object, a literary scholar's interest in food as metaphor in current fiction, an anthropologist's study of local restaurant traditions, or a math professor's linkage of calendars and time to cycles of planting and harvesting.

The last Faculty Colloquium took up the subject of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and its implications then and now. The Center for Kansas Studies was richly represented in that experience, and has ongoing programming as a result of that participation.

For further details, contact **Tom Averill** at x. 1448, or at tom.averill@washburn.edu

The Mulvane Art Museum at Washburn University presents:

The Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art

Sponsored by Capitol Federal Savings

Presentation by Walter O. Evans

Friday, 23 April, 7 p.m

in the Garvey Fine Arts Center,

Choral Rehearsal Room 143

Sponsored by the Swogger Foundation

Mulvane Art Museum Spring Family Day

Saturday, 24 April, 12 - 3 p.m.
in the Mulvane Art Museum:
Hands-On Art Projects, Music, and Gallery
Activities.

“Freedom of Expression” Video Series

Facilitated by WU Associate Professor of
Sociology and Anthropology Cheryl Childers
Saturdays at 1:30 p.m.
29 May, 5 June, and 12 June



WU View

The WU View is a series of talks that takes an interdisciplinary approach to a work of art or exhibition in the Mulvane Art Museum. Washburn faculty are invited to share their point of view.

Tuesday, 27 April, 5:15 p.m.

Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and
Assistant Professor of History, Bruce Mactavish

Tuesday, 4 May, 5:15 p.m.

Associate Professor of English, Mary Sheldon

Tuesday, 1 June, 5:15 p.m.

Chair/ Professor of Theatre Paul Prece

Tuesday, 8 June, 5:15 p.m.

Associate Professor of Music, Tom Morgan



**Separate But Not Equal: Exploring the Ramifications of Brown v. Board
High School Art Exhibition**

7 May - 26 May in the Andrew J. and Georgia Neese Gray Theatre

The Mulvane Art Museum and Washburn University's Art Department are hosts

Planner of this event:
Amanda Martin Hamon

See also, [The Walter O. Evans Collection of African American Art](#)

 Return to [Kansas Resources](#)

 Return to the [Center for Kansas Studies](#)

Contact webmaster@washburn.edu with questions or comments.