

Charles H. Fisher

"Slumber is not in the tents of your fathers; the world advances, advance with it."



Every Western student has told someone to "meet at the fountain." However, not many know the true name of "the fountain," Fisher Fountain, or that it's dedicated to the fourth president who served Western, Charles H. Fisher.

Fisher became president of Bellingham Normal School (Western) in 1923. He arrived from Pennsylvania with extensive experience; he had been Professor of Education and Psychology at Swarthmore College and an executive in the Department of Public Instruction at Harrisburg College. His roots in education extended further -- before Western he was president of Bloomsburg (Pa.) State Normal School.

At Bellingham Normal, Fisher raised the standards of professional education considerably between 1923 and 1939. The original requirement for obtaining a teaching degree was one year of classes; he raised the requirement to three years. Fisher also sought to include different curricula that emphasized general cultural development, creating a group of general education classes. This increase laid the foundation of a four-year college program. On Feb. 9, 1933, the state legislature gave authorization to Bellingham Normal School to issue Bachelor of Arts degrees in Education. In 1937, Bellingham Normal School became Western Washington College of Education, reinforcing its growing reputation as a prime training institution for educators.

In addition to expanding the educational program, Fisher also expanded the actual size of Western's campus. In 1923, Western was considered a small Normal School, consisting of a main building, heating plant, and a dormitory. Fisher helped bring two more new buildings, the library in 1928 and the gym in 1935, in addition to expansion of the old buildings.

Prompted by concerned community, student and faculty members, as well as the Board of Trustees, Gov. Clarence D. Martin asked Fisher to leave Western on July 14, 1939. The governor claimed the reason behind firing Fisher was the "lack of tact" Fisher possessed and that the decision would benefit the college. Amongst the ten charges presented to the board by a community committee in April 1935, Fisher was accused of expressing his liberal leanings and non-traditional religious ideas at the college.

Mabel Zoe Wilson

"Why do we do this?...It is because we believe a life without books is a meager existence and because we want to give our students every possible chance during their student days to know them."



Before Mabel Zoe Wilson set foot upon Western's campus, the library was a study hall tucked within the second floor of Old Main, the only large building perched on the edge of the clearcut swamps of Sehome Hill. Western was then called Whatcom Normal School. Wilson was hired in 1902 upon completion of a bachelor of arts degree at Ohio University as a full-time librarian; a student served as the part-time librarian previously. With a bookcase full of textbooks and a pile of magazines, Wilson shaped and constructed the vast learning resource that community members and students rely upon today -- the Wilson Library.

Wilson's passion for learning and literature fueled the library's birth. "Why do we do this?...It is because we believe a life without books is a meager existence and because we want to give

our students every possible chance during their student days to know them," Wilson answered in April, 1912.

The accomplishments that resulted from this belief had a phenomenal impact on students' education at Western. Four-to-five hundred books filled the scant bookcases that first faced Wilson in 1902. She took the library and organized the textbooks in the Dewey Decimal System and hand-wrote a card catalog of all the library's materials. At the close of 1902, the library acquired approximately 2,000 more books to add to its collection. Wilson also compiled a picture file, hand-copying illustrations found in the back of unabridged dictionaries with India ink.

During the next few years, the library grew and devoured the second floor of Old Main. The library began to grow and thrive on its own, which allowed Wilson to leave in 1909 to obtain a Bachelor in Library Sciences degree from the New York State Library School in Albany, which had been founded by Melville Dewey. Wilson did not stop for a breath after her degree; she helped organized the Washington Library Association which she served as the vice-president.

The library was housed in its own building in 1928, complete with a staff of 6 librarians. The following year, Wilson served as president of the Northwestern District Library Associations, a position that enabled her to become a charter member of many library committees state-wide. For example, she helped the state organize the first survey to determine library needs within communities; in 1935 a bill was passed to provide rural library services.

One of her most memorable contributions was obtaining a \$9,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation in 1938 to purchase non-curricular books for the library. The grant was the only grant of its caliber and type to be awarded to a school west of the Mississippi.

Wilson kept striving for more books and better library services. She traveled extensively across the country, visiting other institutions and studying library systems. As a very active independent woman, she also was constantly "motoring" throughout the Northwest to visit friends and libraries.

In 1945, Wilson retired with the rank of Professor Emeritus of Library Science, however, her momentum did not cease. She still was a very active member of the local community; her apartment was only a few blocks away from the university. Eventually, Wilson became blind, yet learned Braille to keep reading her most precious treasure -- books. She never did get to see or touch the 1962 extension of the library in 1962, when wings were added to the original building. Seven-hundred friends, faculty and students who were members of the Friends of Mabel Zoe Wilson petitioned the Board of Trustees to dedicate the library in her name. The dedication ceremony was held on April 15, 1964. Unfortunately, Wilson was unable to attend the ceremony due to a broken shoulder resulting from falling down some stairs. She never recovered from the injury and died on June 1, 1964.

Paul Woodring

"In a society of free men, the proper aim of education is to prepare an individual to make wise decisions. All else is but contributory."



With dedication and perseverance, Paul Woodring built the College of Education's standards to the excellence they demonstrate today. In 1989, Western named the College of Education after Woodring, honoring his influential presence and major contributions..

Woodring came to Western in 1939, two years after he earned a doctorate in psychology at Ohio State University. His experiences in education range from Western's campus to smoking war zones. Woodring left Western during World War II to serve as an information and education officer on General Douglas MacArthur's staff. He returned to Western in 1946.

Woodring's leadership extended beyond the teaching realm. He was also an author; writing

several books on education, such as *Let's Talk Sense about Schools*, and articles for *Saturday Review* and many other periodicals. . He worked in New York for six years as an adviser to the Ford's Foundation Fund for the Advancement of Education while editing the education section for *Saturday Review*.

During his years at Western, he also contributed his private funds toward a scholarship for prospective teachers -- the Woodring scholarship. Instead of paying for a bone marrow transplant to help relieve a rare form of anemia, he gave \$90,000 to his scholarship fund. He also gave his estate to scholarship funds for arts and sciences majors and Fairhaven students.

Woodring died on Nov. 12, 1989. A memorial stated, "Paul will always be remembered as a distinguished academic, a poet and a humorist."