# **Minutes of the Center for Communal Studies Advisory Board Meeting**

**May 8, 2012**

## USI Campus – University Suite, University Center

**Members Present:** Dr. Casey Harison, Ms. Wendy Bredhold, Ms. Jennifer Greene, Dr. Don Janzen, Dr. Jane Johansen, Dr. Susan Matarese, Dr. Don Pitzer, Dr. Silvia Rode, Ms. Rachel Wright-Summerton, and Ms. Connie Weinzapfel

**Guests Present:** Ms. Martha Janzen, Mr. Gerry Adams, and Dr. Michael Dixon

**Administrative Assistant:** Ms. Marilyn Thielman

Following the lunch buffet, prior to the official meeting, Don Janzen distributed some homemade “disseminator cookies” that contained words of wisdom inside each, similar to “fortune cookies.” Each person read aloud the wise sayings.

The Center for Communal Studies Director Casey Harison welcomed Board members, expressing appreciation to those who came from out of town. He also welcomed guests Martha Janzen and Gerry Adams, as well as Assistant Dean of Liberal Arts Michael Dixon, attending for Dean Michael Aakhus. He then conveyed the regrets of Board members Mr. Matthew Graham and Dr. Tamara Hunt, who were unable to attend because of other commitments.

Harison called members’ attention to the extensive minutes from the last Center Board meeting on October 18, 2011. He asked for any additions or corrections. These were noted:

* Jane Johansen addressed the fact that Harison has been searching for grants for the Center, as indicated at the top of page 2. Concerning the Endeavor Grant, she reported that this year’s grant money was distributed very quickly, and she advised that we check *early* next year to see if we *qualify* for that particular Endeavor Grant.
* Don Pitzer just wanted to clarify the meaning of “us” listed on page 6, on the third line under the comment listed under Janzen’s name, which reads in part: “will USI let *us* keep the money from those sales?” Pitzer wanted to make sure that Board members understand that “us” refers to the “Center for Communal Studies” rather than meaning that Janzen and Pitzer would personally keep the money. The word “us” will be replaced with the words “the Center.”
* Pitzer made one correction on page 7 under the seventh comment listed under Pitzer’s name concerning the Self-Study in 2001: The sentence “And, that headquarters would house all of the papers that are held in New Harmony” should be deleted since, undoubtedly, *not all of the papers* would be held there.

***There being no further corrections, Wendy Bredhold moved that the October 18, 2011 minutes be accepted. The motion was seconded by Don Pitzer, and all were in favor.*** Corrected minutes will be sent to all Board members.

**Don Janzen Report on Shiloh**

Janzen gave an update on his trips to gather archival information from Shiloh, the Christian community in Sulphur Springs, Arkansas. That community, which began in New York State in 1942, now consists of two residents who are intent on turning all of their community materials over to USI’s Rice Library Archives. Janzen has collected a wealth of information from Shiloh which he has been identifying, organizing, and cataloging so that it will become a very extensive collection for the Archives when he turns it all over to USI Archivist Jennifer Greene. Janzen shared some very interesting points:

* The community began when World War II veterans came together as a Bible School, and they didn’t want to leave.
* When they started purchasing property, they numbered their houses in a manner similar to the Zoar community.
* Shiloh never tried to withdraw from mainstream society.
* They started an early “911 service” and dispatched vehicles.
* One of their members became the Mayor of Sulphur Springs.
* The collection is unique in that they saved *everything*, which even includes original membership rolls and obituaries, their own written historical records, labels from their organic foods and business records of gross earnings, audio tapes of their morning religious services, books of funny sayings of their children along with poetry, *many* albums filled with photos, newspaper articles, and articles on each community member as well as a great many loose photos and articles; also, reels of film are being converted and will be identified by Janzen as his time permits.

In addition, Janzen graciously gifted the Center with another 2- x 3-foot framed collage of photos from the early days of the Shiloh Community. Included are photos of Shiloh’s founder, the first two children born in the community, musicians, and scenes from its bakery business. Before leaving on his last visit to Shiloh, Janzen was told that there is also a whole attic filled with materials still awaiting him. Thus, there is much more work to be done.

When Harison asked Janzen what kind of format he envisioned as a way of letting former Shiloh community members know about their collection being housed in USI’s Archives, he replied that sometime in the future we will be sent a list of the children from the community. Harison assured Board members that when everything is eventually turned over by Janzen and ready for public display, he will see that it will become a big event for Janzen and the Center.

Board members applauded Janzen’s tireless efforts and his reporting to the Board. Had a consensus been taken, members would undoubtedly agree that Martha Janzen, his wife, had summed up their feelings as well when she said, “Shiloh’s members think that God sent them Don Janzen!”

**Center Undergraduate and Graduate Prizes**

Harison called members’ attention to item #6 on page 2 of the Center’s Annual Report for 2011-2012 dated April 26, 2012, which had been sent to members earlier. He reviewed the fact that we received two undergraduate paper submissions and seven graduate paper submissions for the Center Prizes. He again thanked Board member Susan Matarese and Mr. David Swartz for judging the undergraduate papers. They selected Justin Bray of Brigham Young University to receive the $250 award for his paper on *The Lord’s Supper and Community in Early Mormon Utah.* Then, Harison again thanked Dr. Michael Strezewski and Dr. Christian Goodwillie for judging the graduate papers. They selected Stephen Vider of Harvard University to receive the $500 award for his paper on *“Brother You Are All I Have”: Gay Communes and the Reinvention of the Family.*

***Don Janzen made a motion that the Board accept the recommendations of both sets of judges for the two cash awards. Rachel Wright-Summerton seconded the motion, and all were in favor.***Direct pay forms will be initiated so that these awards are soon processed.

**Center Research Travel Grant**

According to Harison, the Center received a *record* five applications this year for its $2,000 Research Travel Grant by the May 1st deadline. These applications have just been given to the three judges for their review. When the recipient is decided, this information as well as the information concerning the Center Prize winners will be advertised at USI and in several communal studies newsletters according to Harison. He then thanked Board members Greene and Connie Weinzapfel for again agreeing to serve as judges along with Harison for this year’s Research Travel Grant.

**Center Annual Review and Current Initiatives**

Harison had earlier sent Board members the Center’s Annual Report for 2011-2012. Since this was the first one that he had written as the Center’s new director, he further explained some items listed. Then, he asked members if they had any questions concerning it and opened the meeting for discussion. Included below is the general input solicited from Board members concerning the Center’s past matters and its future plans:

* Concerning items 4 and 10, Harison indicated that during his earlier trip to Scotland this spring, he had hoped to make contact there with other persons who would be interested in researching here at the Center and the Rice Library Archives, such as last year’s Research Travel Grant winner, Franzi Bechtel of Frankfurt, Germany. She has kept in contact with him and Greene since returning to Germany, and she plans to come here again soon to do further research for her Ph.D. in history at the University of Frankfurt. Some contacts were made in Scotland which may prove to be beneficial in this regard in the future. Harison confirmed that travel expenses are included in the Research Travel Grant.
* Discussion concerning Item 14 about the 2014 conference for the 200th anniversary of New Harmony included these comments:

--Be sure to include subjects of a more collaborative inter-disciplinary nature, which

doesn’t really get pushed as much as it could be.

--USI’s core curriculum model is being redone. Ask professors to add courses that

are related to 2014 conference theme “capitalism and socialism” at both lower-

and upper-division.

--Work the theme of communalism and millennialism into that core model as well.

--Make sure that the conference call for papers draws papers with a range of

interests.

--A class in Communal Studies is not currently taught at USI since there is no longer

a professor on staff with that expertise.

--Several Board members expressed the desire to find ways to again teach subjects

related to these themes, even considering an on-line class if nothing else.

--Another reunion of Harmonists descendants is again being discussed for the 2014

New Harmony Bicentennial.

--The New Harmony Bicentennial lends itself to a symposium. A good time for a

symposium might be in March 2014. Albert Bates was suggested as “always a

good speaker.” The New Harmony Bicentennial Committee is currently looking at

speakers’ schedules and various activities throughout that year. The committee

is thinking about bringing Charles Durrett back to New Harmony for this

celebration. Also under consideration is presenting something about the

sustainability of small towns and villages and then engaging people who reside

in New Harmony.

--Members were informed that Ms. Missy Parkison, Community Engagement

Manager for Historic New Harmony, is also on the Center’s program committee

for the 2014 conference.

--The Center’s conference committee has already contacted some speakers who

seem quite interested. And, their fees appear to be reasonable.

--Gathering people together in New Harmony could be a good springboard for the

advancement of more interest in intentional communities. When Dr. Don Pitzer

did just that back in the 1970s, the Center for Communal Studies emerged as a

result.

* New books of interest to Board members were mentioned:

Pitzer’s *New Harmony Then and Now*. Pitzer thanked Harison for

for the Center’s recent book signing event promoting his book.

Pitzer and Janzen’s *Quotable Quotes.*

Janzen’s *Communal Rhymes: A Scholar’s Garden and Verses*.

Rachel Wright-Summerton’s *Spectrum: A Poetry Memoir*.

Arthur Bestor’s *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite*

*Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829, 2nd Edition.*

Pitzer wrote the Introduction for this book, which includes some of Bestor’s

own words. Greene indicated that she unfortunately has no way to

determine what books came to the Archives from Bestor, since the Library

didn’t track things at that time. Pitzer pointed out the fact that there are

120 books listed at the back of Bestor’s *Backwoods Utopias*.

* The lecture series must be reestablished. Future plans for the Center include one lecture per semester. In addition, securing a large grant might allow for a “scholar in residence” who would also advance communalism at USI. The International Communal Studies Association (ICSA) has a speakers list available to assist us. Young scholars must be captured; otherwise, our message will soon fade.
* Harison has a Power Point presentation that he would be happy to present to any group the Board suggests. And, we need to entice students to visit and become active in the Archives. Also, it would be helpful to enlist younger people like Bredhold on the Board of Advisors. Bredhold reminisced that as a student, she was fascinated by the teachings of Dr. Pitzer. She suggested an offering about “co-housing” since it would be appropriate for a university that has ties to New Harmony.
* Students sense that something is missing today, and they are attracted to terms such as “sustainability/co-housing/eco-villages.” We need to respond to those wanting a community and those wanting to study communities. There generally has to be a force to bring people into a community. Today households are growing with many people moving in together to share resources. Fear can be a great motivator, reflected in statements as, “We want to have enough water in the future.” Students need to hear about these matters. An excellent course subject would be “Lessons from Community.” We must generate passion for this kind of subject matter. That can be helped by teaching on campus and at the 2014 conference.
* Getting students to New Harmony always creates much interest among them. We need to increase the number of student visits there or even offer a class that is focused on New Harmony. Some institutions offer six weeks of intensive study for something like that.
* “Entrepreneurship” is one of the buzz words in business now. These communal groups have the spirit that must be carried over into entrepreneurship today. That

spirit was quite evident in the Shiloh community, which was the first to produce its own organic food products – a fine example of venture capitalism then.

* Harison asked for volunteers to serve with him on a Bylaws Committee with the goal of producing a mission statement and set of bylaws for the Center. Searching the records of the Center and the Archives has not produced results concerning any previous bylaws of the Center. Serving with Harison on the new Bylaws Committee will be Greene, Janzen, Johansen, and Pitzer. Johansen agreed to chair that committee. The committee’s recommendations can then be presented to the Board at their fall meeting.

There being no further discussion, Harison thanked Board members for their individual input and indicated that he felt it was a very productive meeting. The meeting adjourned around 2 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Thielman, Scribe