

Bobby Model Professorship and Excellence Fund help build schools in Peru



Emily Smith, Shane Epping, and Vanta Coda III stand for a photo in the middle of a work day in Peru

In Fall 2021, Shane Epping was hired as the first Bobby Model professor in University of Wyoming History. Little did he know that in his first year at UW, he would be able to take two fully funded students with him to Peru for a life-changing adventure.

The Model Professorship in Photojournalism in the Communication and Journalism Department was named in honor of Bobby Model, a UW graduate and *National Geographic* photographer who passed away in 2009.

At Wyoming, Epping wanted to provide students with photojournalism experience they never had before. He was inspired by a book, *Hand Delivered Hope*, written by his friend Jimi Cook, the director of Be The Change Volunteers (BTCV), a non-profit organization dedicated to education-focused development aid projects throughout the world.

"I thought to myself, it would be really neat to go on one of these trips to build schools," Epping said. "I started thinking about my new job, Bobby Model, what he did with his life, social justice,

making a difference with a camera, and in the end, this opportunity just seemed like a great combination of everything."

After reaching out to Be The Change, a private donor and BTCV sponsored two UW students to go to Peru. Epping used the Bobby Model Excellence Fund to pay for his part of the trip.

Vanta Coda III, an environmental natural resources and communication major from Duluth, Minnesota, and Emily Smith, a communication major from Lakewood, Colorado, traveled with Epping in July.

"The trip was 4,000 miles," Epping said. "Denver to Dallas, Dallas to Lima, and Lima to Iquitos. The only way to get to the destination from Iquitos was a four-hour boat ride on the Amazon River."

Once they arrived at El Chino village, it was hard work. Epping and his students joined a team of 12 others from various areas of the United States, and helped build the foundation for an elementary school, while also documenting their adventures by making pictures, videos and interviewing local residents.

"Most of it was manual labor but Vanta did a photo project through the eyes of the children," Epping said. "I did a project on the women in the village and interviewed them through a Spanish translator. Emily did a video project on the overall trip that is being used by Be The Change to recruit future students."

Throughout the experience, Bobby Model was ever-present in Epping's mind.

"I have seen some of Bobby's work, especially toward the end of his life, where he wanted to have a positive effect on the world," he said. "Our time with Be The Change focused on the convergence of global engagement through photojournalism and social justice. While I was in Peru, I was thinking about how Bobby's spirit was with us as we worked and made connections with children, their parents, and their grandparents."

(Model Peru, cont. on p. 2)

Like Model did in his travels, Epping, Coda, and Smith went to a remote area of the world to capture stories based off of other people's experiences.

"When I went to Peru, I went with the mindset that anything can happen," Coda said. "There's not just going to be a story waiting for me there, I had to find it."

Coda focused his photojournalism around ethically showing what it is like being a student and a child in this small village in Peru. He wanted to see how children view their own world and how the community is as tight-knit as it is.

"This trip gave us an opportunity to do very ethical photojournalism but also understand the world around



Shane Epping meets in Cody with Bob Model, father of Bobby Model, for the first time.

us," Coda said. "I thank Bobby Model for his vision and his family for opportunities like this through the professorship and the fund."

In just its first year of existence, the Bobby Model Professorship and Excellence Fund has fostered an environment for creative and ethical learning.

"Through our camera lenses, we were able to provide people who have never been to Peru a look into these students' everyday lives, how their community operates, and a sense of belonging," Epping said.

More opportunities for UW students will be available in the future because of the legacy of Bobby Model and this fund.

COJO Graduate Mark Pedri screens his documentary film "Dear Sirs" on Veterans Day at UW

Communications and Journalism graduate Mark Pedri screened his documentary film *Dear Sirs* at the Wyoming Union on Veterans Day 2022. Prior to the screening, Pedri gave a short synopsis of the film and recalled what drew him to this story. The night continued with a full showing of the film followed by a Q&A session with Pedri and Producer/Co-Director Carrie McCarthy.

The screening at the University of Wyoming marks *Dear Sirs'* 44th showing. Pedri and McCarthy have presented the film from rural Wyoming to historic Germany and everywhere in between. However, coming back to UW holds a special place in Pedri's heart.

"The COJO department has been a part of this journey even though it's been 10 years since I was here," Pedri said. "For every university, you have such a meaningful time when you are there so when you come back, there are aspects of that. You also get to see how the department has evolved."

The film follows Pedri and McCarthy's journey into learning more about his grandfather, Silvio. Little was known about Silvio's past throughout Pedri's young life. All that changed when he and McCarthy stayed the night



Mark Pedri speaks with the audience following the screening of the film.

in Silvio's untouched house years after his passing. After finding relics and letters from Silvio's days in WWII as a Nazi war prisoner, Pedri and McCarthy embarked on a journey of discovery. In the middle of winter, they biked the same route in Germany that Silvio took as a prisoner of war.

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(Dear Sirs, Cont. from p.2)

“History is fragile, so if we do not have a connection to it, it disappears,” Pedri said. “The hope is to allow people to develop a connection with this part of history, separate it from the statistics and to meet somebody in that moment.”

Following the film, Marty Martinez, director of the UW Veterans Service Center, moderated the Q&A with Pedri and McCarthy. Family members, veterans, Pedri’s former instructors and members of the Laramie community were in attendance. Tears were shed, laughter was belted, and camaraderie commenced.

The film taught audiences that each individual story matters. No perspective of WWII is the same, and by looking into Silvio’s story, many more stories emerged.

For more information about *Dear Sirs*, its creators, or how to view the film, visit dearsirsfilm.com.



Official poster of 'Dear Sirs' guiding audiences toward the room where the film was shown.

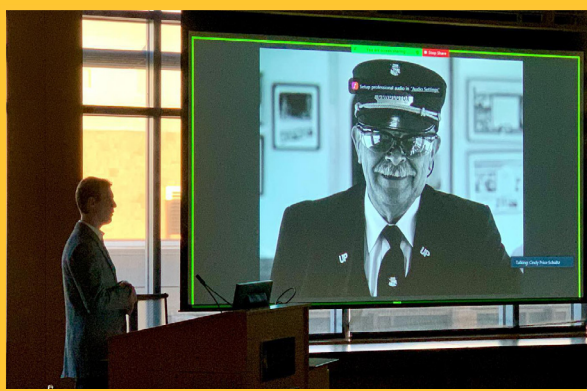
COJO department hosts 2022 Larsh Bristol Photojournalism presentation “Wyoming’s Heritage to the Rails”

The Union Pacific Railway has been a staple of Wyoming’s history since 1867 and helped establish it as a state. But a University of Wyoming student is showing us that it is not an artifact from a bygone era, but is still an important industry today.

Vanta E. Coda III, the recipient of the 2022 Larsh Bristol Photojournalism Fellowship, spent the summer photographing the legacy of the Union Pacific Railway in Wyoming and understanding its modern-day importance. Coda gave his presentation about this on October 21, 2022 in Coe Library. Other presenters included donor Kendie Hartman, photojournalism instructor Shane Epping, and Dept. Head Cindy Price Schultz.

The Larsh Bristol Photojournalism Fellowship is an annual award for UW students to support strong visual storytelling projects. It is named in honor of Larsh Bristol, a UW journalism alum who passed away in 2006.

Having a father that worked in the railroad, the inspiration for his



Vanta Coda III presents his photos in front of his peers, family and friends of Larsh Bristol, and members of the Union Pacific Railway

presentation, “Wyoming’s Heritage to the Rails,” came from a place of childhood wonder. He saw the beautiful stories encapsulated in the railway and the people who help it function.

“I wanted to show people that the railway is still here and still positively impacts people,” Coda said. “It is not just about the trains. It is about the people who work behind the scenes on the railroad who are not recognized enough.”

During the summer, the environmental natural resources and

communication major from Duluth, Minnesota, focused on capturing moments and experiences from the eyes of Union Pacific railway workers and enthusiasts.

“Places like old town sites will be with us forever, but people move like the wind, so they will not always be here,” he said. “I took it upon myself to shed light and talk to as many retirees as possible while also looking towards the future of the railroads.”

The Bristol Photojournalism Fellowship has been hosted by the Communication and Journalism Department since 2008.

“Vanta’s presentation showcased the quality photojournalism that Larsh Bristol stood for and moved it into the 21st century,” Price Schultz said. “What a great way to show Wyoming history!”

Others in attendance included Coda’s family and friends, members of the Union Pacific Railway, and donors Sharon and Jerry Linhart (by Zoom).

Late UW debater Mack Kramer honored with the Mack Kramer NEOWISE Award for Character and Excellence and the Mack Kramer Excellence Fund

Mack Kramer was a student and debater on the University of Wyoming debate team. Kramer tragically passed away in September 2021. The Mack Kramer NEOWISE Award for Character and Excellence and the Mack Kramer Excellence Fund were established to honor them and their dedication to their peers and the Wyoming debate program.

Coming from Rock Springs High School, Kramer had limited debate experience, but with their determination, spirit and hard work, Director of Debate Matt Liu said they excelled at the collegiate level by winning the junior varsity division in their first college tournament. “Not only was Mack a hard worker and skilled debater, they thrived in the pursuit of making the team better. They truly got the ‘many hands make light work’ motif and they were the quintessential team player,” Liu said. “Virtually every UW speech and debate initiative we have done recently has Mack’s fingerprints on them.”

Mack desired greatness and had a competitive spirit all while being supportive of others. In 2021, the UW debate team created the Team Wyoming initiative to help high school students across the state of Wyoming with free debate mentorship. Liu told Mack to take a step back from the initiative so they had more time to work on their own debating. Instead of taking Liu’s advice, Mack coached students for free on their own.

Beyond their debate career, Kramer will be most remembered for their spirit, personality and infectious behavior. “Mack’s work ethic made them an incredible debater, but their warmth made them an incredible person,” Liu said. “Whether it was normalizing the words ‘dingus’ or ‘buffoon,’ inspiring a Change.org petition to ban ‘your mom’ jokes or always checking in, Mack put the community above themselves.”

Following Mack’s passing, Liu and the debate team worked together to come up with significant ways to honor Kramer. The UW debate team hosts the annual University of Wyoming High School Debate Tournament. To honor Mack’s legacy, the debate team, along with the help of the Communication and Journalism department, created the Mack Kramer NEOWISE Award for Character and Excellence. Instead of the traditional debate awards whose focus depends on competitive success, this award is given to the high school student who best exemplifies what Mack is remembered for: excellence in character.

The NEOWISE Comet is linked with this award because of Mack’s special connection to that astral body. NEOWISE was the brightest comet during their lifetime. Liu and his team felt it appropriate to link Mack’s award with something that signified, exemplified and paid homage to their life.

“There is an extensive process to receiving the award,” Liu said. “We have an executive committee that evaluates nomination letters. From there, they decide who best deserves the award and makes a final decision. We then give the award out at the University of Wyoming High School Debate Tournament.”

Those who win are awarded a couple important items. First, winners receive a personal glass trophy to keep for themselves. Second, a perpetual plaque, which serves as a traveling trophy, is given to the school/team in which the student is a member.

On top of the tangible awards, with the help of the UW Foundation and the COJO Department, Liu has initiated the Mack Kramer Excellence Fund. Liu is currently the principal donor, but Mack’s family and other UW alumni are supporting the award in significant ways.



Mack Kramer



The Mack Kramer trophy and NEOWISE award sits among the other debate trophies students can win at the UW Debate tournament. (Photo courtesy of Matt Liu).

(Mack Kramer, Cont. from p. 4)

Upon the creation of the Excellence Fund, Liu plans that in five years from its inception (academic year 2026-2027), the fund will be endowed so that a \$1,000 scholarship will be given yearly to each high school student who wins the award.

"I do not think we will see someone else like Mack for quite a long time," Liu said. "They were the most incredibly hard worker, but also the most incredibly kind and jovial person. They weren't just adored by the UW debate team, they were an icon throughout the state."

Kramer's legacy will continue to live on through

the Mack Kramer NEOWISE award and the Mack Kramer excellence fund. Through these endeavors, their spirit and character will live on and inspire up and coming debaters to be like them -- not only in competitiveness and success, but in character and passion.

The second annual Mack Kramer award winner will be named in February at the UW High School Debate Tournament.

If you have additional questions about the award and excellence fund, contact Liu at mliu6@uwyo.edu or COJO department head Dr. Cindy Price Schultz at cprice@uwyo.edu.

Kazakhstan and Wyoming - an unlikely but strong relationship ten years in the making

2022 marks ten years since now-emeritus professor of journalism at the University of Wyoming, Mike Brown, fostered a relationship with Kazakhstan National University (KazNU). The relationship between KazNU and COJO continues today.

Brown initiated conversations with KazNU in 2011 following the admittance of Kazakh student Askhat Yerkimbay to the Communication and Journalism graduate program. Yerkimbay graduated with a Master's degree from al-Farabi KazNU before applying to UW. Both Brown and the Vice-Rector of the Journalism Department at KazNU agreed that a partnership would be of interest to both institutions. In 2012, the cooperation agreement was signed. Since then, more than 25 KazNU graduate students have attended the UW internship program.

"The US Embassy in Kazakhstan recently recognized our cooperation as a particularly productive

partnership," Brown said. "Our expectation is that the relationship will continue to flourish."

Kazakh students have gained practical knowledge in the realms of communication, journalism and

about feature stories and their differences from other types of stories; Director of public radio Bob Beck shared his experience in public media radio; and with Dr. Sandy Hsu, we discussed her

quantitative research on cultural differences between Taiwanese and American people."

Beyond the classroom, NazKU students attended many cultural events in Wyoming with the help of Price Schultz and Brown.

Karlyga Myssayeva, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Journalism at KazNU, and Brown have fostered a productive and cooperative partnership even years after

the initial agreement.

"Dr. Myssayeva has become a valued friend, and the many students who have visited UW for their summer internship have spoken highly of their visit," Brown said.

Myssayeva shared a similar level of gratitude towards Brown.



Professor emeritus Mike Brown meets with Kazakh students at UW

other facets of research in their time with the COJO faculty.

"We have met with many highly qualified professors and enjoyed it very much," Ayazhan Oralbekova, a Master's student from KazNU said regarding their time at UW. "Shane Epping gave us detailed information about photojournalism and shared hints on how to shoot a perfect photo as a journalist; Mitzi Stewart talked

(Kazakh, Cont. p. 6)

(Kazakh, Cont. from p. 5)

“The most important thing we have to mention when we are talking about the cooperation between the two universities is the leading role of emeritus professor Mike Brown,” Myssayeva said. “He built a good foundation, not just for research and academic issues, but he also gives financial support for the al-Farabi KazNU master’s students’ summer internship at UW.”

KazNU may send its students to UW for internships, but visitation goes both ways. Brown has been to Kazakhstan four times since the inception of the relationship: 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. UW professor George Gladney taught journalism courses at KazNU in 2013. Furthermore, Department Head Cindy Price Schultz is hoping to continue the tradition by visiting Kazakhstan in 2023.

Last year, COJO and KazNU worked together to alter the structure of the internship program. More formal lectures were added, as well as a cultural tour and the visitation of local media organizations. Lectures were conducted by Price Schultz, Sandy Hsu, Tracey Patton, Kaatie Cooper, Shane Epping, Mitzi Stewart, Dilnoza Khasilova and Brown.

The relationship today not only serves as a program that Kazakh students can use to advance their academic endeavors, it provides UW students with global perspectives they may otherwise not have.

“The world has become a smaller place in a way because of communication forms,” Price Schultz said.

“Students need to be exposed to globalization. These visiting Kazakh students help our students learn more about the bigger picture of journalism in the world.

“The COJO Department is grateful for the partnership and will continue to make sure relations between UW and KazNU are fostered for Wyoming and Kazakh students for years to come.”

UW hosts WHSSPA for first time

Nearly 200 aspiring journalists, representing 13 high schools, attended workshops on Nov. 7 to learn about many journalism-related subjects.

“We enjoyed hosting the Wyoming High School Student Press Association for the first time,” Cindy Price Schultz, head of the Department of Communication and Journalism said. “The students had a great opportunities to learn about writing, design, photography and other important topics from COJO faculty and other UW and regional experts. The convention is a catalyst to help high schools all over the state get great ideas for their yearbooks and newspapers.”

The event began with keynote speaker, Aaron Ontiveroz, a COJO alum and visual journalist specializing in sports and portraiture at *The Denver Post*. Student breakout sessions were scheduled throughout the day and included a visit to the Arena Auditorium to see the WyoVision broadcast team.

“We were excited to have the biggest academic institution in the state step in to host the event,” Dan Morris, WHSSPA Vice President, said.

WINTER 2023 COJO FACULTY KUDOS

- Shane Epping won first place in the Faculty Division of the 2022 UW Global Engagement Photo Contest.

- Dr. Kristen Landreville and Dr. Cindy Price Schultz published a paper with COJO Graduate alum Joel Funk titled “Taking Alternative Routes? Examining Mainstream and Alternative Media Consumption Based on Political Identity.”

- Epping had a photo selected for “Spot On #3,” an exhibit at D’Art Gallery in Denver, Colorado, juried by

Doug Kacena of K Contemporary Gallery. The photo was titled, *Spring in Wyoming*.

- Epping had a book review published in Visual Communication Quarterly (Volume 29, 2022 - Issue 3, July-September 2022), *O.N. Pruitt’s Possum Town: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South*, by Berkley Hudson.

- Landreville was invited to be listed as an expert speaker for the U.S. Department of State’s US Speaker

Program. The program fosters unique perspectives and ideologies to connect those from the U.S. and those who are not. Landreville was chosen for her expertise in misinformation.

- Epping presented a paper at the 36th Visual Communication Conference (Cannon Beach, OR) entitled “Visual Analysis of Living with Cancer as seen through the lens of poststructuralism.”