



Memorial Tributes  
**Professor William A. Chaney**



**Emeritus Professor of History and  
George McKendree Steel Professor of Western Culture**

**May 18, 2013**



May 18 is the feast day for Saint Eric. It doesn't sound as grand as the Feast of Saint Ambrose or of Saint Augustine, nor as eccentric and therefore as memorable as, say, the feast day of The Two Hewalds, missionaries to Frisia who were martyred in 695, distinguished from each other as "The Dark" and "The Fair." Or the Feast of Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins.

But Saint Eric is actually a very appropriate saint to have associated with Bill Chaney's memory. Saint Eric was the king of Sweden, dying in 1160. As we all know, Bill's primary scholarly interest was in saint-kings, especially those of the Old North. We know, too, that one of Bill's favorite teaching topics was the Vikings (Bill, having offered several courses on the Vikings at Bjorklunden).

*—David S. Spear '73*



Dr Chaney had a huge influence on my life as a student at Lawrence even though I only took one course from him, Western Civilization, as a freshman. He was on sabbatical my sophomore year, but when he came back, we continued a friendly relationship. I loved the way he always called me "Miss Hamilton" when we met. I later got to know him even better when I was allowed to participate in the London Study Program as an alumna during the winter of 1993. Then I took two more courses from him, but only as an auditor. I think our common bond was a love of England, especially Oxford, where he spent many of his sabbaticals and I did two summer school programs sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the late 80s. His enthusiasm for history was infectious, and it remains one of my favorite fields of study. I owe him a lot, and I am especially glad that my class had a reunion last year, and I was able to visit with him, never dreaming it would be the last time I would see him. I thought he was immortal!

*—Mary Hamilton Burns '62*



Dr. Chaney was a big part of our lives. Wally was in his first class at Lawrence. I had him as a professor for several classes and our son, Jim, had him for several classes as well as going to London with him for a term. For us he represented a large part of what we know as Lawrence.

*—Barbara Adrian Karst '59 and Walter Karst '56*



I am proud to say that I was a student of Professor Chaney. He was my advisor during my senior year, 1970-71, and to this day I have the papers I wrote in his Medieval Civilization class. I made a very modest contribution (public school teacher salary!) to the Chaney endowment fund in 1999. One day in September of 1999, my husband brought in the mail and said, "Who would be writing you from England?" Merely by glancing at the handwriting on the envelope, I was transported to Sage Hall, seeing myself reading the comments on my Medieval Civ. exam written in the same spidery, cramped script. Bill Chaney had taken the time from his excursion to the White Swan Hotel in Northumberland to send his former student a handwritten thank-you for my contribution, which ended with an assurance that he, did indeed remember me after all those years. The letter is something I will always treasure.

—*Norah Barrett McCue '71*



In January 1998 while visiting Appleton I had a moment in which I thought I might be hallucinating. There was Mr. Chaney, in the middle of a group of students, seated at a table in a Thai restaurant on College Avenue. Back at home, later, I ventured a line. The letter partly assuaged my guilt at not having gone up to him; he had come up to me after all, in the Student Union in 1964, and complimented me on a performance I had given in a play. "That's a pleasure to hear," I said. "It was a pleasure to see," he said, words that meant much to one of his Western Civ students of 3 years before.

When I learned there would be a William A. Chaney Fund for Excellence in History I hastened to contribute. Within days I received a note of acknowledgement, hand-written on a Monet water lilies card from the Met. Its words would not have been inappropriate had my gift been huge. It was anything but. At the top before "Dear Virginia (if I may be so informal after all these years)" he had written "Monday, 24th November, 2010: Death of Philip IV ("le Bel"), 1314."

—*Virginia Allen '64*



He was the finest professor and teacher I ever had!

—*Kristine Strom Erickson '68*



As a student at the London Campus during the fall term (c. 1970), in Professor Chaney's Medieval History class, I was assigned to write a paper on medieval monastic life by visiting the ruins of a monastery in Yorkshire; the experience taught me quite a bit about the real work of a historian dealing with "primary sources," and not merely doing conventional hard-copy library research.

As a high school world history teacher, I would sit in on any classes Dr. Chaney was conducting on my staff development days. He was always cordial and gracious about my presence, even joking with his students about, "Here's what history teachers do on their days off"

—*Michael C. Breitzman '73*



A Great Teacher Remembered - I have long felt that the measure of a great teacher is not how she/he inspires great students but how a teacher motivates those average kids who so often fall through the cracks. Scared, nervous, and immature, I was a member of the latter group in 1965. I was not a member of the distinguished salon nor was I smart. I was conscientious; and this fast-talking, engaging professor enthused me about a history I knew nothing about, about authors I had never hear of and about an era that was not dark but rather a rich tapestry of people and events artfully woven by Chaney himself. Thank you, Dr. Chaney, for inspiring me and all of those like me to continue to love the annals of medieval history and classical literature.

—*Mary Jean Vaubel Montgomery '69*



The class of 1956 has always considered Dr. Chaney as part of our class as he arrived on campus the fall of 1952 with us as freshmen. He was the quintessential professor, scholar, author and dedicated teacher who inspired all who knew him. Dr. Chaney brought history to life; even in his 8 a.m. Ancient History Class. A class with him was fun.

Dr Chaney was the inspirational speaker at all of the 1956 class reunions. He took us back to the fifties at Lawrence remembering how things have changed. He was an entertaining speaker. He also participated in events at the University. He was the faculty advisor for the Lawrence United Charities. I was student chairman for the drive. It was his suggestion that the money donated would be spent on American classic books to be sent to a University in Germany as they had none. The books were bought under his supervision and sent. He was always involved in campus activity. He gave inspiration to so many people. He helped make Lawrence an outstanding liberal arts school.

—*Waneta Esch Araneo '56*



I have two fond memories of Prof Chaney that demonstrated his quick wit and his appreciation for humor, one memory from 1967 and one from last summer.

Prof Chaney's lectures were impeccably timed. They ended plus or minus 30 seconds from the ringing of the bell that signaled the ending and beginning of class periods in Main Hall. Prof Elizabeth Koffka, a history department faculty colleague, could be formidable figure who was not given to holding back in any way. On the other hand, Prof Chaney was totally undaunted by her — unlike many of us undergraduates. One day, when his lecture had not run but about 10 seconds past the bell, there was a loud pounding on the windowless classroom door. Without missing a beat, Prof Chaney said through the unopened door, "What is it, Elizabeth?" whereupon Prof Koffka opened the door forcefully and sternly remonstrated Prof Chaney: "Bill, the bell has rung, and you know I have a mid-term in here next period." With a wry smile, Prof Chaney replied, "Well, good luck. I hope you do well on it. Now, please close the door, Elizabeth, so that I can finish."

Last summer, he and I were talking over a glass of wine. I reminded him of the incident described above. He chuckled and started to regale me with amusing stories of dynamics in the history department and then of his family. His grandmother was born and raised and died in Louisiana (and possibly was the source of many of his genteel ways). She and he were discussing American history when she launched into a monologue about the president. Prof Chaney, finding it difficult to follow her train of thought, asked for clarification. "About which president are you speaking, Grandmother," to which she replied, "Bill, you surely know that I'm talking about Jefferson Davis. He's the only president we've ever had."

—Philip E. Berghausen '68



Dr. Chaney was an important part of my Lawrence experience.

—Dennis R. Odekirk '59



It was with great sadness that I read the letter notifying the Lawrence Community that Professor Bill Chaney had died. Without doubt, he was one of the most memorable and appreciated faculty members to ever serve at Lawrence, and I wish I could have been at his memorial on March 22, 2013. I am sure that you celebrated his life and career as he would have wished.

Despite my focus on the sciences and omnipresence in Youngchild Hall, I often found myself in Main Hall, where in the early 1980's I took two classes from Dr. Chaney, both in Medieval History. I loved his classes. First, for the audacity of having a class that meant attending at 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning, and, more importantly, for the flair and panache in which he taught the history of Medieval Europe as it emerged from the fall of the Roman Empire until the era of the Crusades. It was with great interest that I learned about Kings, conquests and the quirks of fate that shaped the emergence of pre-modern governments, law and the worship of a single deity. His love of the subject was absolutely contagious, to the point where I felt like I was actually in the court of Justinian, when he signed into law his famous codes of Law in 529 AD.

One day, while looking at the window of his classroom, on a Saturday morning in January, I had an epiphany. Dr. Chaney had just alluded to the Greek City-State governmental system, and for some reason, it made me recall the myth of Pandora's Box. In that myth, Pandora's curiosity about a mysterious box overcomes her, and all vices escaped to torment mankind, all vices save one -- Hope. It was in Dr. Chaney's class that I began to realize the Medieval Era was more than just about kings, conquests and quirks of fate; it was really about Mankind's struggling with its own consciousness, and eventually finding that hope is not the only thing, but everything that matters to us today.

Many years later, I asked Dr. Chaney to help me with a special project. As the Medical Director for New Mexico's Camp Enchantment, a week-long reprieve for children who have cancer, I wanted to bring a unique relevance to our 2005 special theme, "Sir Campalot". I asked Bill to help me with any medieval themes that I could adapt to the camp. He suggested that the swimming pool could be the "Well of Wellness". He wrote that in medieval times certain wells were attributed with powers to heal illnesses. With that, the swimming pool was duly appointed. That summer, as children played in the pool, some with amputations, almost all without hair, and many with central venous lines and other indwelling devices, no one noticed. There were much more important things to do, such as learn to swim, jump and splash, or play in a bad-ass game of water polo! For in the Well of Wellness, hope and healing were real things.

I now understand that the myth of Pandora's Box makes sense only before the Medieval period. Because of the medieval era, Western Civilization lives in an era off hope. Because of Dr. Chaney, I am quite sure that Hope was the very first thing out of the Pandora's Box, and through all of us, lives forever.

—Stuart S. Winter '83



I first heard about Professor Chaney as a freshman at Lawrence. He was discussed in tones of awe and fear—at once a legend on campus after his many decades teaching and considered one of the most demanding professors on faculty.

In the end, my curiosity got the better of me and I registered for his “History of Britain to 1485.” As I sat in class that first day I felt very uneasy. I was, therefore, completely surprised by the man who entered the room. He had the most wonderful sense of humor. I vividly remember his “audio visual presentations” — decades-old postcards passed around the room showing a lifetime of travels and the locations in our books come to life. Often scattered amongst the postcards were comics about medieval history that we found surprising coming from this very scholarly man — particularly one about Saint Anselm entering the “high” Middle Ages.

At some point in each class he would remind us of the birthday of some classical or medieval scholar, or the anniversary of a great battle or important treatise. And we were instructed to commemorate the event with our “nightly glass of sherry.” I always make sure I keep a bottle of sherry around and whenever I have a glass, I drink to Professor Chaney and all the great moments in history that happened on that very day.

Unfortunately, by the time I was at Lawrence he was technically retired. He emerged from retirement each spring to teach a single course but it was never enough. I loved his lectures more than any other experience in college. He brought the past to life in a way few others have done. He stripped away the centuries separating our world and the Middle Ages and made the men and women of that age tangible and, often, heartbreakingly compelling. The class hung on his every word, frantically writing as fast as possible in our notebooks. The end of class found us flexing our tired hands but also desperate for more.

There was definitely truth to the rumors about him too. He was an incredibly demanding grader, requiring nothing short of 100% dedication. Earning an A from him was the highest honor and one I still recall with pride.

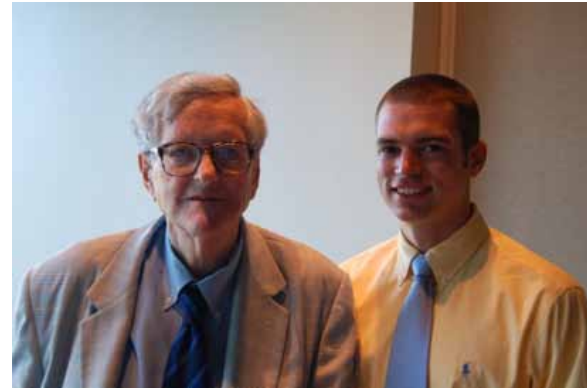
He encouraged me to become a medievalist, a path I did not choose, though I hope he forgave me. Over the years, we’ve corresponded—though not as often as I would have liked. His passing represents the end of an era and we’re all the poorer for losing him. Professor Chaney was one of a kind. He was for me, and countless other students, the Lawrence Difference.

—Elizabeth C. Spoden '05



Dante (b. 1265)  
 and  
 Petrarch  
 who lived as pupils  
 and who lived in Petrarch's home  
 Giovanni Boccaccio (c. 1313-1374)  
 Vittorino da Feltre (1378-1446)  
 Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457)  
 Francesco Petrarca (1374-1374)  
 Hermann von der Bode (1462-1534)  
 Georg Meissner (1465-1545)  
 Johannes Casparius I (1500-1574)  
 Johannes Casparius II (1513-1613)  
 Georg Meissner (1506-1596)  
 Christophorus Harmsen (1607-1650)  
 Johann Frischmann (1619-1697)  
 Christoph Schiller (1630-1707)  
 Maximilian Freyer (1675-1747)  
 Johann Georg Knapp (1705-1775)  
 Johann David Heubald (1713-1791)  
 Johann August Bode (1731-1791)  
 Kapf David Elgen (1783-1834)  
 Johann Gottfried Hermann (1779-1848)  
 Kapf Lohmann (1795-1851)  
 Otto John (1813-1860)  
 Theodor Hermann (b. 1817)  
 Alfred von Dornow (1806-1877)  
 Ernst Kasperowich (1809-1853)  
 William Chaney (1911-1991)  
 Cameron Blegen '12

This photo was taken at the Phi Beta Kappa induction breakfast where my family and I were lucky enough to sit at Professor Chaney's table. I was glad that my family was able to meet such a great man and legendary Lawrence Professor who I thoroughly enjoyed taking a class with and will always remember.



Below is a handout given by Professor Chaney to his High Middle Ages students during Spring Term 2012. It traces a chain of teachers and students from Dante to us with Professor Chaney being our link. It was a tremendous pleasure to take a course from such a great educator and person, it makes me glad to think

of all the students whose lives he touched over the years and how large his tree has become. I will always remember my class with Professor Chaney and hope to have such a large impact on those around me as he did.

I took The High Middle Ages during Spring Term 2012 (my senior year). Although I was a Biology major and Professor Chaney's was the only history course I took at Lawrence, I am so thankful that I was able to take a class with him and this course grade is one of my proudest achievements during my time at Lawrence.

—Cameron Blegen '12



Bill Chaney has gone to meet his maker. Let us honor him.

Was Bill Chaney the oldest teacher ever? In the fall of 2000, when I joined his salon for my senior year at Lawrence, Chaney seemed old and brittle, tottery, yet strangely indestructible. Surely he was over 100; I was only 20. Sherry-glass in hand, Chaney often marveled at his age. Having been a precocious doctoral student at Berkeley, he had become the youngest professor at Lawrence. Always he was the youngest, until one day, without warning, he was the oldest.

Was Chaney the toughest professor? His classroom was certainly the wrong address for students in search of an easy ride. Except for the odd masochist with a penchant for GPAdropping smack-downs, most slackers avoided Chaney's classroom. The man's reputation preceded him. When I took his course on the High Middle Ages, I regarded my final B+ as an achievement; it felt like an A in any other course. For months after graduation, I had nightmares about my Chaney term paper. Short on time, I had only managed to incorporate two sources. Three were required. At about 4 AM on the due date, I turned to Google—a saucy move in 2001!—found an on-topic web page, and scraped together an emergency paragraph with a footnote. My conscience plagued me for pulling a move like that on old-fashioned Professor Chaney, who boasted a reputation for spelling "phone" with an initial apostrophe. Had I fooled him? Or hadn't I? What would be worse? When I got my paper back, I found at the end both a generous grade and, for my future reference, a handwritten explanation of proper citation of Internet sources.



So do we have a winner? The oldest teacher? The toughest? Perhaps the most inspiring? Unfortunately every “oldest” or “toughest” eventually succumbs to the juggernaut of “n+1.” In fact, I don’t think we should care much about superlatives, except perhaps as a prologue to some words of remembrance. Bill Chaney was a rare, challenging, inspiring teacher and a cultured, music-loving gentleman. Anyone who knew him can tell you that. So let me make this personal.

Two words come to mind when I think of Bill Chaney: “vanity” and “awe.” First, vanity. Commingled with all the erudition and caring generosity was a measure of posturing bluff. Chaney didn’t hide his faults from his salon. On the contrary, he was the first to laugh at and with himself. He laughed often, and keenly. A decisive moment in our relationship: Chaney is berating me. I am in town visiting, half a year after graduation. Over dinner at Appleton’s Greek restaurant, Chaney inquires as to my plans. I plan to learn German and then study for a semester in Germany. I am proud of my accomplishments, proud of my goals, proud to share them with this inspiring man, who is himself the pupil of Ernst Kantorowicz, that great German medievalist and erstwhile member of the so-called George-Kreis of German poets. Suddenly Bill Chaney’s tongue is slicing me to ribbons. Audacity! Arrogance! The other salon members stare at their plates; the lashing continues. “Study at a German university after only a year of German!? The language of Kant and Goethe!? I studied German for years, but never was I so vain as to presume to speak it with Kantorowicz!” Amidst my surprise, hurt, and welling aggression, I was learning. Not least, perhaps, I was learning about the effects of large quantities of sweet sherry followed by flowing Greek wine on usually pleasant dispositions. I was also learning about vanity, both Chaney’s and mine. I had been so proud to share my ambitions that I failed to consider how my pride might appear to him. It never occurred to me that Chaney’s gut reaction would be to think I was boasting or somehow minimizing his accomplishments. That evening at the Apollon—not my last with him—I learned that Chaney was human. I also learned to talk less and do more. I finished my dinner, became fluent in German, and earned an advanced degree in German history and philosophy from the University of Munich.

On reflection, I think Chaney’s provocations were at least as valuable to me as any university course I ever took. Social intercourse should be more than mutual tail-sniffing. Dissent spurs growth and action. Chaney inspired me, and then made me want to show him. With a well-aimed kick to the seat of my pants, to use another mundane expression, Bill Chaney propelled me forward.

Now for the awe, in the sense of trembling in fear. Over and over again, Bill Chaney demonstrated the courage to confess his awe before God. It was the same courage with which he asserted that “music is melody,” grandly, unapologetically writing off all music postdating Mozart’s death in 1791. Chaney was in awe of great melody. “Great music proves that God exists,” he used to explain. “The greatest music proves that God loves us.” Chaney knew awe in the world, and he trembled; but he did not tremble in secret. Chaney shared his awe.

A main thrust of a liberal arts education is the broadening of one’s mind, but as the song goes, if you open your mind too much, your brain will fall out. By his example, Bill Chaney taught me a lesson for which I am thankful: Rationalism and Belief occupy separate, but complimentary planes. One can and should dance between them. One can and should insist on melody. One can and should insist on awe. When I think of Bill Chaney, as I often do, I am drawn to the human integrity with which he celebrated the limits of intellect. I see and feel his bubbling, laughing, wicked courage to embrace boundless curiosity and boundlessly liberating self-limitation.



I first met Professor Chaney outside of class on an unseasonably warm night in Appleton. Strolling along College Ave., I recited a litany of late 80's complaints about his Ancient History class to a friend. It was "Eurocentric." It focused excessively on Greek and Roman civilizations, etc... I closed with an obscenity-strewn series of condemnations. As I finished my sophomoric rant, Professor Chaney himself appeared from behind me, and passed me at a brisk walk, not a foot away from my shoulder. He had been walking behind us for some time, and there was not the slightest chance that he had not heard the entire invective. The next day, with much trepidation, I approached Professor Chaney's office, guiltily walked inside, and apologized. With a smile he told me he had not heard anything at all. He did not pay attention, he said to what people said on the street, and while he appreciated my apology, it was entirely unnecessary, as he would never hold anything like that against a student. Students, he said needed to blow off steam once in a while. We began to talk about the class, and he enthusiastically explained the reasons for the outline of his class. While of course conceding that the Greek and Roman cultures were not unique in their sophistication, he sold me on the necessity of learning them. Shortly thereafter, I changed my major to history. The next year and several history classes later, I received an invitation to Chaney's Salon.

It was at these thrice weekly meetings that I got a glimpse into the remarkable world of Professor Chaney. He told us about a dinner with T.S. Elliot, about meeting J.R.R. Tolkien, and a conversation with a Czarist General, who described what it felt like when the White Army lost hope. Not only did he share his experiences from around the world and over much of the twentieth century, he was the consummate historian of Lawrence. He described the chaos of the campus and the heated debates over Vietnam in the 60's. Professor Chaney rarely gave a glimpse into his own politics, religion or opinions, although he always showed interest in those of others. He was always cheerful, and only became stern or grave when speaking about academic standards. He was unwavering in his demands for effort. When he denied me an extension of time to complete a paper, he suggested that I stay up all night to make the best use of the 24 hours before it was due. His standards, however, were tempered with kindness. He knew that the world after Lawrence could be hard, and he wanted us to be prepared for it. He had the toughness to prod you to your best effort, and the compassion to reward it. He could make a hard earned C feel like a victory and an easy A feel like a failure.

We stayed in touch for many years after Lawrence. I always considered him a friend, and never really noticed that we had an age difference between us of 43 years. More than anything, I remember him as a teacher in the truest sense of the word. In my life after Lawrence, whenever I have needed confidence, I have invoked his kind words and his example. I can't imagine the number of those who have been given the same gift. Reflecting on the difference that he made in my life, I am awed to consider how many people he inspired over his career of 61 years, how many lives he changed. He counted the measure of his career not the amount of knowledge he accumulated, but in how much he passed along. He was a remarkable scholar, a masterful teacher, a good friend, one of Lawrence's greatest institutions, and above all, just a great guy. He will be missed.

—Brendan U. Dunning '91



Bill Chaney was a beloved mentor and friend throughout my Lawrence years and through all the years that followed. In addition to kindling a lifelong passion for the study of history, he taught me through example, through great personal generosity, and of course through the "Salon" what it meant to live an educated and civilized life, a life where free-flowing ideas, political, aesthetic, and moral arguments, art, music, wit, and wine all mingled naturally and joyously in the company of spirited friends. And it was he, more than anyone else, who gave me the confidence and courage to know myself and come out as a gay man at a difficult and formative time, a time, moreover, when there was little support elsewhere. My last communication with Bill, gratefully in retrospect, was to congratulate him on his 90th birthday in December 2012, when I told him how much I loved him and thanked him for so enriching and transforming my life."

—Carter J. Eckert '67

Salon in 1966

Front row left to right: Bruce Bauer '67, Glover Wagner '67  
Carter Eckert '67, Professor Elisabeth Koffka  
Back row left to right: Dan LeMahieu '67, Bob Dahlberg '66,  
Bill, Gordon Lutz '66



Professor Chaney 1968



The first time I heard of Dr. Chaney was at a party held for incoming freshman. Someone said, "Be sure to take Dr. Chaney's Western Civ class," and I did. It was the best class that I ever had and changed my major from English to History. I remember that Dr. Chaney would say, "History is everything." He would then demonstrate it by bringing to class art, music and literature from the period. I became a medieval history major and attended the seminars at this home for two years running. I was the only woman and we studied Beowulf and the Song of Roland. I remember the time when he signed the slip to get me back into the dorm with a medieval date, much to the surprise of the dorm mother.

I saw him at all my reunions. I was delighted to be able to introduce him to my new husband this past summer. He was such a caring person. He sent us a handwritten thank you for the donation to the Chaney Fund. Lawrence will not be the same without him and I will miss him.

—Ann Margret Cerny Clark '66



I'm truly saddened to learn of Dr. Chaney's passing. I was privileged to be part of his "Salon" for two years in the late 1960s and often cited it as an example of a liberal arts education and student-faculty interaction at its best. We stayed in touch over the years and I was fortunate to see him recently at the Memorial Service for Dr. Mojmir Povolny, at which Dr. Chaney was one of the principal speakers. Dr. Chaney was a giant at Lawrence and the above title referring to "Legendary Lawrence Professor William Chaney" is apt.

—Steven Ponto

Follow Nicholas

Nicholas Albertini • My mentor as a youth graduated from Lawrence in 1964. He had professor Chaney for Medieval History; and I did as well in 2010. The term used here, "legendary" is no joke. I hope that this great professor is remembered at Lawrence for at least as long as he served there. The number of minds that he helped mold is almost incalculable; and his genius at exposition on his subjects of study was unmatched. I was honored to learn from him; and I learned a lot, even from a single course. The loss of such a mind is a true loss to the world.



Brent Erensel • Truly one of Lawrence's greats, and my time with him was brief.



Robert Gifford • One of my all time favorites. This is a great loss to the educational community. I was lucky enough to get Dr. Chaney in my first semester (Freshman studies)...brutal! I'm so glad that I was so directly challenged early in my time at Lawrence. He stimulated me so greatly to learn that I actually took an elective with him (British History)...people thought I must be daft!! I will always cherish my time being challenged (and challenging myself) by Dr. Chaney.

I only hope that someday I can stimulate someone through direct challenge to the level that Prof. Chaney did to me.



Augustin Fosu • My major was not history (mathematics and economics majors, instead). However, I was enrolled in Dr. Chaney's freshman studies class in 1969/70 (Epic as History, as I recall). It was quite an impressive class, and I learnt a great deal. I still recall borrowing someone's typewriter and staying up all night trying to type a paper for this class (I had never typed before!); hence I turned the paper in to Dr. Chaney in the classroom right after the morning (8 a.m.?) class ended. He accepted my paper but said, 'minus one grade', for the paper was due BEFORE the end of class. I recount this experience, not in a negative way but to reinforce how Prof. Chaney instilled discipline in his students. For that I am most grateful as well.



It was well known that if you were a History major, you "had" to have a Chaney course. I had mine as a Freshman in '77, and was totally mesmerized during Professor Chaney's lectures that I usually forgot to take notes. You were not allowed to record the lectures so this proved to be quite difficult when it came to studying for the tests. I did not do well in this class, but I wouldn't have traded the experience for anything. Professor Chaney will always be the best lecturer that I ever had in my college experience. Thank you, Sir!

—*Paula Magiera*



## PROFESSOR WILLIAM A. CHANEY – MAKING A DIFFERENCE

My first introduction to Professor Chaney was on a dreary January day in 1972, in a converted meeting room space on the ground floor of the Arden Hotel in London, as part of the then Lawrence London Center. For students in his Western Civilization course, we were about to embark upon a remarkable journey through History, which would be highlighted by Professor Chaney's use of narrative history as a means of engaging our imagination and enthusiasm for what might otherwise have been a dry exercise in mastering facts and chronologies.

Over the period of two and a half years, during which it was my good fortune to enroll in virtually every course taught by Professor Chaney, I was constantly fascinated by the inexhaustible supply of stories, some real and some apocryphal, which Professor Chaney would employ to provide context to the background of events and people at the forefront of the historical subject. These stories included the study of Hammurabi's Code, Egyptians analogizing the passage of the Sun across the Sky as a beetle pushing a ball of dung, Aeschylus and his untimely demise at the hands of a turtle dropped by an eagle, Greeks naming "Barbarians" for how their guttural language sounded to the ear, the Albigensian Heresy and the intolerance of religious doctrine, Walther von der Vogelweide and the role of poetry and music in the Middle Ages, Dante and the Quattrocento transition from the late Middle Ages to the rise of the Renaissance, and so much, much more. Professor Chaney's lectures were a riveting form of entertainment, augmented by his keen wit and sharp sense of humor, as well as by his questioning of the class to see just how much the students might have learned from their own initiatives.

Beyond his narrative approach, Professor Chaney also shared insight across a broad range of disciplines, through his presentation of architecture (the evolution of construction methodology), art, philosophy and science. The Western Civilization courses, as well as the Medieval History class, were not just offerings in History, but thoughtful inquiries into the humanities and the study of peoples and their cultures. The end result of this journey, courtesy of Professor Chaney's lectures, was an enhanced appreciation of the similarities and differences between civilizations and cultures at any time and from time to time.

With the articulated appreciation gained from this comparative analysis, Professor Chaney empowered his students to more fully empathize with mankind. By understanding cultural similarities and differences, as well as the individual historical experience of countries and regions, common ground was created as a basis for us to encourage cooperation across boundaries, outweighing the burdens of narrow, parochial interests which might otherwise dictate behavior. In this regard, with the benefit of Professor Chaney's enthusiasm for the narrative, and for the imagination which it unleashed, I have

adopted an empathetic approach to achieve positive outcomes for a variety of commercial endeavors in places as diverse as Central Asia, Eastern Europe, South America, Asia and Oceania. Through the perspective of understanding, explaining, comparing and interpreting the human record and experience, Professor Chaney's inspiration has served as a foundation for the way in which I conduct myself with others and seek to preserve mutual respect and trust.

Professor Chaney made a clear impact upon my life, not just as a student, but as a human being. He can rest well assured that not only did he impact my life, but no doubt equally so the lives of others, many of whom I am sure will be submitting similar thoughts on this occasion. My lasting memory of Professor Chaney will always be of his wry smile, the light in his eyes, and that wonderful Chaney laugh that accompanied the punch line to the end of many of his stories. For example, when musing about what might have happened had Dante ever met Beatrice, he said (in an intentionally nasal Midwest accent), "she probably would have said Hi Dante." I still laugh when I think about that – so much for the end to a platonic relationship

Apart from the obvious contributions associated with his course work, as well as his interest in interacting with students outside class on a personal level, Professor Chaney kindly made the time and effort to write letters of recommendation for me for admission to law school and, much to my embarrassment at the time, to announce my admission in front of the entire class. In later years, on visits to Appleton, I would often see Professor Chaney around town, especially at the Golden Bee. I regret that I was never able to directly express to him the gratitude and appreciation that I have always felt for his devotion to learning and, most importantly, for providing me with enthusiasm, knowledge, insight and confidence. I take the opportunity now to express that admiration and appreciation.

We have all been fortunate that Professor Chaney crossed our paths, encouraged our imagination, and provided us with his unique, invaluable perspective into the past, present and, to the extent we choose to make use of this knowledge gained, our future.

Chuck Ephraim '74

May 7, 2013

The first time I came across Bill Chaney's name was when I was preparing a bibliography raisonnée of medievalist publications for 1970. I wrote of his important book, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, that it was 'learned and stimulating, if a little inclined to see pagan survival round every corner.' A few years later there sat amongst the undergraduates in one of my Oxford lectures this tall, striking man of 50, listening sharply and from time to time nodding sagely. Afterwards we struck up an interesting conversation, mainly about Ernst Kantorowicz under whom he had studied in his youth at Berkeley, California, which ended with his saying, 'Oh by the way, my name is William or Bill Chaney, the one inclined to see pagan survivals round every corner!' From then on we would invite each other for dinners and coffees whenever he came to Oxford, which was very often. He was extremely generous with his hospitality, frequently inviting several of his friends to dinner at the Eastgate Hotel, where he always stayed and which he called his college. He always made a great impression when I invited him to my college, for he was an engaged and sparkling conversationalist, whose knowledge ranged over many areas, especially music. He was also very amusing about his Chaney ancestors, southerners who had consistently backed the wrong horse in the great conflicts of American history. He occasionally adopted striking rhetorical poses, such as that he hated all music composed after 1800! In fact he loved Schubert, and was known to have enjoyed Brahms, though he definitely switched off when it came to the atonality of the twentieth century. Another rhetorical pose was his always pretending to shudder and avert his gaze whenever he passed the statue of General Sherman in Appleton! I may add that he was equally a wonderful and generous host to me at Lawrence University.

If I had to use only one word to describe Bill's conversation, it would be the word 'energizing'. What was his secret? Partly his breadth of knowledge, relevantly deployed. More important, however, was his generosity, not only materially, but also his generosity of spirit – generosity in his judgments of the work and the character of others. It was only human that a man of his gifts should seek to make an impact in conversation; equally observable, at the same time, was his willingness to allow others to make an impact on him. I believe also that there was something else which governed his dealings with his fellows, namely that he was a person of deep Christian commitment, albeit this was something that he never wore on his sleeve.



Bill was devoted to Lawrence University and had a strong sense of its history. In fact from the moment he arrived he fell in love with it and seems never to have wanted to leave, not least after he had established himself in his apartment with its fine outlook. One knew that one was in the abode of a person of great culture in that apartment. As soon as he began his first lecture in Lawrence, the effect on his pupils was almost that of a revelation. It was an intoxicating effect that over the years never really diminished.

Just over two years before he died, I received a card from Bill, dated 6 December 2010 and (as was usual with him) by the saint of the day, St Nicholas of Myra, which showed up his characteristic wit and humour and his game spirit. Having expressed his admiration for President Beck and how she had coped with what he called 'the Bush Depression', he wrote: 'The University asked me to go on – so I go on! After all, two days before Christmas I'll become only 88, so wy stop now. My classes keep getting larger, although my grades keep getting lower.

Thus Lawrence has lost in Bill a loyal servant, a superb teacher, a wonderful friend, a highly intelligent and cultured person, and a human being with a quality of greatness about him.

Henry Mayr-Harting



For the May 18, 2013 Memorial for Dr. William Chaney, I appreciate the Lawrence Administration asking those that knew Professor Chaney to send in their memories of him. I am writing the type of letter I would send to a family member of the deceased. And mailing this note to you feels appropriate, because Lawrence University was truly William Chaney's family.

I took several of Chaney's classes while at Lawrence. If one never experienced a Chaney class, these are my memories of his Medieval II class:

Chaney seemed to stride into the room right as the bell rang, and started his lecture immediately, in one fluid motion. Often using no notes, he would furiously scribble names and dates on the chalk board. Chaney was well over 6 foot tall, and as he made a point, he would gesture dramatically, grabbing the attention of some introverted student in the back.

I remember at my first lecture, I just sat there, astonished, as names, dates, concepts, religion, poetry, prose and stories were shot my way. Chaney's rapid fire delivery seemed to be the only way to express the tremendous knowledge that he had absorbed over the years. A student in Chaney's class had to master the best pace to take notes as well. It was fascinating to see, by his words, the Fifth Crusade reenacted, as legions of crusaders from France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire seemed to gallop around the room, sacking Constantinople. And as the crusaders, weary of war rode back towards the walled citadels of their European domain, the lecture ended. This was, of course, pure brilliance.

For every Chaney class, there were the many supplemental books that he suggested the class consult at the library as well. We students drowned in them. Chaney was funny about this, because to survive his classes, one had to attend lectures and keep up. But when he was a student, he used to brag, he never attending classes or did the course work until the last possible moment. Chaney told me once that when he was a student, he would read everything but what was required. Then, on the night before the final exam, he would pull an all-nighter, cramming in all of the work.

For example, he said that while catching up on his Astronomy work at 2 in the morning,, he was reading about the constellations and the Milky Way. He said to himself, "Hmm, fascinating. I should take a class in this!"

We Chaney admirers, and there were many, used to trade Chaney stories and reference lectures like kids collecting baseball cards. If Chaney gave a particularly great lecture, sometimes he would say, "I was fantastic", but only in a mocking tone. He would mimic a German professor he knew, who used to say, with a thick German accent, "I Vas Fantastick!"

I believe of all his many lectures, it was the one from his "Medieval II" class that was his favorite. This lecture was called "Time" and in it, Chaney explained the medieval concept of chronology. Chaney would describe how the Christian idea of Time was thought of as an arrow, progressing forward. Angels, in their celestial world, had their own time, or as it is called in Latin "Aivum", independent from humans, since their existence was removed from our time. This was deep, and we loved it.

Chaney often talked about studying with the great mediaeval scholars at college, who were mainly from Europe. These scholars knew their subjects, such as the time of Charlemagne, or Frederic Barbarossa, a specialty of one of Chaney's mentors. These men also knew oppression, some having fled Nazi Germany for religious and academic reasons. To them, history was not an abstraction, but a life and death struggle. Chaney often remarked about what a change it was for these professors, used to the frozen campuses of Germany, to find themselves among the Orange Groves in Berkeley, California, a paradise of scholarship, and, most noticeably a paradise of weather as well. California was Chaney's native State, and he talked about what a wonderful place it was to live as a child. The Bay area was also home to Jack London, the author. I never asked him, but I knew that London's father's name was also William Chaney-a relative? If so, then genius didn't fall far from the family tree.

I had the good fortune to study with Professor Chaney for the autumn term at the London Center in 1986. While there, at Coleman Lodge in Bayswater, I took his "History of England to 1485" class. Chaney always began this class by stating how lucky we were to be taking this class in England, for he then could send us out into the countryside to see Great Britain. He would add that at Lawrence, he "couldn't very well send you to the great twelfth century Cathedral of Oshkosh, or the Medieval Baptistery of Kaukauna.'

As students, one of our assignments in Chaney's London class was to pick a town, and try to write up the history of it, but without going to a library. Chaney said if one really wanted to learn the history of a place, then talk with the ladies that put the flowers on the altar of the local church. Of course he was right. The town I picked was Chepstow, in Wales, which had a famous castle, on the River Wye. When I told Chaney that I was going to visit Chepstow, he spontaneously launched into poetry by Sir Walter Scott:

From Chepstow's towers, ere dawn of morn,

Was heard afar the bugle-horn;

And forth, in banded pomp and pride,  
Stout Clare and fiery Neville ride.

On another occasion, I was looking for evidence of a battle from the War of the Roses in a suburb of London. I was standing on a sidewalk at night, scribbling in my notebook, when suddenly a nearby door was thrown open.

"What are you doing?" the owner asked.

I explained my history project.

"Really? A battle here? Extraordinary."

He then turned to his party guests, and pointed to me, explaining that I was a Yank doing research on English history. I was then invited in so the guests could be more about it. Chaney's genius was to get students out into the community, meeting English people and experiencing their society.

But a trip to the British Museum with Chaney was a special treat, especially when one went with him to view the Sutton Hoo artifacts, a 7th century Anglo-Saxon ship burial. Chaney was a leading scholar of this find, having published important articles on it. Sutton Hoo was like something out of Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings", and Chaney would make this early period of history come alive.

But whether in London, or Lawrence, a Chaney final exam was quite intimidating. I recall my Ancient II exam. It was only two questions; that was it.

Because I respected Chaney, I wanted to do well, and so I sweated out my answers, filling blue book after blue book. I can honestly say that the A- grade I received in Chaney's Ancient Civ class was the ultimate prize of my academic life at Lawrence.

I knew Chaney socially as well, since I was a member of the Salon, a group of students who would come together three times a week to discuss, as Chaney said, serious things lightly, and light things seriously, over glasses of sherry. Needless to say, this was a nice tradition, especially the sherry part.

As part of the ritual of the Salon, there would be toasts. A typical toast would be something like this. Chaney would ask "What battle took place on this date, October 14, 1066 AD". Answer; The Battle of Hastings. If you got the answer right, Chaney would say, "Go to the head of the class" and refill the sherry glasses. This toasting game was a bit like the T.V. Game show "Jeopardy" but with alcohol. Although I was usually pretty good with the toasts, one week I was having a bad run. Chaney, in his way, noticed, and began to throw some questions my way.

"Who was born on October 4, 1552?"

I quickly answered "Father Matteo Ricci".

"Go to the head of the class," Chaney replied. The questions continued.

"Who died in Peking China on May 11, 1610?"

I chirped up. "Matteo Ricci".

"Right again". Glasses were poured.

Questions continued, and the answers all were, to some degree, about Matteo Ricci. My fellow students were impressed, slapping me on the back as Chaney would say, "Right again," at my answers.

Of course, only Chaney knew that my senior history thesis was on Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Mission to China in the Sixteenth Century, but that was our little secret.

At one Salon meeting, myself and another student were the first to arrive, and before the others had appeared, Chaney said, "I had the strangest dream last night. I dreamed that I was touring the St James' Priory in Bristol England." He was shaking his head. "Why was I dreaming about Bristol?"

We talked of other things, and the rest of the Salon members arrived. Chaney asked us all, "How was your weekend?" One of the members said, "I think I told you on Friday that I was going home to visit my parents in Bristol Wisconsin." At the mention of "Bristol", Chaney practically fell out of his chair. The mystery of the dream had been interpreted, and Chaney laughed for about five minutes.

Chaney, who spent so much time discussing the medieval world, seemed suspicious of new technology. He had a great record collection of classical music, (nothing after 1791, the year Mozart died). In the era of CD's he did finally upgrade to a CD player, and even bought a VHS machine, with its continual blinking clock, since he didn't know how to program it. While most people might buy a favorite movie, Chaney had a copy of Greek Orthodox Bishop Tikon's Installation Ceremony as Patriarch of the West. So Chaney was impressed when I told him that my the Ecumenical Patriarch from Constantinople visited my wife's church in Chicago, and I went along. "I dined out on that story for a week," Chaney told me.

But besides Bishop Tikon's installation, he also had a copy of the 1984 film, "Amadeus", which was about the rivalry between Mozart and Antonio Salieri. This was, hands down, Chaney's favorite movie. Coincidentally Jeffrey Jones, a Lawrence Alum, was the actor who played Emperor Joseph II in the film. I happened to run into Jones on College Avenue, and I told him how much Chaney loved his role, and the Emperor's reaction to Mozart's playing; "Too many notes." Jones told me how he wished that Chaney had been on set when they were filming in Salzburg Austria. When I told that to Chaney, he dined out on that news for a year.

Chaney had great insight into people, thanks to the academic circles in which he traveled. He had dined with Thornton Wilder, the playwright at Harvard. He said that Wilder was dull company. Chaney learned that the A-list writers and thinkers were usually dull, due to their single-minded focus on their craft. And so, if you really just wanted a good dinner companion, it was better to be with a person with more rounded interests.

Chaney was also a bridge to Lawrence's past. As a student, I was introduced by Chaney to Theodore Cloak, the great Drama professor at Lawrence, and where the Cloak Theater derives its name. Cloak was in his 90's at the time, and Chaney hosted a dinner for him. At this party, Cloak had such a good time, filled with stimulating conversation, that he remarked that it reminded him of the good times of the 1950's.

I was also introduced to Nathan Pusey, president of Lawrence before becoming president of Harvard. Chaney made those connections, and wanted a new generation of Lawrence students to know their Lawrence history as well. He was proud of Lawrence, and how its faculty and alumni made real contributions in the world. Some of his students sat at the seat of power, in politics, or finance, or scholarship. A Lawrence Education was like armor in a medieval battle; strong and resilient, that a graduate wore with pride.

And his students were worldly in a liberal sense. One of his students had jetted off from campus one weekend to attend an Andy Warhol auction in New York City, to help his family purchase Warhol's art. Another had been an advisor to Henry Kissinger. And he always laughed about the dinner at Oxford University, where he had introduced a Lawrence student who, as a child, had danced with the Jazz icon and scat-singing legend Ella Fitzgerald. Chaney said that the Oxford Dons were more impressed with this Jazzy brush with Greatness than if they had met an archbishop or an Earl.

For special occasions, Chaney would go to dine at Karas's, a wonderful Greek Restaurant. (His later favorite, Apollon, hadn't opened yet). Chaney loved Greek food, and the staff of Kara's loved him. I remember walking with Chaney back from Karas's one cold day along College Avenue. Chaney saw white smoke puffing from a nearby chimney. "Habemus Papam!" Chaney shouted announcing the selection of a new pope to all of Appleton.

Before e-mail, which Chaney wouldn't have used anyway, Chaney wrote post cards. These were Chaney's main mode of communication. He called them "PPPs", or "Pretty Picture Postcards", and would say that after graduation students "always have the best intentions of writing, but they never do, because it is a bother to find an envelope, get some paper, stamps, and then sit down to write a letter. It's better to just drop a PPP in the post, the tackier the better." This I would do, sending him postcards from my travels.

Chaney would always reciprocate, with beautiful cards purchased from gift shops from the British Museum, the Tate Gallery, Oxford, Malta, and other interesting places.

Chaney taught us that at the Byzantine court of Constantinople, if it was someone's birthday, one would celebrate by saying "Multos Annos" (Many Years) three times, and each time getting louder than before. For his birthday, which was December 23rd, I would send him a post card, and write in large letters "Multos Annos" three times. He would reply with a post card in his small neat handwriting. The card would always be dated, with a historical note, or feast day. The most recent card I received just a few months ago after sending him congratulations on his 90th birthday. The post card was dated "Thursday, 27, December A.D. 2012; St. John the Evangelist."

Chaney wrote, "Yes, even though I have trouble believing it, my calendar tells me that I am now 90. Incredible! A party was tossed for me on Saturday, the day before the birthday, since "The Apollon" is closed on Sunday-so I could pretend I was still in my 80's...A good time was had by all, I hope, but certainly by me!"

Chaney was an upbeat and optimistic person, and when he talked about death it was in an oft-handed way. He would be discussing the work of a former colleague and would add, "who is dead, like everybody." Heaven was an exclusive club, and as an historian, it was filled with intriguing and accomplished people. He said that for a Professor, he preferred to die after delivering a brilliant lecture, so good that on the last word, as the students began to applaud, he would drop dead.

Whenever I asked him about an older colleague who had battled health problems, and had recently died, Chaney would brush it off by saying, "it was time," the pain and suffering of old age over. As the aches and pains of age began to gang up on him, I asked him in 2011 if he was planning on going to England and Malta for Winter Term, as he often did. Chaney matter-of-factly stated he thought he would travel there no more, due to his problems walking. If this lack of mobility depressed him, he didn't show it.

Since he often quoted poetry, when I heard of his passing, I immediately thought of the Tennyson poem "Crossing the Bar." Now I don't know what Chaney thought of the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson-and he would have had an opinion of him, as he did on music. Yet Chaney was a believer, a High Church Anglican, and for him, life and death were a continuum, a journey.

I like to think that Bill Chaney faced the end like this poem describes:

Sunset and evening star,

And one clear call for me!

And may there be no moaning of the bar,

When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,

Too full for sound and foam,

When that which drew from out the boundless deep

Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,

And after that the dark!

And may there be no sadness of farewell,

When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place

The flood may bear me far,

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

When I have crost the bar.

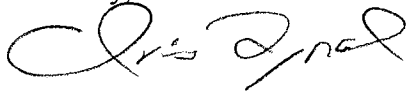
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Thank you for taking the time to read my rather long letter.

May God Bless William Chaney.

And may God Bless Lawrence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chris Lynch".

Christopher Lynch

Class of 1989