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# Indiana University

## Department of Geography E-Newsletter

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### Professor Emeritus William R. Black

The faculty, staff, students and alumni of the Department of Geography mourn the loss of **Professor Emeritus William R. Black** on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at his home in Bloomington, Indiana. Though Bill had fought cancer for a number of years prior, his death was unexpected. A native of Brownsville, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh, Bill graduated from California State College of Pennsylvania in 1964. Afterward he and his new wife Donna moved to Iowa City where in 1966 he earned a M.A. in Geography and in 1969 a Ph.D. He served on the faculty of the Department of Geography at Miami University of Ohio from 1968-1969 before moving to the Department of Geography at Indiana University in Bloomington. He remained at IU throughout his career, retiring in 2007 as Professor Emeritus after his second 4-year stint as Chair of the department, having also served in that capacity from 1985-1989. Additionally, he held appointments and leadership positions in the Transportation Research Center, Regional Analysis and Planning Program, and the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis in the Schools of Business and Public and Environmental Affairs at IU. Outside Bloomington he held a visiting professorship at Purdue University in 1973 and was a Guest Scholar of The Brookings Institution in 1982.

Bill was a foundational figure in Transport Geography. He directed over 20 transportation

research and planning projects, published over 200 research papers and reports, and authored, co-authored, or served as editor of seven books. These contributions include comprehensive studies of the Federal Local Rail Service Assistance Act, a germinal textbook in transportation analysis, and a survey book of sustainability in transportation. He was responsible for the formation of the Transportation Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers and was a key figure in the development of the *Journal of Transport Geography*, which rapidly became one of the top in the field. He also served on the editing board of several major journals in transportation and environmental studies. For his 'Significant Contributions to Transportation Geography', he was awarded the Edward L. Ullman Award by the Association of American Geographers in 1995 and was selected to present the Fleming Lecture in Transportation Geography at the Association of American Geographers meeting in Pittsburgh in 2000. He was extensively involved in the Transportation Research Board of the National Research Council, including serving twice as chair of the Committee on Social and Economic Factors. For his efforts he received the Board's Distinguished Service Award in 2002, and designation as Emeritus Member for Significant Contributions to the Organization in 2005.

He was a singular academic in the extent of his involvement, contributions, and achievements outside academia. He was extensively involved in the planning and restructuring of American railroads in the turbulent 1970s for that industry. He served as Director of Rail Planning for the State of Indiana from 1974 to 1975, and was a Chief on the Activation Task Force of Conrail during its formation in 1975 to 1976. He served as the first Director of Transportation of the State of Indiana when that department was formed in 1980. He was also responsible for the routing and planning of the public transportation system in Bloomington, Indiana when it was introduced in 1972. His service to the State of Indiana was recognized by then Governor Otis T. Bowen in 1980 when he was named a Sagamore of the Wabash for Public Service, the highest honor a civilian can be awarded by the Indiana Governor's office.

Upon retirement, Bill stepped away to pursue a life-long love

of creative writing. He once said he originally wanted to be a novelist, until he became aware of the long-term employment prospects of the industry. But in the comfort of retirement, he produced a biography of World War I correspondent and Brownsville, PA native Percival Phillips, and was working on one of Philander Case Knox. He also published "Mitigating Circumstances: The United States of America vs. Robert Black" and "Greenhouse Effects, A Novel" as e-books, all since 2009.

Perhaps most of all, Bill had a way with words that was unmistakable to anyone who read his work or conversed with him. He had a knack for saying the most impactful thing at just the right time and as succinctly as could be stated. This made him an insightful teacher, engaging public speaker, delightful writer to read, and perhaps most meaningful for those who knew him, a most helpful confidant and mentor.

Bradley W. Lane



## Department Faculty: Zlotin

**Geography:  
Know  
Your  
World**

**Dr. Roman Zlotin** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Geography. His courses have covered a range of topics including biogeography in the former USSR, physical systems of the environment, and global environmental change. In addition to his work in the Geography Department, Roman is a visiting lecturer at Indiana University's Central Eurasian Studies Department and an adjunct professor in the Biology Department at the University of New Mexico.

Roman's current research takes him to the other side of the United States to the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge of central New Mexico. There, he manages a project within

the Sevilleta Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Site. He gathers data annually on the dynamics of primary production in arid woodland ecosystems, looking at fruit production in six core areas of the Refuge. Roman describes his work as traditionally and classically geographical. "I am a biogeographer and terrestrial ecologist," Roman said. "I work in the land."

Each summer, he travels to the desert and gathers samples from the thousands of trees in his LTER site. Roman is currently aggregating data from 1996 to 2013 to compare variability across arid ecosystems at

the regional scale. The project has been rather multidisciplinary, bringing together meteorologists, ecologists, geographers, and statistical modelers.

Prior to joining Indiana University in 1992, Roman was a senior scientist of the Institute of Geography within the Russian Academy of Sciences, formerly the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He was trained as a physical geographer, focusing on biogeography and geography of the soils.

In Russia, Roman researched the ecosystems in different geographic zones, ranging from the arctic to the subtropics. He focused on the structure, functions and dynamics of ecosystems and its components. This expertise, combined with his experiences in the transition from the Soviet Union to a state with a market economy, were what brought him to Indiana University in 1992.

Roman regularly brings his knowledge of Russia and the former Soviet Union into the classroom. Among his other projects, Roman also researches political, socio-economic, and environmental dynamics in Northern Eurasia within the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. "The region is good for teaching," Roman said, "because it is extremely dynamic."



## Graduate Student: Bishop



**Kate Bishop** is a third-year PhD student studying the long-term impacts of technology diffusion in a region known as the African oil palm belt, which stretches from Senegal to Angola along the Atlantic coast of Africa.

For her dissertation, Kate is tracing the geography, culture, and history of a small palm oil machine that was invented during the Appropriate Technology Movement in the 1980s. The machine has played a foundational role in several development projects in Cameroon, Benin, and Liberia.

“I conducted fieldwork in Liberia in 2011 and 2013 to coordinate surveys of the technology users and to study changes in material culture and human-environment interactions linked to technology adoption,”

Kate said. “Working in a post-conflict setting has been incredibly challenging but also very exciting.”

Prior to graduate school, Kate worked as an evaluator and director of agricultural development projects in Africa. “After managing a project in northern Cameroon from 2005 to 2008, I decided to go to grad school to learn better research skills. I was really interested in figuring out better ways to analyze the cultural impacts of development.”

Kate completed her Master’s in Anthropology at Indiana University in 2011 and subsequently joined the Geography Department for a double-major PhD. “I liked the emphasis in geography on human-environment interactions and was especially interested in

applying insights from political ecology to the critical study of the impacts of international development,” Kate explained.

Since coming to Indiana University, Kate has continued her evaluation work. She has coordinated impact surveys in Cameroon, South Africa, Niger, and Liberia. As part of this work, she has authored several studies that have been submitted to USAID/Liberia, including project evaluation reports, a baseline study, and a comparative study of two oil palm varieties.

“Studying geography has really improved the way I do my work as a consultant because I now take into account many more factors than I would have prior to grad school,” Kate said. “For example, I am much more aware of the role of colonial history in shaping current political and economic relations in Africa.”

Kate said she now asks “different types of questions and make[s] more nuanced observations, concerning the social and environmental impacts of technology diffusion.” These changes have been informed by her work with Prof. Rebecca Lave, who focuses on political ecology and science and technology studies.

Kate will be busy in the coming months. “I won’t be presenting at AAG this year because I am expecting twins this spring and can’t travel in April,” she said. “However, I will be organizing a session at the 2014 Dimensions of Political Ecology conference at the University of Kentucky.” At her session, “Intersections of Critical Development Studies and Political Ecology,” she will be presenting the findings of her dissertation research in Liberia.

# Alumni News: Walls

Alumnus Chris Walls is co-founder and managing partner of 39°north, which specializes in developing and implementing software for managing Geographic Information Systems (GIS). His company provides system architecture and geodatabase design, and customizes their Internet and Mobile mapping applications to help expand companies' operational capabilities. They also provide analysis and consulting, as well as data creation and migration services.

After graduating from Bloomington High School South, Chris en-

rolled at Indiana University intending to major in Business, but after suffering an injury while working through college on the 3rd shift at United Parcel Service, he was forced to withdraw and continue full-time at UPS to pay his bills.

Upon returning to Indiana University, Chris pursued his interests in Geography, Astronomy, Physics, and higher math, eventually specializing in Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing in the Department of Geography. After graduation, Chris went to work for

Dr. Denver Harper at the Indiana Geological Survey, where he created data and metadata for the GIS Atlas for Southwestern Indiana, a project funded by the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration.

Chris co-founded 39°north in 2004 and the company currently has a client base that includes 17 Indiana counties as well as numerous other state authorities, federal agencies, and private businesses across the United States. Further details can be obtained at: <http://www.39dn.com/>.



*To honor the memory of William R. Black, the Department of Geography has established the W. R. Black Leadership Memorial Scholarship which honors one undergraduate and one graduate student who best exemplifies service to the discipline, the community and the department. This scholarship is given annually to one junior Geography major with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and one graduate student in the Department of Geography in good standing. The scholarship is presented at the annual Geography Awards Banquet.*

*Memorial contributions may be made to the "W. R. Black Leadership Memorial Scholarship (Account 037AS16063)." Mail to IU Foundation Bloomington, P.O. Box 6464, Indianapolis, IN 46206-6460"*

## From the Chair



In October, the IU Geography family lost William R. Black. "Bill" as he was known to all of us exemplified all the qualities of the very best of the academy – a tireless servant of the discipline, a researcher whose work has influenced countless others, a teacher of great prowess and a mentor to students and colleagues alike. He will be greatly missed by both the department and the discipline.

One of Bill's many attributes was that he was never afraid of change and always willing to see opportunity in shifting circumstances. I'm sure that he would revel in the many changes going on in the department. In addition to transforming

our undergraduate curriculum, the topic of my last missive, we are also now changing the graduate curriculum to focus on our newly developed and developing strengths in GIScience, food and agriculture, climate, land and environmental change, water resources and globalization and justice. This process of change is enhanced by three new faculty hires we are making this year.

We wish you all the best in the coming year. We hope that we can count on you to visit us from time to time.

Until next time,

Dan