

Photo Feature

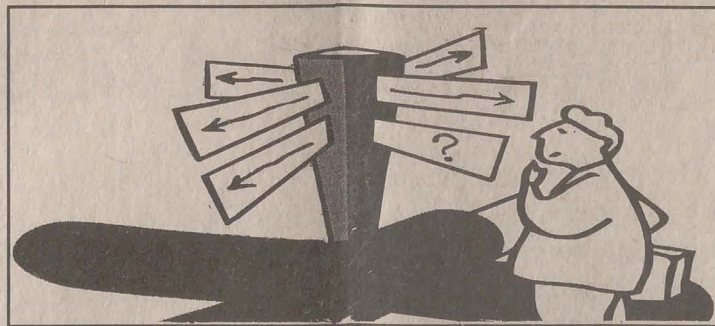
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The Polemic

Alpena Community College

Phillips reflects on his educational journey

BECKY SCHMIDT

Staff Writer

Varied experience in education and other areas makes Roger Phillips an excellent choice to chair the English, Fine Arts, and Humanities Department.

Phillips has 32 years experience in the education field and is continuing to expand his experience in different ways.

Phillips began his undergraduate career at Wheaton College in Illinois and majored in literature.

He then worked on the outskirts of Detroit with youth in a church setting. That position evaporated, so Phillips began substituting in the Detroit school system.

Phillips worked for nine months at Hudson's in four dif-



Photo by Becky Schmidt

Mr. Phillips has taken many detours in his career.

ferent departments. He started out in the returned goods warehouse.

He worked there until his manager discovered that he had been hiding books in the ware-

house to read on breaks. His manager asked him if he was educated and then put him into a supervisor trainee position in the hardware department.

Phillips became a department manager of the ski shop and the infants and toddlers department. After Phillips worked at Hudson's, he decided to get his Master's degree in teaching. He filled in at a school in Detroit for a semester.

Looking for a job after earning his master's degree, Phillips ended up in Alpena teaching at the high school in 1971.

He worked at the high school for ten years and half a year at Thunder Bay Junior High School.

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Homeless go beyond the stereotype

JOANN LANDRY

Contributing Writer

Consider these scenarios:

A TWO-PARENT family, with both parents working at jobs that pay minimum wage or slightly higher.

The car breaks down and they use their rent money to pay to get it fixed so they can continue to get to work, and now they are a month behind in their rent. But that is okay; they will catch up.

But the next month one of them gets sick and has to have surgery. They will lose half of their income for the next six weeks because it will take that long to heal.

Now they are two months behind. Because they are behind, the landlord adds late fees to their rent. They cannot catch up. The landlord now begins the eviction process, adding court costs to their final bill, which now exceeds \$1,000. They become homeless.

AN ELDERLY couple receives Social Security disability benefits for the husband because he is disabled. The wife, 59, has raised eight children but has never worked outside the home and has no marketable job skills.

They get a mortgage on the home they have had for 20 or 30 years in order to fix their leaking roof, and repair the furnace that is as old as the house.

The husband becomes so ill he is placed in a nursing home. All of his Social Security is taken to pay the nursing home fees. The wife has no income and no way

to pay her house payment.

They eventually lose the home. She is homeless.

A SINGLE mother of two works hard, but one day has a stroke at the age of 37. Her doctors say she cannot work again, but it takes months and even years to be approved to receive disability. She uses all her savings and finally has none left.

Her house payment is larger than the Family Independence Agency grant she now receives.

She loses her home and her ex-husband threatens to take the children from her for not providing for them. They are now homeless.

Although all of these are fictional cases, they are situations I saw on a daily basis in my work with Catholic Human Services of Alpena's Call Us for Help program.

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Ladder project gives community a creative outlet



Marquette artist Mary Wright is set up at East Campus with a community art project called "Stepping Into Winter." Anyone is invited to create an outdoor ladder sculpture that will be displayed along the Alpena Bike Path.

Playing Santa is a family tradition

ROXANE SNYDER

Staff Writer

"If everyone did a little, it would mean a lot."

That's what Mr. & Mrs. Bob Richard said to their son, Paul, years ago. It has stuck with him and he practically lives by that advice from his parents.

Paul enjoys volunteering in

the Alpena area and lending a helping hand any way he can. One of his favorite times of the year is Christmas. He is a volunteer Santa Claus.

He took over playing Santa for his father when he couldn't anymore due to health reasons.

"I grew up learning to care for others," said Paul.

In 1989, he played Santa at

the Alpena Mall. He remembers being asked some challenging questions from the children who came to sit on his lap and read off their wish lists.

He doesn't remember the exact questions he was asked or how he responded to them, but he does know that both the children and parents walked away happy and in anticipation for Christmas!

"The answers that I gave those children came from God," he said. "He is there to help me through."

His Santa outfit is as authentic as can be because he knows how observant children are.

Since his experience at the mall, he has been playing Santa for Christmas parties and on his own on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas Eve, Paul starts out at 5 p.m. and finishes his visits around midnight. His last stop is always his mother and father's house.

Besides his regular scheduled stops, Alpena General Hospital, and local nursing homes, he visits about 20 unexpected houses.

"I pick out houses with a lot of activity going on," he said. "If the lights are on and there are cars in the driveway, I might just stop by!"

He told of the many people he has surprised throughout the years.

The owners of one house that he had visited for about three years decided that on the fourth year, they were going to find out who the man behind the beard was.

On his way out the door after his visit, the adults actually tackled him onto the couch and made him reveal his identity.

Another year, as he was trying to fit in all his stops, he was pulled over by the police. They eventually let him go, but only after some laughing.

Paul's middle name is Rudolph, after his grand-father.

Remembering his experiences, Paul laughs and says, "One of the best rewards that you can get for doing nice things for others, is the warm feelings that you get back."

He hopes that some day when he has a family, a Santa will come to visit his house. Maybe someone reading this article will volunteer and touch his life and many others, as he has done.



Courtesy Photo

Paul Richard, whose middle name happens to be Rudolph, has been playing Santa for 11 years.



Photos by Jocelyn Haske