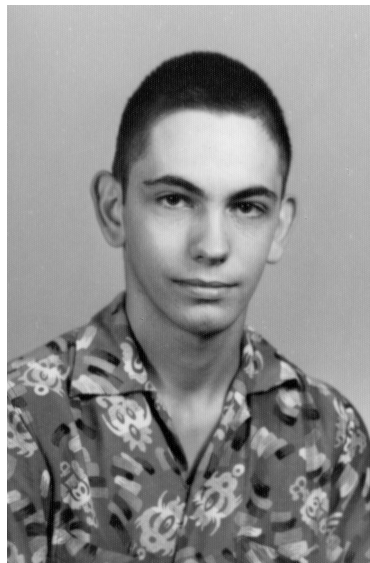
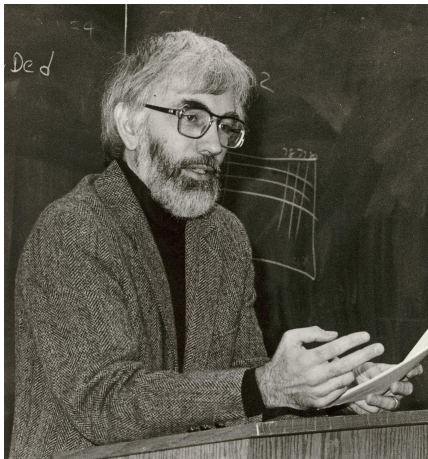


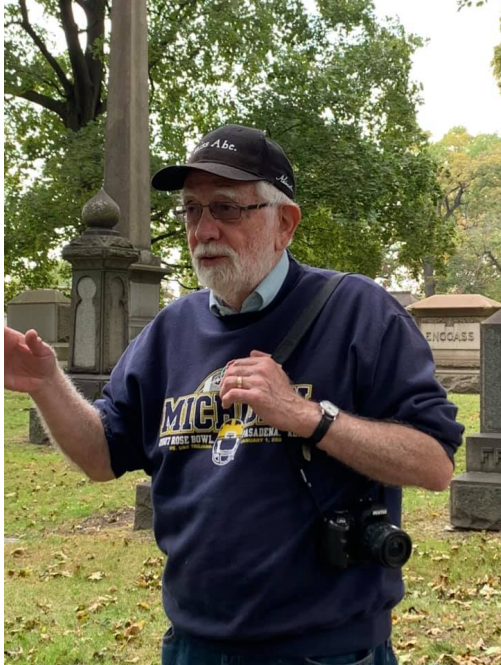
## Ronald Stockton, Legacy Lecture, March 30, 2023

### Reader Introduction to the Talk:

The University of Michigan-Dearborn has a Legacy Lecture program in which retiring faculty can deliver a talk reflecting upon their life, their career, their research, their teaching, and their students. I stepped down from the classroom in December, 2021 and delivered my Legacy Lecture talk on March 30, 2023. I had two colleagues (Donald Anderson and Elias Baumgarten) deliver introductory comments on my career. Then I delivered my talk. Then five memorable students discussed their relationship with me (Amine Zreik, Cynthia Munoz, Monica De Roche, Christian Ledford, Shahad Atiya), Amine was an assistant prosecutor in San Francisco and was in the middle of a trial so his reflections were read by Shahad Atiya. Monica is a doctoral candidate at the University of California – Irvine and flew in for the event. Then there was an Open Mike time for anyone in the audience who wanted to speak. There were probably 70 or 80 people in the audience. The full event was recorded and made available on the Deep Blue site of the CASL (College of Arts, Science, and Literature) website. It was a wonderful event.

**Photos:** Me lecturing in 1986; Department photo; me at 16; me lecturing in Woodmere Cemetery; Family in late 1970s: Jane, Greg, Ted





**Here are my comments.**

Well, here I am, doing a Legacy Lecture. My sense of the Legacy Lecture is that these will be time capsules for future generations. Each of us becomes archaic over time. Those hired during my cohort came when this campus was a shell of its current self. We had three, two-story buildings, built by Ford, to get us started, and several “modules” These were temporary wooden buildings such as they put up during World War II. They were great as offices, very spacious, but racoons got inside, and every time the Michigan economy crashed I had nightmares that I would come to campus and see my office being carried off on the back of a truck. In fact, closure was definitely on the agenda around 1984.

But in every situation there is an opportunity. Gene Arden, our first Provost and everyone’s model of a good administrator, said the campus started when we were able to hire quality people who would have been beyond our reach five years earlier. Gene also said to his administrative assistant Elnora Ford – the two of them ran the campus in those days – that we increased Black enrollment by raising standards. Elnora, who is African-American, told that story at a posthumous tribute to Gene.

Anyway, Gene was right. I had unique colleagues who were intellectually charged. Many of us thought we would stay for two or three years and then go on the market, but the campus grew on us. In time we began to realize that we liked where we were. Not only did the campus allow creativity but we were present at the creation, so to speak. We were building new programs and a new institution. Our salaries were poor (I took a pay cut to come here), but we had interesting students and could teach whatever we thought they needed to learn. And I got to spend my whole career in a garden in the middle of a major metropolitan area.

Let me pause for a minute. When I say the campus was poor, you may not understand what I am saying. Not only were we in temporary buildings but I did not have a desk for ten years. I had a table without drawers. Finally, a kindly lecturer, Abe Raimi, very generously bought me a desk. Thanks, Abe.

In a sense I am a dinosaur, the type of professor not likely to be seen in the future. I need to explain why that is. So let's go back to the beginning of this talk and start over.

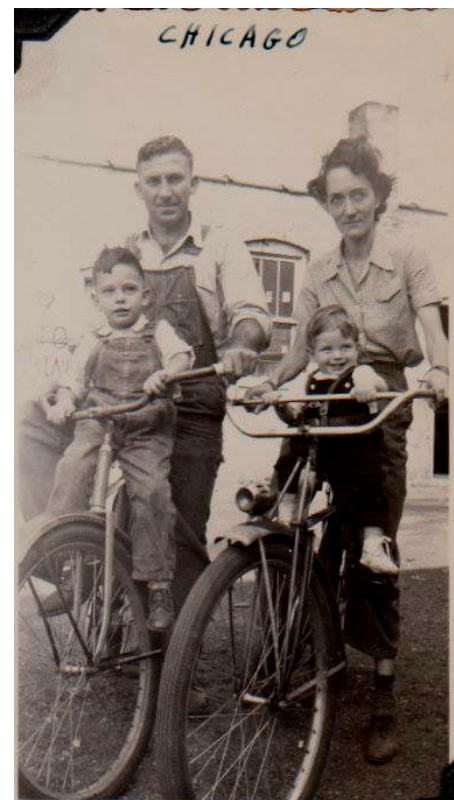
I really should not be standing here. There are two reasons for saying this. The first is that I arrived two hours late for my job interview. To be honest, I had never heard of UM-Dearborn. In 1973 when I came, the campus had been operating only a short time and had just that year added a full four-year contingent of students. It was originally intended to be a two-year senior transfer college for engineering and business students. But when they decided to start admitting freshmen, the whole dynamic changed. Suddenly there was a surge of students *and* a surge in hiring. When my Michigan State placement advisor told me he had submitted my name to this campus, he was a bit sheepish, as if maybe he should have checked with me first. Moreover, I had a good job with the health research unit of the Michigan Department of Social Services. Still, I had trained to be an academic so I was pleased to get the interview. The problem was that I didn't have the slightest idea where the campus was. It certainly was not on my map, and this was well before the days of GPS. Jane and I stayed with some friends in Ypsilanti the night before so I would be close. My friend said it was easy, "Just go down this road until you come to the interstate and that will lead you to it." But I did not realize there were **two** interstates and I took the wrong one.

When I finally showed up, Bernie Klein was very relaxed, as Bernie always was. He said, “They are waiting for you.” I went into a room where people were sitting with their brown bag lunches. Most of you would not recognize their names but these were the gods, an aggregation of high achievers who shaped this college. Bernie was the former comptroller of the city of Detroit and was the highest vote getter for the Detroit Charter Commission; Don Anderson had his book on William Howard Taft; Peter Amman was a nationally prominent scholar; Don Proctor soon had an article in a major journal; Dennis Papazian would create the Armenian Research Center; Noriko Kamachi was a specialist in Asian history, and Frank Wayman was a rising star. And there was Sid Bolkosky, one of the greatest scholars in UM-Dearborn history.

These were the founders, but we soon added Gerry Moran whose knowledge of early-American history made him nationally prominent, even as a graduate student. And Elaine Clark whose expertise in medieval family law was unsurpassed. And Mike Twomey, a specialist in international trade. And Pat Smith, whose work on social issues was remarkable. And Michael Rosano, a political theorist with whom I have shared many conversations. Little did I realize that these people would challenge my mind and make my time here so rewarding. And I have to mention two who got away: Pat Dobel to Washington-Seattle and Leslie Tentler to Catholic University. Darn!

The second reason I should not be here has to do with my background. I was not from the kind of family that would ordinarily produce a professor. My dad was a coal miner with an eighth grade education. My mom had dropped out of high school her sophomore year to help support her family during the depression. My high school teachers were serious about education but the school was poor. We did not have classes in chemistry or physics or language. My senior year my parents moved to a nearby town so I could take those courses.

**Photo:** My parents, me and my sister Delores in Chicago. My dad worked in the Mars Candy Factory during the war, before we returned to Southern Illinois for my first grade.



My first year in college, I nearly flunked out. I did flunk chemistry and got a D in another course. By the end of the year I was on the ropes, academically speaking. My only A was in government, a course that I really liked. Some doors had closed but the door towards political science had opened.

As a boy, I was interested in the political system. We got a local newspaper that I read every day, and from the United Mine Worker's *Journal* I got my monthly dose of public policy and class struggle. I learned quickly that what happened in Washington and Springfield and in corporate offices in Chicago affected our lives.

We also got the *Chicago Tribune* on Sunday, more for the funnies than for the news. But I read the news and also the supplementary *Books Magazine*. That actually got me into trouble my sophomore year in college. I had to write a book review in an English class and apparently it was too good to be mine. The professor wrote "sounds very bookish" and handed back a modest grade. Probably the idea that a miner's kid could write such a review was not credible. I went to talk to her and explained that I read the *Book Magazine* every week and knew what a book review was like. She was sympathetic and perhaps even persuaded. She did not change the grade but at least gave me a B for the term, so that was good.

### **Working with Students**

I always wore a jacket and tie to class, at least for the first few weeks of the semester. My students considered me approachable, and were comfortable telling me about their struggles, but I never let them think I was their friend. I was their professor. I had wisdom and experience they were yet to achieve. I was able to help them because I had once been like them. I think they knew that.

And I had a few extras for my students. At the end of every semester, I invited upper-level students over to my house for an evening of conversations. And on the last day of class I awarded an inscribed *Best In Class* book to the top student. Stories of that Award would get around and students would look forward to which of their classmates was to be honored. They always applauded with great pleasure.

Where did I get my ideas on how to be a professor? Well, from my past. When I was a sophomore I had two experiences that made a difference.

One experience was in my Air Force ROTC class. Reserve Officer Training Corps was required for two years. I wore a uniform once a week and spent an hour drilling. In one class, students had to make a presentation on some topic of public interest. I spoke on agriculture policy. When I finished, the captain said I had a natural talent and should consider being a teacher. That was very welcome praise. When you are unsure of yourself, having a respected authority figure praise you is very significant.

Then in an English class on drama we wrote an essay on *Romeo and Juliet*. I emphasized how young they were, and that many of their actions could be adolescent romantic foolishness. The professor read my essay to the class and cited it as an example of good analysis. Again, I realized I had talent.

Later when I went to Kenya for two years to teach, I arranged with my favorite professor, William Hardenburgh, to take a directed study in which I would read a dozen books on African politics. I periodically sent him essays I had written on those books. At a certain point, he sent a response telling me that the discussions were excellent and showed real analytical skill. That was the point that I decided I wanted to pursue a doctorate. Until that point, I would never have had such a thought. And when Jane said she thought it was a good idea, I knew I had a powerful ally.

**Two photos:** Jane and me on top of Kilimanjaro, and after from a 7,000 mile drive from Nairobi to Cape Town and back. I would not do that drive again, but I would not miss it for anything.



I learned from these experiences how much a word of praise from a professor can change a student's self-image, and give the student a confidence that did not exist before. Thanks to those professors, I knew I had talents but needed to figure out how to hone them.

Once on the faculty, I tried to create classes and units that cut across categories and even civilizations. In Revolution, we compared Marx and Fanon. In the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict we compared Herzl and the PLO. I had a unit on Muslims in the West, and another on the international phenomenon of Blasphemy. My Honors students read Wolstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and other students read Osama bin Laden's *Declaration of War* on the US. And were told to write an explanation of Osama's views *without* revealing their own perspectives. To me, that is education: being confronted by ideas that you do not like, and seeing that they make sense. And after each written assignment, students would write a non-graded Personal Reaction. That made a point, that learning content and thinking about your reactions are two separate processes.

I tried to be on campus every day, often staying after five o'clock. Teaching classes is important and why we are hired, but there is so much more than that. I always wanted to work with students outside of the classroom. One major project was the Model Arab League. The story of that is interesting. I got invited to join a month-long educational program to Jordan in 1987. This was sponsored by the National Council on US-Arab Relations. When that trip was over, I met with the Director, John Duke Anthony. I told him it was obvious this was a quality organization and I would be happy to work with them in any way possible. He suggested I get involved in the Model Arab League. In that annual program five-person delegations represent an Arab country. Each student would prepare for a specialized committee --- Political Affairs, Palestinian Affairs, Security Affairs, Social Affairs, and Economic Affairs. We would study their country, the issues, the region, parliamentary procedure, and negotiation tactics. Each student would prepare two resolutions their country would like to see passed in their area of specialization. Then they would negotiate for two and a half days with other delegations from around the state. Once an Arab feminist advocated for the Saudi position on the role of women and once the head of the Jewish Student Association represented Palestine. Those were real educational experiences.

I always told students that we are not in this for the silver. We want to be the top delegation. And we were. For 19 years in a row we won delegation awards. In some years, we won both top awards. The students who participated in those events often told me it was the most rewarding experience of their career. I was so proud to sit in the audience and see them called up for their individual awards, or their delegation awards.



This was a lot of work. In some years, I had to contribute my own money to cover expenses, but the enthusiasm of the students made the long hours of preparation well worth it.

And I might add that I was able to participate in other National Council programs (in Saudi Arabia for example) and even headed up their summer program to places such as Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, and Jerusalem. I think I can say my career would not have been as successful without that organization.

The other project I did was the Immigrant Memoir Project. It started when a student who was an immigrant from Poland joined a Student Leadership Program. She had come to the US as a teenager and had left behind her friends and family. It was a hard adjustment. One day she came to tell me about her cousin who had died in a car accident. The cousin was her age and left behind a husband and a little girl. My student was distraught that she could not be there to grieve with the others.



I have always felt that when you find yourself at a loss, you should do something to put yourself back in control. I told her she should write a letter to that little girl. Tell her everything she remembers about growing up with her mother, the adventures they had, the conversations, the things they did. I said that when that little girl was her age, that letter would be the most valuable thing in her life. She left my office with new energy.

Every student in that student leadership program had to do a project and she could not decide on one. She had discussed her experience as an immigrant with me many times. Recording those experiences might be a good thing. I explained that this is a wonderful country where she could actually *become* an American, but there are costs. The country will chew you up and spit out something new and different. Perhaps she could write a letter to her future grandchildren telling what it was like to be an immigrant. I myself had a grandmother who was an immigrant from France and I know nothing about her experience of coming to a new country. How I wish I had a letter from her telling the story of her life in France before she left, her reaction when her mother told her they were moving to America, how she felt during the journey, how she felt in her new life, how she made friends, how she learned English, how she met her husband. Such a letter would be a family treasure. I told my student to imagine that she was my age and a grandchild asked her to tell about these things. And then imagine she is not there to answer that child's questions. That is the assignment. Anything you want to survive, you have to put in writing. My student went off very excited. Later she told me she was halfway through her memoir, at 150 pages. I was very happy at that report. (I did not tell her but I later met her mother who said to me, "I got my daughter back.")

To make a long story short this project expanded. Soon I had 40 people in the program, from many countries. Once I was talking to a new student about the project. There was another student there. They were from different parts of the world. The veteran student said to the recruit, "you will cry, but you can call me." Those of us who have deep roots in this country may not be aware of the experiences our students have had. Students wrote of fleeing war, of being oppressed politically and religiously, of going from prosperity to impoverishment, of sitting in their house with bombs falling, not sure they would see the sun come up. One told me of how her family was involved in a massacre. Another told of living in a refugee camp for three years. Yet another told me, "I have seen more dead bodies than anyone you will ever know."

More than one said, “my parents suffered by changing countries but they did it for me. I can’t let them down.” We would meet at my house to discuss their projects. These were exciting events. Knowing immigrant students has enriched my life, and helped me understand myself better.

In time, I arranged for the Bentley Library in Ann Arbor to create an archival collection called UM-Dearborn Immigrant Memoir Project. Two of those projects were perhaps 150 pages long and were remarkable. One writer got a personal note from the archivist. He said he received so much material that he did not have time to read it all, but he always tried to read a few pages of each donation just to have a sense of what was coming in. He said that when he started her memoir he could not stop. He read the whole 150 pages. He also asked her to have her siblings contribute their own reflections, which they did. She is here on stage and will talk to you in a minute. And I might add, a second memoir has just been accepted for publication.

These projects – the Model Arab League and the Immigrant Memoir Project -- were not a part of my assignment. And yet I could not imagine a career without that kind of engagement.

### **Research and Writing**

People say I write well. I always have a person in mind as I write, someone to whom I am explaining ideas and data. When I had my department farewell party, Marty Hershock, whom I admire, said he had always used me as a model for writing. When he would get stalled he would ask himself, “How would Ron do this?” That was a great compliment.

I learned to write from the worst professor I ever had. He taught a course on Latin American politics and just taught from the text. I remember only two things he ever said. One was that when he was teaching in a Central American university a student who had done badly on an examination walked up after class and said, “I am an ear.” That was a threat. It meant he was an informant for the secret police and could report what he wanted. [Today such students just write hostile course evaluations]. I would have been happy if that professor had just spent the semester telling stories from his experiences (a technique I applied in my own classes). But he kept droning on.

The second thing he taught me was of exceptional importance. He said when he was supervising a master’s thesis, he would require the student to put each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper.

From that conversation I realized that if you view each paragraph as a coherent point, it will clarify your analysis. And if you view each *sentence* as a coherent point, that would also clarify your analysis. My advice to students (and to myself) was that “a short sentence is your friend. A long sentence is your enemy. And a long subordinate clause is from the devil.” Careers have been changed by that simple piece of advice, including my own.

I also learned early on that editors are remarkable allies. And I must say that my most valuable editor was my wife Jane. She has a real sense of grammar and syntax, and could see where I had something not quite right. And it has been extremely beneficial to have an intelligent partner *not in my field*. If she can't understand something, no one else will. Thanks, Jane. You should be listed as co-author of almost everything I have ever written. (And to be honest, she IS credited on several published works). (Photos: Jane in Alaska, Jane in Berlin).

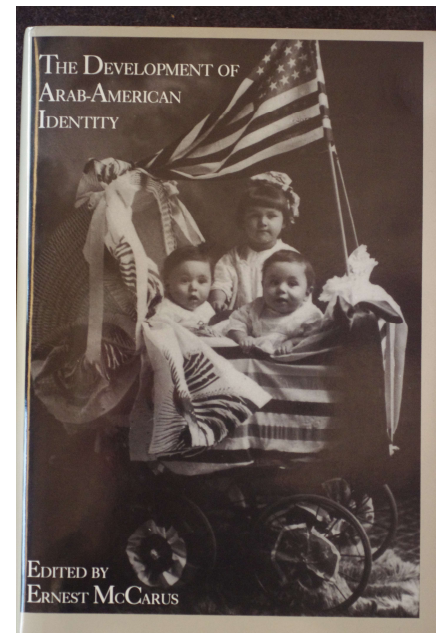


Turning to my research, I have three points.

- First, my research was eclectic. There are colleagues who define a field or interest and pursue it throughout their career. I admire those people, but I was not one of them.
- Second, much of my research grew out of my teaching. Often an issue would come up in class and I would decide to find out more. I would begin systematically reading and collecting data. Soon I would decide that this deserved a conference paper, and then I would revise that paper for submission.

- Third, I am going to quote something said when the Michigan Political Science Association had a tribute for Charlie Press of Michigan State. In a sense Charlie was my mentor, even though he was not involved with my dissertation. At that event, someone said of him, “While many faculty interact in their research with other political scientists, Charlie interacted with the political system and the people who inhabited it.” That was my approach also. I always said, if you can’t imagine a simple person trying to figure out how to survive in the political system you will never be able to understand that system.

Now regarding specific projects. In my class on Southern Africa, I would discuss cartoons published in the South African press and would analyze themes in those cartoons for the benefit of students. (In those days, I got a weekly clipping service from the State Department that included cartoons). I did something similar in my class on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, looking particularly at images of Arabs and Jews. In time I developed a slide lecture called *Ethnic Archetypes: Images of Jews and Arabs in Cartoons and Comic Books*. This was such a fascinating topic that I presented it at a conference in Ann Arbor. After my presentation Ernest McCarrus, head of the Middle East Center, told me he was preparing an edited book on Arabs in America and would like to include that presentation. It became one of my most successful projects, unique and widely used in classes. It is still in print, 30 years later. And on Deep Blue – the university’s virtual archive where professors can deposit their writings -- my chapter has 990 downloads.



That class on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and my class on Religion and Politics --my two signature classes -- led me to pursue the question of Christian Zionism. This is the belief that the creation of Israel in 1948 was the fulfillment of prophecy. I began to read on that subject, always trying to keep my mind open to perspectives I did not necessarily like. That was a great discipline for me, to separate my own preferences from my analysis. We all try to do that but some subjects are more difficult than others. In time, I did a public opinion study asking respondents what they thought. I found that 36% felt that, indeed, those events fulfilled

prophecy. Moreover, those views predicted to a whole host of Middle East perspectives, and fit within an overall ideology that I called the New Religious Right.

My research on religio-political issues had some strange origins. When I was in graduate school I was reading my morning *Free Press*. I had done my duty and read the editorials when I saw a column by Billy Graham. It was called *My Answer*. It was Flag Day and someone asked if it was ok to say the pledge and to salute the flag. Billy said we were citizens of two worlds, a heavenly world and an earthly world. God expected us to be good citizens in both, and that meant respecting authority. (Graham was borrowing heavily from Calvin in the 1500s on this point). As I sat there, I realized that far more people had read *My Answer* than the forgettable editorial of the day. I began reading and clipping on a regular basis.

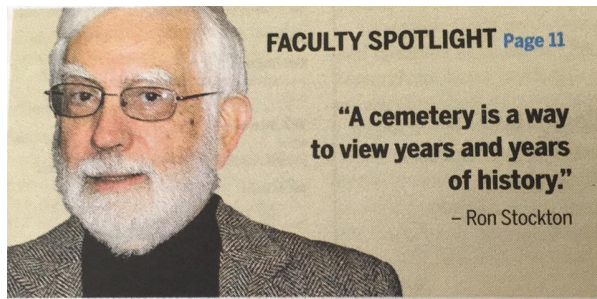
And then a decade later we suddenly had Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, as Republicans began to focus upon cultural issues as a means of pulling Evangelicals and conservative Catholics away from the Democratic Party into the Republican Party. (Don't forget that Jimmy Carter carried the Evangelical vote in 1976). Almost simultaneously, we had an Ayatollah in Tehran. Overnight, Iran switched from an American ally to an American opponent and the whole political and alliance system in the Middle East changed. I suddenly realized that for many people, religion was a political paradigm.

It was then that I started teaching my class on Religion and Politics. I sometimes told students that this class was a gift from the Ayatollah Khomeini. But Jerry Falwell also signed that gift card. I included a unit on Evangelical politics in that class (as well as having students read the Ayatollah's book, *Islamic Government*). And I set off to read extensively on Billy Graham. (Not to mention Islamic revolutionary politics). I read a year of Billy's sermons, several of his books, and two biographies. I also had students read Seyyid Qutb's revolutionary treatise *Milestones*. A decade later a Muslim student said to me, "I was not sure why you had us read Seyyid Qutb but after September 11, I understood."

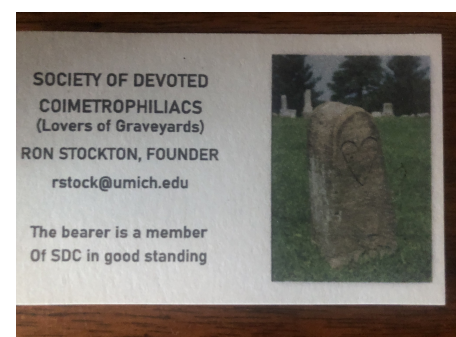
In approaching these materials, I gave myself the same assignment I gave my students: "Until you can understand someone's position well enough to explain it *to that person's satisfaction*, and defend it from its critics, you do not know it well enough to have an opinion." That was a hard assignment but to my surprise, I changed my opinion on Graham. As I read and tried to

extract the model inherent in his writings I found an authentic conservatism that surprised me. I also realized that even though he had grown up in segregated North Carolina, he renounced segregation and insisted that his crusades have integrated seating, even in the South where that was illegal. In every sermon in his last decades he renounced racial injustice. He testified on behalf of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, and when he visited the Soviet Union in the 1980s he called for a nuclear freeze, even in the face of Reagan administration pressure to be silent on the issue. In 2008 when Obama was on the ticket, he told reporters that he was not making an endorsement but he reminded them that he had always been Blue (wink, wink, nudge, nudge). He even let his hair grow long.

I got a few modest articles and conference papers out of that project, and a unit in my class. But I also got a much better understanding of the Evangelicals, which was my heritage faith. And I opened my mind to reassess one of the great spiritual leaders of the age. It was the first time I realized that for many people, religion was not just what you did during services. It contained within itself a political ideology.



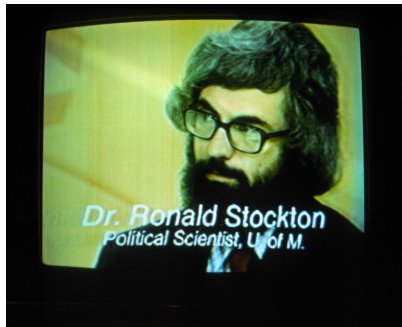
My project on Muslim Gravestones was another surprising, serendipitous project. I have always loved graveyards and often led graveyard walks for students and colleagues. (Some of you have my coimetrophiliac membership card – which you can only get after a graveyard walk). But this project was different. It grew out of my public lecture series, Gravestones 101, run in conjunction with my colleagues Elaine Clark, Gerry Moran, Randy Woodland, and Jackie van Sant. The third (and last) time we offered those lectures, I had five Muslim students in the class. After the class ended I met with them



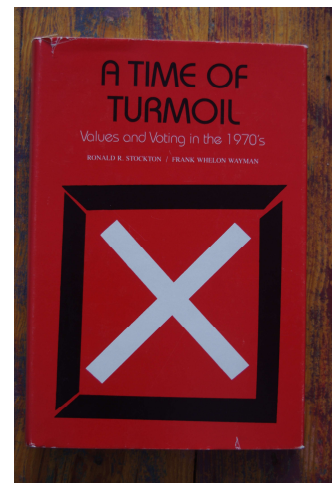
and suggested that we find every place in Southeast Michigan where Muslims were buried. They were very excited about that. I must mention Shahad Atiya [photo], who is sitting here, as the most valuable of those students. She contacted local funeral homes and imams and came up with many locations. I began to visit those places, often with Shahad and even her mother Suha joining me. I discovered a remarkable diversity of stones and styles. In the end, I found 25 different burial sites with people of multiple ethnic groups, 9 different religious sub-groups, and from 31 different countries. I discovered that in cemeteries, Islam was a very diverse, often heterodox category. This project produced an academic article, a photo exhibit displayed at four educational locations, and a host of conference presentations. At this point I have photos of perhaps 1500 different gravestones, not to mention those I found overseas. To my knowledge, no other academic has written on Muslim gravestones in the U.S. My Deep Blue posting of my article has 3,600 downloads.<sup>1</sup>



My first research project on this campus was with Frank Wayman. We were co-teaching a new class on Political Analysis, which focused upon public opinion data. We decided to have students engage in a research project unique to the class. We developed a questionnaire,



drew a sample from Dearborn, trained students in interviewing techniques, and send them out into the neighborhoods. We ended up with 801 responses which Frank and I analyzed for publication. We got conference papers out of



this, but also a major article in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, a highly selective journal. And a book called *A Time of Turmoil*. I think Frank and I can be proud that we found some patterns that

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<sup>1</sup> In 2001 I made an inventory of every grave (829) in my hometown cemetery. My analysis of death patterns (“Death on the Frontier”) was published in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*. I joined with Clara Crocker Brown, who had collected family data on many people, to produce a book entitled *Horse Prairie Cemetery. Sesser, Illinois. Tombstone Inscriptions and Family Records*. On Deep Blue it has over 15,000 downloads.

other political scientists had not yet discovered, such as the potential for cultural issues to be used to shatter the dominant New Deal coalition. And we gave scores of students hands-on experiences they would never have gotten otherwise.

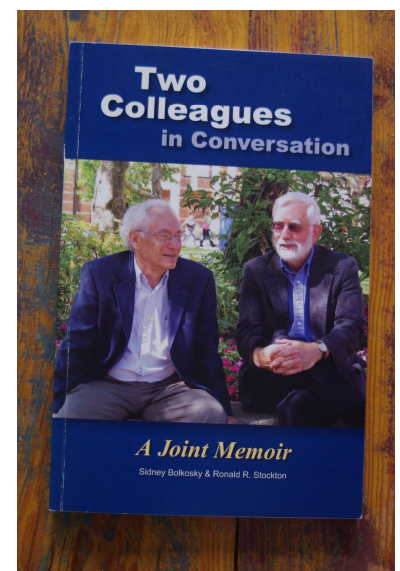
**Photo:** Publicizing *Time of Turmoil* findings on Dennis Holey Show, mid 1970s.

I should also mention some other projects. One was on the issue of Divesting from the Israeli occupation. For some time I have attended Presbyterian churches, which have a long tradition going back into the mid-1800s of working with Arab Christians. In 2004, they had a proposal before their national convention to sell shares in five companies (Caterpillar and United Technologies were two) that were important in sustaining the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands captured in 1967. This produced an explosive reaction within the Jewish community. The inflammatory rhetoric was beyond harsh. At one point Prime Minister Netanyahu even renounced the Presbyterians in a video message to American Jews.

I am by nature a pack rat so as statements or essays or resolutions were issued I would print them out. Soon I had extensive files. (Now deposited in the Bentley for the use of future researchers). I wrote up my findings in the spirit of a Briefing Document. My goal was to state faithfully the positions of the various parties to this dispute. I was proud of that analysis and the fact that it was published in *Middle East Policy*, a Washington-based journal. When the Presbyterians followed up with a second wave of resolutions two years later, and then a third wave in 2014, I extended my project and had additional articles in the same journal. That is a remarkable trilogy of research and analysis on that important topic, which has also roiled the UM campus, with some Regents throwing around harsh epithets.

As of this month, these articles have 420 downloads from Deep Blue.

Another project was also unexpected. I was in a used bookstore and saw a book by [French President] Francois Mitterand and [Holocaust survivor and scholar] Elie Wiesel. They had interviewed each other about their lives and their views. I thought to myself, “Sid Bolkosky and I could do this.” When I proposed it, Sid was excited. We decided on some topics and sat down for nine hours of conversations.





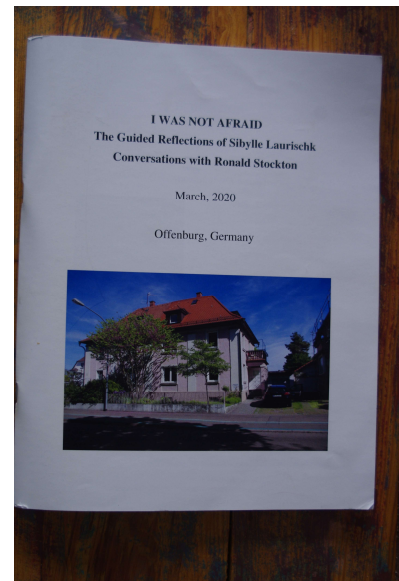
The result is called *Two Colleagues in Conversation: A Joint Memoir*. It is our gift to our families, our colleagues, and the campus archive. On Deep Blue it has 390 downloads.

And, on a roll, I did two other oral histories. One was with Barbara Gepford. She and her husband Bill, who had died earlier, had been educational missionaries in Lebanon and Hong Kong before they came to Dearborn in the 1980s where Bill became the Presbyterian outreach director to the then-struggling Arab community. Barbara had her own remarkable story, which I was able to record.

I also did an oral history with my long-time friend Sibylle Laurischk. Some of you may have met her during her visits here.

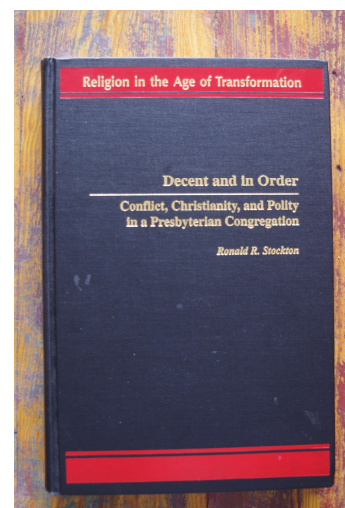


We met back in 1980 when she was a law student, and stayed in close touch until her death in



2020. Just before she died, I flew to Germany and spent five days with her. We recorded six hours of discussions of her life, her experience with the partition and then reunification of her country, her intellectual growth, her thoughts on war trauma, her thoughts on the role of women in society, and her three terms in the Bundestag. This project -- 127 pages long -- is called *I Was Not Afraid*. After two plus years it has over 530 downloads on Deep Blue. I think that book makes a historic contribution.

In a different direction, one unexpected project was my book *Decent and in Order. Conflict, Christianity and Polity in a Presbyterian Congregation*. Again, the research grew from a real situation. I was active in a congregation that hired a new minister.

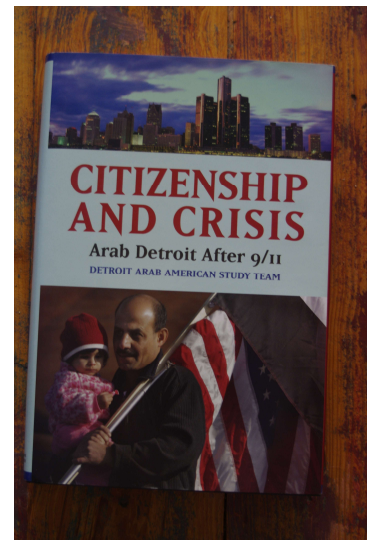


We were excited at this but then realized that he was ill prepared by experience or wisdom or

maturity to lead a large, complex congregation. Soon women began to raise issues. This escalated into the Presbyterian court system (which few of us even knew existed) and ultimately into the civil courts. After the dust had settled, I set out to write a briefing document for the national leadership, explaining what went wrong. I thought this was an archetypical example of how investigations can malfunction. But I was encouraged by my Henry Ford College colleague John Smith to turn it into a book, which I did. This project sent me deep into new areas of research: organizational behavior, sexual misconduct law and policy, civil law, church law, administrative law, pastoral politics, and church organization. It took three years of extensive research before I had a manuscript. I had two offers to publish it but settled on Praeger, which does academic monographs. It was never a best seller but it reached those readers I wanted it to reach. Four different people have contacted me over the years asking for advice on how to handle their own conflicts. I am proud of this project.

I have saved the Detroit Arab American Study for last. This project was started on our campus when Chancellor Dan Little invited his friend David Featherman, head of the Institute of Social Research, to campus for a discussion. Dan was new on campus and was eager to develop a signature project focusing upon the Arab American community. He invited me to that meeting, at which we decided to conduct a major research project. Soon he held a meeting in his office with two faculty from Ann Arbor.

One was Wayne Baker, that year's head of the Detroit Area Study, an ongoing research project that did in-depth analysis of public opinion. Wayne wanted to include Arab-Americans in the study so we fused the projects, he and I being Principal Investigators. Five other people were on the project. This was not an easy collaboration but we ended up interviewing a scientific sample of 1,016 Arab Americans and Chaldeans in the three-county area. Not only was this data set unique but we produced a major book, *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit After 9/11*.



### **Two Folders**

As I was cleaning out my office, I saw two folders tucked away. One was called SOB and one was called Kudos. The SOB folder contained (excuse me) Student Overt Bitches, complaints

students had made at various times. Few of those were from regular students. We professors know how to handle an unhappy student. Often they just don't understand why they got a poor grade and we are able to talk to them and encourage them. The interesting issues in that file were political in nature, often coming from retirees who had lived in a bubble for the last fifty years. Most of our retirees were real assets to the campus but a few came ready to fight. In teaching my class on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict I twice had Freedom of Information requests filed against me, and once had a complaint from someone in one of those groups that monitor professors for proper thinking. He told me he was there to make sure I was objective and fair to all sides. All sides. You know what that means. That means *his* point of view.

That was just before I kicked him out of class.

One FOIA request was from an off-campus hard right Israeli-support group. They wanted to know who was funding me. I wonder what they thought they would find, a note that said, "Dear Professor. Here is your monthly \$5,000 stipend. Keep up the good work. Your friend, Osama bin Laden." Was that what they were expecting? You never know what is in the minds of such people. Anyway, the university attorney sent them a note saying that all of my income was from general funds and they were welcome to call if they wanted more information. That shut them down.

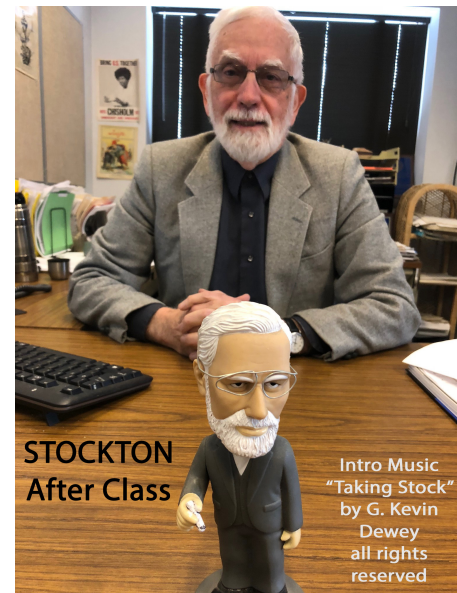
But the other folder was entitled Kudos. Once I was frustrated at something or the other and Jane suggested I start keeping notes from students to remind me of what was really important. I created that folder and started tucking positive feedback into it. This did not include nice words on course evaluations but those extra notes that students send after the semester ends or after they graduate. Those notes are very nice to read now that my career is over. I am so glad Jane made that suggestion.

### **Stocktonafterclass Podcasts**

When I stepped down from the classroom in December 2020 I knew I was going to miss the teaching experience. Jane and my sons and some students said I should start a podcast series. I was not even sure what that meant or how to do it. However, my former student, Yasmeen Kadouh, had a wonderful podcast called Dearborn Girl. She offered to help me get started. Then my sons, Greg and Ted, bought me some fancy equipment. At that point, I was obligated.

When I started posting, I thought I would mostly get friends and family or former students. For the first few weeks that was true. And I was thrilled when I reached 500 downloads.

My first hit was *Understanding Impeachment*. That was a lecture I had delivered during the first Trump impeachment so I had full notes and redid it for this purpose. Suddenly, I was getting downloads in Europe and other places. Then I did a podcast on *Impeachment for Insurrection, The Second Trial of Donald Trump*. That was also well received. I did a podcast on Obama's memoir and one on Vernon Jordan, whom I had met and who had just died, and I recorded a reflection on the life of Nelson Mandela. I had also written on what I called *The Replacement Wars*, about violent white nationalism. These were all well received.



Then in May, 2021, during Ramadan, the Israelis sent soldiers into the Al Aqsa mosque compound to cut the wires of the speakers that broadcast the call to prayer, *and* to drive young men out of the mosque. They were there just in case Israeli soldiers entered the compound. Can you see where this is going? It was a fiasco. Hamas gave them a deadline to withdraw or they would begin shelling. The deadline passed and the shelling started. And we had the Israel-Hamas conflict. Meanwhile I was recycling old lectures: *Background to Zionism*, Herzl, *Three Narratives* on the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the PLO Charter, the 1936 uprising, the 1948 Palestine War. BOOM! My podcasts took off. By the time of the cease-fire eleven days later I had 8500 downloads in 76 different countries and 864 different locations. I had listeners all over the world including in China, Germany, India, Mexico, Japan, and even Mongolia. What a thrill. As I speak to you today, I have over 41,000 downloads in 124 countries. According to a monitoring agency, Stocktonafterclass is in the top 3% of 2.5 million podcasts worldwide. I even have two listeners in Moscow. I think they are Vladimir Putin and his National Security Advisor. And one of my download sites is an island republic about to go under water. Suddenly global warming has become a personal cause.

## Looking Back

I had very modest goals when my career started. I could never have conceived of the evolution I experienced. I had lived three plus years in Kenya, two as a teacher and fifteen months doing field work. My assumption was that I would teach and write in African-related fields, perhaps returning to Africa from time to time to update my insights. The paradigm we used in those days was called modernization theory. It held that as education and economic development occurred there would be a convergence of ideologies and behavior as the regions of Africa and Asia and the Middle East moved closer to a western way of behavior and thinking. In time, everyone would say “have a nice day,” would vote in multi-party elections and would develop democratic values. Tribal differences would fade into some shared community, and everyone would become gleefully American, as if we were the model for the world. This transformation would be driven by agricultural and economic development, urbanism, and rising educational levels.

It did not take long on the ground in Kenya to realize there were flaws in this model. Agricultural modernization and the “green revolution” increased production but also increased inequality and conflict. I hinted at this in the title of my doctoral dissertation, “*Development and Discontent*,” suggesting that economic development was increasing satisfaction but was also increasing conflict and *dissatisfaction*. Some people were spurting ahead and others were being left behind, or even pushed back. Unfortunately, I was too focused upon proving I had mastered the literature and upon satisfying my dissertation committee to realize that I had an insight. I am reminded of the *Saturday Night Live* episode from the 1980s in which John Belushi is a medieval witch doctor. He says to himself, “Hey. Maybe what I am telling people about how evil spirits are behind their health problems is wrong. Maybe there are microscopic creatures infecting people and if I could treat those conditions scientifically, I could create a whole new way of looking at medicine. Maybe I would transform health standards and become famous.” Then he looks at the camera and says, “Na!” and goes back to his potions.

I could not at any point in my career have anticipated what was waiting at the next stage. It may seem that I stumbled from project to project, but that is not being fair to myself. Each project was a creative adventure. And twenty or so years ago, I gave myself an assignment, that every year I would either have something new in print or something underway for future publication. In some ways, I really was driven.

In retrospect, the campus was very kind to me. I received all three major awards they offered: Distinguished Service, Distinguished Teaching, Distinguished Research. Considering the excellence of the competition, I was very honored to receive those awards.

### Living with Death

There was one part of this talk I was not sure I should include. I took it out but Jane said it was ok so here it is. Every time I have started a project I had a thought, “I hope I get to finish this project.” I don’t want to get morbid but I have always lived with the idea of sudden death.

Perhaps it has to do with hearing stories of some work mate of my dad killed in the mines. My dad lost his “buddy,” as your

partner was called, when the top caved in. His name was Pap Kutsinger but we kids called him Pap Kaiser because he owned a Kaiser automobile. My dad held him in his arms as he died. That is something that will stick with a kid, not to mention his dad. And there was the matter of my childhood rheumatic fever. I was



bed ridden for three months and not allowed to ride my bicycle, or run, or climb stairs for three years. I guess in a sense I lived with the reality of death. This carried over into my adulthood.

But I really think there was a benefit to this. I have always viewed each day as a life. I did not just sleepwalk through time. I was aware of what life meant and how precious it was. Jane and I are provident people so we already have our gravestone in place. It has a passage that I adapted from Ted Kennedy’s memoir. “We were given the gift of time, and used it well.” That first part was from Ted. I added the last part –We used it well. And indeed, we did.

**Photo:** My gravestone in Horse Prairie Cemetery, Sesser, Illinois. The back lists our children and grandchildren. We also have a gravestone in Woodmere Cemetery, Detroit. That one has our marriage date and a redbud, a spring flower very common in Southern Illinois.

## Stepping Down

Well, I guess it's time to finish up but I have just a couple of final thoughts. I stepped down at the age of 80. Some people questioned that, and I see their point. I get asked two questions, why then? And why not earlier? The 'why then' part is easy. I was 80 and I knew that nothing could last forever. Plus the Dean was offering senior faculty money to go away, so I thought, why not?

The other question, is more complex: Why I stayed. I always said I would know it was time to retire when three conditions were in effect. If I ever bored myself in a lecture, if students stopped laughing at my bad jokes, or if students stopped coming by to discuss issues raised in class. None of those things ever happened. But there was something else. I had such wonderful students right up to the end, and I kept thinking that somewhere out there was a 17-year-old who would be as good, or even better, than their predecessors, and I wanted to work with that student. But -- the clock has its logic.

I have one last thought, if I may. I often told students that behind each statement I made, there was a data table. Last year this came home when my son Greg asked how many lectures I had delivered during my career. I quickly turned on my calculator and began punching in numbers. 48 years times two semesters a year times three courses a semester less six sabbaticals plus three mini-semester at Calvin College, during sabbaticals, plus summer teaching, minus six released courses during my two terms as department chair, minus the two days (or was it three?) when I was so hoarse or feverish that I could not go to class. That produced well over 12,000 lectures. And that number reminded me of Malcolm Gladwell's Rule of 10,000. Maybe some of you know it. Here is Gladwell's question: What do Albert Einstein, the Beatles, and Michael Jordan have in common? The answer is that before they became famous as the legends they are, each had practiced 10,000 hours. And then, Boom!. Fame and glory.

I think I can match that number, and even exceed it. I am not sure what to do with that factoid, but I am delighted to be in the company of those legendary figures.

And of the rest of you.

Thanks for coming.

**Photos:** Me with grandkids in Kenya, 2003 and family on Alaska Cruise, 2019

