A life sized picture of James H. Stout greeted approximately 80 Stout alumni recently for the opening of the new Stout exhibit at the Russell Rassbach Heritage Museum in Menomonie. Members of the Stout classes of 1953, 1954 and 1955, who were back in Menomonie to celebrate their Golden Reunion, were honored to be the first visitors to the new exhibit.

The display was created by the Stout Historical Association, a group of alumni, and retired and current university personnel which began to meet in 2002 with the goal of establishing a museum dedicated to the preservation of artifacts, papers and memorabilia of the institution known as Stout. The group is now a part of the Dunn County Historical Society, which has agreed to display and provide a home for the collection as it evolves. The exhibit explains Senator Stout’s many business and civic contributions and focuses on the great educational institution he founded in 1891.

Visitors can trace the rich history of the university from its humble beginning as the Stout Manual Training School, to what today is known as University of Wisconsin-Stout. The exhibit also features a number of class projects that were donated by alumni, as well as items from the Wes Face Tool Collection.

Stout Historical Association steering committee Bob Dahlke, Glen Gehring, Don Steffen, Robert Swanson and Kevin Thorie, along with a strong core of volunteers, are excited to see their vision for a permanent museum emerge from dream to reality. They want your “old stuff.” Items that have been stored in the attic because they held too much sentimental value to be tossed are welcomed.

“It is a critical window of opportunity. Families don’t know what to do with items related to the alumni’s time at Stout. We’d like to collect the artifacts before they’re divided up, misplaced or thrown away.”

—Bob Dahlke, SHA Steering Committee

Alumni are encouraged to donate items related to their time at Stout before they are lost forever. Examples of physical objects for donation include woodwork, metalwork, tools, sewing, drawings and other artwork, course textbooks and notebooks. Alumni in the process of downsizing their households or moving can donate their Stout memorabilia, including items from extracurricular activities such as athletic or club uniforms, art objects, mascots or insignias.

To join the SHA, or for information on how to donate artifacts or to make a financial contribution, please contact:
Stout Historical Association
1820 Wakanda Ct.
Menomonie, WI 54751
Phone: 715-232-8685
Web site: www.uwstout.edu/history/sha
Busy people seem to have a cell phone constantly at their ears. E-mails fly back and forth with three-and-four-word phrases. Instant communication over the last several decades has made letter writing obsolete. But, seven Stout graduates refuse to believe that statement. They have kept an ongoing letter writing communication circulating for some 68 years.

In 1936, a group of 12 young women, all Stout Institute graduates, began writing a round robin letter to stay in touch as they left the comfortable surroundings of Menomonie and went out to teach home economics. Elaine Thomas Charlick ’35, started the letter writing ritual, and it has been in constant motion ever since. Today, other active round robin participants include Inez Pickering Siro ’36, Phyllis Lauermann Wilken ’36, Margaret Allen Engel ’36, Ruth Bubeck Voll ’36, Lillian Hanson McCormick ’36, and Esther Spaulding Miller ’36.

Although geography has limited their face-to-face reunions (they are spread out across the country), their letters have woven a thread of friendship and shared interests that has held them together throughout their lives. Charlick and Siro recalled the letters have traced life’s stages from “graduation, first jobs, marriage, the Depression, relocation, through children.”

What brought them together? Voll says they were all “academically minded” and joined together to form a social group on campus called Pallas Athene (this group later became the Alpha Phi Sorority). What kept them together? Voll would say that “although they had diverse interests, they were children of the Depression and had come to know each other during hard economic times... they felt close to Stout and their time in Menomonie.”

The group is smaller now. Seven women remain to keep the thread of letters going, binding their lives together and now sharing stories of grandchildren, travel and the loss of a husband. Will they get together again? They may not be able to gather in one room, but the big envelope with its seven individual letters continues to bring smiles, energy and encouragement to all who anticipate its arrival.
“Stay the course.”

Craig Stark ’73 was a freshman when he heard those words spoken by an advising professor at UW-Stout. He took that advice. Today, as president of The Great Lakes Companies, Madison, Stark still values those words of wisdom. He observes that “people around me were so apt to change jobs or career paths; they never had the opportunity to excel with any one company.”

With a BS degree in hotel and restaurant management from UW-Stout, Stark followed a course that took him from working in a hotel when he was a student, to managing top performing and award-winning facilities in the Midwest, to ownership of several hotel properties across the country.

In 1995, Stark, in partnership with several others, formed The Great Lakes Companies, specializing in real estate activities including the development and management of hotels, land development, Section 42 housing development, and fee development for third parties.

Stark has always continued to expand his knowledge of the hospitality field. His people skills and ability to manage and train employees have brought him industrywide recognition for customer service and employee retention. With more than 2,000 employees in the company’s 12 hotels and resorts, including Madison’s Clarion Suites, The Great Wolf Lodge in Wisconsin Dells, and the new Blue Harbor Resort and Conference Center in Sheboygan, Wis., Stark has had many opportunities to draw upon the hands-on experiences he acquired while at UW-Stout. He continues to advise others to get that “invaluable work experience in your field of study, including internships.”

Stark hasn’t forgotten his campus experiences and the caliber of teaching that helped to prepare him for where he is today. He also understands what that means to a potential employer. There are six other alumni of UW-Stout working in various professional capacities for The Great Lakes Companies. GLC recently participated in UW-Stout’s career fair.

Other UW-Stout Graduates:


Alan Genin ’02, director of Central Reservations, The Great Lakes Companies Inc., Madison, Wis.

Christine Groth ’04, Central Reservations property correspondent, The Great Lakes Companies Inc., Madison, Wis.

Patrick Perry ’90, assistant general manager, Great Wolf Lodge, Traverse City, Mich.

Matt Rybarczyk ’00, assistant controller, Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan, Wis.

Paul Harms ’99, front desk manager, Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Chicago Northwest.
Great Wolf Lodge offers a fun-filled family vacation in a northwoods atmosphere.

Melissa Wheeler, director of Brand Operations, The Great Lakes Companies, was president of the UW-Stout student chapter of Hotel Sales and Marketing Association, which at the time was a very active organization on campus with more than 150 student members.

Blue Harbor Resort and Conference Center located in Sheboygan, Wis., on the shore of Lake Michigan, combines luxury accommodations with family waterpark fun.

In looking back Wheeler comments, “I strongly urge students to get involved in various organizations. The experience I gained in both campus and off-campus events was phenomenal.”

For more information about Great Lakes Companies, visit www.greatlakesco.com

Other graduates in the work place

Hearth & Home Technologies, Lake City, Minn., knows the value of a UW-Stout graduate. “The work ethic and values of UW-Stout graduates are exactly what we are looking for in our employees,” said Bruno Rahn, product line manager. Hearth & Home Technologies continues to recruit through the university’s on-campus career fair. Two May 2005 graduates, John Wieland and Matt Miller, have already been hired to begin working upon graduation in the spring.


Back (l-r): Joshua Halverson ’99, David Richmond ’04, Benjamin Skibsted ’04, Eric Winters ’03, Aaron Fogner ’00 and Sue Pittman, interim assistant chancellor, Foundation and Alumni Services

Lee Fundanet ’98, director of sales and marketing for the Hotel Sofitel, Bloomington, Minn., is committed to giving back to UW-Stout and the students in the hotel, restaurant and tourism program. Fundanet works closely with the professional student organization, American Hospitality Professionals. He routinely returns to campus to share his experiences with classes and has an open invitation to students to visit the hotel.

Front (l-r): John Swaney, general manager; Garth Peterson ’96, director of revenue management; Doug Kennedy, program director for hotel, restaurant and tourism management; John Wesolek, dean; Sue Pittman, interim assistant chancellor; Jeremy Schmitz ’01, sales manager; and Lee Fundanet ’98, director of sales and marketing