

Donor Showcase

Frank X. Braun Award for Excellence in Teaching

By Hartmut Rastalsky

The Frank Braun Prize for the Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor in the German language program is awarded each year in honor of the late Professor Frank Braun, who was a dedicated teacher in the department for many years. This award was established in 1989 when it was presented to Ann Schmitt. The following year it was presented to Hartmut Rastalsky. In 1994 it became a memorial endowment, furthering Frank X. Braun's legacy. As we acknowledge our GSI's commitment to teaching and academic excellence, we hope you will consider contributing.

This year, the prize is shared by two outstanding GSIs: Sara Jackson and Solveig Heinz, who both joined the department two years ago after completing a Masters Degree in German at the University of Oregon. Both of them have received enthusiastic student evaluations for every course they have taught. Students describe their teaching as fun, and motivating, and say things like "Solveig was, is and will forever remain AMAZING"; "[Sara is] by far the best GSI I have had at the UofM...

extremely dedicated to making sure that students succeed. Ich liebe Sara."

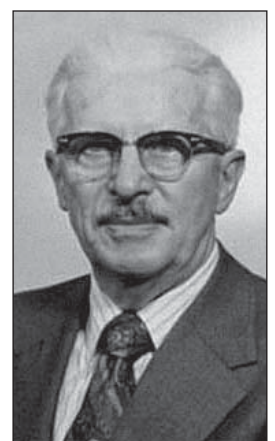
Both of them have designed innovative fourth semester German sections: Sara's section on German Theater introduced students to some classics of German Theater, and gave them the chance to perform excerpts from these plays towards the end of the semester. The performance, which Sara organized and directed herself, was one of the highpoints of the semester: the students really brought scenes to life. Solveig designed an *Introduction to German Opera* in which she provided the students with the tools for understanding and enjoying opera by working with them to analyze scenes from a range of famous operas. This course culminated in final presentations in which students worked together to apply what they had learned to an opera of their choice. It is an indication of Solveig's breadth as a teacher that she had taught our fourth semester course on Scientific German in the previous semester with the same enthusiasm and creativity.



Sara Jackson (top) and Solveig Heinz (bottom) will be jointly teaching our second year intensive German course this summer.

Frank Xavier Braun was born in 1904 in Spaichingen, Germany, the eldest of a long line of Swabian organ builders. He followed his father to the U.S. in 1923, becoming a citizen in 1930. Living in St. Louis, he made various scientific instruments ranging from microscopes to submarine engines. In 1928 Ford Motor Company offered him a job as toolmaker. From there he was promoted to inspector, and finally Chief Inspector of the Experimental Department. While working full-time at Ford, he completed his college prerequisites, and went on to receive his bachelor of arts degree in 1934 from Wayne University, a master of arts degree in 1935 and a doctor of philosophy degree from the U-M in 1940. In 1945 he was appointed an instructor in German at the U-M, assistant professor in 1949, associate professor in 1954, and full professor in 1960. Upon being granted Emeritus status in 1974, a local (unidentified) paper quoted the Regents as saying, "Above all else Professor Braun demonstrated excellence as a teacher... He displayed amazing skill in motivating and captivating students with a teaching style that was at once compelling and highly effective."

In addition to his extraordinary classroom success, Professor Braun was deeply involved with student housing needs and spearheaded the effort to establish the Max Kade House; moving it from an idea to reality within two years. He also was an ardent supporter of the LSA Language requirement (which was threatened to be removed around 1966), the Junior Year in Freiburg program, and counseling students' academic endeavors.



Professor Emeritus Frank X. Braun (1904-1994)