



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

# NEWSBRIEFS

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## Remembering Norm Kopmeyer

Norman Kopmeyer was President of the AAUP at Wayne State from 1981-1985. Norm died on February 27 at the age of 65.

Chris Johnson, History

First, there was the laugh—kind of a bark followed by a chortle. It was so much fun working and plotting with Norm Kopmeyer. It was very sad for me to be out of town the day of his funeral, so I'm pleased to have this chance to reminisce.

I guess I knew Norm pretty much from the beginning of my time at Wayne in the late sixties as part of that always-suspect group of independent-minded folks in Liberal Arts Advising who tended to steer

students toward English and History—the likes of Jerry Lessins, Pearl Warn, Steve Trowbridge, Brad Iverson. (This time of year, I always think of the NCAA pool they ran and let me in on; I believe I even won it one year.) They were also (as Advising still remains) one of the earliest strongholds of union membership on campus, in this case before collective bargaining, mostly associated with the AFT. The AAUP victory as Wayne's bargaining agent for faculty and academic staff was in part motivated by those faculty who feared the "radicalism" (read: "bread-and-butter trade-unionism") of the AFT. What happened, of course, was that the activists of the AFT (including many faculty) quickly moved

into the leadership of the AAUP for want of much strong commitment among many AAUP backers. These leaders were mostly professors, for there was afoot then the notion that the "prestige" of faculty was necessary to give appropriate credibility

to the new bargaining agent. But the proportion of membership among academic staff exceeded that of faculty, and in many respects they provided the day-to-day hard work and vitality that built this

organization during the 1970s. Norm (along with ASO Sheila Shaurer, at least in my memory) emerged as the most important academic staff person in the struggle that brought about the huge contractual gains made during these years. After the departure of Ernie Benjamin for Washington in 1980, Norm's elevation to the union's Presidency, which I strongly supported, was greeted with some misgiving by more traditionally-minded members among the faculty, but turned out to augur an era of growth on all fronts, capping off the creation of the fundamental structure of our contract with the ratification of the document of 1981. That he was "not faculty" was

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sometimes used by the Administration (especially that president-not-to-be-named), but within the union it served as a basis of a new solidarity demonstrated time and again during the difficult years defending our contract against said president. How happy Norm must have been to get the news that our last contract had won the final piece of that grand design, Fair Share.

Norm and I served on bargaining teams together and in that critical pairing of President and Chief Negotiator. His encyclopedic knowledge, his essential prudence, and his wonderful bonhomie made our association a fruitful one. As I think we all know, academic unionism at Wayne State was not founded upon money issues, but was largely about governance, particularly in the crucial area of collegial input into the tenure and promotion processes. These concerns arose in the wake of several arbitrary tenure denials or near-denials where politics (internal and external) played a significant role, and decisions were made by administrators and their old-boy networks. Procedures bringing justice through representative joint decision-making in tenure and promotion developed in the early contracts, especially 1976, 1978, and 1981, still stand at the heart of the contract. It is important to remember that staff and faculty were of one mind on the approach to these central issues of university life. Norm Kopmeyer's influence, so powerful for that critical decade in our union's making, did much to make it so. His significance in the history of collective bargaining at Wayne State and ultimately, of course, nationally, cannot be overestimated. But mostly, I'll miss that laugh.

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## Remembering Norm

**Charles J. Parrish  
President**

It was with a very heavy heart that I learned of Norm's death. He was a sterling person. Now that I think about it, I realize with some surprise that I have known him for almost thirty years. He was such a good man. He was funny, brave, decent and kind. Above all he had a strong sense of justice and a concern for all those who suffered injustice.

He was a union leader in difficult times at Wayne State. Facing the relentless pressure of the Adamany Administration against the union, he fought hard to maintain the necessary autonomy that was vital to the union's survival. The groundwork that he laid was fundamental to the later successes that we have enjoyed. His leadership of the Collective Bargaining Congress, the national office of the American Association of University Professors, was outstanding. He championed it during a time when it's status within the national organization was uncertain and his efforts resulted in a considerable expansion of the role of collective bargaining within the AAUP.

On a personal level he was a warm friend. He and I and a number of other colleagues ate breakfast at the Campus Restaurant about four times a week for a number of years. We had very good times together, gossiping and plotting. When I think of Norm, it is often in the context of those many early morning meetings. It makes me miss him all the more.

He showed remarkable courage throughout the health ordeals that he experienced (two heart transplants and a major stroke). He bore them, not without complaint, but showing good humor at times when I doubt many others could have.

He did good work and left the world a better place for his having been in it. I and many others at Wayne cared for him very much and much regret his death. The members of the union's Executive Committee extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Elaine, whose support of Norm on a day-to-day basis was unrelenting, and his son Mike and his daughter, Gabrielle.

# Partial Tenure Case Goes to Outside Arbitrator

## Grievance Addresses Abuse of Tenure in School of Medicine; Implications for Basic Sciences as Well

In the fall of 2002, the AAUP-AFT filed Grievance #225 “on behalf of the bargaining unit”—that is, on behalf of the many faculty members who are potentially impacted by a violation of the contract, but without reference to an individual grievant. Grievance #225 focuses on the Administration’s practice of giving only 25% tenure to non-clinical faculty members hired in clinical departments in the School of Medicine (SOM).

### Fractional Tenure in the School of Medicine’s Clinical Departments

In 1992 negotiations, the AAUP-AFT agreed to amend the collective bargaining agreement to allow the limited use of so-called “fractional tenure” for clinical faculty hired in clinical departments. The Administration argued that physicians who were hired into the practice plan needed to be better integrated into the academic life of the University and that, even though their primary purpose was to generate funds for the SOM, they also do some teaching and research. The union agreed to allow such fractional tenure only in the clinical departments. It was the union’s understanding that only physicians providing clinical services were covered by this provision.

Recently, however, the AAUP-AFT has learned that the SOM has been extending the use of fractional tenure to faculty who are not physicians and who do not have clinical duties. Thus, the number of non-physicians in the clinical departments who have 25% tenure has recently grown without the union being immediately aware of it. Furthermore, the Administration has now announced its desire to

appoint faculty in the basic science departments with 25% tenure, which is clearly prohibited by the collective bargaining agreement. It has threatened to use joint appointments between the clinical and the basic science departments as a vehicle to carry out such a policy with respect to the basic sciences.

The intention of the AAUP-AFT was never to have 25% tenure apply to faculty who were not clinicians. Therefore, as soon as specific examples of this situation were brought to our attention, the AAUP-AFT took up the issue with the Administration and, when informal discussion failed to resolve the matter, filed a written complaint under Step 1 of the contractually defined grievance procedure. The Administration refused to alter its policy, contending that this practice has continued for some time (although we had no knowledge of it). We have informed the administration that we intend to move to Step 2 arbitration on this issue before a mutually acceptable third party, as per the collective bargaining agreement. It is likely that arbitration will occur sometime during the summer.

### New Language Limits Fractional Tenure Outside Clinical Departments

In the meantime, the only form of fractional tenure that the AAUP-AFT finds acceptable for non-clinicians is the narrow exception speci-

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fied in Article XXII (B) of the contract, which has long stated that “In rare and unusual circumstances a fractional-time faculty or academic staff member serving 50% time or more may be granted and hold fractional-time tenure.” In the last round of negotiations, the union and the Administration signed a letter of agreement interpreting the phrase “rare and unusual circumstances” to mean the unique circumstances of the SOM with respect to the recruitment of new faculty. The letter specifies that in non-clinical departments of the SOM, “the departmental faculty may recommend the appointment of faculty with fractional tenure at no less than 50%.” Note that this requires the majority support of the faculty in any department. The 50% cutoff is also important, because at 50% or more fractional time, employees receive full benefits, including healthcare and pension contributions.

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# **MEMBER-ONLY BENEFITS**

For more details, contact the AAUP-AFT Office @ 313-577-1750.

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