The first issue of *Northwest Passage* ran in March 1969, and the newspaper was managed through publishing offices in Bellingham, and later, Seattle. During the years of its publication, our region was transformed by the social unrest of the late 1960s, the economic stagnation of the ’70s, the environmental movement, the Boldt Indian fishing decision, the pursuit of justice and sovereignty by Indigenous peoples, and the rise of a conservative political agenda under the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

While *Northwest Passage* editors and community contributors reported these changes as they were happening, they must have been aware of the importance of their writing to historical discourse. In fact, researchers frequently comment that many of the issues tackled by the newspaper’s writers remain hot-button topics today. And, in many cases, the opinions and articles in the Passage were ahead of their time, especially those addressing health care, education, organic farming and sustainable living. It is this alternative view that draws Western’s faculty, students and community researchers to the diversity of articles, artwork and perspectives representing voices outside of mainstream journalism.

(Story continues on page 4)
As Director of Heritage Resources, I welcome our readers to the new academic year and to the first edition of Heritage Highlights since our return to campus. We are excited to be back providing services remotely and in-person. However, much has changed over the past eighteen months. The COVID pandemic transformed the nature of our work as we learned to address and accommodate the evolving needs of our teaching, learning and research community. Despite these challenges, we found time to initiate several exciting projects, including digitizing the Northwest Passage newspaper, processing an important collection of underground and alternative comics, and curating a new exhibition, “Silence Speaks: The Quiet Power of Wordless Novels.” These projects share a unique commonality: each offers access to alternative world views that challenge us to consider art, history and popular culture in new ways. So why would Heritage Resources collect this potentially controversial material and prioritize it for digitization and exhibition?

Archivists build the cultural record through the acquisition of material selected from a vast universe of documentation. The decision to collect and preserve specific information is based on an appraisal of its cultural and historical value. For Heritage Resources, this means its value to teaching, learning and research. Through our collecting efforts, archivists have enormous power to define cultural memory and we must carefully consider the interests and needs of future generations. If we do this badly, we can unduly influence the cultural record by privileging certain historical and personal narratives and marginalizing others. In fact, the cultural record is often biased toward the activities and interests of the wealthy and powerful, leaving significant portions of society either undocumented or under-documented, and potentially lost to history.

Thus, the resources featured in these pages reflect an overarching collecting strategy to build a representative and inclusive historical record. Our work is dependent on an understanding of the institutions, communities and individuals who create the documentation we keep, as well as the patrons who will use it. We welcome inquiries about how you might provide financial sponsorship for the activities we support or donate materials that fall within our collecting mission.

~ Elizabeth Joffrion, Director

Feature d E x h i b i t i o n — S i l e n c e S p e a k s : T h e Q u i e t P o w e r o f W o r d l e s s N o v e l s

Wordless novels, a genre of visual storytelling that paved the way for today’s graphic novels, developed during the years of artistic, social, and political turmoil between the First and Second World War. This exhibition introduces some of the major themes wordless novels express and highlights their connections to early cinema. In addition, it explores the complex relationship between power, knowledge, and silence, and reflects on how wordless books inform our understanding of communication more broadly.

The exhibition is free and open to the public, and can be viewed in Special Collections (Wilson 6th floor) Mon.-Fri. from 11:00am to 4:00pm or by appointment (closed weekends and holidays). There is also an online version that can be accessed any time. For more information or to inquire about class visits to view the exhibit, contact Special Collections Librarian Michael Taylor (taylo213@wwu.edu | (360) 650-3097).
The Frank L. Waynewood Collection

By David Schlitt, Special Collections Manager

In 2017, Heritage Resources received an unexpected gift of nearly 1,200 underground and alternative comics from a one-time Fairhaven College student named Catherine Tate. The collection had belonged to Tate’s husband, Frank Waynewood, who passed away the previous year. Waynewood moved to Seattle from Abilene, Texas, in 1961, and his collection documents the 1960s-1970s underground comics scene as well as the emergence of the Pacific Northwest as a hub of alternative comics in the 1980s and 1990s. Frank Waynewood collected comics on two parallel tracks, according to Catherine Tate: the political and the transgressive. The scope of the collection is vast, and it runs the gamut from pulpy thrillers to public-spirited titles like *Mama! Dramas* (Educomics, 1978).

Initially, the titles in the Frank Waynewood collection were cataloged and shelved individually, sprinkled throughout Special Collections. While this made walks through the stacks consistently surprising — resting near a fine facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible you’d find a slim volume called *The Adventours [sic] of Viagraman* — it also meant that the collection could not be viewed or understood as a coherent whole.

One of my first projects as Special Collections Manager was to reconstitute the Waynewood Collection and process it as a single archival collection. With the help of Roz Koester and student worker extraordinaire Grafton Grimm, there is now a detailed finding aid for the collection, publicly available through Archives West. Portions of the subject matter contain explicit and/or controversial themes, and these are noted in the finding aid description. The Frank L. Waynewood Collection is available to researchers and for class visits and is ready to speak again.

Selections from the Frank Waynewood Collection are currently on display in the Special Collections Research Room, in conjunction with the Special Collections exhibition, “Silence Speaks: The Quiet Power of Wordless Novels.” The display describes the history of underground comics as a transgressive, outsider art-form, and its attraction to Waynewood. As Tate explained, “Frank would likely agree that his comic collection fed a lifelong interest in politics and in transgressing boundaries,” said Tate. “From childhood on, comics represented a means of exploration and escape. His original attraction to comics inspired him and allowed him to imagine a life beyond the imposed boundaries of the segregated South.”

The voices constituting Frank Waynewood’s comics collection are in conversation with one another — sometimes explicitly, and angrily, as with the comics-based beef between Roberta Gregory and R. Crumb during the early nineties — and they offer insights into political contestations and artistic developments in underground- and popular culture during the second half of the 20th century.

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Why digitize this publication? This was a project we were convinced would have high impact for users and in support of research, teaching and learning. For several years, original copies of the Passage have been the most frequently requested resource at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies during class visits (a full run of the title is also available at Special Collections, and on microform at WWU Libraries). Even as the original print and/or microform copies received significant research use, however, lack of digital access rendered the publication a relatively untapped resource. Researchers needed firstly to be aware of the existence of the Passage, and then to browse each issue to discover the wealth of information, topics and perspectives contained within. Digitization became a top priority because it would allow anyone with internet access to search and access the full text of articles online. As an added preservation benefit, we could reduce the handling and wear and tear of increasingly fragile original materials once digital copies were available.

In 2019 we were thrilled and deeply grateful when Steve and Neelie Nelson of Bellingham approached Heritage Resources and generously offered financial assistance to digitize the full run of the newspaper. With their support — and consent from the family of Frank Kathman and from Laurence Kee (co-founders along with Michael Carlson) — staff were able to ship original newspapers to Pennsylvania for digitization by Backstage Library Works. Heritage Resources then received and was able to upload the resulting digital copies online (plus metadata created in-house) in time for the beginning of WWU’s Fall Quarter. Although a small amount of revision work is still anticipated, all 309 issues published between 1969 and 1986 can now be browsed, searched and accessed via WWU’s MABEL platform.

We welcome comments and questions about this new online resource, and again, our thanks to Neelie and Steve for making this a possibility. Additional information about the Northwest Passage and the 1960s in Bellingham can be found at the FairhavenHistory.com website. Researchers are advised that this digital collection contains content and language that some individuals may find offensive or triggering.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our volunteers and student employees for all they do in support of Heritage Resources. We would also like to thank the many individuals, families, and organizations who have made generous monetary gifts and contributions of collection materials.