

Alumni, friends share stories about a special man



The Northwest community was saddened by the March 10 death of Dr. Robert P. Foster, Northwest's seventh president. In addition to serving as president from 1964 to 1977, Foster held positions at Northwest as registrar, director of admissions and dean of administration.

In the spring issue of the *Northwest Alumni Magazine*, readers were invited to share their favorite stories or remembrances of Dr. Foster. The following are just a few of the many responses from Bearcats who were influenced by this great man.

My favorite story about Dr. Foster is when he and I had our appendix out at the same time at the old St. Francis Hospital in Maryville. It was in January 1969. I was in a great deal of pain, and Mrs. Margaret

was a wonderful administrator whose legacy will remain memorable in our hearts. Perhaps Dr. Foster will be mostly remembered for transforming our campus as one of the most beautiful in the region. May the good Lord grant his soul eternal rest.

Chuks U Ndika '76

In May 1951, I graduated from Horace Mann High School. In June 1951, Dr. Foster (then Mr. Foster) hired me as his secretary in the Registrar's Office. Mr. H.R. Dieterich, Horace Mann principal, and Dr. E.K. DeVore, Horace Mann business teacher, had recommended me for the job. In those early years Dr. Foster would often tell people he "raised me from a pup." After Dr. Foster returned from the University of Missouri, where he obtained his doctorate degree, he was made dean of administration. In 1964, he was chosen as the University president. In each move, he asked me to continue as his secretary. At Dr. Foster's retirement party in 1977, he told those attending that "he loved me as much as Mrs. Foster and Willie (my husband) would allow." I worked for Dr. Foster for more than 25 years. He was the kind of man every secretary would love to have for their boss.

Monica Giesken Zirfas

Wire, house mother at Roberta Hall, took me to the hospital during a fierce snow storm. Back then, a long hospital stay was required for an appendectomy, and I missed all my finals. But, I was certainly surprised to find out Dr. Foster had his appendix out at the same time. We would visit some during the day as we began to feel better. I was an RA in Roberta Hall, and one of the girls on my floor was from Sweden. She was dating Dr. Foster's son at the time (I think she married him). They would come in the evenings and bring him a milk shake. Once they realized I was there, too, we both received a milk shake. I looked forward to the milk shake, but also to getting caught up on campus news. The entire Foster family treated me so nicely. In May 1969, during graduation, Dr. Foster announced he and I had spent some quality time having our appendix removed. I thought fondly of Dr. Foster before, but I always remembered our hospital stay.

Karen Colton Dixon '69

I was sad to read that my former president Dr. Robert Foster passed away. He was an educationist par excellence, a fine gentleman, whose love for the institution, the students and the faculty members was extraordinary. Dr. Foster was very much at home with the students. He

Just before summer school in 1961, my wife of six weeks, Judi, and I arrived on campus to see if I could be enrolled at Northwest under President J.W. Jones. We were led to Dr. Foster's office, and I was immediately impressed by his positive approach to my request for admission, one that could easily have been rejected. I was 28, had been working for five years after

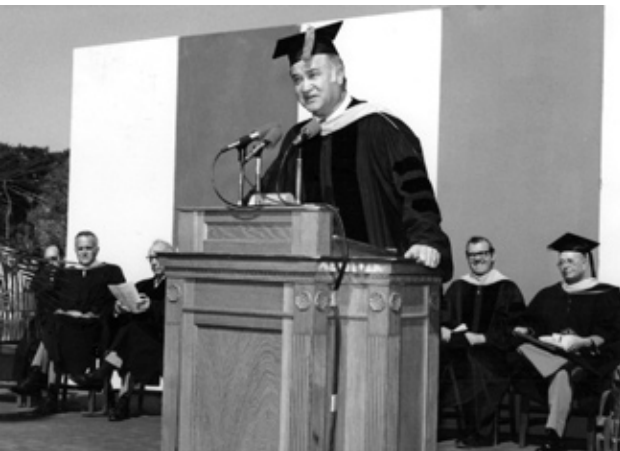
President Emeritus Dr. Robert P. Foster always had a way with Northwest students, whether it was through his inspirational words, a kind smile, an understanding ear or a shared interest.

Foster Legacy Continues

Memorials for the Robert P. Foster Commemorative Scholarship may be sent to The Northwest Foundation, 800 University Dr., Maryville, MO, 64468. (Please indicate "Foster Scholarship" on check's memo.) Online donations may be made by visiting www.nwmissouri.edu/alumni/giving/onlinegiving.htm. (Select "Non-Departmental Scholarships" and "Robert P. Foster Commemorative Scholarship.")

Foster (continued)

leaving the military service, and my marriage had influenced my decision to finish a college degree. But there was a problem. I had attended Tarkio College immediately out of high school and my transcript was a disaster. As Dr. Foster reviewed it, he shook his head several times. He asked me several questions about my military service, and when he learned that I had served in the Korean War in a combat zone he stepped up his attempts to get me admitted. He added credit for my service time and for those courses that I did pass at Tarkio and announced that I could enter on probation. As an afterthought, knowing we were a newlywed couple living on a shoestring, he sent Judi across the hall to interview for a secretarial position. She got the job immediately. I graduated from Northwest three years later with grades high enough to be accepted to graduate school.

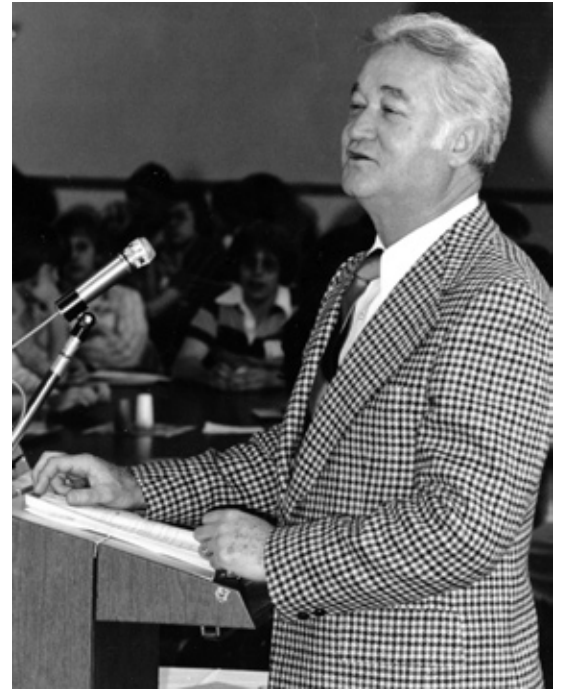


That was followed by my Ph.D. Judi and I attribute much of our success to Dr. Foster's instincts, love of students and human understanding. We will never forget his trust in my ability to live up to his expectations. In that respect, I felt that I could never let him down.

Ted Jamison '64

I remember Dr. Foster in a very different way, through the eyes of a child. My father came to know Dr. Foster while in college there. My father (Bob Cotter) graduated and became the alumni director under Dr. Foster, and Dr. Foster became a family friend. As a child, there were so many times I would run around the campus and visit my dad's office while he and Dr. Foster were talking or working at an event. Every time I saw him he took the time to make eye contact with me, at the very least, and smile. Often, he'd ask me questions and make me feel very comfortable. I'm sure I didn't have a full understanding then of what Dr. Foster did, but I knew, by his actions and words, that presidents must be good people who looked out for others – and I knew I liked him as a person. He'll be missed.

Erin Cotter Bushey '90



BEARCAT ROAR

"Bearcat Roar" gives you the opportunity to share your Northwest memories or stories with other alumni and friends.

Please submit remembrances along with your name, year of graduation, address and telephone number to Mitzi Lutz, editor, *Northwest Alumni Magazine*, Alumni House, Maryville, MO 64468-6001 or by e-mail to mitzi@nwmissouri.edu.

Do you remember these events?

1958

Tau Kappa Epsilon begins its fourth year on campus with a record 34-man pledge class. *Tower* yearbook

A highlight on the social calendar is the harvest moon dance in October, sponsored by the Dorm Council. *Tower* yearbook

1968

Horace Mann Junior High School closes, leaving the on-campus laboratory school with only kindergarten through sixth grade classes. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

Head Start and LPN programs begin. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

1978

Football games move from Saturday nights to Saturday afternoons and lights are removed from the stadium. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

Apple II computers are first used in teacher education, often used to teach BASIC programming language. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

1988

A record number of freshmen, 1,405, enroll at Northwest in the fall. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

Campus Activity Programmers bring country singer Charlie Daniels to Northwest for a concert in Lamkin Gym. *Tower* yearbook

1998

The Joyce and Harvey White International Plaza is dedicated. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*

Golden Pond and the north side of the Peace Pavilion are refurbished. *Transitions: A Hundred Years of Northwest*