



Photo by Tom Rubin

OUTSTANDING NEBRASKAN . . . Gerald Swihart, takes a minute's relaxation from preparing lesson plans and grading tests.

Swihart Finds Time For Students Amid Research, Teaching Schedule

The ideal combination would be one or two teaching courses plus a continuing research project, according to Outstanding Nebraskan Professor Gerald Swihart.

"But it just doesn't work out that way," he said in an interview. "There isn't enough time during the school year since we are short of staff in civil engineering. That's why I do research in the summer."

Swihart has worked at the U.S. Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory in California for six of his summers, proposing theories on the structural possibilities of reinforced concrete and steel.

"I have worked almost entirely on the theory side of the project since the practical tests take almost five years to complete," he said.

Time is of the essence in Swihart's world. He teaches two sections each in four different courses, is chairman of the Membership Committee of the Southeast Branch Lincoln YMCA and is the father of three children.

"By the time you paint the house and make repairs, there just isn't much time left," he said. "Civil engineering is as short of personnel as any other department, but we think we are holding our own."

"We are always revising and reviewing our schedule to keep up with new developments," he said.

'Gives Time'

Swihart had just returned from a conference with an architect, and had "two exams to prepare for tomorrow. I guess I will have to come back and work after dinner," he said.

"He always has a minute or an hour to spare for his students, whether or not the session pertains to scholastic troubles, some special engineering problem or just a friendly conversation about the football team,"

the letter nominating him for the award said.

With a daughter in her first semester at the University, Swihart is feeling the pressures of the University from all sides.

"Seventeen hours is quite a load, especially for a freshman," he said. "But I guess they have to make it tough to keep up the reputation they have built."

"You actually do most of your learning while you're on the job anyway," he said. "The fundamentals hardly ever change, but the means of getting an end result are always being improved."

Computers, automation and scientific advances are always changing every field of study, he said.

Swihart attended seminars last summer at Lehigh University and the National Engineering Conference, American Institute of Steel Construction in Memphis, Tenn.

He is a member of Sigma Tau engineering and architecture honorary, Chi Epsilon, civil engineering honorary and Sigma Xi, science honorary.

"There is quite a bit of competition going on between steel and concrete in building materials," he said. "Steel is the more predictable of the two and is more expandable, but concrete is more compressible."

By March or April Swihart will know if he will be working at the Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory this summer.

"It depends on funds. Projects and programs they will be working on," he said.

Personal Research

What about personal research projects?

"There are a number of things a guy could work on," he said. "I suppose it would be something to help understand better what goes on in both steel and reinforced concrete structures."

"There is a need for more study as to what amounts of steel or concrete are strongest, the proportions of both in combined materials—all these things are to a degree as yet unpredictable," Swihart said.

Besides his reports for the Naval laboratory and professional journals, Swihart is a co-author of *Principles of Structural Equilibrium*.

"Writing a text is a very difficult job," he said. "The publishers wanted to have every little detail in the book, while we just want an outline for the professor to fill in the details while he is teaching."

"So we gave up on the company and had the University Press print the book," he said.

An upperclass adviser,

part time consultant for architectural and engineering firms in Nebraska and past member of the Engineering

Executive Board, Swihart has worked for the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation and is a registered Engineer in Nebraska, Iowa and Indiana.

"Civil engineering was originally a term used to separate civilian from military engineers," he said. "In time, branches such as architecture, electrical engineering and chemical engineering broke off on their own."

"Civil engineering still takes in sanitation, hydraulics, roads, structure, water supply and many other specialties which may or may not break off in the future," he said.

Yale Graduate He decided to specialize in structural engineering because "Yale is a very strong school in it."

"It just seemed like the natural thing to do," Swihart said. "I now teach

courses in structural steel, reinforced concrete and indeterminate structures, such as bridges and some building frames.

"The civil engineer has to work very closely with architects," he said. "We have to make sure that the structures they plan will stand up."

Engineers usually allow for twice the strength needed to support the "load" to be placed on a structure.

"There could be circumstances when the planned load is exceeded, or when the building is being used for something other than it was planned for," he said. "We try to make sure it will hold up."

Even though he is pressed for time, Swihart finds time for a graduate student-instructor basketball game every Monday, Wednesday and Friday in the Coliseum.

"I'm interested in all sports," he said. "My family and I go to all the football and basketball games."

In his YMCA work, Swihart has been an "Indian guide" in father-son projects.

"If there is any one person who comes close to my idea of a complete man it would be Prof. Swihart," reads the nominating letter. "He has, while living here in Lincoln, instructing, working and counseling, not only established himself as a truly Outstanding Nebraskan, but also become somewhat of an idol to each of the students that have come in contact with him."



Photo by Tom Rubin

SWIHART . . . "A friend," not just a student counselor or instructor.

Historical Society . . .

Donations Welcomed From Knives To Pipes

By Bruce Giles
Junior Staff Writer

From an eight-foot knife used to cut cake at an anniversary celebration of the Burlington Railroad's Pioneer Zephyr train, to a lady's pipe of the 1880's—these are just a few of the donations to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Donations have been made to the archives, library and the museum, according to Marvin Kivett director of the Historical Society.

"Most of the donations are small collections of items, but sometimes we get almost an entire household, such as the Pound collection," noted Robert Pettit, curator of collections for the society.

Kivett said that all donations "represent some part of

Nebraska history."

"The criteria for accepting the donations is how well the item relates to the people of Nebraska and also how many of the same thing we already have," he said.

Some of the people are consistent donors, he said. Their hobby is looking out for things the museum may want.

The Historical Society also keeps some recent items because they will be of historical value in the future.

Some of the donations to the library and archives are papers of individuals, many with the stipulation that they will not be used or published until after a certain period of time. In addition, the Historical Society keeps documents of the various state

agencies which are of historical value.

One of the most recent acquisitions of the Society is a Needham conversion rifle, donated by Timothy J. Doyle. It came from an arsenal in the home of John Fitzgerald of Lincoln and was intended for the Irish Fenian attack against Canada. The rifles were discovered in the basement of his home when the home burned down.

Currently, the Historical Society is looking for good photographs of historical Nebraska to be put in a soon-to-be published pictorial history of the state.

They are also seeking city directories and telephone directories of many back years. "These," said Dr. Donald Danker, history lecturer and historian for the Society, "are an important guide to businesses and people in Nebraska history."

and literary figures in Great Britain.

The books selected were James C. Olson's "Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem," Roy Meyer's "The Middle Western Farm Novel in the Twentieth Century," Willa Cather's "Collected Short Fiction, 1892-1912," "The West that Was," by John Leakey and Nellie Yost; Glen Shirley's "Pawnee Bill;" and Osborne Russell's "Journal of a Trapper," edited by Aubrey L. Haines.

University Press Wins Honor

Six books, produced recently by the University Press, have brought international recognition to their authors and publisher.

The books were selected by the Books-Across-the-Sea Committee of the English-Speaking Union to be included in its American Ambassador series. The English-Speaking Union, with headquarters in London, is an institution made up of distinguished scholars

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