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The★Star
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

MU tries to persuade university press authors not to reclaim book rights

Digital transition is planned, but scholars want university to release publishing rights on their works.

By **MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS**

University of Missouri officials spent all last week on the telephone with scholarly authors who want their book rights back because the UM Press is going digital.

Earlier this summer, the university announced it was shutting down its 54-year-old traditional scholarly book publishing operation. Instead, it's creating a model that would digitize the current catalog of the press and add more digital formats using new book publishing technologies, including audio, video and blogging.

The operation also would serve as a training ground for students, and a board of faculty from all four UM campuses will review future manuscript submissions.

The 10-member staff of the press was laid off, although most of them are still publishing fall books and awaiting a termination date. MU English professor Speer Morgan was named interim director of the new press model.

A Facebook page, "Save the University of Missouri Press," immediately erupted, with hundreds of posts from across the country slamming the university for closing the publishing operation.

Then authors who have books with the press chimed in that they are not happy with the new format. Authors such as Don Spivey, a University of Miami professor who wrote "If You Were Only White," published by the UM Press this spring, said they want the university to release the rights to their books.

Several told The Star that they have received offers to move their books to another publishing house.

On Thursday, author John Shelton Reed got a call from a university official asking him to wait until he sees how the new press works before making a decision about his book rights.

But Reed told The Star by telephone that he doubts he will change his mind unless the university agrees to rehire the UM Press staff members and go back to traditional scholarly publishing.

In an email to The Star, university system spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said that Debra Noble-Triplett, assistant vice president for academic affairs, “is kindly asking authors to let development of a new model continue so they have a full and accurate understanding of what the new press may look like. After talking with Dr. Noble-Triplett, few authors have demanded immediate release.”

She declined to be more specific.

University officials have defended their decision to move away from the traditional press. They said MU provided an annual \$400,000 subsidy to the press and, even after several cost-saving measures, it still operated at a deficit. They have said the traditional model is not sustainable, and the subsidy could be put to better use.

“We anticipate investment of about half as much as was invested in the old model,” said a posting on the university website.

MU also cites non-financial reasons for the change, such as the creation and dissemination of new knowledge in a way that’s more integrated with the academic mission. For instance, students could receive training in new methods of publishing.

“The purpose is to provide appropriate scholarly communication, not to make money,” the posting said.

Some authors aren’t convinced.

Reed, a professor emeritus in the sociology department at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, said that if the university won’t hand over rights to his titles, he will seek help from a lawyer.

“It is not because I think I could make a lot of money with another press, although I’ve been approached by another press,” Reed said. “It seems to me that the press that I signed the contract with has closed.”

Ned Stuckey-French, a co-creator of the “Save the University of Missouri Press” Facebook page, said he has a list of 29 authors, including authors of “Dictionary of Missouri Biography,” calling for the university to return rights to their books.

“I don’t want this pretend press that is run by students to have my book (“The American Essay in the American Century”),” Stuckey-French said. “I want it back. I don’t want my book to be associated with a vanity press.”

He said authors of scholarly books want their books associated with “respected” presses so professors will select them for class instruction.

“That’s what the university press is supposed to be all about. They don’t want their books associated with a press that has a bad reputation. This press has a bad rep now.”

Morgan could not be reached for comment.

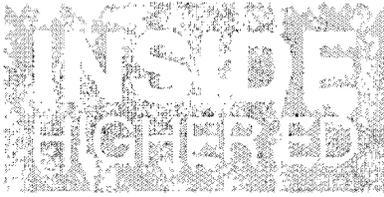
Author John Bird, whose work is part of the Mark Twain and His Circle series of about 20 titles, said that he did agree to give the new digital press some time to prove itself but that so far he was not happy with how the university has handled the press closing or decisions on how to redesign the publishing operation.

“I am extremely dismayed,” said Bird. “It seems the university decision was hasty. They didn’t consult with all the people they needed to.”

“I think losing Mark Twain and His Circle would be a big loss for the university press, for the university, for the state of Missouri,” said Bird, an English professor at Winthrop University in South Carolina. “I know some other press would publish those books, but Mark Twain was from Missouri. They should be published here.”

Members of the Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press say they don’t intend to stop urging the university to return to the press operation it has shut down or talk with faculty before going any further.

On Aug. 21, the group is hosting a rally called “A Celebration of the University of Missouri Press” from 2 to 4 p.m. at Jesse Wrench Auditorium on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.



insidehighered.com

Authors Want Rights Back From Missouri Press

August 13, 2012 - 3:00am

Authors have been telling the University of Missouri Press in the last week that they want the rights to their books returned, and that they don't believe new plans for the press live up to its obligations, *The Kansas City Star* reported. The university announced plans to phase out existing operations, but then said that the press would be kept alive as a way to teach students, in an all-digital format. For the last week, the *Star* reported, Missouri officials have been calling authors asking them not to demand their rights back, or not to turn over their rights to other presses.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

August 13, 2012

Governance? It's in the Hands of Corporate Elites

To the Editor:

I have just retired from a state university after 40 years during which I have seen all governing power taken over by a corporate-business elite. Recent weeks have evidenced the mess that takeover has begotten. **The president of the University of Missouri—wholly unqualified for the position, having been appointed by the small clique mistakenly designated as "the university"—axed the University of Missouri Press forthwith.** (Wasn't ever no damn press in any business he ever ran.) No one was informed—not press employees, not the faculty University Press Committee, no one. People concerned by the press closing came from around the state to the next Board of Regents meeting only to discover the issue was not so much as alluded to. The board walked out on us—refusing so much as eye contact—to attend an athletic-committee meeting.

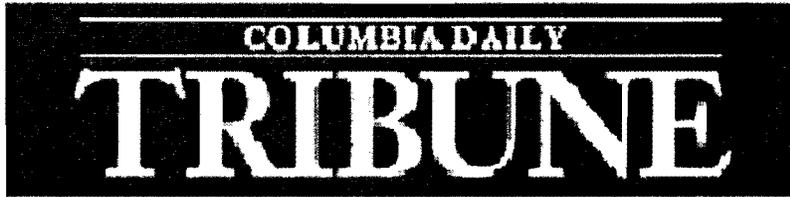
The University of Virginia was during the same period embarrassed by the summary dismissal of its president by two members of the governing board, and her subsequent reinstatement after demonstrations.

Things are so far gone that talk of shared governance is at this point idle. It is in effect peasants appealing to the czars. At least for the sake of clarity, it must be recognized that there is no longer any "university" that makes significant decisions, hires, fires, and so forth. The firing of the Virginia president, the hiring of the Missouri one—all such matters are now handled by a dozen or so corporate executives, if that many. We must at least forgo any illusions about this if American higher education is to be rescued.

Jack Morgan
Rolla, Mo.

The writer was research professor of English at the Missouri University of Science and Technology.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



Two Mizzou doctors plagiarized research paper, journal says

Doctors investigated by the university regarding paper on irregular heart beats.

BY BLYTHE BERNHARD — bbernhard@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8129

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Two University of Missouri doctors committed plagiarism in a medical research paper published this year in the American Journal of the Medical Sciences, according to an apology published Thursday by the journal.

The journal retracted the article about irregular heart beats written by Dr. Amar Jadhav and Dr. Anand Chockalingam of the MU medical school after discovering it "plagiarized significant aspects" of another article published in the journal *Heart* in 2006.

Jadhav and Chockalingam remain employees while under investigation by the university, according to a school spokesman.

"Should evidence be found to warrant further action, the case will be referred to the MU Standing Committee on Research Responsibility. Researchers found to have committed research misconduct, such as plagiarism, are subject to discipline including termination," said Christian Basi, in an emailed statement.

Chockalingam is an assistant professor of clinical medicine and Jadhav is a resident in cardiology, according to the school's website. A third author of the article, Apeksha Ingole, is affiliated with a medical school in India.

Jadhav was issued his medical license in July by the Missouri Board of Registration for the Healing Arts. Chockalingam has been licensed since 2006. Neither has a discipline record with the state board.

The editor of the medical sciences journal said the similarities between the two papers are "obvious and significant," according to the blog Retraction Watch, which first reported the incident.

The retraction marks the latest problem for the MU medical school, already under a federal fraud investigation for illegal billing by two radiologists. Dr. Kenneth Rall and Dr. Michael Richards were dismissed in May after an internal audit found they had billed Medicare for services that were performed by residents, doctors who receive specialty training in the three to seven years after medical school.

At the time, the school's dean, Dr. Robert Churchill, announced his plans to step down in October after less than three years in the position.

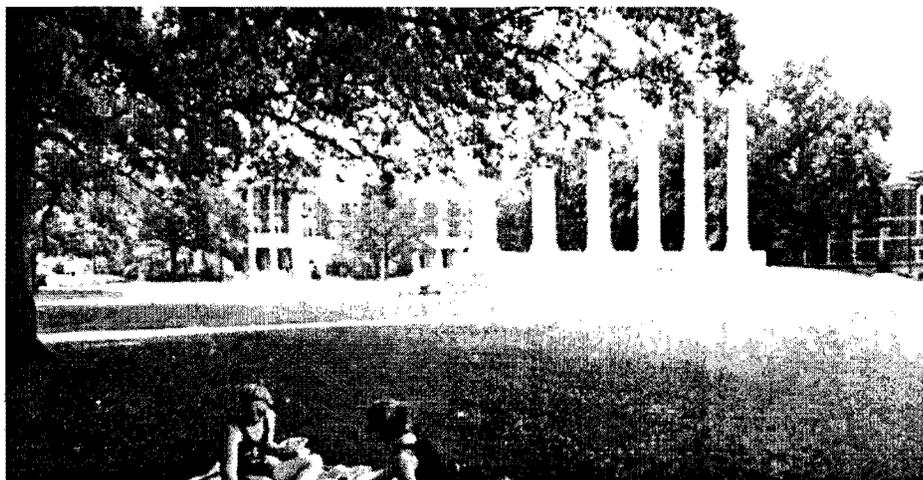
Churchill was brought on as dean in October 2009 after the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education placed the school's residency programs on probation. The council cited a lack of funds and poor record-keeping as reasons for the probation, an action it hands down to only a few schools each year.

The council also criticized the school for allowing medical residents to take on noneducational duties such as scheduling patient appointments.

The school's probation ended in 2010.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Scared away from college by the fear of debt



August 12, 2012 12:20 am • [BY JIM GALLAGHER • jimgallagher@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8390](#)

Todd Flanders is a teacher at McCluer North High School, and he counsels students on their plans for after graduation.

The kids largely come from blue collar neighborhoods, where families live paycheck to paycheck. He's troubled by what he's hearing.

"I want to go to college," students tell him. "But my parents can't afford it."

High school students see their parents struggling to pay debts (North County has some of the region's highest foreclosure rates). They hear about new college graduates who can't find jobs or make their loan payments.

"I'm afraid to take on debt, because I see what my parents are going through," they tell Flanders.

College costs have been rising much faster than family income for more than two decades. If you get no scholarship, a year at Mizzou now costs \$22,200, including tuition, books, room, board, travel and incidentals.

State universities used to be the answer for work-a-day families. But how many car mechanics or store clerks can afford a fraction of that and still make the mortgage?

Rising tuition and fear of debt may be robbing our blue collar students of their best chance to climb the economic ladder.

The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis on Tuesday invited teachers to its downtown fortress to talk about teaching personal finance and economics.

Flanders laid out the problem and asked Fed economists: "What do I tell these kids?"

"Student debt is a good form of debt," answered Fed economist Kevin Kliesen. Median household income for high school grads was \$39, 647 in 2009. Add a bachelor's degree and that jumps to \$82,722 and \$91,660 with a master's degree, according to the Census. That kind of pay boost is worth borrowing for.

Kliesen said he chose to have his children borrow part of the cost of college. Kids should have "skin in the game," he said.

OK. But there's a difference between skin in the game and getting skinned by outrageous tuition financed with big debt.

When McCluer kids ask Flanders if they can afford college, he says, "Yes! You can do it!"

That's the right answer. College is still affordable for kids whose parents can't help. But they probably won't be cheering on a big-time college football team. They'll be riding Metro to college from Mom's house every morning.

The work starts in high school. Scholarships go to kids with high grades and test scores. "A student with a C average is going to pay more for college than a student with a B average," says Alan Byrd, director of admissions at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

But there's hope for the C student, too. Check out the "A Plus Scholarship" program offered by the state of Missouri. It requires only a C-plus average (2.5), passing algebra, a 95 percent attendance record and 50 hours of tutoring or mentoring other students.

The payoff is free tuition for two years at any two-year community college or public vocational school. That's worth about \$5,000 at St. Louis Community College.

Some state universities – including UMSL – offer scholarships to students who transfer in for their final two years toward a degree. At UMSL, that generally means \$2,000, but sometimes up to \$5,000, toward the annual \$8,500 tuition and fee bill. "The higher the GPA, the more opportunity for transfer scholarships," Byrd says.

Community college, followed by UMSL, may be the cheapest way to a four-year degree in St. Louis for students without a great high school record.

Lots of kids on the low end of the income scale qualify for federal Pell grants of \$5,500. The American Opportunity Tax Credit is worth \$2,500 toward higher education costs, and you'll get \$1,000 of it even if you pay no income taxes. It phases out for incomes over \$80,000 or \$160,000 for married couples.

Pay attention to due dates for federal and college aid forms. Snooze and you'll lose.

If you have to borrow, favor federal Stafford loans. Compared to private loans, the federal loans offer lower interest for most borrowers. They offer easier repayment terms for grads with limited income, breaks for people who lose their jobs and possible loan forgiveness for people who work for the government and charities.

Avoid for-profit colleges and technical schools. Their students have high rates of default on student loans – often 20 to 30 percent. Profit-hungry schools aren't delivering value if their students are going broke.

We older folks owe today's young people an apology. Through our aversion to taxes – and some extravagant spending in academia – we've let tuition at our state universities get so high that it frightens students away.

The next generation will pay the price, through skimpier paychecks and slower economic growth for St. Louis. I'm sorry about that.

The Washington Times

HAGELIN: Study shows teens imitate risky sex of films, TV

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

Culture challenge of the week: Movies "selling" sex to children

Can you name the last five movies your teenage son or daughter has watched with friends? How strong was the sexual content in those movies? Does it really matter?

New research suggests it does. The study, conducted by Ross O'Hara and soon to be published in the journal *Psychological Science*, found that on-screen promiscuity promotes promiscuity in real life.

"Adolescents who are exposed to more sexual content in movies start having sex at younger ages, have more sexual partners" and engage in riskier sexual activities, Mr. O'Hara said.

While at Dartmouth University, Mr. O'Hara (now a researcher at the University of Missouri) and his team analyzed the movie-watching patterns of about 1,200 young teens, ages 12 to 14. Researchers analyzed the teens' sexual behavior six years later, considering the age at which they became sexually active, their number of partners and the riskiness of their sexual activity, including whether they used contraceptives.

The result: bad news. Young teens who viewed movies with sexual content were profoundly influenced by what they watched. They initiated sexual behavior earlier than their peers who had viewed less sexual content, and they tended to imitate the on-screen sexual behaviors they saw — which included casual sex, having multiple partners and high-risk behaviors.

It's not surprising, really. Teens crave information about sex — and too often turn to the media for information. Moreover, adolescent hormones operate in overdrive, and teens naturally are more sensitive to sexual stimulation. Less likely to delay gratification, teens are more likely to be impulsive and think themselves impervious to harm. The combination, researchers say, means that "sensation seeking, or the tendency to seek more novel and intense sexual stimulation" increases in teens who "watched more movies with sexually explicit content."

So what should parents do?

How to save your family: Select movies with your children

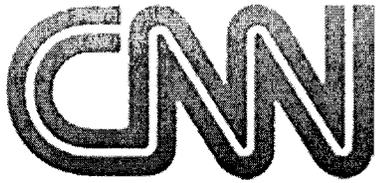
Mr. O'Hara sums it up well, saying, "This study, and its confluence with other work, strongly suggests that parents need to restrict their children from seeing sexual content in movies at young ages."

Agreed. Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as checking a movie's rating. In fact, G-rated movies are part of the problem. The O'Hara study also analyzed the sexual content in 700 films, all top-grossing films from 1998 to 2004. Defining "sexual content" as anything from heavy kissing to actual sex scenes, researchers found sexual content in more than a third of the G-rated movies, more than half of PG-rated films and 4 out of every 5 R-rated movies.

Short of prohibiting movies — an unwise and unworkable solution — there are some things a parent can do. First, use websites that provide specific information about a movie's content, rather than a reviewer's judgment about an appropriate viewing age.

Websites such as www.PluggedIn.com and www.movieguide.org provide not only specifics about movie content, but also analysis from a Christian perspective. (PluggedIn offers reviews of music and gaming products, as well.) Two straightforward secular sources are www.ScreenIt.com and www.kids-in-mind.com. Both provide valuable descriptions of specific movie content, including sexuality, violence and language.

The Parent's Television Council, at www.ParentsTV.org, is an excellent resource for information on the content of popular TV shows and offers great movie reviews.



Lab-Grown Meat Gives Food for Thought

(CNN) — A burger grown in a laboratory. Sounds like science-fiction? Well up until very recently it probably was but now the prospect of lab-grown meat appearing on our supermarket shelves is closer than ever.

Synthetic or test-tube meat involves taking a small amount of cells from a living animal and growing it into lumps of muscle tissue, which can then, in theory, be eaten as meat for human consumption.

As well as avoiding killing animals, scientists believe it could help reduce the environmental impact of meat production.

The technology to create artificial meat has been around since the turn of the century — NASA once looked into developing it for their astronauts — but making an edible and commercially viable product has remained out of reach. It also remains to be seen whether consumers will accept it as an alternative to farm animal-based meat.

But now a U.S. scientist says he is closer than ever to achieving the technological breakthrough. What's more, he believes a market for his lab-grown meat does exist.

Hungarian-born Gabor Forgacs, of the University of Missouri, is a specialist in tissue engineering, working to create replacement tissue and organs for humans. He realized the same technology could be used to engineer meat for human consumption.

He became the first scientist in the United States to produce and publicly eat some of his tissue-engineered meat, at the 2011 TEDMED conference.

His company, Modern Meadows, has already attracted a number of investors since being launched in 2011, including, says Forgacs, funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

See also: 3-D printing: the shape of things to come

Initially at least, his engineered meat is likely to be more of a “niche” product, priced somewhere close to Kobe beef, which is currently around \$125-\$395 a kilo.

“This product isn't going to be for the masses at the beginning, it's going to be for eco-conscious people and people who don't eat meat for ethical reasons,” says Forgacs.

However, Forgacs is not the only scientist working on lab-grown meat. Dutch researchers, led by professor Mark Post of Maastricht University, are promising a high-profile launch for their synthetic hamburger by the end of the year.

“It’s not going to be as easy as some people imagine,” says Forgacs, and adds, “I am not racing him (Mark Post).”

In fact, rather than attempt to race to produce an engineered meat product, Forgacs said his first lab-grown product is going to be leather, which he says “is a similar product to some extents but not as controversial and doesn’t require the same legislation that meat does”.

When it comes to producing meat, Forgacs says the most difficult part is creating muscle tissue that tastes, looks and feels like animal flesh.

“What the final outcome is going to be is difficult to predict,” says Forgacs. “One thought is that it’ll be something like an ingredient to a lot of staples which are based on animal protein — for example we make something which has the consistency of ground meat and that can be used for paté, meatballs.

“Take the analogy of flour. You don’t eat flour, it’s not very tasty but you eat a zillion products that contain flour and are very yummy. Whether or not this is going to be a major application of our product I don’t know but this is definitely something I envisage it leading to.”

Forgacs says lab-grown meat is becoming increasingly necessary as the world struggles to cope with an unsustainable meat industry.

As well as animal welfare concerns over rearing large numbers of farm animals in close proximity, the water use, farmland for animal feed, waste and greenhouse-gas emissions associated with meat production make it one of the most significant environmental problems in the world today.

The U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization estimated that 18% of global greenhouse emissions are accounted for by the livestock sector, and demand for meat is predicted to double over the next 40 years.

Research from the University of Oxford, published last year, estimated that lab-grown meat produces 78-96% lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventionally produced meat within the EU. It also had a 99% lower land use and a 82-96% lower water use.

“The rules of the game of meat production are not the same as they were 100 years ago,” says Forgacs. “It’s not sustainable. We are destroying this planet with intensive meat production. Seventy percent of arable land today is one way or another connected to animals through grazing animals or growing food for them. We’re running out of it.”

He adds: "What we're doing is a transformational idea. We're going to produce something that is not exactly the same but it is going to be cost efficient and much less harmful to the environment."

What still remains uncertain is whether or not consumers will accept a lab-grown meat product.

Neil Stephens, a sociologist from the Cesagen Centre at UK's Cardiff University, has been studying the emergence of lab-grown meat and has interviewed a number of researchers working on the technology.

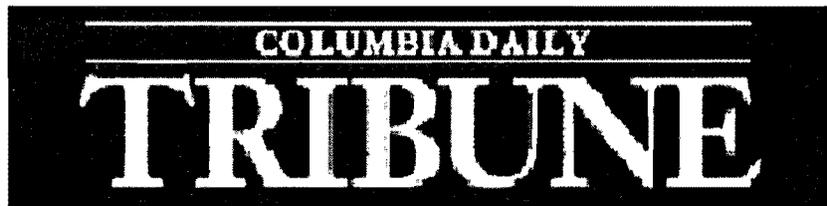
"Is this stuff really meat or something else?" says Stephens. "Some want it to be meat, and recognized like any other meat. Others think it is better to be seen as a new type of meat and as such OK to taste or look different. Then there is a minority who feel it is a meat substitute, very meat-like but not meat."

Without a product available for people to see, smell and taste, Stephens says it is difficult for any debate about how to classify it to move forward.

"If it ever becomes a marketable product it will still be a small one. It is not going to be plumped in the supermarket. It will take time to gain acceptability," says Stephens.

Many of the scientists working on lab-grown meat still see their research as marginal and are striving to get synthetic meat accepted as a reality, according to Stephens.

Whatever the final outcome, lab-grown meat is no longer in the realm of science fiction. "It is coming. There is no question that someone will hit it big and if we are the ones then so much the better," says Forgacs.



Aspects of U.S. society resemble polyandry

By Janese Silvey

Women in the United States don't have — and probably don't want — more than one husband at one time, but parts of our legal system reflect polyandrous culture, a University of Missouri doctoral student has found.

Polyandrous societies are set up for women to have more than one husband to ensure the women's children are taken care of even if one father dies or leaves. Here, there are other safety nets, said Katherine Starkweather, a student in MU's Department of Anthropology.

"In America, we don't meet many of the criteria that tend to define polyandrous cultures," she said in a statement. "However, some aspects of American life mirror polyandrous societies. Child support payments provide for offspring when one parent is absent. Life insurance allows Americans to provide for dependents in the event of death, just as secondary husbands support a deceased husband's children in polyandrous societies."

Starkweather and co-author Raymond Hames, an anthropology professor at the University of Nebraska, examined 52 cultures with traditions of polyandry from all continents except Europe. They found that similar conditions influenced polyandry: Males outnumbered females but were more likely to die in adulthood from war or hunting accidents.

In about half of the cultures studied, the other husbands were closely related to the first husband. That's because inheritance traditions called for land to be divided evenly among male offspring after a parent's passing. If several brothers married the same woman, the family farm would remain intact.

In other cultures where land ownership was not usual, younger brothers in the marriage would be the provider if the older brother was absent.

"This research shows that humans are capable of tremendous variability and adaptability in their behaviors," Starkweather said. "Human marriage structures aren't written in stone; throughout history, people have adapted their societal norms to ensure the survival and well-being of their children."

The study, "A Survey of Non-Classical Polyandry," was published in the journal *Human Nature*.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

The★Star
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

AP Associated Press

Hundreds honor late MU heart surgeon Stephenson

August 11, 2012 2:10 pm • Associated Press

Hundreds of friends, colleagues and family members remembered Dr. Hugh E. Stephenson Jr. on Saturday as a "true Tiger" with an unwavering, lifelong commitment to the University of Missouri.

The 90-year-old Stephenson died on July 26 from Parkinson's disease at his summer home in Rehoboth Beach, Del. The Columbia native, the son of a dentist, grew up two blocks from campus and earned two bachelor's degrees from Missouri. He completed medical school at Washington University in St. Louis, since at the time Missouri only had a two-year medical program.

In the early 1950s, Stephenson helped secure the University of Missouri's status as a four-year medical school and teaching hospital in once-rural Columbia while working as a surgical resident at New York's Bellevue Hospital. He soon returned to the Missouri medical school, where he would spend nearly four decades as a faculty member and make his mark as a nationally prominent heart surgeon. Stephenson later served as a University of Missouri curator after his 1992 retirement.

"We owe our very existence as a health sciences university to Dr. Stephenson," said Dr. Hal Williamson, vice chancellor of the University of Missouri Health System. "By all accounts, his passion carried the day."

Stephenson is credited with developing one of the first mobile cardiac resuscitation units during his residency. At Missouri, he was chairman of the surgery department, medical chief of staff and an interim dean of the medical school. He performed the university's first open heart surgery in 1958, and was one of the first surgeons to implant an automatic defibrillator. The medical school named its surgery department after Stephenson in 2003.

Stephenson was an avid college football fan whose front yard was decked out with a pair of goal posts, and his nine books included a history of the lost art of the drop kick. He was an active member and former president of the Beta Theta Phi fraternity. Dozens of his fraternity brothers,

young and old, attended the funeral at Columbia's First Baptist Church. He was recruited to join the fraternity by Missouri student Sam Walton, who would later found Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

Survivors include his wife of 48 years, Sarah "Sally" Dickinson Stephenson of Columbia; son Hugh "Ted" Edward Stephenson III of Columbia; daughter Ann Stephenson Cameron of Edmond, Okla.; and two grandchildren.

"Hugh set the standard for the highest personal and professional integrity, and he will always be a model for our medical students and faculty," said Dr. Robert Churchill, dean of the University of Missouri School of Medicine. "I will deeply miss being able to stop by his office to draw on his wisdom as a giant in medicine and as a leader of higher education in Missouri."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

DEAR READER: Break out the mudbugs and beer. It's SEC time.

By Tom Warhover

August 10, 2012 | 5:27 p.m. CDT

Dear Reader,

Welcome to fall.

I'm meteorologically in error, despite predicted high temperatures in the near-frigid 80s. But Sunday starts the week when Columbia children leave home for school and when college students from around the world arrive in town. This is the week before the first week of Friday Night Lights, when Rock Bridge opens against DeSmet and Hickman plays Lee's Summit North.

This is the week for enjoying one last ride on city roads traveled less during summer; for cleaning and painting and prepping; for buying soap or shower curtains before the inventory on store shelves gets skinny. This is the week to gear up for the onslaught.

At that little land-grant university in the middle of town, three little letters are on the lips of many, and they aren't MIZ or ZOU.

Ready. Set. Start the SEC.

The Southeastern Conference has arrived. The defection from the Big 12 is old news, just stuff for codgers on barstools to reminisce upon. The focus is on Razorbacks, not Jayhawks. It's time to move on to other Tigers. (Mizzou brings to three the number of SEC schools with this particular cat as their mascot). On to (both) Bulldogs and to Rebel Black Bears.

In March, a group of us were pondering what more could be said about the SEC by August. The "stat sheets" of schools had been published (and will be again as MU competes against the various opponents). The likes of LSU and Alabama, perennial national champion contenders, were household names even here in Big 12 country.

What would be the road less traveled, so to speak, that gives readers something no one else has done?

The answer was in the question.

“Road Trip SEC” will be published Thursday in print and next week online. Six Missourian reporters spread out to the 13 universities to capture the essence of the cities, schools and people that make up the Southeastern Conference.

They came back with a sack full of stories. Fun stories. Fascinating stories.

They listened to Alabama’s “Song of the South” at a Five Points bar in Columbia, S.C. They hung out with downtown hipsters and midtown frat guys in Gainesville. They ate deer burgers at Left Field Lounge while trying to find the truth behind the persistent question: Is Starkville, Miss., really the most boring town in the SEC?

The Missourian reporters traveled on weekends between March and May. They took along camera phones — there wasn’t enough in the budget to send photojournalists, too — and came back with snapshots. Some got hotels; others found sofas or spare rooms.

It was a risk, frankly. They were reporting at colleges in the middle of NCAA baseball season. They weren’t arriving on football weekends, when the chandeliers are broken out for tailgaters on The Grove at Ole Miss.

But they found plenty of football. And they discovered much more.

I’d plan to kick back with a beverage (cheap beer travels well between the Big 12 and SEC, it appears) and read a spell. At 32 pages, this special section is one you’ll want to savor, not scan.

Tom
