

Howard F. Stein's Introduction of Ed Knop, Recipient of the 2004 Omer C. Stewart Memorial Award

Howard F. Stein

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be invited to participate in the ceremony that honors Ed Knop with the 2004 Omer Stewart Memorial Award. Ed Knop has been a devoted, energetic, and fruitful applied sociologist for four decades, and a dedicated member of HPSfAA for more than two decades. He has pioneered in the development of truly interdisciplinary – not merely multidisciplinary – teams in the solution of rural problems ranging widely geographically from Egypt to Indonesia to his beloved Colorado and the North American Southwest. His work is characteristically “empirically-oriented and focused on strategies and tactics for goal-realization” (Knop 2004b). With the HPSfAA he has served as editor of our journal (1984-1987), as a member of the Executive Committee, and as a Member-at-Large.

Ed Knop's degrees have been joint sociology-anthropology degrees, with his early academic and applied identity being mostly as an anthropologist, although he worked in joint Sociology-Anthropology departments. When the Colorado State University department grew and divided off anthropology and social work, he stayed with sociology for practical reasons; thus he was subsequently seen mostly as a sociologist. Ed Knop held joint appointments and taught some anthropology at various times. Most of his colleagues knew that his professional orientation was more typical of cultural anthropology than sociology, however, and nearly half of his Ph.D. students had their prior degrees in anthropology and were sent his way for a somewhat interdisciplinary development studies training (Knop 2004b).

The main foci of his career have been sustainable community and rural development, and natural resource management. At Colorado State University, Fort Collins, where he has worked (not only taught) since 1969, he pioneered the innovative “reverse extension” model. In so doing, he attempted to counterbalance the traditionally centralizing and hierarchical “outreach” model of extension programs with decentralizing and more reciprocal programs. Here, community members would “come and speak to [CSU] campus personnel about their experiences and insights” (Knop 2004a) in

natural resource management. Ed Knop helped foster an atmosphere in which both parties have an opportunity to speak and be heard.

Ed Knop has been teaching and practicing holistic management in rural development throughout his career. Over the years his efforts have been informed by structural system theories, general systems theory, interaction theory, critical conflict theory, Futurism, and the interdisciplinary model of mixed-discipline collaboration (Knop 1984, 1993). Avoiding the initial fragmentation of a project and hope for later assembly, participants in the interdisciplinary model undergo the more strenuous effort to work “together in defining a problem and approach, planning and implementing work, and evaluating and drawing conclusions about it” (1993: 56). Here, “intersecting organizational structures . . . cross-cut discipline authority that brings together some faculty and staff, at least part-time, around common interests in interdisciplinary topics and university mission emphases” (Knop et al. 1986: 67).

Put a different way, Ed Knop has devoted as much thought and effort into building the *culture of the work-team* as he has expended toward *the explicit goal of the project itself*, i.e., helping another culture to achieve some aim. Thus Ed Knop's work on farming systems research and extension has two foci: the farming systems themselves, and those social systems that study and try to assist farming systems (project teams and the larger systems in which they are embedded). Alas, satisfied farmers and satisfied team members do not always translate into satisfied universities and their discipline-bound structures.

If my all-too-brief sketch of some of Ed Knop's career themes is even partially true, one immediately understands the instant and enduring fit between the style of Ed Knop and the ethos of the HPSfAA. Ed Knop, the applied sociologist, is interdisciplinary at heart and in function. So has been the history of those anthropologists and anthropology students who have been attracted to HPSfAA. An esteemed senior colleague of mine attempted to “diagnose” me many years ago by saying that I was loyal to HPSfAA

because I could be “a big fish in a small pond.” Alas, he chose the wrong metaphor. What has been so refreshing about HPSfAA for so many of us is that it (we) has been a sanctuary and refuge from those university disciplinary structures that have historically squelched interdisciplinary work and insights that fall between the cracks of dogma. Ed Knop has belonged here for good reason.

I want to end my introduction with a story. For many years, Ed Knop has graciously driven me between Albuquerque and Abiquiu, New Mexico, for our annual Ghost Ranch retreat. The drive has been a time for us to renew our old friendship and to discuss HPSfAA issues. It has likewise been an opportunity for me to learn about the cultures and history of the Southwest. There is seemingly nowhere he drives that lies outside the range of his interest and knowledge. As I listen to his numerous stories, I have also come to recognize Ed’s great love for the people and his sense of place here.

In sum, many themes in the life and work of Ed Knop converge to make him the deserving 2004 recipient of the Omer C. Stewart Memorial Award bestowed by the HPSfAA. Ed is distinctive and singular in a way that quintessentially makes him one of us as well. I thank Ed personally for the honor of being part of this ceremony.

References

Knop, Ed

1984 Community Conceptions and Development Approaches in Sociology. *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* 4(2):12-14.

1993 Politics, Power and the Pragmatics of Praxis: Issues and Insights on Social Science Roles in Mixed-Discipline Development Projects. *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* 13(2): 52-66.

2004a Colorado State University’s Reverse Extension. www.holisticmanagement.org/art_csu.cfm?cfid=2325279&cftoken=88820005. Accessed February 12, 2004.

2004b Personal communication, February 18, 2004.

Knop, Ed, Maya ter Kuile, Willard Schmehl, and Mary Beebe.

1986 Making the Mixed-Discipline Farming System Model Work: Issues and Management Insights from U.S. and Egyptian Projects. In *Farming Systems Research and Extension: Management and Methodology*. Edited by Cornelia Butler Flora and Martha Tomecek. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University.