

# Exploring the Global Village

by Eve K. Sandstrom

When Jim Goodman was a pupil at Henryetta's Roosevelt Elementary School, geography was a fourth-grade subject.

"That was my one and only exposure to geography," Goodman says. "I did not have any more until I took a class when I was a junior here at OU. But I remember that fourth grade class very vividly. There was a globe on the back table—probably the only one in the school. I used to try to draw maps off of that globe."

Today Goodman is one of the key figures in the American renaissance of the teaching of geography in elementary and high schools. His work is ensuring that Oklahoma children of the 1990s will learn more about the earth than did their older brothers and sisters, their parents or the young Goodman himself.

The Henryetta fourth grader grew up to become Dr. James M. Goodman, chair of the department of geography at the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma's associate state geographer for education. And in 1991 he was officially singled out as one of the nation's top geographic educators by the prestigious National Geographic Society.

Goodman was one of the first six persons ever honored with a Distinguished Geography Educator Award, given by the Society for the first time in 1990.

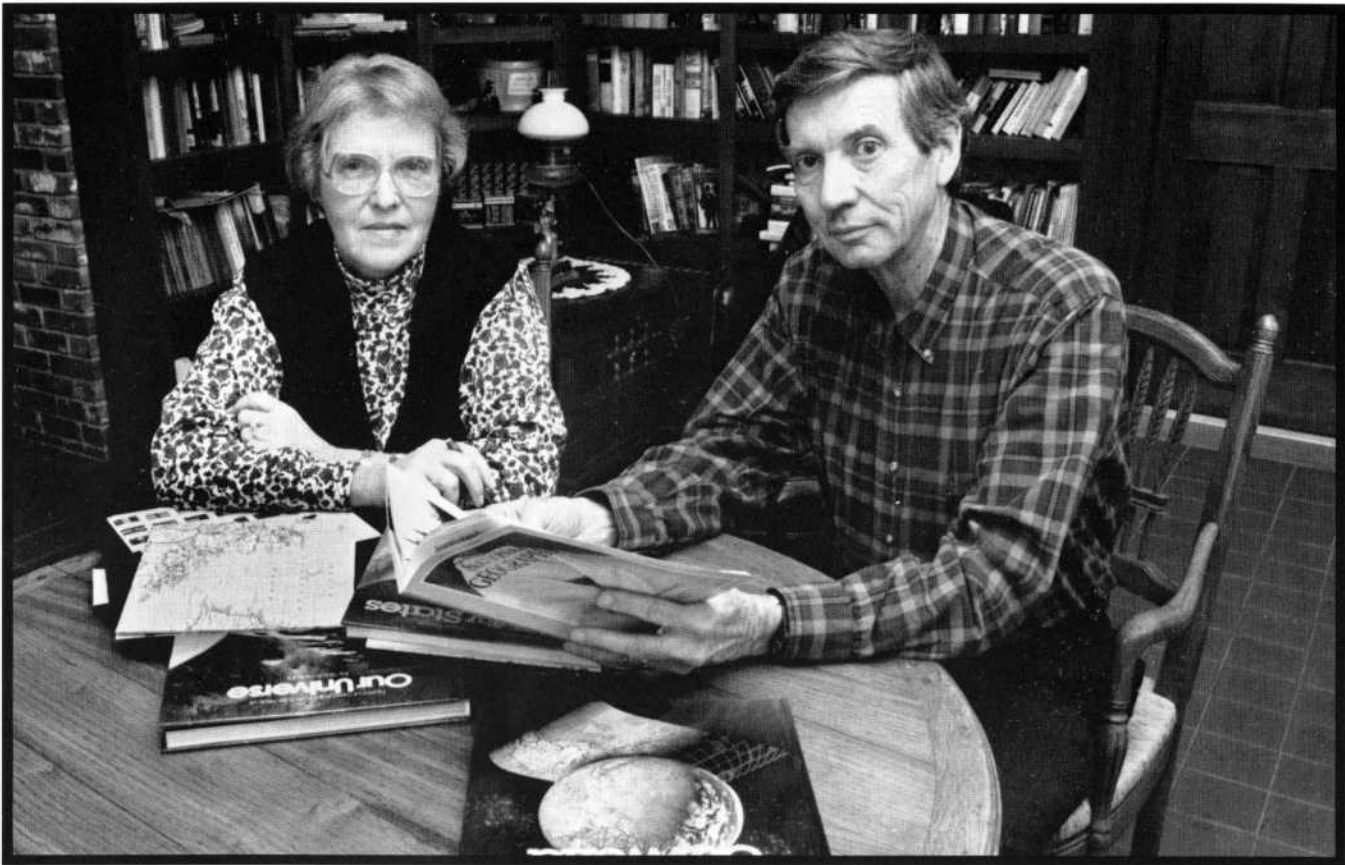
Gilbert M. Grosvenor, president and chairman of the National Geographic Society, has paid tribute to Goodman as an educator whose "unyielding enthusiasm has spurred hundreds of classroom teachers to teach this subject in new and exciting ways.

"Jim Goodman is one of those rare teachers with an absolutely infectious curiosity about the earth and how it's made," Grosvenor says. "For years, Jim has been one of a tiny minority of professional geographers absolutely committed to teachers. As past president of the National Council for Geo-

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*The long-neglected study of geography is finding its way back into Oklahoma classrooms, thanks in large part to the efforts of OU's James Goodman.*





*The success of the Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education — OKAGE — can be credited to the efforts of Mary and Jim Goodman, above in their home. Jim describes their work as a “Ma-and-Pa operation;” their colleagues call it total commitment.*

graphic Education, he is a leader in the national movement to bring geography back to the classroom.”

Goodman earned this national honor, which included a prize of \$5,000 for him and an additional \$5,000 for the University, through his work with the Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education, known as “OKAGE.”

One of Goodman’s major professional interests has been Indian lands. The home he shares with Mary, his wife of some 35 years, is decorated with rugs, Indian figures and paintings collected during travels over the Southwest. Relaxed in corduroy pants and a plaid flannel shirt, the tall, slim Goodman might have been sent by a Hollywood casting agency in answer to a call for “university professor.” But he is not acting when he talks about geography; he has enjoyed his profession immensely.

Geography is more important today than ever before, Goodman says, and its study is more broadly based than ever before.

“Geography combines perspectives from both the social and natural sciences to study the earth as a stage for human activity,” Goodman says. “A knowledge of geography is essential to the well-being of a people, because it is part of their instinct to survive.

“I’m particularly fond of the expression ‘global village.’ The earth is someplace you live, but it’s also someplace where you buy your groceries and obtain the water you drink and the air you breathe.”

Geography’s varied subject matter—maps and navigation, geology and weather, oceans and rivers, agriculture and economic resources, plants and animals, even political systems and national boundaries—tie in with the study of ecology and with humankind’s new recognition of its dependence on other species, on the natural world and on the finite resources of the planet.

The current emphasis on the teaching of geography is partially a reaction to a lack of interest in the subject that began, Goodman feels, in

the days of political isolation before World War II. This lack of interest was dramatized in 1988 when the National Geographic Society commissioned a study to compare the geographic literacy of Americans with that of citizens of eight other countries.

The United States ranked in the bottom third, with only citizens of Mexico and Italy scoring lower. And young Americans who took the test—those survey participants aged 18 to 24—did worse than persons in that age group from any other country.

As he announced the results, National Geographic’s Grosvenor said that the aspect he found “most alarming” was that young people from the United States were the only ones in that age group who did worse than the oldest group tested.

This seemed to indicate that Americans did not know much about geography in 1988, and that in the future they were likely to know even less.

Seventy-five percent of Americans,

***“We’ve tried to calculate the multiplier effect. We figure that at least 100,000 students have been taught by teachers trained through this program.”***



*Goodman’s Sarkeys Energy Center office commands an impressive view of the campus where he has taught for nearly 25 years.*

for example, could not find the Persian Gulf on a map—the area where the United States would go to war less than three years later. Forty-five percent could not locate Central America, and 57 percent could not guess the current U.S. population on a multiple choice questionnaire.

A 1986 test administered to students in six state colleges showed that Oklahoma’s students were not doing much better than the rest of the nation.

In the mid-1980s, concern over this situation led the National Geographic Society to offer a series of programs and grants designed to improve the teaching of geography.

In response to this same concern, Oklahoma geographers in 1985 formed the Consortium of Oklahoma Geographers (COG), with Goodman as chair. In 1987 COG established OKAGE.

Mary Goodman promptly left her

own job as cartographer for the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey to become part-time administrative assistant for OKAGE. She now works full-time for the alliance.

“We run a Ma-and-Pa operation,” Goodman says with a smile. Their coordinated effort has been credited with the success that has come to OKAGE, success which earned Goodman the Distinguished Geography Educator Award.

But his best reward may have come when a new survey of Oklahoma students’ knowledge of geography was taken in 1991. Today’s high school students, after OKAGE-led instruction in elementary and middle schools, know as much about geography as beginning college students did five years earlier, Goodman reports proudly.

OKAGE is not an OU project, Goodman emphasizes. He and Richard

Hecock, of the Oklahoma State University department of geography, shared duties as coordinators until Hecock resigned in 1991, and the group always has involved geographers from throughout the state.

“When we established the alliance, we thought we would not do it through a single institution,” Goodman says. “We’re trying to make it a statewide effort. People from the University of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Cameron, Northeastern, East Central, Oral Roberts and Tulsa Junior College took part. And in the past few years we have had a lot of K-12 teachers join the consortium.”

Teachers are the focus of OKAGE.

The entire purpose of the group is to help Oklahoma teachers at all grade levels become more effective in geography instruction. The group now has more than 3,000 members and has

been responsible for training thousands of state teachers.

One of these teachers, Glenda Sullivan, a Lawton sixth grade teacher, in July 1991 represented OKAGE at the National Instructional Leadership Institute sponsored by the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C.

"Jim Goodman is absolutely great!" she says. "Oklahoma's super alliance (OKAGE) is all due to Jim and Mary Goodman. They are totally committed to the alliance and geography. At the Leadership Institute in Washington, we felt that Oklahoma was way ahead of most of the states. Our presentation was well-prepared and well-received because Jim Goodman had worked with us. I can't say enough in praise of him. He's made a tremendous difference to Oklahoma teachers."

One reason Oklahoma teachers are hungry for help with geography, Goodman points out, is because the Oklahoma legislature is emphasizing the topic. Legislative action has mandated the teaching of geography on the junior high level since 1988, and the importance of geography was reiterated in HB 1017, which reformed Oklahoma schools in 1990.

Goodman is strongly behind HB 1017, which was controversial enough to force a statewide vote seeking its repeal. In a 1991 referendum, Oklahoma voters backed the bill and the tax hikes it instituted, and it is now being fully implemented.

"I'm really proud of 1017, because the state of Oklahoma anticipated President Bush's year 2000 educational objectives by several years," Goodman said. "One of its requirements (for high school graduation) is assessment tests in five areas, and geography is one of those areas."

HB 1017 also mandates more environmental education, Goodman says, and this topic is closely allied to geography.

OKAGE is the primary source of help for teachers faced with integrating geography into the classroom, and one of its missions is to develop geography curriculum materials.

Funded by the Oklahoma legislature, a series of grants from the National Geographic Society and a number of state foundations, OKAGE has offered institutes, workshops, confer-

ences, in-service training and curriculum materials to Oklahoma teachers. In addition, teachers such as Sullivan have been sent to national meetings by the group.

One of the major OKAGE projects is summer institutes on techniques for teaching geography, offered since 1988. Each teacher attending these institutes is pledged to hold at least three later meetings for fellow teachers, passing on what was learned at the institutes. This means that each teacher trained by OKAGE in turn trains from 25 to 100—or even more—other teachers.

"We've tried to calculate the multiplier effect of this," Goodman says. "We figure that at least 100,000 Oklahoma students have been taught by teachers trained through this program."

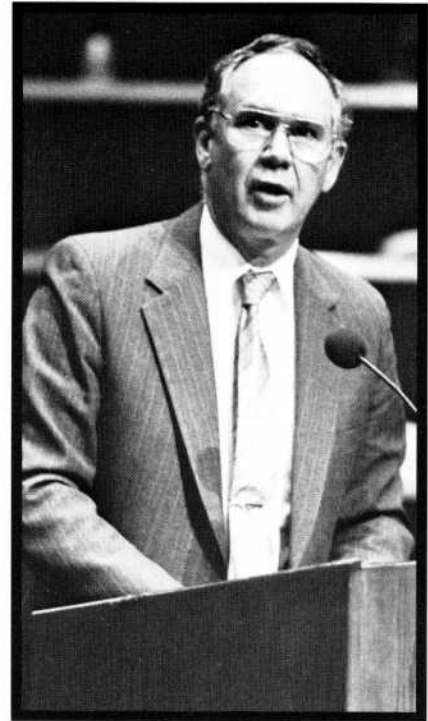
And modern teaching of geography is not mere memorization of isolated facts. The subject is integrated into traditional reading, writing and math education, particularly on the elementary level.

Geography today emphasizes five themes: location, place, human/environmental interactions, movement and regions. These themes are guidelines selected by the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education.

Sullivan, for example, used these five themes and tied them into the rest of the curriculum when her sixth grade class studied Europe in the fall of 1991.

Each student selected a country for a report, she explains. The student then used writing and spelling skills to compose a poem about the country and to write a letter to the country's embassy seeking information for the report. Each student learned the location, area and population of the country, then drew a map using mathematics skills, including directional orientation and scaling. Each studied the culture, terrain, transportation systems, ecology, industries and many other aspects of the country. They created travel posters. Working as a group, the class wrote, illustrated and printed an alphabet book on Europe, then read the book to children in lower grades.

"I gave extra credit for the number of sources used in their reports," Sullivan says, "and they had to finish with an oral presentation before the class, emphasizing visual aids—filmstrips and slides, as well as their



*National Geographic's Gilbert Grosvenor was a featured OU Centennial lecturer.*

posters. They had to prepare a five-sided cube, with each side illustrating one of the five themes of geography."

The results?

"The kids loved it!" Sullivan says. "They retained much more. And they couldn't copy their reports from the encyclopedia."

Some 150 teachers have attended OKAGE institutes held over the state since 1988. Numerous in-service workshops have been held for teachers in individual school systems, and OKAGE is now branching out into "pre-service," or workshops for undergraduates majoring in education.

An advanced institute, for teachers who had been trained at earlier institutes, was held for the first time in 1991. This institute emphasized field



*In 1991 Gilbert Grosvenor, left, honored OU's Jim Goodman with the Distinguished Geography Educator Award, given by the prestigious National Geographic Society. Grosvenor lauded the Oklahoman as an educator whose "unyielding enthusiasm has spurred hundreds of classroom teachers to teach this subject in new and exciting ways."*



***"We're trying to understand the relationship between people and their home planet."***



work, and participants researched on-site the Black Mesa area of Oklahoma, a Spanish-American village near Santa Fe and an extended family on a Navajo reservation, where they helped shear sheep. This activity earned the program a plug in the December *National Geographic Magazine*.

"We exposed them to three different cultures and different sorts of environments," Goodman says. "We had a lot of fun, but we also got some very serious materials developed, which we will give to teachers free. Anybody who comes to our workshops gets all this material, and our teachers demonstrate how to use it."

Goodman regards this aspect—teachers training other teachers—as vital to OKAGE's success. "It's no use having a college professor tell a grade school teacher how to do something."

One of the most impressive contri-

butions of OKAGE is *The GeoReader*, a highly sophisticated teaching tool on geography that was prepared by two Oklahoma teachers, Linda Greeson, of Edmond, and Jeanie Sisson, of Moore, under the supervision of Goodman and with the help of Mary Goodman. This outline of geography resources and activities was distributed to 700,000 teachers nationwide in 1991 through the Book It! program sponsored by Pizza Hut. OKAGE was selected to produce this program on the recommendation of the National Geographic Society.

OKAGE also coordinates National Geography Awareness Week events and sponsors Oklahoma's part in the National Geography Bee, a project that involves some 500 state schools and enables a state student to participate in a national contest with a top prize of a \$25,000 scholarship.

The National Geographic Society has provided a series of matching grants to fund OKAGE—\$50,000 each year since 1989. The Oklahoma legislature has matched this grant each year, and OKAGE funding is now a line item in the annual state budget.

In addition, the Harris Foundation, the Phillips Petroleum Foundation and the Kilpatrick Foundation have provided grants. The University of Oklahoma for a period of time provided a graduate assistantship.

Now Goodman is starting a new push for money to establish an OKAGE endowment fund. The National Geographic Society has offered matching grants from a minimum of \$250,000 to as much as \$500,000, he says.

"The Noble Foundation says they'll give \$50,000 if \$200,000 more can be raised. This would give a strong endowment for geographic education in

the state. Oklahoma will benefit forever."

Goodman hopes to finish this drive by the summer of 1992.

Goodman's work with OKAGE has been performed on top of his own research and his regular full-time duties teaching geography classes at OU and chairing the department of geography.

Dean James F. Kimpel, of the College of Geosciences, of which geography is a part, strongly backs Goodman's work with OKAGE.

"OKAGE's focus on pre-college education increases the awareness of geography among teachers and among high school and junior high students," he says. "It reflects credit on the University, and it also helps recruit students for our program."

OKAGE workshops even have offered a certain amount of professional experience for the OU graduate students who help staff them.

"Everything about it is beneficial," Kimpel says. "We're pleased to see Jim getting the recognition he deserves for leading OKAGE."

Goodman has been chair of the OU department of geography since 1985. He earned his B.A. in geography from OU in 1952, his M.S. from Northwestern University in 1953 and his Ph.D. from Northwestern in 1961. He taught at Western Kentucky State University, the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where he was also department chair, and Oregon College of Education. He joined the OU faculty in 1967 and has been a full professor since 1985.

Goodman's own particular interest is physical geography. He is the author of *The Navajo Atlas*, a book published by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1982. A list of his published articles and papers for professional meetings is four pages long. In 1980-81 he served as president of the National Council for Geographic Education, one of the two major professional organizations of geographers.

How did an academic whose whole career had been spent in higher education become interested in training elementary and secondary teachers?

Goodman traces this interest back to a sabbatical year, 1973-74, which he and Mary spent as volunteer teachers in a Navajo high school, St. Michael's Indian School, in Arizona.

Goodman grins when he recalls the



*Goodman's "global village" is not only someplace that you live but also someplace to buy your groceries and obtain the water you drink and the air you breathe.*

year. "You know how nuns are! They can talk you into a lot of things. We were teaching high school *anything*, and we even ended up driving the school bus. We really enjoyed that year. After we came back, I got more seriously involved with geography on the public school level."

He does not foresee an end to this involvement. In fact, he is hoping to step down as department chair so he will have more time to spend on OKAGE.

"I don't want to give up my appointment at the University, but new opportunities keep coming up. Right now it seems that I can make my greatest contribution by helping with geographic education."

But he still hopes to continue his own research interests, which include the land dispute between the Navajo

and the Hopi tribes, a textbook on Indian lands and a book on the geography of the national parks.

"Geography to me has been an exciting profession, certainly a very stimulating area to be in," he says. "We're trying to understand the relationship between people and their home planet."

A great deal depends on this understanding, Goodman believes.

"The major problem is just that (the earth has) too many people. Our whole life-support system is over-taxed. We simply have to keep a better house than we have in the past."

And because of Goodman and other OKAGE members, a lot of Oklahoma youngsters are developing an understanding of geography that could mean better housekeeping on a world-wide scale.

