

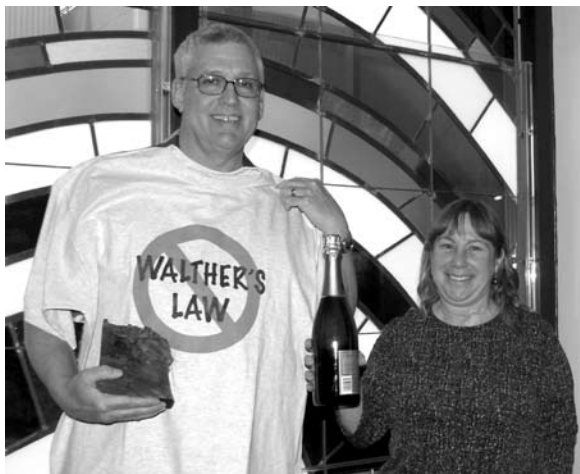
# Charlie Byers Retires

After 35 years of service to the department, the university, and the professional community, Charlie Byers retired after the spring 2008 semester.

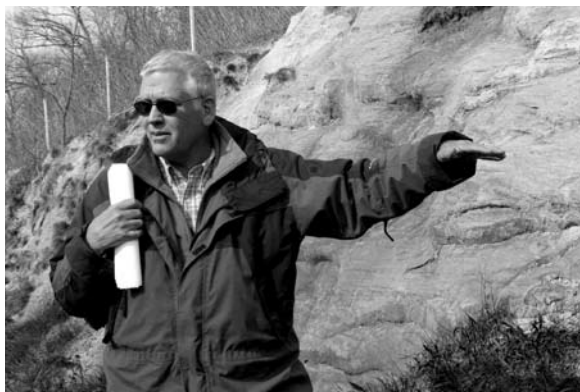
Charlie came to Madison in 1973, after earning his B.S. from Marietta College and his Ph.D. from Yale University. Charlie's research focused primarily on the sedimentology of shales, especially those of the Cretaceous Western Interior, and the sedimentology and paleoecology of early Paleozoic rocks in Wisconsin and the northern Midwest. Charlie has also worked in the history of geology, with published papers on J.D. Dana, E.O. Ulrich, K.M. Waage, and L.L. Sloss.

Charlie served the department, the campus, and the community in many ways. In addition to 35 years worth of departmental committees, Charlie was chair of the department from 1987 to 1990. Charlie was part of the L&S advising service for over 15 years, where he no doubt had a major influence on the direction of a great many undergraduate careers. Charlie was active within SEPM and GSA, including serving as an officer of GSA's History of Geology Division from 2002-2006.

Charlie will be best remembered for his insightful teaching. He taught at all levels, including the department's summer field camp in Utah, advanced courses in paleoecology, various courses in stratigraphy and



**Charlie Byers shows some of the gifts he received at his retirement party in Weeks Hall, May 9, 2008. About 100 guests, faculty, students, and staff helped Charlie celebrate "last class day," and department chair Jean Bahr is ready with champagne. (Neal Lord)**



**Charlie lectures in front of a St. Peter Sandstone outcrop at a field trip location near Mt. Horeb, WI. (Amalia Doebbert)**

sedimentologic processes for majors, and a popular elementary course on evolution. He was elected to the UW-Madison Teaching Academy in 1995, and was the recipient of the UW System's Underkofler Distinguished Teaching Award in 2000. ●

*Contributed by Dana Geary*

## *Comments from letters of support for his teaching award:*

"Two decades of collaboration with [Charlie] in teaching and research have given me a profound admiration for his scholarly talents. Byers is a modern "Renaissance man" whose eclectic breadth of knowledge and dedication to educating students at all levels makes him an exemplary professor. He is a superb lecturer—one of the very best I have ever known. His presentations are well organized, very clearly presented, and carefully enriched with well-chosen illustrative examples and witty anecdotes." *Robert H. Dott, Jr.*

"I teach stratigraphy at my university. I have tried to emulate many of the teaching techniques and concepts I have learned from watching Charlie teach his course. I believe a course as superior as Charlie Byers' course in stratigraphy is something I still strive for, but have not yet attained." *Robert H. Goldstein*

"Charlie is committed to excellence in teaching and works hard to promote student learning. Perhaps the most important component of his teaching is his ability to stimulate students to think for themselves. His view of learning (and by extension, teaching) is reflected by the following quote that has been in his office at least since my graduate school days (and is now in mine).

At school you are not engaged so much in acquiring knowledge as in making mental efforts under criticism. A certain amount of knowledge you can indeed with average facilities acquire so as to retain, nor need you regret the hours you spend on much that is forgotten, for the shadow of lost knowledge at least protects you from many illusions. But you go to a good school not so much for knowledge as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment's notice a new intellectual position, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the art of working out what is possible in a given time, for discrimination, for mental courage, and for mental soberness.

William Johnson Cody, Master, Eton, 1875  
To develop such arts and habits, student must have good teachers. Charlie Byers is one of the best." *Heather Macdonald*

## **Student comments from Geology 110:**

"Wow! What an awesome professor!! I've left every lecture very intellectually stimulated, and I always continue to learn from him. His organization and incredible enthusiasm about this course make learning easy. He has a wonderful pace and shows incredible knowledge. I have no complaints!"

"I found this course to be outstandingly interesting and stimulating—was surprised and delighted. The instructor was among the most fun, enthusiastic and sympathetic I've ever had. His lectures were fascinating and I appreciated all his help and support. Learning from him has been a wonderful experience. For the first time in my life, I feel that I have both learned and retained info from a science class. Thank you! It's been wonderful."



**Charlie in the specimen repository, c. 1990. (Department archives)**