

# Passings: Professor Emeritus of History Douglas Wheeler

## UNH mourns the loss of a "true gentleman"

Friday, January 27, 2023



Douglas Wheeler, professor emeritus of history, served UNH from 1965 to until his retirement in 2002. He passed away on December 22, 2022.

Here, professor and chair of history Kurk Dorsey remembers his colleague.

## In Memoriam: Douglas Wheeler

Douglas Lanphier Wheeler passed away just before Christmas after a brief illness. Many of us feared something was wrong because he and Katie, his wife of 58 years, had not sent out invitations to their annual creche parties. Over years of travel, by the Wheelers and many friends, Katie and Doug had gathered nearly 300



DOUGLAS WHEELER IN 1984  
(COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES).

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Christmas nativity scenes, which they set out around their wonderful home as the centerpiece for holiday gatherings. Doug was also widely known for his skills as a playwright, having written not only "Rudolfoletto," which was performed at the Seacoast Rep in 2014 and published as a book, but also years of skits for the faculty talent show many years ago.

Doug was a native of St. Louis who came to New Hampshire to attend Dartmouth College. He stayed close, earning his M.A. and Ph.D. from Boston University before coming to UNH in 1965. In graduate school, he had a Fulbright to study in Lisbon, which set up his dissertation on Angola in the Portuguese empire in the 19th century; he then served a stint with the U.S. Army Intelligence School. Doug was hired as part of a commitment in the university to expand the department's offerings in world history. He offered courses in African history, but also in the Portuguese and Spanish empires, as well as world history and history of espionage. Before retiring, Doug had visiting appointments at BU, Morgan State University, University College in what was then Rhodesia, and Harvard. Beginning in the 1990s, Doug held the Prince Henry the Navigator Professorship in Portuguese History, and he also served as the founding editor of the Portuguese Studies Review, both appointments reflecting his prestige in the field.

Doug was an inspirational colleague from the time he got to UNH. In fact, before he even came to Durham for his first semester, he wrote to Bill Jones, our department chair, to report that he had seen an excellent film called "Africa in Motion" at the World's Fair, and he hoped that Bill could figure out a way to have it shown when he arrived in the fall, particularly as a way to introduce the state's teachers to "culture change in the continent." And proving that nothing under the sun today is new, he was involved in a summer institute for world history teachers that summer.

Doug was always a strong supporter of the department and university, helping to set up the Wheeler Fund for international scholarly travel, serving as department chair and as director of the center for international education, chairing the emeritus faculty group, and coming back to the department to assist with a Portuguese language exam for a graduate student just this fall. But more than anything, Doug was a true gentleman. His colleagues recall his mentoring, his warm humor and his commitment to his students, as well as his place as a fixture in the Durham community.

—*Kurk Dorsey, professor and chair of history, UNH*

Memorial arrangements are incomplete at this time.

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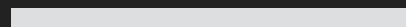
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