My Last Day at UWRF

by long-retired Prof. C. N. Stockton
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Five or ten years ago the Alumni magazine invited people to send in reminiscences of R.F., to go into a special magazine issue. I sent them something like the following but they never acknowledged nor printed it. Maybe because they didn’t want to publicize the fact that we have (or used to have) bats in our belfry.

Having taught history and philosophy at UW-RF for twenty-three years, I retired in 1989. My last day with students was in very late May, a final exam for Hist. 153 in South Hall 223 from 10 a.m. to noon with maybe 35 students. I was supervising the exam myself.

The cloudy morning grew dark. Then it grew VERY dark. As sheets of rain began to fall and the wind howled, there was an intense flash of lightning, instantly a deafening crash of thunder, and the lights went out. It seemed dark as night in South Hall 223. I told the students to write their exams the best they could, I promised I’d grade them leniently. Many of the students crowded by the windows, hoping for slightly better light. Three or four of the men students moved to Room 227, saying that they thought the light was better there. If that was some scheme for cheating, I didn't care. It was dark as night there too.

A South Hall bat, assuming that it was night, came out of its hiding place and started swooping through the air in our classroom – now close to the ceiling, then at eye level, then diving past the windows where women students were crowded. There followed a good deal of shouting, yelling, and screeching.

I asked a couple of the men students to grope their way down the stairs into the basement and to try to find a janitor to deal with the bat. Five minutes later, into our room marched two resolute custodians armed with a bucket, a dust pan, brooms and other weapons. Then Hist. 153 became like a super-hero movie as people rushed about flailing at the elusive bat. There was even more shouting, yelling, and screeching.

Finally, success! One warrior dazed the creature with his long broom, it fell to the floor, and the other warrior whomped it with a shovel and scooped it into his dust pan. In the sudden silence a woman student said “Gross!”

That is my last memory of University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

(Their grades were no problem to me. I already had grades from two hard mid-term exams or makeups for each student so I averaged those -- unless the fragmentary final exam showed that the student had made a noteworthy effort to study. In semester averaging, I always preferred awarding happy surprises to ghastly disappointments.)