Several threads of thought in the Spring 2014 issue of *Radiations* inspired this communication: director Toni Sauncy’s exhortation in “Finding Historical Ties,” Richard Dyer’s Letters & Feedback referencing Worth Seagondollar’s lecture to the 2004 Congress, Dyer’s career at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), and the alert to the reader by Sigma Pi Sigma president William DeGraffenreid that, “In this issue of Radiations, we are showcasing alumni connections.”

Each of us noted in this communication is affiliated with Emporia State University (ESU) in Emporia, Kansas. In 1941 Seagondollar earned his baccalaureate degree from our institution, then known as Kansas State Teachers College (KSTC). We were touched by the death of one whom we knew. He contributed in a significant manner to a national project of international consequence and advanced physics education. The Seagondollar Award, which recognizes extraordinary levels of service and commitment to Sigma Pi Sigma, is given in his name.

Two of Seagondollar’s classmates also had distinguished physics careers: Robert H. McFarland, a 1940 KSTC graduate, and Francis McGowan, class of 1942. Following graduation from KSTC, the trio matriculated at the University of Wisconsin–Madison to pursue graduate degrees. Their mentor at KSTC, Dr. S. Winston Cram, was a 1934 University of Wisconsin–Madison graduate. McGowan began work with the physics division at ORNL in 1946, retiring fully in the 1990s as the “senior” physicist. He completed his PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1951. Richard Dyer may have been acquainted with McGowan as a UT alumnus or through their work at ORNL. For more details on these KSTC/ESU physics luminaries and their alma mater, see http://www.emporia.edu/physics/past-people.html.

In the spirit of the Spring 2014 issue of *Radiations*, “alumni connections,” ESU celebrated the 50-year heritage of the KSTC/ESU physics program and its graduates’ distinctive accomplishments in April 1993. Seagondollar, McFarland, and McGowan served as panelists. They shared their life experiences, personally and professionally, and paid tribute to the professors and mentors who influenced their lives in virtually immeasurable fashions. The two-day program was characterized as “Preserving the Heritage.” For many, Seagondollar’s reminiscences of his Manhattan Project experiences at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, culminating with stories about the Trinity site test, were the highlights of the “Preserving the Heritage” weekend. Noted by many in the larger physics community, the Society of Physics Students, and Sigma Pi Sigma chapters across the country, Seagondollar’s riveting accounts of those experiences continue to resonate.

Sincerely,

DeWayne Backhus, PhD
Professor and Chair, Emeritus, Physical Sciences
Emporia State University

Jorge Ballester, PhD
Professor, Physics
Emporia State University

Chris Pettit, PhD
Associate Professor, Physics
Emporia State University

Richard Sleezer, PhD
Chair, Physical Sciences
Emporia State University

Worth Seagondollar Service Award

A commitment to service is one of the keystones of the Society of Physics Students (SPS) and Sigma Pi Sigma (ΣΠΣ). The Worth Seagondollar Service Award is to be given in recognition of an exemplary level of commitment and service to the SPS and ΣΠΣ. See http://www.sigmapisigma.org/awards/worth-seagondollar/index.html.