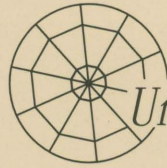


Gatherings

SPRING 1994

No. 6



University Libraries

WESTERN
MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY

Direction — Continuity — Accomplishment —

A Friends' Personality

Many of us lead somewhat helter-skelter lives that, at least part of the time, are neither carefully planned nor focused. A few lead lives with direction and continuity and usually accomplish a great deal. One such is George Hebben.

Born in Detroit where his parents occupied the same house for sixty-five years, and educated in parochial schools, George joined the U.S. Air Force after his graduation from Servite High School. Eight years later, after tours in Germany and Viet Nam, he returned to a long-held aspiration—to attend college and, even more specific, to become a bookman, a librarian if you will.

To this end, George Hebben enrolled at Western Michigan University earning first an undergraduate degree in sociology along with a minor in library science. From there, he followed with a graduate degree, the Master of Science in Librarianship, awarded in 1973—also from Western Michigan University. George worked for several years as an adjunct librarian at Waldo Library until his interests and his strong personal direction took him to a comparable field. In 1987 he acquired a landmark Kalamazoo bookstore, the Athena, and has made it a mecca for those who read and appreciate books. He credits his library school reference courses with teaching him how to locate the hard-to-find books his customers frequently seek while courses in children's literature have served him well since the Bookstore has a thriving and strong collection in that area—some claim it to be the finest in the community.

George Hebben's close ties to the book community and to Western Michigan University made his involvement in the planning of a Friends group for the

University Libraries extraordinarily obvious. Currently he serves as Vice President of the Friends and has been active since the group's establishment in 1992.

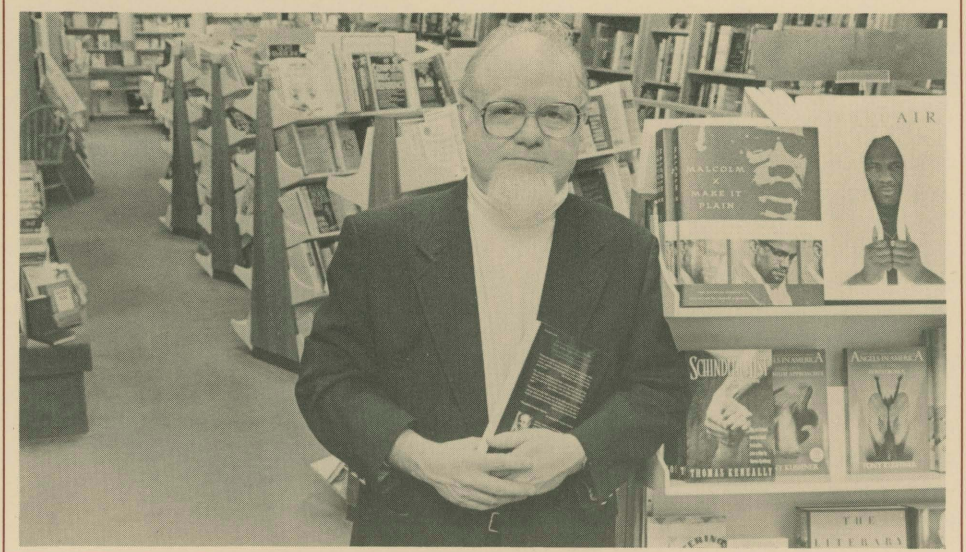
Another continuing passion in Mr. Hebben's life is young people. Between 1976 and 1982, George and his first wife were foster parents to twenty children—some for as long as two and a half years. Since his wife was an avid gardener and provided lots of high quality food, George assumed responsibility for the kitchen and did most of the cooking for the house that was full of youngsters. He became quite an accomplished cook and especially likes mideastern cuisine. His interest in young people extends to several organizations that are concerned with their wellbeing including the Plainwell High School Building Committee, Gryphon Place and the Civic Youth Theatre. That last involvement is also reflected in his board membership of Actors and Playwrights Initiative as well as a newfound enthusiasm for acting itself. Last year he took a small role in a high school production, *The Pig Man*, and more recently had a role in the production of Moliere's *The Miser*, at Kalamazoo

College.

George Hebben is a staunch supporter of the First Amendment rights guaranteed under our national Constitution. He is an active member of the Great Lakes Booksellers Association and has been frequently called upon to testify in defense of intellectual access before legislative committees when legislation intended to limit our reading choices has been proposed. As one might anticipate of a "good" bookman, George is also an avid reader in such varied areas as spirituality and business. He is a lover of classical music and supports local musical organizations with both time and funds. He confesses, however, to having serious discussions about the volume level that his teenage daughter prefers when playing contemporary music.

This is only a brief profile of a man of self-direction, continuity of purpose and accomplishment. However, there is little doubt that it does demonstrate that George Hebben reflects those characteristics well; he is a man of strong commitment and the will to make that commitment succeed.

G.E.



George Hebben, Owner, The Athena Book Shop.