

LIFESTYLE

Concordia Hall of Famer featured in book

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The year was 1935, and the Winnipeg Pegs had just won the Grey Cup. “Bob Fritz for Mayor! Bob Fritz for Mayor!” chanted the people of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Led by head coach, quarterback, running back



Ryan Christiansen's book.

MOORHEAD SPUD HISTORY FACEBOOK

and Concordia College alumnus Robert “Bob” Fritz, they were the first Western Conference team to win the Grey Cup, and, in fact, the first Western team to beat an Eastern team in any Canadian football league game up until that point.

Ryan Christiansen, North Dakota State University lecturer and Moorhead High School graduate, later wrote “Border Boys” about the people who inspired the chant. This book is about how these American football players went to Canada to help the Western Canadian teams take down the Eastern powerhouses.

Fritz went to Concordia from 1931 to 1935 and played four years of varsity football at Concordia after not having played at all in high school. He was born and raised in International Falls, MN, where he went to high school and played basketball with Minnesota Gopher legend Bronco Nagurski. Christiansen said Fritz was a sort of quarterback-halfback hybrid, where he would throw and run the ball interchangeably with the other players in the backfield.

In 1933 and 1934, while Fritz attended Concordia, the varsity team would play Canadian football teams,

including Winnipeg, since the Canadian teams were lacking competition. Concordia won both competitions, and the Winnipeg team took notice of the star fullback for the Cobbers. Fritz was recruited to come play for Winnipeg after he graduated in 1935. A short but full career followed, lasting until 1937.

Fritz was a player-coach for Winnipeg in his first season in 1935, and Christiansen said he excelled at both. Fritz gave the quarterbacking duties to Art Stevenson, while he focused more on coaching and being the main running back. Christiansen noted he was by far the best athlete in any game he played in, along with being the smartest player on the field.

During the season, the teams in the West wrapped up their season about a month before the teams in the East, and so Winnipeg would go to Detroit to train while they waited for the playoffs. While they were there, they attended a Detroit Lions game where they faced off against the Brooklyn Dodgers. During the game, Detroit ran a trick play where they would pump fake to a receiver, hand off to the running back who would throw to the player they originally faked it to and that

player went for a touchdown. Fritz took note of this and came up with two variations of this play. Winnipeg ran both in the championship game and scored on both plays.

Christiansen said Fritz also had a reputation of a tough guy. In 1932, while playing for Concordia, he broke his right hand, which was thought to be his dominant hand. He did not tell anyone and was able to keep playing his same position because he was ambidextrous; he just started throwing with his left hand. The next season, he broke his jaw in the penultimate game of the year, finished that game and played the rest of the season. In 1935, he sprained his wrist before the Grey Cup and played with it. If not for that level of grit, who knows what the outcome of the 1935 Grey Cup would have been.

Fritz, known for his football talent, brains and brawn, was a Concordia legend who Christiansen said changed the landscape of Canadian football by giving the long dominated Western teams a chance to make a name for themselves.

Vacancies lead to custodial outsourcing

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Custodians are essential to the functioning of any institution—yet they are also some of the least-recognized staff members. This paradox contributes to the increasing difficulty to find custodial staff all across the nation.

This is reflected at Concordia College as it has become harder and harder to fill custodial positions for the past few years. The pandemic has only exacerbated this phenomenon.

Concordia started outsourcing through the company ServiceMaster in fall 2021. Director of Facilities Dallas Fossum said this solution will likely be short-term for the college.

Fossum said, “(The decision to



Donna Preston.

CONCORDIA COLLEGE

outsource) was born out of necessity because of the workforce shortages since the pandemic. We are actively recruiting for custodial positions and the desire is that once we fill more positions, we hope to reduce the extent to which we are outsourcing.”

The outsourced staff are servicing administrative buildings and Old Main while in-house staff work in student spaces, such as residential halls and academic buildings.

Assistant Director of Facilities Rob Smith said, “As we have continued to have more and more vacancies, we have had to expand our outsourcing to more and more buildings, but we will cover residential halls as fully and as best as we can before we have to outsource student areas.”

It is more expensive on an hourly basis to outsource, so the outsourced staff will be cleaning less frequently to maintain Concordia's budget.

“To stay budget neutral, we are cleaning three days a week in administrative buildings, but if we were doing it in-house we would be cleaning five times a week,” Fossum said.

Outsourcing will not impact cleaning services except the frequency at which they occur. Fossum said there should be no noticeable difference between cleaning three versus five times a week, but it may have long-term impacts on the cleanliness of the buildings.

Concordia seems to be grappling with unemployment more severely than North Dakota State University or Minnesota State University Moorhead. This can be due to state

schools being able to offer more incentives to their workers, especially reduced cost for insurance.

State schools can offer custodial workers several incentives, including paid vacation and sick time, pension and discounted insurance. Building services supervisors Paul Smith and Matt Langlie said MSUM offers the highest wage of the tri-colleges for custodial staff. Both NDSU and MSUM are facing custodial staff shortages as well.

As a private college, Concordia is unable to offer state benefits, but has been incentivizing a \$1,000 sign on bonus and increased flexibility of hours. Despite this, supervisor Paul Bjelkengren said the staffing shortage has become especially prevalent on campus this past year.

“Years ago, we didn't have this issue. About 10 years ago, we would have a job positioning and have an applicant pool of about 10-12 people. We would actually sort through and pick who we wanted to follow up with. Now, we need to interview whoever applies because we can't afford to pass them up,” Smith said.

Smith said another reason Concordia is struggling is because there have been several retirements recently.

“The people that are leaving, that we are unable to replace, are veteran people. We are not only losing manpower, but also the experience that they have accumulated over the years of doing custodial work,” Smith said.

Donna Preston worked at Concordia for 38 years and retired this month. Preston said she is grateful for her time at Concordia and for



Nathan Wasvick keeping the atrium clean.

MARIA KLIPFEL

investing in the retirement plan, which allowed her to retire at 62 and care for her husband during the pandemic.

“I have worked in every building on campus due to my various roles. I had many students work for me throughout these years and became friends with many who I still stay in touch with through Concordia. Concordia became a second home to me,” Preston said.

Although Concordia is experiencing fewer staff, certain technological advancements have made it easier for custodial staff to do their jobs. Fossum said Concordia invested in an automatic mopping machine that cleans by itself and connects to workers via phone.

“It's just one way we are getting better. It has saved us a lot of time. We can run the machine 6 to 7 hours a day. It used to take someone 6 to 7 hours a day to run a riding machine,

but now it does that itself, so that worker can do other things while the machine mops,” Fossum said.

In addition to advanced technology, Fossum and Smith said individual attentiveness can make custodians' jobs easier. Picking up after oneself and treating the residential hall as home are two ways to aid custodians.

“One of the main issues we have is actually in the residence halls. For example, East Complex has had cases of student vandalism in the past year. This throws a wrench in our ability to make it a pleasant living space and for us not to spend all of our time cleaning up a building or two when we need to cover the campus,” Smith said.

Fossum and Smith also ask students and staff to be patient and understanding as Concordia works on recruiting new staff and implementing outsourcing.

Putting their money where their music is

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Peter Haberman and Kevin Sütterlin, directors of the Concordia band and orchestra, have pledged to match up to \$10,000 in donations for the orchestra and band students' upcoming trip to Spain.

The international tour, which sees the two groups give concerts, provide lessons and collaborate with bands and orchestras in the country they are touring, happens annually, with the band and orchestra alternating every two years.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted the band's tour in 2020 as travel was restricted and many countries went into lockdown. Rather than wait four years for the next opportunity, meaning some students would not get the chance to perform internationally, Sütterlin and Haberman worked together to figure out a way to combine the trip so both groups could participate.

The tour, which will take place this May, currently has a little over 80 students participating, with expectations that a few more will sign up before the cut-off to join. Haberman said the groups have fundraised for trips in the past, but the COVID-19 pandemic had added a new set of challenges, both for the school and for students individually, and he and Sütterlin wanted to help offset the costs.

“Dr. Sütterlin and I both committed our own personal money to help,” said Haber-

man. “We wanted to try our best for anybody who wants to get that experience, to get that experience,” said Sütterlin. “I would hate for some of my students to miss out on performing abroad because money is an issue,” continued Sütterlin.

Several Concordia alumni and a community member have pledged their support as well.

“The people who are helping us match the \$10,000 in donations are people we have established friendships with and who have a genuine interest in the band and orchestra,” said Sütterlin. Haberman said many of the alumni who offered their help had gone on their own international tour while at Concordia and know how beneficial it will be for students.

While touring, the band and orchestra will have the opportunity to work with ensembles in the country as well as teach students at a school in Spain alongside their professors.

Haberman said they hoped students will form connections with the people they meet while touring and that it would deepen the experience. “We want our students to connect with their students — interact in really culturally significant ways through music,” continued Haberman.

“It's about the people you meet, the friendships you make, the genuine relationships you form. I'm looking forward to our students seeing that and making lasting international friendships,” said Sütterlin.

Sophie Pepple, a violist in the orchestra,

said the connection between the people in the orchestra is already strong and is excited for the opportunities the trip will provide. “I'm really looking forward to working with other ensembles outside of this community. The orchestra is like a family to me, and this will be a new bonding experience for everyone involved,” said Pepple.

Haberman and Sütterlin's donation match was supposed to end Feb. 2, though Sütterlin said they have considered extending the deadline to reach their goal. Both directors said the

campus community has rallied around their cause.

“Concordia has been known for its global experience and desire to send forth students with global perspectives. It's been wonderful to see the support from the community as we move forward again in this new normal,” said Haberman.

“The community has been really generous,” said Sütterlin. Donors from across the country and across the globe have supported the program and have sponsored the trip.



The Concordia Orchestra.

LAUREN MELTON