

Warren Rees

Research Librarian, Renaissance Man

BY MELANIE MCDONALD

*“I have a few hobbies
so that life isn’t dull.”*

—Warren Rees

Talk to Warren Rees for a minute or two, and you feel as though you are in the presence of Clark Kent. He’s intelligent, reserved, and friendly. He’s even got the glasses.

Talk to Rees for an hour, and you learn that underneath the Clark Kent exterior is a guy with a cape. He runs marathons, pilots an airplane, and is a serious wine connoisseur. Boredom seems to be his only kryptonite.

“I have a few hobbies so that life isn’t dull,” Rees says. What an understatement.

Let’s start with athletics.

Rees has been running for about 20 years and has competed in three marathons. Last fall, he bought a road bike, and has ridden it up to 42 miles at a pop. Then there’s the cross-country skiing; Rees recently completed a 55k race in Hayward, Wis. Perhaps his next endeavor will be leaping tall buildings in a single bound. Until then, he just flies over them.

On to adventure.

“I’ve had a fascination with flying ever since I was a little kid,” recalls Rees. It wasn’t until the summer of 2001, however, that he actually took to the sky at the controls of a Cessna. “The most important thing in flying is to feel comfortable with your landing,” explains Rees. “You have to know the feel of the plane. I still get an adrenaline rush every time I come in for a landing.” Rees has logged more than 150 hours of flying time in a single-engine 1979 Cessna 172. One flight was to Eau Claire, Wis. to visit family. “I probably won’t do that



again. We flew around the lake instead of over it, because if the engine stops it’s much easier to bring the plane down safely on land than on water. Having the engine stop over land doesn’t bother me. Over water, we’d be in trouble.” So instead of a non-stop, four-hour trip it, was a one-stop (for fuel), six-hour trip. “It’s just too time-consuming,” he says.

One thing Rees does not mind consuming his time is wine—learning about it, tasting it, and visiting its origins.

Last stop: refinement.

Rees became a serious wine connoisseur about five years ago. “There are so many facets to wine—how it’s made, the impact of climate and soil on the grapes, the operation of wineries as a business—I think they’re all quite interesting.”



He and his wife recently made the pilgrimage to Napa and Sonoma Valleys for three blissful days of wine tasting. “I’m a big fan of really good red Zinfandel, and you get the best in Sonoma.” When asked if he sees himself owning a winery for his encore career, he said that’s out of the question “unless there’s some rich uncle out there that I’m unaware of who wants to leave all of his assets to me.” But he would enjoy working in some capacity at a wine retailer, helping customers learn about wine and select the right vintage.

Until then, Rees—who earned his J.D. from Southern Illinois and his Master’s in Library Science from the University of Michigan—will continue to build upon his 22 years as a research librarian, 11 of those at Notre Dame’s Kresge Law Library. “One thing I love about working here is the tremendous amount of contact I have with students,” says Rees. “All research librarians here teach a legal research class, and I teach advanced legal research. It keeps things interesting.”

Dwight King, librarian and head of research services in the Kresge Law Library, hopes to keep Rees around for a long time. “We were so fortunate to steal this mellow librarian from Valparaiso Law Library,” says King. “Warren is very knowledgeable and has a great rapport with students. He’s a real asset to the department. I’ve never found the courage to go flying with him, however. I’m sure he’s a fine pilot; I just prefer to interact with him on the ground.”

“Warren is very knowledgeable and has a great rapport with students. He’s a real asset to the department.”

— Dwight King,

Librarian and Head of Research Services in the Kresge Law Library

Third-year law student Ben Runkle took Rees’ Advanced Legal Research class, and says he highly recommends the course. “The research strategies I learned from Professor Rees enabled me to research a topic exhaustively while still making efficient use of my time.” Runkle also shares Rees’ affinity for wine tasting, and gets together with Rees about once each month to sample and discuss various vintages. Says Runkle, “I am always impressed by Warren’s knowledge of wine and his refined palate, but I question his preference for Australian over European wines!”

As for Rees, he’s just pleased to have found a life-work balance that accommodates his hobbies and allows him to make a difference in other people’s lives.

“I love my work, but if I had to spend 60 to 80 hours a week in the office, I wouldn’t have time for these other things that are the spice of life,” says Rees. “Being on the academic calendar is a great thing. It allows me to devote time and attention to everything I love.”