

Center for Research on Vermont
Lifetime Achievement Award
Kevin Graffagnino
May 14, 2020

A word from Sarah Dopp, a member of the Center and a long admirer of Kevin Graffagnino. I'd like to add my sincere congratulations to him for his Lifetime Achievement Award. I'm sorry that the wonders of technology were not quite up to connecting me to the event. In Kevin's case his "lifetime of achievement" covers ~~most~~ more years than most, inasmuch as he became enamored of Vermont history as a child and was the "boy wonder" of the Vermont antiquarian book world as early as high school. That's how I first knew of him. He and I were both connected to the Chittenden County Historical Society from its early days in the 1960's. Kevin naturally became an authoritative voice among those interested in our local and state history. This became more formalized when he took up the post of Wilbur Library Curator at UVM in the 1970's.

My next personal intersection with Kevin was in 1982 when we were both getting MA's in English at UVM. By happy chance, we were both named co-winners of the Frederick Tupper Award from the English Dept. that year. Kevin was soon immersed in a fertile book-writing period and I returned to my laboratory career at the Medical Center Hospital's Blood Bank Lab.

Now, I fast-forward to 2003, when I had been serving on the Vermont Historical Society's Board for about a dozen years. I was on the Search Committee which brought Kevin back to Vermont from Kentucky, to serve as the VHS Executive Director. His tenure was marked by a number of important milestones—

a capital campaign, completion of the Vermont History Center building in Barre, the re-opening of museum and program space at the Pavilion Building in Montpelier, successful years of the Vermont History Expo. Kevin criss-crossed the state, speaking to local historical societies and other partners, writing Vermont history and collecting on behalf of VHS (especially with his friend, the late J. Brooks Buxton). During Kevin's tenure, I served as Co-Chair of Development, 1st Vice-President and, about a year before Kevin left us, I became President. Looking back on it now, I realize THAT may have been the event prompting him to "run screaming from the room!" But seriously, how could he have passed up the opportunity to lead the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, where he has also made his Vermont history buddies very proud! Warm congratulations to you, Kevin, on this richly-deserved honor! I wish I could be with you today, at least "virtually."