

Teacher's degree work of fiction

Grams admits years of Ph.D. fakery

By Scott Williams

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As a school teacher in Shawano County for almost 30 years, Mart Grams borrowed frequently from author Ayn Rand's influential novel "Atlas Shrugged" when discussing politics or economics in his classroom.

Grams also got something else from Rand's popular work of fiction: his own Ph.D.

Known for years as "Dr. Grams" to students and colleagues in the Shawano School District, the now-retired teacher and author is acknowledging that he holds no doctorate and that he has falsely claimed a Ph.D. from the same fictional university featured in "Atlas Shrugged."

Grams said he and some friends concocted his degree from the non-existent university as a way of protesting what they perceived as the troubled state of higher education in America.

"I guess you could say it's just a tad rebellious," Grams said in an interview. "It was kind of a slap to a system that's gone pretty bad."

Grams, 58, who still serves as a substitute teacher in Shawano, has continued using the Dr. Grams title not only in the classroom but also in selling books he has authored, and also in making a recent unsuccessful bid for election to the Shawano School Board.

His self-published 2015 textbook, "Economics for the Remnant," has been posted for sale at amazon.com for as much as \$86 a copy. The author is listed online as Dr. Mart A. Jacob Grams.

'Ph.D.' brought respect

Those who have known Grams during his distinguished teaching career say that claiming he had a Ph.D. — which is rare among teachers at the high school level — brought the longtime social studies teacher



MART GRAMS

added respect in the halls of Shawano Community High School.

Former student Elena Bohm recalled seeing Grams make a point of correcting people who addressed him

merely as Mr. Grams. Bohm said the teacher had a sharp sense of humor and might have been joking at times, but she assumed he was telling the truth about having a Ph.D.

"I didn't even think to question it," she said.

Officials at Viterbo University in La Crosse confirmed that Grams in 2004 earned a master's degree in education from that institution.

After creating the fictional Ph.D. starting around 2010, Grams was described frequently as Dr. Grams in the Shawano high school newspaper, and