

Legacy of the Freedom Rides of 1961

Panelists

- Tom Sorensen, Ph.D., Associate Dean at the School of Law at USD.

Tom is a Vermillion native, receiving his graduate and post-graduate degrees from USD. He is a member of the SD and NE bars. Tom has served in the City Attorney's office and on the Vermillion City Council. Tom also has journalism experience on radio, even serving as the very first host of SDPB's noon hour program for six years. He is the past president of the SD Assoc. Press Broadcasters and of the Sioux Falls Area Press Assoc. He specialized in covering local courts and all branches of government, which led him to his career at the law school.

- Robert Hilderbrand, Ph.D., professor of History at USD.

Dr. Hilderbrand is a Professor of History at USD, teaching courses on America in the 1960s and the Vietnam War. He earned his PhD from the University of Iowa. Dr. Hilderbrand is the author of several books about recent US History, and he was the editor of The Papers of Woodrow Wilson. He developed the Peace Studies thread for the IDEA Program, and has served as Chair of the History Department and Director of the University Honors Program at USD. Dr. Hilderbrand has twice been named Professor of the Year at USD.

- Claire O'Connor, an original Freedom Rider who now lives in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

Claire was in her first year at the University of Minnesota when she had the opportunity to join the Freedom Riders. She rode from Nashville, TN to Jackson, MS, where she and her co-riders were arrested for disturbing the peace.