

# MUSINGS



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**Dates to Remember**

- Thursday, May 25: Poetry as Music; Music as Poetry: a retirement celebration for Gary.
- Friday, May 26: Gary's Retirement Party
- Monday, May 29: Campus Closed for Memorial Day
- June 9: Commencement

## FROM THE CHAIR: 3/3

The field, the discipline, the career goes on, but the individual disappears; therefore, let me take this moment at the end of my full-time (I will become part-time) teaching career to pay tribute to those individuals (just to write their names means something) who inspired me to become a teacher and poet: Florence Bookwalter, Larry Borders, Margaret Holl, Marion Dechant, Lewis Marcuson, Clifford Hardie, Helen Chapin, Marie Buncombe, Robert Stillman, and poets Wendell Berry, Hollis Summers, John Ashbery, Carolyn Kizer, Richard Howard, Thom Gunn, and Michael Harper. Here at Sinclair at the beginning of my career, Harold Solomon, Helen Peterson, Nancy Moody, Jim Walter, Lloyd Hubenka, Clifford Barr, Jeanne Jacobs, and Karen Wells helped me become a better college professor

Recently, when I was cleaning out files, getting ready for retirement, I found my first teaching contract, dated May 22, 1967, for \$5,200.00 to teach English at Wayne High School in Huber Heights. Was it the economic times, the lack of respect for teachers, or just a local budget, but why would I go into a profession that paid so little?

My standard response is: "Psychic Income." Mentally, I have gained so much from teaching. My mother taught me the "What me worry?" demeanor, but from teaching I have learned to stimulate my brain, to become a "village explainer," and, of course, to do well on *Jeopardy*.

When in high school, we did very little writing, what we call now "composition." In college, I

was expected to already know how to write essays. When my papers came back marked with lots of red, I was devastated since I had earned A's in high school. However, that was how I began to learn to write compositions. I appreciate now the time that the instructor spent marking up those papers. When I started at Sinclair in 1972, I began to learn how to teach composition. Then we were still thinking mostly about the finished product. We never used the word *process*. I would say that moving from "product" to "process" has been the most significant change that I have experienced in my career. Secondly, I would point to the move from the standard five-paragraph theme to something more amorphous.

The study of literature has moved through "New Criticism" to social- and political-based literary theories to more recently a reevaluation of all those theories. From that sophomore in high school who was handed Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* to read to this Shakespearean "foolish fond old man," I have enjoyed greatly the best works of literature. My professors told me not to read anything that was not at least a hundred years old and not to read anything written by any one alive. I did not take their advice, but as I approach retirement I begin to think a lot more about wasting time.

To those who have disappeared, and those who remain, cheers and ciao to all of you.

Gary Mitchner

## FROM THE FACULTY

*The following are a few fond remembrances about Gary from the English faculty.*

From **Jack Bennett**:

Remember the infamous Fall Conference Committee we served on together? Our theme was "TQM: Better Than The Known Way". We bankrupted the Fall Conference budget by spending \$20,000 on food and corrupted everyone by having wine at the evening dinner. Fall Conference from then on has been the same menu and non-alcoholic!!!

From **Carmel Morse**:

Many years ago, I took a distance learning poetry course from Gary. His feedback was generous and extremely helpful. He encouraged me to write poetry. Presently, I am working on my Ph.D. in creative writing, poetry. Gary is one of the pivotal professors who helped me along the way and led me to the path I'm on today. I just want to say, "Thank you!" He made a difference in my life and career choice to be a writer and instructor.

*(continued on p. 3)*

## FROM THE FACULTY (CONTINUED FROM P. 1)

From **Ed Davis:**

In the PAC the other day, Dave, a phys ed instructor, and I had just exclaimed over the gorgeous April day outside, when a disembodied voice from an adjacent locker bay intoned: "But April IS the cruelest month!" I smiled at the evocation of T. S. Eliot there among racquets and jockstraps, grunts and jokes; poetry in the midst of sweat and shower steam. It was Mitchner, of course, reminding me, not for the first time, that, as English Department chair (and long before), he's always demanded that poetry (and all the arts) be a vital part of everyday as well as academic life. Poetry is for people, not dusty library carrels. Furthermore, Gary's done a lot to place literature squarely in the mainstream of what our department does, right beside composition, and I'll always appreciate that. (And the parties; how can you not enjoy them when *he's* enjoying them so much with his crystal, china and wry smile!)

From **Liz Christensen:**

I remember the first time I saw Gary's office. It is a lot like him, eclectic, often scattered pieces of students and friends remembered, and layered with each part being delicious! I will miss his sense of humor, love of gossip and advice. His excitement when his first granddaughter was born was infectious and began all of our "grandparent bragging rights." Now, he has two little girls to love, read to, and teach to explore. Off you go traveler! Head across the hills, with a walking stick in hand and a good hat to keep the sun out of your eyes! You have just begun the journey!

From **Kate Geiselman:**

The first time I met Gary was at a part time faculty inservice, and he began the meeting by telling us everything that we were doing wrong. I was terrified. It has been a great pleasure for me to discover that he isn't the dictator I once thought he was, rather he knows that the best way to lead is by example and by trusting that his faculty will work hard with what they are given. He's also just a really nice guy. (Who knew?)

From **Vicki Stalbird:**

I haven't had the time yet to write the witty and charming *something* I wanted to write about Gary's parties--OR the lessons I've learned from Gary about the Sinclair culture. Just--thank you, Gary, for teaching me good.

From **Rachel Porter:**

When I was a freshman in college, I took a composition class from a professor who seemed to think he was a real tough guy. The first thing he did was tell us that if we were in the class to get As, we were in the wrong place, because he didn't GIVE As; student had to EARN As, and only

one or two a year succeeded. I looked at him and thought, "Oh, yeah? Well, I'll get an A in this class or die in the attempt." I probably would never have become an English major if it hadn't been for a deep-seated competitive need to show that Gary Mitchner person that I could get an A in English any time I wanted, so there.

The first thing Gary said to me after becoming the department chair was "I can't believe I get to give you more homework." When I told him that I still had all my papers from his classes, he told me to bring them in so he could review his green comments and consider re-negotiating my contract. I told him that he might have to give me a raise and he said "I don't GIVE raises; you have to EARN them."

I'll miss that tough guy.

From **Sally Lahmon:**

Gary has a zest for life that many of us are sadly missing. He celebrates events that otherwise may have gone unnoticed and makes us all feel special by his gracious parties and remembrances of the milestones of our lives. That joy seeking quality is what I admire most about him.

From **Sarah Kiewitz:**

Gary is magic! I sat on Gary's knee at a Christmas party and asked for a better boyfriend. Gary's son called two seconds later (though Oregon was a little far away). I didn't have to wait too long, however, as I was engaged to a much better boyfriend the following Christmas. Maybe Gary should set up shop in the mall . . .

From **Tim Waggoner:**

Among my many wonderful experiences with Gary is the time we went to the League conference in Minneapolis. Since former wrestler Jesse Ventura was the governor, Gary brought a full-body costume of the Rock (a wrestler who, thankfully, went into action movies instead of politics). I'll never forget Gary wearing the costume and dancing at a bar where a band of Gen-Xer's called Boogie Wonderland played 80's cover songs. He was, as usual, a big hit with the crowd and likely returned to Ohio with more than a few phone numbers of people into trans-trunk-ites (those who dress like wrestlers).

From **Susan Callender:**

I will miss Gary. Since we have "lived together" for a number of years, we have shared all kinds of personal, family and professional ups and downs. I feel like I can be very honest with him, and even if he laughs at what I've said or done, his responses are always genuine. This is a rare virtue in a society that often embraces duplicity. I hope the new era in Gary's life is not so much filled with random doings, but rather it is filled with what he has worked on for some time---the art of being.

*"Praising what is lost  
Makes the remembrance  
dear."  
—William  
Shakespeare*

## PRINTED AND PRESENTED

**Chuck Freeland** has two Grubb tales forthcoming: "Wan Study," in the *Texas Review*; and "Revolution," in *Ellipsis Magazine*.

**Ed Davis** made a presentation on subsidy publishing at Edison State's first annual *Publish, Don't Perish* workshop on April 29. The workshop was sponsored by the Edison Writer's Club and featured speakers on nonfiction, fiction and poetry publishing.

**Lisa Tyler** has been selected as one of 15 faculty members from across the country to participate in "Modernist Paris," a five-week seminar in Paris sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Participants will study the writings of Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Henry Miller, as well as modernist art and film. Lisa has also been selected to participate in two Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops for Community College Faculty, also sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities: "Untarnishing the Gilded Age: American Politics and Culture, 1870-1901," at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center in Fremont, Ohio, May 15-19, 2006; and "Henry Ford and the History of American Industry, Labor, and Culture," at Henry Ford Commu-

nity College in Dearborn, Michigan, June 18-23, 2006.

**Adrienne Cassel** received the Alumni of the Year award from WSU's English Department this year.

**Carol Nancarrow** attended Facilitator's Institute at Brevard Community College, Coco Beach, Florida, in April. This event is a process learning training for facilitating faculty development. Carol is now on Pacific Crest's list of facilitators for process learning events such as Teaching Institute and Learning to Learn Camp.

**Tim Waggoner's** short story "Knock, Knock" will appear in a limited edition promotional chapbook to accompany the release of the anthology, *Masques V*, in which his story "Waters Dark and Deep" appears. Tim will also serve as one of the judges for the 2006 Scribe Awards given by the International Association of Media Tie-In Writers. His novels *Pandora Drive* and *Thieves of Blood* were released this quarter, and his fantasy novel *Godfire: the Orchard of Dreams* will appear in hardcover this July from Five Star Books. He's currently working on the sequel to *Thieves of Blood*, the first draft of which is due at the end of June, God help him.

## WRITING CENTER UPDATE

The Writing Center will be moving to the new, renovated and beautiful Library at the beginning of summer. We will open as soon as possible, probably in week two of summer quarter. Our new digs are located next to the pit for the bell tower, which gives us something unusual in the library: huge actual windows letting in lots of actual daylight.

The tutoring area will have a huge growth in physical space and in computer capacity. We will have room for four tutors to work at the same time and for 25 students to work have computer work spaces. We will also have places for using a scanner and for collating or assembling projects. There will be plenty of printing capacity and, so far, we have held the line of requiring students to pay to print, though they will have to pay when using the other computers in the library.

The one disappointment is that we do not now have actual work hours budgeted for additional tutors, so we will for now be closed on Saturday and have only two tutors at a time working in the center. If demand is huge in the fall, we can try again to get expanded staffing.

Just outside our door, we'll have access to gourmet coffee and treats, so we will be permitting these to come into the Center. Also nearby, we'll have access to all of the library materials, including reference books and reserve materials, which can easily be brought into our area. We even have *color* in a bright, multi-color carpet.

In addition, the English department will be the first-scheduled user of a classroom space in the library. This space has computers for 28 students, with most of them facing toward the exterior walls of the room. It also has a podium, with a projection system, and printers, also free. All of the materials now stored on Olivine for use in the old classroom will be accessible just like they are now.

Scheduling the classroom will eventually be automated, but there are no room numbers assigned as this point, so that capacity is not yet available. However, you may reserve the classroom for use for summer or fall classes soon. Watch for an email outlining the process.

Several English faculty are assembling materials that can be used in the classroom with little preparation time. More information about these will be sent to all English faculty by the end of spring quarter. Anyone who has a good technology-using activity to share may send it to Carol Nancarrow, preferably as an email attachment.

*"Consider your origin;  
you were not born to live  
like brutes, but to follow  
virtue and knowledge."  
—Dante Alighieri*

## Faculty and Staff

- Chair:

Gary Mitchner

- Secretary:

Fortunate Finley

- Faculty:

Jack Bennett

Kay Berg

Susan Callender

Adrienne Cassel

Liz Christensen

Ed Davis

Jamey Dunham

Chuck Freeland

Kate Geiselman

Sarah Kiewitz

Sally Lahmon

William Loudermilk

Becky Morean

Carol Nancarrow

Vicki Stalbird

Lisa Tyler

Tim Waggoner

- Tech support:

Doug Greathouse

- Student worker:

Malintha Gunawardana

- Newsletter Editor:

Kate Geiselman

## FROM THE TEAMS

The **Bus/Tech Committee** has decided to adopt the new edition of *Business Communication: Building Critical Skills*, by Kitty O. Locker and Stephen Kyo Kaczmarek, beginning fall quarter 2006 for all English 131 and 132 classes. To improve consistency of instruction between and full and part time faculty teaching 131 and 132, the committee will develop a more specific teaching syllabus that includes examples of different assignments that they may choose from as long as they meet the same criteria. Vicki Stalbird is currently working on 131 online and it will be ready to offer students winter quarter 2007. The committee also discussed the future of Technical Composition 121 and 122, which may be phased out completely if enrollment doesn't improve. The committee is also down to three members and would like more department involvement. If you're interested, please contact Liz Christensen.

The **Creative Writing Team** reports that winners were chosen for the Annual Creative Writing Contest, Spectrum Awards, the Paul Lawrence Dunbar contest and the local League for Innovation Student Literary Competition.

The Spectrum Awards banquet was held Monday, May 8 and was a resounding success, thanks primarily to the hard work of Kate Geiselman, in her first year as Spectrum Awards coordinator.

To launch the new library computer classroom there, the **Library / English Liaison Team** is planning a series of hands-on mini-workshops for English faculty in the fall. The workshops will be organized by course: one for those of us who teach 111, one for those who teach 112 (or want to), and one for those who teach 113 and/or literature classes (or want to). Faculty may attend all three. Librarians will show us parts of the new library and introduce us to existing and new resources appropriate for each course. Faculty will be encouraged to bring a typical assignment so they can do some hands-on experimentation for their course. Librarians will present options available for orientation presentations, so faculty can choose the areas and activities they want covered when they bring their classes. This will be a new approach, not just a repeat of orientations you have heard before.

## THE MARCH HARE: A TRIBUTE TO GARY MITCHNER

The March Hare sat in his well-appointed office drinking his morning tea from a Staffordshire cup and reading the *New York Times*. On his desk, next to his wineglass of orange juice and a well thumbed *Complete Works of Jane Austen*, lay a pair of long, slim scissors, at hand for clipping articles of interest. After a cursory glance at the front page, he had turned immediately to the Arts section and begun reading a review of the Broadway opening of *Alice!* He would ask his secretary to book a flight and theatre tickets for Saturday. He was sorry to have missed the opening, but it had been two weeks since his last trip to NYC.

He was dressed in business casual attire: yellow plaid Ralph Lauren shirt and matching socks, crisply pressed khakis, and penny loafers. Behind the door, on the oak coat stand, hung his signature black turtleneck sweater and slacks, and size 9 black trainers, at the ready for a poetry reading at Hobbit & Co. Bookstore, where he was a luminary.

Between articles, he glanced at his Rolex. He didn't like to be late, and he had a full day ahead: first a meeting with the dean, then a Shakespeare class. He would hop on his Vespa to lunch off campus at El Meson with a former student, an aspiring poet now at UD, and return at 2:00 to

explore the circles of hell in the Forum. The cleverness of that course's title still brought a smile to his lips, and he sat for a moment recalling some of his other creative endeavors—the art and literature course that had necessitated a trip to Greece with the charming Ms. S. and friends; the production of *The Frogs* in the college swimming pool; his visits to faculty offices, video camera in hand, to make a technological opus for that year's bi-annual review; his many works as poet laureate; skydiving on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday . . .

Ah, but now it was time to go. On his way through the outer office, he stopped to rearrange the vase of peonies from his English garden and to place a small piece of chocolate in each of the faculty mailboxes, along with an invitation to the tea he and his gracious wife were hosting later in the month.

He was looking forward to today—and to the evening later—a drive to Cincinnati with students to hear a poetry reading, dinner in Clifton, and an opera at CCM. Glancing again at his watch, he mentally calculated whether there might be time to take in the exhibit at the Museum of Art beforehand. Then, picking up his pace, he turned the corner and left the building.

Kay Berg