



*Fifteenth Edition
July 2008*

Retirees' Quarterly



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C O N T E N T S

Off the Cuff	2
A Word from the Interim President, Anne Mulder	3
Glimpses of Old GRJC, Winnie Fox	4-5
A Green Tribute to the Tin Lizzie, Gilda Gely, Provost	6-7
The Errand, Kim Winegarden.....	7
Greetings from the 2008 Emeritus Faculty Recipient, Roger DeVries	8
On Losing One's Spouse, Gordon Langereis	9-11
My Role as a Life-Long Learner at GRCC, Chuck Buffham.....	12-13
Retirees' Breakfast Schedule	13
I Almost Cut My Hair, Philip Jung	14-16
Thoughts about Shampoo, Soap, Cereal, Schools and Scholarships, Keith Longberg	17-20
The Reading Room	21-23
The Summer Without Rain, Kim Winegarden	23
At Eight, Kim Winegarden.....	24

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Off the Cuff

We received a note from **Richard Austin** in response to our article about fountain pens in the April *Quarterly*. He said, “I have used a fountain pen for over 50 years... I enjoyed and appreciated our memories and your value of the fountain pen.” It’s nice to receive a note in response to something that has appeared in this publication, nice to know there’s a reader who will respond. Thanks Rich!

In the “Afterword” to his book, *BETTER*, Dr. Atul Gawande, a surgeon, makes some suggestions about how we can be better at what we do, whatever that may be. One of them is to “Write something.” He says, “It makes no difference whether you write five paragraphs for a blog, a paper for a professional journal, or a poem for a reading group. Just write. What you write need not achieve perfection. It need only add some small observation about your world. By offering your reflections to an audience, even a small one, you make yourself part of a larger world. Put a few thoughts on a topic in just a newsletter, and you find yourself wondering nervously: Will people notice it? What will they think? Did I say something dumb? An audience is a community. The published word is a declaration of membership in that community and also of a willingness to contribute something meaningful to it.” We solicit your reflections, narratives, ideas, opinions for this publication. The next deadline for copy is September 15th. We invite you to “declare your membership” in the GRCC retiree community in this important way.

We received a most thoughtful and generous check from **Gordon Langereis** to help defray the cost of publishing and mailing the “Quarterly.” He said, “I and many others greatly appreciate what you are doing with the Journal. Perhaps you wonder at times if anyone really cares. I’m sure they do.” How thoughtful of him to send that note of appreciation. Thanks very much, Gordon. Please take this as a reminder to send a check to the Foundation to help pay the cost of printing and mailing this publication: 143 Bostwick NE, 49503, in the memo, please write “Quarterly.” It will help keep us afloat.

A reader responds to our review of the book *Neem*, in the April *Quarterly*: “Your review of the *Neem* was interesting. I have a cousin from my Dad’s side of the family who is a retired chief chemical engineer that worked for Dow. He has developed a way to get the oils extracted from the neem nut. He is now marketing a pesticide called Optineem EC sold under a business name of Cantec Inc. From what I hear, it may one day be used on and by humans, perhaps systemically, to ward off biting insects.” Ellet Wilson, Lompoc, CA.

We sadly note the passing of Adrian Swets, Dr. Marinus Swets’ older brother. He was as close to a true genius as any person I’ve ever known, a poet, philosopher, artist, designer, architect, builder, businessman-- full of exuberance and passion, with a love of words, sounds, colors, lines, shapes, movement, and life itself. Adrian was a unique person, and a genuine pleasure to know. The memorial service for Adrian Swets was held on June 29 at Fountain Street Church.

Keith Longberg

By invitation:

A Word from the Interim President. . .



When Wendell Shroll called me well over forty years ago to come teach an evening English class at “JC,” I am certain neither he nor I had any idea on where that call would lead. To be sure, what happened to both the college and to me is history, and a lot of it, at that.

While I have been away from Grand Rapids for many years, I have remained connected through friends and family and through GRCC as well. Long after I had gone to Benton Harbor/St. Joseph to serve as President of Lake Michigan College and then to Florida for semi-retirement as a university professor, I could recount my many memories of the people and the places in and around the college, and I would smile. Those were good days, indeed.

Now, after all these years, I am returning to serve for a short while as the Interim President of the college as it undergoes a rigorous search for a new person to head our beloved CC. I must tell you I am humbled, especially since my brief visit to the college last month. When I left those many years ago, “JC” was a fine institution; it has become, I think, extraordinary. What we began years ago-- even before many of us were there-- was a commitment to quality teaching that would make a difference in the lives of the countless women and men we served. We did that. We were good teachers, good administrators. We were involved in our greater community. We trained and retrained nurses and health care workers, chefs and mechanics. We taught the transfer student, provided continuing education for returning adults. It was a compelling mission.

That mission has not diminished; indeed, it has expanded. The college has grown and flourished. It was always a good place to be. Now, it is an amazing place to be. I return obviously aware of that past, but cognizant that it is a fluid, dynamic institution where much has changed. I bring a knowledge of the past, a respect for the present, and a promise for a future that will be shaped by all that has gone before.

It is a good thing to look back; it is a good thing to be grounded in the reality of the present; it is an even better thing to be part of shaping a future for an institution that gave me so much. I will need your help, my colleagues. I know you will be there.

Thank you.

Anne Mulder

Glimpses of Old GRJC

Winifred (Winnie) Fox, Co-op Program

Although JC had been in existence more than thirty years when I was hired, faculty contracts were not negotiated. Class size and labs were loosely established. In my first semester, I had 47 students in one class – mainly tall young men, who filled the room. I did go to President Andrews and request that the class enrollment be closed, but the answer was, “That shows good interest,” and no change was made. There were no restrictions over the number of class preparations assigned, and I started with five. Naturally, I was anxious to make the Co-op Program a success, and I continued to accept what seemed to be standard practice.

Regular classes were one hour long plus additional time if labs were involved. Assemblies were held in Central High Auditorium, and each faculty member was responsible for taking roll of an assigned section and reporting attendance to Mr. E. Ray Baxter, Vice President of JC. At that time many veterans were returning to college and the growth of the college created space problems, so assemblies were discontinued.

Occasional assemblies were held at Fountain Street Church. Ralph Nader was a guest speaker. Afterward JC entertained him with a luncheon in its Conference Room. It was almost the beginning of Nader’s several runs for the US Presidency.

Even though JC was a full-fledged college, the teachers were given the title of Instructor and were seldom called Professor. For those who held the PhD, the title was used. Gradually that changed to become more formal.

The faculty generally ate in a small closed area near the front of the large cafeteria on the fourth floor of the Main Building. Being a newcomer, I appreciated the informal arrangement because several of my colleagues had been my instructors when I was a student at JC. Faculty members were very helpful, especially when I showed films for my classes—not being very adept with a projector. Both Dick Wherity, chemistry, and Dan Anderson, physics, were especially helpful.

One could hardly call the Registrar’s Office an office. The Registrar was located with a desk and typewriter in the Main Outer Office adjacent to the President’s Office. It lacked privacy, but maybe it was a forerunner of the popular cubicles used now. Payday was every other week and faculty collected their checks in the Main Office. One faculty member’s wife always picked up her husband’s paycheck, which amused me.

JC was part of the Grand Rapids Public School System and various departments on the Fifth Floor of the Main Building had control over its classes. My area being Vocational was under GRPS’s Vocational Department, with Bernard Kennedy its Director. He, in turn, was accountable to the Vocational Ed. Dept. of the State of Michigan. My classes were held in the morning and fitted into JC’s framework. My afternoon’s coordination work with employers was scheduled through Mr. Kennedy’s office, and coordinators were responsible for signing out. Sometimes students might have jobs within the city or within a radius of 30 miles. The Co-op Coordinator, both JC and high school, held weekly meetings, usually with Mr. Kennedy on the Fifth Floor.

Fortunately, JC had sufficient parking spaces to provide parking for each of us.

Other junior colleges in the state had similar co-op programs and when there was a JC conference, the coordinators would meet separately. This was very helpful because none of the programs were very old.

In the fall the President held a reception and formal dance in the gymnasium with some faculty members wearing tuxedos and the ladies, long formals. It opened JC's official social season.

Miss McCabe and Miss Marlowe were advisors to the Women's League, which had a suite of rooms in the Main Building. Having an organization as the Women's League gave self-esteem to its members, even though it did not have a separate building like the U of M had. It sponsored a formal Coffee Concert each fall. Refreshments were formally served using table clothes and beautiful antique coffee and/or tea urns. League members served. Once evening classes became popular, evening social events were eliminated.

After McCabe and Marlowe retired, I was given the responsibility of being the advisor of the Women's League. This assignment was not compensated, simply added by Dr. Visser, then Dean. After discontinuing Coffee Concerts, we started having an informal Friday afternoon coffee hour in the League Rooms. The faculty members were invited and it was well received and enjoyed by both faculty and Women's League members, who prepared and served the refreshments. A grand piano was in the Women's League room. It disturbed Mr. Armstrong, GRPS Director of Music, because the piano was near a drafty window. A small closet held silver serving dishes and urns for storage; later these items disappeared, although the closet was always locked.

Final exams were three hours long and blue books were required. We were expected to have exams long enough to keep students busy for two and a half hours before leaving the classroom. In those early days if you gave exams which required several copies (ie, modified true and false), it was the faculty who prepared and produced copies on an old mimeograph machine kept in a small inner office adjacent to the main front office. My exams usually required blue books and contained mimeograph pages. Later a copy machine became available.

Some years JC had a yearbook called the Olympian, with the last one being published in the 40's. In order to complete the yearbook, several of the top administrators worked on it—a good reason to eliminate the yearbooks.

Commencement, the year's closing highlight, brought the faculty out in full academic attire. The processional was impressive with the caps and gowns with colorful hoods representing the various alma maters. The traditional Pomp and Circumstance was played by JC's Orchestra, directed by Al Smith. The faculty marched from JC's tiny downtown campus enclosed in its iron fence to Fountain Street Church across the street, where the commencement ceremonies were held. Faculty lined up alphabetically—Mr. Hart, Spanish Instructor often marched with me. The coolness of Fountain Street Church was welcomed because graduation always seemed to bring hot and humid weather. Occasionally, Mr. Hart would make a whispered comment that was humorous. Those of us who had seen other graduations would glance knowingly at each other when the choir sang "Give Us Your Tired and Poor," one of Smitty's favorites. Once graduation was over, it didn't take long for the crowd to disperse.

By Invitation:

A Green Tribute to the Tin Lizzie

By Gilda Gely, Provost



As a newcomer to Michigan, I have enjoyed exploring the scenery and landmarks that distinguish this marvelous state. Last Thanksgiving, I drove to Detroit to wander through the newly remodeled Detroit Institute of Art, to take in a show at the beautiful Fox Theater, and to eat seafood gumbo at the famous Fishbones restaurant in Greektown. (I thank Professor Eric Williams for graciously sending me a list of things to do and places to see there.) I also wanted to visit the Henry Ford Village and Museum in Dearborn. What I saw there led me to marvel at the impact of one individual not only on the American way of life but on modes of production and means of transportation in many other parts of the world.

This year marks the centennial anniversary of the production of the Model T, the Tin Lizzie. Ford's vision to assemble an affordable vehicle so the masses could see the country changed modern sensibilities. Very quickly, the acquisition of a car gave the owner a thrilling sense of mobility and independence. One's perspective of place would no longer be limited by fixed horizons; the automobile would make trips, like the one I took from Grand Rapids to Detroit, commonplace.

Since my Thanksgiving trip, however, the rising price of gasoline has made this driver and many others think twice about sightseeing excursions. News reports during the Memorial Day weekend about families staying close to home because of high gas prices show that highway travel is becoming more of a luxury. Subsidized gasoline prices in such countries as China and Russia are fueling demand for vehicles and, as a circular consequence, for more gasoline. The thrill of owning a vehicle to chart one's course through the world's crowded cities or remote regions has become a global phenomenon, yet another sign of what Thomas Friedman in *The World is Flat* calls the equalization of economies.

However, like Friedman, I am optimistic about the creativity of the next Henry Ford, the next curious entrepreneur who will meet future transportation needs by designing a vehicle which runs on clean, dependable technologies. But the credit for building such a car will not go to any single person; no new individual will emerge to challenge the Ford icon. Instead, given the collaborative nature of design via the Internet and labs in companies and universities around the world, the revolutionary Model E (for environment, e-commerce, e-learning, etc.) will be the brainchild of many individuals from very different places. Detroit, a city known around the world as the Motor City, would certainly reinvigorate that image with the mass production of these affordable green vehicles.

Young minds are already working on viable environmentally sensitive cars. Young international collaborators at MIT's Vehicle Design Summit understand that manufacturing processes must be environmentally sustainable, that (by)products be recyclable, and that vehicles be marketable. These are enormous challenges! At GRCC, our students are rolling up their sleeves to join collaborative efforts for the creation of new car-related technologies. GRCC's

Manufacturing Training Solutions has partnered with Henry Ford and Wayne State to use National Science Foundation grant money to work on advanced motor technology for hybrid cars.

There is still so much of Michigan to explore. I would like to taste the treats at the Cherry Festival in Traverse City, to cross the scenic Mackinac Bridge, to see a caribou or moose (I'm not sure I know the difference!) in the Upper Peninsula. But just as I motor through Michigan with a traveler's desire to arrive at these wonderful destinations, I also journey with a sense of urgency that the new automotive technologies arrive soon. We learn so much by traveling, as any visitor to the Meijer Sculpture Gardens, or the Gerald R. Ford Museum, or the Grand Rapids Art Museum can attest. It is my hope that the new green cars maintain that American, now international tradition which began with Henry Ford's production of the Model T – the summertime road trip.

The Errand

*By Kim Winegarden**

They've moved the pickle relish again.
He's too proud to ask for help and
steps sideways along aisles with ethnic food,
past pasta shaped like questions marks
and feels the same confusion he felt
during the war when gun fire shocked
his boots off his feet and blew his buddy
over a rack of tree limbs,
the skin of him left stretched out on a branch.
It was almost dark then, night, and he thought
he was running away from the enemy.
Then a piercing red flash and a hot burn
to his knee sent him low to the ground
And crawling back the way he had come.

Now he doubles back through the store,
still looking for the jars that must have disappeared
or are out of stock.

He turns away from the faces that look like
they want to help him. He lifts his feet
a little higher as if to say I am not old,
foolish, forgotten. He places
a green pepper in his cart, something
to ward off the young scrappy fellow
in an apron who's on to him
that he is lost, confused under fluorescent lights and
Christmas music and moving toward
a force more powerful than any fire.

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*(current member of the GRCC English Department)

Greetings from the 2008 Emeritus Faculty Recipient

Roger De Vries, Chemistry

Picture the moment: It's 3 a.m. and the phone rings. You automatically reach for the RED one. Oops! This time it is the GREEN one. The voice says, "This is President Olivarez. It is a pleasure to inform you that you are being offered the Emeritus Faculty Award. If you choose to accept this assignment all documents will be destroyed and you are totally on your own to carry out the mission."



After the first few minutes of great joy, you realize what an honor this is, but yet, you wonder: Who remembers the first year it was awarded? Who was the recipient? Who can name six other individuals whose names appears on the plaque? Who knows where the plaque is located?

Then your thoughts start to wander to the great number of people involved in the process. You know that someone had to have nominated you, which already gives you a good feeling. That person had to get a large number of documents from Deb DeWent which identify very specific GRCC Raider Values and make comments as required. This would take some time and thought. The Emeritus Faculty Criteria Form can be found online at grcc.edu/provost (Under Resources and Links) or call Deb DeWent at 234-3920.

Your recommendation could make some deserving colleague as surprised and grateful as I am.

Recipients of the Emeritus Award are recognized in the following ways:

- Recognition at the reception for retirees
- Recognition at the employee luncheon as the Crystal Award
- The recipient name will be engraved on the Emeritus Plaque in the front hall of the Main Building
- The recipients name is placed in the Emeritus Faculty section of the GRCC Emeritus Faculty section of the GRCC Catalog
- A Heritage Dining Card, which entitles the recipient to four free annual meals (lunch or dinners)
- A \$15,000 donation in the recipients name to the GRCC Foundation Emeritus Scholarship fund.

I wish to thank everyone who was involved in my being granted this award. A special thanks to Sandy Andrews and Joe Hesse for making the DVD that was shown at the reception. It was a very rewarding week and brought a lot of pleasant memories.

I recommend that you to browse the retiree directory and find someone whom you feel is deserving of this honor, and then take the time and effort to recommend that person. Then, let's ALL gather at the 2009 Retiree Reception to honor the next Emeritus recipient and be reminded of our contributions to making GRCC such a quality institution.

On Losing One's Spouse

Gordon Langereis, Psychology

Two psychological researchers, Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale to describe the degree of stress experienced by an individual as a consequence of various life events.¹ They classified a large number of life changes, both positive and negative, and ranked them according to the degree of severity from most stressful to least stressful. The death of a spouse is listed as the most stressful of all life's experiences and is given a rating of 100.

Having recently lost my dear wife, June, I can personally attest to the validity of their scale and do agree that the death of one's spouse is indeed the most severe and stressful of all of life events. It is a psychologically devastating experience second to none.



June became ill in Florida while we were vacationing on Fort Myers Beach. It progressed to the point where she had to be hospitalized at the Physicians Regional Medical Center (formerly the Cleveland Clinic) in Naples. It became apparent that this was not the place for her and my daughter Colleen, who is a nurse, strongly advised that we should get her back to Grand Rapids. We flew her by special ambulance jet to Spectrum Health at Butterworth where we knew she would receive better care.

I accompanied June on the flight and she took the trip quite well, but after a day at Spectrum, she took a turn for the worse and had to be transferred to the Fred Meijer Intensive Care Unit. She finally had to be placed on a respirator. Despite the best care of doctors and nurses, our earnest prayers and those of countless others, her condition grew progressively worse. Each day was worse than the day before and it became apparent that she would probably not recover. I was at her bedside when she died and I must say I have never had such a harrowing experience. To watch a loved one slowly die is a soul and heart wrenching experience. It is as bad as it gets! Some of you have gone through this, I know, and you in particular can appreciate what I am saying.

June was an exceptionally fine person and we had 56 years of wonderful married life together. She was beautiful, talented, creative, artistic, hard-working, and enthusiastic. Her cheerfulness was contagious and she rarely complained about anything. Throughout her entire life she demonstrated true Christian love and always tried to see the best in others. June never criticized others and would gently reprimand me if I did so. She accepted people for what they were and not what others expected them to be. She was a truly authentic person and there was no pretense about her. What you saw and heard was what you got.

No husband could have found a better wife and no couple could have had a better marriage than we enjoyed together. June brought out the best in me. She accepted me for what I am despite my faults as she did all members of her family. Her unconditional love for me and others was Christ like. Fortunately, there are many people like her who live devout Christian lives and practice what they preach. Thank God for every one of them!

As I write this I'm reminded of Dr. Kubler Ross' theory of death and dying and the five stages one may go through in the dying process.² These five stages--denial, anger, bargaining,

depression, and acceptance--also apply to the stages of grief one may well experience in the illness and death of a loved one. At this point I am in the depression stage and, although I'm trying hard to find peace and relief, it has yet to happen. Unlike the Apostle Paul who wrote in Phillipians: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (4:11), "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (4:70), I must admit that I am certainly not content nor have I yet found peace. The death of June has not shaken my abiding faith in God, but dealing with the earthly reality of my loss continues to be most difficult.

There are so many things that daily remind me of June and frequently induce a flood of tears. Her picture, the many pictures she painted, her clothes, her personal effects, her jewelry, the flowers and shrubs we planted together that are now in bloom, the handicap bedroom and bathroom that my son Paul constructed especially for her are all constant reminders of our life together. I recently viewed a video we had recorded of our 50th wedding anniversary. Seeing June's beautiful smiling face, her attractive figure, hearing her sweet voice, was more than I could handle. I am so pleased to have so many special reminders of our life together, but am so lonely without her. To come home now to an empty house where there is no one to talk with, no one to eat with, no one to sleep with, and no one to make love with is hard to bear.

I was pleased to receive a flock of sympathy cards, many thoughtful letters, flowers, memorial contributions and other sincere expressions of condolence. Those received from my colleagues at GRCC and United States Coast Guard friends were especially appreciated. It is indeed reassuring and comforting to have so many friends and relatives who care. A few of my close Christian friends appropriately reminded me that we do not mourn like those who have no hope and that I should take comfort in the fact that June is in Heaven. I certainly do take comfort in knowing that she is with the Lord, but her absence here with me is a reality that I would have much preferred to postpone.

I never thought that June would precede me in death. A touching poem by Albert Rowswell expresses my feelings about her going first.

SHOULD YOU GO FIRST

Should you go first and I remain
To walk the road alone
I'll live in memory's garden dear,
With happy days we've known
In Spring I'll wait for roses red,
When fades the lilac blue,
In early Fall, when brown leaves call,
I'll catch a glimpse of you.
Should you go first and I remain
For battles to be fought.
Each thing you've touched along the way
Will be a hallowed spot.
I'll hear your voice, I'll see your smile,

Though blindly I may grope,
The memory of your helping hand
Will buoy me on with hope.

Should you go first and I remain
To finish with the scroll,
No length'ning shadows shall creep in
To make this life seem droll
We've known so much of happiness,
We've had our cup of joy.
And memory is one gift of God
That death cannot destroy.
Should you go first and I remain,
One thing I'd have you do;
Walk slowly down that long, lone path,
For soon I'll follow you.
I'll want to know each step you take
That I may walk the same,
For some day down that lonely road
You'll hear me call your name.

Albert Rowswell

My children have been a great help, especially my daughter, Colleen, who is much like her mother. When I was really feeling low and did not care to go on, Colleen said to me, "Dad, you've lost a wife and I'm terribly sorry, but we have lost a mother and we need you now more than ever." This remark quite abruptly made me realize that I was guilty of self-pity and being selfish in my grief. After all, I have three fine children and four wonderful grandchildren and many close relatives and friends. They all miss June as well, and assuredly I should be a better example to them as to how a Christian should more appropriately deal with the death of a loved one. There are so many good reasons to go on. Furthermore, consider the alternative!

There is a poignant lesson in all of this, which is that we should all endeavor to do a better job of expressing our love to others while they are still alive. If you have a husband or wife, children, grandchildren, parents, special friend, or whoever, I would strongly encourage you to tell them how much you love them and do it often. Tell them how wonderful they are, give them a lot of hugs and affection, encourage them, praise them, and help them to become the best they can be. We never know when one of these loved ones will pass away and if we now shower them with love and tenderness, they will be the much better for it and so will we.

If you do this, someday you will be glad you did ---- I GUARANTEE IT!

References

1. Holmes, T. H. & Rahe, R. H. (1967). The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research 11*.
2. Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth, (1969) *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan.

My Role as a Life-Long Learner at GRCC

Chuck Buffham. Music Department

Soon after I retired, I read about the Older Learner Center that had started at Grand Rapids Community College. The part of it that particularly grabbed my interest was the Senior Computer Club which met every Friday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. After coming home from thirty-nine days in the hospital with my head injury I became quite aware that my wife, Sandy, knew next to nothing about the computer. Therefore, this computer club seemed to me a good way for her to get together with others “in the same boat.” This club was just what was needed, especially since it was only a ten minute walk from our house to the ATC where club sessions were held. As I went with her for her first visit, I noticed that there was a place for me there as well. Helping others in the club learn this and that about the computer and the Internet seemed like a natural thing for me to do.

After a few once-a-month teaching sessions with GRCC faculty sharing their knowledge of things that could be done on the computer, I asked program director, Mike Faber, if he would be interested in having me show other club members how I write music on a computer. Did I teach them how to do it? Of course not, but I did install the software and have them listen to some of the music that I had composed and arranged. They were very interested, but commented that the music did not express feelings as well as live music does. I agreed with them on that. When music is played on a computer, the computer is too dumb to make mistakes. There is no “plot” to the event. Mistakes make the performances more interesting. Perfection can be a bit “boring.”

Since the time of that initial music computer session I have become not only an active club member, but have volunteered my time as a club facilitator. In this role, I have enjoyed being a liaison between the college and members of the club. I assist club members at weekly sessions by answering questions like “Where do I go to get this?” “Give me directions to that,” and the many other things that they want to know.

A few years back, the name of the club was changed from Senior Computer Club to simply the Computer Club. This was done to place the emphasis less on “Older Learners” and more on the value of “Life-Long-Learning.” This was a welcome change for me. I was thinking of suggesting that it could be changed to the “Been Young a Long Time Learners.” Somehow that did not take hold of anyone’s mind.

It is interesting to take note of the people who take advantage of this club. Many enjoy not only learning about computers, but the social interaction that the club affords. Others are people who have children and grandchildren who live a significant distance away, and appreciate the opportunity to e-mail and exchange pictures via the Internet with these loved ones. I too appreciate this because one of my grandchildren lives with her mother and stepfather in Las Vegas, Nevada.

In addition to the computer club, the Older Learner Center offers a number of life enrichment and life-long learning opportunities including a several fitness, exercise, and nutrition classes; grandparents raising grandchildren educational support groups; a senior leadership program; and a life history club. The Life History Club is a group that was formed to help individuals to write

their life's story. I am also a member and co-facilitator of this group. As a member of this group, I have found my fellow participants to be very pleasant, and their life stories are intriguing to hear. The group meets once every three months from 1:00 to 3:00 PM on the second Tuesday of January, April, July, and October.

Being a senior citizen has become a part of my life that I still am working to understand in myself as well as in others. Many of us find ourselves at a loss in terms of socializing with others; particularly talking about what's going on in our lives. This leads many older individuals to make appointments with their doctors just to talk. In these terms I find myself pleased to realize how beneficial Older Learner Center programming is, especially in light of high medical costs today. The life-long learners of the Older Learner Center share with each other all kinds of helpful hints, and information on the services available to help them when certain needs arise. When I think of how this information gets passed along, the benefits multiply.

I am also involved in a number of area music groups including the Socialaires, a swing band playing the music of the 30's and 40's. If you are interested in checking us out we play from 1:00 to 3:00 PM each Thursday afternoon at the West Side Complex for social dancing. We also play once a month on the fourth Tuesday at the Northview Senior Citizens Center. Occasionally, some of the life-long learners of the Older Learner Center show up and enjoy participation at these dance sessions.

As director of the Older Learner Center, Mike Faber is very much appreciated. He knows when to lead, when to listen, and when to "run with the ball." The Older Learner Center provides retirees like you and me with a wide range of life-long learning and potential volunteer opportunities. Information on the programs and activities of the Older Learner Center is available online at grcc.edu/olc or by calling (616) 234-3483.

Retirees' Monthly Breakfast Schedule

We will meet at 9:00 at The Breakfast Nook, corner of Plainfield and Fuller on the following dates: Please join the conversation.

July 24

August 28

September 25

October 30

November 27

December – no breakfast gathering

We would like to have a retirees potluck picnic at a local park, perhaps September would work. If you would be willing to help with the planning for such an event, please contact Keith Longberg at keithlong@hotmail.com.

I Almost Cut My Hair

By Philip Jung, Philosophy, English

Actually, my wife Joni cuts my hair, what's left of it. She's been doing it since July of 1967. But that's a story better left untold. This one's about another subject altogether. It's about betrayal. Temptation. The fallibility of a die-hard loyalist. It's much more interesting stuff than a haircut any day.



"I Almost Cut My Hair" is the title of a song written by David Crosby and performed by him as a member of the band Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young back in 1970 or so. In it the hippie Crosby breathed a sigh of relief over having resisted the impulse to cut his very long and frizzy "freak flag." I've thought of that song's title any number of times since first succumbing to the urge to betray the one thing I had worked hard for over my thirty-four year career – not counting the seventeen years of preparation and training preceding those decades – to achieve. Namely, retirement.

When I undertook retirement in May of 2002, a month before my 57th birthday, I decided to make it not an escape from work but my next career. My aim was to become so adept at it that when anyone would ask me, as countless people subsequently have, "What do you do in retirement?" I'd be able to answer like Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* when asked what he was rebelling against: "Whaddaya got?" Socializing, discoursing, writing, reading, building, herb gardening, traveling, biking, fishing, working out. Doing nothing at all. There is a place in this career for pure idleness, don't you know. In short, I wanted to do a little of everything and a bit of nothing too. And by and large that's what I've done.

But there was a time when I transgressed this noble set of enterprises, and another – I hope the last – when I came close. The first occurred in January of '03, only seven months after leaving CC. The thought occurred to me that it might be fun to spend some time working in a bookstore, so when a prominent locally owned establishment announced that it was to open a new store in my West Side neck of the woods the following April, I thought it would be a great opportunity to be around books, to handle a lot of books and read them too, and to spend some time talking with other people who like to read books, and I'd get paid for it. The way I used to be able to talk about ideas and books with colleagues and students who also valued those things – and get paid for it. So I applied for part-time work, took a surprisingly comprehensive test on literature and music, passed with flying colors, and was hired.

Work began in April with the unpacking and shelving of books, and with it my education began. I was in charge of stacking various popular genres such as romance, crime, and horror novels – thousands of them with unfamiliar authors' names and strange titles and bizarre cover pictures. I'd read some representative works in these genres when I taught the popular arts portion of Humanities 270 over fifteen years and never liked any of them, though I always finished them and always tried to evaluate them on their merits rather than on my taste. Along with the fun of handling so many books, I also had the pleasure of meeting and talking with a number of people younger than myself, all bibliophiles, including the store owners, managers, and newly hired staffers.

But along with these enjoyments, there was also the travail of receiving instruction in new computerese to assist in looking up Books in Print, in making special orders for customers from the store's wholesalers, in locating titles and authors from sketchy information provided by curious phoners as well as in-store customers, and in seeking availability of books. On top of that, we had to learn the same kinds of things for music ranging from classical to hip-hop to "world beat." But all this was nothing compared to having to learn to operate the cash registers.

When I was in high school and college I worked at fast food restaurants and clothing stores and was a whiz at ringing sales up on the old cash registers with their delightful taps and chings and ka-dings and the black numbers on white square chips that sprang up and dropped and changed with every new tap of a key. Now you have to be a technogeek or a youngster (there: that word shows my age, doesn't it?) to be able to master these new computerized machines. (I almost said newfangled machines.) There were fully 25 different combinations of coded keys to push depending on the type of purchase a customer made, and you had to remember each instantaneously in order to not hold up the line or try a customer's patience. These included combinations for regular book purchases, newspaper and periodical purchases, purchases with gift cards or discount coupons or special teacher discounts for classroom orders or discounts for symphony members, for calendars and games and DVDs, CDs, puzzles, gnomes, greeting cards, you name it. That's all in addition to the returns and special order forms and employee discounts which required their own special forms.

Well, after a month of sorting and stacking books and, eventually, CDs, as well as studying computerese and memorizing, not always successfully, the register combinations, the store opened. I was put in charge of the philosophy, religious, and inspirational sections, which means I had the responsibility of seeing that books were neatly lined up and in categorical and alphabetical order, that the shelves were full, and that new orders were made to replace sold-out titles. I could also put in orders for new titles that I thought, from my own readings or from impressive reviews, would be of interest to our clientele. These things I was more than happy to do; unfortunately, there was only about a half hour a day when this work could be done – if I was lucky. I signed on to work only 20 hours a week, two days of eight hours and one of four. Most of my time was spent at the registers, ringing up sales using my imperfect memory of the keyboard and the aforementioned combinations, often asking a younger associate or the manager for help, and keeping the counter area clean and orderly. Some of the time was spent at computers looking up titles for customers, leading them to books in specific sections, or figuring out how to special order for them. Answering telephones. Asking everyone who was browsing if I could help. And I enjoyed all of it.

There were only two problems. One was that my main fantasy upon applying for the job – that I would be able to talk books with the customers, perhaps make recommendations, discuss mutually read works, or simply listen and learn from them about works that I might enjoy – could not be realized in a busy store with many customers in a hurry. The longest I was able to speak with someone was about five minutes, about boxing. Another time I conversed for several minutes about model trains. That was pretty much it for conversations with customers.

But the bigger problem was that as late April approached Joni and I were looking forward to an impending trip to Connecticut to see our son Joe in a play at UConn, where he was an MFA student. I began to see a conflict between work, even part time, and the freedom I had had to

simply leave on trips without accountability to anyone – owners, managers, and fellow employees. To go on a week's or a month's trip I'd now have to write for a leave well in advance and make sure all my hours were covered by others, and that would add complications to a lifestyle I'd become used to, one that allowed me almost unqualified freedom. It's then that I realized, with a sinking heart, that I'd betrayed the lofty goals of my retirement. There were only two honorable things to do, of course: 1) confess my error in judgment to my manager, which I promptly did in a hand-delivered letter of resignation and two weeks' notice; and 2) to go on my trip with Joni and a clear conscience.

Since that lamentable lapse of two months, I've traveled widely coast to coast, to Europe and to Asia, written a book of short stories (2004) and had it published (2005), traveled for readings, engaged in volunteer activities, done everything and nothing – in short, lived my retirement to the fullest.

Then came the fall of 2007. And a call. A new bookstore was to open downtown on Fountain Street, and I was asked if I'd be willing to help. So I jumped at the chance to once again play around with books, to box old remainders from the previous store and tote the boxes downstairs and set up shelves and stack them, to engage in some grunt work and to also be able to once again touch, fondle, caress a seemingly endless number of books both paperback and cloth bound, slick and embossed and new and solid and fresh smelling. I would have done this work for free, even told that to Tim, the manager – the same fine gentleman that was at the Alpine Ave. store – but, of course, he merely smiled. Then when the set-up work was almost finished, he asked me if I might help a bit during the first couple of weeks after the opening until full staffing needs were met. I hesitated a moment. I'd been able to come and go as I pleased during the set-up, and I generally chose to work full days, though occasionally I'd leave early. Now I'd have to face regular hours. Well, I thought, glancing at my own book on a face-out shelf, it's only temporary. I agreed.

After a successful opening, my second with the company, I enjoyed a dream job. It was downtown, the hours were 11-3, four days a week at first, and I didn't even have to punch in. I just kept track of my hours and reported them after two weeks. I didn't have to use the registers or computers, didn't have to take orders or do research; I think Tim kindly spared me the embarrassment of having to face my incompetence in these matters. All I had to do was greet people, talk with them, help them find books in the shelves, make suggestions for their own pleasure or for gifts, discuss the merits of crossword books or plastic puzzles, straighten shelves, sometimes rearrange them. I spoke with distinguished people, the mayor, for instance, high powered attorneys, judges, and physicians as well as students, office workers, and even some street people. So I stayed a third week. And then a fourth. And then... and then a voice started whispering to me gently. A cooing sound. Then it spoke. At the store and at home. It spoke garbled sounds and sometimes it growled. And I knew whose voice it was.

It was the voice of my retirement. The voice of a lover betrayed. Sputtering. Plaintive. Angry. Bewildered. Hurt. I told Tim. A gentleman, he understood. I worked two more days and left my friends there and walked outside into the cool early December air and looked forward to my impending trip to New York. Attend a writers conference, listen to poets and novelists, walk Central Park north to south, visit every museum on Fifth Avenue and Central Park West. Be joined by Joni and see some plays, including my son's. Sit in a deli and do nothing but nurse a cup of coffee. Let my hair, what remains of it, grow long.

Thoughts about Shampoo, Soap, Cereal, Schools and Scholarships

By Keith Longberg, English Department



On a recent trip I forgot to pack shampoo. Well, I could use soap. Soap? Just plain soap? *You can't wash your hair with soap*, a wee voice inside of me whispers. Why not? *Well, you can't just wash your hair with soap; it will wreck your hair!* Wreck my hair? It's already wrecked, and I don't have all that much of it left anyway. *Well, you can't use soap. Just don't do that!* the voice insists.

At my destination I visit the newly opened drug store on the corner near my daughter's house. Everything is new in that part of Texas, the houses, the stores, (all of them franchise operations), the schools, the streets, all of it seems new. Probably fifteen or twenty years ago, or less, there was nothing there except windblown brush, a few contented snakes, lizards, horned toads, tumbleweed and lots of dust. I wander through the aisles of the new store looking for shampoo. It's not just shampoo. It's shampoos by the dozens, literally. It depends on what kind of hair you have: frizzy, dry, unmanageable, damaged, rebellious, lifted, layered, volumized, highlighted, shiny, balanced. There are other possibilities. I don't know what kind of hair I have. Maybe my hair is just normal?

I read some more bottles. Shampoos, according to the information on the labels, apparently do a lot more for you than just give you clean hair. I pull out a pad of paper from my shirt and a pen and jot down some of the benefits the various shampoos promise to deliver: "Reveal your intensity!" "Need a little oomph?" "Slip into something silky." "Turn up the lights." "I'm so good, I'll put clean thoughts in your head." (Wow!) "I'm deliciously bent and so is your hair." "Cleaning so deep it makes you tingly all over." "I'm a moisture packed multi-tasker." "If you love me now, you'll love me New!" "A love potion for bad hair break-ups." "Get a lift in all the right places." "The power will go straight to your head." "Turn on the heat, turn on the shine." Just imagine all the creative minds that came up with this wacko stuff... for shampoo!

In a previous life, it seems, I wrote advertising and promotional copy for various products for both print and electronic media for an advertising company. Most of my accounts were in the food industry: a cereal company, a regional producer of canned goods, a national cookie company, a huge dairy. One day a rep from a cereal company brought me a plain white box of what he said was cereal for me to promote, and he gave me a sheet of descriptive information about the product. There was lots of advertisement money available. "What's it called?" I asked. "You tell us!" he said. "You mean you want us to give it a name?" "Yes, that would be good." "OK, I'll work on it."

I did work on it. I figured flakes were flakes, but I studied the information supplied by the manufacturer and ate the flakes with my usual banana and soy milk. It was a "multi-grain" product. It was OK. I came up with three possible brand names, wrote three sets of copy for the box and had the art department work their magic on three boxes. I prepared the strategy and

copy for a full ad program: magazine and newspaper ads, news releases, billboards, as well as a series of sixteen radio and TV spots. I made a presentation to the company about the advertising campaign, and explained my thinking on the three brand names I suggested for the product.

Within a couple weeks I had approval from the manufacturer to start spending ad money for one of the brand names I had suggested: “Surprize” cereal. I had deliberately misspelled the word on the grounds that that might produce some media buzz, and kids might get a kick out of it. Months later most of the ads and promotional material had been published in various media.

Shopping for shampoo made me think about all this now, so many years later. I conclude that, although it sounds crazy, some of the copy from the shampoo bottles listed above would have worked just as well on the cereal I promoted: “Need a little oomph?” “Get a lift in all the right places.” I don’t remember now what I said about the cereal, but I know I wasn’t imaginative enough to say it would give someone a “lift in all the right places,” or give them “clean thoughts.”

Some of the products I promoted, I actually took home and tried out. That cereal was about like any other cereal as far as I could tell. The world doesn’t really need another brand of flakes, of course. One time I took home a clear bottle of cooking oil (no name on it, of course). Later my wife told me not to bring any more of it home. “Why not?” “You can’t even fry an egg in it,” she told me. I thought about people on welfare who might be running out to buy the stuff because I had touted it so highly.

I tend to be very decisive, but after looking over the amazing variety of shampoos available in the store, I didn’t buy any. I have lots of it home, and I would be back home soon. I don’t have all that much hair, and I don’t have to look at it anyway. I used soap. Soap? A bar of green soap, and now, writing this little piece, I wish I had kept the wrapper so I could see if there were any creative benefits I might soon realize. Will it “reveal my intensity?” Give me “clean thoughts?” “A lift in the right places?” No. You can’t believe advertising pitches. There’s a good chance that the person who wrote the copy had never used the product and knew nothing about it at all.

The incredible variety of choices for any given product, shampoo, toothpaste, cereal, even automobiles, must amount to an amazing amount of duplication and inefficiency in the production stream. How much would a new car cost without the wide choices of makes and models available? If there were just, say, three or four different choices, eliminating most of the engineering and tooling for the many varieties available, a new car might cost half what it does now.

But there is a logic to all the unnecessary varieties of any given product. If you made, say, just one fantastic brand of cereal, the best cereal available, and four other manufacturers each produced a dozen different brands, your one product would be competing against forty eight other brands on the shelf. With odds like that, you are not likely to stay in business long. To compete in the market you need to load the shelves with your many brands even if they all are practically the same stuff with different names and packaging. It’s not efficient, but it works. The “planned economy” of the Soviet Union certainly didn’t work.

Recently I have been working on promotional strategy and copy to raise contributions from a broad base of possible donors: foundations, corporations, educational and other professionals, municipal employees, and the general public for a new program to fund scholarships to GRCC

that will be available for “at risk” sixth grade elementary students when they graduate from high school. It’s a long-term plan to keep kids in school, to promote hope and motivation for students who need much help. Lots of kids don’t have much hope and therefore not much motivation either. I believe it’s the root cause of a large share of the dropout problem. I don’t think kids who drop out are dumb. Under different circumstances with good role models, mentors, better support, they would do just fine in school. Instead they make poor choices which limit their chances for a good productive future. In some urban, or urban-like, cities a third of a typical graduating class has dropped out. Possibly another third has transferred out, and maybe only a quarter of that class of students is actually graduating, a few still working at it, but you are not likely to read the facts on all this in the press. Why not? It’s important, isn’t it? Yes, of course, and it’s newsworthy too. But there are two conditions which effectively prevent the true figures of student retention, performance, and graduation in a system from being published. Local news sources are not doing investigative reporting, and school administrators in many districts regard such facts as proprietary information, not public information. It is closely held, and if you try to get this information, an administrator is likely to get very defensive, and may even ask you not to take it to the press, saying, “It could be very bad for me.” Also there are ways to offer figures that obscure or only partially reflect reality. If a system is graduating only a quarter of a class of students, it is no wonder administrators are willing to take drastic steps to increase graduation rates, never mind attendance or performance.

Students don’t transfer out of a system primarily for convenience. They, or most likely their parents or guardians, search for a system where the prevailing culture is one of achievement and success (not just graduation), rather than where students perform below grade level and where drop-outs are common. Who among us wouldn’t help our children do that? A recent article about reading scores touted “increased scores.” Could the scores have increased because those students who were reading below grade level had left the system? Why not give the facts on how many students are reading at, or above, their grade level? Has that increased? That would be meaningful information.

When drop-outs and transfer-outs, walk out the door, millions of tax dollars likely leave with them. This is money that will never be on the negotiating table. You would think this would be the highest priority concern of the teacher’s union as well as the Board. If this continues, it will ultimately prove to be ruinous to the public schools and highly costly to taxpayers. Teachers will be increasingly dissatisfied with their contracts, retiring teachers will not be replaced, and more schools will close.

The focus of both a teachers’ union and a school board should be on working together harmoniously to prevent students from dropping out or transferring out, and increasing the percentage of students who are performing at or above grade level in the various disciplines. When that doesn’t happen, students and tax payers are not well served.

How can it be done? Here’s a partial list of what is needed: 1. We need an effective program to entice parents and guardians to be more interested and involved in their children’s education. 2. Students need mentors. 3. They need a steady stream of enrichment experiences as they go through school that will show them a world of opportunities for educated people that they know

nothing about. 4. The curriculum needs to be made more interesting and relevant, and in some instances, more challenging. 5. Teachers who make such changes should be recognized and rewarded. 6. We need to follow up students who do drop out. When they walk out the door, they are off the books and quickly forgotten. The message is that the schools don't care if they are there or not, and the message becomes pervasive. We need to talk with students who drop out and get their stories. What went wrong? What could have helped them? When? Is there any way the schools could still provide some help for them? These conversations don't happen now, but if someone were willing to do the grunt work to have them, we might be learn something, and the message would get to students that someone really does care if they are in school or not.. This writer's offer to do this study for the GRPS, made twice, has never produced a response. Apparently no one sees the value of doing this work.

I certainly do not minimize the difficulties that would be involved in implementing these suggestions. It will take long and hard work by seriously dedicated professionals to implement the suggested programs to address these needs. I believe a teachers' union, in addition to negotiating contracts, grievances, etc. should also take on the roll of a professional organization and pursue work on some of these difficult issues. It would probably need to be done largely by voluntary labor. I know of no better way for a teacher's union to gain respect and support in any community. The union has a vested interest in preventing students from dropping out or transferring out, as that would keep more money on the table. Some relatively easy systemic changes by administrative fiat, such as changing from a semester to a term schedule can be made, and that may convince some people that "something is being done," but dealing effectively with school dropouts and transfer outs cannot be corrected that way. The solutions will be labor intensive and will take much hard work over several years.

I take my work of designing a strategy to keep kids in school and promoting it for the GRCC Foundation, voluntary and unofficial as it is, very seriously. It is great at this stage of my life not to be marketing flakes or canned goods, cookies, or dairy products. I feel what I am doing meets a definite and critical need, and it's very important. It is a "product" about which I can be truly honest and passionate. It is called "The Great Expectations Scholarship Program," and it can make a difference in the lives of students. It can benefit our community in important ways in the future. I know, of course, that one scholarship program that will help kids stay in school is just a small piece of the comprehensive program that needs to be implemented to save our students and schools, but it is a start, and it's long overdue. Please look for more complete information about this program in the next issue of the Quarterly, the October issue. I urge you to consider supporting it because we all have a vested interest in keeping students in our community in school.

The Reading Room

Recommended by Till Peters:

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong, by James W. Loewen, Simon & Schuster Publishers, 1995, 376 pp. incl. notes and appendix.

This book reports on the author's study of twelve high-school history textbooks and the important distortions of American history that they present. He discusses how we have made heroes out of many historical figures to the extent that "...we cannot think straight about them." Examples include Helen Keller (who was a radical socialist who "...sang the praises of the new communist nation" after the Russian Revolution), and Woodrow Wilson (who was a virulent racist who segregated the federal workforce, and a militant who used American troops to intervene in Latin America at least 16 times during his Presidency, and who actually invaded Russia in 1918!). He devotes entire chapters to the half-truths, distortions, omissions, and outright lies that surround the story of Columbus, and that of the "Pilgrims." He talks about the "invisibility of racism" as well as the "invisibility of antiracism" in American History textbooks. He discusses the "disappearance of the recent past," and then talks about the results of teaching history as we do and how we might change that for the better. This book is clearly a "must read" for teachers of American history and for anyone interested in that subject.

Recommended by Phil Jung:

***Warhol* by David Bourdon**

I bought this at in the new GR Art Museum's bookstore and gift shop, one of many texts there in conjunction with the Warhol exhibit. This is a comprehensive book on the life, art, and times of perhaps the most influential artist of the second half of the 20th Century. Short on psychological insights, it's full of details and wonderful representations of images from Warhol's college years and his early years in advertising design through his decades of paintings, silkscreens, and filmmaking. Seemingly a detached, impersonal individual who merely used his friends and hangers-on for his own purposes – namely the achievement of wealth and fame – Warhol isn't a particularly sympathetic person. But I sure developed a deeper appreciation of his art and accomplishments through this tome.

***The Whole Shebang: A State of the Universe(s) Report* by Timothy Ferris**

Timothy Ferris is a writer intent on making the disciplines of physics, astrophysics, and cosmology comprehensible to a wide audience, including old-school humanists such as I. This is a comprehensive review of these fields, though the book was published in 1997. Much has been discovered since then, of course. Still, most of the details of the information in this book is new to most of us, and it provides a very helpful groundwork for reading updated materials. I think it's more readable and accessible, as well as more exuberantly written than *A Brief History of Time*.

***The Third Culture: Behind the Scientific Revolution*, by John Brockman**

This is a superb collection of reflections on evolution, the mind/brain, and the cosmos that incorporates evolutionary biology, genetics, cognitive science, astrophysics, quantum physics, cosmology, neuroscience, and relations among these complex, self-organizing systems. Contemporary science is revealing amazing evidence of relationships among cells, organisms, and the universe that not only speaks but hollers to my own sense of the unity of things despite their seeming diversity and chaos. This book consists on reflections in their respective fields by the new type of intellectual – the “third culture” that C.P. Snow predicted: scientists and philosophers of science who are also good writers and eloquent spokespersons in their fields. Among them are Stephen Jay Gould, Steven Pinker, Martin Rees, Daniel Dennett, Francisco Varela, Paul Davies, Richard Dawkins, and Murray Gell-Mann. This book is a booming affirmation of a world that is self-organizing and in which all properties of things are relational, to paraphrase a statement by Lee Smolin. It’s something that this lifetime humanist steeped in Nietzsche has found exhilarating.

Recommended by Keith Longberg:

***“Better; A Surgeon’s Notes on Performance”* by Atul Gawande**

© February 2008, 273 pages.

The author, a surgeon, focuses is on how we can become better at what we do, whatever that may be, and he uses examples from his own work to illustrate this. His writing is easy to read and understand, and the concepts he raises are clearly illustrated with fascinating facts and examples. I found this book interesting and valuable, and I recommend it.

***“Where Have All the Leaders Gone?”* Lee Iacocca (with Catherine Whitney)**

©2007, 275 pages.

Iacocca offers a number of suggestions which are appropriate for seniors. He says to **“Stay connected.”** Retirement is not a time to burn bridges, hole up in our digs and cut ourselves off from our former interests and contacts. Reach out, keep expanding your world; there’s no better time in life to do it. He says we should make an effort to **“Give something back.”** Others have undoubtedly helped all of us in many ways. The challenge for seniors is to find or create a way to do that with the knowledge and skills you have, and then have the gumption to do it.

Lee also advises that we **“Get off the golf course and DO something.”** That’s easy for me. I regard golf as a huge waste of time... except for the 19th hole. Lee has set up a foundation that is promoting research to find a cure for diabetes. This is fast, easy reading, and Iacocca is blunt, plain spoken, and interesting.

***Shakespeare’s Wife*, by Germaine Greer**

© 2007, 406 pages.

This is a book of serious scholarship, obviously based on meticulous research into primary sources, including a broad selection of published literary works of the period. This is a book for the person who is a patient reader and keenly interested in The Bard and in the society he lived and wrote in.

Years ago when I taught senior English at Union High School, I taught several of Shakespeare's plays. From this book I've learned that Shakespeare was just eighteen years old when he married his wife, who was pregnant. That bit of information just might have humanized Shakespeare and captured the attention of my students. His wife was at least eight years older than he was. Shakespeare's father was a "glover." (He made gloves.) At that time, animal skins were treated so the leather would be pliable by soaking them in large tubs of urine for an extended period of time. The boy genius, William, fortunately decided against taking up the family business, and we are all so much indebted to him for that. I found the book informative although some of the historical detail did get a bit tedious, a small price to pay for the valuable experience.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, by L Frank Baum

© 1900. 267 pages, 100th Anniversary Edition, Books of Wonder, HarperCollins

This 100th Anniversary edition is a lavish facsimile of the rare first edition, and it contains all 24 of W.W. Denslow's original color plates, the colorful pictorial binding, and the 130 two-color illustrations of the original publication. Page edges are gold and there is a green silk ribbon. If there are children in your life, this gorgeous heirloom-quality edition of this classic book would make a wonderful gift for a birthday or other special occasions.

The Summer Without Rain

By Kim Winegarden

In a heat that keeps children indoors
and the yellow cat alaze under the spirea,
the sparrow follows the grace-arc
of the lawn sprinkler all summer
into the puddle made just deep enough
inside a circle of cracked concrete
on the sizzling sidewalk outside my front door.

A family of sparrows follows.
They line up, one small bird behind the other—
without a bully in the flock—
for their dip in the bowl of water,
wings fanned and flashing a bargain that the heat of summer
will not singe their flight.

I watch this semblance of order, made more solemn
by the shared relief
that often comes with water
while a clan of farmers, just miles from here,
stand like stalks in a corn field of dried and cracked furrows
in the summer without rain.

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At Eight

By Kim Winegarden

The boy at the back of the room watches
the dragon eye fish in the aquarium on the counter next to him
swim around in the tank while his teacher explains
multiplication tables and division to the class.

The boy is fascinated by this orange water choir,
their rhythm of movement that almost
lulls him to sleep, the slight wave of water and
the choreography of tail fins when the fish
turn all at once and round out the corner of the glass.

The hum of the air filter almost carries the boy's mind
away from how hungry he is, away from his house,
a low rent bowl with cracked windows
and a single loaf of bread.

Not surprise but suspense swallows the boy
when the smallest fish in the tank gulps
from its own build up of waste,
arches its back and turns belly up
with its black telescope eye.

When the teacher calls on the boy to answer a question
he can't remember or see with his myopic eyes
if it is multiplication or division she's doing at the board;
he is so used to dividing the loaf of bread from the cupboard
with the children he doesn't recognize
who multiply inside his house at night.
He doesn't know how to answer the teacher when she asks
how to carry the number left over.

This bright boy is embodied by the aquarium
and the welt of sadness that runs straight to his heart
with no distance in between.
At recess the boy will swing his strong legs
to the side of the desk and on the playground,
while the fat girl with glasses points a finger at him,
build up in his body a healthy toxin of anger
into the full force of poetry
that will in time save his soul.

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