



**Third Edition
July 2005**

Retirees' Quarterly



www.grcc.edu

Editors' Note:

The Second Edition of our *GRCC Retiree's Quarterly* with its colorful cover was mailed to over 250 retired faculty and staff of the college. The cover was the work of the staff of the Printing Services and we thank them for it. We also thank Dr. Olivarez for his support in making this publication possible. And then there are those retirees who took the time to sit down and share something of their lives and interests with the rest of us. Without their cooperation we would have no such publication, and we thank them for their work.

This, our Third Edition, has attracted some new writers, and that is good to see. We encourage others to participate in future editions. A couple people have said they "Can't write." We are not buying that. This isn't the *New Yorker*, after all. We want to get those personal stories of your activities and interests that you freely swap with your friends. Those are the good ones. Please share them with your former colleagues. Someone has said there is too much "I" in the publication. Well, we are specifically encouraging people to write personal essays, personal stories, or express their own opinions so the use of the first person pronoun is most appropriate. Avoiding it would be stilted and artificial.

Several people have asked for a copy of the First Edition of the *Retirees Quarterly* which was published in very limited numbers in January. We have sent those as requested, but only one or two copies are left. If enough of you request a copy of our first edition, we will see if the college will reprint it and mail it to those who request it. We promise nothing at this point, but your request for it is the first step. Otherwise those limited First Edition *Retirees' Quarterlies* could eventually cost a mint on ebay as collectors' items.

Please note the final line in the article by Jan Simpson, page 31. Your written answer to her cogent question will be appropriate material for our forth edition which will be published in October. Please send it! We depend on your cooperation. It's most convenient for us if you send your article to us by email, but you can send it by snail mail, carrier pigeon, pony express, dog sled, whatever, in any format you wish, handwritten, or typewritten. We will be happy to receive it and share it with your former colleagues. There is an uncommon amount of vitality and activity in our group, and the stories you share help to strengthen our connection with each other and with the college community as well.

PLEASE NOTE!

Please mark your calendar for the next deadline for copy: September 15th

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THE MONTHLY GOLDEN RAIDER BREAKFASTS

are scheduled for the next three months in the Student Community Center Multipurpose Room—adjacent to the Quiet Cafe.

- **8:30-10:00 a.m.**

- **Parking is in the ramp next door (Bostwick Parking Ramp).
Parking has NOT been a problem on these Friday events.**

- **Golden Raider Breakfast Special is just \$5.00**

- **PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR with these dates:**
 - Friday, June 24, 2005**
 - Friday, July 29, 2005**
 - Friday, August 26, 2005**

My Backyard Sculpture Doesn't "Mean" Anything, It Just IS!

by **Philip Jung**, English

It's strange and amusing sometimes, this human adventure, even in its humdrum predictability, its drab mundaneness. You never know what's going to happen, whether it's following the Pistons or sitting on your own porch.

That's where my wife Joni and I were – on the open porch attached to the side of our house, hidden from the front walk seventy-five feet across our front yard by a tall rhododendron plant, a full azalea bush bright with pink blossoms, and a couple of tall but well-trimmed yews. From our comfortable metal chairs we could survey the pedestrians on the sidewalk and the street with its light traffic to my south without being seen, and we could enjoy the nine-foot tall abstract steel sculpture in my back yard slightly to the north.

I bought the sculpture with part of the incentive money the college paid me to retire early three years ago and set it where we could enjoy it from any vantage in our back yard and where observant strollers could see it from the front walk. When the artist, Johnny Blue, from Fennville, installed it in the late spring of 2002, I regarded its placement as an act of sharing with strangers, not as a measure to show off my love of sculpture. The piece is nine feet at its highest, bronze colored, its smooth surface playfully lined with reddish dribbles and dull motley weather-induced patterns that give it a liveliness fully complementing its overall design. It's an untitled work that consists of two shafts intersecting at some invisible point – invisible because where the intersection takes place is a space occupied by a form like a backward lower case "e". One of the shafts is a foot or more longer than the other, and both taper downward so that it seems that they penetrate the earth. When I look at the piece I can't help but think of a dazzling energy. When he saw it for the first time, my good friend Keith Longberg said it made him think of cosmic communication, of the flow of ideas into cyberspace. I can't help but imagine that Johnny Blue would happily approve of these enthusiastic interpretations.

Joni and I were engaged as usual in ordinary conversation when we heard raised voices coming from the front sidewalk and peered past the azalea to see a couple in their thirties stopped and gesturing. Their voices were as expressive as their arms were animated.

"But don't you like it?" asked the woman as they gazed across the expanse of yard at the sculpture.

"Sure. I think it's really neat," said the man, probably her husband.

"Well, why do you laugh at it in that way then?"

"What way?"

"Derision. Your laugh is derisive."

I loved her vocabulary. You don't often hear a word like derisive thrown out on a sidewalk.

"Well, I like it," the man said. "But I don't know what it is."

“It’s a sculpture,” the woman said in a needling tone.

“Yeah, I know it’s a sculpture,” he said, arms flailing. “But what’s it supposed to mean? I don’t know what it means!”

I wanted to shout: “What do you want it to mean?” But after thirty-eight years of marriage, Joni anticipated my impertinence and prevented me from embarrassing myself with a sharp “Phil!”

A couple of months earlier, late February, I spent parts of three consecutive days strolling through and under and along Christo’s Gates exhibit – 7600 steel and fabric structures along 26 miles of walkways – in New York’s Central Park with thousands of other people of all kinds and ages and stations and statuses. On the first day there was old snow in the flat places and mud and ice, and there was the orange of the fabric and the steel supports against the deep blue sky and the encompassing sunshine. The gay loose fabric blew freely in the strong breeze, and you could stand beneath one in a seemingly endless row of curtained structures and see the line of colorful orange motion and raise your eyes and see just one curtain above you dancing against its azure background, the steel supports, because they shared the orangeness of the fabric, seemingly as fluid as the fabric’s motion, as sensuous as the nectar of the fruit bearing the sweet color’s name.

The next day, Thursday, was cloudy and cold and the park lay under several inches of fresh snow. The damp air and penetrating wind didn’t discourage the crowds, however, because now you could see that refreshing orange against clean snow, however trampled. At one point five schoolboys, probably sixth graders, approached me and said excitedly, “Hey Mister – (“Mister”?) – do you like these sculptures?” Seeing their excitement changed to a guarded reserve, as if prepared for anything, including vitriol, I quickly decided to unguard my own enthusiasm:

“Yes,” I answered. But I heightened my simple response with a raised voice and a wide-eyed ardency that they themselves might have displayed if asked whether they liked the new chrome-plated motorized three-wheeled scooter they just spotted under a Christmas tree. “Yes!” I shouted, and instantly they reciprocated my ardor with the expected reaction. As my terse little affirmation rang out their eyes darted to each other’s lively faces and they simultaneously jumped and shot their fists in the air as if celebrating the sacking of a star quarterback on a game’s crucial final play and they cried out “Yes-s-s!” and turned and began to run toward a waiting adult, two of them shouting thanks to me between whoops of glee.

On the third day I walked the park’s paths again, this time with my son Joe, on another cold day that saw abrupt changes of sunshine and cloudiness. We walked the entire southern two-thirds of the park, from its east to its west boundaries and back, and this time I bought a lovely poster of The Gates, which I’ve since matted and framed. The next day, a Saturday, the day before the exhibit was to end, I returned to the southeast corner just to see the crowds. And they were dense indeed; you could hardly walk anywhere near the place.

At the park I heard very few remarks critical of the exhibit among the throngs passing by or crowding the shops and tables laden with posters, t-shirts, caps, and other souvenirs. None of the many visitors bemoaned the lack of clear meaning as they set up expensive photography equipment or measured potential angles with their store-bought disposables. What the thousands did was walk under as many of the

7600 gates as they could, marveling at the freshness of orange in stark urban February and the audacity of a visionary in bringing those myriads together for a two-week period. And perhaps as they strolled and snapped their pictures and enjoyed the company of ten thousand other strollers, the thought occurred to them that no one ever again – ever! – would share their experience.

Now on our porch Joni and I talked about the anomaly of people in this age of extreme individualism and aggressive democracy wanting to be told the meaning of a sculpture – or painting or poem or dance, for that matter – that was created for the viewer to relate to individually and subjectively. We constantly hear of people making such claims as, “I can think for myself. I don’t need Big Government or politicians or priests or judges or movie stars or teachers to tell me what to think....” Free thought, free choice, free speech: these precious rights are given at least lip service by almost every American capable of speech or thought or choice.

Yet when it comes to art, many viewers want to be told what it’s supposed to mean. They may go so far as to sneer at the very notion that something can be called art if its meaning isn’t as explicit as the image of Cheerios on a box of Cheerios. Most of the people I’ve talked with or heard of, including New Yorkers, who condemned The Gates as meaningless didn’t experience them. The key word here is “experience.” “Not “see” or “feel,” but “experience.” Experience implies more than just receiving sensations, just as it implies more than just absorbing information.

Experience involves a subjective investment in an idea, an object, a sensation, an event. That’s fundamentally all it involves. But to fully appreciate an experience, an open mind helps a lot. In fact, the more open the mind is to relating to the ideas, objects, and so on, the greater is our opportunity to invest our own thoughts and feelings and memories in them, resulting in a deeper experience and a broader and richer range of meaning for us. In other words, we generate meaning through our investment, as money in property generates greater wealth. Like those kids in Central Park, we’re fortunate to be living in a time when artists have enough respect for our dignity to make exposure to art a meaningful personal experience. I’m sure that’s why they were so unrestrainedly happy when I shared their experience of delight with “the sculpture.”

If the man strolling along the walk in front of our house really wants to be dished out explicit meaning, the perhaps the eminent art critic Arthur C. Danto is correct in claiming that Andy Warhol is the most significant artist of the last half of the twentieth century. You can’t get more explicit than an exhibit of Brillo boxes or repeated Elvis images or Campbell Soup cans. In these images we have art redefined in a way totally appropriate to this age of mass consumption and cultural one-dimensionality. We don’t have to think at all, except to question: “Is this art?”

But in asking that question, we’re implying that art should be something more than the obvious and superficial. And that’s why I hope the man’s companion will prevail in their discussions when they walk by our house again, at least that she’ll keep the discussion going and that maybe his mind will open a bit to allow for his own thoughts and interpretations on my backyard sculpture.

We Are Living Life As We Like It

by **Gene Smith**, Social Science

It was so interesting to read this latest issue of *The Retirees Quarterly*. All those retirees, still so active and vibrant! That is just the way I remember that faculty at what used to be “J.C.” It was great to hear from so many people.

We are not in town often enough to see very many of our former colleagues. We travel about eight months of the year. I stay in contact with Dick Kurzhals throughout the year, and catch up on the news while we struggle through the brush trying to hook trout on one or another of those remarkably beautiful Michigan streams. (He catches three trout for every one I get.) Even on the trout stream Dick is Emeritus.

We spend our winters skiing in Taos, and in Michigan with our grandchildren whenever they can get away from school. This is our favorite family outdoor activity, and it has been a real satisfaction to watch them progress from the beginner hills at the two local ski areas when they were three years old to powering down the ice covered bumps anywhere. These local ski areas produce some excellent skiers. I remember clearly how Dick Kurzhals’ two sons learned to ski at our nearby Cannonsburg Ski Hills, and as teen-agers tear down the slopes at Vail in those trips West.

Skiing has been for Donna and me, a way of life. We still have those old wooden skis from college days stored in the rafters of our garage, and I sometimes wonder how they ever stayed attached to those antique boots. This modern equipment used today makes it all so much more comfortable, and I urge anyone interested to try it.

We have in recent years, spent more time at it. The freedom of retirement has made it possible to combine our travels to the historic and archeological sites with “Add on” time at the snow areas whenever and wherever we could.

I try to convince anyone who will listen, of the virtues and downright enjoyment of downhill skiing. I paint a verbal picture of Donna and me in Norway, tooling over fifteen feet of lovely snow, with a warm June sun shining brightly. I show pictures of St. Moritz, another great place to combine snow, exercise, and good food and great wine. I put together photos of Mount Villarrica, in the Lakes District of southern Chile. This one is tough to beat. It is a live volcano, a thousand miles south of Santiago, in a stretch of the Andes. It isn’t the biggest resort in Chile, but it has soft powder, a deep blue sky, short lift lines, and a thousand feet above those lifts, a steady stream of light smoke, slowly drifting out of the top. Later, there is that elegant hotel and restaurant service, that delicious food, and always that famous red wine Chile produces. In my pitch for the ski travel industry, I feel compelled to describe skiing in New Zealand using helicopters and ski planes. The ski center is Queenstown, on the South Island. This is where Coronet Peak is located. There is plenty of

local help here and fixed lifts. For heliskiing, the traveler can fly out of Queenstown airport, to Mt. Cook. This is the place for anyone who wants to try something different. I know there are several “JC/CC retirees that are skiers. They would feel comfortable in any of these places.

I must confess, that with all the enthusiasm I try to engender in others to do what I think is a great way to spend their time, I haven't had much success. They have their own ideas about what makes for a good setting in retirement! They in turn will tell me of tropical air, soft breezes moving off the ocean, waves breaking over warm, sandy beaches. They are also of the mindset that palm trees are preferable to snow, and don't intend to change the former for the latter!

But it doesn't really matter. All of it is great. I love hearing about all the places others have seen, and the way people spend their time. I remember something an Egyptian guide said about the reasons the pharaohs spent so many of the national resources building their pyramids. He explained that their hope to “live forever,” would be fulfilled by erecting these great monuments. We know we can't do that, but Donna and I are truly enjoying a great retirement!

“Life, if well lived, is long enough.” Seneca

Retirement Year
by Phil Pikkart, Library

One year
Like running deer over fences tiered.

Retirement year
Like kids pulled by the ear, not always with cheer.

Another year
Rill you dear, love does cast out fear.

Retirement year
New places, oasis, ever glades, northern shades.

Another year
Three to the family tree and Gramp and Gram labor free.

This year
GRCC's 90th staff blast - dancing, American Idol, food unsurpassed.
Moods was legendary - loved Smitty's commentary.

First year
Rhyme time, mind time was tough to find.
Composing songs and lines fell behind.

Second year
The first was wool the next cashmere.
New ventures still appear and family is near and dear.

“Let us go then, you and I”*

*Quote: T.S. Eliot

Pat McClellan Is The Volunteers' Volunteer

by **F. Jeane Feurstein**, A Colleague

Every Friday morning, volunteers gather at the Franciscan Life Process Center near Lowell for a chance to use their crafting skills. In the Big studio room dedicated to this effort, conversation flows around the tables, ideas are traded, and friendships developed.

But someone has to be in charge and that someone is Pat McClellan, who is the Volunteer Coordinator in charge of the Franciscan Friends. She makes sure that everyone has a good creative time and that things get done in an orderly way. Pat is a master at matching volunteer to project in a most productive way.

Principally, the Friends are quilters, although other projects are also in the works. Sewing machines hum, donations of yard goods are sorted, and generally things get done. One of Pat's suggestions was to make quilts for the children at Camp New Day, a camp for children of incarcerated parents. What a hit that project has been. The first year the Friends made eleven 36" x 45" quilts for the campers to use and then take home with them at the end of their week. In 2003, fifteen new quilts were distributed. Thirteen warm, huggable quilts went home with campers in 2004. The 2005 quilts are being sent to local Head Start groups.

Other quilts have been sent to Algeria. Some went to the Oncology Unit at St. Mary's Hospital, the Veterans Facility, and the Neonatal Unit at St. Mary's.

The Friends, under Pat's congenial and gentle supervision, go through the various steps of making quilts out of raw materials. They mark the fabric, cut out the squares, and sew them together. They then "sandwich" and tie the top, batting, and backing together, soon adding another completed quilt to the ever-growing pile.

This is besides all the additional volunteer jobs they do for the Life Process Center which includes mailings, cookies by the dozens, pre-school needs and requests from the Music and Art Departments for extra help.

Pat has been the Volunteer Coordinator for twelve years and personally rejoices in the wonderful friends she has made there. When the Friday sessions are over, she and her volunteers leave with good, positive feelings, knowing they have been of service to the Franciscans and the local communities.

Here's an Empty Nester's Saga

by **Nancy E. Miller**, Secretary

Once upon a time there was a mother newly experiencing the “empty nest syndrome”. As circumstances came about this mother was afforded an opportunity to go to college. What an idea! This was a chance to do something she had always secretly hoped to do. So with a friend in tow they headed down to the Grand Rapids Junior College to participate in Creative Writing 101.

I was that “empty nester” and what a change that choice brought into my life. It opened doors I had never anticipated walking through, opportunities I had never expected, relationships that would have never been, and a host of experiences and memories that continues to encourage me.

Beginning as a “returning student” I moved on to become a “student assistant” in the Social Science Division. Eventually I became an employee of the College and a full-time secretary for Jim Bogdan and the Social Science Division and its instructors.

Since this “empty nester” and “returning student” had never worked as a secretary in her life, this was all new territory. But I began to learn proper phone etiquette, the multiple responsibilities of an office, using a computer, and mastering the mysteries of the copy machine. I learned to deal with the expectations of twenty plus instructors and their students. Even though I was the secretary I began to recognize there was a whole world of information available to me that I had not realized before I came to the College. I learned from interaction with the instructors as they discussed current events and items in the media. I discovered the differences in subjects our instructors taught. I took additional classes myself, and eventually earned my degree and graduated with an Associate. I really did it. I graduated from College!

Once I had some years under my belt and could see the advantages of working and building for a future I fully intended to work my ten years and retire from the College. Very often the events of our life do not go according to our script. A very bad car accident took me off campus for a year as I recuperated from multiple broken bones and other physical problems. When the doctor finally gave permission for me to return to work, I realized that at my age and with my immediate physical limitations it was not the wisest choice to return. It was not an easy choice, but necessary.

During these intervening years I have visited the College numerous times. I have kept in touch with various staff members. My husband and I have attended different activities and special College functions when we could. You must realize that I could not have had this wonderful adventure at all if it had not been for the support and involvement of my husband, Al. And now we have seen one of our grandchildren attend and graduate from Grand Rapids Community College.

This summer will be the tenth year since that car accident. Through those years there have been memorable times both in our family and in relationships that stem from my time at the College. But this year 2005 is a really big year for our family personally. In February our youngest daughter and husband celebrated their 20th Wedding Anniversary. In March we took our first vacation ever in Florida, and became great-grandparents for the first time with the birth of little Connor Ethan Miller. In June I will celebrate my 70th Birthday, our oldest son and his wife will celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary, and we will celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary. For us these are all significant milestones in the life of a couple and family.

God has been gracious and we are thankful.

My Meanderings Keep Me Busy and Grateful Every Day

by **Milly Weeber**, Counseling

Oh, where do I begin? I find myself grateful every day for the path my life has taken. As many of you know, I retired August 29, 2000 and shortly after relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico. In the spring of 2000 I purchased a condo with the idea of using it as income property, However, with an offer of an early buy- out, 37 years of employment in various areas of education, including 30 with the State of Michigan, and my two children's urging me to retire, I decided to submit my retirement papers. So I made the big move to New Mexico and settled into the condo, lived there a year while getting to know the new city, then bought a lovely home that overlooks the city that I now call home. I love living in the Southwest and agree with my daughter that perhaps all my life I was a Southwestern woman!

During my 18 years at GRCC I was a counselor in the Career Resource Center, Adult Education and the regular counseling offices. Then I became head of the Counseling Department, had an excellent staff of counselors and front office employees and worked with most of the departments throughout the college. I enjoyed my work very much, but after I became a grandma to a darling granddaughter, my son convinced me it was time to slow down and smell the roses. So I threw my hat in the ring and changed careers to become a happy, full time retiree!

How the years have flown by and each one is filled with adventures. Besides taking care of my house, small yard of flower beds and yes, a New Mexican lawn, I have been taking various classes in computers, the history of New Mexico and Albuquerque, Spanish culture, and others interests. Fortunately, I joined a wonderful, active Presbyterian church and became acquainted with many wonderful people from a variety of backgrounds. I sing in choir, lead the Presbyterian Women's Group, and am involved in other activities as they arise. I also participate in community committees and events such as volunteering at the National Hispanic Center and the NM Symphony.

I also have been able to fulfill my passion for travel and sightseeing. I just returned from spending two weeks in Costa Rica, (no, I did not see Kay Dodge!) touring the entire country, which we thoroughly enjoyed. Tomorrow morning I am leaving to spend two weeks in Colorado where my daughter and her spouse live. Then I will be home for four days before flying to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada where my son, daughter- in- law and their two children (6 years and 1 year old) reside. I hope to spend some of the month of July in Albuquerque to catch up and rest up before going back to Colorado for a big

family reunion. Since I have arrived in New Mexico, friends and I have taken road trips to most every part of the state, as well as Texas and Colorado. In between I have enjoyed visits from many family and friends.

Those of you who knew or taught my children may be interested to know that my son, Russ, is a Wetlands Ecologist/Biologist with Canadian Wildlife Services after earning a Masters in Science from McGill University in Montreal. My daughter, Chris, is beginning a career in freelance editing and writing after earning her Master of Arts Degree in Cultural Anthropology from Colorado State University. Thanks to all who contributed to their education either in their high school or college years.

Though I have thrived in New Mexico, I miss my dear friends and acquaintances at GRCC and invite you to visit when you travel through this part of the country. We can share a southwestern meal and perhaps I can serve as a tour guide in this wonderful part of the country.

My life as a retiree has given me a the freedom of being able to choose how I spend my time which includes having time to travel, be with my family and visiting with new and old friends.

I Was Queen for a Day

by **Mary Jayne Olivier**, Reading

Finishing our new home near Indian Lake, about twenty miles southeast of Kalamazoo, was as far ahead as Willard and I were planning when we retired in 1991, but the following year when we were given the opportunity to participate with a Work & Witness team, we decided to give it a try, and we were hooked. The Church of the Nazarene encourages volunteers, who pay all of their own expenses, to travel to various locations on six continents to help national workers and missionaries with work projects in progress. One of our sixteen trips has been to the subcontinent of India.

India is the exotic, mysterious land of its reputation, with great extremes of wealth and poverty. After we completed our assigned work in Bangalore, we delighted in the pageantry of the lengthy Republic Day Parade in New Delhi (from our security checked reserved folding chairs) where we watched colorfully ornamented camels and elephants carry their decorated riders. There it was a pleasure to view their government buildings and monuments, but we found it difficult to keep our eyes off the deformed and disabled citizens who were straggling through the streets.

A few days later, our pre-dawn boat trip on the Ganges River at Varanasi (Benares) allowed us to observe sandalwood funeral pyres along the “burning ghats,” but we were not permitted to take pictures. It was acceptable, though, to take shots of Indians bathing and laundering their clothes in the river. After we left the boat we struggled through narrow passageways—maybe six feet wide—that were also paths for the sacred cows. You can imagine that walk. At another location in Varanasi, Buddha is said to have preached his first sermon, and the spot is commemorated by a large stupa..

Farther west, our stop in the slums of Bombay (Mumbai) made TV requests for help to alleviate poverty come alive. Hundreds of naked and poorly clothed children, along with ragged looking adults, picked through the garbage dumps next to their shanties and tents. Chickens and goats shared their walkways. We were told that many dwellers make their living from bartering with items they find in the dumps. In the same neighborhood we visited a tailoring school sponsored by our church, where women learn to sew and prepare themselves for employment.

But our stop in Agra became a once in a lifetime event for me. Camels lumbered along the sides of the road, transportation for both people and merchandise. The dirty, narrow streets were crowded with buses, carts, donkeys, cars, trucks, and people. Our bus slowly made its way toward a hotel where we had lunch and took a break after our train trip from New Delhi. The train trip itself was “challenging,” for the restroom provided just a hole to straddle as the train went rocking and rolling down the track (but I desperately needed to use it!) Years before I had discovered why it’s much easier to wear a skirt for such travel.

As required, we shed our shoes and toured the Taj Mahal, with its tons of white marble, unbelievable carvings, and many semi-precious gems that are mounted in the walls. Nearby we examined other neighboring palaces. We listened

to countless tales of Indian history, triumphs and defeats, all seeming to prepare me for my coming adventure.

The most memorable experience for me was a shopping stop, where I became “Queen for a Day,” or at least for a few minutes. There is an exclusive shop in Agra named Kohinoor Jewellers (like the Kohinoor Diamond in the British crown jewels). It is gated with iron bars, and guarded by bearded officers at the entrance, but because a number of interested members of our group decided to take home some expensive souvenirs, the rest of us wandered around and gazed at the precious diamond, pearl, ruby, and emerald jewelry, beautifully displayed on satins and velvets. In an adjoining room were three dimensional embroideries, created by the artist Padma Shri Shams. Some of the embroideries were very large (8’3”x 6’3”, 7’9x5’9,) and some were embedded with semi-precious stones.

My special treatment came in the jewel room, when the owner/manager chose me for his “model.” I’m sure that because of his years of experience he could see that my fingers were just the right size to display a ring which had probably been passed down from an old mogul family. It was an “emerald cut emerald surrounded by brilliant diamonds, set in 18K gold.” It fitted perfectly. After he achieved the desired shock effect on our crowd, he went a step further, and placed upon my right wrist a bracelet “with fine quality emeralds, baguette and brilliant cut diamonds, set in 18K gold.” The third adornment, which he arranged around my neck, was “an art deco broach-pendent with carved emerald and brilliant diamonds, suspending from beads of carved emeralds and Persian Gulf pearls.” (The quotations are from the jeweler’s brochure.)

I felt like a mogul empress standing there with fabulous jewels of the ancients on my finger, wrist, and neck, and finally I was bold enough to ask the pleasant manager if he could share with me an approximate value of the gems. In his gentle, charming voice he replied, “Priceless, just as you are!”

Travel Can Teach Us About Prejudice, Bias, Stereotyping, and Profiling

by Al Heldt, Psychology

These terms usually bring reactions of, “Not right!” “Not fair!” and especially, “Not me!” However, no one can escape these tendencies, simply because one of our brain’s primary methods of learning involves generalization and differentiation, the former being easier than the latter.

From various experiences we will generalize so that the next time we encounter a somewhat similar experience we will know what to feel or how to act. For example, I learned to like dogs when, as a child, my face was licked by a little dog named “Tippy.” I generalized to include other dogs and evil ones, or I might have just run away from all dogs. This behavior is not fair to the “good dogs” and it could be described by the terms above.

We are born with the tendency to react in similar ways. When I encountered carrots, I was hungry and they were prepared well. I like carrots! However, my first encounter with broccoli was not ideal. I hate broccoli. Ah, but you say, “Have you tried the broccoli at the Heritage? Of course not! We all make generalizations or prejudicial reactions to people who look different, are of different races, are connected with other churches, academic disciplines, countries, occupations, etc. Our generalizations are often formed without first-hand experiences from sources such as the media, books, friends, family, etc.

Permit me to relate a recent experience last year in Mexico. My ideas regarding Mexicans were primarily from the media. I “knew” that the Mexicans were poor, lazy, uncultured, and generally dishonest. My image of a typical Mexican was a seated man, his back against a tree, and a large sombrero shading him as he slept the afternoon away.

A year ago we flew into Guadalajara International Airport and I was impressed, but it is the second largest city in Mexico, and they should have an airport better than the Kent County Airport. We were to take a bus to Morelia. I looked for a rickety, old, beat-up bus with luggage tied on the top. Not so! We boarded a sleek modern bus with a rest room, and we drove not on unpaved roads, but on divided highways.

Where was “my Mexico,” the one I knew from the media? At the first rest stop, I was elated to spot an old dilapidated single room shack with a man, a woman, a chicken and a goat freely walking through the open door of the house. I had finally found the “real” Mexico.

Taking pictures is what I do on my trips, and I do slide travelogues for numerous groups—hospitals, retirees, nursing homes, churches, etc. This scene of the single room shack was the last slide I took of my biased, prejudicial, stereotyped image of Mexico. I spent the next three weeks taking pictures of the “REAL” Mexico with well-kept parks everywhere, beautiful cathedrals, historic murals by great artists in many cities, beautiful architecture, well-cared for homes, flowers, more fountains than I could imagine, many sculptures and

statues of historic leaders. We found the people to be honest, family oriented and very talented, and the streets were safe. We enjoyed nightly free concerts by various groups such as Folclorica, a song and dance group from the University of Guadalajara. We even spent an evening in the opera house, which I have never done in the U.S. The rich heritage they inherited from the Spaniards, the French and other cultures was very evident.

Needless to say, my mistaken idea of at least a part of Mexico has changed. We even went back in 2005 to see more of Mexico. Many Americans do not even know that Mexico has a canyon four times larger than the Grand Canyon and 1,500 feet deeper. That's my next slide show, by the way.

So what did I learn? Travel broadens one's vistas and reduces one's prejudices. In addition, I may even go back and check out the broccoli at the Heritage.

Even a Geezer can Tell Tales Out of School

Richard Kurzhals, Department Chair, Social Science

All of us had a variety of experiences with students. Several groups stood out: those who were excellent students, those who were terrible students, and those who displayed bizarre behavior. Of the over 18,000 students that I had in class over the 36 years at the College five stand out as having displayed truly unusual behavior. To keep each straight in my own thinking I applied mental nicknames to them. Below is a short synopsis of my experiences with Inter-Planet Janet, Sally the Smotherer, Kevin the Kilt, Micro Mike, and Sonny Sunglasses.

1. Inter-Planet Janet

Inter-Planet Janet knocked on my door one day. In getting up to answer Janet's knock apparently made a noise by closing a desk drawer, scraping the desk chair, or the noise may have been in IPJ.'s head. She exclaimed as the door opened that she had heard a dog bark in the office and it sounded a lot like a puppy. Was there a puppy in the office?

When told that there was no puppy or dog in the office, Janet insisted that she had heard a dog bark and proceeded to walk around the office looking behind and under things. Finding no puppy, she mused that perhaps it was being kept in one of the file cabinets to conceal it for surely the College would not allow pets on the premises.

No amount of reasoning could convince Inter-Planet Janet that there was no puppy in the office. In an attempt to make her day a little less stressful together we opened and looked in each file drawer and alas there was no puppy. Happy at last, Inter-Planet Janet left shaking her head and without asking whatever question she had come to ask.

2. Sally the Smotherer

Sally was a rather large and heavy student who sat at the end of the front row. She showed little emotion and in fact seemed to have a dower look about her. About six weeks into the semester Sally was gone for several class sessions. Imagine my surprise when I picked up the evening paper and noticed Sally's picture on the front page. It seems that Sally, thereafter Sally the Smotherer, worked in a nursing home and being the kind soul that she was, smothered patients that she determined to be in need of pain relief. SS was convicted and is now serving a life sentence. I assume that she will be released from prison and in need of a job just about the time that I am ready for a nursing home. Sally the Smotherer certainly has the employment experience to warrant rehiring in a nursing home.

3. Kevin the Kilt

Kevin was much like any other student. He was neither an excellent student nor a poor one. What made Kevin stand out was his clothing choice. The first half of the semester he dressed like most other male students his age. However, mid-way through

the semester Kevin came to class attired in a kilt.

My first thought was that perhaps he was in a presentation of some sort and needed to wear the kilt for the day. But, the kilt became Kevin the Kilt's regular "dress." After several weeks I suggested to Kevin the Kilt that I had noticed that he was dressing a little differently. KK's response was that yes he was dressing differently since he had seen the film Braveheart and was most impressed with it.

I have always been happy that KK did not see the Lone Ranger films that I did as a young person. Can you imagine how he would have dressed if he had seen Zorro, Tarzan, or the Three Musketeers?

4. Micro Mike

Mike was the type of student who had the need to impress both the instructor and the class with his knowledge of the subject. His technique was to read ahead of the rest of the class in the textbook and ask questions about things the rest of the class knew nothing about. He undoubtedly hoped that he could befuddle me as well.

One day as we were talking about soil formations Micro Mike attempted to astound all of us by asking a question about micro organisms and their importance in soil development. Mike's problem was that rather than saying "micro organisms" he said "micro orgasms." The class went wild. Poor Micro Mike was so embarrassed that he never returned and he dropped the class.

Each semester after MM I found myself very carefully forming the words micro organism when I talked about soils. You see, I have always felt that macro was far preferable to micro.

5. Sonny Sunglasses

Sonny had irregular attendance and when called on in class never seemed to have the faintest idea of what was going on. The class period before the first exam Sonny I explained a bit about the exam and emphasized that there would be an A and a B exam and they would be alternated to discourage looking on other student's papers.

Sonny appeared for the first exam with wrap around sunglasses and a hat pulled down over much of his face. Poor Sonny proceeded to copy verbatim the paper next to him. In spite of being told 48 hours previous little did Sonny Sunglasses realize that he had an A copy and the student next to him had a B copy of the exam. Sonny apparently had short term as well as long term memory loss.

These five unusual and memorable students each exhibited bizarre behavior. Yet, it was students like these that made the job every bit as interesting, enjoyable, and unforgettable as the other 18,000 students.

I Fondly Remember A Variety of Work Assignments With Great People

by Alice Beckwith, Secretary

Wow, where to start? I guess at the beginning. I worked for twenty-seven years with the Board of Education and the College, beginning with the humble position as a Teacher Aide at Sigsbee School that turned into a six-year stay. It worked out wonderfully for me as a single parent. I worked the same hours and had the same days off that my kids did. I loved the work and the staff were so devoted to teaching that being there as a good thing for everyone.

After that I became a full-time custodian at North Park School and later at Eastern Avenue School. I was the only female custodian at the time, and I don't think the guys thought that was so cool. I was assigned to mop the full gym and rake the entire playground the first day. Ah, but I was young and up to the challenge, and eventually I was accepted. They even taught me to play poker. This was a short-lived adventure because working second shift with three teenagers at home was not the wisest thing for me to do.

So, I took a brush-up typing class at Ottawa Hills and soon became a secretary with the COPE Program. I loved that job. It involved working at the Kent County Honor Camp, the Kent County Jail, and 17 other such interesting places. At one time we worked out of a refurbished funeral home on Lake Drive. Bud Vashau, Ron Andrus, Sandy Benham, and Terry Pietsch worked in the office. Needless to say our clients were all very interesting.

When budget cuts were again made, my job was cut to part time, and I applied at the College and was hired in the Continuing Ed office by Dr. Ray Boozer. Those were the days of Dr. Boozer's Friday Fish Frys. The whole school knew someone somewhere who was frying fish. I was only there for a short time when I got a call from Mr. LaPenna asking me if I was interested in working in the Admissions Office. Well, I worked in Admissions with Mr. Arnie Terpstra handling all the Health Admissions. It was another wonderful position for me with really great people, and some of us still go out to lunch together. Mr. LaPenna recently had a heart operation that involved seven bypasses. I talked to him the other day, and he is doing fine and had just been outside for his first walk. Mr. Terpstra is sadly missed by all of us; I still have a hard time realizing that he and Marilyn and her mother were killed in that terrible accident.

After that I was Dr. Weller's secretary in the Registrar's Office and then went back to Continuing Education working for Julie Johnson. What a positive work experience we had there. It was wonderful helping the timid returning students; they seemed so excited about learning. We also had our little pets, literally, some squirrels that visited many times a day at the window and sometimes, to Elaine's dismay, they would come in the window and walk along

the sill. We even had a couple of bird feeders attached to the window with suction cups. We had such a feeling of family there.

I eventually ended up in the Registrar's office again and, after a bout with cancer (All is well now.) I am retired after 27 years with the GR Board and GRCC. Well, what am I doing now you ask? No more than I have to, it seems. I did some traveling to Washington DC to see my daughter when she argued a case before the United States Supreme Court. I was so proud and so nervous. I am proud to tell you that she won the case with a unanimous decision.

And for my 65th birthday the kids took me to Chicago for a long weekend of celebrating. We had a beautiful hotel with a wonderful view of the city. We went to Second City, movies, out to eat at some really great restaurants, and enjoyed a boat trip around the city and out on Lake Michigan. What a great time, and great times continue.

How Blest I Was to Have Had “My Little Corner Of The World” at GRCC!

by Dee Palmer, Secretary

Telephones constantly ringing, students lined up requesting overloads in classes, and instructors requesting room changes were just a few of the hourly requests for the first week of classes. The hand-written room charts remained on the top of my desk ready for searching for another room request. The scratch pad was next to the phone with a pen/pencil to take messages. A steady flow of students walking in the office with multiple needs, these were among the traffic flow in and out of the office.

I loved it! The challenge of meeting the needs of each person was exuberating. But every once in a while I'd meet a person who really needed some extra support. I remember the homeless who needed someone to talk to in confidence; the chronically ill student who needed assurance, and the list goes on. It was wonderful to be there for those in need, to give them support and encouragement.

All in all, I felt blest to be there for the students, faculty and support staff. As each individual entered into “my little corner of the world,” I would tell myself, “This is a new situation, a new person seeking assistance...treat that person as if he or she were the only person in the world.” Treat each person with the respect that you would want to be treated. I'm thankful that I was able to be of help to them.

Now during retirement I don't have the one-on-one contact with students and faculty, but I have been fortunate to work with Keith Longberg on the *Retirees Quarterly* as well as working to update the retirees' directory. It is my way of saying “Thank you!” to my fellow workers with whom I had the privilege of working at GRCC.

So each of you that read this article, if you could take the time to write an article for the next publication it would be welcomed. You can pick your own topic, be it an interesting student situation you experienced, or your travels, or volunteer work you are doing, or even your garden! We welcome your article. Each of you are valued just as you were when we were co-workers at the College.

Thank you to each retiree for all you did to enrich my life. It was wonderful to work with you.

A Bassoon survived the War To Make Music in America

by Ray Gill, Music

During World War II, I was in the infantry (76th Division) in Germany, and kept pretty busy at the front in the area between Luxembourg and the Czechoslovak border.

One day we were involved in house-to-house combat in Bad Sooden, a resort town of some size, and we proceeded down the main street against considerable resistance, taking all due care that we did not do anything rash or foolish as we went. There came a sort of lull in the action and we had just started moving again down the street when I heard someone running behind me to catch up. I ducked into an alleyway and he (another G.I.) ducked in after me. He was carrying a beat-up instrument case which he set down before me. He asked: "Are you the fella who is the musician in the company?" When I replied that I was, he said: "I found this in one of the houses and knew that its owner didn't need it anymore, so I thought you might have a use for it." The case had in it a bassoon, looking quite the worse for wear, but with a body in workable condition, so I took it and passed it back to the cooks to keep for me until I got a little less busy.

Later I wrapped it up in several sets of underwear and shipped it home to my mother. When I wound up in college as a music major, I had it sent away to Connecticut to be fixed up, and I bought a new case and two new neck pieces, called "bocals," for it, and now it was in playable condition. Bassoons can be quite expensive. Even a good second-hand one can sell for \$10,000.00. I was a clarinet major, but I took lessons on the bassoon for a semester as well.

Eventually I wound up playing it in the Nashville, Tennessee symphony orchestra for a year. There aren't a lot of people around who can play the instrument, and the Nashville Symphony need a bassoon player so even though I wasn't highly skilled, I was invited to play the bassoon with that orchestra. It was a good opportunity for me to improve my skill.

In Grand Rapids years later I sold the instrument to the second bassoonist in the Grand Rapids symphony, "Chip" King. He bought it for a student of his and as far as I know she still has it. Some years ago I heard her play it, and it sounded so beautiful that I was moved to tears.

Don't you like stories with happy endings?

Shakedown on the Night Train From Berlin

by **Keith Longberg**, English

I was visiting a friend of the family in Germany while on my way to visit my daughter who was living in Warsaw. Our friend was a professor of mathematics and a well-known organist in his area. He took me over to his church, which he opened with a huge key. He played the ancient pipe organ for me, mostly Beethoven, the cavernous church vibrating with the sound. He asked me what else I wanted him to play. I said “Wagner,” just to see how he would react. He said “Nein, Nein!” He told me Wagner was a *swartzgeist*, a black spirit. I couldn’t argue.

We walked back to his house and sat on the patio and listened to a Mozart CD and sipped hot chocolate coffee. His English vocabulary was as small as my German vocabulary, but it was an enjoyable time sitting there together, communicating silently and listening to “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” and other Mozart selections. I asked him to help me get my train ticket to Warsaw and gave him enough money for this.

The next day he handed me my tickets from Berlin to Warsaw, first class, sleeper car, and handed me the change left over. Good. I love to ride trains, and I looked forward to the ride across the countryside, the historical battle lands periodically bloodied over the ages between the two cities. My friend made it clear that I would not owe any more money for the train trip. He cautioned me that someone will try to get more money, but I shouldn’t pay it. He was very insistent on this...at least as I could understand it. Two years of college German taken more than forty years earlier just didn’t help much.

Several days later I took my leave of our gentle and sensitive friend, Egon, climbed aboard the train for Berlin where I transferred to the train for Warsaw. I settled in my cabin getting the choice forward facing seat, the opposite facing seat later occupied for part of the trip by a sullen and silent Pole who refused my offered apple. I could have made a better offer, but thought he already had enough whiskey. Once outside of Berlin, which from my window looked plastered and painted with graffiti, I was not disappointed by the countryside I had anticipated seeing. It was gorgeous. It was just delightful to sit there listening to the clickity-clack of the wheels on the steel tracks and watch the scenery flow past my window, as the evening darkness gradually descended.

What luxury to have a sleeper, so much of my travel has been done without this luxury. My Polish cabin-mate was soon snoring and I was tired, but the pleasure and adventure of the travel, and the clickity-clack kept me just barely on the conscious side of the dividing line between sleep and wake, a delightfully altered state of consciousness. My intention was to stay right there in that wonderful zone, never mind being tired; this was just too good. It was too good to last.

It didn't last. My reverie was broken by a knock on the cabin door. It wasn't sufficient to waken my cabin mate so I got up and opened the door. A female train official in uniform, a ticket taker, was standing there, clipboard and punch in hand. She wanted money. My ticket, she indicated, was not for the full route to Warsaw. I knew it was. I supposedly owed a substantial amount of money to continue on to Warsaw. This was nonsense. It was an obvious shakedown.

I could have paid the money, and I didn't want to morph into the "ugly American," but I didn't like being taken advantage of either. I refused to pay. The train was making steady progress towards my destination. What could they do? Throw me off? Why prevent a likely interesting adventure from taking place? I decided I'd play this game for what it was worth. I pasted on an angry face over the humor I saw in this scam and told her to go away. I would pay no more money and closed the cabin door as politely as I could in her face. Of course I knew she would be back with reinforcements, but I climbed back in bed with a chuckle, and snuggled in listening to the clickity-clack. It had to be just a matter of time.

Soon my fuzzy consciousness was insulted by a knocking on my door, knocking, knocking. The female ticket taker was there with the seasoned conductor, a serious officious look on his gray face. He started to tell me something in German. Pointing at the ticket taker, my finger an inch from her nose, I interrupted him as best I could: "Thief, Robber, Crook, Thief, Robber, Crook (oh my!) My German was doubtful, but the conductor got my point. As I started repeating my vocabulary list again, he nodded in agreement. It took me completely by surprise. His nose wrinkled up, a wry smile appearing on his face. He knew. He knew that I knew it was a rip-off, and he knew that I was not going to back down. If push came to shove, he knew they were on the wrong side. I had nothing to lose: the train was making steady progress towards my destination. His wrinkled nose, his wry smile had clearly said, "OK, you win." He drastically lowered the amount I "owed" to a face-saving token. I couldn't object; his wry smile made me want him to save face. He was the conductor, after all!

Back in the sack, I savored the comic shakedown experience, a likely scene from a foreign film, and soon drifted off to sleep. In the morning I saw through the compartment window gorgeous stands of mature spruce, pine, larch, and hemlock streaming past. These trees had been planted by hand. When the angle of sight was just right, I could see that they had been planted in rows, probably fifty years earlier--after the din and death and dust of the war had gone, to flourish perhaps in blood-enriched soil. I contemplated the scene streaming past my window. What violence and death and destruction plagued this land, again and again and again over the centuries! What would you find with a metal detector out there in the soil of those lush-feathery forests? Belt buckles, shell casings, spent rounds, rifle barrels, pistols, shrapnel, bashed or pierced helmets like broken eggshells? Artifacts of wholesale madness?

I could look out the window and see myself under a gorgeous larch tree, a bent old man in boots and an unlikely hat, a metal detector in hand, intently

listening with earphones for the sound of artifact in the quiet green forest, the sound of train diminishing in the distance. It would be interesting to sift the soil even if nothing were found, traipsing over the healing land, hearing the wind in the trees above me, smelling the fragrant pine. I will never do it. It's better to see it passing by briefly in the window, better to contemplate it and move on.

Later the train stopped at Posen, the Polish border stop, and my silent and sobered cabin mate departed, not returning my parting gesture. Life can be hard, but not that hard. The train moved on toward Warsaw.

When You Think The Kids Are Gone You Discover Something: They're Baaack!

by **Fred Garbowitz**, Speech

For three years my wife, Karen, and I were empty nesters. Life was good. I would chase my wife around the house naked...ok...I would start getting undressed and fall to sleep, but the thought was there...in complete privacy. We would wake when we wished. We would eat when we wished. We had our little piece of heaven. Then our worst nightmares came true. We tried to avoid it. We even moved, but to no avail. Two of our sons graduated college and moved back home to student teach. Life, as we knew it, was over.

Don't get me wrong, we love and are proud of our sons, we just want to love and be proud of them from a distance. Move back home for a little while, we thought, sure, no problem. What did we know of purgatory? Once, we knew of a night's restful sleep. We weren't awakened at 3:00 am by bright lights, slamming doors, and loud, slurred conversations. Groceries lasted for a week, sometimes two. Neither my wife nor I could finish a \$4.00 box of breakfast cereal at one sitting. A one pound bag of lunch meat was good for a number of sandwiches throughout the week. How could we know that three one pound bags of lunch meat had to be replaced every four or five days? Milk? Orange Juice? Don't ask. Now, grocery shopping is a daily errand.

When our children were in high school we encouraged their musical interests. Our daughter played piano and oboe, and our sons played saxophone and guitar. We enjoyed going to recitals and band concerts. Now, our youngest has it in his mind to be the new Gene Krupa or maybe Ginger Baker. He bought a drum set and assembled it in our basement. Have you any idea how a drum set played at ear popping volume can vibrate a house? We became a tad annoyed, and we set down the law. No practicing while we are in the house. That law soon had to be modified. No practicing while we were anywhere in the neighborhood.

Sleeping late for us on days off or weekends was 8:00 or 9:00 am, but for our boys 1:00 pm is not unusual. Maybe they would waken earlier, but then it would be to finish a box of cereal and then go back to bed. Laundry has become an issue. Not that they don't do their own, it's that they leave their clothes in the washer and dryer for days. I do enjoy talking baseball with the boys, and we can relate on issues dealing with education and politics. I do love my sons, but I would love to enjoy these discussions over the phone.

Farm Boy Survives the Jungle To Become a Dean at GRCC

by **Bill Foster**, Dean

I was born in Emporia, Kansas in the mid 40's and grew up on a small farm in Cottonwood, Falls, Kansas. How small? Well, Cottonwood Falls was so small that when the local census took place, it was done by county only. We had 1200 people in Chase County. My wife, Laurie, has visited my hometown and says it is the mirror image of Mayberry RFD!

After completing my bachelor's degree in January of 1967, I began teaching in Wichita, Kansas. Uncle Sam gave me the opportunity to serve in the US Army (Infantry) in May of that year, so off to Fort Leonardwood I went for basic training. Following those eight weeks, I was transferred to Fort Polk, Louisiana for advanced jungle training. Can you guess where I was assigned following those eight weeks of training? If you guessed Viet Nam you are correct. I arrived in Ben Hoa in November 1967 just in time for the Tet Offensive. Needless to say, my next 14 months were incredible. I returned to the US in February of 1969 with a purple heart and many life-changing memories. I was a much different person than when I was drafted.

I used the GI Bill to complete my master's degree from the University of Kansas while looking for a teaching job. After several local interviews, I decided that I needed to expand my search. About that time, a guy by the name of Richard Calkins was on the road, recruiting teachers for the Grand Rapids Public Schools. He came to KU and I interviewed with him. He was very passionate about Grand Rapids and convinced me that it would be a great place to work and call home. He offered me a contract in the amount of \$6,700. So after looking at a Michigan map to locate Grand Rapids, I signed the contract and in 1970 headed north!

I taught for one year in the GRPS and then became a principal. Two years later I became an administrator at the new Union High School and shared an office with Bob Partridge. I was at Union until 1980 and then moved "downtown" to the GRPS Central Office. I was the executive assistant to the superintendent and began working closely with Dick Calkins again. Over the years, Dick and Phil Runkel taught me how to run millage campaigns. In 1985, Pat Oldt was the Dean of Continuing Education at JC and decided to leave to become a superintendent. Dick was the president of JC and offered me the vacant Deanship.

Needless to say, I jumped at the opportunity to join the terrific staff at JC. So in 1985, I began my new career with my new family. In 1991 we all worked hard on the redistricting campaign to become GRCC. I was truly blessed to have had the career opportunity to move from Kansas to Michigan. JC FOR ME!

Intuition Brings More than the Magic

by **Marie Pokora**, Counseling

I love those elusive moments when our intuition whispers, “Yes, yes...DO it!” and, amazingly, we listen.

A couple of months ago I had been watching a Grand Valley PBS special—Andre Rieu Live in Dublin. For those of you who haven’t heard of Andre Rieu—he is a violinist/conductor/showman of world renown who usually gives concerts only in Europe but now I was hearing he would be appearing in the states, in Detroit, on May 9. I was elated to learn this because I had seen several of his concerts on PBS and, in fact, owned several DVD’s of the concerts and nearly all of his CD’s.

I’m not known to be a concert groupie, but this music speaks to my soul. The camera work on the Italian productions I’ve seen, for example, was amazing—simultaneously capturing the soulful artist center stage, the sweep of an enraptured European audience amid the beauty of an Italian piazza in the moonlit night, and a close-up of a grandfatherly gentleman listening to Andre with emotion-filled eyes and a tear sliding down his face. The thought of being a part of all this was enchanting and so I had just made a mental note to call about tickets the next day when I heard the TV commentator remark that the concert had been sold out, but that Grand Valley was holding a block of tickets for its contributors.

I noticed the number of tickets was rapidly decreasing each time the concert was interrupted by the broadcasters to make a sales pitch for contributions. Suddenly, someone was saying there were only five pairs of tickets left and it hit me: if I didn’t act now, I would lose this glorious opportunity. I picked up the phone and suddenly found myself making a \$250 contribution to the university and, miraculously, I got one of the last pairs of tickets. When my husband returned later that evening, I announced that my intuition had kicked in and the next thing we knew we were making arrangements to attend the Andre Rieu Concert on May 9 and spend the night in Detroit. God bless the magic that moves us out of our every day lives!

And so on the afternoon of May 9, we drove to Detroit. Before long we had arrived at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel on Washington Blvd. To a building quite lovely inside but surrounded by so much construction, it seemed like a mirage in the dust. The hotel staff was friendly and accommodating. We noticed that we did not have time to go to dinner before the concert so we got settled in our room and decided to make do with the apples and crackers we had brought along with us.

When we returned to the lobby to request a cab we encountered two couples (sisters and their husbands) also going to the concert who had requested the hotel shuttle and we were waiting for it to arrive. They generously offered to share the shuttle with us and we began a delightful conversation which continued as we rode to the theater regarding concerts in general, Andre Rieu in particular, all of our travels to Italy and our mutual experiences with the Italian language. We parted ways as we arrived at the stately Fox Theater.

The Fox was teeming with people streaming into the lobby. We stopped to ask for some information from a couple operating a concession stand. They were foreign-born and had some trouble understanding me but, despite the many people pressing against their counter, they were very generous in trying to patiently assist us.

Edith, one of the women from the two couples in the shuttle, had recently had a knee replacement, which was not doing well so she and her husband opted to get an elevator to

take them to Gallery B where their seats were located. One of the elevators was broken so they boarded the second, along with many other patrons, only to find the elevator sinking down a foot before the door was even closed. The elevator operator immediately jumped out and our new friend decided she would climb the stairs with her failing knee, no matter how high up they went. The steps to Gallery B followed three long and ornately curved staircases. However, buoyed by her natural ebullience and her desire to hear the famous violinist/conductor in concert, she valiantly climbed all of the stairs to encounter an astonished look on the face of her sister who was waiting at the top of the three flights.

As we found our seats with the Grand Valley entourage (also in Gallery B), we were mesmerized by the ornate and delicate beauty of the theater's ceiling. We were even thrilled to be sitting up so high. Meanwhile, I had been muttering periodically to myself about not having remembered to bring binoculars, but put that concern aside when Andre and the Johann Strauss Orchestra took the stage, individually marching up the center steps with great ceremony to the strains of "Entry of the Gladiators." Dressed in ebony tuxes and elegant, iridescent gowns, the members of his orchestra looked ready to play for the Queen. The audience members at the Fox Theater that night numbered five thousand and you could feel the anticipation and excitement in the full house as the maestro raised his violin. Behind him sat his talented orchestra, heavily favoring violins and cellos, but the evening would prove the brass and drum sections very capably balanced them.

As usual, the maestro immediately struck a warm and convivial note with the members of his audience, including them in his commentary and especially in his musical pranks, which were sprinkled throughout the evening. He and his orchestra and performers were treated to several standing ovations. Three female soloists (two from Brazil and one from Holland) were flawless in their presentations. I could not believe the fabulous acoustics in a theater of this size. As they performed, the obvious delight of the maestro, the orchestra, and soloists hung rapturously in the air. At one point, Maestro Andre passionately proclaimed the Strauss family responsible for the best waltzes ever written, as he proudly introduced "The Blue Danube."

Sitting next to us during the performance was a Grand Valley participant who had injured his back from a car accident. I lent her my lumbar cushion, which I had brought with me but didn't need at this point and she generously lent me the use of the binoculars circulating within her party.

The magic continued until the last waltz played was hailed with a burst of colorful balloons from what seemed like the miles-high ceiling. I did not know what was more touching... the music or the joy of the people performing and listening to it. I do know that my husband turned to me and thanked me for the intuitive leap, which had prompted me to make the contribution, which got us to the concert.

After the performance we hurried outside, hoping to get one of the first cabs we expected would be lining up in front of the theater. As we looked around, we saw no cabs but what looked like a blockade of busses. (The performance was being presented exclusively for patrons of PBS and it seemed many members of the audience had traveled to Detroit in their respective group transportation.)

Furthermore, there was apparently some sort of minor fracas going on between a policeman who refused to let the cabs double park because of the danger to patrons who might be running out in between busses and the doorman in red ties and black top hat who was trying to find cabs for the patrons. A few moments later the handsomely attired doorman confided to us affectionately that the policeman was causing him a great deal of trouble but he promised to help us and smilingly continued to search for one of the cabs which he promised were even now circling the block. Eventually, the two uniforms struck a

compromise and the policeman promised to keep all the busses away from the theater entrance at the Thursday performance. My husband chatted with the doorman about Comerica Park being located directly across the street from the Fox Theater when he cheerfully announced that he also worked some evenings at Comerica and that, therefore, he had the best jog in the world.

Finally, a cab was found and we climbed into a back seat that was VERY tightly wedged behind a barrier separating us from the cab driver. As we pulled away, we tried to engage the driver in some casual conversation about the traffic and endless construction and he told us in a voice heavy with contempt that Detroit was the worst place in the world in which to live. He then announced that no one there was human. When I asked him why he felt this way, he could only repeat his comment two or three more times and shake his head. Feeling his pain, and because we make it a practice to be especially considerate to anyone whose pain is transforming in life force into cynicism, negativity, or depression, we gave him a \$7 tip for the five-minute cab ride, but he seemed not to notice...or to care.

I was struck by the significance of the glorious festivities ending in this way and felt there was most definitely a lesson here. That evening we had encountered so many faces of humanity: the artistic genius of Andre Rieu, the joy and talent of his orchestra and performers, the elation of the audience in hearing the concert, the delightful conversation with the two couples in the shuttle, the courage of our new friend who after being stunned by the falling elevator, climbed the three winding staircases with her painful knee, the helpfulness of the foreign-born couple at the concession stand, the generosity of the woman in the next seat who lent her binoculars for our enjoyment, the jolly red-tail coated doorman who proclaimed that he, indeed, had the best job in the world, the policeman who eventually came to a compromise with the doorman regarding the "lost" cabs and, finally, the cab driver whose aura (had I been able to see it) must have reflected the darkness of the night and of his psyche. In the midst of the artistry, joy and exuberance of those attending and performing at the concert, here was this lonely, lost cab driver who seemed as if he had no drop of hope in the world to sustain him.

I pondered the amazing parade I had witnessed that evening and considered what part we all had played in this drama. We are all responsible for the gifts and pain of the world. Just this past week, I had heard Carl Franklin, an international speaker with over thirty-five years of spiritual/metaphysical research, teaching, lecturing, and counseling, remark that reality as we experience it is shaped by mass human consciousness via the quantum field. There is no speed limit here, he said. The speed of thought is instantaneous.

In reflecting on this, I asked myself what kind of thoughts and emotions have we all been projecting into the cosmos? What caring and concern? When have we ignored the suffering of humanity? When have we answered its call? We (every one of us) helped bring the joy of the glorious and amazing music to its manifestation at the concert and, equally, we helped shape the tragic sadness of the cab driver we encountered in the night.

We have all contributed to the collective energy which produced in the same evening the higher vibrations of exquisite artistry and, simultaneously, the lower cadences of hopelessness and despair. The concert, I feel, represents the awesome joy that is possible and the cab driver the pain that must not be left unattended.

I received more than the gift of music the evening I attended the concert of Andre Rieu, more than just the magic. I was also given a reminder of our common brotherhood and the responsibility of adding joy and love and, most especially, compassion to life. As always, my intuition has been my great teacher and friend...and, in this moment, a conscience for humanity.

Retirement is Really a Commencement

by Janet Simpson, Speech

When our beloved Jane Anway retired from the Art Department a number of years ago, she said that retirement was a commencement, that instead of thinking that retirement meant going away from something, it was actually going towards something new, possibly something new and bright and shiny.

At the time, I found this hard to believe. My life's passion (possibly an addiction) was teaching. I had always loved and enjoyed it and knew that I wanted to do it forever! My passion was in my speech classes and making young people confident in expressing their thoughts and ideas. I especially loved directing plays and molding students to love theater and to know that it was a "we" project and not an "I" one. I felt that what I was doing would help them to know that life is a team effort and that the enjoyment of theater would be an experience that would last them the rest of their lives. How could I possibly ever leave my mission and enjoy going on to something else? My satisfaction and "highs" came from watching these young people grow and helping them to develop their potential. What could ever replace that passion?

I watched my colleagues looking with great anticipation to their own retirement. It was hard for me to understand how they could give it all up. When my husband and I had acted professionally for three years, I had never received the same kind of satisfaction that came when from meeting former students and hearing how my classes had influenced them, and I was thrilled that they still recognized me after all the years. There was more gratification in those meetings than any applause I had received in play-acting. Teaching, indeed, was my passion.

And then came the time to retire myself. What was I going to find that was new and bright and shiny that could possibly replace my passion for teaching? Would I end up in a rocking chair looking over old theater programs and thinking about what I had done in the past?

But a new passion was just to begin and the third act of my life proved to be just as exciting and wondrous as the first two acts. We traveled to many new and wonderful countries, and that became a passion... meeting people in strange countries and learning their customs, and even seeing theater in these places. It was a new beginning in this wondrous journey of life.

I took two Life Drawing classes from Nick Antonakis at the College. No student entering one of my speech classes was ever more nervous than I was on that first night. I was now a student and not the instructor! Would the others accept me or wonder what an old lady was doing in their class drawing nudes? Maybe they would act like I was the elephant in the living room and just ignore the fact that I was there. On the contrary, they were friendly and supportive and I had a great experience. With this confidence I went on to take sculpture

classes in clay in Florida. I found it to be like teaching: imaging, molding, shaping, and creating, looking for the potential in the clay. We now have a garden full of clay heads that I have created with verve and passion.

We joined Grand Forum, which is a group of 200 retirees that is sponsored by Grand Valley University. For three months out of the year we all go to “school” all day for twice a week and we are exposed to many topics and field trips and the intellectual exchange is stimulating. I am now serving on the Board and have found it to be another great passion for me.

So now I must really endorse Jane Anway’s theory that retirement has truly been going towards new and exciting adventures. I even wonder at times, how I found the time to teach. Life’s passions are great and our journey is really just beginning.

And now, what is your passion?

“My Country Tis of Thee” or Is It?

by **Julie Johnson**, Registrar

Do you know a homeless veteran? It is estimated that 275,000 veterans are homeless on any given night across our country and at least twice that number experience homelessness over the course of a year. (In the Grand Rapids area there could be as many as 200-300 on a given night.) Thousands more are considered at-risk, either one-week away from homelessness or relying on the kindness of friends and family. The source for this essay information is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Approximately one-third of the homeless population have served in the U.S. military.
- Most homeless veterans are male and account for at least 60% of the nation's homeless men. There are 3-4% homeless female veterans.
- Nearly 70% have drug/alcohol abuse issues.
- 25% of homeless veterans from the Vietnam Era have full or partial symptoms - flashback, anxiety, emotional numbing, depression of war related mental illness called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Those with PTSD are 5 times more likely to be unemployed than those without it and up to 6 times as likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.
- Nearly half of the homeless veterans served during the Vietnam Era.
- Veterans are homeless for many of the same reasons as anyone else: poor job market, steep housing costs, mental health issues, substance abuse and slashed social programs. The lack of affordable housing (specifically efficiency apartments and rooming houses) is a significant problem.
- When the Grand Rapids Downtown YMCA closed, 35 veterans in a treatment program were displaced. These veterans were assisted in finding new housing. That housing was scattered around the area and thus the treatment portion of their program was compromised. There is a local Veterans organization (Health Care for Homeless Veterans) working to re-establish communal housing.

The needs of Veterans should be a high priority in our country. Instead this is a time in which we are increasing our numbers of veterans - and reducing services. Budgets have been reduced and restrictions on eligibility for services have been increased. Of course we have raised the death benefit considerably!

Why am I writing on behalf of veterans? I have worked with homeless veterans for nine years; my Navy father was killed by a kamikaze pilot in WWII; my Navy adoptive father served in the Pacific during WWII; my cousin was severely traumatized in Viet Nam and has been in a veteran's facility for the past twenty years and my Marine grandson has been in the Marines for four years and completed two tours of duty in Iraq. He is one of the fortunate ones who has returned home and will leave the military in August.

There are certain to be many more veterans of Iraq who will need services. Veterans once served our nation proudly and bravely. Each of us can do no less than our part to ensure that these men and women are treated with the dignity they deserve. They need our individual and governmental assistance now. If you would like to be involved with veteran groups or learn of other ways you can help, please contact me at (616) 364-7183 or e-mail: julierj@sbcglobal.net My husband and I volunteer with homeless veteran organizations.

Veterans need to know that "My Country Tis Of Thee!"

GRJC Inspired Me, Helped Me in Becoming “Real”

by **Karin Orr**, English

The first time somebody asked me to pray in public I wanted to throw up. Praying was private, an ongoing but unspoken conversation with God. The idea that someone else might overhear any part of this conversation put me into a panic. To pray out loud meant I would have to reveal how I addressed--and therefore perceived--God. Through my petition I would also have to reveal whatever it was I thought worthy of God's attention. Such openness was just too much, like standing spiritually naked. I wanted no part of it.

The problem was the request had come from members of the graduation committee for what was then Grand Rapids Junior College. Each year they asked a member of the faculty to give the invocation at the graduation ceremony, and this particular year they had asked me. I was honored but overwhelmed--what words could I use? What could I say that would be appropriate, memorable, and, most importantly, true? This was not a simple task; I took it very seriously and sought suggestions from colleagues who seemed vaguely spiritual.

My trepidation surprised several of my friends. "You've been in theater and public speaking all your life," laughed one, "how can this be so difficult?" Admitting that I, too, was surprised at how challenging this little task had turned out to be, I struggled to explain what the differences were between acting and speaking, let alone praying, in "real life."

"When I'm acting I'm putting on a role, creating a character out of the words and actions the playwright has given me," I offered. "They aren't my words or ideas, even though I try to 'motivate' them and make them sound like they came from my experience. But a prayer . . .," my voice trailed off, "those words would have to come from me. They would have to be real."

Not that art isn't real in the deepest sense. I have always believed that art above all things deals with what is true and eternal. But what I was beginning to realize was that I could not separate art from the making of art. I could not tell the dancer from the dance, so to speak. With theater this was permissible, even desirable. Giving reality to a playwright's truth was a cooperative act, something I believed in and, on a certain level, understood. But with prayer, with God, there was a truth apart from me, a truth I had no part in creating.

Moreover, God was not simply a playwright. This much I knew, but I did not yet know who God was or what I believed in, and that is why I was having trouble praying in public. Spiritually, I had come to a stopping point. I could not stand up in front of people I admired and respected and "act" a prayer. I could not say anything in the way of faith or belief I did not think was true. The pastor of the church I belonged to, a liberal and compassionate man,

finally helped me write a prayer, and I muddled through without betraying my own integrity or, I hoped, God's. Still, the experience left me with a deep sense of unease.

Much in my life has changed since then. Now I am a United Methodist minister in a small, rural church in southern Michigan. I pray in public all the time. I pray unceasingly. And as I look back I realize that the most valuable part of my GRJC experience was that it propelled me into a much more conscious journey of faith. Actually, being at GRJC did the provocative, motivating thing we always hope an institution of higher learning will do: it inspired me to ask questions and challenged me to learn more. I had always felt called to the ministry; but at the time I entered undergraduate study, young women were not encouraged to become pastors. Choosing to be a teacher, even earning my graduate degrees, were alternatives to attending seminary, and they never felt fully satisfying.

Today, as a minister, I feel I have come home to my heart's desire, to a peace and contentment that are beyond describing. Yet I know that everything I learned and practiced as an instructor at GRJC has been invaluable training for ministry. I bless my days at "JC" and the wonderful colleagues who made me doubt and think and grow. God be with you, in all things, always.