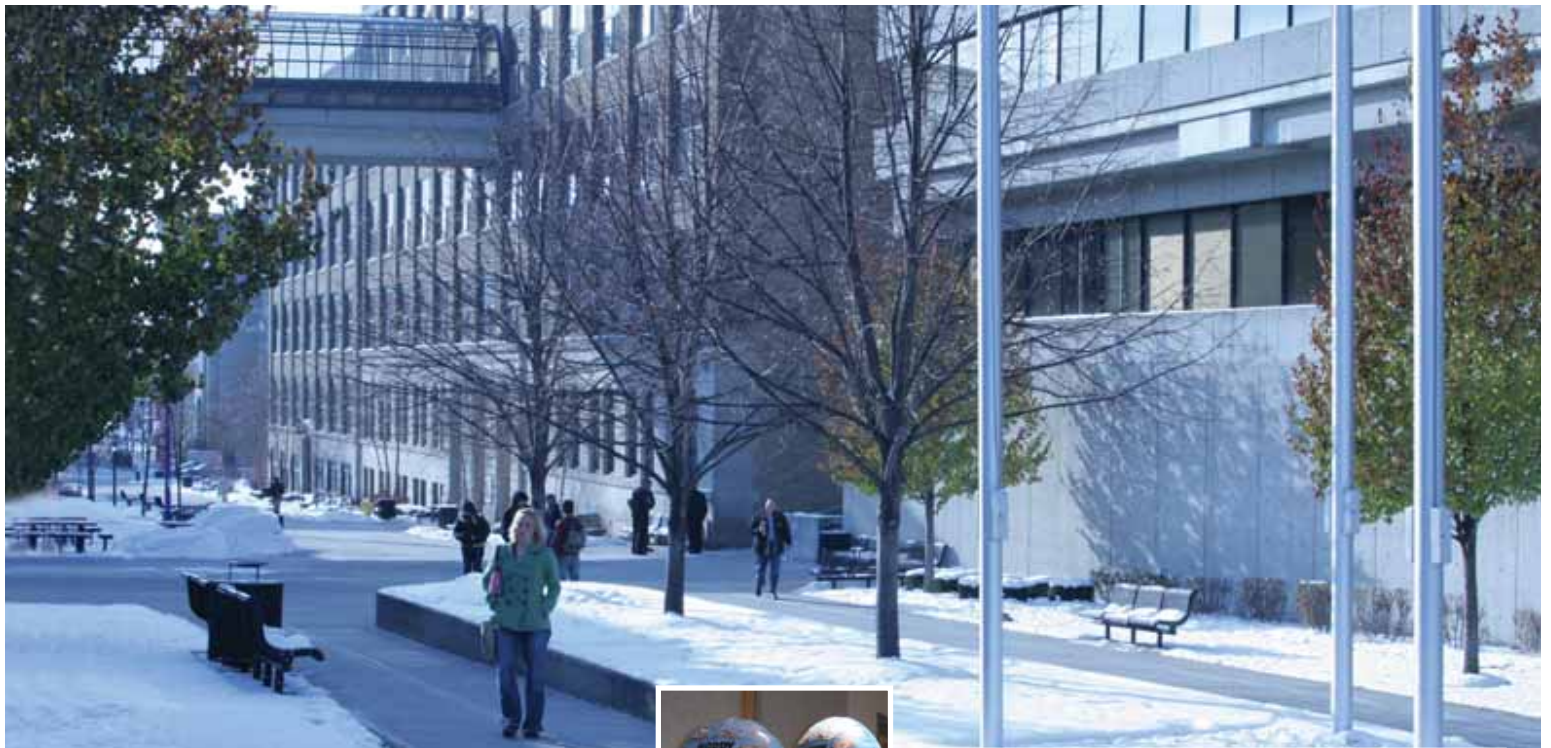




*Ninth Edition  
December 2006*

# Retirees' Quarterly



[www.grcc.edu](http://www.grcc.edu)

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## ***A Note from Andy Bowne*** **Director of the Foundation**



Happy New Year!

2006 was a great year for the GRCC Foundation. We raised more money than ever before. We moved into a new “home” on the 1st floor of College Park Plaza, and we’ve moved to a new level of activity and success.

Just prior to the Holiday Shutdown the \$10 million initial goal for the Open Door Campaign was realized. Many of you supported this campaign with financial gifts as well as gifts of time and talent. Thank you.

The Open Door Campaign will continue through June 2007. We have donors to meet with and alumni to contact. There are millions of dollars of proposals in the works.

One proposal that we have been working on is the “Great Expectations” proposal created by our own Keith Longberg. The proposal provides for mentoring and scholarships for GRPS sixth graders who are identified as least likely to succeed. This proposal grew legs in December with a lead gift from one of our local corporations. We can now launch the program for the spring. In order to sustain this program we will need to create a \$4 million endowment. Great Expectations has been a dream of Keith’s for years. We’re thrilled that it can now become a reality.

The GRCC Foundation offered an estate planning workshop to interested retirees and employees. Glen Borre (GRCC Foundation Board Member) and Chris Edgar, both are attorneys at Miller Johnson, led the workshop to approximately 30 participants. The Foundation is in a position to receive planned gifts as we seek to build our endowments.

We were at risk of losing the McCabe-Marlowe House. The House has been a financial challenge for the Foundation for many years. Dr. Olivarez presented a plan to the Foundation Board of Directors that increases the use of the House for donor relations, private events held by donors, etc. We have also created a funding strategy to support necessary renovations and on-going operations. Our goal is to create a \$1.5 million endowment to meet these needs.

I know that many of you have fond memories of the Million Dollar Faculty. We have committed to putting a new annual giving plan in place that will be a second Million Dollar Faculty program. It won’t look exactly like the original but there will be some similarities. I suspect that there may be retirees who would be interested in providing “external match” for the pledges of current faculty members.

If anything catches your attention and you’d like to discuss it, please call me or send me an email. Thank you for your help in making 2006 a terrific year. We wish you a peace-filled, healthy, prosperous New Year!

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## *Off the Cuff* by Keith Longberg, English



The July 2006 issue of the *Quarterly* included an article by Dr. Bud Elve, entitled “Evolution or evolution,” and in that issue we invited your response to his article because of its controversial topic. No response was received for the October edition, and we again invited a response. It is an important mission of institutions of higher learning to provide a forum for serious inquiry into important issues of our day. Competing concepts should have equal opportunity for serious and dispassionate consideration.

We have received an article supporting the idea of “Intelligent Design” as well as two articles supporting the concept of Evolution. The three articles take up a lot of space, and we will run one rebuttal to Dr. Elve’s article in the issue, and hold the article about Intelligent Design, and the other rebuttal, written by invitation by a current member of the faculty for the April issue because of its length. We welcome this discussion in the *Quarterly*. We will not have exhausted that topic, of course, but will move on to other topics in the future.

\* \* \*

In this issue, we note with deep regret the passing of two of our colleagues, William Dix, Language Arts Division (page 4) and Leanna Siegrist, (page 16).

\* \* \*

Copy for this issue of the *Quarterly* came to us slowly since our last issue, and we were afraid that we would not have enough copy to go to press. Dee Palmer has been calling (sometimes long distance) and writing people trying to get them to write. “People say they ‘can’t write’ or are ‘too busy, or “let the people in the English Department do the writing,” she says. We appreciate her work. We don’t buy the “can’t write” claim from college graduates at all, and not the “too busy” claim either. Being “too busy” is a sign of good mental health, which means you must have something to say, something to share with us. Let’s have it.

Writing for the *GRCC Quarterly* is not like writing for the *New Yorker*, or *Harpers*, or even a college class. We are only asking for a page or two, maybe 500 to 1,000 words. You can use up that many words telling someone something on the phone or over coffee in just a couple minutes! This isn’t a big deal, and you can send us copy in any format you want without worrying about technical errors, etc. You will get an “A” anyway. We hope to get articles from many people who have not yet contributed to the publication. We will appreciate your cooperation and your colleagues will enjoy reading your article. Please send copy (and a picture) as soon as possible. Deadline for the April edition is March 15th. Please don’t wait for the deadline.

\* \* \*

We wish to thank Dr. Olivarez and the Board for their support for the printing and mailing of this publication. It shows that they favor promoting our continued identity with the college and the sense of community this publication strives to promote.

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## ***Bill Dix (1930-2006) Continues to Teach, and I Continue to Learn from Him***

**By Philip Jung, Philosophy**



I learned a very valuable lesson a few months ago from a colleague whom I've regarded as a friend and mentor for almost four decades. It's a lesson grown out of a truism that I've heard so often over my lifetime that until I learned it from him it was never much more than another tiresome cliché to me. The truism is, You're never too old to learn.

What I learned from Bill Dix is this: You can relish the mystery and the joy of learning right up to your death. Even a death from glioblastoma. The deadliest type of brain cancer. After a year spent in combat with this invariable killer, Bill succumbed early Sunday morning, last October 8. But not before he bestowed upon me a part of himself that will last the rest of my life.

Of course, in order to experience the joy and mystery of learning right up to the end, you've got to have some luck on your side. You've got to be lucky enough not to have experienced the kind of debilitating pain and disorientation that often accompanies late stage glioblastoma, and which usually necessitates large doses of Vicodin or Darvocet until it's time for the final palliative, morphine. If you have that kind of luck – and, considering the virulence of glioblastoma, you can consider yourself blessed if you do – then, when the learning finally comes to an end, your survivors can consider your final moments a good death. Bill Dix's death was no more and no less than the culmination of a life nobly lived.

On Bill's last Tuesday, he lay in the hospital bed that had been set up for him a month earlier in the spacious den of the modest, tidy colonial home he and Liz had lived in for four decades, raising three children – Susan, John, and Martha – and lately hosting six grandchildren. The room has a large bay window overlooking their well-tended, deep backyard that ends abruptly at a wall of trees, part of a thirty-acre woodlot that separates their neighborhood from the bustle of Grandville north from the woods to 28th Street. Much of his waking day was spent gazing out that window at the lush green grass and the thick woods from his prone position on the bed from which he could no longer rise or even sit up by himself.

At the head of the bed bookshelves rose to the ceiling and at the other end of the room more shelves stood on a wide counter on which a computer and some stereo components sat. On those more distant shelves Bill, at this late stage, could make out only vague shapes and blurred colors of the many biographies and histories that he had read, and the long line of narrow books marked "Today" on their spines – years' worth of records of daily events that he considered notable. The books behind his bed he couldn't see at all because he no longer was able to turn his head even to cast a sidelong glance at them. Sitting next to him, I smiled at the old matching volumes of Wordsworth and of Dickens that I saw, the collections of Irving and of Hardy and so many others that Bill had devoured over the many years of his academic career, from his college days at his beloved University of Michigan through his forty years at GRJC/CC. (Bill started teaching there, after several years at South High School, in 1965.)

"Do you still have any of that literature going through your head, Bill?" I asked him out of respect for his marvelously deep and capacious intellect. Although he had taught mostly

English composition, continuing with one or two classes a semester even during retirement simply because of the purity of his love of teaching and of students, I always identified him as the Eminent Professor of British Literature, a course he created and taught for well over thirty years.

“Oh, yes,” he said. His voice, always a rich baritone, was now hoarse and weak, and he could move his head only with effort to look at me. “I think of Dickens,” he said, and he rattled off favorite scenes from a number of stories.

“How about poetry? Do you still recite your favorites?”

“Wordsworth,” he rasped. “Up with me! Up with me into the clouds! / For thy song, Lark, is strong; / Up with me, up with me into the clouds! / Singing, singing, / With clouds and sky above thee ringing, / Lift me, guide me, till I find / That spot that seems so to my mind.”

These are the lines he recited. I looked up the poem, “To a Sky-Lark,” and wrote down the words later on at home. The recitation seemed to tire him, so I began to read from the book we’d agreed upon weeks earlier, while he convalesced for a month at Covenant Village, still entertaining the notion that he might improve. It was an oral history compiled by Studs Terkel titled, *And They All Sang*, featuring John Jacob Niles, Marian Anderson, Louis Armstrong, Leonard Bernstein, Birgit Nilsson, Bob Dylan, and many other composers, musicians, and singers.

As I listened to Bill’s notably labored breathing, I read the recollections of Marian Anderson, one of his favorite singers. He had turned his head as far as he could toward me and I could tell he was straining to hear. His eyes, only half open, probably could barely see me.

“Mama had looked forward so many years to this time when I might appear with a regular company at the Metropolitan Opera House,” I read. “And Mother, who was not a demonstrative person, that night had a glow around her that cannot be described. . .”

“That’s interesting,” Bill interrupted.

Later, Anderson recalled a trip to Bangkok, where Thai children had been taught old American spirituals. After their performance, the “stoic” children “came out and stood by [our] car, and the first one put her hand just across my fingernails. Then there was another hand up to maybe the knuckles, then another, until there were hands all the way up to my shoulder, and some girls were leaning almost into the car, and they looked at each other in astonishment and then there was laughter. I had never seen that happen before. . .”

“That’s really interesting,” Bill said again. “I didn’t know she went to Thailand. That’s really interesting.”

All the time I sat there with him I knew that Bill was preparing to check out. I knew somehow that I would not see him next week. I gazed at his face, expressionless and swollen from doses of steroids, his half-open yellowing eyes, the ravished crown of his head. “Yes, it is interesting,” I said. “Yes it is. Very,” he responded.

On Thursday as I sat with him, he was pretty much unresponsive. Liz said that he still had no lingering pain, though the pressure of the rapidly expanding tumor was beginning to make itself felt. He was sleeping quite a bit of his time now, she told me, then graciously left me to quietly sit with him as she tended to her granddaughter. I sat still for an hour, listening to his rattly, laborious breathing, remembering many things. Then I started reading the section

by Segovia. After a few minutes, the breathing quieted and, with considerable effort, Bill turned his head a few degrees in my direction and barely opened his sightless eyes. I greeted him. His return was a forced whisper.

There was clearly nothing more important I could do than resume reading.

“Francisco Tarrega was a great master,” Segovia said. “I did not know him. He died when I was fifteen years old. He could not give the guitar the popularity it deserved because he very seldom gave concerts. . .”

“I didn’t know that,” Bill whispered. The words, the declaration of ignorance in the past tense, implied that he now knew something he hadn’t known. He was still learning, and underlying his words, now, in this condition, I heard a sense of marvel.

I continued with Segovia. “I heard the guitar played by people with very rough hands. Despite that, the sound of the guitar by itself, its melancholy, moved me more than any other instrument. . .”

“Yes,” murmured Bill.

“The guitar is descended from the ancient kithara, Greek,” I read. “There were two gods, Hermes and Apollo. Hermes invented the lyre and Apollo the kithara. Hermes found it in nature: the form of the lyre assumes the shell of the turtle. . .”

“I didn’t know that,” he whispered, this time with a hint of amazement, at least as much as he could muster.

“I didn’t either,” I rejoined.

“No, I didn’t know that,” he said again

And he said it again and again as I continued to read, and after I finally said good bye for the last time and drove home, he said it again and again in my head, where it continues its quiet, humble intonation in moments of revelation daily, hourly, with each book I read, each conversation I engage in, each new sensation I savor. I carry Bill Dix within me as do so many others whom he touched, and that is what I know of life after death. I didn’t know that before.

*Note:* All textual quotes are from Studs Terkel, *And They All Sang*, The New Press, 2005.

## ***Virginia Wierenga’s Artwork is On Display***

This fall I was accepted by the **Eyecons Gallery at 210 East Fulton** in Grand Rapids and was honored to be one of the artists featured in their show “Art Meeting the Sacred”. Check out [www.eyekons.com](http://www.eyekons.com). Also, I have 31 pieces of art and note cards in a new gallery in Lowell, the **Fire and Water Gallery is at 219 West Main**. You can see some of my art at [www.vwierenga.blogspot.com](http://www.vwierenga.blogspot.com) and soon my work will be displayed on [www.virginiawierenga.com](http://www.virginiawierenga.com). There’s currently a ‘vanilla page’ there but the rest will be coming shortly.

## ***Hi-ho, Hi-Ho, It's off to work I go!***

by Carol Redwine, Language Arts

According to the Dec 3 Grand Rapids Press, “69 % of the nation’s 77 million baby boomers plan to find jobs....about half of those retirees will work because they want to....”

So it seems.

I have watched so many of my colleagues count down the days to their own retirement, and that countdown took on many forms. Some marked off each day on a special calendar; others counted the number of commencements they had left to attend. Those who weren’t as close as others counted the years they had until age 60 or 62 if they wanted a serving of early Social Security with their pensions).

No matter what, most people saw retirement as that long-awaited sigh of relief from having to get up early, fight weather and traffic, and grade those stacks of papers from students who seemed to have already retired in their own way.

Then a funny thing happened on their way to the golf course (or tennis courts, or the Poconos). Some of them stopped at GRCC and *stayed a while longer*. What on earth were they thinking?

Those who returned probably thought the same way that I did after this past June 1: “This is a great place to work, I have friends here, and now I can set my own schedule. There are only so many clothes to wash, so much carpet to vacuum, and daytime television could dry up my brain in no time. I don’t want to stay home.

Hi-ho, hi-ho, so it’s back to work I go. I realize that there are other interests at the college that I can now pursue because I don’t have the paper load. I can stay intellectually engaged because I have time to do that extra bit of research or reading. I can use skills that I have in another department who needs the extra help. This business of retirement is turning into just that—business.

My business is now helping aspiring teachers to become more culturally competent. As multicultural support services coordinator for teacher education, I continue in a department that I worked with part-time while I was teaching composition. I stay in touch with students, but in another capacity, and I interact with new colleagues. I haven’t lost touch with my former English Department colleagues, though, because I always find a reason to get some insights on 5 North – I mean Cook Hall.

See, many things change when we retire: building names, department locations, and job titles. Still there is one constant—the yearning to stay engaged in what gives us a sense of purpose. Whether it’s writing a book, composing music, traveling, returning to part-time employment, or simply enjoying time to ourselves, retirement is a second chance. It’s an opportunity full of possibilities. It moves the “wish I had” to “now I can.”

Retirement used to conjure up images of sitting back and watching the world go by from a Lazy-Boy recliner. Now some of us may be in the showroom selling those Lazy-Boys. What? Me retire? Don’t count on it!

## ***Biology in Miss C's Class***

by **Richard Reid, German, Humanities**



Of course there are many examples of statistics with built-in distortion, whose errors are only apparent to those few sophisticates of the science. We have all known such skewing, but one particular example stands out as one of its most egregious iterations. Like physics and chemistry, tenth grade biology invited my avid interest in things scientific. Miss C., the middle-aged teacher, had set up what she considered a well-designed bulletin board. A conspicuous statistical map of Cleveland, Ohio, was posted on her bulletin board. Normally such a map would elicit in students a desire to understand some new and interesting aspect of the city. This map did that and much more. Each dot on the map indicated a multiple of incidences of reported venereal disease in the city, a fact which, by itself, could have represented a significantly important survey. But most of the those dots populated the Central district where I lived. In fact there were so many dots, the meager space allowed by the scale of the map well nigh blackened Central district, thinning only when nearing the neighborhood's boundaries. The spare few dots that appeared in Collinwood district or on the West side clearly showed that those outside Central were exemplars of sexual self-restraint and moral distinction. Of course this was utter nonsense compounded by jackassery!

Of whatever ethnicity, every one of us had been woefully deluded. No fifteen year old from Cleveland or anywhere had more than a modicum of experience with statistics. Who could forestall the embarrassment felt each time one's eyes and those of fellow students took in the message of that map and then met the reproving eyes of other students? What could prevent some students from assuming a hollow superciliousness? The African-American students who lived in the Mt. Pleasant district where many of the upwardly mobile black middle class strove in the 1940s and 1950s may have felt little or no connection to Central. From my poor perspective, they may have joined the others in silent condemnation rather than to appear allied to Central's population.

Far more tragic than the misleading map with its dotted decree was Miss C's failure to alert us about the potential nefariousness of statistical stigma, especially about its censure cast preponderantly on one district and on its black residents. Such a map merely cited the reports of the very public health clinics where significant percentages of poor people sought medical care. Although such health records may have preserved individual, personal privacy, their general dissemination nevertheless became public domain to pinpoint opprobrium against Central and hence against its overwhelmingly black residents. The extravagance of convenient laxity in such a map was that no dots documented private medical records, which, had they been publicized as well, would have distributed dots sufficient to create a wash of gray all over Cleveland.

But Miss C let the map's unspoken obliquity of African-American inferiority and immorality stand unchallenged. It suited the fine-tuned sense of European preeminence and entitlement of 1957 (and even of more recent times—O, William Shockley, how could you busy yourself with intelligence and complexion? Why didn't you concentrate on perfecting your transistors?). However, had Miss C been prepared to break tradition and teach us about

this kind of mapped intellectual dishonesty, we would have been far richer for it, and the map would have been relegated to the trash heap rather than holding for an entire semester its all-too-prominent position on a classroom bulletin board. If she had disputed the map's presumption, if she had taken issue with its covert suggestion of popularly conjectured European hegemony, if she had asserted the falsity of such statistical meanderings, what words could bear sufficient meaning to describe such a teacher?

Many years would pass before I could understand and properly express what had taken place in that biology class almost fifty years ago. Although it saddens me to think what might have been, I am not embittered. Over the years along with many others, Miss C has become a kind of inspiration, and perhaps that has made all the difference in how to teach and how not to.

\* \* \*

***You Are Invited:***  
***Call for Nominations for***  
***Emeritus Faculty/Administrator Award***  
**by Debbie Dewent, Provost Office**

The Emeritus Faculty/Administrator Award was established in 1985 to recognize and bestow "Emeritus" status upon a retired faculty member or administrator. The award is presented each year in the month of May, at the annual All Employee Recognition Reception. The recipient is also recognized at the Golden Raiders Retiree Reception and during Commencement exercises.

Anyone may nominate a retired faculty member or administrator for this prestigious award. Nomination Forms may be obtained by visiting the Provost web site at [www.grcc.edu/provost](http://www.grcc.edu/provost) or calling the Provost Office at (616) 234-3920 and one will be mailed to you. Nominations must be made by February 1, 2007. Nominations are to be mailed to:

**Provost Office**  
**Grand Rapids Community College**  
**143 Bostwick Avenue, NE**  
**Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

If you have any questions regarding the award or the nomination process, please call the Provost Office at (616) 234-3920. [ddewent@grcc.edu](mailto:ddewent@grcc.edu)

***Our African Adventure***  
***Was Alluring and Awesome***  
**by Pat Bloom, Nursing Instructor**



Travelers who go to Africa want to see wild animals in their natural habitat. If they asked me, I would tell them the animals are wonderful, but Tanzania, the area we visited, had a great deal to explore, observe and study besides all the animals. Africa was stunning, scary, delightful and puzzling.

Viewing unusual terrain close up and so different intrigued me. Areas seemed to have many different birds and animals. The large, fierce animals in all areas were eager to kill in order to prevent starvation. This, we realized, keeps the many species healthy and numerous. Balance is necessary in all forms of life. After viewing the cycle of the kill, hunger and devouring of the meat, we realized this was a necessity for African animal life. The Maasai, a nomadic tribe we visited, we found to be very interesting. The people were delightful to observe but very unusual in dress and living style. I cannot describe the beauty of Africa. Animals, trees, flowers and wonderful sunsets warmed our hearts and souls. This is the Africa I saw and loved. The Africa I hope to return to some day.

The trip started from Grand Rapids to Detroit, with a stop in Amsterdam, and then on to Tanzania. We were with one other couple, good friends of ours, and we were all excited and rather anxious. The boys informed us that half of the trip we would sleep in lodges and half of our nights in tents. The girls were quite unsure of the idea of living in a tent part time. We were all dressed for our journey in ugly brown or beige safari clothing. We wore baggy clothes and vests with many pockets filled with bug spray and camping objects.

The first stop of our journey was a beautiful lodge in Arusha, near Mt. Kilimanjaro, called Mountain Village Lodge. We knew the last night of our trip would be in the same area. The lodge was nestled in a coffee estate surrounded by hills, unusual flowers and birds. We could view a lake from our room, Lake Duluti, and also Mount Meru. The structures at the lodge were round and had thatched roofs. The view from our rooms was breathtaking.

African sunsets are hard to describe. They are very colorful and vivid. Many times we took pictures of the sunsets with unusual trees such as Acacia or Baobab in the picture. Elephants and giraffes frequently got into a picture with the sunset. What a sight!

Our first camping experience was in Tarangire National Park. The give large guest tents were attractive, clean, and comfortable. The king-size bed was framed in mosquito netting but we never saw many flies or mosquitoes. A small tent attached to a larger (main) tent contained a sink, weird toilet (stool) and “weider” shower. Each guest tent had an African guard to take care of the guests and do the house cleaning. Their duties included making beds, sweeping, and filling the toilet and shower bags with water. These bags were outside of the tent and they filled them when necessary. This took time to accept but soon we were comfortable with these facilities. The dining tents were beautiful with an African motif. The food was outstanding and this tent had a well-stocked liquor bar.

The main guide was a Maasai, and his name was Elias. He spoke excellent English and

could tell us about all the animals we saw. He informed us about African history and told us interesting stories concerning Maasai life. Every night we talked around an outdoor fire. The tent guards were always near us with flashlights.

Some nights, during the darkness we heard chewing outside of our tent. This was the sound of grazing zebras next to the tent. Lions were kept away by motion, such as campfires, and guards' flashlights. It wasn't very long and we lost all our concerns about the camping experience and really enjoyed the camp.

The vegetation zones changed very quickly as we traveled in our Land Rovers on safari. We drove through large areas of white powder grassland, swamps filled with hippotamus, forests, etc. Sometimes it was very bumpy and dusty. The Kopic (rocky outcrops) were beautiful and favorite "hangouts" for lionesses and cubs.

Next, we stayed at Lake Manyara Serena Lodge in Lake Manyara National Park. This area supports a large chain of lakes in Africa's Great Rift Valley. The lodge had nature trails and a beautiful swimming pool. We went on a late afternoon safari and observed the five large animals all African travelers hope to see. The five include elephants, Cape buffalo, hippopotamus, rhinoceros and lions. We saw many, many other species of animals. We watched them play, eat, mate, and care for their young. The animals appear tame because they are very used to seeing Land Rovers and came right up to our vehicle.

I really enjoyed the animals' mealtime. We saw a wildebeest and zebra killed and eaten. The female lion/lions would catch their prey, kill it, and then allow the male to eat. The female wasn't allowed to eat until after the male. He allowed cubs to eat next, and the last of all the female lions. Isn't this just like a male? The Hyenas would watch and when all the lions were done, they would clean up bones, hair, etc. and leave nothing on the ground.

The elephants were very interesting and very large. They would walk right up to our vehicle, look at us, and turn away. They could have easily pushed us over but in our Land Rover they found our vehicle and us very interesting. Mother elephants keep their young under them as they eat, swim, and walk. The baby elephants are a great meal for lions, cheetahs, and alligators.

The giraffes looked so strange eating the tops off of the trees. When they wanted to eat ground grass, they spread their long legs far apart and nibbled grass between the two front legs. Elias said they aren't very smart and don't care for their offspring well. Sixty percent of baby giraffes become prey to large animals.

Two nights we spent camping in the Ngorogoro Highlands. The camp was perched on the rim of the Ngorongoro crater. This crater is considered one of the natural wonders of the world. From our camping spot we looked down 2,000 feet into a large bowl filled with wildlife. It was very cold on the rim so we wore coats, hats, mittens and a red Maasai blanket



around us. We descended on safari into the crater and observed many large beautiful birds, many animals, and Maasai herdsmen with their cattle.

Our last days were spent in the Serengeti area. The Serengeti Serena Lodge was beautiful and it seemed great to have the comfort of heat, excellent food, a swimming area, and a shower where you could use all the water you wanted.

After an overnight in the lodge, we went into the camping area in the Serengeti, which was very exclusive, comfortable, and beautiful. The Serengeti area is the location of the spectacular wildebeest and zebra migration, but we weren't there at the correct time to see the migration. We did see large flocks of animals. The animals are searching for fresh grass.

One day we visited a Maasai village. I will never forget this fascinating experience. I never realized there are colonies of human beings still alive and functioning like the Maasai. The village was out in the dusty plain and it was very windy and sand was blowing. The people were all dressed in red wool with beautiful beading on their skin and clothing. They were covered with sand.

The Maasai are very tall and dark skinned. They like to accent their height so they jump straight in the air at times. The warriors carry tall sticks. I noticed all the people had holes in their earlobes and some body piercing. We couldn't understand their speech. It was called "Maa". A very few people spoke English.

The Maasai currency is cattle. A man's wealth depends on the number of cows he owns. Their lives consist of searching for grass and water for their herd. They need to move their villages frequently to find new sources of food for their cattle. When they move, the women build the homes in a circle. The house is small, very low and made of grass, sticks and dung. Pricker trees make a fence around the whole village for safety. I was very surprised that they looked so healthy and were energetic. Their diet consisted of only meat (beef and goat), milk, blood, and honey.

Elias told stories about the Maasai initiation into puberty, warriorship, elderhood, and death. I found these customs very interesting. Maasai culture, with time, will probably disappear. They have no weapons to confront the modern world. They need education, land, and resources to enable them to fit into a money economy. The land is being colonized so it is being taken from the Maasai.

What a journey we had – our fears concerning the unknown quickly disappeared. The cycle of animal existence was very interesting. The hunting and killing of animals and eating their bodies are part of the African animal life. It is necessary for existence and keeps all animals healthy. The whole African experience was very positive. We shall return to this romantic, addictive, amazing area.

## ***The American (Dis)enlightenment***

**by Richard Kurzhals, Social Science**

The July 2006 article in the "Quarterly" entitled "What is it: Evolution or evolution" raises an important issue in American society. Should we answer questions and solve problems by science or theology? The answer of course is we should use both science and theology to answer questions, but the questions answered by each are quite different questions.

### Modes of Order:

We are perplexed and become anxious when we have unanswered questions. If humans do not know the answer to a question, they often make up an answer (ex: the Norse god Thor beating on the clouds to create thunder and lightning). We have difficulty saying, "I do not know." Over the generations people have attempted to answer questions through a number of modes of order including theology, aesthetics and emotion, common sense, and science. According to geographer Robert Abler, each mode is a way of organizing and ordering information in an attempt to answer questions and glean additional information.

### Theology:

Theology appears to be one of the first order systems used and is used in countries around the world. But theological explanations to questions and problems have limitations. Theology is a non-empirical system. Theological explanations can not be tested, reexamined or verified. Instead, one either believes the explanation or does not believe in it. In short, theological explanations are authoritarian and answer questions by citing dogma rather than by testing. Moreover, these explanations are without criticism or skepticism.

Thus, theology is normally used to answer "why" questions. Why is there a universe? Why are there mountains? Why are we here? "Why?" questions are quite different from "how" questions. Theology has been unsuccessful in answering "how" questions and invariably loses credibility when it attempts such answers. Nicolas Copernicus and Galileo Galilei were early advocates of the earth revolving around the sun. Their conclusions were rejected on the basis of theology. Galileo was put under house arrest and forced to recant his conclusions. Yet, today we accept that Galileo was correct in his assessment of the solar system.

### Science:

Science being very formal and organized is well suited to answering "how?" questions. How are mountains formed? How was the universe formed? How were humans formed: A major asset of science is it can quickly "weed out" errors. In science a problem is defined, a hypothesis stated, data gathered, tested, and analyzed, and the hypothesis either confirmed or rejected based on the collected data. Errors can be quickly corrected because science follows a prescribed methodology. But, science is poorly equipped to answer "why" questions and those types of questions are left to theology.

### Evolution:

Human evolution is a "how" question. What Dr. Elve argues for in his article is a faith-based illegitimate, biological science: his faith, of course, and his interpretation. Such rejection of Evolution in favor of blind faith is in the same vein as alchemy, a flat earth, leeches, the bleeding rod, and the earth as the center of the solar system. The evidence for biological Evolutions is overwhelming and increasing yearly. The evidence for human Evolution from a scientific standpoint is clear and supported by some 98% of the biological scientists who have studied it. Those who cite the remaining 2% as evidence are arguing that "the exception makes the rule." The challenges to Evolution come from the edges of the

scientific community like computer “science” and from those who have made up their minds ahead of time based on what they believe as infallible dogma.

Belief is totally different from science. A person can believe anything. In the area of science, conclusions must be supported with evidence and testing. It would be more comforting and more accurate to read an anti-Evolution article that just says, “I believe” or “I accept,” or “I think,” rather than one that uses convoluted arguments to assign the study of Evolution to the field of history (Elve, July 2006). Such arguments show a lack of understanding of the scope and methodology of history as well as those of science and theology.

#### Scientific Methodology:

I am a cultural geographer. I do not care to argue the nuts and bolts of Evolution. Those arguments are better left to those trained in the biological sciences. They are the experts in the field and they overwhelmingly accept Evolution as a “well established explanation” for human existence. They generally feel that the supporters of creationism and Intelligent Design either do not understand the fossil record or choose to ignore the insurmountable scientific evidence that is available. Is it not odd that when historians tell us that Lincoln was an outstanding president or chemists tell us that the mixing of several chemicals will create a dangerous reaction, we accept those conclusions. We should, those people are experts in those fields. Yet, when it comes to human Evolution some people reject out of hand the conclusions of experts because the conclusions conflict with their own predetermined beliefs.

What I am most concerned about is the preservation of scientific principles. Science should not be polluted with ideas that can not be scientifically supported by rigorous testing. I wonder how many indoctrinated young people leave home each year for universities where they study geology, astronomy, biology and archaeology and as they return home on vacation they look their parents in the eyes and wonder what else the parents have lied to them about.

#### (Dis)Enlightenment

The problem today is much larger than an assault on Evolution. Political leaders in Washington who are pandering for votes have begun to defy scientific conclusions. This defiance has come in the areas of biotechnology, climate studies, and petroleum geology. This American (dis)enlightenment is having profound influences in climatology, federal drug approval, biological research, medical research, and disease control. Former Republican strategist Kevin Phillips suggests that we are now experiencing the greatest “threat to science since the Catholic Church put Galileo under house arrest for heresy.”

#### American Dark Ages:

Far too many Americans are being asked to out-source their reasoning. Other creationism and the junk science, Intelligent design are examples of the substitution of faith for reason. Once again religious extremists are attempting to answer “how” questions rather than sticking to the usual “why” questions. The rejection of evidence and reason has led the national government to reject scientific reports on ecology, stem cells, contraception, and a variety of other topics. Many Americans now advocate not only faith-based social relief but

have expanded their desires to have a faith-based war, faith-based science, faith-based education, and faith-based medicine.

Clearly the attacks on Evolution are only the tip of the iceberg. Proponents of such faith-based programs are advocating willful ignorance. The use of faith to answer “how” questions would eliminate the fields of geology, archaeology, paleontology, biology, physical geography, climatology, and astronomy as well as parts of many other disciplines. Critics of Evolution, through their pseudo-theology, are encouraging a rejection of knowledge, and American (dis)enlightenment, and American Dark Ages.

### ***A Letter to Retirees:***

Today is a great day for the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel (MARSP) and the retirees represented by MARSP. Bonnie Carpenter, Executive Director, has sent out this information. Please forward this informational to family and/or friends who are retired public school employees or about to retire.

1. After 10 years of working on a remarriage bill, it finally passed both houses of the legislature on December 14, 2006, the final day of the 2005-06 Legislature! It does not take effect until January 1, 2009. Therefore, I (Bonnie) will have the details available at the 2007 area conferences. This bill allows public school employees to name a second spouse as retirement beneficiary if first spouse predeceases him or her and naming of spouse as beneficiary if marriage occurs after retirement allowance effective date. Many individuals have expressed interest in this bill.

It now requires the signature of Governor Granholm and we expect she will sign the bill. Thank you for each of you who contacted your Representative regarding this bill (SB 1017 that came to the House). The grass roots process is working.

2. The effort to change the defined benefit plan to the defined contribution plan has died! Thanks again for your grass roots efforts with your Legislators. Maybe the message of the KARSP-Friday forum is getting through. We can not let up, because it will be back.

3. Here’s another reason to celebrate today ... the MARSP nominee to the NRTA Pension Round Table, William J. Lawson of Livonia, will be appointed to a 3-year term! What more could we ask for in one day? For your information, William J. Lawson is a MARSP member who is the MARSP representative on the MPSERS Board.

Congratulations are in order to the MARSP staff for their leadership in achieving these great issues. Congratulations are also in order to each retiree who has “lobbied” his/her Legislator regarding these issues.

If you would like to be added to our email list, please let me know at [daveshirl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:daveshirl@sbcglobal.net). If you would like to be removed from this informational list, also let me know

**Dave Steinfort**, KARSP-Friday Coordinator.

***Sadly, We Note the Passing of  
Our colleague, Leanna Siegrist, Secretary***  
**Grand Rapids Press, Oct. 23. 2006**

Leanna Grace (Faulk) Siegrist, aged 72, passed away at peace in her home, surrounded by the family who so cherished and adored her. True to her indomitable spirit, she resolutely prepared herself and her family for her transition in the five weeks after she was diagnosed with cancer. A selfless mother, wife, sister, friend, and community volunteer, she is survived and carried forever in the hearts of her husband of 50 years, Thomas David Siegrist; her children, Cindy and Craig Siegrist Berthold, Mike and Misty Siegrist, Mark Siegrist, Lisa Siegrist Fuhr, Robert Siegrist, and Allan and Marcie Siegrist; her grandchildren, Aicha and Mia (Mark) Siegrist, Joshua, Jeremy and Jordan Fuhr, and Trevor, Brendan, and Brady (Allan) Siegrist; and her sisters, Sadie (Carroll) Duhon, and Beverly (Nicky) Mitchell. Leanna was born January 15, 1934 in Abbeville, La.

After receiving a degree from USL, she began teaching Home Economics in Houma, La. There, she met her husband, Dave, an air force lieutenant from Michigan stationed in the same city. Upon moving to Grand Rapids in 1962, she took great pride and pleasure in providing a loving, nurturing, and supportive environment for her family, in which education, a good work ethic, self-discipline, self-reliance, and doing the right thing were consistently exemplified and valued.

After raising her children, Leanna returned to the field of education and worked for many years as an executive secretary at Grand Rapids Junior College/GRCC from where she retired in 1999. Upon retirement Leanna enjoyed keeping up with her active family and friends, babysitting her grandchildren, reading, gardening, and traveling to places such as Europe, Morocco, the Caribbean, and China.

She also spent countless hours as a volunteer in the Sallie Bender Guild in the gift shop at the downtown Spectrum Campus. Leanna epitomized her middle name of Grace. She was a woman of enduring beauty (inside and out), simple elegance, quiet dignity, modesty, and a sly sense of humor. She showed us all the true meaning of the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words," in such a way that family and friends never questioned her unconditional love for them.

Leanna had boundless energy that she most often drew upon to support others. Even those half her age could not keep up with her. She was intelligent, highly capable, organized, logical, and practical, always discerning between the essential and the frivolous. As one of her dear friends wrote her in a letter "In any association you may not be the tallest gal (at four foot eleven), but you would always be the most outstanding wife, mother, neighbor, friend, employee, volunteer, etc." She was loved and respected in any community she became a part of. At the end, she gave the family a wonderful gift of sharing her death with us and bringing us all closer in the process.

A Memorial Service was held at Zaagman Memorial Chapel on October 26. She was laid to rest at Woodlawn Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of Michigan. "She is more precious than rubies." "She is the tree of life to those who embrace her." Proverbs 3.

***What Goes on Behind the Scenes  
On a State Board and Commission?***  
by Stu Meyers, Technology Division Instructor

Some J.C. instructors and friends have asked me, “What does one do as a member of Bill Milliken’s Environmental Review Board or as a member of the Department of Natural Resources Commission (DNR) under Jim Blanchard and John Engler?” I hesitate to talk or write about it as some people may think it sounds like an ego trip for me. If so, I apologize.

Bill Milliken’s sojourn occurred while I was a J.C. instructor. It involved review of State projects, big and small, relative to environmental impact. Two reviews served to bring this former J.C. instructor down to the real facts of life. One involved a Mafia proposal for a land fill along the Grand River. My vote was against the proposal. However, no cement shoes were made for me. The other was an analysis of a half billion dollar set of road projects. The next day it was necessary to sign my name at our college to get a 15 cent red pencil to mark student papers. Obviously, our budget was rather low.

The DNR exposure was more fulfilling. Plus, as a new retiree, more of my time was available so I could become more a part of the DNR affairs. It took about a year to learn the job. Although as a former president of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, I had some familiarity with many of the people and programs.

The question is often asked, can an individual have an impact in such a large bureaucracy? The answer is yes. Here are some illustrations: The first of our “rails to trails” programs, Hart to Montague, needed the muscle and know-how of Gordon Guyer and Stu Meyers. Two citizens doing groundwork needed help on invading the bureaucracy and establishing funding sources. This included convincing the Parks Division they were going to become involved in linear parks!

Bear management was put on a more scientific basis by my intervention.... as were salmon and herring limits. A 165 million dollar settlement came about in court because the Commission, led by guess who, refused to accept a \$35 million proposal by Consumers Power Company, i.e., Ludington Pump Storage effect on the Lake Michigan fishery. Contested case hearings involving citizens versus supposed DNR staff miscues were settled by the DNR Commission. Some commissioners tended to decide by heart rather than law. I inherited the title school teacher - lawyer because of nagging the “good hearts.” As a retired J.C. instructor the time to intermingle with DNR staff as to their special projects was available, i.e. Sizuan pheasants, wolf and moose introductions, and initial studies to establish black bear population criteria.

There is a hunting knife gift in a case mounted on my Drummond Island cabin wall with the phrase, “Thanks for saving my ass - Jim Blanchard.” My tenure with Gov. Engler was short. We didn’t get along very well relative to what the precepts of conservation governing was all about. I suspect my only “no” vote on who he wanted for DNR Director didn’t help matters. Nevertheless, my work on protecting the environment has been interesting, challenging and satisfying.

*In the Middle East*  
*Life Goes on In Spite of War*  
*But as a Tourist, I Was a Curiosity*

by Dave Holkeboer, Language Arts, Film

At 6 o'clock in the morning in downtown Luxor, Egypt a grey donkey stared at me impassively. He waited patiently on a narrow dirt road while the cargo he was pulling behind him on a wooden dray with bald car tires unloaded. 100 gallons of diesel fuel in a metal tank slowly drained by gravity out of a 1" plastic hose into an underground tank to fuel the oven of a mom and pop bakery. Life is not fast in Egypt. It is not efficient, but it goes on—and on.

In many essential ways life has not changed much since the days of antiquity for which Egypt is famous, a bygone era which now accounts for most of Egypt's gross national product—tourism. Life still hinges on the lifeblood of the Nile straddled by farmland intensively cultivated to feed a fast growing urban population. From Cairo, 400 miles north, train tracks snake along one bank of the Nile, a two lane highway on the other, much like an aorta feeding oxygen to the brain.

By 6:30 am men are already gathering in the tea shops pensively meditating over their hookah water pipes. An employee busies himself stoking a charcoal stove preparing small red hot and blackened chunks of tobacco which are placed with tongs into the hookahs. Wearing a variety of headdresses and turbans with gray or brown floor length gowns, the early morning customers engage in snippets of conversation between inhaling the smoke. Some of them muse over a checkerboard in rapt silence.

I return to the Nefertiti Hotel for breakfast, included in my \$7 daily room charge, and indulge in fresh bread, which the donkey no doubt played a role in delivering, some cheese wrapped in tin foil and a cup of Nescafe.

Later I am approached on the street by a 14 year old boy with sharp eyes and a yellowish brown complexion. "Hey mister," he said, "Are you married?" Strange question, I thought, but I answered "No." Wrong answer, as it turned out. He tailed me for blocks hitting me up for a sexual tryst. Nubians, indigenous to Sudan, often migrate north for economic opportunity. Social custom in the heavily Islamic south of Egypt precludes sexual expression between unmarried men and between unmarried women, yet homosexual liaisons are viewed with equanimity. Gay sexual tourism, as it turns out, is part of the Luxor economy. The Nubian boy, whose articulate English spiel was limited strictly to the argot of his profession, ran off disappointed.

I spotted the first European face I had seen in days, a 6' 8" kidney specialist from Madrid who had taken up residence in the Red Sea port of Hurghada and joined him for tea. Disaffected by the socialized medicine in Spain, he retired at 53 and just said the hell with it. Having just arrived on an early bus from Hurghada, he needed a room and I finagled one for him at the Nefertiti. But the bed was too short.

Back in Cairo a week later I found the central bus station and, for another \$20, got a ride to the desolate Red Sea port of Nuweiba, a 7 hour night trip through the Sinai desert, a vast and unmitigated stretch of reddish gravel. The bus arrived at 4 am and dumped me off in an unimaginably dirty town, a collection of dirt roads, donkeys and a few Toyota minibuses.

By 4:20 am the pre-recorded Imam was broadcasting prayers, the first of many throughout the day, from a tinny speaker atop a minaret on the local mosque.

Although nobody seemed to notice, the prayer went on endlessly in a musical gamut of about 3 notes. It wasn't like Luxor where one could hear three or four of these prayers being broadcast simultaneously from minarets throughout the city. At one point a Catholic church near my hotel was ringing its bell at the same time.

I managed to scavenge breakfast from a series of primitive food stands not recognizing anything I ate while waiting for a ferry to take me on a four hour voyage to Aqaba at 8 a.m. It showed up at 3:30 that afternoon. Unaware of this delay I joined in a line of about four hundred impoverished Egyptians waiting to get through customs at the port. A customs official, obviously noting I was the only one in line wearing a navy Brooks Brothers blazer and white button down shirt, took me peremptorily to the front of the line and led me through customs without so much as a nod from the many immigration officials on hand. I sat down in a cavernous warehouse and waited on a hard wooden bench. All the signage was in Arabic. Even the numbers were written in Arabic, including the ferry schedules. Yet I soon came to realize I had a 7 hour wait on my hands in a dank warehouse with no sunlight. Having passed through immigration, however, I was technically no longer in Egypt and had to spend an hour enduring the process of getting back into Egypt and into the sunlight.

Hauling my suitcase over a couple blocks of gravel, I emerged back on the street, found a restaurant and the word "Eggs" in English. A clean white tourist bus was parked outside and, improbably, 25 Vancouver tourists emerged. In fresh clean Dockers and sunglasses, cameras in hand, they traipsed into the restaurant, no doubt included in their tour price. They too were waiting for the Aqaba ferry and expected to overnight at the ruins of Petra. It was on their itinerary, after all. They all looked a little dazed after having driven through the desert from St. Catherines, a small Egyptian town at the base of Mt. Sinai. They were awakened at 2 am the night before to pray on the mountain. After all, Moses received the 10 Commandments from God, perhaps there and perhaps at that same time. Lawrence, a retired shop teacher from British Columbia, said the hell with it. He wouldn't get up. They will undoubtedly be downloading hundreds of pictures of gravel when they get back to Vancouver.

Aqaba was a breath of fresh air. Drivers observed traffic laws and generally stayed in their lanes. The hotels had English names like The Golden Tulip where I stayed. In its state of the art marble lobby mideastern carpets were suspended from the ceilings to enclose a space resembling a Bedouin tent scene complete with low dark purple sofas and pillows on which one could recline. No washcloths but then no cockroaches either. Clean streets, Dominos pizza, McDonalds, and plenty of newer SUVs. I boarded a bus to Amman the next morning, a city which in 1920 simply didn't exist. Jordan is governed by a western educated second generation king and you can tell. It works. A plurality of religious and cultural orientations coexist harmoniously side by side.

The bus trip north to Damascus took 4 hours, half of that expended on the formalities of crossing the border. Good thing I didn't have an Israeli stamp in my passport or I would not have been admitted into Syria. Two veiled women sitting directly behind me on the bus curiously asked another passenger where I was from. He told them in Arabic, "the USA." They responded they didn't know where that was. Probably because of its age, Damascus is a motley melange of curved and angled streets. Gas is cheap, obviously subsidized, and cars

are in abundance, many of them dating back 20 or 30 years. The taxi I later hired to take me to Beirut was a 1960 Pontiac.

I paid \$16 and checked into the Al Saraya hotel, a collection of ten rooms, all of them empty. The owner, Mr. Hassad, greeted me warmly and summoned a boy to carry my luggage to the room. Before I entered the room, I was to be joined by my taxi driver and have tea with Mr. Hassad. He waxed eloquent in his polished English acquired from earlier days working as a longshoreman in Romania and sat next to his Dell computer explaining how he traded stock on the Nasdaq. The taxi driver politely drank his tea and listened intently but without understanding a thing. After two hours of tutoring on the history of Syria and Jordan, I retired to a high ceilinged, barren room with a flickering TV set broadcasting news in Arabic covering the funeral of the recently slain Beirut politician Gemayel who was gunned down by Syrian operatives while driving home from work. It's a way of emasculating the nominally Christian government of Lebanon and allowing the Hezbollah to flourish. Perhaps, it's the Hezbollah way of doing public relations work.

Unable to find bus service connecting Damascus with Beirut, I joined 4 other men in a taxi who contracted a ride to Lebanon. The young Lebanese lawyer sitting next to me in the back seat was a law school classmate of the recently assassinated politician Gemayel, but he wasn't sure if the hit was ordered directly by the Syrian government or by Hezbollah renegades. On route into Beirut, the yellow 1960 Pontiac maneuvered across a number of bombed out bridges recently replaced with temporary spans by the French government, but had to take an alternate route around the large freeway bridge, a large portion of which hung unceremoniously from its moorings attached only by rebar. It was the route used by Hezbollah for transporting thousands of shoot-and-hope-for-the-best missiles used during the recent war against Israel. The precision with which the bridges were destroyed and the absence of ancillary damage indicated to me that Israeli intelligence agents, not to mention fighter pilots, did a great job sparing Lebanese from gratuitous losses. The taxi driver stopped at a tea shop in the mountains overlooking a large valley which, until recently, was cultivated in poppies. The opium crop helped Hezbollah with their bottom line until the Iranian government began kicking in \$30 million worth of oil money each month to support the regime. I suppose getting a check from Tehran each month is a whole lot less messy.

Along the Mediterranean seashore in the "Christian" neighborhoods of Beirut life went on as per usual throughout the war. No veils to speak of. Lovers openly stroll hand in hand along the Corniche stopping for pretzels and soaking in the clear sun. White yachts motor in and out of the marina. English signs are ubiquitous. And the hotels have washcloths.

## ***The Loss of my Brother Brings a Lesson*** **by Gordon Langereis, Psychology**

It had been a picture perfect day on Fort Myers Beach with lots of sun and temps in the 80's. June and I had spent the day swimming, walking the beach, and enjoying the wonderful view of the Gulf. In the early evening we watched another gorgeous sunset from the lanai of the condo as the sound of the waves lapping the beach added to our appreciation of the view. We had a light dinner and were both reading as we relaxed from our daytime activities when it happened.



*Gordon (left) and Harold*

The phone rang. It was a call from our son, Paul, in Grand Rapids who said, "I'm sorry to tell you this, Dad, but your brother Harold was in his workshop helping his granddaughter with a school project when he suddenly began to stumble and dropped to the floor. Although the E-Unit personnel tried, they could not revive him."

We were deeply shocked, especially since Harold had been in fairly good health and we had talked with him no long ago. We immediately began preparing to leave the next morning for the long trip home in time for the visitation and funeral. I called Harold's daughter before we left and again expressed our sympathy. She asked if I would assist with the funeral and offer a eulogy of my brother's life. I agreed to do so albeit with some apprehension.

Fortunately our other son, Mark, was with us in Florida and he agreed to do most of the driving as we quickly hit the road. I sat in the back of our van during much of the trip contemplating what I would say at the funeral. As I made some notes and thought about my brother's life, I recalled how he had so unselfishly helped me and the family throughout the years. With no father in the home, my brother, who was several years my senior, assumed the role of "man of the house". He went to work while still in school to help support the family. He gave everything he earned to our mother so she could pay the bills. These were the depression years and we lived in abject poverty. Without Harold's help, we probably would not have made it. I also thought about the little appreciation I had shown for the many times my brother came to my rescue whenever I was in trouble during my delinquent youth. I reflected on all the years he had provided financial support, love, acceptance, hope, and compassion without expecting anything in return. In this sense he was a truly altruistic person. He always tried to see the good in other people. There was never any pretense about him. He walked the walk as we say. To quote a little Shakespeare from Julius Caesar:

"His life was gentle and the elements  
 so mix't in him that Nature might stand up  
 and say to all the world, "This was a man!"

Harold's devotion to his family, especially his wife, was exemplary and bordered on the heroic. His dear wife, Marilyn, suffered a massive stroke at the age of 57, which left her in a semi-vegetative state very similar to that of Terry Schiavo. She could not speak or swallow and had to be stomach tube fed. Harold retired from his engineering job to care for her 24/7 until she died five years later. One time I asked my brother if it would not be better all the way around if he would place Marilyn in a nursing home so that he could have some freedom.

His response was definitely not because he loved her too much not to have her home with him. Furthermore he said that he had made a marriage vow to care for her through sickness and in health and that was exactly what he intended to do. I never once heard him complain or grumble about his having to care for her.

Some years following his wife's death, he met Margaret Hoyle who taught English at GRCC. They met at Central High School's 50th reunion and soon began dating. Their friendship grew into a wonderful relationship. They traveled together, took cruises, and spent winters together in Florida. Although they never married, they were as committed and devoted to one another as any married couple could be. Unfortunately Margaret also died and Harold was once again alone.

As I continued to reflect on my brother's life and what I would say at the funeral, a quite startling thought crossed my mind. Suppose I had died and my brother agreed to offer a eulogy at my funeral. Could he say the fine things about me that I could in all honesty say about him? The answer was clearly no because he was a far better person than I am or probably ever will be.

Harold was more intelligent than I, and an all "A" student. I struggled to get Cs in some of my classes. He was a superb craftsman. I am not at all mechanically inclined. He was less confrontational than me and more patient with others. He was less critical of others and accepted people for what they were, not what he expected them to be. Oh yes, he had some faults as we all do, but he tried not to let his faults intrude on the lives of others. I would be quick to admit that my brother exceeded me in many respects.

The funeral went well and the attendance was greater than I expected. As is often the case with such occasions, I met some people I had not seen in years. Apparently my eulogy did touch some and I received a number of compliments at the reception following the service.

It is not at all uncommon nor unusual to have a guilt trip following the death of a loved one. One might well regret not having done certain things for or with the deceased. I should have visited my brother more frequently or at least called him on a more regular basis. When June and I left for Florida, we should have visited him, given him a hug and told him that we loved him. Instead, we merely called to say goodbye. Although much time has passed since my brother's death, I still feel guilty for not having spent more time with him. We are often too busy with our own self-interests to devote the time we should to others and it is so easy to rationalize our reasons for doing so.

The death of my brother and my response to it is a good example of how a bitter experience can result in some good. Such has been the case in my life. I am now more aware of the brevity of life and the unexpected death of relatives and friends. We are here today and gone tomorrow. A few lines from the Psalms come to mind:

"As for man his days are as grass: as a flower of the field,  
so he flourisheth. For the wind passes over it, and it is  
gone and the place thereof shall know it no more."

Psalm 103

Also I have been more keenly aware of the legacy that each of us will leave when we die and the importance of our legacy will have on our children and grandchildren. As Longfellow wrote in his beautiful poem, "Psalm of Life".

“Lives of great men all remind us  
 We can make our lives sublime,  
 And, departing, leave behind us  
 Footprints on the sands of time.  
 Footprints, that perhaps another  
 Sailing o’er life’s solemn main  
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
 Seeing, shall take heart again.”

Since my brother’s death, I have endeavored to be more like him. I sometimes even catch myself asking, “What would Harold do”? Although I yet have a long way to go, I can honestly say that I have made some improvement and the Lord knows I’m trying.

\* \* \*

## ***The Reading Room***

### **Recommended by Jan Benham:**

***Water for Elephants*** by Sara Gruen 2006 This is a novel about a ninety-something-year-old and his memories of himself as a young man with the circus during the Great Depression. It is a very interesting cast of characters and life within the circus world. Intriguing and hard to put down. The story centers around a runaway young man, his experiences with the circus as a vet, his love the for the star of the equestrian act, and Rosie the elephant and their bond to survive. Quick read!

***The Book of Fate*** by Brad Meltzer 2006 This is a novel about a presidential aide and an assassination attempt that left him disfigured and the President’s friend dead. Eight years later that “dead” friend is spotted alive. The aide tries to figure out what really happened and runs into involvement with the CIA, FBI, Secret Service as well as the White House. Interesting mystery.

### **Recommended by Keith Longberg:**

***The Varieties of Scientific Experience: A Personal View of the Search for God*** by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan. This book was published just a month ago, and was edited by Ann Druyan, Sagan’s widow and former colleague, from the text of Gifford lectures he delivered nearly ten years before his death in December 1996. The cosmic scope of this book should make anyone stand in awe of the known extent of the universe, and especially at the most unlikely prospect of the recent arrival of human presence here on earth, and especially of the presence of human intelligence (such as it is) in this grand scheme. The book discusses the expansion of the known universe since the Big Bang some 14,000 million years ago, and it answer’s the question “What kind of God, if any, exists.” I especially recommend this book to those who still believe in the “Flat Earth” and “Intelligent Design” concepts even though more than two thousand years of scientific inquiry have disproved both concepts to the satisfaction of most serious scientists.

***Born To Kvetch; Yiddish Language and Culture in All of Its Moods***, by Michael Wex.

I bought this book for my oldest daughter who is a student of languages, but I couldn't resist reading it. There are countless interesting examples of usage of Yiddish and how they emerged over time from German roots and/or with Slavic structure. My limited background in German made some of this book pretty hard slogging, but it was still informative and worth my time. Recommended especially for those with good background or interest in German and Jewish culture.

***Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation***, by Michael Zielenziger, 2006. 560 pages. I have enjoyed living (courtesy of the US Army) and traveling as a private citizen in Japan and am always interested to find a good book on its culture. The Japanese people are embarrassingly polite and you can wander just about anywhere in Japan at any time of day or night and feel perfectly safe. This book details numerous social and psychological maladies from the falling birth rate, the aging population, the high rates of alienation, depression, suicide, the pressure to conform, and now, a little-known phenomenon affecting over a million young Japanese, mostly male, known as the hikikomori, who are unable to cope and choose to completely withdraw from all human society and stay in their own bedrooms for months, or even years, doted on all the while by their mothers without communicating with anyone.

**Recommended by Phil Jung:**

***Shakespeare's Philosophy*** by Colin McGinn. Harper Collins, 2006. 230 pages

A philosopher's reading and analysis of what appears to be Shakespeare's philosophical thinking in such fields as the nature of self, the nature of knowledge, and the nature of causality (metaphysics). Other issues include what appears to be Shakespeare's views of ethics, gender identity, and the mind. McGinn analyzes four tragedies (Hamlet, MacBeth, Othello, and King Lear), along with two comedies (A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest). The book is eminently readable for a book of philosophy (not literary criticism), and McGinn's analysis yields further testimony on behalf of the Bard's modern, secular, skeptical, and proto-scientific thinking that's certain to raise one's level of admiration for his vision.

***Coming of Age; the Story of Our Century by Those Who've Lived It***, by Studs Terkel. St. Martin's Griffin, 1995, 468 pp.

Terkel writes oral history, and the requirements for inclusion in this one is a minimum age of 70. The remembrances of notables such as John Kenneth Galbraith, Uta Hagen, and the Admiral Gene LaRoque, are mingled with those of medical doctors, community activists, millionaires, captains of industry, people of the cloth, and laborers, all of whose lives, works, struggles, and contributions spanned most of the 20th Century. As is usual with Terkel's books, the reader learns not only about people but about a society and a culture, and runs the gamut of feelings — awe, anger, compassion, amusement, and wonder — while doing so.

*Coming to Our Senses; Healing Ourselves and the World through Mindfulness*,  
by John Kabatt-Zinn. Hyperion 2005. 631pp.

Recommended to me by a successful industrial psychologist, this is a revealing, informative, instructive, and easily understandable study of the spiritual and practical benefits of the practice of meditation, mostly following Buddhist principles and methods. Written by a physician who founded a well-known stress reduction clinic that caters to everyone from hospitalized patients to high level business people, this book contains chapters on meditation techniques as well as on neuroscience, including an entire chapter on the author's introduction of meditation into psoriasis treatment and the research techniques that led the extremely positive results of the treatment. This is a book for those who are interested in discovering and delving into exciting new fields of knowledge and self-improvement.

\* \* \*

### ***Retirees' Breakfast Schedule for 2007***

**Please find one of those brand new 2007 calendars you have  
and mark the dates below for "Grub & Gab" with your former colleagues.  
We will meet on at 9:00 a.m. on the Thursday dates indicated below at  
The Breakfast Nook, corner of Plainfield and Fuller.  
Please join us. No speeches, no committees, just talk.**

**January 25  
February 22  
March 29  
April 26  
May 31  
June 28  
July 26  
August 30  
September 27  
October 25**

**No breakfast in November or December because of the holidays.**

## *Some Teachers You Remember...*

### *Some You Don't*

by **Keith Longberg**

Among the teachers that had the most impact on me from the four colleges I attended (GRJC, WMU, U of M, MSU) were several at GR Junior College, as it was called then.

**Tom Van Wingen** helped me overcome my fear of math. I still don't enjoy working with numbers, but I'm not afraid of that any more. If I'm confronted with a math problem now, given enough time, I will probably figure it out. I had several private sessions with Mr. Van Wingen either in his office or in the classroom after class, and his instruction was clear and understandable. He was patient and unhurried. It was a huge help, and it encouraged me to take other math classes. **Tom's father, Martin**, had been one of my high school teachers and was one of the warmest and most helpful of my high school teachers.

**Mr. Dan Anderson's** physics class was a great learning experience for me at JC, one of the best courses in my college experience. I was frightened to death of physics, but I needed a physical science class. As it turned out, it was one of the best classes I ever took, highly informative, practical, challenging and the teaching was just outstanding, the best. I loved it. I seriously considered changing my major to physics.

I had two instructors for zoology at GRCC, **Miss McCabe** for lecture, and **Mr. Roland Constant** for lab, his first year at the college, I believe. In one of her lectures, Miss McCabe told us something about some part of the body. I wrote it down. Later Mr. Constant gave different information about that same thing. I don't remember the details now. I wanted to do well, and I wanted to get this difference clarified. I went to see Miss McCabe and explained the problem. She said "You don't have a problem, Mr. Longberg." "Yes I do; I need to know..." She interrupted me: "All you have to do, Mr. Longberg, is to remember whose class you are in." "Oh, OK." That was the end of that problem. It was simple, but the lesson was important, and it stayed with me. I thought of it many times after that in other classroom situations where I questioned or disagreed with an interpretation that was presented, and it was helpful to me.

Another big influence was a history teacher at JC, whose name I won't mention here because I have to say he was the sloppiest, most unkempt dressed teacher I ever saw, anywhere. Sloppy? Unkempt? Yes. One day he would have a huge gob of ketchup on the middle of his yellow tie, another day his belly button would be peaking out of his unbuttoned, or improperly buttoned shirt, or a sweater would be inside out, or he would turn to write something on the board and reveal that his belt was not through three of the loops, leaving sagging britches. Once he came in, sat down at his desk and put his elbows on the desk. The class instantly exploded in laughter, making him perplexed and angry. The undersides of the arms of his blue jacket had a quarter inch thick layer of dust stuck on them probably from the boiler room where he went for a smoke between classes. He didn't have a clue. A new wardrobe would not have helped him at all. He was completely unaware of his appearance and clothing. He was unforgettable, and, as I said, the worst dressed teacher I ever saw. His dress, pathetically funny as it was, however, was easier to accept than the more recent trend of some college teachers who apparently think it's cool to teach classes wearing jeans, or shorts

and sandals, like they had dressed to work on their car, or for a tennis game, not for their profession. That's not cool. It is cheap and lazy and, most important, it's disrespectful of their students, of the college, and of their profession. What other professionals outside of sports or entertainment dress like that for their work?

Anyway, the nameless history teacher certainly did know history, and he was well read too. He would frequently write the names of two or three books on the board and tell us they were good books and if we'd read and write about information in them, we could get "extra credit" of some sort. I always read them, not just for the credit, but they were, I quickly learned, interesting reading and often had surprising, off-beat information that you just wouldn't expect to find in a college text, sometimes about the private lives of historic figures. I would write lengthy reactions or commentaries to information I found in those books and enjoyed doing it. Once in an especially long report on this discretionary reading, I put in parenthesis in the middle of a long paragraph the comment "I bet you don't read all of this stuff!" When I got my paper back, there was a large check by that comment in the margin of my paper, and later he and I had a good-natured conversation about it. I learned from him that history is not just a bunch of dates and facts. It contains fascinating, unlikely stories and provides insights into complex personalities and the decisions they make, and information about incredibly difficult issues and the competing national interests which impact the lives of millions of people including me. As a young person we may tend think that history is irrelevant, but as we get older we can gain more appreciation for the lessons that history can reveal, and we learn what it costs to be ignorant of them.

I believe our best presidents have had a strong appreciation for, and background in, history. I also believe that a pope who has a good knowledge of history, especially his own church's history, would be unlikely to make statements which inflame the anger and hatred of millions of people who have sincere faith in a belief system different from his. Because of that history teacher at JC, I have continued to read history books ever since, and I have been enriched by his influence.

Dr. Clarence Meyer, who taught English at GRJC, probably had the most profound influence on me of all my teachers. I don't know how much of a scholar he was and it doesn't matter because he clearly enjoyed teaching, and had a great and obvious passion for it. He opened up Shakespeare to me, and what a rich gift that has been. He would "read," which is to say, quote, long passages from the plays, his face becoming bright red, sometimes almost purple, and the veins in his temples and neck would become swollen by his excitement. I was afraid he was going to have a stroke right in class. One day he "became" King Lear right there in the classroom on the raised platform his desk stood on. It was fantastic! In the middle of a storm scene he was quoting from "Lear," there was a tremendous crack of thunder right outside the classroom window, so it seemed, and it was right on cue! Doc Meyer stood frozen, and he was visibly stunned. So were we all. There followed a few seconds of intense silence as Doc Meyer slowly straighten from the awkward position the thunder caught him in, and breaking character for a second, he said, almost to himself, "I didn't know I had so much power!" It was a unique classroom moment. It was in his class that I first thought I would like to teach English. I thought: maybe If I'd get qualified, I could get a job teaching English at the college. It became my goal.

There are many teachers I don't remember very well any longer. I don't mean to imply

that they were not good teachers. It's likely they all had some special impact on other students and are well remembered by them. I know from experience that in any given class one student can think you are interesting and effective and the student in the next seat can be completely bewildered, or even bored. Different styles and methods and personalities work with different students, and the rich mix of these that a student experiences in public education is itself a huge and valuable learning experience, but much isn't said or written about that important fact.

I know that some of the teachers that I don't remember well any longer were important to me in ways that I didn't understand at the time, sometimes for small things, a comment on a paper, or an off-hand remark after class or in the hallway. A former teacher once stopped me on the sidewalk on Monroe Avenue where I delivered newspapers when I was still in high school and said, "I remember you. You were a very good student." I thought he must have me mixed up with someone else. I said, "But I didn't do all that well in your class." "Yes, I know that, but I know you could have...and you will. You are going to be a late bloomer, Mr. Longberg, I'm sure of it!" he said. Wow! I never told any of my friends about that encounter, but I thought about it a lot. That little incident took only a minute or so, but it had lasting positive influence on me. What he told me turned out to be prophetic too, but that did take a while. Every student should have a teacher so thoughtful, so encouraging.

The teachers that I learned the most from on all levels, whether it was relevant to the subject matter of the course or not (and that never mattered to me), and therefore enjoyed the most, may not have been the most outstanding scholars in their fields, but they all had a passion for their subjects, and they all clearly and genuinely liked and respected their students. They also invariably seemed to have had, from what I could tell, a rich and varied personal life, an open mind, and many interests outside of their profession. Whether or not I remember them all well now, they were all important to me in one way or another even if I didn't realize or appreciate it at the time.



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