

Welcome to the second volume of *Emeriti: Annual of Retired WKU English Faculty!* When Dr. Angie Jones asked me if I had a newsletter assignment in mind for her Editing and Publishing class last year, I immediately thought of the wonderful work that our retired faculty are doing. I have continued to enjoy getting to know our retired faculty during my second year at WKU and appreciate even more their commitment to the English Department. I am thrilled we can continue to celebrate their work!

Our current group of retired faculty share interesting stories about the history of the department and their contributions over the years. In this issue, you will learn about Joe Glaser's controversial exam for first-year composition, Janet Schwarzkopf's memories of serenading Kelly Thompson, Frank Steele's founding of our creative writing concentration, Mary Ellen Pitts' recollection of the Kennedy assassination, and Katie Ward's powerful experience's with general education students. These folks continue to be active scholars, writers, and community servants and represent a small sample of the fine work our former faculty have done and continue to do.



Rob Hale
 Department Head
rob.hale@wku.edu



Photo by Clinton Lewis

In This Issue:

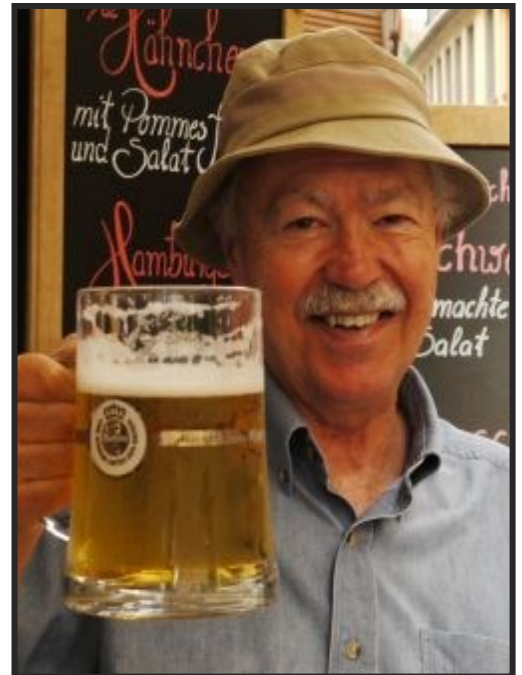
- Joe Glaser
- Janet Schwarzkopf
- Frank Steele
- Mary Ellen Pitts
- Katie Ward

Sir Glaser and the Creampuff Exam

By Melissa Hayden
Photo Submitted by Dr. Joe Glaser

Dr. Joseph Glaser came to Western Kentucky University from the University of Texas, Austin in 1969 to teach non-Shakespearean Renaissance Literature. While here on WKU's campus Dr. Glaser taught a number of literature classes, which included sixteenth and seventeenth British Literature, Introduction to Literature, and the first half of English Literature Survey.

Dr. Glaser soon became part of a team-taught humanities course, in which he taught Classical Greek and Roman Literature: "I loved that class, especially the team teaching part, and the self-selected students who came through it. They were excellent." During the course, Dr. Glaser taught the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, several Greek plays, and the *Metamorphoses*. He realized that he could not find an anthology of the lesser poets, so he decided to make one. This event is what got him interested in translation, "I've got out verse translations of *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, along with an anthology of Middle English Verse and a redaction of *Le Morte D'Arthur*, which just came out as a revised edition."



Joe Glaser

Dr. Glaser became the composition director for WKU's English Department in 1984 and held the position until 2003 when he retired. He holds a memory of a time when the English Department gave students a pass/fail exam before they could exit Freshman English. As the composition director, Dr. Glaser created the one hundred question practice test to help prepare the incoming freshman class:

“WHEN I CAME HERE, WKU WAS A NOTABLY HOMEY PLACE, NOT JUST BECAUSE IT WAS SMALLER, BUT BECAUSE IT FELT LIKE A LITTLE WORLD OFF ON ITS OWN, ROOTED IN KENTUCKY AND TRADITIONAL LEARNING.”

—**JOE GLASER**

"I did it over a couple of weekends, and little by little started to entertain myself making up tricky questions. When the test came out, I managed to fail about 900 nervous freshmen, something over 90 percent of the class, if I remember rightly."

Dr. Glaser's bit of fun caused quite a stir on campus. He recalls that "*The Herald* had a field day" and that "then-president Tom Meredith was beside himself." Of course, the English

Department no longer gives such an exam to exit Freshman English, but Dr. Glaser said the actual exam was far easier than his practice exam; in fact, he called it a "creampuff."

Dr. Glaser also taught several semesters abroad. He recalled his times teaching in England fondly and ranks the experiences in Europe as unforgettable. "I'd also rank the five summer terms I spent teaching in England right up there—especially for the experience and live-in camaraderie with students," he said. He took students to Canterbury, Bath, and several other iconic literary landmarks in England in order to provide context and history for their studies.

Continued on Page Seven

Sixty Years on the Hill

By Lyndsey Pender

Photo Submitted by Professor Janet Schwarzkopf



Janet Schwarzkopf

Western Kentucky University has had quite the influence on WKU alumnus and retired emeritus professor Janet Schwarzkopf. Professor Schwarzkopf has spent more than sixty years at WKU, and in this time she has served as an undergraduate student, a graduate student, and a faculty member. Nowadays, Professor Schwarzkopf spends her time traveling and relaxing, free from the hassle of grading college papers.

Professor Schwarzkopf received her B.S. from WKU in 1959, and later received her M.A. in 1962. She also received her Educational Specialists degree from the George Peabody College for Teachers, now a part of Vanderbilt University, in 1974. From there, she became a faculty member in the WKU English Department, teaching a range of honors classes, Masterpieces of American Literature, and Intermediate Composition.

Although Professor Schwarzkopf has more than fifty years' worth of memories from teaching at WKU, her fondest moments occurred while she was an undergraduate student. She remembers being a freshman in 1955 and "going with a group of other students to serenade Dr. Kelly Thompson when he was named President of Western."

As an undergraduate, Professor Schwarzkopf was also a part of an underground sorority: "Sororities and fraternities were not a legal part of campus life then, and the rumor was that anyone found to be a member would not receive a job recommendation upon graduation."

Many changes have occurred since Professor Schwarzkopf was an undergraduate, one being that students are now encouraged to take part in social organizations like fraternities and sororities. And Professor Schwarzkopf has been around to witness those changes taking affect across the WKU campus. When she first arrived at WKU, most if not all the courses being offered were taught in Cherry Hall. "The center of campus life was at the top of the Hill then," she said.

"SINCE RETIRING IN 2002, I CONTINUE TO ENJOY ATTENDING CAMPUS EVENTS—LECTURES, MUSICAL PERFORMANCES, BASKETBALL GAMES, AND DEPARTMENTAL SOCIAL EVENTS."

—JANET SCHWARZKOPF

Since her retirement in 2002, Professor Schwarzkopf continues to attend and support a variety of campus events including basketball games, departmental social events, lectures, and musical performances.

She is also an active participant in The Presbyterian Church's Chancel Choir and Art Board. An active community member, Schwarzkopf also serves on the Board of Directors of The Symphony at WKU and is a member of the LARTHS Literary Club.

Whether she is studying, teaching, or simply enjoying the activities that Bowling Green has to offer, Professor Janet Schwarzkopf continues to be an inspiring and active member of the WKU community.

Fin.

The Beginning of a Creative Flow

By Allison Henson

Photo by Kaylen Kinney and submitted by the WKU English Department

When Dr. Frank Steele was hired at Western Kentucky University in 1968, he really was not sure what he was getting into. "I was hired as some kind of vague American literature person," but then Dr. Steel went on to become a part of many foundations at WKU. In his time at the university, he served as Freshman Director for thirteen years. He also worked as a part-time administrator, a member of seventeen committees, a participant in planning programs for new graduate teaching assistants. It can make one wonder how retirement could be even busier than his time at WKU.

But if it weren't for Dr. Steele and a few other very important faculty and staff, WKU would not have a creative writing program. "There was a single, one-hour course in creative writing. It was an elective and counted toward nothing," he said. Dr. Steele said he was interested in creative writing and the study of literature, so he made friends with other faculty who loved to write—Dr. Mary Ellen Miller, Dr. Elizabeth Oakes, and Dr. Joe Survant to name a few.

"Through diligence, secrecy, committee work, God's will...we got up a minor in creative writing...In a few years, we had a major; then a kind of beginning graduate program."

When asked about a funny memory or time at WKU, Dr. Steele reminisced about the time he and a few of his students made up a fake poem for poetry journals around Kentucky. There were only three rules: "the poem should make no sense at all, should be bad throughout—not a single redeeming feature, and should contain a few 'telling echoes' of famous literary styles so that it faintly resembled a poem without actually being one."

"I USED TO THINK, 'THERE'LL BE
TIME FOR EVERYTHING WHEN I'M
RETIRED.' WHAT A LAUGH.
RETIREMENT IS TWICE AS BUSY AS
WORKING."

—FRANK STEELE

em. But the real problem, Dr. Steele felt, was the fact that poetry journals accepted the horrible poem.

"The upshot was that we realized it was time for a new poetry journal in Kentucky, one with at least faintly believable standards and goals. So PLAINSONG was born."



Frank Steele

Continued on Page Seven



Mary Ellen Pitts

A Vital Part of the Equation

By Abby Ponder
Photo Submitted by Dr. Mary Ellen Pitts

When Dr. Mary Ellen Pitts first arrived at Western Kentucky University in 1962, she had just finished the final stages of her M.A. degree at the University of Florida. While there, Dean Raymond Cravens approached her about an open position in WKU’s English Department. After contemplating the decision, she emphatically said yes.

“I was ready to go out and teach and set the world on fire,” she said with a laugh.

In her time with the department, she taught several introductory courses, as well as British and American literature surveys. The latter were among her favorites, due to the enthusiasm displayed by the students in those classes. One such student was Jim Flynn, a beloved and dearly missed WKU emeriti.

The transition between graduate work and professorship was sudden, but Dr. Pitts said she thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

One of her most surreal moments as a professor at WKU occurred on the day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Dr. Pitts liked to have laughter and smiling faces in her classroom, but one day there was a knock on the door that interrupted the joviality. A fellow professor poked her head in the room and ushered Pitts out into the hallway. When she returned to the classroom, shaken to her core upon hearing the news, the class participated in a moment of silence.

“It was the most profound moment of all,” she said somberly. “Everybody just went home and basically grieved—regardless of one’s political persuasion.”

In addition to teaching her own classes, Dr. Pitts also helped to establish WKU’s Sigma Tau Delta chapter. In fact, at the 2015 Sigma Tau Delta Conference in Albuquerque, NM, WKU’s chapter received recognition for celebrating its 50th Anniversary—thanks, in part, to Dr. Pitts’ contributions to its establishment.

Although Dr. Pitts loved WKU, she eventually sought a change of pace. In 1965, she made the transition from WKU to Memphis State University. However, upon spending several years in Tennessee, Pitts saw the job opening for a position as head of the WKU English Department in 1994. Not wasting any time, she jumped at the opportunity.

“One thing I really respected about WKU—and this is not always true for regional universities—was that the department was seen as a vital part of the university for having produced a number of graduates who went on to do several good things,” Dr. Pitts said. “It wasn’t just seen as a ‘service’ department, but rather as a vital part of the university.”

“FOR ME, WKU WAS A PLACE OF CONGENIAL FACULTY, INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES, STRONG FRIENDSHIPS, AND COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATORS. WKU WILL ALWAYS HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART.”

—MARY ELLEN PITTS

Continued on Page Seven

A Journey Through Human Connection

By Bryna Sims
Photo Submitted by Professor Katie Ward

Professor Katie Ward once traveled to various parts of Ireland and to California with her husband to recover eighteenth century letters. They then twice-published a book of the complete collection of letters. Many people approached the Wards after the publication and expressed that they could not have conducted their own research without the Wards' research. This adventure and great success was only one of the many had by Professor Ward as a professor of English at Western Kentucky University.

During her time as a professor at WKU, Professor Ward was a teacher who desired to do more than the bare minimum. She did not want to be remembered merely by being good at explaining lessons, she wanted to make a connection. She taught various classes at WKU that ranged from British Literature Survey II to Women Writers to the beginning Freshman and Sophomore classes. However, her fondest memory of making a connection was when she taught Introduction to Literature during Summer School.

Professor Ward told the story of her fondest memory with such detail that it was clear how important it was to her. She described a young, African American man who read aloud and analyzed a poem about a lynching for his final assignment in the class. According to Ward, this student had been quiet throughout the class and had not much impressed her. However, his analysis was excellent, and he "read the poem aloud with such passion," she said. This moved Ward because she believes that "the purpose of poetry is to recreate human experience."

“TEACHING AT WESTERN, WHILE I WAS TEACHING AND EVEN IN RETIREMENT, GAVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE EXPRESSION TO MY OWN PERSONAL VALUES.”

—KATIE WARD

that Sam was not struggling. Professor Ward was humbled and impressed by Sam, and he was not the only one to have this effect on her.

Professor Ward's inspiration by WKU students led her to write a book about non-traditional women students. These were women in transition who had come out of challenging situations and were now making their way through college. Ward described the successes of several of these women after they graduated from WKU, and it was clear how proud and admiring she was.



Katie Ward

Continuations

Joe Glaser, *continued from Page Two*

Since his retirement, Dr. Glaser has been keeping busy. He stated that he has “embarked on a new career” as the “oldest art major in Southcentral Kentucky.” He would like to take every studio or history class that the WKU Art Department offers. And some of his work can be viewed at [Art Works Inc.](#) In 2013, His piece, NAVAHO 9, received an honorable mention at the Artworks 6th Annual Members-Only Exhibition.

Dr. Glaser is currently working on two literary translations: a few cantos of the *Inferno* and Gavin Douglas’s Middle Scots version of the *Aeneid*. He’d like to translate Robert Henryson’s Middle Scots *Fables*. Additionally, he is thinking about creating two more textbooks: one on English language and the other on developmental writing.

Frank Steele, *continued from Page Four*

When asked if he had any books he would recommend, he listed a number of books he suggested to his students, but also named a few up and coming writers.

“A wonderful new writer now reviewing books for *The New Yorker* is Kathryn Schultz,” he said. “She’s very young, I think, and it’s necessary to read everything she writes, because—this is instantly clear—she is one of the places where the future is coming from.”

Dr. Steele continued to have good life after WKU. “I’m still writing,” he said, “playing the piano, cherishing my wife, Peggy, and enjoying personal and professional friends.”

Mary Ellen Pitts, *continued from Page Five*

After a fruitful career as the department head, Dr. Pitts ultimately found herself feeling homesick for Memphis. She made the decision to return to the city upon her retirement from WKU in 1998. In the time since then, she has co-authored a book with Patricia McFarland entitled *Memphis Medical Society: Memphis Medicine, a History of Science and Service*. She is also currently composing a book about the Roosevelt Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

In the meantime, she also enjoys traveling the world. In May 2015, for instance, she will sail to England aboard the Queen Mary II.

Despite the distance and time between Dr. Pitts and WKU, the university remains very near and dear to her heart.

Katie Ward, *continued from Page Six*

Professor Ward retired from WKU twenty years ago. She now cares for her husband who has dementia as well as motor issues. Although the situation is hard on Professor Ward, she noted that her husband’s personality has remained the same. “He’ll say, ‘I’m so happy, I’m so lucky,’” she said. Ward’s caring for her husband eliminates time for creative projects, but she still makes time to read. She recommended several novels that everyone should read.

The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway, *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, and *The Kitchen House* by Kathleen Grissom are historical novels with interesting characters that Professor Ward recommended to everyone. Her awareness of humanity and human connection within literature and poetry should inspire everyone to try one of her favorite pieces.

**Western Kentucky University
Department of English
1906 College Heights Blvd #11086
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1086
Phone: (270) 745-3043**

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