



# Renaissance Retirees



Editor: Sarah Diel-Hunt

Editorial Board: Dale Birkenholz, E. Joan Miller, Bill Morgan

College of Arts and Sciences, Illinois State University

## The Editorial Board



Drs. Miller, Morgan, and Birkenholz pictured at an editorial board meeting.

The Editorial Board of Renaissance Retirees is truly representative of the title. Each has experienced a renaissance during retirement — giving true meaning to the value of “lifelong learning” that we so earnestly try to instill in each new generation of students at Illinois State University.

It is difficult to schedule our editorial board meetings and production schedule around **Dr. Dale Birkenholz**, who remains so busy, you’ll never catch him at home by phone! He’s always on the go—usually chasing down wildlife. See photographs of one of Dale’s excursions inside this edition.

While snow bound at home in February and March this past winter, **Dr. E. Joan Miller** did the following to keep busy: she completed an invited critique of the 585 pages of the third edition of *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*; she wrote a five-page essay drawing attention to errors in a timeline titled “Points in Time: Geography Education Highlights” published in *Perspective*; and she submitted her article on Douglas Clay Ridgley and the Herbartians at ISNU to the *Journal of Geography* for publication in an issue on the history of that Journal.

**Dr. Bill Morgan**, a scholar on Thomas Hardy and current Executive Vice President of The Thomas Hardy Association, has been invited to speak at the “Thomas Hardy in Cambridge” conference at Magdalene College this summer. He is also helping Milner Library compile a collection of literary criticism on Hardy, to be preserved in the restricted, special collections section on the library’s sixth floor. In addition to his continued scholarly pursuits, Dr. Morgan keeps ever-busy traveling and enjoying the outdoors. Dr. Morgan is also a member of the Exploratory Committee for a Possible Old North Normal Historical District along with other ISU emeriti professors Ed Jelks (History) and John Gueguen (Political Science) and current ISU professors Susan Burt (English) and John Poole (Theatre).

We at the College are very grateful to Drs. Birkenholz, Miller, and Morgan for taking time out of their busy schedules to help write and edit this publication.

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## Emeriti Initiatives

Illinois State University's retired faculty remain extremely active. The following sampling of emeriti initiatives was self or peer submitted.

**Mark Plummer**, History Emeritus, presented "Keep Close to the People: Governor Richard Oglesby and the Lincoln Icon" at the Hall of Representatives at the Old State Capital State Historic Site in Springfield.

**James House**, Chemistry Emeritus, authored *American Air Rifles*, published by Krause Publications.

**John Gueguen**, Politics and Government Emeritus, authored a chapter, "Plato and the Modern Escape from Political Responsibility," in *Public Philosophy and Political Science: Crisis and Reflection*, published a review of *De la Utopia a la Politica Economica* by Jorge Arturo Chaves in Vol. XII of *Utopian Studies*, and published a review of "On the Unseriousness of Human Affairs by James V. Schall" in *The Review of Politics*.

**Rodger Tarr**, Distinguished Professor of English Emeritus, published *As Ever Yours: The Letters of Max Perkins and Elizabeth Lemmon; The True University . . . Is a Collection of Books*; and "G. Thomas Tanselle Among the Paperback Critics" in Vol. 14 of *Text*.

**Douglas West**, Chemistry Emeritus, co-authored multiple articles in 2002 including eight in the *Journal of Molecular Structure*, three in *Polyhedron*, two in *Zeitschrift für anorganische und allgemeine Chemie*, one in the *Journal of Brazilian Chemical Society*, one in *Inorganica Chimica Acta*, one in *Acta Crystallographica*, and one in the *Journal of Chemical Crystallography*.

**Robert Corbett**, Geography-Geology Emeritus, was elected to a term of service by the members of the American Institute of Professional Geologists.

**F. James David**, Sociology-Anthropology Emeritus, presented and was a panelist at the Conference on Race and Cancer Care held in Washington, D.C. His book *Who is Black?* was recently reprinted for a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition.

**Dorothy E. Lee**, Sociology Emerita, recently had a book signing for her newest book, *Under My Hat*.

## Emeriti Initiatives—Mathematics Renaissance

Four recent retirees from the Mathematics Department have continued their teaching and research lives in four rather different ways. *Renaissance Retirees* Editorial Board member Bill Morgan asked Charles Vanden Enden, Linn Sennott, John Dossey, and Al Otto some questions about their post-retirement activities and got some lively and interesting answers.

**BM:** *It's obvious that the four of you are staying busy with research and publication or other kinds of activities involving discovery of new ideas after retirement, but I wonder if you feel the absence of coffee-room and office conversations with your colleagues: is it harder to maintain your research energy without the kind of immediate feedback one can sometimes get from others in the Department?*

**CVE:** Yes, I find it harder.

**JD:** Well, since most of my scholarly work was conducted with others outside the university, the shift to retirement has potentially increased the research energy levels, since I'm freer to meet with others and have fewer committee and other university-related activities to divert my attention. But I do miss the discussion of problems and the seminars that took place from time to time.

## Emeriti Initiatives— Mathematics Renaissance, cont.

**AO:** My comments need to be taken in the context that I am still teaching in the Mathematics Department at ISU on a part time basis. So I am still in the classroom--but yes, that classroom teaching is critical to the kind of scholarly interests that I pursue.

**LS:** I'm actually doing something completely different from my mathematics research. Bertrand Russell once remarked that *Principia Mathematica* was so difficult to write that, after he completed it, he was forced to give up mathematics and concentrate on philosophy! I felt something like this after I completed my 1998 monograph *Stochastic Dynamic Programming and the Control of Queueing Systems*. I did publish one paper after the book appeared, but my interests changed, and dreams told me that it was time to move to something different. I had long had an interest in yoga and, in fact, was teaching once a week for ISU Wellness. After my (somewhat early) retirement in May, 2001, I decided to get my teacher certification at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Lennox, Massachusetts.

**BM:** *Do you miss teaching? I think many of us get some of our best ideas for research projects from interactions with students, so I wonder if you miss the classroom.*

**JD:** I miss teaching and the everyday contact with students. Teaching and working with students was always my favorite activity as a faculty member. While I drew great satisfaction from my professional and research activities, the growth and accomplishments of my students was the source of my greatest satisfaction. I get some teaching experiences yet from my work with teachers in the school systems with which I consult.

**CVE:** I don't miss teaching, though I never minded it. But it's true that you sometimes get ideas for projects from teaching, even in elementary courses.

**LS:** Interest in yoga has exploded at ISU and Wellness runs four classes a week. I teach two of those and two more at our local YMCA. This is another form of teaching—with no papers to grade or tests to raise anxieties!—and I enjoy it thoroughly. It provides an opportunity to weave ideas for living life more fully into the classes; I found this personal touch difficult to achieve in my mathematics classes.

**AO:** The question does not apply to me in the same way, since I am still in the classroom; but that classroom teaching certainly is critical to the kind of scholarly interests that I pursue. My teaching responsibility reflects my major assignment before I retired. That is, I am the coordinator for one of the Inner Core courses in Mathematics, namely, Dimensions of Mathematical Problem Solving. There are multiple sections each semester and we hold weekly staff meetings to assist instructors with the teaching of the course.

**BM:** *Is collaborative research and publication any different now that you're retired? Are you any more of a solitary worker now than you were when you were teaching?*

**LS:** My new kind of writing is a lonely experience, but in some respects isolation is necessary to realize a vision. I am glad to be at the stage of working with my editor and unofficial advisor; she is a cherished support.

**JD:** Since I did most of my research and scholarly writing from my home office as a faculty member, the shift to retirement has only led to greater time spent in the office at home. I would not say that I am a more solitary worker, as I have maintained the practice of co-authoring most articles, chapters, and books since retirement. I miss the contact with Sharon McCrone, one of my more recent faculty co-authors, as we now have to arrange meetings, rather than walk down the hall. Phares O'Daffer and I almost always wrote and met outside of the university on our joint projects. We continue to do so. The remainder of my writing is conducted by occasional trips to meet with co-authors or by telephone and e-mail.

**CVE:** Although research involves frequent meetings with collaborators, actually figuring something out is usually done alone. Not seeing a research partner every day does cut down on interaction. You may have an idea that you would mention by the mail boxes that doesn't seem to justify an email. Having to prearrange all meetings, make special trips to school, and park less conveniently. And the lack of a department office for books and other materials does make collaboration harder.

**AO:** There really has been little change in this. My scholarly interests remain the interests of some faculty in the Department.

## Laura Berk, Professor Emerita of Psychology



*The story below was submitted by Dr. E. Joan Miller, Professor Emerita of Geography, following her interview on April 3, 2003, with Dr. Berk.*

Within the labyrinth of wide corridors of DeGarmo Hall is the fourth floor office of Laura Berk, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Psychology, who took early retirement in August, 2001.

Computer literate, she continues her vocation of research, writing, and publishing on early childhood development. She has some classroom teaching as well as work with three doctoral candidates and six undergraduate projects. One and a half years ago she was the keynote speaker at a conference in Finland. Her latest book, *Awakening Children's Minds: How Parents and Teachers Can Make a Difference*, is her first trade book and addresses a readership outside academe. It was published in the first year of her retirement and generated other activities such as newspaper interviews, radio talkshows, speaking engagements, and teachers' workshops. She is a passionate writer — her term — and is into a new project with a publisher.

With less teaching and no University committees, she has time for gourmet cooking and eating with kindred spirits, flower gardening in Normal, and trips to Chicago and Pasadena for music and family affairs. Reading biographies gives her grist for her scholarly mill.

“Retiring? That is an unfortunate word; it means to lie down.” She has derision for the stereotyping of older people and knows of models of academic institutions where retirees are respected and very involved. She certainly is a role model; for her, retiring is not a synonym for resting and rusting.

## Mildred Pratt, Professor Emerita of Sociology



Mildred Pratt, Sociology Emerita, was the featured Founders Day Academy Speaker. She spoke on “A Model for Conducting Local History: A History of African Americans in Bloomington-Normal.”

Pratt was instrumental in founding the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project in 1982. Her presentation explored the early history of the project. She, along with Illinois State students and staff, interviewed elderly African-Americans in the Bloomington-Normal community. Today the project is part of the McLean County Historical Museum and includes some 80 taped interviews, photos, letters and other artifacts.

## From the Dean

Being a dean brings few pleasures as great as those that derive from the time I spend with the College of Arts and Sciences' many accomplished retirees. In the last year, I have talked with biologists about ornithology and entomology. I have discussed poetry, novels, and drama with literary critics retired from English and Foreign Languages. Political scientists have sharpened my understanding of state and national politics, and geographers have taught me about cultural folkways.

But retired faculty and staff, I have discovered, have many interests beyond those that they developed in their original disciplines. I have heard pianists and poets. I have discussed grammar with people from at least five different disciplines. Economists have taught me about computer technology, and physicists have taught me about religious philosophy. I've learned about tuba playing and yoga from mathematicians. A chemist taught me how mechanicals work in a complex building, and a psychologist and I together learned something about creative writing.

Were I to sum up the most important thing I have learned from these many talented retired people, it would be this: be the type of retiree about whom it might always be said, "gladly wolde he (or she!) *still* lerne and teche."

The College of Arts and Sciences is extraordinarily grateful to the many people who still return to campus to work with our students. In these tight budget times, we would not be able to offer nearly the breadth and depth of courses that we offer were it not for the generous gift of time that our many emeriti give us. But we also reap the benefit of the tremendous accomplishments made by the faculty and staff whose passions lie outside the classroom. This newsletter, then, is a celebration of the many talents that our annuitants have. I thank you for being among this noteworthy group of people.



Biological Sciences retirees Dale Birkenholz and Robert Weigel were part of the local John Wesley Powell Audubon field trip in mid-March to the Platte River in central Nebraska. Each Spring more than 500,000 sandhill cranes and between two and three million waterfowl pass through this area on their journey northward. The cranes, which feed in the area for about three weeks before continuing to the Arctic, constitute one of greatest wildlife spectacles on earth. Some of these birds travel as far as 2000 miles into Siberia to nest. These impressive photos were made and provided by JWP Secretary Kim McRoberts-Wilson.



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## Become a Part of Renaissance Retirees

The idea for this publication came from conversations during the 1st Annual Emeritus Faculty Luncheon two years ago. We were amazed at what some of our retired colleagues were doing and thought it would be interesting to tell those stories.

If you are interested in conducting an interview and submitting a story for a future newsletter, please contact Sarah Diel-Hunt at the address listed above. Also, we would like to report the publications and activities related to the scholarly expertise all our emeritus faculty. Please fill out the form below and send it back to the address listed above or send a fax or e-mail to let us know what you've been up to.

## Help us Keep Up to Date

Name/Department Affiliation

Contact Information

Recent Publications/Presentations/Scholarly Related Activities or Other Interesting Ventures

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