

The Extension



WRIGHT STATE
UNIVERSITY

Spring 2019 Issue 101

President's Message: Joyce Howes

PLASTICS: We can't keep living with them in ever-increasing amounts, but can we learn to live without them? As I write, I look around my kitchen. Every surface is occupied by items made at least partly of plastic. On the table I see my iPhone in its plastic case, my glasses, mouse and keyboard, the casing of my computer, the wrapper around my Cliff Bar. If I broaden my gaze, I see a plastic dish detergent bottle, a plastic blueberry container, a plastic bin full of kitchen junk and papers.. I'm almost hyper aware of minimizing plastics in my home. I no longer buy zipper storage bags, I buy milk in cardboard cartons, and I use waxed paper instead of plastic wrap, yet there still is too much plastic in the recycle bin every week.



According to the United Nations Environmental Assembly 2018 Annual Report, *"Putting the Environment at the Heart of People's Lives,"* nearly 2 billion plastic grocery bags are discarded every year. But that's just the beginning. Much of what goes into those plastic bags is in plastic containers; most restaurants still use plastic straws; fast food restaurants generate an obscene amount of plastic waste; and on and on. In general, humans are inclined to over-consume, discard, litter, and pollute. The US alone produces about 40 million TONS of plastic waste annually! So, what can a single American household do to make a meaningful difference in global plastic waste? Consider the "Rs": reduce, reuse, refuse, reclaim, renew, revitalize, refurbish, rethink and redesign. Notice that recycle is not on the list. The more we reduce plastic brought into our homes, the less plastic we'll toss in the blue bin.

The UN Environmental Report also highlighted numerous advancements in reducing plastic waste: banning plastic bags and drinking straws, charging for usage of bags, taxing manufacturers of plastic bags, and more. The European Union is a leader in these efforts. Sadly, the United States has strongly supported increased waste management over reduced production of plastics. The world's plastic waste wildly exceeds our capacity to "manage" it, yet US delegates demanded extension of deadlines and reduction of goals in the final report. It's time for the United States to join dozens of other countries and put environmental recovery before corporate profits.

In 1967, the famous one-word piece of advice offered to Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) in *The Graduate* was, "Plastic." "There's a great future in plastics," he was told. Unfortunately, our unbridled pursuit of that great future has now created one of our greatest environmental challenges. Now, some 50 years later, I have just two words of advice: VOTE GREEN!

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President's Quote for Today's Message:

"We're in a giant car, heading towards a brick wall, and everyone's arguing over where they're going to sit."

David Suzuki, science writer and environmentalist

Events Calendar

Annual Meeting
June 5, 10:00 am
210 Foundation Bldg.
3070 Presidential Drive



Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration

On April 25 about 70 retirees and their spouses gathered in the Berry Room for the fifth annual WSURA Luncheon. They were ushered—perhaps even lured-- into the room with dulcet tones from the beautiful, golden harp of Leslie Stratton, a faculty associate at both Wright State and UD and a member of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. Thanks to the hard work of the luncheon planning chair, Gail Whitaker and her team, the room was lovely. Each table had a floral centerpiece and 25th anniversary touches. President Joyce Howes convened the group and recognized three long-term members who decided to retire from the Board this year: Marlene Bireley, Abe Bassett, and Carol Stevenson (see article Page 7). Two of the founding members of WSURA were present: Mary Rutkowski and Gary Barlow.



Mary Kenton announced the winner of the Richard A. Johnson Staff Service Award, **Paul Newman**, who served for many years as Senior Associate Director of Athletics before he retired in 2006. Paul was inducted into the Wright State University Athletics Hall of Fame in 2009, an honor also awarded him at his alma mater, Edinboro State. Paul's second career in public service began long before he retired. But since, he has compiled an incredible record. He served as Executive Director of the Fairborn Chamber of Commerce from 2009 until 2016. He is on the Steering Committee for Wright State's Campus Ministry. He Volunteers for the American Red Cross. He was Fairborn Citizen of the Week in March 2019. In written remarks, Paul recalled that "Rich was a great friend and personal advisor

for me. I relished the times we met after our retirements, especially when he had his granddaughter in tow. I am truly honored and deeply touched by this award." Paul came by early to pick up his plaque. He was serving as MC of the Greene Giving Foundation luncheon across the street at the Holiday Inn and had to be there before noon. Before his departure he was careful to note: "This philanthropic foundation gives thousands of dollars to worthy individuals in Greene County every year." WSURA could have found no one more worthy of an award given in Rich Johnson's memory than Paul Newman.

Next, Larry Prochaska introduced the Lewis K. Shupe Faculty Service Award recipient, **Rudy Fichtenbaum**, who retired from the Economics Department in 2015 as Professor Emeritus. Rudy was a successful teacher and researcher. He published widely, often on such topics as race and sex discrimination and the impact of unions on wages and benefits. He was elected twice, 1990-91 and 1996-97, to serve as WSU Faculty President. A major force in organizing an AAUP chapter, he was instrumental in establishing collective bargaining at Wright State. He served as Chief Union Negotiator from 1998 until 2015, and again in the most recent negotiation which culminated with the current five-year contract. Rudy has served as President of the national AAUP longer than anyone else in the history of the organization. After accepting the award, he spoke of his view of what Wright State needs to do to restore the confidence of faculty and staff and to attract and properly serve students. He has a passionate commitment to the centrality of the professor/student dynamic in higher education. He has been a strong defender of faculty rights over his long career. In concluding his letter of nomination, Larry writes that Rudy "is one of the deepest thinking and most caring people I have known." (Continued)

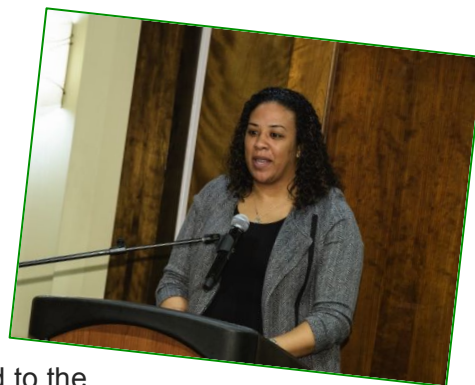




From Top:
 Marlene Bireley reviews historical display
 Mary Rutkowski and Gary Barlow, two
 original board members
 Current Executive Board

(Continued from Page 2)

Following lunch, President Howes introduced our speaker, **Katrina Merriweather**, Head Women's Basketball Coach at Wright State, whose team won the Horizon League Tournament and thus received a bid to the premier event in college basketball, the NCAA Tournament. Some of you may remember that WSURA had announced Men's Coach Scott Nagy as the speaker for the event. As it turned out, he had some unexpected departures from the team and had to embark on an emergency recruiting trip two days before the luncheon. With a gracious assist from Athletics Director Bob Grant, we were thrilled to be able to schedule Coach Merriweather on such short notice. She was dynamite—inspirational, reflective, philosophical, and flat out funny. It's clear she sees herself as an educator, first and foremost. In response to a question, she spoke eloquently about her all-female staff and explained how rare that is in women's basketball. Two of those female staff members sat in the back and beamed as their hero won over every person in the room. Abe Bassett was later heard to say he fell in love that day!



Election Results

Larry Prochaska will take over as President and Dan Abrahamowicz becomes President-elect. Joyce Howes gets to take a big sigh of relief as she moves to the post of past-President. She had a busy year.

We add three new Board members: **Kathy Morris** who retired as Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, **Jerry Alter**, Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and **Richard Mercer**, who retired from the Department of Math and Statistics also as an Emeritus Professor. Jerry and Richard are going to serve on the Scholarship Committee. Kathy is joining the Historical Preservation Committee.

Congratulations to all and best wishes for a productive year.

Memorial for Jim Walker

Tuesday, May 8 in the Millett Hall Atrium Donna Schlagheck led a remembrance of her colleague Jim Walker, who died at home in Arizona from complications of lymphoma on March 17. It was Jim who hired Donna in the mid-1980s and mentored her, especially as she took on leadership of the Model UN Program. Chuck Taylor, former Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, spoke first. He read from a letter written by long-time retiree Nick Piediscalzi who called Jim a *uomo bellissimo*, an Italian phrase that suggests both a beautiful man and a life well lived. Chuck recalled some of Jim's always provocative, often hilarious, sometimes profane posts on the faculty list serve. The point was, he said, that Jim's posts were always worth reading and apparently worth saving for all these years. Mike Solimine was one of Jim's prized students in the late 70's. Jim encouraged his law school ambitions and his desire to have an academic career. After he became a professor at the University of Cincinnati Law School, he and Jim often collaborated on articles concerning federalism and constitutional law. David Petreman highlighted Jim's long-standing interest in Cuba. Jim travelled there many times always remembering to bring David a box of fine Cohiba cigars hand rolled in Havana. David Garrison read a poem he had worked on for several months, which he began when he learned how ill Jim was. David shared that he too suffered from lymphoma, but he was fortunate to have the more treatable non-Hodgkin's form. David's poem, a villanelle, was inspired by a line from "*The Undertaking*" by fellow poet Thomas Lynch, thus the title.

On a Line by Thomas Lynch

Life goes on. The dead are everywhere.

They make the floorboards creak like ships at sea,
they wink from glistening streetlights here and there.

They read the book we're reading, touch our hair.
they walk beside us though we cannot see
or hear their steps. They constantly declare

themselves in letters we have saved. We stare
at those who favor them. The cypress trees
protect their souls like nesting birds. They are

not "in a better place," they're here. In air,
in water, earth, and fire. The timpani
of life beats on in death. The world is where

they linger, waiting for us. Say a prayer
for the dead, that they may always be
around us, in our homes and in the flare

of memories, so we do not despair.
They make their way across the river, we
can only see them off. We're in their care
as life goes on. The dead are everywhere.



*Ninety-three year old WW II veteran and retired Professor of Political Science, Bob Thobaben, Mike Solimine and David Garrison, one of the five Davids present: David Barr, David Goldstein, David Leach, David Petreman
Below: A Toast to Jim at W.O. Wrights*



Donna concluded the ceremony with a charming story about how Jim once introduced her saying, "This is Donna Schlagheck—that's German for cream puff!" She invited everyone to adjourn to W.O. Wrights where a group of 15 or so toasted Jim and told stories. As David Garrison's poem so beautifully expresses, we could feel Jim's pleasure in the event—The dead are everywhere.

As Others See Us

*From the May 2019 cover article in
The Atlantic: Elegy for the American
Century by George Packer*

Dayton, Ohio 1995

He [Hal Holbrooke] selected Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, outside Dayton, Ohio, one of the biggest military bases in America: 8,000 acres sprawled across flat farm country, 23,000 employees, an airstrip two and a half miles long. The delegations touched down on the night of October 31, and Holbrooke was the first on the red carpet to shake each arriving president's hand. Near the entrance to the base were four two-story brick barracks around a rectangular parking lot—the Visiting Officer's Quarters. These became the temporary home of the national delegations... The housing blocks had long, narrow corridors and cramped rooms, with vinyl trim and shabby furniture, like a \$49-a-night motel.

The only places to eat on base were the Officers' Club, a short drive away, and Packy's Sports Bar & Grill, in the concrete-block Hope Hotel and Conference Center, 2000 yards across a grassy field from the barracks. Workers laid a winding path over the grass and lined it with ground lights, a modest touch of elegance. But in the history of international diplomacy nothing was less elegant than Wright-Patterson.

Suffer the Little Children . . .

Growing up in the 50s, I pledged the flag every morning, learned to march like a soldier in gym class, and knew all the words to the "Marines' Hymn." I liked Ike well enough, though most of my family were Democrats. Once a plane fell out of the sky and almost hit Beavercreek High School, we practiced nuclear attack drills, but guns were not an issue. I never once thought, much less worried, about getting shot at school.

I was probably 15 years old before I saw an actual gun. No one I knew had guns, or if they did, they were well concealed. A little later I learned to shoot both a Colt target pistol and a shotgun, though I never pointed a gun at a living thing. I lived for many years in a house with a cabinet full of guns and never felt unsafe about having them around. We didn't hunt or shoot much; they were mostly decorative. But we joked they might be handy "come the revolution."

First it was John Kennedy, Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bobby Kennedy, and then the near fatal attack on President Reagan. No more joking around. Political assassination attempts declined, but attacks on schools escalated. Columbine, Virginia Tech—the list became numbing. I started to worry about getting shot at Wright State. We devised an informal plan in Honors for an "active shooter." I started thinking about it when I sat in a restaurant; I always wanted to know where the exits were, especially in movie theatres.

The tears that I was usually able to blink back started to flow with Sandy Hook. My granddaughters were 5 and 3, and I was horrified they would hear about it on TV, see the heartbreaking photos of the murdered children. I called their mother and told her not to turn on the set for at least a week. Everyone thought things would be different after Sandy Hook. But nothing was. The attacks on schools continue with alarming regularity. As of May 10, the US has endured 8 school shootings in 2019.

Lately, I struggle not to sob out loud when I see interviews with the grieving parents whose son threw himself on the shooter to save his classmates. My car radio is tuned to WYSO, and recently as I was driving down US Route 35 to Dayton, I heard an NPR story about a little boy—a sixth grader—who clutched a baseball bat as he and his classmates took shelter in a closet with their teacher. The gunman was just outside their classroom. His words started the tears to stream down my face as I drove. In his little sixth grade voice he said he kept his hand on the metal bat "Cause I was going to go down fighting if I was going to go down."

Nicholas Kristof's May 9 column enumerates grim statistics about gun deaths in America. He goes on to outline some sensible Second Amendment friendly ways we might begin dealing with this perennial problem. I don't know all the answers, but I am absolutely certain this carnage is not what the Founders require of us.

By Mary Kenton

Transitioning to the Pacific Northwest

By Jim Sayer

In the fall of 2017, Cathy and I made the decision to move to Wenatchee, Washington, to join our daughter Annie, her husband, and our two little granddaughters as she began her pastorate at a Presbyterian church. This meant leaving the Dayton area after 44 years and my retiring from teaching after 49 years, a decision made with some trepidation.



We spent the winter and spring of 2018 selling or giving away a lot of our possessions as we prepared to downsize, and I continued in that effort as Cathy went to Wenatchee to find a house for us. She was successful in her search, and we then arranged to have our remaining household goods shipped west.

In mid-May our goods were loaded on a huge semi-truck, and then Cathy and I began the 2500-mile trek across the country to Washington, detouring to visit Mount Rushmore along the way.

We made it to Wenatchee in late May and began the massive process of setting up our new home. I never realized how many pictures we had to hang on our walls! Finally, everything is nicely arranged, and I now consider Wenatchee my home.

Wenatchee, Washington, is in a valley, completely surrounded by parts of the Cascade Mountains. It is very pretty, except when there are forest fires in the area that cause the smoke to hang over the valley, making the air quality very poor. During winter the mountains are covered by snow, and we are ringed by a beautiful white circle. The valley receives little precipitation throughout the year.

Wenatchee is an interesting small city with a population almost equal to that of Beavercreek, with the exception that this area is about one-third Hispanic because of the many orchards and vineyards here. Wenatchee bills itself as the "Apple Capital of the World," and if you go to Kroger, don't be surprised to find apples from Wenatchee.

I am happy that Washington is a "blue" state with many progressive tendencies, especially in terms of caring for the economically disadvantaged. Democrats are not an endangered species as they often are in Ohio!

Cathy and I are happy here, though shopping is very limited and I miss having a Tim Horton's. Utility costs are low because of hydroelectric power, and our three-bedroom house is just the right size for us (about 2200 square feet). I love having a three-car garage. Our lot is small so cutting grass is no big deal, and we have sidewalks, something we did not have in Beavercreek. And I love being with our granddaughters (ages 6 and 8), though they run me ragged. I am happy that our older son and his family live about six hours away in Portland, and our younger son and his wife are but a short plane ride to Los Angeles.

The one thing that makes me look twice is when I see someone wearing a WSU sweatshirt. I have to remember that in Wenatchee WSU means WASHINGTON State University!

WSURA Board – 2018-2019

Executive Committee

President: Joyce Howes
 President Elect: Larry Prochaska
 Past President: Donna Schlagheck
 Secretary: Ruth Schumacher
 Treasurer: Sheryl Provens
 Communications: Mary Kenton

Board Members at Large

Dan Abrahamowicz
 Abe Bassett
 Gary Barlow
 Marlene Bireley
 Peggy Bott
 Judi Engle
 Mary Gromosiak
 Gary Pacernick
 Carol Stevenson
 Robin Suits
 Gail Whitaker
 Dick Williams

Standing Committees

Activities: Mary Gromosiak
 By-Laws/Elections: Gail Whitaker
 Communications: Mary Kenton
 Membership Development: Marlene Bireley
 Sunshine: Peggy Bott
 Scholarship: Gary Pacernick
 OCHER: Peggy Bott and Dick Williams
 Historical Preservation: Dan Abrahamowicz

Liaisons

Alumni: Dick Williams
 Athletics Council:

Mary Kenton and Larry Prochaska
 International Studies: Ruth Schumacher
 Friends of the Libraries: Gary Barlow

Web Masters Abe Bassett and Robin Suits

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 Facebook.com/groups/WSURA



Retirees Retiring

Three long-time board members have decided to retire this spring: **Marlene Bireley, Abe Bassett, and Carol Stevenson**. All three will be sorely missed, though they think they have taken care to make sure their old jobs are covered. That may be so, but they can't really be replaced.

Marlene joined the Board in 1998 when Lew Shupe and Gary Barlow recruited her to run for President-elect. She helped Elizabeth Harden with *The Extension* as Past-president and took over as editor for the next decade. She served as Membership Chair for the last four years. She plans to help Mary Gromosiak with the Activities Committee, primarily focusing on Live and Learn presentations and workshops.



She will continue with the Dayton Playhouse Reading Committee for the summer *Future Fest* new play festival. This involves reading about 300 plays every year to select twelve finalists. She enjoys the local arts scene including WSU Theatre, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and the Dayton Art Institute.

She hopes to continue car trips with her cousin. Recently they've visited Yellowstone, the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario and upstate New York. She goes west to LA and Bountiful, Utah to visit her daughters and granddaughters at least once a year. She enjoys WSU basketball games and other family activities with her eldest granddaughter and her sons.



Abe Bassett joined the Board in 2001 because he wanted to be active in retirement and to maintain a relationship with the University. He enjoyed connecting with former faculty colleagues, but soon he discovered that staff members on the Board had a lot to offer too. They knew how to get things done. They were uniformly highly competent and dependable.

For many years he and Joanne Risacher co-chaired the Activities Committee. After he finished this three-year presidential term, his main interest was in developing a web site. He had no experience in web design, but still he persisted. He got it up and running and worked constantly to improve it. He is proud of the result and happy that the website will be in the extremely competent hands of Robin Suits. After leaving the Board, he plans to continue his genealogy research, perhaps direct in the theatre and continue to support WSURA.

Carol Stevenson joined the Board because she wanted to give back to the University after the 29 years of support and encouragement she had received from faculty, staff and the administration during sometimes difficult and challenging times, both professional and personal. She served for many years as treasurer, helped with *The Extension*, and spearheaded several special projects.



Now she plans to move to near Mount Pleasant, Michigan, the home of the Central Michigan Chippewas. She will join six grandchildren, two rescue dogs, her daughter, and her son-in-law who serves as pastor of the First Baptist Church. Carol is confident she will find her niche. In addition to sporting events and school programs, she hopes to find a way to continue her music ministry. She plans to visit her son in Alaska and spend a little time in the front porch glider where she can think lofty thoughts, and maybe even catch an occasional nap.

The Extension is published quarterly by the Wright State University Retirees Association (WSURA). All issues can be found on our website: wright.edu/wsura.

Cut off dates for articles:

Nov. 15 – Winter

Feb. 15 – Spring

May 15 – Summer

Aug. 15 – Fall

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Wright State's Women's Basketball Team Garners National Attention

WSU women's basketball team, coached by Katrina Merriweather, guest speaker for the annual WSURA luncheon, captured its second Horizon League Tournament and a ticket to the NCAA.

