

The Extension



President's Message: On Civility

Today, there is a significant societal decay of the civil treatment of people. I experienced my own life lesson in civility which had an unexpected and profound result. It began with a phone call from a person who had questions about cardiovascular related diseases and current research at Wright State in the School of Medicine. After about a half an hour, we decided that she should visit my laboratory. She drove to campus and upon arrival, I met a modestly dressed woman in her eighties. She was well spoken but not highly educated in the sciences. We spoke for about an hour and during our meeting, she revealed that she wanted to leave a legacy for society in memory of her husband, Henry, who had died of a stroke. As we concluded the appointment, I told her she could call me anytime.



Over the next few months she called me with her questions related to heart disease or stroke. She was always polite and considerate of my time. If I was busy, I would call her back later. She visited campus again, although her failing health did not allow her to drive on her own. By this time, I had spoken with my chair, Dan Organisciak, and arranged for him to meet her. At this meeting, she stated that she was thinking of changing her will as she had no heirs. Dan described several options if she chose to donate funds to Wright State. We both thought to ourselves that she would live 10 or 15 more years.

I stayed in touch by mail, yet I was a little surprised when she invited us to her modest home for tea. We went and exchanged pleasantries, but she did not mention her will. Two months later she died. Dan and I attended her funeral service at an all-black church in rural Jefferson Township where we were welcomed with open arms. At that point we expected nothing in return. We soon learned that she left my laboratory \$900,000 for heart and stroke related research.

Her legacy to my lab was used to fund the training and research of three Biomedical Science Ph.D. students in the biochemistry and biophysics of heart mitochondria, the powerhouse of heart and brain cells. Their work resulted in six publications in peer-reviewed journals and 24 national presentations. Her gift also funded the training of two M.S. biochemistry students and two undergraduate Honors students in biology.

I was completely blindsided by the generosity and thoughtfulness of this lovely woman named Emily Webb. You just never know where treating people with civility will lead you.

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Events Calendar

May 14, 11:30 a.m.
Annual Retirees Luncheon
Berry Room, Nutter Center

Sage words from another president—

Abraham Lincoln

To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men.



WSURA Service Awards for 2020

It's time to think about all that Wright State Retirees do to make the university, the community, even the world, a better place.

You may recall that at last spring's banquet we presented the inaugural Lewis K. Shupe Faculty Service Award to Professor Emeritus of Economics **Rudy Fichtenbaum** and the Richard A. Johnson Staff Service Award to former Senior Associate Athletics Director **Paul Newman**. Without question there are many equally worthy recipients in our community of retirees. But WSURA needs your help in identifying them.

All retirees of Wright State University, except those currently serving on the Board, are eligible to be nominated. The easiest way to nominate someone is to write a short letter or email and send it to the address on the back page of this newsletter. Include as much detail as you know, and the selection committee will take it from there. Soon you will receive a form by email that you can fill out and return. Our goal is to have several names in each category to research before making a final selection.

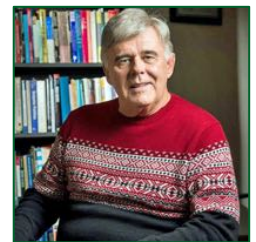
The recipients will be announced at the annual luncheon on May 14, 2020. The deadline for submitting nominees is Friday, March 20. When Abe Bassett first proposed the idea of awards for service, he made the point that when we honor individual members of our community it brings honor to us all. Many on the Board found this assertion puzzling, but eventually we came to understand what he meant. We are not just tired, used up people who sit home watching reality shows on TV. We are collectively so much more than the clichés about retirement. We are dynamic members of many communities working hard to achieve worthy goals. Help us illuminate this truth by selecting two of our best to recognize in May.

Recent Activities Recap

Tim Wood, a retiree from Biological Sciences, kicked off the fall with a charming and informative talk about the seventeen years he partnered with Kassetsart University in Bangkok. Tim covered everything from the tsunami to his encounter with royalty. Of course, the main effort was a scientific collaboration that produced significant discoveries and brought international prominence to a small, unknown academic department. The talk provoked a lively discussion among those in attendance.



On October 23 **Paul Leonard**, former Dayton mayor and Ohio Lieutenant Governor, led a rousing discussion about the current political climate and the upcoming presidential election. The 25 or so retirees who attended represented a variety of political perspectives. They enthusiastically stated their positions and asked Paul challenging questions. He handled the situation adroitly, demonstrating what an accomplished teacher he has become since joining the Political Science department about seventeen years ago, although his first course at Wright State was in 1974, "Public Issues in Ohio." We hope he will agree to enlighten us again in the coming months as the political plot thickens.



A small group gathered at the Dayton Hollywood Racino for an evening of dining, betting and watching harness racing. This annual event attracts retirees who don't always attend other activities.

The Wellington Grille in Beavercreek was the gathering place for the winter dining out luncheon on January 12, with 20 plus retirees in attendance, including one of our newest members, **Andrew Lai** from the College of Business and Administration. Our waiter, who did a splendid job under difficult circumstances, graduated from Wright State back in the 80s. **Gail Whitaker's** older daughter, **Kristi Whitaker-Krile**, attended with her mother. She was visiting from Ann Arbor, where she teaches first grade. She added more than just a youthful perspective to the table. She had relevant things to say on a variety of topics. Our current President, **Larry Prochaska**, was able to slip away from his nursing duties for a couple of hours to attend. His wife, **Cathy**, is recovering from knee replacement surgery. The mimosas were refreshing and relaxing, the food was delicious, and more than one retiree went home and had a nice little nap with the sounds of football playing in the background.



Artist's Corner

Interview With an Elk

Our eyes met by luck,
 my gaze reasoned, his wild.
 I came upon him at dawn,
 by a stand of hoary hemlock.

What were we to each other,
 before his unhurried retreat?
 For me, the answer eluded.
 Could he have gone deeper?
 An avowal of affinity
 despite disparity in bearing?
 If so, he had kept his counsel,
 granting only one look back.

No guess what an elk believes,
 what sensations tie to rack and rut.
 Still I thought that morning
 we could somehow bond,
 fettered to this earth, yet free.

From the Oregon Coast—Poetry by Larry Hussman

Wright State has produced a fair number of excellent poets. Several have been featured in these pages over the last couple of years. As a result, there is evidence that poetry reading and writing is increasing in the retiree community. That is good. These latest inspirations come from a collection titled *Last Things* by **Lawrence E. Hussman**, Professor Emeritus of English Languages and Literatures. Many of you will remember Larry's memoir, *Acanemia*, and the reading he gave at the now defunct Blue Jacket Books in Xenia three years ago this summer. There was a lot of Larry's dry wit in that book. The poetry collection is, as the title suggests, more somber.



Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's First Symphony

With what inner stir I first gave ear to it,
 this epic meld of fervor and ache.
 A time of vigor and limitless yearning,
 not past my twenties.

Clamorous passages that ignited thrills,
 tender others piercing the innermost recesses
 of what the religious call the soul,
 thunderous climax leaving the listener
 drained of sensation.

Each of his ten symphonies ever affecting,
 but always my needed return again to the first,
 that treasured constant of my emotive life,
 rekindling desire and promise of meaning.

Now at this small hour, the music's power spent,
 I'm left to wonder where all those longings led,
 what all this living meant.

On a Personal Note

The very first course I took at Wright State was "Introduction to the Study of Literature: Poetry and Drama," taught by the inimitable Dr. Hussman in 1969-70. Memories from that class have lingered for fifty years. I remember the Frost poem I used for my explication paper, and I can still hear Dr. Hussman telling the class that listening to Mahler was the ultimate aesthetic experience for him. That we are still in contact and that I have the honor of sharing his poetry with a wider audience is one of Wright State's sneaky little miracles.

Mary Kenton

Steady Hands

Wright State has experienced remarkable stability in its athletics program. Only three men have served as Athletics Director since the position was invented in 1971.

Don Mohr, who moved into the AD job from other Wright State duties, got fourteen sports up and running, five of which were women's teams. Some of those early teams, notably volleyball and golf, were surprisingly successful with deep runs in post-season play. Mohr retired in 1981 and was the first inductee into Wright State University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1985. He died at age 89 in 2012.

Mike Cusack of Mercyhurst College was hired as his replacement in 1982. Mike presided over a period of expansion and growth, especially in facilities. In addition to creating the Hall of Fame, Mike also gets credit for the Nutter Center, Nischwitz Stadium, the softball field, tennis courts, the Mills-Morgan Center, but, alas, no track, though he did establish the women's track team in the 1990s as a response to Title IX concerns. Several teams experienced high levels of success during his tenure, including the sport he had played and coached, baseball, as well as golf, men's basketball, women's soccer, and softball. He took pride in the academic success of his student athletes. After all, he was "Doctor" Michael Cusack, and his wife Dorothy was a Gifted Education coordinator. While he was AD the department's cumulative GPA was over 3.0 for 24 consecutive quarters. He handed off a solid, successful, well-run program.

Bob Grant has spent almost all of his adult life at Wright State. He began as a business student who volunteered for athletics. Later he worked for the Nutter Center for several years before joining athletics in 1992 as the first Director of Development. In addition to raising over ten million dollars, he made sure he gained direct experience working with teams and student athletes. He was ready to lead when Mike made the decision to retire in 2008.

Bob's selection was not a given. The search committee brought in other outstanding candidates, but he convinced them that he was the right man for the job. The transition appeared seamless to the casual observer. But Bob had ideas about how to make a good department better, and he began to implement them right away.

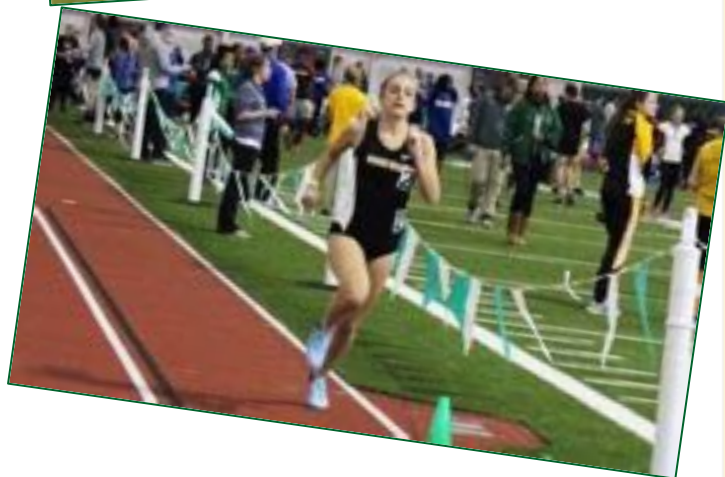




Bob Grant's signature contribution is the PSA program. His goal is to treat student athletes as **People** first, **Students** second, and only then as **Athletes**. It may sound a little corny, but he is all in. He and his wife, Kim, host every team for a meal at their home every year. Bob spends his fair share of time with donors, but he also finds time to run an open-door program for student athletes. There is nothing remote about Bob's leadership style. He keeps up with all the many aspects involved in running a complex program. He is accessible to all of his stakeholders. It's one of his greatest strengths as a leader.



The department's academic support team, led by Assistant Athletics Director **Judy Chivers**, is superb. There is no denying the academic results. The department has now achieved a 3.0 or higher GPA for 51 straight grading periods. Student athletes are graduating on time and in majors like biomedical engineering and nursing that challenge their academic as well as their time management skills. The overwhelming majority of student athletes say they would choose Wright State all over again. More than one current staff member, including Senior Woman Administrator and Associate Athletics Director, **Joylynn Brown**, are former student athletes.



The department has also been competitive in almost every sport, as evidenced by winning its first McCafferty trophy for the best overall record in the Horizon League. Fall was a brilliant success with several teams playing in the post-season. Basketball is off to a great start. All of this has been accomplished with the fourth lowest budget in the Horizon League and the smallest Division I budget in the state. Bob Grant likes to argue that Athletics is the most cost-effective unit on campus, bringing millions of dollars of positive publicity to the university.

There is, of course, another side to that argument. Only one athletics program in Ohio, the Buckeyes, actually makes money. All of the others are supported in large part by the taxpayers. And as academic budgets are cut and tuition continues to rise, many question the wisdom of spending so much on non-academic pursuits. That argument won't be resolved in the pages of *The Extension*. It's been going on a long time. As a fledgling campus Wright State made the decision to begin an athletics program and over the years to allow it to grow and prosper. The growth phase may be over for the foreseeable future, but athletics is firmly ensconced at Wright State, and we are fortunate to have had responsible, responsive and innovative leadership from the beginning.

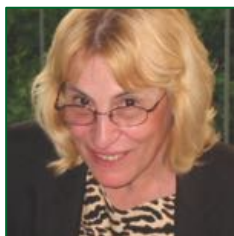


Communication Strategy

Over the last few years the WSURA Board has worked hard to improve our outreach to all retirees, those who live in the Miami Valley as well as those who are scattered across the continent. For many years **The Extension** was the principal mode of communication. It had to meet as many of our needs as possible. It has been published continuously since WSURA was founded with several people serving as editor, most notably **Marlene Bireley**, who admirably filled that role for about a dozen years. **Abe Bassett**, another long serving Board member and human dynamo, singlehandedly created the web site and the e-newsletter. As one of his last gifts to the Board before retiring last year, he recruited **Robin Suits** and **Judi Engle** to help ratchet up our efforts.

The three of us make up the Communication Committee. I (Mary Kenton) chair the committee and edit **The Extension**. Judi chairs the Membership Committee and supervises the design and coordination of all our publications. If you think **The Extension** looks better these days, thank Judi. She is a genius at layout and she is solely responsible for the new design. Robin Suits took over as web master when Abe retired. He would be the first to tell you that she has been transformative. WSURA has one of the best web sites on campus. Robin also edits the e-newsletter that goes out each month. The e-newsletter relieves **The Extension** from being newsy. It can be more aspirational and informative, more provocative and artistic, more reflective of the talents and interests of retirees wherever they may live. The web site provides a wealth of current information, but its most important function is as an archive for all things relevant to WSURA—oral history interviews, Board minutes, obituaries, and old **Extensions**, to mention a few. Some lazy afternoon, explore the WSURA web site instead of surfing the Internet or logging in to Facebook. It can be addictive too.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. If you have an interest in helping with any of these tasks, speak up. Write an article for **The Extension**, submit a cartoon, write a poem. We'll find just the right spot for your efforts. Email me at mary.kenton@wright.edu and be sure to put Communications in the subject line. Tell me what we're doing right, what you wish we would do better, and what you want us to do next.



Your Communication Team: Mary, Judi and Robin

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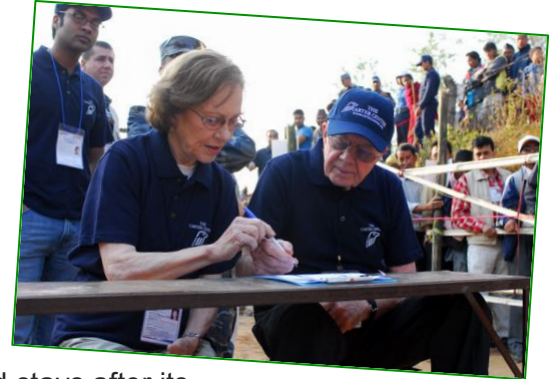
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A Model for Retirement

In 1975 a peanut farmer from Georgia, trained as a nuclear engineer at the Naval Academy, burst upon the national stage. “Hello, I’m Jimmy Carter” he said, flashing his toothy grin to the millions of prospective voters who put him in the White House. He didn’t have the most successful presidency (remember the Iranian hostage crisis?) and he was not reelected in 1980. Thus, in defeat, begins the most remarkable retirement in American political history. As 2020 gets underway, Jimmy Carter just keeps on going, despite the falls, the melanoma and the brain cancer. He is sharp, even witty, and Rosalyn is still at his side some 73 years after their marriage in 1946. He still teaches Sunday School at the Baptist Church in Plains. It seems quaint to note that he was the first self-proclaimed born-again Christian elected to the presidency.

Much of the good the Carters accomplish in the world originates in the Carter Center, which they founded in 1982 in affiliation with Emory University. Early in his post-presidency, Carter served as an ambassador without portfolio, trouble shooting in such hot spots as Nicaragua, Panama, Ethiopia, North Korea and Haiti. Beginning in 1989, the Center started observing elections around the world. To date representatives have observed 110 elections in 39 countries, everywhere from the Cherokee Nation to China and most recently in Tunisia this past December. All parties in the election must agree to invite the Carter Center team, which has often but not always included President Carter. The team arrives well before the election to observe registration and campaigning and stays after its conclusion to monitor ballot counting and assist in possible power transitions. The Carter Center has probably done more to bring about free and fair elections around the world than any other group.



In 1986 Jimmy Carter took on the Guinea worm, a parasite then infecting more than 3.5 million people in Africa and Asia. It is a hideous pest that has been around for thousands of years. Until Carter got involved little progress had been made to deal with this scourge, described in the **Bible** as a fiery serpent. There was no vaccine and no advances in treatment. People became infected by drinking water contaminated with the thousands of tiny eggs that adult female worms left behind. (Those interested in the gory details of the worm infestations need only search Guinea worms. Be warned, it is not pretty.) Eradication took the form of providing safe drinking water and changing peoples’ behavior. In 2015 when he was diagnosed with melanoma, Jimmy Carter said he wanted to live longer than the last Guinea worm. At that time the World Health Organization had certified 91 cases. In 2018 it was down to 28. The last Guinea worm is expected to expire in 2020. It may be time for him to set a new goal.

When he hasn’t been travelling around the world doing good, he works at Habitat for Humanity or maybe writes a book. He has published more than 30 volumes, everything from his presidential memoir to a children’s book he wrote with his youngest child, Amy. He has written books about faith, books about Plains, and a book about his remarkable mother, Lillian Gordy Carter, a nurse who went to India as a Peace Corps volunteer when she was 68. In 2002 Jimmy Carter won the Nobel Peace Prize. It’s hard to imagine a more worthy recipient. He wrote a book about that too. A book of his paintings came out in 2018 and a volume of poetry, ***Always a Reckoning***, in 1995; a selection is featured on Page 8.



All three photos, courtesy of The Carter Center

Top: Rosalyn and Jimmy opening a polling center in Bhaktapur, Nepal

Middle: The Carters watch as a health worker dresses a child's painful Guinea worm wound in Ghana

Bottom: Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony, Oslo, Norway



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A Committee of Scholars Describe the Future Without Me

Some shy professors, forced to write
about a time that's bound to come
when my earthly life is done
described my ultimate demise
in lovely euphemistic words
invoking pleasant visions of
burial rites, with undertakers
friends, kinfolks, and pious pastors
gathered around my flowery casket
eyes uplifted
breaking new semantic ground
by not just saying
I have passed on
joined my maker
or gone to the Promised Land
but stating the lamented fact
in the best and gentlest terms
that I, now dead, have recently
reduced my level of participation.

Jimmy Carter