Bidding a Fond Farewell

After a Combined 64 Years of Teaching at the College of Charleston, Dr. Caroline Hunt and Dr. Bishop Hunt to Retire

Dr. Bishop Hunt will retire as professor of English from the department this spring semester. Professor Hunt earned a bachelor of letters at Oxford University, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar, and his Ph.D. at Harvard, where he also did his undergraduate degree in history and literature. Before joining the faculty at the College of Charleston in 1976, he taught English Romantic poetry as an assistant professor at Princeton University. At the College, he has taught courses across the general education, honors, undergraduate major, and graduate curricula, including courses on Milton, the 18th century, the Victorians, modern poetry, and the Romantics. For three years he taught a course on the New Testament offered in the religious studies division of the Philosophy department. Although Professor Hunt says his “real interest has been in teaching, not research,” he is an accomplished researcher, serving as the Wordsworth bibliographer for David Erdman’s *The Romantic Movement: A Selective and Critical Bibliography*, and as an associate trustee of the Wordsworth Library in Grasmere, England. About his work in the classroom, Professor Hunt says, “As a teacher, you always hope to be able to ‘make it new’—to see the great writers afresh, every time you walk into a classroom, and to share that sense of wonder and renewal with students of every level of ability. It’s the subject matter that’s important, not the teacher.” All of us in the department wish him the best in his retirement.

This year Professor Caroline Hunt announced that she would retire after the spring semester, although she will continue to teach in the department part-time, designing two sections of English 101 for the Math and Science Learning Community. Before joining the department in 1976, Professor Hunt taught at a variety of institutions, including Clark University, Beaver College and the Venango Street Baptist Church in Philadelphia, where she worked with African American adult learners. During the student riots of the early 1970s, Professor Hunt briefly served as an associate dean of an Ivy League college, where, as she says, “We had, literally, a bright red phone in the basement for 24/7 emergency calls.” At the College of Charleston, she has published research and taught courses in Southern literature, English literature before 1700, children’s literature, fantasy and science fiction, and metaphysical poetry. She has also been committed to the College’s general education curriculum, teaching, as she puts it, “courses in the Schools of Science and Math, Arts, Education and Business on topics ranging from global warming in science fiction to musical adaptations of Milton.” All of us in the department appreciate her many important contributions to the college and look forward to her continuing work with students.

Caroline Hunt

Bishop Hunt

(continued on page 3)
Marguerite Scott-Copes, a senior instructor new to the department this year, has a diverse teaching resume. She’s taught courses in composition, creative writing, and literature at Trident Technical College and Florida State University, where she earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in English/ Creative Writing. Dr. Scott actively teaches in the community as well, leading writing workshops in a variety of settings.

This year Dr. Scott-Copes designed sections of English 101 and 102 that draw from her research interests in composition and creative writing. As she explains, “I am currently developing a pedagogy that leads students toward analysis and critical thought through a series of creative writing and invention activities that best suit literacy by trying their hand at the creative process of composing.”

During the summer of 2007, several student/faculty pairs in the English department were awarded CoC/SURF grants (Summer Undergraduate Research with Faculty) to collaboratively pursue their research interests beyond the bounds of the classroom. Following is a brief summary of their work.

Professor Anthony Varallo and Amy Sauber worked together on “‘One in Two Hundred’: The Crazyhorse Journal Project” for which they read 219 manuscripts to establish the ways in which Philip Pullman’s trilogy can be reckoned with. “His Dark Materials Trilogy and Postmodern Cultural Discourse,” Professor Faenger’s research on “Postmodern narrative theory in ‘The Power of Narrative’” through zines, quirky, individualized booklets filled with writing, and out of school and women construct their public and private identities as books are on paper.

Professor Doryane Birrer and Melissa Glasscock established the ways in which Philip Pullman’s trilogy can be read from a “literary” standpoint in the context of postmodern narrative theory in “The Power of Narration: Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials Trilogy and Postmodern Cultural Discourse.”

Professor Carol Ann Davis and Elizabeth Stephenson read poetry manuscripts for the Tupelo Press First Book Competition while at the same time screening individual poems for inclusion in Crazyhorse. This is the first time the editors of Crazyhorse have been asked to serve as judges for the competition.

Full summaries can be found at www.cofc.edu/~english/research/surf/surf2007.html.

Students and Faculty Collaborate on Research

Dr. Caroline Hunt

What are some of the questions or issues that have motivated your teaching throughout the years? A leading question for me, perhaps even an issue, is the importance of inquiry. At several points I have been officially admonished for admitting to students, in class, that I didn’t know the answer to a question. It seems to me that setting an example of continued learningought to be seen as a positive goal, not a pedagogical error, and yet the myth of the omniscient professor seems to be still with us. Why does this myth matter? Students too often come to us with the habit of grabbing for the ‘correct’ instant answer—without much thought, reflection, or questioning. The frame of mind exhibited by those students is one that a liberal education should address head-on, and I try to do that.

What research interests have you pursued throughout your academic career? What projects are you currently working on? I don’t consider myself a serious researcher. Most of my projects pop up out of questions that have surfaced in classroom discussion, or in preparing for class. Let’s look at an example: some years ago at a conference, people were batting around the question of literary theory as applied to children’s literature. As a Young Adult specialist, I objected that there was very little published on theory in my area—and then, of course, wondered why this should be so. That question turned into an article, “Young Adult Literature Avoids the Theorists,” which was published in a journal, cited in the main textbook, and reprinted this year in a Canadian anthology of criticism.

What are some of your professional accomplishments—and by this I mean both teaching and research—that you’re most proud of? Not burning out. It’s as exciting now to walk into a class as it was in 1965.

Dr. Bishop Hunt

To start, could you talk about when you first joined the faculty here at CoC? What were the school and students like then? I was hired in the summer of 1976. The College was much smaller then, and there were fewer students from out of state, or from affluent backgrounds. The College had only recently become a public rather than a private institution, and memories of the tensions involved with educational desegregation were still present, along with, it seemed to me, a deep sense of commitment and a determination to overcome the obstacles of the past.

How has the College changed in the time you’ve worked here? If you had to pick one or two moments that would perhaps best illustrate your career here at CoC, what would they be? In a word, the College has got bigger—and, on the whole, better, by just about every measurable parameter. And yet—and yet—I hope we do not lose our small-college atmosphere, or over-emphasize “research” at the expense of good teaching, or neglect the traditional liberal arts and sciences that have made us an institution to be reckoned with.

Surely, for more than two centuries, an important part of the College’s historic mission has been to provide a “sound, well-rounded education to lowcountry and South Carolina students, many of whom could not afford to go elsewhere for their education, even if they desired to do so. I hope we never lose our sense of the priceless value of simplicity and common sense.

What plans do you have for retirement? Survival.
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Professor Trish Ward and Greg Rockwell collaborated on “The Posy: Understanding George Herbert’s Poetics Through Material Culture.” Their objective was to examine the posy tradition and, particularly, Herbert’s posy of memory, since the latter is a significant part of all God’s mercies, which they found to be indicative of his theory of poetry in general.

Professor Scott Peeples and Kara Mirmelstein conducted research at the South Carolina Historical Society, investigating the role of letter writing in upper-class Confederate women’s lives during the American Civil War. They addressed such questions as how girls and women construct their public and private identities through zines, quirky, individualized booklets filled with writing, art, and poetry manuscripts for the Tupelo Press First Book of Poetry contest.

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Alumni Spotlight: Thomas Beckner

Upon finishing his B.A. in 2000, Thomas Beckner pursued the passion that had led him to an English major—his love of stories and their ability to take him to any place and any time. Having interned in Poland the summer before his senior year, he returned to Europe after graduation, working first in marketing in England. Eventually, he found a position as a researcher and production coordinator for an American production company in France, where he found what he had learned as an English major—how to research, synthesize, and produce an argument critical to [his] success. Thomas was then hired by The Documentary Group in New York City, where he recently finished work on a documentary on the 18th-century Marquis de Lafayette, an international co-production. He is currently working on a piece for PBS’s “Frontline” on the 2008 presidential elections. His role is to advise the documentary director on multiple aspects of the production—story development, research, editing, writing, etc. It’s a great privilege to be involved in such an important project, and to be a part of a creative team whose “story is a journey to the heart of the story.”

What plans do you have for retirement? Survival.

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SGA President and English Major Whitney Hinds
On Studying Literature and the Discipline of Writing at CoFC

Whitney Hinds, SGA President for 2007–08 and an English major, will graduate in May with a concentration in creative writing and in December pick up a second degree in arts management, and from there? Well, let’s just say she has a number of options. Next year, she will apply to law schools and Teach for America and, perhaps in the future, to graduate-level creative writing programs as well, but whatever fork she ends up taking, it’s all her own piece to her. She uses it to make a difference, whether through writing, teaching, or political activism, and in my conversation with her on a late March morning at Kudu Coffee on Vanderhorst, she talked of how her study of English at CoFC has laid a solid foundation.

Whitney, who came to the College as a theatre major (she’s still a minor), opted for the English major, she says, because she wanted a truly “comprehensive education” and she knew that the study of literature would also teach her about history, philosophy, political science, the social sciences, and more. Already, she finds that the analytical and communication skills she has cultivated in the major have a significant payoff whenever she writes and delivers a speech, which she’s done nearly 30 times this year so far. It’s not unusual when she speaks to off-campus groups for her to hear from an audience member “That was a really good speech; you must be an English major.”

But Whitney counts something else as the greatest gain from her study of literature and the discipline of writing: the development of a certain sensitivity toward others.

The necessity of putting herself “in other people’s shoes” and “reaching out to understand people that think or live differently” than she does has been developing throughout her study of English but really came home when she was taking a class last spring in 20th century American women writers with Alison Piepmeier. That class, she observed, forced her to think more deeply about marginalization, and she took its lessons to heart, reaching out in her campaign for SGA President and once in office to under-represented groups on campus, such as the Gay-Straight Alliance and the Black Student Union.

Whitney also shared with me a few other experiences as a major that she considers central to her intellectual and personal growth. She felt pushed to greater academic and intellectual achievement in her American Renaissance class with Larry Carlson, who, Whitney says, challenged her to dig deeper with her critical writing—a watershed term paper exploring Geraldine Brooks’s take on Bronson Alcott in her recent novel, March. Whitney also spoke reverently of her experience with poet Carol Ann Davis, whose desire for students to internalize writing “as a means of the discovering of the self and of the world around you” really stuck with Whitney because, she says, of Davis’s “gift for bringing out the best in people.” Likewise, Whitney found something special in Alison Piepmeier’s approach to teaching, which created a classroom in which students developed knowledge on their own and through their own interactions. As Whitney slyly puts it, “Alison tricked us into teaching ourselves.”

Our conversation concluded with my asking Whitney the not-so-simple question of whether or not she felt there were particular pieces of writing that had a transformative effect on her. Gamely, she gave me three texts: a play, a novel, and a poem. Jim Leonard’s It’s And They Dance Real Slow in Jackson; Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird; and James Wright’s “A Blessing,” respectively. Lately, she finds herself thinking a lot about the last of these, especially its closing lines: “Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom.”

— J. Michael Duvall

Alumni Notes

After working as a teacher and in the banking industry for many years, Louanne L. Lyles ’69 joined the staff at Availys Wayfinding Solutions, Inc., which manufactures interior sign systems in Fort Collins, Colo. She is looking ahead to retirement in South Carolina.

Nancy (Limehouse) Morrow ’72 taught high school English for 14 years before building upon her experience with residential construction to start her own interior design business. N. E. Nelson (Linter) Little ’74 is the financial information systems manager for the MUSC Controller’s Office.

Grier (Gudden) Brown ’76 teaches Advanced Placement and 12th grade British literature at Bishop England High School in Charleston, S.C. During the past two years, she has also been team teaching a SAT prep course with a math instructor.

Ted Zorn ’77 is a professor of communication and associate dean at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. Last year, he received a career achievement award from the International Communication Association.

Sylvia (Dwight) Folk ’78 works with various government contractors on manuals used by the military in conjunction with communications software systems.

Suzanne Reynolds ’79 started a college prep business and published The College Coach Guidebook in 2005. She is also the curator for a small art and ethnography museum in Houston.

Garrick M. Somers ’81 retired from IBM sales career and currently serves on several boards of directors. He is also the contributing editor of Musings of the Millhill Monkey, an op-ed website, as well as the founder and editor of Pointed Pencilmount, an online children’s literature magazine.

Claude Carnell ’86 is an information systems manager at The Daniel Island Company. He also works as a computer and internet systems consultant and writes technical reviews for Piedmont College. Glenn Shed ’89 graduated from the Alabama School of Law in 1991 and is currently employed by the Law Offices of Glenn A. Shed in Fort Payne, Ala.

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Bret Lott returns this year to the College’s English department as professor of English and Writer-in-Residence. Below is his reply to an interview question about how he got started as a writer. For the full interview, go to www.cofc.edu/~english/features/new_faculty/lott.html.

I got started by reading my brains out when I was a kid, though back then I wasn’t doing it—that—reading—with any idea toward becoming a writer. I simply enjoyed stories, enjoyed going somewhere else, enjoyed finding out what people do in certain circumstances. That is, I wanted to find out what happened and why, which is all a good story gives us.

I ended up having four majors in college—forestry, marine biology, education, and then, finally, English; in addition, I took a year off halfway through college to become an RC Cola salesman, believing at that point that college wasn’t for me. But after a year of that, I knew I wanted to go back to school, and so, before reenrolling at Cal State Long Beach, I took a course at Golden West Community College so as to get myself used to having assignments again, readings and deadlines and all. The only nights I had open were Tuesdays, and the only course that was open on Tuesday nights was Creative Writing, and so I used to show up to class in my RC uniform on Tuesday nights, and had a blast writing things, though I still had no notion of becoming a writer. I then took another creative writing course once I was back at Cal State, and the professor read out loud a single sentence out of an entire story I’d written for class. Then he said, “That’s a writer’s sentence,” and I remember thinking, “Maybe I want to do this.”

I know this is a long-winded answer, but it is to say that my writing life has been inextricably entwined with that of teaching; without my teachers, I wouldn’t be here today. And as a teacher now, I continue to be invigorated by my students, as the things I teach them are things I must—I must—practice every moment I am writing. I tell my students on the first day of class that the things I am wrestling with as an author are precisely the same things they will have to struggle with: How does this character hold her coffee cup? What does this character see as he walks from this room into that room? What is she thinking as she parks the car in the lot outside the grocery store? These are all I work with, and there have been no breakthroughs beyond this in story-telling, ever. So my students are always, always my peers: we are all in this together, trying to tell stories.

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Bret Lott on Becoming a Writer

Faculty Notes

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For a full listing of the publications, conference presentations, and other professional accomplishments by faculty members in the department, go to: www.cofc.edu/~english/faculty_notes.html.
Thank you for your continued support of the Department of English.

If you are interested in making a gift, please make a check payable to the College of Charleston Foundation and mail it to:

Kristin Romness
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School of Humanities and Social Sciences
66 George Street
Charleston, SC 29424

Please note “Department of English” on your check. If you have any questions please contact Kristin at 843.953.0781 or romnessk@cofc.edu.

Below are excerpts from critical and creative works read by students at the Spring 2008 Senior Symposium

Despite respecting Ichabod’s academic proclivities, the townspeople do not regard such proclivities as worthy of imitation, for as soon after the schoolmaster vanishes without a trace, his books are thrown away, as the townspeople “never knew any good” that came from “reading and writing.”

— Kendall Spillman, “Class Consciousness in Sleepy Hollow”

“Yeah.” He looked at her and she was pleading with her eyes but he knew she knew. He felt like everyone knew. She didn’t respond to him so he took a deep breath and stepped over the threshold. He stepped into a life without parents. He took his seat at 3A, a window seat in first class. He wished it wasn’t a window seat. What am I going to wear to their funeral?

— Britt Particelli, “Capture in Black and White”

There’s a tenderness to the way the sky pretends that it’s going to open up, that it’s going to give us rain — what we’ve been wanting, what we’ve been waiting for.

— Annah Browning, end of “June of the Holy Spirit”

The words, was all I could think, all the words that could come spilling out, running onto the plastic tablecloth, stopping my brother’s hands at the dinner table. The words that would stop my grandmother’s feet in the middle of the kitchen floor, forcing a feeling deep in my gut. The only thing I could compare it to then, was falling, that gut clench that starts down deep, rising and rising as you get closer to the ground.


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