



WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

# WASCH CENTER FOR RETIRED FACULTY

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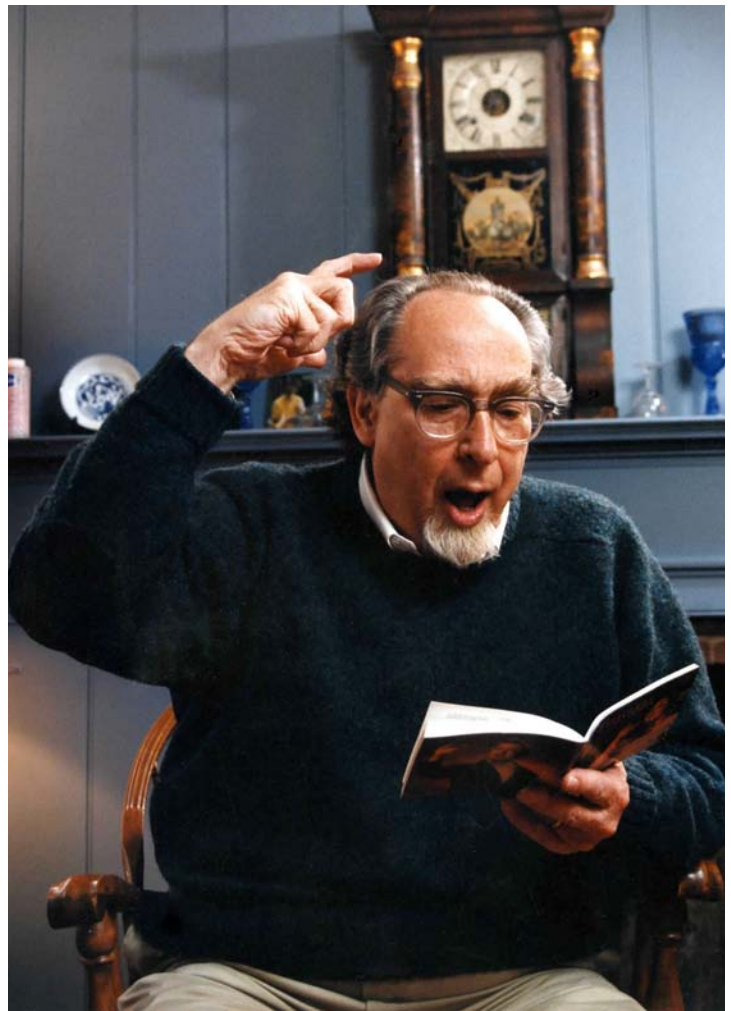
## A Conversation with George

*Jerry Wensinger talks with George Creeger*

**G**eorge was a little skeptical about the whole idea of an “interview.” In fact, he didn’t much like the word “interview” at all. When I first arrived at their Middle Haddam house on Keighley Pond Road in February, he said let’s make this a “conversation.” We agreed that we had known each other far too long and had enjoyed far too close a friendship for more than fifty years for any sort of a formal interview. So what was to be the format? Two choices to use as a model: the so-called Proust Questionnaires that are over before you know it, one of the moronic columns in the *Vanity Fair* magazine. Those arch brevities could certainly not be the pattern. We agreed to liking, on the other hand, the long and searching interviews of writers that have been running for many years in the *Paris Review*; but they are much too expansive for this little newsletter to manage. So that led to a simple compromise: an abbreviated conversation that will wander as it likes and that can be edited down, we hope, to digestible size, but still keep the rhythm and flavor of our two and a half visits. I had borrowed a tiny recorder, the size of a cigarette lighter, put it on the table next to the cup of tea and plate of cookies offered by the indispensable Elva on this chilly winter day. Our only aide memoire was the briefest list of topics I had sketched on a half sheet of paper and sent a day or two ahead. This must’ve been about the first week in February because one of our opening topics was the death of J.D. Salinger which had occurred a short time before.

A final visit at the beginning of this past July was necessitated by the fact that at the second tea-time visit we had failed to engage the proper button for the entire section in which George talks about his favorite literature, both for personal consumption and for his teaching.

Your reporter is “J” and he is in *Italics and boldface*. George is “G.” These initials are soon dropped. We sometimes use a run-on paragraph style. There is repetition. Life is full of it.



*“... such a fire by God’s grace in England. . . as shall never be put out.”*

**J:** *As to the expected encomia, most of us know what you’ve been celebrated for during your Wes.U. days: your chairmanships, your deanships, your addresses, books, papers. Perhaps even more for your astonishing run as famous teacher and speaker, campus-wide and beyond, together with the awards thereunto appended. Do you wish to go deeper into that?* **G:** No. But I do not suffer from false modesty; so

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# AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW OF THE WASCH CENTER

By Mary Klaaren

Mary Klaaren, retired minister of Middletown's South Church, has been an active and activist member of the community for many years. She and her husband, Gene (Religion Department), are now retired.

“This is incredible,” said the man standing next to me as we were filling our plates with food in the hallway of the Wasch Center. The afternoon program had been enlightening and energizing for both mind and spirit. People lingered for quite a while after the talk. Some had follow-up comments and questions for the speaker; others were catching up on family matters; a few were discussing where the best apples could be picked or purchased. Strangers and first timers were making introductions.

As I filled my plate from the spread of colorful fruit surrounded by cheeses and crackers, I responded to the man who had spoken to me. “I agree. The food is incredible. This is not my everyday fare.” “That is not what I meant,” he said pointedly, “I don't mean the food, I mean the entire place – where we can learn from each other and about each other.”

Later while walking home, I pondered what he had said. It is true. At the Wasch Center, the academic and social come together. Its offices provide space for twelve retired faculty to work on new projects, continue their research, and do other things as well—such as mentoring new faculty.

But the Center offers much more, and one need not be a retired faculty member to participate. There is a monthly Classic Film Series, introduced by Joe Reed – with plenty of time for discussion. The Wednesday afternoon programs, consisting of seven lectures per semester, have attracted audiences that often fill the room. Some come early to read or chat but often stay on for refreshments and conversation.

These programs attract a variety of people: retired and non-retired faculty, spouses, staff, and students, – as well as individuals from the community. During one of the programs, I learned from Suzanne O'Connell's lecture why she is so fascinated with Antarctica and how her research there relates to what's going on under the ice. My own hair has been changing color for years, so I knew I shouldn't miss Jason Wolfe's talk on “Graying Hair, Stem cells, and the Process of

Aging.” The program with Peter Standaart and Libby Van Cleve caught the attention of many, not only because we enjoy hearing their flute and oboe, but because they were talking about the ways musicians have to work out the musical problems raised by a score before they can play together effectively.

On election night a couple of years ago, the big-screen TV in the Center's Butterfield Room was popping with state-by-state results. Elvin Lim, a specialist on presidential elections from Wesleyan's Government Department, had been invited to bring his insight and expertise. It was a remarkable way to get together and watch the political process with a bit more understanding than usual.

Personally I am very grateful to Susan and William Wasch, whose vision for the Center included this social component; to Karl Scheibe, whose leadership sustains it; and to all who, in ways they may not even realize, contribute to this vital hub of academic and social enrichment. ■

## WASCH CENTER LECTURE PROGRAM FALL 2010

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 4:15 PM

Sheila Murphy, “The Gold of Memoirs: Sharing Nuggets from the Past”

### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 4:15 PM

Richard Slotkin, “After the Fact: Writing the Battle of the Crater as Fiction and as History”

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 4:15 PM

Lincoln Keiser, “Drinking Rolling Rock Beer and Pink Ladies: Why we are Losing in Afganistan”

### WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 4:15 PM

William Trousdale, “The Pros and Cons of Nuclear Power: Basic Principles”

### WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 4:15 PM

Robert Grant, violin, Carver Blanchard, lute, and William Bowie, recorder, “Music from the Four Points of the Compass”

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 4:15 PM

Elizabeth Bobrick, “Reconsidering Greek Tragedy: Is the Tragic Hero Really Flawed?”

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 4:15 PM

Holiday Party



you could if you like list a few recognitions, offices, and honors for the record. In no particular order I was Acting Dean of the College in 1970-1971, Dean of the College in 1971-1973, Director of the College of Letters 1962-1964, Fulbright Guest Professor in Würzburg, Germany, 1959-1960, again in Berlin in 1968-1969, named W.F. Osborne professor in 1982, Secretary of the Faculty, 1985-1989, Vice-Chair and Chair of the Faculty 1990-1992; I was the first recipient of the Binswanger awards for excellence in teaching when they were inaugurated in 1993.

**J: Splendid.** G: All in good time...

**J: George, what do you want to be remembered for?** G: For having been a good teacher...But let's for heaven's sake get down to brass...

**J: knuckles?** G: Stop the joking. Brass tacks, of course. This cannot be confrontational or contentious, okay, dear chap?

**J. Alright. Repeat: let's get the encomia out of the way at the outset. It is no secret that in the annals of the second half of the 20th century George R. Creeger was one of the most extolled and popular teachers, and classroom presences, in Wesleyan's 20th-century records. What do you say to that?** G: It might be so...

**J: Thank you. So then, let us jump in medias res. The evening I was concocting a few questions for you, there came the announcement of the death of J.D. Salinger. Years ago you were, as I distinctly recall, not only a fan of the man's writings but also one of the best speakers on the subject of his works. What was there for you?** G: Well, I think it was primarily a matter of his style, of the very colloquial manner of his style. It reminded me in fact very much of the style of Mark Twain. Salinger captures prep school speech very beautifully. It was a construct, to be sure, but it was also entirely authentic. Well, he was a recluse you know, up there in New Hampshire....

**J: In Cornish, near your son.**

G: Right. He was a puzzling man. He came early to a full stop, I guess.

**J: Okay, there's our opener, a literary figure. The big question now is how and why you got into English and American literature?**

G: Well, it was partly by default. I was certainly not going into the hard sciences, that would have been entirely beyond me. I've always liked my stuff, I mean literature, mainly I guess for its aural qualities, aural, not oral. I mean the sound of it. Yes, the sound, particularly of verse, and poetic prose. [George quotes from John Foxe:] "...then they brought a faggot, kindled with fire, and laid it down at Ridley's feet. To

whom Latimer spoke in this manner: 'Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a fire by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out.' That's marvelous, Latimer to Ridley at the stake. Great prose cadence; you can feel it on your skin. [We looked it up and it is "candle," not fire; we agreed George's "fire" is better.]

**J: Did you read a lot when you were youngster?** G. Yes, I read voraciously.

**J: Beginning at the age of what?**

G. When I read a whole book first? Let's see, probably at the age of six or seven . . .

**J: What else might possibly have been on your plate besides teaching literature, now that we've dispensed with the "hard sciences"?**

G: I trifled for a while with history and then I had quite a flirt with German. That was my minor in college. I did two years of German at DePauw University, in Indiana, a staunchly Methodist institution. I had a four-year, full tuition scholarship there.

**J: So you and I in a sense . . .**

I understand, yes, we did have that in common and early on had a couple things to talk about together; right? A grandfather of mine—he was a misplaced Pennsylvania Dutchman, meaning of course a "Deutschman." We still have his Bible—or my daughter has it. His native language was Pennsylvania Dutch but he also spoke Hochdeutsch. He came to this country in the early 19th century, at least according to his name as registered in the Bible. He was very musical.

**J: Speaking of which, we know how important music has been in your life. Did you have any training in music?** G: What we used to call music appreciation? . . . well yes, and I tried piano lessons for a while, to not much avail. I didn't have the ability to look at a score and translate that through my mind and turn it into digital manipulation; so I never became a good pianist. I was hooked on music for a very long time, though. It was a sort of drug for me. I would come home from school—I was intensely nervous as a child—visibly upset; I loved music with a passion. I'd come home and put on a record. With a passion . . . intensely nervous. Does our audience have to know that? No, I don't think so, but leave it. Jerry, there is a dark side to my soul. No, no, strengstens verboten. But let it stand. No, it was much more than mere appreciation.

**I recall that you did some music teaching, in a sense.** Yes, well it was really an opera-as-drama-and-literature course here. Good course, if I say so myself. I couldn't pretend to teach it as musical theory, simply because I didn't have the knowledge.

**You loved . . . ?**

In particular Bach and Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner (but

*Continued on page 4.*



## New Adult Education Program Offered by Wesleyan

The Wesleyan Institute for Lifelong Learning (WILL) is a new program established by the University to present brief, non-credit courses intended for adults in the Middletown and Central Connecticut communities. Most of the instructors for the courses will be retired Wesleyan faculty members and, from time to time, others with similar qualifications. Courses will be made available at a modest cost and will generally meet for two to six ninety-minute periods.

In the coming fall, six courses will be offered, plus a one-day special program on the history of Middletown. The schedules courses are:

### The Home Front in Revolutionary Connecticut

Richard Buel, Professor of History, Emeritus  
Three Mondays: 4:30–6:00 p.m.  
October 25; November 1, 8

### “Geology and Art: The Connecticut Valley in Art and in View”

Jelle DeBoer, Professor of Earth and Environmental Science, Emeritus  
Two Days: Tuesday September 7: 4:30-6:00 p.m.  
Thursday, September 9: 1:00-5:00 p.m. off site

### Food, Culture and Identity

John Finn, Professor of Government  
Six Tuesdays: 6:00 – 7:30  
October 5, 12, 19, 26; November 2, 9

### The Infectious Microbe

William Firshein, Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Emeritus  
Five Mondays: 4:30-6:00 pm in the Butterfield Room  
September 20, 27; October 4, 11, 18

### Deciphering Gauguin

Rhea Padis Higgins, Adjunct Professor of Art, University of Hartford  
Three Mondays: 4:30-6:00 p.m. in the Butterfield Room  
November 15, 22, 29

### Hamlet’s Soliloquies: Method & Madness

Gay Smith, Professor Theater, Emeritus  
Three Mondays: 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.  
September 14, 21, 28

In addition, the Institute will present on September 11, 2010, an all-day program on the **History of Middletown**. The program will include four presentations, a walking tour of central Middletown, a luncheon, and a panel discussion at the conclusion of the day. The presenters are:

Richard Buel, Professor of History Emeritus  
Dione Longley, former Director of the Middletown Historical Society  
Dianna Ross McCain, Head, Research Center, Connecticut Historical Society  
Elizabeth Warner, Teacher, Independent Day School  
Saturday, September 11, 2010, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

*A Conversation with George* continued from page 3.

not too much Wagner), Brahms and Berlioz, and so on! *I hadn’t remembered that you came to Wesleyan as early as 1951, is that right?*

Yes, ‘51. I guess you and I knew each other from fairly early on, even before you and Carl [Viggiani] and I were the tutor team for the College of Letters, class of 1963. That’s when we were sort of thrown together.

*How about that wonderful, darf man sagen: “famous voice” of yours! Were you ever tempted by the pulpit? Or by the theater, the stage?*

All no, no, no. There were at best a couple of entirely amateur theatrical performances at Wesleyan that we (Elva and I) were in. They are no longer clear to me. Monday Club things, but entirely amateur.

*Now back to our job here: teaching. Not which courses you were teaching . . . but earlier, when did you know that that is what you wanted to do? From very early on?*

Well, when we were living in Middletown [*as a child George’s father was Methodist minister to the College*] my father put up in the kitchen a genuine slate blackboard and my sister and I used to pretend that we were teachers and we’d have all the chalk and the erasers and everything one needs as a teacher . . . and both of us had such fun. My sister, yes she could certainly also have become a teacher, but she didn’t do that. She was very bright, went to Allegheny College in Pennsylvania and of course had her Phi Beta Kappa.

*There’s a connection here, your letter-opener there on the desk. Your Phi Beta Kappa paper knife?*

No, that one is Elva’s. Mine is around somewhere.

*Do you ever go to any of the Phi Beta Kappa meetings now?* No longer. You? *No, nor I neither.*

We don’t need the paraphernalia to let the world know that we’re bright enough. . . .

*So when you were playing teacher back then at six or seven, were you emulating any particular teacher of yours?* No, it was no more than a game, about teaching. It wasn’t doctor and nurse, mind you. But we were a great teaching team, my sister and I. One of the few times we didn’t squabble. She was older, about a year and a half older.

*Did you ever pretend, George, that you were the student?* I don’t remember that. How we loved that blackboard and the chalk; sometimes the chalk or fingernail would screech on the slate, enough to set your teeth on edge.

*So you were really doomed. Or should I say predestined, to be a teacher?*

Yes, predestined is much better word, wouldn’t you say? *Back to the theater. You said you did some bits of it, at least at Wesleyan.*

Yes, but not as a kid.

*So you were not seriously bitten by the stage bug,*

*ever?* No. Well at Christmastime, in the church, small roles. I participated as a shepherd. Things like that. Strange little recollections.

**So, the theater, I can't drop it because you're so . . . so what? "theatrical?"** Hmmm, Wesleyan in the 'fifties, yes, the '92 theater. And I, that is Elva and I, we were in a couple of productions, as I said, then one or two others later with dear Doris Hallie. We did not particularly distinguish ourselves. **Who else?** Elspeth Cowie and of course Pendleton, Ralph Pendleton. Gosh, how far back all that is, you know.

**George, you unquestionably could have been a very good actor. You remind me of George Arliss with a touch of Edward Arnold -- remember who Arliss was? Disraeli?**

Yes, perhaps, a little turn of one screw, and then I'd have had to overcome a certain set of inhibitions, a self-consciousness that I think few people see in me; a self-consciousness. Not in front of an academic, that is, a classroom audience, never in lecturing; but when called upon to perform, that's different. What plays were we in? Well, there was that Eliot play; I wonder which one?

**Were you good in it?**

Well, damn it, yes! I think so, at least not bad....

**Retirement. When did you go into retirement?**

Be damned if I can remember all the details, but I decided officially to retire in 1999 and did so. Then I taught on an irregular basis two more years in the department. That adds up to fifty years; not a bad record, eh? Bill Firshein will say that he has the longevity record, but all that's biology—turning on the lights in the laboratory, heating up the Bunsen burners or whatever they have. I jest, of course. But is that "Teaching"? Well, yes of course it is, a sort of teaching. But it is not the same thing that we citizens of the humanities will always consider teaching. In any case, I certainly did it for a very long time; all in all it was a splendid life on that stage. Fifty years -- maybe not quite fifty; depends. What about you?

**An honorable record, nothing like yours, a mere almost 40, also counting in a bit of early partial.**

**But George, did you really want to retire?**

Did I want to retire, you ask, dear lad. You forget? Don't you realize I was beginning to have health problems; that damnable tumble down the cliff in New Hampshire; I broke all sorts of things, but for God's sake let's not dwell on that. This so-called "conversation" is not a health protocol, I trust . . .

**But did you want to retire? And I believe I am expected to ask at this juncture: what message, what advice do you have for the younger retirees? This newsletter is half for their benefit, . . . and half to regale the moribundi waiting in the wings.**

Are we on the Magic Mountain? Have I "messages" to the newly retired? Certainly not. Nothing earthshaking, I sincerely hope, is to be coming out of this conversation. Send them to me one on one, if they like; we have tea and sympathy here. You know, part of the charm of retirement is (or was) that great feeling, not having to rise at the crack of dawn any longer, getting oneself into the classroom. But by this time, well, all good things come to an end, and peter out. . .

**Truly said, but do cooperate: did you have what some of our square-er friends insist on calling a "retirement plan"?**

No, not exactly. Ach, das ist schon so lange her.

**Well, tell us. . . .**

We had sold [the house on] Cornwall Street in Portland, the house which was a mess, in fact, when we bought it. The restoration was glorious fun, but part of it we did in the worst possible way.

**George, that is a gross exaggeration, everything was in the usual impeccable Creeger restoration style.**

We didn't use enough proper timbers in the cellar, but 2-by-8s, 2-by-6s, laminated, all that, but by God it worked.

*Continued on page 7.*

## THREE FACULTY MEMBERS ATTAIN EMERITUS STATUS

Three members of the faculty retired during the past academic year. They will be honored at a May, 2011 reception at the Wasch Center as part of Reunion/Commencement weekend.

Their names, positions at Wesleyan, and institutions of advanced degree are below:

**Marilyn Katz** Professor of Classical Studies (1990-2010); Associate Professor of Classics (1983-90); Assistant Professor of Classics (1978-83); Ph.D., Yale University.

**Philip Pomper** William F. Armstrong Professor of History (1992-2010); Professor of History (1976-2010); Associate Professor of History (1971-1976); Assistant Professor of History (1966-71); Instructor in History (1964-65). Ph.D., University of Chicago.

**Jeremy Zwelling** Associate Professor of Religion (1975-2010); Lecturer in Religion (1969-1975); Instructor in Religion (1967-1969); Ph.D., Brandeis University.

# News & Notes

from retired members of the faculty

Retired faculty members are encouraged to submit short descriptions (150 words or fewer) of their research, scholarly writing, and related activities. The deadline for the January 2011 issue is November 19.

## Joyce Lowrie

After having had my last book published (*Sightings: Mirrors in Texts – Texts in Mirrors*), I am now engaged in a project that is temporarily titled “Carmen: an Interdisciplinary Study.” I attended the recent Metropolitan production of Bizet’s *Carmen* as well as an adapted version of the opera by Peter Brook at Yale. It was followed by a short Stravinsky opera, *Le Rossignol*. I am working on the relationships that exist between Bizet’s and Stravinsky’s operas. My readings have included Allan Josephs’ *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Corrida*, Jack Randolph Conrad’s *The Horn and the Sword*, and other books on bullfighting, including novels by Hemingway. Recent controversies over bullfighting in Spain have increased interest in the subject. This past semester I helped organize a campus visit by Patrick Henry, who gave a lecture at the Wasch Center on his book, *We are Only Men: The Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust in France*. Henry also led a “conversation” on the person and work of Philip Hallie at the College of Letters. I also organized a talk by Catherine Lafarge, Emerita from Bryn Mawr College, who spoke to the Middletown Literary Club on Joan of Arc and was on a panel on retirement at the Wasch Center.

## Dick Miller

Since retirement in 2006 I’ve done lots of reading, trying to find out why the US experienced a housing bubble, why it deflated, and what policy responses will be effective. Also why most observers, including many macroeconomists, failed

to see it coming. Within the past 18 months, I have published two corporate finance articles on the cost of capital; another, “Algebra, Home Mortgages, and Recessions,” was co-authored with daughter Jean. We have submitted another paper on algebra and retirement planning, both aimed at educating high school math teachers on uses of algebra.

## Dick Ohmann

I am beginning a four-year term on the Executive Council—i.e., board of directors—of the Modern Language Association. In the election last fall (2009), my campaign statement stressed this theme: “Since 1970, most professions have been on the defensive, chiefly because of changes in the broad economy, but also because of political pressures... our [own] profession has lost cohesion and power in setbacks that at first seemed a crisis but now appear an enduring, maybe permanent etiolation... The current economic crisis is turning up the heat on traditional university education...” The MLA has been a leader in opposing the trend toward contingent academic labor, and I expect to hop into that battle. Whether learned societies and academic professional organizations can do much to slow the commercialization of higher education is a good question. Ideas from colleagues receiving this Newsletter will be welcome.

## Paula Paige

I just won an online prize, the Gordon Prize for flash fiction (short short fiction), which is sponsored by *Our Stories* literary magazine ([ourstories.us](http://ourstories.us)). My story, “Moshiach is here,” will appear shortly in the spring edition on line, and will be collected in a print edition at year’s end.

## MORE FLICKS FOR DISCERNING VIEWERS

Joe Reed will once more provide a piquant selection of Hollywoodiana. Come and hear Joe’s tangy gloss on these classy films—with popcorn to boot. All films will be shown on Tuesdays at 3:15. For the complete schedule, please go to the Wasch Center web site: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/waschcenter/>





And we got the building restored. And we got it all painted up.

**How long did you work on this one?**

Oh, several years. We worked on it all the time. I went over every day. At one point it was really something. In mid-stream, I had broken two arms or rather I had two broken shoulders, and it helped me recover by redoing all those endless, wonderful damned windows. There's a photo of me standing at this sort of easel, redoing with consummate patience all of those windows -- drawing the sash, to use the technical term for it. That was early on.

**But wait, backtrack: when did you get that house?**

I think it was 1996. Elva would say because I could never stop getting houses—but it had to be an old house, excepting this one we're sitting in. **Well, you were at first pretty determined you were going to move into the house on Cornwall Street.** Yes, depending on what day of the week you asked me. Well, it was a lovely place, but this is also a lovely place because it is so quiet. I've always been very sensitive to noise, since childhood. Do you want to hear my childhood reaction to noise? That's a story in itself. I remember vividly on the Fourth of July in Middletown a parade and they would come up Main Street and I was so small I could stand on my father's feet and he would clap his hands over my ears so I wouldn't be too upset by the noise, the band, the horns. I have always been hypersensitive, even morbidly so, to noise.

**But you were healthy child otherwise?**

Not really, they thought I had rheumatic fever and I was in bed much of the time. I became a reader -- and a listener, to my little bedside radio.

**But we were talking of Cornwall Street: you say you worked on it for almost eight years. But knowing you and your passion for old houses and old furniture and making furniture (so beautifully), certainly no one was surprised that you were doing that. But earlier; let's go back a few more years to those other places you brought back to authentic life (including parts of my house in Higganum, by the way), what for instance about your house in Durham? And that little house you did, I think, with and through Chad and Margaret Dunham?** You mean that little house on Chestnut Hill Road in East Hampton? I think Margaret found it; she was the source of the money. It was a dear little place, 18th-century center chimney, down the slope, nestled at the side of a brook. Oh, we all had such wonderful projects, didn't we? And so many of them involved working with my dear and close friend Sam Hipsher; I can't even begin to recount them all. The house we're in is a different sort of story: it is a wonderful house for

growing old in. The Cornwall Street house was supposed to be the be-all and end-all of everything we wanted to live in, the perfect house. Now we go by it sometimes and it doesn't hurt at all. Yes, those people who bought it from us, they are a perfect fit for that house. At the end of the day there are no regrets whatsoever. How could there be? The only thing is that we were never able to have people like you and the Frenzels and the others who were so keen on the project and followed the progress so kindly and intelligently, couldn't have you over for meals and evenings—in a proper house fit for all our good old furnishings.

**Back to music. Do you enjoy music a lot?**

I listen to recordings. My problem now is a problem of linearity; that is, I can't follow the musical line before I begin to be confused.

**What about television?** Yes, "Masterpiece Theater" productions, as long as they're British. Following can be hard. Hearing aid problems. We're not youngsters anymore, Jerry.

**Oh, had you noticed that? Are you still in contact with any of your students? You certainly had, can we say thousands of them.**

Oh no, not that many.

**Well, do the math, 50 years more or less, the better part of 100 semesters, except for the rare sabbatical you took, at the beginning six days a week, from eight to three, or later; 4/4, then 3/4 . . .**

Yes, we drudges took very few semesters off in contrast to them what came after us, the baby researchers. Well, yes, the students do sort of disappear, don't they? Isn't that

*Continued on page 8.*

## NECROLOGY

### **William Ward**

Bill Ward, professor of Theater & Design, emeritus, died on June 14, 2010 in Middletown. He received his B.S. from Ball State University in 1951 and his M.F.A. from the University of Illinois in 1953. No memorial service is planned.

### **Richard C. DeBold**

Dick DeBold, assistant and associate professor of Psychology at Wesleyan, 1963-67, died on June 29, 2010 in Higganum. He later taught at Hobart & William Smith, where he was Dean, and at Long Island University as professor of Psychology. No memorial service is planned.

your experience too? Not true for all our colleagues. Perhaps, yes, for those who try too hard to be immortal. Yes, one certainly remembers sensational students. And the other category, the important category, the great regular run of students, those who worked for us for years, those who come back now and again, those who became real friends—they studied honestly and they worked honestly, and they are dear people. I want to record the names of at least a few: Paul Baumann, Bonnie Blair, Dennis Murphy, Cara Leheny, Duane Herman.

***Time for autobiography. Where do you come from, where were you born?***

I was born in Attleboro, Massachusetts, September 1925 because that's where the hospital was when my father had parishes or charges in the general area; and we stayed there until he came to Middletown; then we were moved regularly from parish to parish, but in Middletown he became sort of a fixture. That was in part because of the disastrous fire at the Methodist Church, which was nearly completely destroyed. It was large and there was a whole lot to do for him there. It was the college church, not the chapel on campus. And it burned. It was a dreadful fire and I was still a child, of course.

***When was that?***

In the early thirties. For a very long time I had nightmares about that fire. It was a brick building. It must have been traumatic for me.

***Your father, did he ever go to parishes in the Midwest?*** No, but he was from there; he was born in Bascom, Ohio. He went to college in Tiffin, Ohio; and then he was in Boston working on his divinity degree. I was a full scholarship student; I'd contemplated going to St. Lawrence College; I thought I might be a skier which of course is nonsense, for I have very little aptitude for that—a romantic. But instead I was offered a full scholarship at DePauw University and accepted that. We were poor as church mice—well, almost.

***Then how did Yale get into the mix?*** Well, you see I was graduated from DePauw University in 1945, when I was not quite 20. In those days you could have gone anywhere you wanted. At Yale they offered me a scholarship.

***You knew then about wanting to get into language and literature?*** Yes. I lived at first in Hall of Graduate Studies; each room had its fireplace, which was very nice indeed, very nice. I remember waking one freezing morning; the parapet outside my window was covered in snow. Lovely. I had stack privileges. In the meantime my father had become district superintendent and was given a house on Whitney Avenue. So I began living at home. I was

given an almost free ride at graduate school.

***Did you go back to Yale much after you finished there?*** Not much; I worked at the library, of course, on the classes and dissertation. By that time my father was supervising churches in the Naugatuck Valley. And my years in service were in that mix. So it was Yale/military service/DePauw/Yale/Wesleyan.

***Did you go immediately upon completion from Yale to Wesleyan?***

Yes, as a matter of fact, I did. I had all my credentials sent directly from Yale to Victor Butterfield. Could you believe such a thing, nowadays? Right to the president? More or less on the spot I was hired.

***When did you and Elva meet?*** Rather early on, you might say. She was in kindergarten at the First Methodist Church in Middletown where her father was of course Carl Stearns, the head of the astronomy department at Wesleyan.

***Backtrack to military service?***

I was on "limited service" for long time. I'd been drafted in 1945 and had basic training in the Air Force in San Antonio, Texas. I was released from that in 1946 and then was with the occupation forces in Japan and worked on the base newspaper; and that summer I taught at the dependent

### **WESLEYAN TO HOST BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF AROHE, OCTOBER 14 - 17**

The biennial conference of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) will be held at Wesleyan University, October 14-17. The Usdan Center and Beckham Hall will be the sites for conference activities. More than 200 people are expected to attend the conference, representing colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada. About half of the audience will consist of representatives of schools that already have some form of retirement organization, with good representation as well from institutions currently considering the establishment of such organizations.

The program for the conference is now set. The theme of the conference is "Passion and Purpose in Retirement." Dr. Robert Butler of the Longevity Center in New York is scheduled to be the keynote speaker. Other major addresses will be given by Professor Annabelle Patterson, Sterling Professor of English at Yale University. Joyce Cohen, CEO of Unconventional Wisdom, Fred Mandell, artist and author, and Patricia Will, CEO of Belmont Village. ■



school. Sixth, seventh and eighth grades; the only ones hired as teachers were guys with bachelor degrees. Under those circumstances, war over, I can say that I really rather enjoyed my experience in the military. In the fall after service, I was mustered out and came home. I taught a semester at my alma mater, DePauw. By that time I had begun grad school, left DePauw, and re-entered Yale.

**Any travel?** Well of course with the Army Air Corps in Japan and the occupation, then later during my teaching years we were in Europe, principally in Germany, England, with Fulbright grants, and the like; we also went to Würzburg and the Freie Universität in Berlin. Basta, Jerry! Let's have some tea.

**Hold on for two moments. We have to record again that partial list of those whom you professed for many years, what writers most particularly got their hooks into you, British and American; it got flushed into the ether. Eliot said, somewhere, no matter where, Shakespeare and Dante divide the world between themselves; there is no third. Agreed?**

That's pompous old Tom Eliot; he spoke often in blurbs; but who can prove him wrong? Dante I don't know in Italian. I take it on faith. Dante is hard to teach as a poet for us, in translation; it's theology. But I loved teaching dear Chaucer and reading him aloud. Students love him. **[He quotes from memory from the "General Prologue."]** How great! As to Shakespeare, yes, Shakespeare, I happily put him on top. But you want my younger favorites for reading and teaching, British and American?

**Four each for openers.**

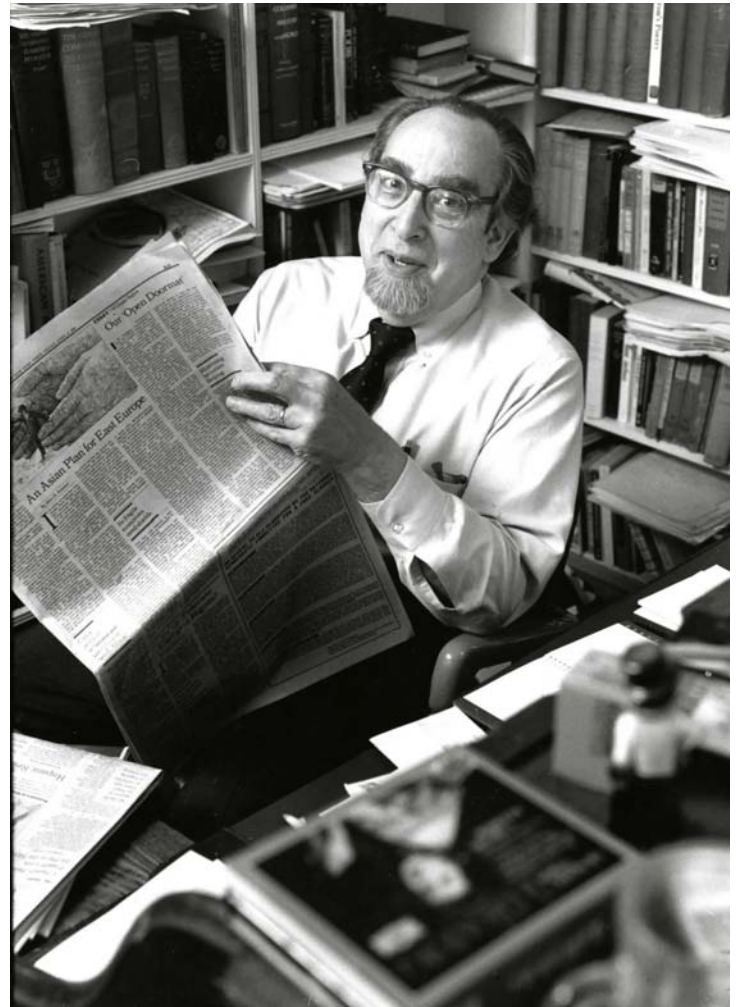
Of the British, in prose, it would have to begin with Charles Dickens. And after Dickens it would be George Eliot, and after Eliot it would be Austen, Jane Austen. And after her it would go to .... probably Thomas Hardy. Right now those are my four. Of the Americans, prose writers, it would be Ralph Waldo Emerson, and after Emerson comes Henry David Thoreau; after Thoreau, not strictly prose, it must be Walt Whitman, and then Mark Twain. I have to slide T.S. Eliot in here before I forget: American? Yes, certainly, and of course we're in poetry here.

**Okay, let's continue with full-fledged British poets.**

Alexander Pope, William Wordsworth.

**Wordsworth? He's up there for you?**

Oh, indeed, way up there. William Blake, then John Keats. Then George Gordon Noel, Lord Byron; then let's see ...Tennyson, yes, definitely. Getting closer to our time, William Butler Yeats; back a step to Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. That's a pretty great representation, isn't it?



"... so much more to talk about ..."

**The pantheon grows a main. Now what about the 20th century?**

Well, we've mentioned T. S. Eliot already, and Yeats. Oh, but Frost, Frost! ...Now a surprise, Edward Arlington Robinson, lower on the scale, to be sure. So many others, but . . . oh yes, hold on, Dick Wilbur. Other moderns to be sure; but Wilbur, he's an important modern poet, whom I read with great pleasure . . . Of course, how could I have forgotten? Emily Dickinson. Now, just to be sure: we have Wordsworth in this bunch already?

**Yes, he's a particular favorite, right?**

Right; for beginning undergrads he's hard, the long things, "The Prelude?" For young readers? No, I don't think so. Rather "Resolution and Independence," other glorious shorter things, the sonnets, unbeatable. All in all, they don't get Wordsworth early. They prefer Keats, you know. And they like Eliot – T.S., not George, mind you... Mein Gott, so much more to talk about....

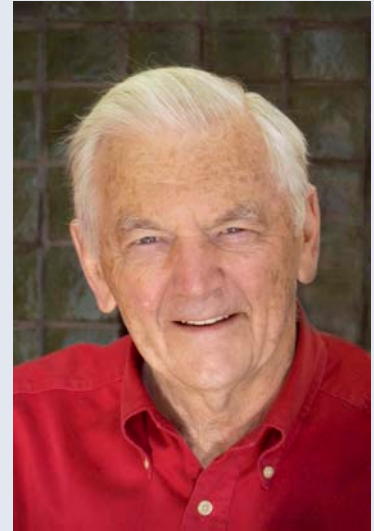
**We haven't even touched your German loves. Thomas Mann?**

Richtig, das nächste Mal, lieber Freund.... Now to that tea and cookies. ■

# BILL WASCH RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Bill Wasch was presented the Sid Spector Award by the National Institute of Senior Housing for his many years of service in the area of Senior Housing. The award was made at the Aging in America Conference held in Chicago last March.

Bill has had a long and productive career in elderly services and is author of the nationally recognized Home Planning for Your Later Years. With his architect daughter Christina, he designed and built the first completely accessible house for the elderly. This work will be continued in the development of an active adult housing project on Maple Shade Road. Bill has also developed other programs to assist older adults to “age in place.”



This is a notable record of service to the community. In addition to three years of volunteer leadership with the Independent Transportation Network Central Connecticut (ITNCentralCT), Bill is a former delegate to the White House Conference on Aging and served as a board member of the National Council on Aging. He chairs Middletown’s Senior Affairs Commission and serves on the Leadership Council of the National Council on Aging. Congratulations, Bill!



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