Vitae Scholasticae

The Journal of Educational Biography

Volume 27 Number 1
2010

Vitae Scholasticae
Volume 27, Number 1, 2010

Vitae Scholasticae is a refereed journal published by the International Society for Educational Biography.

Members of the International Society for Educational Biography receive each issue of *Vitae Scholasticae* as part of their membership. Subscriptions are available to other individuals for $50 a year and to institutions and libraries for $100 a year (add $40 per year outside of the United States); single copies of issues may be ordered for $50. See form on page 84.

ISSN 0735-1909.

Articles appearing in *Vitae Scholasticae* are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

Table of Contents

Editor's Note

In 1955, a *Palm Beach Daily News* columnist named Alice Hughes interviewed novelist James Michener and shared with readers a detail about his life that had largely been unknown. Early in his career, Michener "became a specialist in teaching others how to teach."[1] Drawing on the life stories of Michener and others, this issue of *Vitae Scholasticae* highlights educational innovators whose work informed pedagogical practice. The subjects include famous people as well as those who were largely unrecognized during their lifetimes; they range from philosophers and theorists, to school administrators, to classroom teachers.

In "The Evolution of James A. Michener from High School Teacher to Writer: The Formative Years," John W. Hunt unwraps Michener's experience as a social studies teacher at College High School of the Colorado State College of Education (now the University of Northern Colorado). Hunt, who previously served as director of the school, draws on his contextual knowledge as well as primary and secondary sources in the James A. Michener Library.

Hunt's article, the third in this issue, is complemented by three essays on career educators who forged new approaches to teaching. The first two, by authors Edward A. Janak and Gera Burton, each introduce readers to biographical subjects who challenged widely-held notions of who should be taught, and where. Janak focuses on an educational administrator of the early twentieth century: John Eldred Swearingen, South Carolina State Superintendent of Schools. Swearingen, who lost his sight at age thirteen, advanced the education of all children in the state, irrespective of disabling condition, race, or socioeconomic status. Charles A. Wedemeyer (1911-99), the subject of Burton's essay, was an educational pioneer who championed the cause of the autonomous learner. Wedemeyer's work resulted in practices that are widespread today in the form of distance education, correspondence programs, and independent study.

While Hunt, Janak, and Burton use historical methodology to present their subjects, Elizabeth Sherwood and Amy Freshwater take a more personal approach in "All in the Family or Whose Life Is It Anyway?" Their essay explores the life of early childhood innovator (and Sherwood's aunt) Betty

Kirby. In addition to considering Kirby's contributions to teaching, Sherwood and Freshwater discuss the particular challenges of writing an educational biography of a relative.

This issue also contains reviews of two biographies recently released by Yale University Press. Sarah Winfield, a doctoral candidate at the University of Cambridge, offers insights into the life of an influential twentieth century thinker in her review of David Miciks' book, *Who Was Jacques Derrida? An Intellectual Biography.* Margaret McNay of Western Ontario University probes the life of seventeenth century scientist Robert Boyle in her review of Michael Hunter's biography, *Boyle: Between God and Science.*

We thank the authors for providing rich examples of educators who took the risks inherent in educational innovation to shape pedagogical practice. We hope *Vitae Scholasticae* readers will be stimulated and inspired by the life stories offered in this issue.

—Linda Morice

[1]Alice Hughes, *Palm Beach Daily News*, January 6, 1955, 2.

Adventitiously Blind, Advantageously Political:
John Eldred Swearingen and Social Definitions of Disability in Progressive-Era South Carolina

Edward A. Janak
University of Wyoming

John Eldred Swearingen was elected South Carolina State Superintendent of Education for the first time in 1907. Throughout the fourteen years he held office, Swearingen made great strides in improving the state's education for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income. In accomplishing his goals, he conflicted with textbook vendors, state legislators, the Governor, the General Education Board, and even the Ku Klux Klan. Swearingen willingly battled local, state, and national officials in his drive to increase state funding, pass a compulsory education bill, implement the Smith-Hughes Act, and resist the Cardinal Principles report.[1] Swearingen did more for the hitherto undereducated populations in South Carolina—children of the mills and African American students—than any superintendent before, and many after. As biographer James Dreyfuss noted, "Swearingen ultimately believed, in the broadest sense, that education should be equitably provided, funded, and available to all citizens, regardless of class, race, or gender."[2] Also, Swearingen was adventitiously blind, born sighted but developing blindness later in life. He became one of the "mettlesome souls" that "broke out of these confining molds" of what the blind were thought to be capable, who "made places for themselves in the world at large."[3]

Born in 1875 during Reconstruction—or, more specifically, South

Carolina's resistance to Reconstruction—Swearingen was very much a product of his time. While his society tried to instill that those who were "different," either in race or ability, were inferior, he acted to reject what he had been taught about his capabilities, particularly as a man who was blind.[4] Swearingen knew what it was like to be seen as "different" and have society categorize him, making his actions to benefit underrepresented voices fully understandable. In her memoirs, Swearingen's wife, Mary Hough Swearingen, related a story about her husband that occurred during their 1918 honeymoon. She recalled they were en route from Greenville, South Carolina, to New York City when

> On the train [she] asked the porter to see whether Mr. Swearingen needed any help in the dressing room. He unhesitatingly consented to do so, but in a few moments he came up the aisle chuckling. "Lady," he said, "that man don't need nothing! He's in yonder shavin' himself with a long straight razor, and everybody is a gaping at him. They can hardly use their own little safety razors—but not him. Lordy, miss, that's a *man*!"[5]

The story is both summative and metaphoric of Swearingen's life. While Swearingen did not live constantly attempting to prove his ability, social definitions of disability did influence his actions, both proactively and reactively.

It may be useful to remember life writer James Garraty's three-tiered typology of biographical subjects, sorted by the writer's "over-all view of the importance of individual intelligence and character in determining the course of events." First were subjects who are "significant only because the times in which they live make them so"; second, subjects who are "forceful individuals" that have "change[d] the trend of events"; and third, subjects who are not controlled by themselves or their times, but rather an outside force such as luck, chance, or destiny.[6] Within this typology, this work seeks to show that Swearingen's life evidences most definitely the second type: a forceful figure who worked to change the society in which he lived. Swearingen was unafraid to take on any and all challengers to his vision of what the schools of South Carolina should be.

Context: Swearingen's Life and Times

In the midst of the political and educational turmoil of Reconstruction, John Eldred Swearingen was born January 9, 1875 near the town of Trenton in Edgefield County, South Carolina. His parents were John Cloud Swearingen, a Confederate veteran and Red Shirt Rider, and Anna Tillman

Swearingen, sister of U.S. Senator Benjamin "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman. Swearingen was immediately a product of society and family who upheld traditional notions of what it meant to be a man—service to country and defense of one's way of life. His father had a distinguished career in the Confederacy; John Cloud was among the first troops to leave Edgefield County, fighting as an officer in the 22nd South Carolina Infantry unit of the CSA. Despite sustaining injuries at both Gettysburg and Lookout Mountain, John Cloud Swearingen remained on active duty until War's end.[7] Anna Tillman was widely recognized for her exceptional intellect. She was a skilled musician, needle worker, homemaker, and planter's wife, and hosted a private day school for her children and those of her neighbors. An avid reader, she loved poetry and literary classics; this love of reading and desire for learning passed down to their son.

Swearingen's youth was like that of any other white, sighted boy in the rural South; however, it would change drastically once he entered his teen years. One of the rites of passage in Southern "boy culture" was learning to hunt. Swearingen received his first shotgun, against his mother's wishes, for his thirteenth birthday. Like many children with a new toy, Swearingen carried it constantly. Less than a week after receiving his gift, he went out on a firewood hauling expedition with some of the field hands. He saw a dove and shot it, but in his excitement to retrieve his kill, the trigger of the second barrel of his gun snagged and tripped on a branch, discharging the birdshot. The shot entered at his right little finger and exited at the base of the thumb, shattering every bone in the hand before settling into his forehead, face and eyes, blinding him.[8]

Swearingen's entire family—brother George, sister Sophie, and both parents— hoped and prayed for his eyesight to return. His mother, ever the educator, refused to accept her son as helpless and began a strict re-education program for him. She started by having him re-learn simple household chores such as lighting stove fires, bringing in firewood, and fetching water for the garden. She advanced his training to include proper table manners, the techniques of which Swearingen later used as a teacher of the blind. Eventually, she taught what would be called a "wellness program" in modern vernacular, encouraging him to learn physical activities such as basic exercises, acrobatics, wrestling, and horseback riding.[9]

As Swearingen re-mastered household duties and activities, his mother continued reading to him and had him recite lessons in the belief that his eyesight would eventually return. While this home schooling was typical of the era, it also reflected contemporary suspicions about the direction of education. Although he did attend a traditional school, Swearingen was still exposed to a huge variety of social structures that would have reinforced social norms regarding the treatment of people who are "other," such as the

disabled or of another race. However, because of his blindness, Swearingen did not have these patterns (or those setting adolescent normative values surrounding race and sex) set in him via his teenage play; this likely is one reason among many that explains the progressive social attitudes held by Swearingen throughout his career.

In spite of their likely reservations about public education at the time, Swearingen's family chose not to home school him for the entirety of his academic preparation. Initially, the family sent him to an institution in Macon, Georgia, to work with a Dr. Calhoun from Atlanta who specialized in vision recovery; however, that placement was short-lived as Dr. Calhoun informed the family there was no hope of Swearingen's vision returning. With his family finally accepting that his blindness was permanent, in 1899, he began attending the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind at Cedar Spring.[10] In testament to his mother's preparations, he quickly worked his way through the school's standard curriculum, making his teachers design a series of independent study projects to keep him challenged. He learned, for example, to fluently play multiple musical instruments and performed on the organ at the school's graduation ceremonies. As further proof that his mother came to accept her son's lack of vision, Anna Tillman became one of two people of all his friends, family, and colleagues to learn the point print (the precursor to Braille) method of writing; as such, she became his best friend and guide for years to come.[11]

Swearingen was fortunate; schools such as Cedar Springs were at that time a relatively recent phenomenon. Mainstream society often equated those who had lost their vision with those who had mental disabilities. However, thanks to pioneers such as Samuel Gridley Howe, that perception was beginning to change. In the mid-1800's, Howe led a campaign to"redefine blindness by stressing that the blind were essentially no different from the sighted: they were merely people who could not see." Howe was wont to ask"what is blindness,"answering his own question by explaining it as a condition that

> deprives a man of the perception of light, and limits the freedom of his locomotion, but which touches not his life, which impairs not his health, which dwarfs not his mind, which affects not his soul, and which cuts him off from none of the high and essential sources of human happiness.[12]

Had Swearingen been born even a handful of decades previous, his experiences certainly would have been remarkably different. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, people with disabilities—particularly those who were blind—were making inroads into the mainstream. For

example, by the time Swearingen concluded his studies at Cedar Springs, there were two journals catering to an unsighted audience: *The Problem*, published in Leavenworth, Kansas, which was a publication of the American Blind People's Higher Education and General Improvement Association, ran from 1900 to 1903; and *The Outlook for the Blind*, started in 1907 by the same group now titled the American Association of Workers for the Blind, which would remain in print almost until the U.S. intervention into World War II in 1941.[13]

This was also the period during which Helen Keller was making headlines. From 1887, the time that Keller met Anne Sullivan, to 1896, when Mark Twain raised funds on her behalf, to 1907, when Keller wrote a series of articles in the popular magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*, Keller had rapidly entered the national consciousness. Keller and her teacher became a fixture on the vaudeville circuit through 1924, literally and figuratively setting the stage for people with disabilities.[14] Taking the matter into the realm of the arts, Helen Menken, a New York City-based actress, brought her production of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice to Columbia, South Carolina, in 1922. This was unique, for the production was performed by Menken and a company of six other actors entirely in sign language—not a word was spoken during the entire performance.[15]

It wasn't just in the North or just people who were deaf making progress in societal attitudes; in the South, there was a sea change in attitudes of the general public regarding people with disabilities in the time of Swearingen's childhood. Due to the enormous physical toll taken on the men of the South by the U.S. Civil War, seeing men with the full gamut of visible disabilities was common. Indeed, on one level, Confederate veterans in the South were the first disability activists. As reminded by historian Catherine Kudlik, at this time being a disabled man was a badge of honor, not a stigma, because they"sustained their injuries in the patriotic and sacrificial act of serving their country, thereby investing their disability with an honorable quality." While this attitude didn't always carry over to civilians (who were perceived as receiving welfare as opposed to earning benefits), it very likely influenced Swearingen to want to serve his state even more.[16]

Due to such temporal-social circumstances, the beliefs of his mother and his entire family, and the efforts of educators such as Howe and public figures such as Keller paving the road, Swearingen was confident enough in himself to want to pursue further education; upon his graduation from Cedar Springs, in 1895 Swearingen applied to South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina). Providing a significant taste of discrimination against the disabled, Swearingen was rejected because of his blindness. Obviously, the trustees of the University were of the mindset, now proven incorrect but unfortunately pervasive through the twentieth century in the

United States, that the blind were incapable of functioning in larger society. One 1951 study on blindness, which took a perspective representative of the times, explained the premise using the metaphor of a canary: to the author, the blind were like a caged canary "singing lustily in the hall." While kept in the home, it "responds intelligently to its caged condition." However, according to Thomas Cutsforth,

> [t]he deficiencies of the canary would become apparent as soon as it was released from its cage and compelled to shift for itself in the much larger and more complex situation in which the wild birds represent the normal. The caged canary is *functionally feeble-minded* as compared with the free bird who is able to perceive relationships that are not in the former's world.[17]

The college trustees wanted to keep Swearingen safe in his "cage," either at home in Edgefield or at Cedar Spring. They clearly did not share Cutsforth's opinion, however, that college life was "an ideal situation for social adjustment" for a young adult who was blind. Cutsforth argues that due to a variety of reasons, including the safe and insular physical environment of many college campuses, students who are blind that enter college place "themselves in one of the most favorable environments open to young blind graduates."[18] Swearingen, however, had to formally appeal to the president and board of trustees, who granted him provisional admission. While modern universities provide provisions for people who are differently abled, such was not the case at the turn of the twentieth century. Swearingen had to provide his own guide and readers for his textbooks. Moreover, should Swearingen have fallen behind in his studies, any sign that he could not keep up with the other students would have resulted in his being asked to withdraw from the college.[19]

In many cases, once a person with a disability is presented with the social stigma associated with it, their self-esteem is affected. As explained by Myron Eisenberg, even if the person with disabilities "rejects the label," very often their "awareness of the reactions of others will contribute to changing the social interactions of which he is part."[20] This is true for Swearingen; however, rather than allow such social stigma to become a self-fulfilling prophecy of academic failure, instead it steeled his resolve to not only succeed, but become the most academically successful student on campus.

Much to the surprise of everyone except Swearingen, he excelled in his coursework, doublestarring in all but three courses.[21] By 1891, Swearingen earned a reputation as the most intelligent student on campus. It was in college that Swearingen further developed his competitive spirit: Swearingen strongly desired to prove his worth in the academic arena—the

only one perceived to be open to a blind student at the time.[22] By the time Swearingen graduated from college, he had amazed his fellow students with his feats. He could walk unassisted anywhere on campus with no difficulty and could identify all two hundred students on campus by voice. As recalled by Swearingen's son, John Jr.,[23] college friends of his father's visited their house years after Swearingen had retired from public life. "As I was growing up, I observed many of them come by and shake hands with him, and say that 'I learned more from you than I ever learned from any one of our professors.'" When he graduated June 17, 1899, Swearingen was the top graduate in the college and had completed the penultimate goal: making the record books. His records of academic achievement remained unbroken into the 1950s. [24]

It took Swearingen little time to apply his own hard labor and careful planning to a successful career path; upon graduation, Swearingen returned to the Cedar Springs Institute as a teacher. During the first few years following graduation, he wanted to pursue a career in the field of law. Since he did not have the money for graduate school, in 1903 he applied for a Rhodes scholarship to pursue a degree in law starting at Oxford University and ending at Columbia University. To this end, he secured effusive letters of recommendation from almost every professor he had at the college and he mustered the political clout of his uncle, United States Senator Ben Tillman. In spite of these efforts, the Rhodes committee refused the scholarship, likely due to Swearingen's blindness. "Here again," explains wife Mary, "the authorities in charge probably doubted the wisdom of admitting a blind applicant, and his efforts were fruitless."[25]

Throughout his life, Swearingen maintained a sense of decorum and propriety; the fact that he had lost his sight did nothing to change this. People who attempted to relax those standards due to his lack of sight did not remain in his acquaintance long—no matter how close the relationship. Before meeting his wife Mary, Swearingen "found a certain young lady very congenial, and he called on her very often." After one short visit with her, Swearingen asked his driver how he liked the looks of the young lady in question and what color dress she was wearing. When the hackman replied she was wearing a kimono-style dressing robe and wasn't dressed, "[t]hat was the end of the budding romance. He never went back; he never forgot it." In fact, upon meeting the young lady at a social gathering many years later, Swearingen asked aloud "if she still wears that kimono in the presence of gentlemen."[26]

In spite of being very successful in the classroom by all accounts, his career as a teacher did not last. Soon after becoming a teacher in 1899, Swearingen became principal of the blind department, earning a reputation as a tough, compassionate instructor and leader. By the 1907-08 school year,

Swearingen rose to become superintendent of Cedar Springs, even learning sign language, holding the hands of the deaf students with whom he was communicating to read their signs. However, he did not serve long in this position either. In 1908, he opted out of education and into a career that combined his love of politics, service, South Carolina, and education with his sense of duty and pride: he decided to run for State Superintendent of Education. While Southern honor and duty was most frequently expressed through military service—something Swearingen desired to do, but could not—serving the state through support of its schools offered an alternative way to gain civic identity. If he couldn't carry a musket and bayonet to serve his state on the battlefield, he could carry his beliefs and efforts to serve his state in its capitol.

Career: Swearingen and the Schools of South Carolina

Political campaigning during this period was difficult. Commenting on the oddities of the process, Mary Swearingen remembered that it was "a grueling practice which may not be peculiar to South Carolina, but which is certainly peculiar."[27] Making this travel even more uncomfortable were the coal-burning trains, with their discomforts of coal smoke and hot cinders in the cars. Candidates publicly debated throughout the intense heat of summer in every county in South Carolina. But in an apparent slight to his ability, both of Swearingen's opponents disregarded him, an act which brought out his competitive nature. After listening to one of his competitors deliver the same speech at every whistle stop, Swearingen used his remarkable memory for humorous end. At the next stop, at which Swearingen was slated to deliver his address first, Swearingen rose and recited his competitor's oration verbatim—leaving the man quite literally speechless.[28]

Swearingen's platform had multiple facets, most of which were highlighted in the broadside pamphlet printed for his campaign and mailed to business owners in the larger towns across South Carolina. Swearingen did not try to hide his blindness; rather, he announced it in headline type on the broadside. A photograph filled the center of the page, taking up almost one-third of the document, with highlights of his life printed in banner type alongside. To the right states his educational experiences: "Student at South Carolina College 1895-1899," and "Teacher in Cedar Springs Institute 1899-1908"; to the left, two more biographical statements: "Born January 9, 1875," and "Made Blind by the Accidental Discharge of his Gun while out Hunting January 13, 1888."[29] After several days of vote counting, Swearingen eventually won 61,379 to Stiles R. Mellichamp's 48,426, for a total of 109,805 votes cast. Swearingen defeated the only opponent to finish the race, Mellichamp, by a total of 12, 911 votes (over 11%). [30]

JOHN E. SWEARINGEN

Candidate for State Superintendent of Education

Courtesy of South Caroliniana Library

Proving his ability to mainstream society was one of Swearingen's early foci: once elected, he quickly established a public routine of efficiency and developed a knack for keeping his staff at ease. Using his gifted memory and his spatial skills at understanding maps/directions more prominent in the adventitiously blind than the congenitally blind, Swearingen daily would walk the ten-block route from his home on Blanding Street in Columbia to his office unaccompanied. His son John explained:

> In his early days as state superintendent of education, his office was in one of those tall buildings…he used to walk from the house to his office by himself. He knew his way around, and in those days there weren't that many cars on the street. And he was able to manage those things for himself. He did it without any problem at all.[31]

Organization governed Swearingen's professional life. His staff quickly grew used to his routine: he entered the office, had mail dictated to him, typed responses, made calls, and handled other bits of official business. Swearingen was out to prove his worth as a man without regard to his perceived disability: he hardly ever refused invitations to barbecues, picnics, family gatherings, political campaign meetings, graduation ceremonies, or school dedications. Whether it was loyalty to the state, a real sense of duty in his position, a means to prove himself, or more attempts at confounding social opinion, Swearingen traveled the state frequently. He completely muddied the waters of discussion regarding issues such as those outlined by Catherine Kudlick, including "who deserves the government's assistance and protection, what constitutes a capable citizen, and who merits the full rights of citizenship."[32] More specifically, while society of the time didn't necessarily view people who were blind as being capable citizens, Swearingen was elected to office and held it unopposed for a decade and a half.

One duty that took Swearingen out of the office regularly was inspection of new school buildings. At the outset, builders and superintendents alike doubted Swearingen's abilities in this capacity. He took great pleasure, however, in performing highly detailed inspections that caught construction errors missed by sighted colleagues. Mary Swearingen recalled a county superintendent telling her once that her husband could "find out more about a building with one trip than [the superintendent could] by watching them build it." Swearingen was methodical in his work:

> With his cane he checked the height of the ceiling and quickly stepped off the width of the room. With his sensitive perception to light, he could face the windows and remark, "I see you have your windows where you get good light." Some spectators were ready to swear he had a magic sense of some sort. He tested floor strength by his shiver-the-timber method. He would find a strategic point and suddenly bounce up and down energetically. If from two or three vantage points he could hear no rattles, he was happy. If, however, a carpenter had not braced his sills well enough, Mr. Swearingen was quick to suggest with some asperity that "these sills should be strengthened and steadied…" He would ask about the desks, the blackboards, and the heating facilities of the school building.[33]

Swearingen not only compensated for his blindness while in office, but performed all of his duties in a much more direct fashion than many of his predecessors. His efficiency and capability characterized not only the routine tasks of the office, but also Swearingen's view of his professional responsibilities. He not only wanted to maintain the public schools while he was in

office, but he also aspired to affect significant change. Swearingen capitalized on the new spirit of reform that swept the nation and South Carolina through his time in office, 1909-1922. He successfully posted several significant pieces of legislation[34] and began several independent programs. Compulsory education, extended school terms and increased tax revenues to schools affected all students in the state. When the flu epidemic closed the schools and much of the state in 1919-1920, Swearingen demanded districts continue paying teachers. Most significantly, Swearingen's experiences in being treated as disabled made him particularly sensitive to those populations so labeled by mainstream society for their social as well as physical differences: he continued his supportive attitude towards hitherto educationally disenfranchised youth. He dramatically increased funding for African American students, arguing in his annual reports that public schools must consider equalizing:

> The time has come when this problem [expanding schools so all students have equal access through tenth grade] has reached the negro schools…Personally I favor the use of identical standards for all schools. If the instruction and organization of a colored high school, organized and directed by local school officers, and superintended and directed by men and women responsible to local authorities, conform to the high school standards of the state, I believe such a negro school ought to be accepted as an integral part of our high school system.[35]

Swearingen also greatly increased outreach efforts to mill workers and their children. He opened a great number of mill schools and worked with mill school advocate Wil Lou Gray to begin a program of adult education and literacy. In 1920 they began their "Midsummer Drive Against Illiteracy," coauthoring a pamphlet that detailed a plan for schools to implement evening adult literacy programs. The rear cover of the pamphlet summarized a vision of the program that tapped into South Carolinians' senses of historical appropriateness and masculine achievement: "Let South Carolina Secede from Illiteracy."[36] To accomplish his ends, Swearingen alternately cooperated and battled political and philanthropic forces on the state and national levels, including the General Education Board and Governor Coleman Blease.

Conflicts: Swearingen and the Politics of South Carolina

While Swearingen was an advocate of vocational education, he did not support the General Education Board (GEB), one of the nation's most significant philanthropic agencies assisting, among others, African American

schools. A group of private philanthropists operating out of New York City, the GEB was an organization that purportedly sought to assist Southern education; however, the GEB incorporated agents who completely subscribed to the vocational-only model of education throughout Southern universities and government agencies, such as state departments of education, in order to promote the organization's goals nationwide.[37] These agents, in turn, spread the GEB philosophy of vocational-only education throughout the South. While this can be viewed as a positive influx of money, specifically for schools serving marginalized populations, the intent was arguably pecuniary and borderline racist.

For the most part, Southerners welcomed the GEB funding of African American schools for a variety of reasons; there were, however, a few sporadic and isolated individuals who resisted GEB efforts as unwelcome intrusions of Northern philanthropy. Swearingen publicly opposed GEB intervention in South Carolina's schools: he did not appreciate the control placed over his office by an outside agency, there was a bit of post-Reconstruction resistance to another round of Northern intervention, and he certainly questioned the curriculum dictated by the GEB, recognizing the racist tendencies inherent in it.[38] While the relationship was initially collegial, starting in 1921 directors and representatives of the GEB were subjected to Swearingen's frustrated invectives. In a letter of response to Wallace Buttrick, a director with the Board, Swearingen wrote, "[y]ou have the absolute right to do as you choose with your own funds. I decline, however, to play the part of the fish dangling at the end of your line."[39]

Swearingen repeatedly expressed growing frustration and mistrust of the GEB's efforts. In April, he wrote to Abraham Flexner "[I]t is high time for a clear understanding between all parties. The use of your contributions means nothing to me individually and I cannot afford to be harassed and bedeviled by meddlesome dictation and afterthoughts."[40] In June, Swearingen wrote again to Flexner: "If you do not wish to support the work, simply keep the money…I am tired of being deviled with variations and uncertainties that will not allow me to plan definitely for the activities."[41]

Swearingen was also an outspoken critic of Governor Coleman Blease. The Governor was renowned for physically threatening opponents and promising sound thrashings to anyone who questioned or opposed him. Filled with abrasive and profane language, the state legislature frequently had to censor Blease's addresses. On one level, Blease was the logical culmination of the populist politics that had ruled the state since before the Civil War: for decades, Blease was particularly adept at tapping into the zeitgeist of the state, and elections in which he ran as a candidate had the highest voter turnout in the twentieth century. As historian Walter Edgar phrased it, "Bleaseism was a last hurrah of a dying world."[42]

In some regard it was the echoes of an unreconstructed South that led to Blease's popularity: he was a public face on racism, which directly led to his popularity among white workers. Yet this is only a negligibly small part of the overall picture. The attitudes of white workers, mainly textile workers in the upcountry region, combined concerns about race, class, and gender. Blease was skilled at tapping into these interwoven concerns, recognizing that to the workers, independence was woven of citizenship, economic autonomy, white supremacy, and masculinity.[43]

Swearingen could not have been more different. He opposed discrimination and racism, and believed there was a place for the government in helping others. Blease and Swearingen were also polar opposites in the realm of intellectualism. Throughout his life Swearingen used his gifted mind and memory as assets. Blease was an outspoken anti-intellectual who encouraged a blatant distrust of intellectuals as part of the aristocracy. These patterns of conflict came to a head in the election of 1914.

Blease again ran for governor; this time, however, it was with the vocal opposition of one of South Carolina's most powerful politicians, Benjamin Tillman. Blease viewed Tillman as a former mentor, and Tillman was one of the most populist and popular politicians in South Carolina; Blease faced a tremendous electoral struggle in light of Tillman's opposition. In the midst of this political conflagration, in January 1914, Swearingen wrote Blease, asking the governor to explain his view on rural graded schools: "[a]t the 1913 session of the Legislature, you opposed State aid to two-teacher and three-teacher schools in the country. I understand that your position…is still unchanged. If you care to express your views on this policy, and your attitude toward rural graded schools, I shall be glad to learn your position."[44]

Blease's response was furious, full of invective, and typical of South Carolina politics. While Swearingen's question was clearly not meant to defame the governor, Blease chose to take out the anger felt towards Tillman on Swearingen, the nephew of "Pitchfork Ben." Rather than address his policy toward state support of schools, Blease demonstrated his utter contempt for Swearingen by attacking him on a personal level: "I do not care to speak of your infirmity—but unless you have been imposed upon by reasons of your infirmity, I cannot understand this statement." Then, in spite of Swearingen's efforts to keep politics out of the office, Blease began a political attack. "I can understand why your uncle, Senator Tillman, has endeavored to injure me politically, and I presume his influence over you, being afflicted as you are, caused you to write the willful [sic] and malicious falsehood."[45]

The 1914 election was a turning point in South Carolina politics. Blease was defeated (he wouldn't be again elected until 1922), and every candidate who had aligned himself with Blease lost. Newly-elected governor Richard

Manning, a progressive, prepared to move into the governor's mansion. Blease was so anti-progressive that he chose to resign five days before his term ended, abandoning his responsibilities rather than turning the position over to Manning in person.[46]

Throughout his term, Swearingen was notably apolitical and honest in his office. When a book salesman threatened to campaign against Swearingen, the State Superintendent's reply was direct: "neither your bribe nor your threat makes any impression on me. When I have to sell my soul for political support, I shall gladly step out."[47] This resistance to politics was not more true than in a tragic but interesting event in Swearingen's life, that of his final campaign in 1922. After fourteen years as State Superintendent of Education, Swearingen decided to run for Governor. His opponent in the Governor's race was his nemesis Cole Blease. As the politics became heated, however, Blease's attacks on Swearingen became increasingly hostile and personal. Rather than fight such a dirty campaign, Swearingen withdrew from the race and re-entered for State Superintendent.

Swearingen's son, John E. Swearingen Jr., explained that his father was told the Ku Klux Klan opposed him in the gubernatorial bid.[48] While his son did not remember the Klan ever threatening the family or making an appearance at the family's home, Mary Swearingen remembered "the night before his withdrawal, a group of men visited him. He had always considered them friends. They urged that he withdraw from the governor's race because the 'cards have been stacked against you.'" Just two pages earlier in her memoir, Mary recounted Klan opposition to her husband in terms of his refusal to play politics with his position. "He never considered the political effects of his decisions," she recalled. "When the KKK accused him of giving teacher certificates to Catholics, Jews, and Negroes, he said frankly, 'Of course I do. What do you expect me to do? Break the law to suit prejudice?'"[49]

Swearingen also had a personal friendship with J.J. McSwain, a Congressman who served as Swearingen's best man and a frequent speaker at Klan rallies. If McSwain was involved, then it is safe to assume that while the Klan was serious in not supporting Swearingen, it had made no threats to him or his family. It is also safe to assume that it was McSwain who warned Swearingen of the cards being stacked against him. The Klan's bravado may have arisen as well from a weakening of progressivism: by 1922, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the concomitant strife were well on their way to myth.

Those who joined the Klan or otherwise worked to continue discrimination in their daily lives perceived themselves as moral, enforcing traditional social order and law. They also believed that the "aristocrats" who questioned white superiority and the need for lynching were effete and socially dangerous. Cole Blease embodied this antebellum notion of Southern life:

he unequivocally defended lynching because he wished to protect womanly virtues: "'whenever the constitution of my state steps between me and the defense of the virtue of a white woman…then I say to hell with the Constitution!'" Blease so relished Klan-style violence that he often celebrated their extraconstitutional means of preserving the status quo with a death dance.[50] Both McSwain and Blease were Klansmen; however, McSwain practiced what in contemporary parlance would be referred to as"kinder, gentler" racism, which Swearingen could abide.

Swearingen's withdrawal conceded the resurgence of Blease's style, but was not the end of the electoral conflict between the two men. Swearingen decided to mount a bid to remain State Superintendent, re-entering that race late. Jasper Hope, the State Superintendent candidate publicly supported by Blease, campaigned actively against Swearingen, making significant inroads among the millworkers. Tapping into anti-industrial and anti-reform sentiment, Blease offered millworkers a defense of their patriarchal privilege and white equality.[51] While Swearingen spent much of his career crusading for greater educational opportunities for mill workers, the educational gains made by mill families could not compete with Blease's rhetoric. Describing the election loss to family friend Sophie Rasor, Swearingen explained that "[t]he cotton mill vote went against me about three to one. This was the strongest element in the opposition, so far as any one class of schools or voters was concerned."[52] Swearingen never held public office again.

Conclusion: Swearingen's Legacy in South Carolina

After leaving public service, Swearingen retired to a quiet life as a gentleman farmer. He took over the management of his extended family holdings, both in the upstate of South Carolina and in Florida. Neither Swearingen's wife nor son mentions him using the "talking books" (phonograph recordings of literature) that started coming out in the 1920's; however, once the Library of Congress began commissioning its holdings be reproduced in Braille, Swearingen became an avid reader once again. According to son John, Swearingen toured the State, volunteering his time at the Confederate Veterans Hospitals and speaking to groups that supported people with disabilities:

> His message always was,'Don't give in to that handicap, don't just sit in a rocking chair waiting for somebody to take care of you. You've got to do something to justify your own existence, or work with whatever you have in the best way you know how to do it.'[53]

Plagued by headaches throughout his career as a result of the birdshot

left in his head and face from the accident, Swearingen's health began to deteriorate in his later years. As early as the 1940's, his headaches began to become insufferable. Swearingen's other senses began to fail him with the onset of old age as well. First, his hearing began to suffer; son John had Swearingen fit with a hearing aid, which Swearingen wore when more than one person was visiting with him. Eventually, Braille books became too heavy for him to hold. Also, his sense of touch began to deteriorate; he commented often to his wife that Braille magazines were not printed as clearly as they used to be. Soon, he stopped his usual habits; he no longer sat on the porch, read his Braille books, listened to the radio, nor had anyone read the daily newspaper to him. After a year-long bout of invalidism, Swearingen passed away early morning September 27, 1957 at the age of 82.

Swearingen's successful career is a clear reminder that, while "[s]ociety assumes that everyone places the highest value on the 'naturally working body,' "[54] such a definition is just that: a social construct with no biological basis. While it is safe to assume that Swearingen would not have chosen to be blind, once he came to accept this part of his life Swearingen led the best life he could. It is equally safe to say that Swearingen never allowed social definitions of what a blind man was capable define him; he spent his entire adult life marking success after success, disproving these definitions.

His success in improving the schools was just one example. To say he moved the schools of South Carolina into the 20th Century is not overstating the case. While transcending the values of his time, Swearingen was also very much a product of those values; however, his efforts to improve the schools of the state are vast:

- He raised awareness and funding regarding African American schools while resisting the popular vocational-only model;
- He insisted on the passage of compulsory attendance laws;
- He gained extensions of length of the annual school term;
- He began a system of statewide accreditation of schools;
- He increased public school funding for all populations, including implementing national funding efforts such as the Smith-Hughes Act;
- He targeted white wage earners in the mills and their children for educational opportunity;
- He honestly believed education was the best means to social empowerment.

It was his peculiar and complex understanding of social norms, and his willingness to actively work to transcend these norms, that inspired him to run for office. No more apt description exists than that provided by his wife, Mary:

> The layman of today, or even the students of educational progress in

> our state, can scarcely believe the school system of South Carolina was as inadequate as it was when Mr. Swearingen became State Superintendent of Education fifty years ago. But I must admit that it gives me a feeling of infinite pride to see how he grappled with the situation, determined to correct abuses, to extend opportunities, and to create a worthwhile public school program.[55]

Swearingen's legacy in terms of a career of "firsts" as a blind public figure in South Carolina was profound:

- He was the first student who was blind to be admitted to the South Carolina College;
- He was the first candidate who was blind to run for office in South Carolina;
- He was the only state superintendent who was blind in South Carolina's history.

While many people who are adventitiously blind interpret their lack of vision as "an actively repressed *memento mori*" (reminder of the mortality)[56] of their sight, Swearingen never viewed himself as disabled. In fact, as is the case with many people with disabilities, the notion that his blindness caused suffering, or diminished or devalued his life would be abhorrent.[57] Typifying his attitude is a story recounted by son John. One afternoon, during the Great Depression, Swearingen was out walking with his family when a beggar approached and asked for money. Swearingen fumbled in his pocket to find a coin. The beggar, shocked at Swearingen's blindness, apologized, saying "Oh, I'm sorry mister, I didn't realize you was afflicted." Swearingen's response was blunt and perfect: "Here, take your money. I'm not afflicted, I just can't see."[58]

Swearingen believed people who are blind are, indeed, "full-fledged members of society" that prove themselves by "desist[ing] from asking or accepting special favors" in contrast with those who viewed blindness as "so disabling a handicap that only if it were equalized through contemporary laws and regulations could blind people hope to approach parity with the sighted."[59] As recounted by wife Mary, Swearingen did everything he could to transform and transcend by example social definitions of disability:

> Mr. Swearingen himself never complained about the hardships and handicaps of blindness; his own practice and example inculcated similar attitudes in his blind friends. He urged them to participate in business and society and preached to them the therapy of work. He considered locomotion, reading, and social recognition of friends and acquaintances the most difficult problems of blindness. Enforced idleness was not far behind, and almost equally difficult to

avoid.

> Mr. Swearingen's attitude as well as his example were an inspiration not only to the blind of his generation but to the sighted as well.[60]

Swearingen should remain an example and inspiration; however, he should not only be taken as an inspiration to people with disabilities. In contemporary society, if those employed in state departments of education across the United States could emulate Swearingen's honest discourse regarding social and financial inequities facing our students that will not be cured by additional assessments, the public schools of the U.S. would likely see great improvements. If Swearingen could remind contemporary public servants of his bravery as a politician, doing the right thing in spite of its unpopularity, imagine how many beneficial pieces of legislation could get passed. If the general public would remember his admonition to always work for the best in any situation rather than allow themselves to wallow in the cult of victimhood, imagine the progress we could make as a society. Indeed, if these "ifs" were followed and we could bring his memory to the public, the U.S. would be a remarkably different, substantively better place.

Notes

[1] The Smith-Hughes Act was the 1917 federal act that provided funds to public schools for the promotion of agricultural and vocational education. Cardinal Principles was the 1918 national educational report that realigned secondary education into seven curricular strands, including new categories such as vocational education and health; traditional academic subjects were classified together into one strand in the report, rather than the traditional "three r's" approach.

[2] James Dreyfuss, *John Eldred Swearingen: Superintendent of Education in South Carolina 1909 – 1922* (Columbia: University of South Carolina College of Education, 1997), 2.

[3] People who are adventitiously blind develop their blindness later in life, possibly as a result of forces such as an accident, trauma, disease, or medication. Those born blind are referred to as congenitally blind. Frances A. Koestler, *The Unseen Minority: A Social History of Blindness in America* (New York: David McKay Company, 1976), 191.

[4] For a more detailed explanation of the role of physical ability/disability on biographical analysis, see Robert Gittings, *The Nature of Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 49-52.

[5] Swearingen met his future wife while early in office; they married after she had begun a teaching career of her own. Mary Hough Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey: Mr. Swearingen and His Family* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1983), 98.

[6] James Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1957), 4-6.

[7] In actuality, not only did Swearingen's father serve, but all of his father's brothers served as well; most survived the war, but two gave their lives for the Southern

cause. Mary Hough Swearingen presents a detailed accounting of the Swearingen family from their arrival in America from Holland in 1636 through her husband and children's lives in *A Gallant Journey*. Accounts of John Cloud Swearingen and Anna Tillman Swearingen are found in Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 14 – 25.

[8] Details of John Eldred Swearingen's childhood, including the hunting accident that led to his blindness, are recounted in Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, Chapter 3, "The Light is Spent", 26 - 38.

[9] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 26 - 38. Upon his mother's passing, Swearingen wrote to friends extensively about the role his mother played in his rehabilitation and beginning of his political career, correspondence that survives in the John E. Swearingen Papers, Box 2, Folder 60, (Columbia, SC: South Caroliniana Library).

[10] Founded in 1849, Swearingen's wife refers to it as the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind; however, in their 1892 work Gallaudet and Bell refer to it as the "South Carolina Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind." Edward Milner Gallaudet and Alexander Graham Bell, *Education of Deaf Children: Evidence of Edward Miner Gallaudet and Alexander Graham Bell* (Washington, D.C.: Volta Bureau, 1892), 72.

[11] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 18-19.

[12] Mary Klages, *Woeful Afflictions: Disability and Sentimentality in Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 33.

[13] For an excellent, thorough comparison of the two publications, see Catherine J. Kudlick, "The outlook of *The Problem* and the problem with the *Outlook*: Two advocacy journals reinvent blind people in turn-of-the-Century America." In *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* eds. P. K. Longmore & L. Umansky (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 187-213.

[14] For a more detailed discussion on Keller's impact on the blind, see Koestler, *The Unseen Minority,* 53-90.

[15] "To present play in sign language: Helen Menken plans to attempt mute Portia." *The State*, April 2, 1922, 2.

[16] Catherine J. Kudlick, "Disability history: why we need another 'other'." *American Historical Review* 108, (June 2003): 777. For a much more thorough discussion of the role of soldiers on perceptions of people with disabilities, see David A. Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[17] Thomas D. Cutsforth, *The Blind in School and Society* (New York: American Foundation for the Blind, 1951),25.

[18] Cutsforth, *The Blind in School and Society*, 222.

[19] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 40.

[20] Myron G. Eisenberg, "Disability as stigma." In *Disabled People as Second-Class Citizens,* eds. M. G. Eisenberg, et al. (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1982), 4.

[21] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 43-44. The grading scale at the college was broken into divisions; division I meant marks between 80-100% down the scale to division IV that meant marks less than 40%. Swearingen never was marked out of division I. Within the division, a single star meant a mark between 90-95%; double stars signified 95-100%.

[22] E. Anthony Rotundo, "Boy Culture: Middle Class Boyhood in Nineteenth-Century America." In *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian*

America, eds. M. C. Carnes & C. Griffen, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 22.

[23] The eldest of Swearingen's three children, John Jr. was born in 1918. After a successful career as president of Standard Oil, amongst other offices and honors, he became a fixture in the Chicago philanthropic and social circles. He died in 2007.

[24] John E. Swearingen, Jr., interview by Edward Janak, July 30, 2002), Interview 1, tape 1 side 1.

[25] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 50.

[26] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 60.

[27] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 100.

[28] Both Swearingen, in his papers, and wife Mary, in her memoir recount many of the details of the first campaign; however, as an example of Southern gentility, neither recount their opponents by name. Mary simply refers to them as "prominent, respected, 'old school' gentlemen, both of whom had been closely associated with educational work in South Carolina for many years…each resented the candidacy of the other as a sort of unwarranted intrusion." Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey,* 100. In the August 25 1908 edition of *The State* newspaper, however, primary results were tabulated for three candidates: Swearingen, Stiles R. Mellichamp, and E.C. Elmore. Mellichamp and Swearingen won their primaries and moved on to the election.

[29] John E. Swearingen, "John E. Swearingen: Candidate for State Superintendent of Schools," Legal Box, John E. Swearingen Papers South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.

[30] "Election results" *The State*, September 13, 1908, 1. Early reports had the two candidates in a "very close" race (*The State*, September 8, 1908, p. 1 col. 6), but Swearingen was declared the winner the day after the race—on Wednesday, September 9.

[31] Swearingen, interviewed by Janak, tape 1 side 1.

[32] Kudlick, "Disability history": 766.

[33] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 116.

[34] Swearingen had been working on several pieces of educational legislation with no success until 1914, including bills for compulsory education and extensions of length of term, statewide accreditation of schools, increased public school funding for both white and African American schools, and increased personnel in his office.

[35] John E. Swearingen, *Fiftieth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina* (Columbia: Gonzales and Bryan State Printers, 1919), 24.

[36] John E. Swearingen and Wil Lou Gray, *Midsummer Drive Against Illiteracy for White Schools* (Columbia: Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 1920), Cover.

[37] Charles Biebel, "Private foundations and public policy: The case of secondary education during the Great Depression," *History of Education Quarterly* 16 (1976): 3-4. For a more detailed description of the GEB's efforts in vocational-only funding, see also Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss, "*Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902 –1930* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 85 – 107.

[38] In his article on GEB funding, James Anderson describes Southern resistance

to the GEB's efforts as a "series of isolated incidents"; the only specific example of this resistance Anderson presents is that of Swearingen. James Anderson, "Northern foundations and the shaping of Southern Black rural education 1902 – 1935," *History of Education Quarterly* 18 (Winter 1978): 383.

[39] John E. Swearingen to Wallace Buttrick, January 29, 1921, Series 1: Appropriations; Subseries 1: The Early Southern Program (Supervisor of Rural Schools—White, 1912 – 1927), *General Education Board Archives,* Rockefeller University, New York City, NY.

[40] John E. Swearingen to Abraham Flexner, April 11, 1921, Series 1: Appropriations; Subseries 1; The Early Southern Program (State Agent for Secondary Education 1919-1926), *General Education Board Archives,* Rockefeller University, New York City, NY.

[41] John E. Swearingen to Abraham Flexner, June 9, 1921, Series 1: Appropriations; Subseries 1; The Early Southern Program (Supervisor of Rural Schools—Negro, 1917-1952), *General Education Board Archives,* Rockefeller University, New York City, NY.

[42] Walter Edgar, *South Carolina in the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 34.

[43] Bryant Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat: The Politics of South Carolina Millhands 1910 – 1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 67.

[44] John E. Swearingen to Coleman Blease, January 27, 1914, Miscellaneous papers — Letters to State Officials, Box #14, Governor's Papers of Coleman Livingston Blease (1911- 1915), South Carolina Repository of History and Archives, Columbia, SC.

[45] Coleman Blease to John E. Swearingen, January 29, 1914, Governor's papers of Coleman Livingston Blease (1911- 1915). Miscellaneous papers—Letters to State Officials, Box # 14, South Carolina Repository of History and Archives, Columbia, SC.

[46] Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 664.

[47] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey,* 113.

[48] John E. Swearingen, Jr. interviewed by Edward Janak, November 1, 2002, Interview 2, tape 1 side 1.

[49] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey,* 112 – 114.

[50] Bryant Simon, "The appeal of Cole Blease of South Carolina: Race, class, and sex in the New South," *The Journal of Southern History* 62, (February 1996): 82-3.

[51] Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat,* 34.

[52] John E. Swearingen to Sophie Rasor, September 19, 1922, Box 3, Folder 90, John E. Swearingen Papers,: South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, SC.

[53] Swearingen, interviewed by Janak, Interview 1tape 1 side 1.

[54] Rod Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 47.

[55] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey,* 107.

[56] Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes,*10.

[57] Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes,*50.

[58] Swearingen, interviewed by Janak, Interview 1tape 1 side 1.

[59] Koestler, *The Unseen Minority*,176.

[60] Swearingen, *A Gallant Journey*, 61.

Opening the Great Gate at "the Palace of Learning": Charles A. Wedemeyer's Pioneering Role as Champion of the Independent Learner[1]

Gera Burton

University of Missouri

Philosopher, scholar, innovator, university administrator, humanist, and pioneer of distance and independent learning, Charles A. Wedemeyer (1911-1999) espoused ideas that were decades ahead of their time. A champion of non-traditional education who believed that there should be a diversity of options for learning, Wedemeyer dedicated himself to extending educational opportunity for autonomous learners. His views on extending access to education beyond the confines of the classroom for traditionally excluded populations challenged conventional thinking, prompting reformers and government agencies on six continents to call upon this American educator as an advisor and consultant. In the rush to embrace online learning, institutions of Higher Learning have been slow to validate Wedemeyer's contributions for, as he noted: "Educational change is evolutionary, and its tempo is glacial."[2] This article examines the life and works of a courageous, innovative, but under-acknowledged educator, reviews his research and influence on the introduction of open learning systems around the world, and evaluates his innovations for educational reform in light of the proliferation of instructional technologies.

Wedemeyer outlined his theories of open learning in his best known work, *Learning at the Back Door: Reflections on Non-Traditional Learning in the Lifespan* (1981). Inspired by the writings of famed Dublin satirist, Jonathan

Swift, who, in 1704, lampooned the exclusivity of an educational establishment protected by "the great gates" of the "palace of learning,"[3] and moved by the image of a young peasant boy from a painting by Russian realist Vladimir Bogdanov-Belski (1868–1945), Wedemeyer found the perfect metaphor to represent the legions of "back door learners" excluded from classrooms worldwide. In a March 12, 1974, letter addressed to Professor Rudolf V. Berdichevski in Kaliningrad, Soviet Union, Wedemeyer described the significance to him of the painting entitled *School Door* (1887): "It shows a ragged little boy looking curiously, yearningly, through the school door at the better dressed children who are in the schoolroom. The painting expresses what has been my concern for over 30 years—extending learning opportunity to persons who have been, for one reason or another, deprived."[4] A print bearing this image found a permanent home among Wedemeyer's prized possessions. Wedemeyer's life's work revolved around the provision of educational opportunities for those "back door learners" who, for whatever reason, could not comply with the predetermined constraints of an educational establishment that demanded the completion of all assignments as part of a cohort, or in lock-step fashion within the framework of the classroom.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1911 to parents of modest means, Wedemeyer developed a sense of excitement for what he termed "self-initiated" learning. His parents, Adrian August Wedemeyer and Laura Marie Marks Wedemeyer, strived to provide books and magazines in an environment conducive to learning. An avid reader, the young Wedemeyer made great use of his local library in his quest for knowledge. As a senior at South Division High School in 1929, he showed athletic ability and played a leading role in the school play. For his oratorical skills he won a gold medal on the subject of National Apostasy. The speech affords some insight into the formation of the budding leader who would become an intellectual giant and a true humanitarian. The speech opened with an eloquent account of the treachery of Benedict Arnold, and kept the audience captivated right through to its conclusion delivered with a rhetorical flourish: "Is one's fate to be that of Greece and Rome? Once before, we forsook our principles and put the dollar before the man, forcing the negro to undergo shameful slavery. Evolution, not revolution is nature's law; we must lift men through love. The hour of temptation is at hand. The answer lies with us."[5]

Following completion of a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, with a major in English, and a Master's Degree in English, both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he pursued doctoral studies at Northwestern University. On December 19, 1937, he married his high school classmate, Mildred Brown. The couple settled in Milwaukee and had two daughters: Mary Beth and Carol. As a public school teacher and principal of

Steuben Junior High School in the 1930s, he taught English and Science to students then described as "disadvantaged youth." This was when he began to formulate his progressive ideas on extending educational opportunities to excluded populations as integral to the democratic project.

Toward the end of the decade of the Great Depression, Wedemeyer began to use the airwaves to broadcast English lessons, using the University of Wisconsin's 9XM WHA radio station—a resource made available in accordance with the University Extension's mission since 1919—in an attempt to reach an audience to that point excluded from the educational system. While teaching in Milwaukee, Wedemeyer became Chair of the Wisconsin Association English Radio Committee. This led to his development of a series of instructional radio broadcasts during the school year entitled, *Literature Then and Now* for the *School of the Air*. Drawing on novels, plays, and poetry, the series enabled Wedemeyer to reach out to high school students, adults, and those outside the educational mainstream, to "stimulate good reading."[6]

As early as 1891, the idea of extending the University beyond "the ivory tower" had been imported to the U.S. from Britain—championed by William Rainey Harper, with the founding of the University of Chicago—along with correspondence study. By 1906, under the leadership of William H. Lighty (1866–1958), the so-called "Wisconsin idea" had propelled the University of Wisconsin to preeminence with the development of the Extension Movement and Correspondence Study.[7] In 1915, leaders in higher education formed the National University Extension Association (NUEA), meeting in Madison for the first time. By 1929, recommendations emerged from NUEA's Committee on Standardization,[8] including such matters as course and credit equivalencies and instruction by regular faculty.[9] In 1931, this committee identified the first standards for the new discipline, covering eight specific categories for good practice in the field.[10] For the committee, Pittman noted, "improving correspondence study's image and credibility [was considered] at least as urgent as instructional quality."[11] In 1938, the first International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE) held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, attracted 88 delegates from around the world. Years later, as president of the organization, later renamed the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), an affiliate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Wedemeyer played a key role in the organization's global expansion.[12]

As a naval officer and instructor in World War II, Wedemeyer interrupted his doctoral studies to create effective instructional techniques for the benefit of thousands of sailors deployed around the world in adverse learning conditions. From this instrumental experience, Wedemeyer developed a theoretical framework for learning, using innovative communication technologies adapted for non-traditional learners. In the post-war period, correspon-

dence study emerged in a strong position, poised to facilitate experimentation using new technologies to enhance learning. At the University of Wisconsin's School of Education, Department of Continuing and Vocational Education, and at University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wedemeyer pioneered distance and independent learning, although the "distance" descriptor was not used until much later. Implementing a range of technologies as educational tools, Wedemeyer experimented with radio, television, records, tapes, film, telephones, and computers to enhance and reinforce learning for students near and far. This innovative approach impelled him to conduct research as an educational consultant on six continents, where he witnessed much despair as a consequence of deprivation and neglect of educational opportunity.

Courtesy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison archives.

Wedemeyer's advanced ideas on self-directed, independent learning emanated from his desire to extend learning opportunities beyond the university to traditionally excluded populations of "back door learners." In 1969, under his leadership in NUEA, the University Correspondence Study Division approved a change in title to the more accurate "Independent Study Division" to reflect the incorporation of media with print materials in the instructional process.[13] With year-round enrollment and up to twelve months to complete a course, students engaged in learning on their own initiative, set their own goals, and exercised a high degree of autonomy while progressing at their own pace. Independent Study placed more responsibility on the student for learning; it afforded more options, more opportunities, courses, and formats. The methodology utilized techniques that proved more effective on an individual basis and promoted adaptation for individual differences. Students were provided the opportunity to start, learn, progress, and stop at their own pace, unhindered by the constraints of time and space. This fostered more time for reflection and deeper understanding cited by current studies as vital to the learning process.[14]

Not surprisingly, Wedemeyer's ideas on extending learning opportunities for non-traditional students were challenged. "From its inception, extension faced the slings and arrows of academics who were suspicious of any attempt to democratize education."[15] Until recently, academics and administrators provided scant support for non-traditional learning. Institutional barriers included a host of restrictions designed to maintain the status quo and prohibit options for prospective students outside the mainstream. Typically, institutions limited the number of credits earned outside the classroom toward degree completion, introduced a maximum number of correspondence credits allowable—even from their own academic departments—and implemented the so-called "scarlet letter"—sometimes "E," sometimes "C," sometimes "X"—on transcripts denoting an Extension course. Responding to critics Wedemeyer wrote: "There is nothing in our history that remotely justifies the derogation of any kind of learning as second class, when undertaken with purpose, initiative, energy and resourcefulness."[16]

As Director of the University of Wisconsin's Correspondence Study Program (1954–1964), Wedemeyer broke ground in higher and adult learning by initiating a number of research projects on areas such as learner characteristics, instructor characteristics, and instructional quality and effectiveness. From modest beginnings, he went on to publish a newsletter, *The Correspondent*, which solicited student and faculty contributions on the process of learning by correspondence.[17] In 1961, he collaborated with Dr. Gayle Childs, from the University of Nebraska, to write *New Perspectives in University Correspondence Study*, published by the Center for the Study of Liberal Education of Adults (CSLEA). The same year, Wedemeyer became Chair of the newly formed NUEA Committee on Criteria and Standards that produced the landmark document, *Criteria and Standards*. The purpose of this initiative was to "boldly and fearlessly proclaim our high standards."[18] Meeting in Nebraska the following year, NUEA members ratified the 12-page document, establishing the standards of best practice as official NUEA policy.

In 1961, Wedemeyer received a grant from the Ford Foundation to conduct a study of 14 major correspondence schools in Europe. At the Swedish Correspondence School, he forged a professional relationship with Dr. Borje Holmberg, the educational reformer who would later become Director of the Central Institute for Research (ZIFF) at the Fernuniversität in Hagen, Germany. This collaboration led to the introduction of a series of faculty seminars, each devoted to a particular aspect of correspondence instruction, led by a recognized leader who presented a paper on a given topic. Participants received reading lists in advance, and library materials were distributed. Held twice a semester at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the seminars attracted between 50 and 100 educators from Europe,

Africa, Australia, and South America, as well as the United States. With the growing popularity of these activities, Wedemeyer noted that faculty experienced a sense of pride in their contribution to what was becoming known as "non-traditional education." Faculty consistently reported that this instructional development carried over to the classroom, resulting in superior face-to-face experiences. The seminars proved so successful, generating papers and research proposals, that Wedemeyer applied to the Brandenberg Foundation for a publications grant. The first volume of the Brandenberg Memorial Essays on Correspondence Instruction was published in 1963; the second volume appeared in 1966.[19] The volumes included essays by Leonard Stein, University of Chicago; Renée Erdos, Head of External Studies, New South Wales, Australia; Harold Wiltshire and Fred Bayliss, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom; and Borje Holmberg, Educational Director, Hermods, Sweden, at that time the world's largest distance-teaching organization.

In 1964, a team of educational reformers from Venezuela came to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to participate in a seminar and learn from Wedemeyer's innovative techniques. Preparatory to the foundation of the Instituto Nacional Cooperativa de Educación (INCE), the country's official adult education agency, responsible for technical, vocational and civic education, the team invited Wedemeyer to Venezuela as an educational consultant. Following a four-month sojourn in Caracas to conduct workshops for employees and oversee the establishment of the INCE, Wedemeyer directed the production of a bilingual manual on correspondence study methodology for use in employee training. In 1973, INCE invited him back to Venezuela for further advisement during the establishment phase of the project.[20]

With the support of a multi-million dollar grant from the Carnegie Foundation, in 1965, Wedemeyer developed the Articulated Instructional Media (AIM) project that would revolutionize educational systems worldwide. AIM incorporated behavioral science methodology to arrive at a theoretical framework for learners at a distance. Designed for adults who had been previously excluded from the educational process, the system combined old and new methods and media in a new format that would "expedite recruitment, registration, curriculum development…credit transfer…." The idea was to deliver "high quality and low-cost teaching to off-campus students."[21] Instructional strategies encompassed correspondence tutoring, study guides, radio and television broadcasts, audiotapes, telephone conferences, kits for home experiments, and library resources. Counseling and student support services were also "articulated" into the program, as were study groups and the use of university laboratories. By incorporating a range of media, Wedemeyer's technique introduced a richer, more comprehensive environment that would accommodate a diversity of learning styles.

Designed to effect change at every level of the academic hierarchy, the AIM project's Faculty Development Seminars and Workshops ran for four years on an experimental basis (1964–1969) in three separate locations in Wisconsin. As a result, newly created course design teams, comprised of instructional designers, technology specialists, and content experts, developed a total of 49 courses. This highly innovative team approach included counseling, guidance, learning centers, and technology, among many other features. The method required students to be self-directed as they worked with the mediated materials. The AIM experiment brought together interdisciplinary contributions toward the development of a ground-breaking theory of independent learning.

The AIM project attracted the attention of educational reformers in the international arena, most notably members of British Prime Minister Harold Wilson's (1964–1970; 1974–1976) government at a key juncture in the evolution of Labor party policy on educational reform. Wilson's vision of a "University of the Air" perfectly aligned with Wedemeyer's determination to expand access to higher education for working adults and previously excluded populations. In 1965, following his lecture on AIM in Wiesbaden, Germany, Wedemeyer met administrators from Oxford University, United Kingdom, who informed him of their proposal to create a "University of the Air," using television as a teaching tool. The Oxford administrators invited him to visit a number of universities and government officials in the United Kingdom. In his presentation, Wedemeyer acknowledged AIM's three fatal flaws: "It had no control over its faculty and curriculum; it lacked control over its funds; and it had no control over academic rewards for its students (courses or degrees)." The implications were clear: a large-scale, non-experimental institution of the AIM type would have to start with complete autonomy and control.[22]

In 1965, Wedemeyer became the first Kellogg Fellow in Adult Education at Oxford University, an opportunity that afforded him space to present his compelling case for a new kind of university based on a model of instruction that combined technology with correspondence study for audiences in Edinburgh, Bristol, and Nottingham. At the 1965 ICCE conference in Stockholm, Wedemeyer presented his report on "World Trends in Correspondence Education," based on data collected from educational systems around the world. The report's findings, a summary of which appears below, highlighted the international popularity of non-traditional learning, most notably in the developing world. Always eager to extend the parameters of his instructional technique, Wedemeyer decided to collaborate with behavioral science researcher Professor Gerald Gleason, on *The Theory and Nature of Independent Learning* (1967).[23] This was one of the earliest efforts to bring together interdisciplinary contributions toward the development of a

theory of independent learning.

In 1967, Wedemeyer became the first William H. Lighty professor in Education, an appointment that afforded him the impetus to focus on learning theory and the compilation of data on correspondence and independent study from around the world. In a communication with Holmberg, Wedemeyer observed that "what had been variously called correspondence study, independent study, or distance education, was now an established field in education, ready to emerge as a discipline."[24] Always eager to exploit emerging technologies for the benefit of the learner, his Educational Diffusion and Social Application of Satellites (EDSAT; 1967–1974) project pioneered the use of satellite technology in an educational setting.

From 1969 to 1971, as a member of the Wisconsin Governor's Commission on Education, Wedemeyer pushed for a state-wide task force on open learning that brought together 60 educators from across the state. Under his leadership, "Distance Education" was becoming the preferred general term for the field that covered independent and non-traditional options. The task force recommended the establishment of an open learning system in Wisconsin through all levels of schooling, including education in adulthood. For political reasons beyond the scope of this article, the project did not receive the support of the incoming Governor and new state government. Perhaps not surprisingly, Wedemeyer's ground-breaking research did not receive due recognition in the United States. It did, however, receive much acclaim in the United Kingdom and around the world.

As President of ICCE from 1971 to 1975, Wedemeyer organized an institute on Independent Study at the University of Wisconsin that drew administrators from Canada, Venezuela, and Africa. Until his retirement in 1976, he held a number of administrative positions, including Director of Instructional Media, and taught a series of graduate classes in the Department of Continuing Vocational Education in the School of Education, including The Development of Independent Programs for Adults, Teaching the Adult Learner, Systems Design for Institutional Development/Evaluation, and Technology and Media in Independent Learning. He holds the distinction of having taught the world's first course on Distance Education. Complementary to his teaching role, while conducting field work in many countries, he amassed a significant amount of materials in pursuit of his research on the expansion of learning systems. This led to his publication of "World Trends in Correspondence Education" (1966), the first major work on Open/Independent Learning systems.

While it would be impossible to cover the evolution of distance learning in every country, a summary by region should suffice to give an understanding of the role and expansion of correspondence study from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Wedemeyer's extensive collection of materials at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison constitutes an indispensable resource in attempting to frame a more accurate portrayal of the scope and extent of the distance education movement and his influence on its development on an international level. The collection testifies to the links forged with educational reformers on six continents. Wedemeyer would maintain correspondence with many of these contacts throughout his working life.[25]

Data from the Wedemeyer collection reveal that the distance education movement was particularly welcomed in countries with widespread, rural populations, poor transportation systems, and great distances between schools. Perhaps surprisingly, Scandinavia was fertile ground for the growth of the movement. Sweden began to offer correspondence study in 1898, mainly for adults and for teacher training. The correspondence method became so successful that, by 1969, 150,000 students were enrolled at Hermods, out of a total population of 7.5 million, ensuring great prestige for the practice. Subsequent to ICCE's 1965 international conference in Stockholm, Wedemeyer forged a lasting relationship with Swedish educators, most notably, Borje Holmberg. Despite its more urban population, Denmark, which has always prided itself on a high standard of education, adopted a practical approach. The government embraced correspondence study, launching its first correspondence school in 1916. Finland implemented correspondence methodology at the secondary level and extended it to specialized groups of adults, including homemakers. Supported by the government, Norway developed distance courses and remains an important center for research in distance technologies.

Wedemeyer's correspondence with Professor Rudolf Berdichevsky yielded insights into early Russian efforts to educate the masses. Translated into English, Berdichevsky's historical report "Special Pedagogical Features of Higher Correspondence Education" paints a picture of the evolution of the movement.[26] At the close of the nineteenth century, Russia introduced correspondence study; after the October Revolution, the practice gained popularity with avant garde scholars, progressive social workers, and a variety of organizations. Known as "School at Home" and "Popular University at Home,"[27] the movement held wide appeal. The Correspondence Study Act (1931) initiated the instructional technique to train production workers and to raise the general level of education. Administered through the Ministry of Education, the system enrolled 350,000 students at high school and college levels; entrance exams were introduced in 1935. By 1939, correspondence study had become integral to the Soviet higher educational system. Extension Centers were set up in locations where enrollment exceeded 200 students. By 1961, Institutions of Correspondence Study had become an organic part of the entire educational system, from elementary to graduate level. The institutions were controlled by the Ministry of Higher and

Secondary Education, incorporating radio and television broadcasts, and special educational films. Graduates received identical diplomas as their counterparts from other institutions of higher learning. By 1963, in most of the Soviet Republics, enrollments in correspondence courses exceeded those in regular day schools.[28] This fact is particularly illuminating in light of the worldwide interest in the Soviet educational system precipitated by the successful Sputnik launch, and the subsequent crisis in the United States educational system at the end of the 1950s. Britain's Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was impressed to learn that 60% of Soviet engineers had earned their degrees by correspondence supplemented by radio broadcasts and one year of study at the university in Moscow.[29] This made him favorably disposed to implement Wedemeyer's innovative educational techniques with the establishment of the Open University.

Beginning in 1949, the Sorbonne in Paris offered correspondence courses in conjunction with radio broadcasts, a practice that spread to other French institutions in the 1960s. Italy incorporated correspondence methodology with courses in engineering, English, and adult education. The Netherlands offered correspondence study for continuing professional training; by 1960, the country enrolled 420,000 students in correspondence courses that prepared them for state administered exams. Belgium boasted that a coal miner who studied accounting by correspondence found a job as a cost accountant for a coal mine, earning ten times his previous salary. The German Institute of Academic Correspondence Study at Tübingen offered 162 disciplines through correspondence study. In 1976, Wedemeyer's colleague, Borje Holmberg, joined the Fernuniversität in Hagen, Germany, as Professor of Distance Education Methodology. In 1972, Spain established the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) to expand access to higher education for disadvantaged social groups.

By 1968, correspondence courses were available in Canada through all ten provincial governments, thirteen universities, four institutes of technology, as well as private and business schools. Nine of the universities offered courses for degree credit with a residency requirement of some classes for degree completion. With enrollment topping 121,600, six universities offered courses that incorporated a variety of media, including film strips, slides, disc recordings, and tapes. Dr. Tony Bates, Director of Distance Education and Technology (1995–2002) at the University of British Columbia, acknowledged Wedemeyer's influential role."I actually sat at the foot of the master way back in 1969 when Chuck Wedemeyer came to the UK around the time of the launching of the Open University. He gave a truly inspiring lecture on distance education."[30]

In the United Kingdom, the University of Nottingham offered courses for adults—using radio and television—through the National Extension

College at Oxford. According to the Planning Committee Report (1969) established to set up the Open University, there was a need to expand access to adults with "limited opportunities for education determined by social, economic, and political factors."[31] Models for what the Prime Minister termed the "University of the Air" included the University of South Africa, Young-Perraton National Extension College at Cambridge, and the University of New South Wales, Armidale, Australia. In 1969, Wedemeyer accepted an invitation to spend several months at Milton Keynes as a consultant for what would become the world's first open, fully autonomous, degree-granting institution, now known as the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU). There, he worked with representatives of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Walter Perry and Walter James, later knighted for their efforts as founders of the Open University."It became clearer than ever before that the discipline of Distance Education was being clarified in the crucible of this new institution."[32]

Following Wedemeyer's recommendation, the British government decided to establish a fully autonomous, open, degree-granting institution with its own funding and faculty. Today, UKOU is one of the world's premier universities, enrolling more than 200,000 students and graduating 20,000 students annually. UKOU has spawned similar institutions around the world including the Open University of Hong Kong, University of South Africa (UNISA), and Anadolu University in Turkey. In 1975, in recognition of his pioneering role in expanding educational opportunity, the Open University presented Wedemeyer with a Doctorate Honoris Causa; he remains the sole U.S. recipient of an honorary doctorate from that institution.

The Wedemeyer collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison sheds light on the historical significance on the Correspondence Movement in Africa. Wedemeyer collaborated with educators at Haile Selassi University, Ethiopia, and at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. In Kenya in 1973, he presented a planning matrix for modeling a correspondence teaching and learning institution. Two decades earlier, in 1954, the Central African Correspondence College was established when a number of foreign correspondence providers saw opportunities for expansion at the close of the colonial era.[33] Following independence, African nations faced enormous challenges in attempting to educate large populations. Apart from a lack of resources, they faced shortages of teachers, classrooms, libraries, textbooks, and basic facilities. What they needed was a cost-effective means of educating the masses in order to generate a pool of capable teachers.

Kenya founded a Correspondence Course Unit to provide in-service training for the new nation's teachers, civil servants, and police personnel. The unit was emulated in a number of countries that were gaining their independence, such as Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ivory Coast and later

Zimbabwe and South Africa. Malawi implemented correspondence courses at the secondary level. Although plagued by a poor transportation system and uneven distribution of electricity, by 1994 the National Correspondence Institution of the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, had trained 35,000 teachers. The same year, the institution changed its name to the Open University of Tanzania. In 1991, the Zimbabwe Institute of Distance Education (ZIDE) enrolled 42,000 students. South Africa implemented correspondence study for a range of subjects, including business administration and engineering. At 250,000, enrollment at UNISA ranks second only to that of Anadolu University in Turkey, the largest distance education institution in the world.

From 1963, the University of Delhi, India, offered correspondence study for teacher training, and for army, civil service, and foreign service personnel. The method proved effective for building morale and aiding social reform. Slow to embrace the method, after the Second World War, the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation incorporated radio transmission in conjunction with correspondence study for a four-year science and math program at the high school level. Later, courses in *shodo*, Japanese calligraphy, the tailoring of kimonos, and the art of printing became popular. South Vietnam initiated correspondence study for training programs with army personnel.

As early as 1911, the University of Queensland established a program of Correspondence study. The system was implemented for students in remote areas to supplement on-the-job training for transportation administration, technology, and pest control. As an instructor at the New South Wales department of Technical and Further Education, and as Director of the School of External Studies trailblazer, Renée Erdos (who in 1964 had participated in one of Wedemeyer's workshops) administered Correspondence Study for 20 departments, covering some 400 courses, making her Australia's preeminent non-traditional educator. In 1957, 32% of students enrolled in the University of Queensland were working by correspondence; at the University of Western Australia that figure was 14%.[34]

Wedemeyer developed a close working relationship with educators from Venezuela. With his guidance, the country successfully implemented correspondence courses linked to practical experiences for apprentices. The Wedemeyer collection includes a list he compiled of institutions throughout Latin America that offered education by non-traditional methodology. Of historical importance, the collection reveals that Mexico used correspondence study for teacher training and that in the 1940s, Colombia employed radio effectively through Acción Cultural Popular (ACP) as part of a literacy initiative to empower *campesinos*, a program emulated by 20 nations. With few exceptions, distance education did not become firmly established in the region until the 1970s.

While the dimensions of the university-sponsored correspondence/independent study movement were little publicized throughout the twentieth century, evidence compiled by Wedemeyer shows that the instructional technique succeeded on a global scale to educate vast numbers in a cost-effective manner, particularly in the developing world. The methodology instilled in learners a sense of confidence in their ability to take control of the process of learning. The American notion of modules or accumulated credits towards a degree was new to countries outside the U.S., and the foregrounding of "learner autonomy" was certainly innovative in the international arena. Wedemeyer's contribution to opening up the "Great Gate at the Palace of Learning" led to groundbreaking change in education worldwide. International consultant on Distance Learning and Penn State professor, Michael Grahame Moore—a former graduate student of Wedemeyer—noted: "The Open University internationalized the philosophy and practice of American Independent Study."[35] Wedemeyer became a consultant and advisor to the U.S. Department of State, UNESCO, NASA, USAID and many other agencies, ministries, and universities. An early innovation for retraining faculty for instruction of students at a distance, Wedemeyer's Carnegie-supported Articulated Instructional Media (AIM) led to the formation of new models for higher educational institutions in the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, Spain, India, Mexico, South America, Israel, Africa, Australia, The South Pacific, Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The UKOU—which spawned the creation of open learning systems in South Africa, Hong Kong, and Turkey—represents the preeminent example of Wedemeyer's legacy. The UKOU became "an inheritor of Wedemeyer's inspiration, a beneficiary of his advice, and a learner from his wisdom."[36]

Among Wedemeyer's major contributions to education was the creation of university-sponsored Independent Study programs in 1969. Also noteworthy was his implementation of the first instructional design teams and the introduction of the first university course on the subject of Distance Education which he taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. If the goal of education is to develop self-sufficient learners, affording students greater access with more freedom to build on experience can instill confidence in their ability to learn independently. Notwithstanding Wedemeyer's work with media-assisted, cutting-edge technology, the intrepid educator never lost sight of the centrality of the learner to the educational process, as evidenced in more than one hundred and fifty publications. Focused on the quality of the learning experience, he would have been just as enthusiastic by the prospect of a student's exploration of a well-designed print study guide—the so-called low-tech medium—as he would from the same student's utilization of online, web-based, or mobile communications—the so-called 3G, or third-generation equivalent.

Forty years after his groundbreaking findings, a number of studies have validated Wedemeyer's educational philosophy. A 2009 meta-analysis of 46 research studies undertaken by the U.S. Department of Education supports the use of individualized instructional techniques. The analysis affirms key features of independent learning systems as advocated by Wedemeyer, including the importance of time on task, deep reflection, learner control, and self-monitoring. Nine of these studies concluded that "a tool or feature prompting students to reflect on their learning was effective in improving outcomes."[37] Further, this study found that encouraging students to use "self-explanation and self-monitoring strategies affected learning."[38] All these studies confirm what was proclaimed by Wedemeyer's Independent Study methodology: using additional reflective elements with self-monitoring strategies improves students' online learning. Not surprisingly, to increase learning effectiveness, time-on-task facilitates deeper understanding.[39] Recent studies concluded that instructor-student interaction proved more effective for learning than student-student interaction.[40] Additional studies found a distinct student preference for self-pacing.[41] Another finding confirms Wedemeyer's and Childs' long-standing conclusions: when it comes to learning outcomes, instructional technique has greater impact than the specific medium of instruction.[42]

The history of Independent Study is one of creative adaptation.[43] Emerging technologies have captured the imaginations of millions of non-traditional learners through the decades: radio in the thirties and forties; television in the fifties and sixties; video and satellite in the seventies and eighties; and computers and mobile devices since the nineties. Nowadays, Web 2.0 offers immense possibilities for new generations of learners. Childs described it best: "Independent Study has always acted both to supplement and to complement the established system of education. Its supplemental role is to fill in the interstices, by accommodating the unmet needs of students in that system. Its complementary role is to serve people not affiliated with the established system. I think that, in the past, the role of Independent Study was to a large extent supplementary but that it will be increasingly complementary in the future."[44] As Wedemeyer would have it, what non-traditional learning does not need is "anything that would diminish the freedom of choice, autonomy and independence that has kept this kind of learning vital, practical, resourceful, innovative, and humane from the beginning."[45]

Following his resignation as Director of the University of Wisconsin's Correspondence program, Wedemeyer dedicated himself to research, to "freeing learners of the constraints placed by institutions," and to persuading those institutions "to be more open, convenient, and responsive to learners."[46] His work with learning systems and media applications made significant contributions to the establishment of the field of distance

education on a global scale. By the time he retired in 1976, already millions of students and former students around the world had benefited from his ingenuity and contribution to humanity. Wedemeyer passed the baton to a cadre of creative graduate students who, in turn, became faculty members and administrators at institutions around the globe. Just as his cherished image of the "back door learner" inspired him to advocate for flexibility and inclusion, for educational policy makers, it should serve as a perpetual reminder of those still excluded from the educational mainstream.

Notes:

[1] This article was written following research conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison archives in August 2009 with generous assistance from Mr. David Null, Director, University of Wisconsin Archives and Records Management Services.

[2] Charles A. Wedemeyer, *Learning at the Back Door: Reflections on Non-Traditional Learning in the Lifespan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), xx.

[3] Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* (London: John Nutt, 1704).

[4] Charles A. Wedemeyer to Professor Rudolf V. Berdichevski, 12 March 1974, Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[5] *Cardinal* (South Division High School, Milwaukee, WI), vol. 19 (1929), Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[6] Randall Davidson, *9XM Talking: WHA Radio and the Wisconsin Idea* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 286. The series ran between 1939–1940 on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. WHA also broadcast instructional programming at the university level with its *College of the Air* series.

[7] William H. Lighty founded correspondence study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

[8] Decades later, Wedemeyer would chair this committee, leading the organization to incorporate media with principles of best practice for instruction.

[9] Barbara L. Watkins and Stephen J. Wright, eds., *The Foundations of American Distance Education: A Century of Collegiate Correspondence Study* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991), 24.

[10] Von Pittman, "Evaluation and Independent Study," *Adult Assessment Forum* 2 (Spring 1992): 6–7, 13.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Four subsequent conferences took place in the United States, followed by the 1965 conference, held in Stockholm, Sweden, and the 1969 conference in Paris, France, which attracted representatives from 34 countries under the presidency of Australian educator, Renée Erdos.

[13] *Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the National University Extension Association* (53rd, Annual Meeting, Miami, FL, July 21-24, 1968), vol. 51. The change became effective in 1969 after a referendum held by Directors in compliance with the Division's constitution.

[14] U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy

Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Author, 2009), 44, http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf (accessed July 2009).

[15] Wedemeyer, *Learning at the Back Door*, 24.

[16] Wedemeyer, *Learning at the Back Door*, xxii.

[17] Charles A. Wedemeyer to Dr. Borje Holmberg, 25 June 1984, Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[18] Pittman, "Evaluation and Independent Study."

[19] Charles A. Wedemeyer, ed., *The Brandenburg Memorial Essays on Correspondence Instruction*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1963–1966).

[20] "Report of Assessment and Development of INCE's Department of Correspondence Instruction," Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[21] Michael G. Moore and Namin Shin, eds., *Speaking Personally about Distance Education: Foundations of Contemporary Practice* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 33.

[22] Charles Wedemeyer, "The Birth of the Open University—A Postscript," Teaching at a Distance 21 (1982): 21-27.

[23] G. T. Gleason, ed., *The Theory and Nature of Independent Learning* (Scranton, PA: International Textbook Company, 1967).

[24] Wedemeyer to Holmberg.

[25] Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[26] Rudolf Berdichevsky, "Special Pedagogical Features of Higher Correspondence Education," Wedemeyer Collection, University of Wisconsin Library Archives, Madison.

[27] Ossian Mackenzie and Edward L. Christensen, *The Changing World of Correspondence Study* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1971), 345.

[28] Ibid, 351.

[29] Jennifer Shelton, "U.K. Open University Opens Its Doors," in *History of Education: Selected Moments of the 20th Century* [online], ed. Daniel Schugurensky, http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/research/edu20/moments/1971ukou.html (accessed November 12, 2009).

[30] Tony Bates, e-mail message to Evan Smith, October 6, 1995.

[31] The Open University, *Report of the Planning Committee to the Secretary of State for Education and Science* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969).

[32] Wedemeyer to Holmberg.

[33] Charles A. Wedemeyer, "World Trends in Correspondence Education," in *The Brandenburg Memorial Essays on Correspondence Instruction*, vol. 2, ed. Charles A. Wedemeyer (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1966).

[34] Renée Erdos, "Some Aspects of Teaching by Correspondence in Australia," in *The Brandenburg Memorial Essays on Correspondence Instruction*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1963).

[35] Watkins and Wright, *Foundations of American Distance Education*.

[36] Moore and Shin, *Speaking Personally*.

[37] U.S. Department of Education, *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices*.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Terry Anderson, *An Updated and Theoretical Rationale for Interaction*, Athabasca University's IT Forum Paper No. 63 (Albuquerque, Canada: Athabasca University, 2002), http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/paper63/paper63.htm (accessed November 5, 2008); David Murphy, Des Casey, and Janet Fraser,"Talk about Walkabout: Evaluation of a Flexible Learning Initiative," in *Enhancing Learning through Technology*, ed. Philip Tsang, Reggie Kwan, and Robert Fox (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing, 2007), 11-26; U.S. Department of Education, *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices*.

[41] Suzanne Greenwald, "Eduventures" (PowerPoint presentation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006), slide 32; Andrea Duff and Diana Quinn, "Benefits of Online Learning," Online Learning @ UniSA (University of South Australia, 2004), http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learn/learnOnline/?PATH=/Resources/Workshop-ready4online/Learning+Online/&default=Welcome.htm (accessed July 2009).

[42] U.S. Department of Education, *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices*.

[43] Watkins and Wright, *Foundations of American Distance Education*.

[44] Mary Beth Almeda, "Speaking Personally with Gayle B. Childs," *American Journal of Distance Education* 2, no. 2 (1988): 68-74.

[45] Wedemeyer, *Learning at the Back Door*, 218.

[46] Wedemeyer to Holmberg.

The Evolution of James A. Michener from High School Teacher to Writer:
The Formative Years

John W. Hunt

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

People today are most familiar with James A. Michener the novelist.[1] His first novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947,[2] and he went on to publish twenty-four subsequent novels. Michener also published thirty-two non-fiction books,[3] eighty-six articles and stories[4] and had begun or was working on six additional manuscripts at the time of his death.[5] But while Michener is known to many as a preeminent author, few people know that he was a high school teacher for nearly a decade before beginning to write for the general public. Based primarily upon an examination of primary and secondary sources included in the James Michener papers held in the archives of the James A. Michener Library at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, I argue in this article that Michener's early life as a teacher informed his later work as a writer. The fact that James Michener was a successful and popular teacher is evident in an examination of the papers contained in the archives in Greeley – particularly when reading issues of the high school newspaper of the era, the *College High Courier*. I also gained an interesting perspective of Michener as a teacher in an interview with one of his former College High students, a member of the class of 1938.[6] This article chronicles Michener's pre-novelist life period, highlighting ways in which his early career as a teacher shaped him as a writer.

The Early Doylestown Years

James Michener's date of birth and the actual circumstances of that birth remain unclear. The version Michener used when he first applied for a passport was "…that he was the son of Edwin and Mabel Michener, born February 3, 1907, in Doylestown, Pennsylvania."[7] However, Michener knew that this was not true, since Edwin Michener died in 1902, five years before Michener's birth.[8] Even as late as 1964, Michener stated, "I am not a Michener."[9] He continued, "I am not related to them. Actually, I do not know who my parents were…the date, the locale, and parentage of my birth I have never known."[10] Some believe that Mabel Michener was James' birth mother, but that she had him out of wedlock. Others speculate that Michener was actually born to an unwed teenager who left him at a public place, later to be delivered to Mabel Michener. Mrs. Michener did take in foundlings. In the words of one author, "She took in a number of homeless children: at one time, Michener counted thirteen living under one roof."[11] Regardless of the situation, Mabel Michener was the only mother that James knew and loved.

Since James was raised exclusively by Mabel Michener, he did not have a strong male influence during his formative years. He found his favorite male influences in the books that Mabel frequently read to him. He was particularly enamored by some of the male figures in the work of Charles Dickens.[12] Many years later, Michener spoke of the influence of *Great Expectations:*

> Pip was an orphan and so was I. His problems were solved by his being taken into the home of his older sister and her husband. Mine were minimized by being taken into the home of an almost saintly poor woman who eked out a living by taking care of abandoned children…Therefore I followed young Pip with a magnifying glass, aware at every turn of the brilliant plot the extent to which the happenings might apply to me.[13]

Young James Michener worked hard as a youngster to help support Mabel Michener and the children she was raising. In the summer of 1918, when he was eleven years old, he got a job with the Burpee Seed Company outside of Doylestown. He walked two miles to the seed company, and then worked from seven o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon, six days a week, earning the sum of sixty-three dollars for the entire summer. He turned all of this money over to Mabel Michener.[14] He also worked as a paper carrier and a plumber's apprentice, all before entering high school.

James Michener developed his sense of wanderlust at an early age. In the summer of 1920, he and another boy were able to successfully hitchhike to

New York City. Emboldened by this, the two boys decided to try something on a grander scale. In the words of Michener, "Ted and I were so exhilarated by our first success that after we were back home for a few boring weeks, we set out again, this time with a little more money, and headed for Florida."[15] The two young men hitchhiked through Virginia and both Carolinas. At some point in Georgia, they walked into a police station and asked whether they could spend the night in jail. After questioning the two boys about their age, the police officer threw them into a cell for the evening. The next day, he gave a northbound truck driver fifty cents to pay for their meals and to take them back to Pennsylvania.[16] Later that same summer, the two hitchhiked north, through Maine, and took about six steps into Canada before heading back home.[17]

High School Hero

James Michener entered Doylestown High School in 1921. Doylestown was a small-town high school which maintained "very high standards" and "was well regarded in general."[18] The principal of Doylestown High School was a man named Carmon Ross. Michener characterized Ross as "a good scholar, a classicist and a most rigid disciplinarian." Michener's description of Ross also indicated that he was "a good educator," an extremely charismatic figure, and consequently well liked throughout the community. "What Carmon Ross wanted, the community wanted," Michener asserted. "He made them want it."[19]

High school was easy for James Michener. It was obvious that he was very intelligent, but since he was more interested in sports and other activities, he did not work very hard in his academics. Michener lettered in baseball his senior year, [20] but his biggest passion was for basketball, and he was a basketball star at Doylestown High School. *The Daily Intelligencer*, the local Doylestown newspaper, was replete with references to Michener's basketball prowess. For example, the January 3, 1925, issue stated that, "Jimmy Michener played up to form with six two-pointers and 3 out of 4 fouls, while McNealy, too, took advantage of every shot with four two-pointers to his credit."[21] A few weeks later, they reported, in much the same vein: "Jimmy Michener, who at all times desires to be an unsung hero, was the 'works' as well as the salvation for the champs again last night. Michener, playing his great game at forward, not on the sides or down under the basket, but in the middle of the defensive fracas, registered three field goals and shot seven fouls without a miss, thus accounting for 13 points for Doylestown."[22]

In addition to sports, Michener was involved in numerous other student activities in high school. His senior year, he was editor-in-chief of *The Torch*, the high school newspaper. His interest in history was evident when he won

the first prize in an essay contest on Abraham Lincoln, his senior year, receiving a cash prize of three dollars.[23] Michener was also a thespian, and also occasionally managed high school plays.

On May 6, 1925, James Michener and thirty-five other seniors boarded a train for their senior trip to Washington, D.C. Michener served as a special correspondent to the local newspaper, sending back accounts of the trip. His reports were written in a folksy style, typified by the following statement:

> Dr. Ross told us all to bring lunch with us the first day, and we all did. The platform looks like a shoe store. Everybody has a box of real grub and some have two. Jack Waddington is in the latter class. He has something that looks like a hat box to me. All the boys are trying to find out what's in it, and we are almost unanimous in our decision that it's a cake. Poor cake when we light in it![24]

In addition to being an athlete, an actor, an editor, and a correspondent, Michener was the president of the senior class. As president, he played a prominent role in the graduation ceremonies on June 24, 1925; he was also one of six honors students graduating that evening. He had received word the previous week that he had been awarded a prestigious scholarship award from Swarthmore College, a Quaker institution. Not only was this an excellent institution of higher education, it also seemed to be a match since James Michener had been raised as a Quaker. The newspaper report of the award read:

> James Michener, a member of the graduating class of Doylestown High School and one of its outstanding students and athletes for several years, has been awarded by Swarthmore College one of the most coveted scholastic honors of the year. Michener, in competition with 155 candidates from twenty-seven states, has won one of the five open scholarships awarded by Swarthmore College – a four years' course valued at $2000. As a member of the local high school Michener ranked the highest in the psychological tests, was a scholastic leader, editor of the school paper and won his 'D' in basketball and baseball. President Aydelottee awarded the scholarships yesterday at the commencement exercises at the college.[25]

Swarthmore

Swarthmore College is located in the borough of Swarthmore, eleven miles southwest of Philadelphia. While Michener continued his involvement in student activities there, playing basketball and acting in plays, this was a

period when he concentrated upon academics. It was also the period when he began displaying tendencies toward social activism. In the words of one biographer:

> During his freshman and sophomore years Jim courted the image of a college radical. He particularly objected to having to join a fraternity. Students at Swarthmore pledged to fraternities, even women, and Michener's cheekiness in raising his voice against them immediately branded him as a maverick. Fraternities were the social center of campus life but Jim rebelled against the constant partying and their overt discrimination.[26]

In Michener's own words later describing his feelings and beliefs regarding what he perceived to be the discriminatory practices of the fraternities of the era, he proclaimed:

> In a democratic, academic situation it was criminal to turn the social life of the college over to organizations that did not admit Negroes or Jews, and weren't very happy with Catholics either. I didn't have to be very bright to figure that out, but I did have to have a certain amount of guts to act on it.[27]

During the four years at Swarthmore, Michener received a liberal arts education. He spent his first two years in the general program of studies. However, beginning his junior year, he was selected for the Honors Program based upon his excellent academic performance. The Honors Program was essentially self-directed. There were no regular classes. Students, with the assistance of an advisor, selected a limited number of areas of study, and engaged in selected readings and submitted weekly papers. Michener chose to focus upon English, history and philosophy. He took eight honors seminars- four seminars in English literature, two in history and two in philosophy. Ultimately, he graduated with a major in English and a very strong history minor.[28] Clearly, James Michener made his mark at Swarthmore. When he graduated in 1929, the head of the English department of the Hill School handpicked him from approximately twenty candidates to teach English at the prestigious college preparatory school. The Hill School, located in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, offered him his first teaching job at a salary of $2100 per year, a respectable sum on the eve of the Great Depression.[29]

Two Private Schools and Europe

When James Michener walked into the office of the chair of the English

department at The Hill School in the fall of 1929, John Lester told him, "We place great emphasis here on diagramming the sentence. It teaches the student how to think, how to keep his ideas in line."[30] When Michener admitted that he knew nothing about diagramming sentences, John Lester uttered a single word, "Learn."[31]

Michener's first two years of teaching were fairly typical of new teachers. He just hoped to stay a step ahead of his students. In addition to teaching English, he coached football and assisted with the basketball team. The Hill was modeled after English public schools and most of its graduates subsequently attended Harvard, Princeton, or Yale. Even though The Hill was a top notch school with excellent students, the students had forced Michener's predecessor to leave. In later years, reflecting upon the situation that he entered, Michener gave the following description:

> I was a pretty gung-ho guy and I came there under some difficulties. The previous guy had been run off campus…it was touch and go with a new teacher. They were going to take a shot at me. It was very rough and everybody knew it, including the faculty. The faculty was not supportive; they said "let the son of a bitch sink or swim – let's see if he's got it."[32]

In addition to teaching, Michener served as a dormitory master. This job kept him confined to his quarters with little social life. In order to deal with the boredom, he bought four hundred classical albums for fifty cents each, and over a period of weeks, transported them to his room from Pottstown.[33] He also made extensive use of the school's library, reading classical literature, and laying the foundation for his future career as an author. He began to look at literature in a much more serious manner than ever before.[34]

Perhaps due to the initial admonition of John Lester, James Michener remained a traditional teacher during his two years at The Hill School. At the same time, Michener admired Lester, who was a quiet, yet visionary Quaker. However, Michener was restless in his placement and began considering other options. His chance came in 1931, when Swarthmore awarded him the Joshua Lippincott Fellowship, which would allow him to travel and study in Europe. After considerable thought, Michener decided to accept the award. Considering the economic situation of the times, this was a very bold step on Michener's part, one that would prove to be life-changing. In the words of May:

> On a spring day in 1931, Michener walked into the headmaster's office and resigned. The headmaster, as well as a cadre of his colleagues, were speechless. Later, as Michener was removing his per-

> sonal effects from his rooms, his teaching friends told him he was a fool to throw away a good job during the worst of economic times.[35]

Many years later, reflecting upon his first years of teaching, James Michener said:

> I think that every young teacher learns far more from his first years than he imparts. I doubt that I accomplished very much with my students at The Hill: I was much too young myself to know much. But I certainly learned a great deal from them.[36]

James Michener decided to use his Lippincott Fellowship to study at the University of St. Andrews in eastern Scotland. St. Andrews, very receptive to international students, classified Michener as a "research student," which essentially allowed him to use the university as a base of operations for travel. He took full advantage of this opportunity, taking long hikes across the length and breadth of Scotland. He often was absent from the university for weeks, even months at a time. He spent three months, during the winter, on the island of Barra, on the Outer Hebrides.

Early in the summer of 1932, he enlisted in the British merchant marine service. This was a very informal process which merely required that he write a letter to the Bruce Line in Glasgow introducing himself. One of the directors wrote back, telling him to show up in Glasgow and be ready to ship out when he arrived. This led to trips delivering coal to Spain and Italy and return trips carrying lemons and oranges. Michener saw firsthand the art work of the Italian masters, and he developed a life-long interest in Spain.[37]

Michener's Lippincott Fellowship would expire in the summer of 1933, so he needed to find employment back in the United States. He decided to return to teaching. Although he knew that his options would be limited in the depths of the Depression, he also knew that he did not want to return to a rigid institution like The Hill School. His travels in Europe had reinforced his inclination that he needed to teach differently, and he began to believe that he should teach in a more interdisciplinary manner, incorporating English, the social studies and the arts. He applied to several schools. The George School, a private coed Quaker school in Newtown, Pennsylvania, offered him a position.[38] He was offered room and board and a salary of $1200 for the year. Although this was much less than he had made at The Hill School, it was still a decent salary, given the economic conditions in 1933.

Although a conservative Quaker institution, the George School was at the forefront in its educational objectives of academic and emotional growth for students.[39] The school endorsed the progressive movement by becoming a key player in the Progressive Education Association's Eight-Year Study.

Involvement in the study meant that the school was released from restrictive college entrance requirements and became one of the thirty schools chosen to experiment with its high school curriculum.[40] Participation in the Eight-Year Study enabled Michener to experiment with new techniques and ideas as he taught the experimental new English curriculum. Unlike at The Hill School, supportive colleagues encouraged him.

Michener learned and grew as an educator. Each summer, he looked for new opportunities for professional growth. Toward the end of the 1934-35 school year, he expressed interest to the administration of the George School in shifting his teaching emphasis to the social studies. Perhaps sensing that this might keep a strong teacher happy, the school assented. During the summer of 1935, he enrolled in history courses at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville. While there, he met Patti Koon, the twenty-one year old daughter of a Lutheran minister from South Carolina. By the end of the summer, when Michener returned to the George School, he brought back a new wife.[41] James Michener's world was expanding at the beginning of the 1935-36 school year. He was beginning his third year of teaching at the George School with a new wife and an exciting new curriculum.

Michener did not engage in creative writing while at the George School. Although he wrote a few plays for school productions and served as the advisor for the school newspaper, he spent most of his time preparing for teaching the new curriculum in his classes. He added art, literature and music to his lectures in sophomore history.[42] As he ended the year, encouraged by his participation in the Eight-Year Study, he decided to study that summer at The Ohio State University, under Ralph Tyler and Boyd Bode.[43]

The Greeley Years

Dr. William Wrinkle, director of College High at the Colorado State College of Education in Greeley, (now the University of Northern Colorado), had an unexpected social studies opening for the 1936-37 academic year. He needed an individual to teach in the College High laboratory school and ideally, along with a spouse, manage a dormitory housing thirty male students. The candidate would be employed as an associate professor and would hopefully pursue a master's degree at the college in Greeley.[44] William Wrinkle traveled to The Ohio State University looking for likely candidates for his opening. Tyler and Bode gave a written recommendation of Michener to Wrinkle.[45] Wrinkle contacted Michener and offered him the position. Michener saw this as an opportunity to teach in an even more progressive setting than the George School. Through his participation in the Eight-Year Study, he had developed an interest in public education. He also felt that it was time for him to engage in a formal program of graduate studies. He

accepted the position.

Michener thrived during his years in Greeley. Not only did he complete his master's degree, but he also began writing for professional educational journals. He became very active in the National Council for the Social Studies and retained his contacts with the Progressive Education Association. He was a popular teacher, and the non-graded, interdisciplinary curriculum at College High was to his liking. All teachers at College High sponsored advisory groups; his groups were very active. College High was very progressive. Students made decisions as they participated in advisory groups. Not only were many curriculum decisions made in this venue, but students also made decisions on assemblies, social activities and community relations. Both James and Patti Michener accompanied students on a variety of field trips, and were actively engaged in the life and activities of the school. There were times when Patti Michener served as a chaperone for trips without her husband's presence.

Kepner Hall at the University of Northern Colorado and the former location of College High where James Michener taught.

The College High newspaper of the time, the *College High Courier*, is replete with references to James and Patti Michener. One of the first references to Michener to be found in the school newspaper was in late October of 1936:

Members of the fifth and sixth levels were audience to a very clever-

> ly arranged discussion assembly from nine to eleven o'clock Wednesday at which the proposed amendments to the state constitution were presented and discussed by members of the social studies classes. The program was originated by Mr. James A. Michener and members of his social studies teaching staff.[46]

Continuing the story, the article when on to proclaim, "The second part of the assembly was a cleverly arranged mock meeting of the city council of Greeley after the passing of amendment number five. Mr. Michener acted as Mayor."[47] These citations indicate that Michener was an active, hands-on educator.

Michener actively shared his ideas with professional colleagues throughout the state during his tenure in Greeley. He attended and spoke at the meeting of the Colorado Education Association in Denver in November of 1936. According to the *College High Courier*, "James A. Michener, supervisor of social studies, talked in the social science department on 'Modernizing the Social Studies.'"[48]

Not all of Michener's activities were academic in nature. In another issue of the school newspaper, it was reported that:

> College High students will be surprised to learn that the home economics girls are confident enough of their cooking to have invited Mr. Barnard, Mr. Michener, and Dr. Wrinkle to a buffet dinner from 2:15 to 4:00 p.m. last Wednesday, December 2. Congratulations to Messrs. Wrinkle, Barnard, and Michener for summing up enough courage to place the future of College High in the hands of a few school-girl cooks.[49]

Continuing in the same non-academic vein, the school newspaper reporters asked faculty members what they wanted Santa Claus to bring them for Christmas in 1936. It was conveyed that, "Mr. Michener says he wants a Chevrolet convertible coupe or a ticket to 'Romeo and Juliet,' and he will settle for either."[50]

Michener quickly gained the respect of the students at College High. In the spring of his first year at the school, he was "…unanimously chosen sponsor of the class of 1937."[51] One particular student recalled Michener in the following way, "He was a quiet, reserved man but seemed to be very understanding. I know he was the sponsor of our 'sneak day,'…he went with us as our chaperone. Really, our class was pretty close to him."[52] A view from a professional colleague also confirmed this sentiment regarding Michener. Earle Rugg, one of Greeley's most distinguished educators, saw Michener as a "bright young man" and popular as a teacher.[53]

In an activity that combined fun with a serious message, Michener accompanied the entire secondary student body to a showing of the film, "Legion of Terror." The trip, which occurred on May 11, 1936, was described in the following fashion in the *College High Courier*:

> By special arrangement with Eddie Burke, manager of the Kiva Theatre, the entire secondary school was dismissed Tuesday, May 11, to attend a showing of "Legion of Terror." A gripping, vital movie of present day problems, it shows to what lengths ignorant, unhappy people can go trying to run away from themselves and their environment. The picture is considered by Mr. Michener, professor of social studies, to be one of the outstanding movies of the year in its timeliness; all those attending agreed with him.[54]

"Legion of Terror" essentially asserted that many Americans were followers of - and were susceptible to- groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. The film held relevance in view of what was happening in Germany and Japan during that era. Michener was apparently a movie fan, so it is not surprising that he used a field trip as an educational exercise. The *College High Courier* reported the following, eighteen months later: "A class in judging movies is being introduced for the first time and will be taught by Mr. James Michener."[55] In a subsequent school newspaper article entitled, "New Movie Class Proves Interesting," it was reported that, "Many interesting things have been taken up in this class under the supervision of Mr. Michener."[56] The same article also provides evidence that Michener brought guest speakers in to his class as well.

The *College High Courier* mentioned Michener's outside professional activities several times over the years. In November of 1937, the following statement appeared:

> Mr. Michener and Mr. Bishop spoke on the Social Studies and Industrial Arts respectively, to those groups who attended the Western division of the Colorado Education Association in Grand Junction on Oct. 28.[57]

In the same article, it was mentioned that, "Both teachers attended the banquet at which Mr. Michener was a speaker."[58] In May of 1938, the paper contained an article entitled, "Magazine Publishes Michener's Article," which discussed his article on 'sex education and the social studies' which appeared in *The Clearing House*.[59] In early December of the same year, the newspaper announced that, "Mr. James Michener left November 21 for the National Council of Social Studies, held at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. One of the fea-

tures of the program was a debate between Mr. Michener and Mr. I.J. Quillen, former teacher at C.H.S."[60]

In February of 1939, the paper announced:

> Mr. James Michener, head of the social studies department at College High, has accepted a fellowship at Harvard Graduate School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. Michener is to work with Dr. Howard Wilson in the social studies department. During the summer, Mr. Michener will teach graduate work in social studies and assist in a workshop for experienced teachers. In the winter, he will work on his doctor's degree and teach two of Dr. Wilson's classes.[61]

James Michener did travel to Harvard to begin work on his doctorate. However, he never completed his degree and after his one-year leave, he subsequently returned to Greeley"to resume his teaching on the campus."[62]

In addition to the previously referenced article in *The Clearing House*, Michener published a number of other articles in professional journals and monographs during his tenure in Greeley. He periodically used his classroom activities to inform his professional writing. One excellent example was his use of community surveys as a teaching device. The first mention of the survey technique appears in a November 1937 issue of the high school newspaper:

> Three College High students…are making a survey of bicycles at the request of the City Council. They are studying the bicycle traffic problem so they will be able to make suggestions to the council as to what could be done to make bicycles safer to ride.[63]

Then Michener and his students took the survey technique to a new level in 1939. As described in the January 26, 1939, issue of the *College High Courier*:

> The question of how the Greeley business man can improve his services is what the survey class, under the supervision of Mr. James Michener, is trying to solve. Questionnaires are being sent to all business men of Greeley and a house to house survey is also being made. A forum will be held to present the information to the Chamber of Commerce.[64]

Since part of the mission of College High was to disseminate new ideas and techniques to the teachers of Colorado, teachers frequently shared their ideas with Colorado educators in different venues. In a meeting of over five hundred rural teachers held on the university campus,"Mr. James Michener's

class on buying held a class discussion on the methods used in conducting their survey."[65] Finally, a later February issue of the paper reported:

> Nine students working with Mr. Bill Weidner [Michener's student teacher] and Mr. James Michener will complete their survey of Greeley businesses by presenting a forum discussion to the Greeley Chamber of Commerce in the near future. In order to gather authoritative information for their survey the students circulated questionnaires to students, faculty, businessmen and consumers of Greeley merchandise. The total of questionnaires [sic] numbered over 200. In their survey, students studied credit, prices, advertising, selection, salesmanship, and why the college faculty buys out of town and its effect on Greeley business.[66]

Michener ultimately wrote about this teaching strategy in his article entitled, "Participation in Community Surveys as Social Education," which appeared in the *Tenth Yearbook* of the National Council for the Social Studies.[67]

Michener published two articles regarding the relationship between music and the social studies. He called upon social studies teachers to use music in the classroom and he also called upon music teachers to integrate social studies in their classrooms. The first of these articles, entitled "Music and the Social Studies," was published in *The Social Studies* in 1937.[68] The next year, he published "Bach and Sugar Beets" in the *Music Educators Journal*.[69] The plains, just east of Greeley, were used for growing sugar beets, a fact that Michener later wove into the novel *Centennial*. In this article, Michener stated that most musicians liked the country and drew many of their themes from the country.[70] Michener went on to proclaim:

> I teach the social studies, and have no connection with the music department of my school. Yet to music I have an immediate and almost impelling connection; for in the social studies I am supposed to teach of man's great experiences, and to me there has never been a worthy human experience that has not been put into immortal music. Almost any subject that I elect to teach in the field of history or human relations has been discussed by the great musicians, and I would be foolish not to utilize their works in the same way that I use textbooks and magazines.[71]

Although Michener wrote articles on sex education and music in the social studies, most of his other writings of that era were more closely aligned with teaching methods and content that fit the traditional mold of the social studies. Among articles he published in the late 1930s and in 1940 were the

following: "A Functional Social Studies Program;"[72] "The Beginning Teacher;"[73] "The Future of the Social Studies;"[74] "Discussion in the Schools;"[75] and "An Improved Unit Method."[76]

The National Council for the Social Studies published a number of Michener's articles during this time period. In 1938, Earle Rugg, one of his Greeley colleagues, nominated Michener to become a member of the editorial board for the National Council for the Social Studies.[77] He was appointed to the board, and on January 1, 1940, he was appointed the publications chairperson. He particularly appreciated the guidance and mentorship of Erling Hunt, then the editor of *Social Education*.[78]

The Educator-Author Connection

The year at Harvard had been both an intellectually stimulating and emotionally wearing time for James Michener. He enjoyed the exciting discussions with fellow students and professors and he enjoyed the teaching. However, in order to obtain a Ph.D., he had to become fluent in two foreign languages. He felt that this would be beyond the scope of what he wanted to do at this point in his life.[79] He returned to Greeley and primarily taught college level classes during the remainder of his time. Michener knew that many universities were beginning to require even methods instructors to possess a Ph.D. While he still enjoyed teaching, he was exhausted and his classes were large. He had made the determination that he would like to do more writing and less teaching. Soon, Michener received an opportunity to transition into writing as a career, when in the spring of 1941, Macmillan Publishing sent a representative to Greeley in hopes of hiring a book editor for its textbook division. He offered Michener the position of senior associate editor at three times his college salary.[80] Michener accepted the position and in the summer of 1941 he moved to New York City to assume his new duties.

Michener continued to think of himself as a teacher throughout his writing career. In 1970, Michener wrote, "Today, I think of myself as a somewhat older social studies teacher, still preoccupied with the same problems that faced me thirty years ago."[81] In the same article, Michener described the advantages of his early training in the social studies for his later career as an author saying, "…and when I received my training in the subjects which comprised it I could not have known that I was absorbing material which would have relevance for the rest of my life, but it was the case."[82] Many of his subsequent writings dealt with topics that interest social studies teachers, such as geographic locales (as in Hawaii, Texas, Mexico, and Alaska) or historical developments (as in *Kent State: What Happened and Why*). Regarding the specific connection between writing and teaching, he said, "In fact, I think of my books as an extension of my early commitments; creative teaching expressed

in a different way."[83] In an even stronger statement, he says, "Every waking hour, I am conscious of the fact that I am a trained social-studies scholar."[84]

Michener was very comfortable, as an author, studying the communities and regions which were his subjects. He often moved to the areas about which he wrote. This comfort level began evolving in Greeley, Colorado, where Michener had continually made use of community surveys in his social studies classes. In an article in the 1938 Yearbook of the National Council for the social studies, he said, "We have conducted so many successful surveys that *we can now confine our activity to those surveys which the community itself has asked for*."[85] In his conclusion of this section of the article, he said, "When our school launches a survey commissioned by the community, a public meeting has already been arranged for."[86] Carrying the community engagement and survey technique forward to a summer institute he conducted for social studies teachers at Harvard, Michener said, "A course like this one would have to be very poor not to awaken teachers from the lethargy into which they often fall."[87] This experience of working with and studying communities during his educational career eased his transition into an observer of communities and regions as an author.

At Greeley, with his previously mentioned appointment to the publications committee of the National Council for the Social Studies, and his selection as its chair in 1940, he gained both national recognition as an educational scholar and excellent skills as an editor. His selection as a senior associate editor of Macmillan's textbook division would have been highly unlikely without the editing skills gained during his service on the publications committee of the National Council for the Social Studies. Michener once said that his years at Macmillan caused him to become "…one of the great rewriters…,"[88] a skill which surely contributed to his success as an author.

Writing for publication was an expectation of college faculty members, which led to Michener's involvement with the National Council for the Social Studies while at Greeley. This work improved his skills and opportunities in this area, and made Greeley a clear stepping stone from teacher to author for Michener. Thus his move to Colorado State College provided the impetus and inspiration to begin writing for an external audience, and ultimately, James Michener decided to switch to the role of writer as a career choice. This transition was clearly enhanced by his earlier writing opportunities, particularly those encouraged at the Colorado State College of Education.

The author would like to thank Kay Lowell, Archival Services Librarian; Shirley Soenksen, Library Technician II;, and Eve Measner, Library Technician II, all of the James Michener Library, for their invaluable assistance during the research on this paper.

Notes

[1] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 323-324.

[2] Marilyn S. Severson, *James A. Michener: A Critical Companion* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 6.

[3] Stephen J. May, *Michener, A Writer's Journey,* 323-324.

[4] Ibid., 324-326.

[5] Ibid., 327.

[6] Raymond Alles, interview by author, January 6, 2009.

[7] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 5.

[8] Ibid.

[9] A. Grove Day, *James Michener* (New York: Twayne, 1964), 17.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 7.

[12] Ibid., 8.

[13] Ibid., 8-9.

[14] Ibid., 14.

[15] James A. Michener, *The World Is My Home: A Memoir*, (New York: Random House, 1992), 117.

[16] Ibid., 118-119.

[17] Ibid., 120.

[18] Cleta M. Galvez-Hjornevik, *James A. Michener: Oral History No. 1,* December 6, 1983. Files of Cleta Galvez-Hjornevik, Austin, TX, 3.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "High School Students Organize For A Year," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), June 27, 1925.

[21] "Local High Ran Away From Ambler Players," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), January 3, 1925.

[22] "Good Shooting Eyes Lacked By Souderton," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), February 4, 1925.

[23] "Students Are Awarded Prizes for Six Essays," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), February 20, 1925.

[24] "Seniors Merrily Start Trip To Washington, D.C.," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), May 7, 1925.

[25] "Michener Won Prize," *Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), June 16, 1925.

[26] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 24.

[27] John Hayes, "James Michener," *Writer's Digest* (1972): 34-35.

[28] John P. Hayes, "James A. Michener," in *Conversations with Writers II*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli. (Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1978), 158.

[29] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 29.

[30] John Hayes, "James Michener," 46.

[31] Ibid.

[32] G.L. Dybwad and Joy Bliss, *James A. Michener: The Beginning Teacher and His Textbooks*, 48.

[33] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 30.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 31.

[36] James A. Michener, "Michener Remembers." In *The Hill School Bulletin*, vol. 58, no. 4. September 1981, 13.

[37] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 34.

[38] Cleta Maria Galvez-Hjornevik, "James A. Michener: Educator" (PhD diss., University of Texas Austin, 1984), 128.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 36.

[42] Ibid., 38.

[43] Cleta Maria Galvez-Hjornevik, "James A. Michener: Educator," 129.

[44] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 39.

[45] Cleta Maria Galvez-Hjornevik, "James A. Michener: Educator," 135.

[46] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 1, October 30, 1936, 3.

[47] Ibid.

[48] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 2, November 30, 1936, 2.

[49] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 3, December 4, 1936, 1.

[50] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 4, December 18, 1936, 4.

[51] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 10, April 23, 1937, 1.

[52] Cleta M. Galvez-Hjornevik. Imogene Hoff: Oral History: June 26, 1984. Telephone Conversation. Files of Cleta Galvez-Hjornevik, Austin, Texas.

[53] Cleta Maria Galvez-Hjornevik, "Michener: Educator," 140.

[54] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 3, no. 12, May 28, 1937, 2.

[55] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 2, November 11, 1938, 4.

[56] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 2, 1938, 4.

[57] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 4, no. 2, November 12, 1937, 3.

[58] Ibid.

[59] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 4, no. 13, March 20, 1938, 4.

[60] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 2, 1938, 4.

[61] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 8, February 10, 1939, 1.

[62] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 7, no. 3, November 20, 1940, 4.

[63] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 4, no. 3, November 24, 1937, 2.

[64] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 7, January 26, 1939, 4.

[65] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 8, February 10, 1939, 4.

[66] *College High Courier (Greeley, CO)*, vol. 5, no. 9, February 24, 1939, 4.

[67] James A. Michener, "Participation in Community Surveys As Social Education," National Council for the Social Studies, *Tenth Yearbook* (1938): 1-37.

[68] James A. Michener, "Music in the Social Studies," *The Social Studies* 28, no.1 (January 1937): 28-30.

[69] James A. Michener, "Bach and Sugar Beets," *The Music Educators Journal* 30 (September 1938): 29, 43.

[70] Ibid., 29.

[71] Ibid., 29.

[72] James A. Michener, "A Functional Social Studies Program," *Curriculum Journal*, vol. 9 (April 1938): 163-164.

[73] James A. Michener, "The Beginning Teacher," ed. Burr W. Phillips, National Council for the Social Studies, *Tenth Yearbook* (1938).

[74] James A. Michener, ed., *The Future of the Social Studies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1939).

[75] James A. Michener, "Discussion in the Schools." *Social Education* 4 (January 1940): 4-5.

[76] James A. Michener, "An Improved Unit Method," *Harvard Educational Review* 10 (March 1940): 211-224.

[77] Cleta Maria Galvez-Hjornevik, "Michener: Educator," 153.

[78] James A. Michener, "The Mature Social Studies Teacher," Social Educatoin 34, no. 7 (November 1970): 760-767.

[79] Ibid., 763.

[80] Stephen J. May, *Michener: A Writer's Journey*, 48.

[81] James A. Michener, "The Mature Social Studies Teacher," 760.

[82] Ibid., 761.

[83] Ibid., 763.

[84] Ibid., 764.

[85] James A. Michener, "Participation in the Social Studies as Social Education," National Council for the Social Studies, *Tenth Yearbook* (1938): 13.

[86] Ibid.

[87] James A. Michener, "Teachers in the Community," *The Social Studies* 32, no. 5 (May 1941): 220.

[88] James A. Michener, *The World Is My Home: A Memoir*, 311.

All in the Family or Whose Life Is It Anyway?
Challenges of Writing Narrative Educational Biography about a Relative

Elizabeth Sherwood

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Amy Freshwater

Southeast Missouri State University

We are two early childhood educators at work on a paper about kindergarten teacher Margaret Elizabeth (Betty) Kirby (1911 – 2005). We sift through the materials that document her career from 1933 to 1975. The several hundred primary source documents include photographs, teacher-developed curriculum plans, annotated textbooks and professional publications, anecdotal records, and notes from college classes. There are also personal materials including letters, family photographs, scrapbooks, travel diaries, and other memorabilia. They are vivid and rich resources for learning from the past. We read, we talk, we analyze and debate as we try to tease out just what Betty was like as a teacher and a woman. Even as we work our way through Betty's copious materials, we have differences in our perspectives. Our conversation sounds something like this:

Amy: She seems to have been so open-minded.
Elizabeth: That's not how I would describe her. She could, at times,

be really rigid in her views. She was generally conservative politically.
Amy: Maybe open-minded isn't the right descriptor. Curious – she seems to have stayed curious and interested in learning new things her whole life.
Elizabeth: Now that I'll give you. She truly was an educator who was a lifelong learner.

Amy has learned about Betty by exploring these materials. So has Elizabeth, but Elizabeth also learned about Betty by being her niece. Betty was Elizabeth's father's only sibling.

In this paper, we will explore challenges of biographical research about family members as well as the dimensions of insider/outsider knowledge in constructing educational narrative biography. Difficulties include questions about whether an ordinary family member can be of interest to the scholarly community, how to see the very familiar with new eyes, and how to construct a portrait of a family member that has value to an outside audience. In reflecting on the beginnings of our research about Betty Kirby, we have come to recognize that challenges of researching family members can be addressed by drawing on the knowledge of insiders – the family – and outsiders, those who are unrelated. We have applied strategies such as consulting with experts in the field, utilizing multiple sources of information, and collaborating with colleagues in our efforts to understand and learn from the complexities of another person's life.

The value of narrative educational biography lies in the purposeful nature of the work. The narrative should provoke thought about educational issues and provide interest and value for readers through its description of particular aspects of an individual's life. It is not intended to tell a life story from beginning to end.[1] While we were intrigued by the materials that provided a window to a classroom of the past, we questioned whether Betty's life as a teacher was one that would be of interest and value to the larger educational community.

Betty kept a record of her classroom practices with her kindergarten children for twenty-five years through photographs and curriculum notes. The photographs provide us with some insight into Betty's teaching. Many of her photographs depict children using large, wooden blocks to build stable, semi-permanent structures for classroom play. The blocks were designed in the early 1900's by Patty Smith Hill, a progressive era kindergarten educator. When Elizabeth first shared Betty's photographs of the children and their block structures with early childhood historians, she quickly discovered that her photographs were rare and highly prized within the profession.[2] We concluded that Betty's photographs were a worthy subject of research, but was she?

As we worked through the boxes of archival material, it became apparent that we had enough documentation to provide insight into one person's vision of kindergarten education in the early 1950's. We were intrigued by photographs of children's artwork associated with month-long teaching units. Paintings of trains showed a developmental progression as children constructed their knowledge of trains. They began with simple outlines of locomotives and advanced to highly detailed renditions of trains, tracks, and signals. As teacher educators, we wondered what our teacher candidates, who were in classrooms where a week on a given topic was the norm, would make of this outcome of a month of focused investigation of a single topic.

We looked at photographs that showed a serene classroom with walls decorated with children's artwork, large expanses of bare wall, and nothing hanging from the ceiling. We began to wonder if the cluttered and crowded classrooms of today where glossy, commercial posters and signs cover the walls and hang from the ceilings have contributed to the struggle with focus and attention some children have in classrooms.

We began to share the photographs with both undergraduate and graduate education students, as well as education professionals at conferences. This initial exposure was a straightforward sharing of photographs and quotes Betty had placed in an album for public viewing. Audiences both in and out of the classroom were intrigued and wanted to know more about Betty as a teacher and as a person. This would require a deeper analysis of her

materials, the context in which she lived, and the life that shaped her as a person. In writing a narrative biography of Betty, Elizabeth would also be writing a part of her own life story and that of her brothers. Amy did not have a personal relationship with Betty, but as the data gathering, interpreting, and reporting begin, her perspectives of Betty began to shift. She began to know Betty through her work and to admire her as an early childhood professional. She has the challenge of being an outsider and "knowing" another person well enough to write about her.

Words from Betty's notes on setting the stage for the train unit also set the stage for the journey we are now on. Betty wrote:

> We vote to take down a large house and garage of blocks so there will be more room to play train….Billy says, "How will we make it?" "We'll make it any way we want it," I answer. "Maybe we will even make signals and gates." "Yes" says Billy, "Gates. I made some with my erector set - that's going to be compalacated." The children begin to make crude trains out of the blocks and invite other children to ride in [them].[3]

We began the 'compalacated' process of deciding what and how much to tell of Betty's life, how to work our way through various signals and gates, and who to invite along with us on this journey.

Researcher-Subject Relationship

We approach our work with Betty clear on one point: there is no objective "truth" to be found. We are exploring multiple aspects of a complex life through the lenses of our own lives. In their discussion of life history work, Audra Cole and Gary Knowles note that when people study people, it is always, to some extent, autobiographical.[4] This is all the more true when the person being studied is a relative. Elizabeth's relationship with Betty was one of both love and tension. H. L. Goodall uses the term "narrative inheritance" to describe the family stories individuals use to contextualize our lives. He describes his narrative inheritance as one filled with deceptions and conflicts.[5] Betty's life is part of the narrative inheritance of Elizabeth and her four brothers. How would Elizabeth's narrative inheritance inform and/or interfere with constructing a narrative biography of her aunt?

While our research about Betty has not uncovered the kinds of conflicts or deceptions Goodall experienced in his family, accounts of family events and stories about Betty vary. People tell stories in context. A question, setting, or audience can shift the emphasis or the details shared. Memory is illusive and complex. Various descriptions of the same event exist in families, just as

they do in society as a whole. Baiba Bela describes a constructivist approach to oral history, contending that "reality is always socially constructed" and notes that "the understanding of the meanings attributed to facts is just as important as reaching for the knowledge of the 'facts' themselves."[6] For example, as we constructed an understanding of the influence of her travels on her teaching, different versions of the same stories emerged among family members. As our research proceeds to interviews with former students and colleagues, conflicting information may emerge about Betty as a person or about her teaching. We expect that multiple sources and conflicting information will push us to deepen our understanding of her life. Consensus is not the ultimate goal, since "the truth" may have many facets.[7] We offer our interpretations based on many factors including examination and analysis of the primary source materials, knowledge of the context of the times, and the memories of Betty's family members and others. At the same time, we are cognizant of the likelihood of other possible interpretations, including those made by an outsider. There is value in Elizabeth stepping back in an effort to see Betty as a stranger might and Amy trying to enter her world as a colleague. Using multiple approaches and having both Elizabeth and Amy involved in making decisions and suggestions based on the available data has the potential to enrich our understanding of the complexities of Betty's personal and professional life. It can allow us to go beyond what an insider or outsider working alone could achieve.

We are aware that much of Betty's archival material was self-edited. For example, she created an album of classroom photographs, along with quotes she selected to convey her philosophy of teaching to share with visitors to her classroom. She edited her legacy by what she chose to keep, by the stories she chose to tell. Her collection was edited again when she died. The family could not keep everything, so some books and papers were not saved. As researchers, we edit again when we choose which aspect of her life or work to investigate.

William Pinar and Anne Pautz caution that the autobiographic voice of the biographer "may overwhelm or distort [the] subject, through decisions of inclusion and exclusion, emphases and de-emphasis."[8] With this caution in mind, we go back and forth between archival material and conversation in an effort to build a balanced and representative portrayal that is anchored firmly in the data we have. At times, we immerse ourselves completely in Betty's world and try to see her practice through her eyes. At other times, we attempt a more neutral stance as we work to understand what the materials themselves convey about Betty and her work. In a sense, the three of us, Betty, Amy, and Elizabeth, are co-constructing a narrative educational biography of aspects of Betty as a teacher grounded in progressive education. Family letters, historical accounts, and other memorabilia flesh out Betty's edited mate-

rials with information selected by other individuals. In addition, our biographical research is informed by the memories Elizabeth and her brothers have of Betty and the stories of other people who knew her. There are also Amy's perceptions of Betty as she has come to know her in a way less encumbered by family interpretations of her persona than Elizabeth is.

We began grappling with how to share her legacy in an authentic way that would stimulate thought among educators, respect her gifts, and not romanticize her or her era into something that never was. We are just at the beginning of the work of examining her life, family history, archival materials, and the history of our shared field of early childhood education to discover details and intricacies of Betty's work with young children that would be meaningful to other educators.

Seeing with New Eyes

Families can be described as minicultures who "actively brainwash their young" into thinking their family's way is the right way to be.[9] In biographical research on a family member, there can be the traps of believing the family's way of thinking, reflexively rebelling against it, or missing aspects of a person's life because they are not visible through the lens of a relationship or shared history. When Elizabeth looks at Betty's materials, what she sees is colored by memory, emotion, personal and professional knowledge, and her roles as a niece, a member of the same profession, and a researcher. When Amy looks at the collection, what she sees is influenced by her understanding of child development, her background in art, and her investment in years of teaching, learning, advocating, researching, and writing about teachers and young children as an early childhood professional. Our various lenses combine to offer many ways to analyze and learn from the legacy of resources about Betty.

As is true of all individuals, Betty lived a complex and multi-faceted life. Our goal is to explore aspects of her life and teaching in all its richness and honestly report our findings. We were mindful of the challenge of organizing boxes of slides, letters, diaries, and other memorabilia to create a usable collection and aware of how easy it can be to get lost in "stuff." We were cautioned by Lou Smith's reflections on the differences between creating archival records and using such records for research.[10] As a result, we started with analyzing the material that was the most readily accessible. We have continued with organizing the additional materials as a separate task. We began with the idea that a multi-faceted approach to researching a multi-faceted life would be appropriate. We collected data in the following ways: analysis of Betty's writings and other texts of the same period, analysis of photographs, and research about kindergarten teaching practices of the time.

Beginning

The 1950s was the era we first explored with Betty. This was when she began teaching kindergarten in a newly built school. She created an album of photographs and detailed curriculum notes that documented the units of study throughout the school year. The material was well organized and of interest to us both. We began the construction of our understanding of Betty as a teacher by focusing on what we were curious about. We were intrigued by the previously mentioned block structures Betty and the children created with the Patty Smith Hill blocks. There were enormous ships and trains with accurate features. The planes and cars had workable moving parts. The blocks were held together through a system of slots and metal rods that made the structures stable enough to climb on. We wrote about the blocks and examined more photographs. Photographs of children's creations of trains and boats with paint, wood, and construction paper also intrigued us. Transportation was a common topic of study in kindergarten classrooms of the time, but Betty's classroom photographs and records seemed to hold much more substance than we saw in other documents from the period.

We began focusing our work on Betty's use of units of study on trains, boats, and airplanes because it was so thoroughly documented. She indicated, through her writing, that she wanted to be an expert on her topics of study with the children so that she could respond to their questions using correct and accurate terminology. Upon analysis of her curriculum notes, we marveled at her dedication to researching so carefully what she shared with her kindergarten children. We wrote:

> Betty's guidance in the construction of the Hill block trains drew the attention of the children to the details of components and working parts of the real trains they saw daily. Her planning notes include comprehensive lists of terms to be used in the classroom as she talked to the children about trains. For example, on one page she includes, under the heading "Information and Appreciations":
> A. Kinds of engines: switch, diesel, steam, electric, and the care of them at the round house
> B. Kinds of cars and their uses: freight; stock, oil tanker, gondola, flat, refrigerator, box, caboose
> C. Passenger: baggage, day coach, Pullman, vista dome, double decker, diner
> D. What the men do to run the trains: the engineer, the conductor, the brakeman, the fireman, the Pullman porter
> Vocabulary
> A. Steam engine: sand dome, steam dome, boiler, firebox, throttle,

cow catcher, cab tender, driving wheels, pilot wheels, water chute, hopper.[11]

We wondered if this kind of planning was typical of the times or unique to Betty. We turned to other texts from that period to begin to answer the question.

Deepening the Investigation

We began analyzing Betty's written documents and comparing them to the kindergarten discourse of her era to understand her place in the world of kindergarten education and to deepen our understanding of the intersection of her personal and professional life. We collected period books and other historic materials in order to gain an accurate understanding of Betty in the context of her time. Elizabeth had Betty's copy of the *Curriculum Records of the Children's School* from the National College of Education, printed in 1932, while Betty was in attendance there.[12] Margin notes and underlined text indicate what Betty regarded as important information – or perhaps what she needed to know for exams. Amy acquired her own copy that is signed by editor Clara Belle Baker and her colleagues and has a hand written invitation to a dinner and book signing (complete with the menu) tucked into the back of it in a tiny envelope.

We used both copies of this text to analyze what Betty was taught in her kindergarten teacher preparation program. Having a copy that is free of Betty's "interpretation" has allowed us to more clearly see the similarities and differences in Betty's enactment of the curriculum she experienced in college. For example, a photograph from the *Curriculum Records* of a large boat built with Hill blocks allows us to make some comparisons.[13] The authors suggest that teachers add a Union Jack, a captain's flag, maps, a pilot wheel, a lighthouse, a foghorn, and an individually made set of binoculars for each child. In the photograph, two children stand on a gangplank, one is in a wooden "tugboat" box at the ship's side, and the rest of the children are aboard, some in deck chairs. The boat itself is fairly simple compared to the boats in photographs of Betty's classroom constructions. Her photographs depict lifeboats that can be raised and lowered with pulleys, pilot houses, and children swabbing the deck or dressed up in fancy dramatic play clothes waving from the decks. The photographs indicate that she went far beyond what she was taught in her college classes. We speculated that this was, at least in part, due to her life long personal interest in travel.

Betty's notes tell us that she continued to gather accurate information about boats as she traveled, and incorporated what she learned into her kindergarten curriculum and the block structures from year to year. In our

analysis of the influence of travel on her teaching, we noted that

> a page of her travel diary includes notes on the detailed workings of the ship that could be applied to classroom activities with the concluding remark, "use pulleys." We can see from later classroom photos of children "loading cargo" onto a large classroom ship that pulleys were indeed incorporated into their play.[14]

In addition to collecting books and documents from the period when Betty was studying to be a teacher, Amy looked for curriculum materials that were commonly used in kindergarten classrooms during Betty's teaching career. She came across a book in her own collection of children's literature entitled *Boats on the River*, an award winning book published in 1947.[15] Amy showed the book to Elizabeth and suddenly we were in the midst of a dilemma – what counts as knowledge? Here is Elizabeth's account:

> Upon seeing the cover of the book, I immediately responded with the memory of seeing the book on the book case by the stairs in Aunt Betty's home. I remembered sitting on the bottom step and reading the children's books that were on the shelves nearby. It was something that I did every time I visited, even as an adult. This book about boats was on the shelves. It was a part of Aunt Betty's personal collection of books that she took to kindergarten to read to the children. I also remembered sitting in the same place years later reading the book to my son.

In addition, we had long been puzzled by the fact that the children's representations of boats as seen in her photographs were different from year to year with one exception. Every year, there were representations of boats with three long poles at each end. When we looked at the illustrations in *Boats on the River*, we saw what we thought was the answer to the puzzle. The children appeared to be replicating an illustration that showed a boat with three large cranes at each end. We speculate that Betty read this book to her kindergarteners. We don't have empirical data that says Betty owned the book. Although Elizabeth has a clear memory of the book, it is not among the books that she chose to keep when Betty died. Are Elizabeth's memory and the similarity between the children's representations and the book's illustrations sufficient to say that she owned the book and used it in her classroom?

As we begin to interview former students, we may find someone who remembers *Boats on the River* to provide more confirmation. Does it matter? Whether or not she owned this book is not particularly important to our research. What is important is the question it raised. What counts as knowl-

edge? Is Elizabeth's memory of the book or any other bit of information enough confirmation that something existed or occurred or is more needed?

> Again, Elizabeth reflects:
> Growing up as the only girl in the family, the only teacher in the family, and the family member who saw her most often in the last decade of her life meant that I often had conversations with Betty about teaching and about the family that were different from the conversations she had with other individuals. These conversations were not recorded and only a few were documented in any way. We've come to one of the convergence points of Betty's story and my own. If I were writing my own story, I could describe what I learned from her about story telling and classroom management. I could talk about how I learned to teach five-year-olds to wire a battery operated doorbell from my aunt and how she used it in her teaching.

> Amy reflects:
> If I were Betty's biographer and interviewed Elizabeth and her siblings, how would I handle the above information? I would probably note that Elizabeth was privy to information that her brothers didn't have. I would also look for similarities and differences between Elizabeth's experiences with her aunt and those of her brothers. As I interpreted what these individuals told me, I would think about what aspects of herself Betty shared and how it varied according to context, interests, or other factors. This is acceptable research methodology. How does this change when the subject of the interview is yourself?

Thus far, we've only published information that can be confirmed through additional sources such as written records or another person's account. "What counts as knowledge" is a complex subject that merits careful consideration and analysis as each issue arises.

Our work with Betty's archival material is just beginning. As we continue our biographical research, we will deepen our understanding of Betty by placing her work in the larger context of the kindergarten culture of her time. The comprehensive *History of Early Childhood Education* by Celia Lascarides and Blythe Hinitz provided solid foundational information for us.[16] A few additional books chronicle the history of kindergarten either through biographies of leading figures[17] or through the larger context of American educational trends.[18] A small body of less comprehensive works describes the changes in kindergarten since World War II.[19] We have begun to analyze these texts and Betty's documents for commonalities and differences in both

language and focus. James Gee's conception of discourse serves as a support for this analysis. He writes that discourse is

> a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and "artifacts," of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network," or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful role.[20]

If we compare the discourse used in professional writing of the period about kindergarten to the discourse used by Betty in her own writing about her teaching and her description of the district in which she taught, we can gain additional insight into common practice of the time and what was unique about Betty's work. Our initial focus has been how the role of the teacher is described and the meaning and purpose attributed to the children's work and play. Other themes will be pursued as they emerge.

Betty's documentation gives us a glimpse of how these roles played out in one person's classroom, in one person's life. While a study of Betty's professional practice represents a limited niche in American education—an all white, middle- to upper-middle class setting - it raises issues relevant to a wide range of children and settings. By exploring the words she used to describe her work, we may uncover assumptions about the values and meanings her words reflect and how those assumptions influenced her practice. By clarifying her assumptions and ours, we may be able to define any unspoken conflicts or contradictions. As we look at what Betty did and did not teach, at how her personal life influenced her classroom life, and her understanding of kindergarten children, we can prompt all educators to reflect on their own assumptions and practices.

Images as Texts

Betty's photographs carry with them an historical and cultural context and were selected with a particular purpose in mind – to showcase what she believed to be the best of her teaching. They are not a neutral record of her classroom practices. As researchers, we work to understand the stories they tell and perhaps the stories that are omitted. Creswell tells us that "participants share their perceptions of reality directly" when they look at photographed images.[21] Betty's photographs allow us to pause and reflect, to observe carefully the images before us, and through the lens of our own life experiences bring meaning to them.[22] In some photographs we see both boys and girls working with hammers and saws at the workbench and creating with paint and construction paper in the art area. In contrast, we find only

boys as engineers on the trains and only girls are shown arranging flowers. We wonder about Betty's ideas about gender roles. It will require more questions and additional analysis to come to some understanding of her views.

We observed that in photographs of the block constructions, the large boat and train block structures were fairly similar from year to year. On first seeing the similarities, Amy and another colleague, as outsiders, wondered if Betty simply taught the same material over and over again. Since Elizabeth remembered conversations with Betty about curriculum development and change, we turned to the photographs for a greater understanding. Close examination of the photographs showed that while the large block structures were similar, they weren't the same. From year to year, various detailed components appeared. For example, in one ship photo, there is a pulley system for loading cargo. Another year, propellers and anchors appeared. Yet another photograph shows life jackets and a gang plank. This seems to be evidence of Betty's comment quoted earlier: "we can make it any way we want."

When Amy did an extensive examination of the content of children's art related to the boat unit from several different years, she concluded that the children's paintings and cutouts showed enough variation to indicate the creative input of individuals and the uniqueness of their learning experiences. A similar analysis of train-related creations from the start to the end of the study indicate growth in knowledge and an increase in understanding of the discrete components of trains, tracks, and signals. The process of analyzing the photographs allowed Amy to step away from her emotional and aesthetic responses to the children's work and focus on the knowledge the work represented.

Other colleagues have wondered whether five year olds could produce such highly detailed work without explicit teacher direction. Amy looked at the complex and artistic expressions the children in early childhood programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy, create during their lengthy investigations of a topic. The refined detail in their work provides support for the notion that young children are capable of producing complex work independently.[23] Elizabeth, in turn, reflected on her own experiences of "doing art" with Aunt Betty. She recalled feelings of fun and excitement and "knowing that I could make anything I wanted to make" to try to get inside the experiences of children in Betty's class.

We also studied the photographs and related curriculum materials to understand the material culture of Betty's classroom. For example, Elizabeth remembers Betty telling her that the children made what they needed for their play and her photographs make it clear that they did. There is a control tower constructed of cardboard in one photograph. Another photograph shows a girl wearing a nurse's cap and a stethoscope, both made of construction paper, caring for a doll. Children's creations in paint, wood, clay, and

paper are displayed throughout the room. A few photographs show a bulletin board with photographs of airplanes, boats, or trains that are mounted low enough for children to be able to examine closely as part of their study.

The room is sparsely furnished with instructional materials by today's standards. Blocks, books, and art supplies were the core of her teaching tools. With them, she helped children create what they needed for play and learning. By getting on the floor and constructing complex block ships, trains and an array of other structures with them, Betty "speaks" about the place of children and the role of play and education in their lives. The way she presented her classroom materials, maintained her classroom space, and displayed children's work conveyed her view about children and what they were capable of doing.

Because we have both the photographs and her written descriptions of her teaching, we can reflect further on what Betty appeared to value in her work with children in terms of both content and teaching methods. Elizabeth also has the echoes of Betty's commentary about her teaching as another voice to add to the conversation. We have both been classroom teachers. Sharing the same profession gives us insight into Betty's world. That shared background may also lead us to make assumptions and errors or to not see things that might be apparent to someone outside the profession. Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin note that "autobiography is the telling of our history, while biography is someone else reconstructing an individual's past."[24] Our work with Betty is both – and it's "compalacated."

Notes

[1] Craig Kridel , "Biographical meanderings: Reflections and reminiscences on writing educational biography," *Vitae Scholasticae* 25 (2008): 5 – 16.

[2] Elizabeth Sherwood first shared Betty Kirby's photographs at the History Seminar at the National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference in Atlanta, GA in 2006 in a presentation entitled *Beyond Nostalgia: What can we learn from a 1950s kindergarten teacher about DAP, children as active builders and creators, and using aesthetics to support learning?*

[3] M. Elizabeth Kirby, Curriculum Notes, Margaret Elizabeth Kirby Papers, private collection.

[4] Audra L. Cole and J. Gary Knowles, Eds. *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2001), 10.

[5] H. L. Goodall, Jr., "Narrative Inheritance: A Nuclear Family with Toxic Secrets," *Qualitative Inquiry* 11 (2005): 492 – 513. http://qix.sagepub.com (accessed April 17, 2010).

[6] Baiba Bela, "Narrative and Reality," *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 13, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 26, 29. http://proxy.library.siue.edu:2080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=9&sid=46ad414a-472a-4dd0-a13a-851ddab5c143%40sessionmgr11 (accessed April 17, 2010).

[7] See *Ibid.* and Brian Roberts, *Biographical Research*. (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2002), 144 - 148 and Bela, 2007 for additional discussion of the role of memory and stories in biographical and historical research.

[8] William Pinar and Anne Pautz, "Construction Scars: Autobiographical Voice in Biography," In *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*, ed. Craig Kridel. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 67.

[9] Goodall, "Narrative Inheritance", 508.

[10] Louis M. Smith, "On Becoming an Archivist and a Biographer," In *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*, ed. Craig Kridel. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 166 – 167.

[11] Elizabeth A. Sherwood and Amy Freshwater, "Betty Kirby: Travels and Translations in the Kindergarten," *Educational Studies* 45 (2009): 470.

[12] Baker, Clara Belle and members of the staff. *Curriculum Records of the Children's School: National College of Education* (Evanston, IL: National College of Education, 1932).

[13] *Ibid*., 39.

[14] Sherwood and Freshwater, "Travels and Translations", 474 – 475.

[15] Marjorie Flack, *Boats on the River* (New York: Viking, 1947).

[16] W. Celia Lascarides and Blythe F. Hinitz, *History of Early Childhood Education* (New York: Falmer, 2000), 212 – 225, 235 – 293.

[17] Agnes Snyder, *Dauntless Women in Education: 1856-1931* (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education International, 1972).

[18] Michael S. Shapiro, *Child's Garden: The Kindergarten Movement from Froebel to Dewey* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press,1983).

[19] For more on the changes in kindergarten education following World War II see Donna M. Bryant and Richard M. Clifford, R. M.,"150 years of kindergarten: How far have we come?" *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 7 (1992): 147 – 154; James L. Hymes, Jr., *Early Childhood Education Twenty Years in Review: A Look at 1971-1990*. (Washington, D. C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991); and N. K. Webster, "The 5s and 6s Go to School, Revisited," *Childhood Education* 60, (1984): 325 – 330.

[20] James Gee, *Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (New York: Routledge, 1999): 131.

[21] John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, (3rd ed.) (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson, 2008), 232.

[22] For more information about analysis of photograph as related to education and children, see Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies : An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001); Janet Fink, "Inside a Hall of Mirrors: Residential Care and the Shifting Constructions of Childhood in Mid-twentieth-century Britain," *Paedagogica Historica* 44, no. 3 (June 2008): 287–307. http://www.informaworld.com (accessed April 18, 2010) and Linda M. Labbo, M. Kristina Montero, and A. Jonathon Eakle, Learning How to Read What's Displayed on School Hallway Walls — and What's Not. *Reading Online* 5, no. 3 (2001, October). http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit_index.asp?HREF=labbo/index.html (accessed May 2, 2010).

[23] For a sense of the work young children do in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, see for example, Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Foreman (Eds.), *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach Advanced Reflections*, (2nd ed.) (Westport, CT: Ablex, 1998) or Lella Gandini, Lynn Hill, Louis Caldwell, and Charles Schwall (Eds.), *In the Spirit of the Studio: Learning from the Atelier of Reggio Emilia*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005).

[24] F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988): 37.

Book Review:
Mikics, *Who Was Jacques Derrida?: An Intellectual Biography*

Sarah Winfield
University of Cambridge

David Miciks. *Who Was Jacques Derrida? An Intellectual Biography*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-300-11542-0. 273 pages.

Seldom has any name in the history of intellectual endeavour polarised and provoked to the degree that Jacques Derrida has. Since bursting onto the world stage in the latter part of the twentieth century, Derrida has probably generated more controversy than any other philosopher in living memory. As large in death, as in life, Derrida's name alone continues to send tidal waves across almost every area of humanistic scholarship and artistic activity, challenging norms and changing scripts. He is at once the subject of adulation and vituperation. Rarely is there a middle ground.

Yet still we might ask, *Who Was Jacques Derrida?* We know the name, but what of the man, and, moreover, the mind? David Mikics' 'intellectual biography' seeks to answer this very question by diachronically charting the evolution of Derrida's thought through a 250 page foray into selected published texts from the unfolding canon. The texts used are chosen for a purpose: to fit within an intellectual narrative, in which Derrida's own philosophy emerges in opposition to that of the theorists he addresses through the pages of his books.

From the outset, Mikics' objective is plain: to cut Derrida down to size by writing a "measured" appraisal of his work and intellectual legacy (1). The

strategy is simple, but effective. Starting with Husserl, Mikics provides a series of brief accounts of the key thinkers featured in Derrida's writings, comparing the original text with that of Derrida's own explication. On each occasion, and without exception, Mikics reports Derrida's deliberate misrepresentation of authorial intent in order that his own doctrines might take root and grow.

It is Mikics' contention that the seedling principle from which the Derridian lexicon would emerge can be traced back to his early preference for the work of Edmund Husserl over Jean-Paul Sartre. Husserl's dismissal of psychology appealed to Derrida in his pursuit of a truly impersonal theory, though in the course of time he too loses favour due to his perceived metaphysical blindness. Mikics thus asserts that Husserl's writings serve as the original stimulus for Derrida's doctrine that the world is fundamentally written, meaning is founded on *différance* and all absolutes are illusory. Derrida accuses Husserl, Rousseau, Freud and so many other intellectual forebears, of logocentricism, the chief symptom of which is an attachment to the ideal of certain truth which can never be realised in a world of constant ambiguity in which language reigns supreme.

In *Writing and Difference*, Derrida champions deconstructionism: the free play of the written word, detached from the centre, the logos. In this, he is said to set himself up in opposition to the structuralist paradigms of the previous generation and their perceived fetish for speech. Jabès and Lévinas alone receive Derrida's unadulterated adulation, which, according to Mikics, reveals a growing conflict between Derrida's religious and philosophical proclivities, pointing an implicit ethical demand connected to Judaism in the deconstructionist project.

Having decoded the work of so many of history's greatest thinkers to expose their logocentric bias, Mikics discerns a shift in the 70s as Derrida becomes preoccupied with his second core theme: resistance to psychology. In order to invalidate the psychological emphasis of philosophy, Derrida analyses a series of key texts from Plato to Austin. In each case, Mikics charges Derrida with the deliberate perversion of textual content in order to underline the eternal flux of meaning and perceived heresy of the psyche.

However, according to Mikics, all Derrida's credibility in this respect was lost during an episode in the 80s in which Derrida's ill-advised defence of his close friend, the former Nazi sympathizer, Paul de Man, demonstrated the impossibility of avoiding the myth of the self as well as highlighting the perils of the deconstructionist method. Such pervasive scepticism relieves us of responsibility for our words and deeds, denying us the ability to judge others and ourselves (210). Mikics states that in this respect deconstructionism is instructive because it demonstrates the incompatibility between the limitless meanings and textual abstractions advocated by Derrida and a society

characterised by human dignity and ethical responsibility. The ultimate lesson, then, concerns the "self-imposed limits of philosophy" and the necessity of the psychological perspective (1).

According to Mikics, the last stage of Derrida's career should be seen as his attempt to disentangle himself from the "airless unproductive paradox" he had generated through the waging of a relentless war between "metaphysical assertion" and "deconstructive doubt" (245). The turn to ethics and politics in the final chapter of Derrida's life can thus be seen as a response to this as well as a last ditch attempt to rescue his reputation and reclaim his place at the heart of the academy. At this point, a brief glimpse into the life of Derrida the man is given, a portrait which appears as endearing as it is enigmatic, leaving the reader yearning for more.

No doubt it is a product of Mikics' chosen genre that the narrative should focus exclusively on the mind of Derrida, at the expense of the man. Occasional references are made to significant events in Derrida's life but there is no discussion of the type of person Derrida was or what he was trying to achieve. Instead, Mikics works through Derrida's voluminous published works, cross referencing his findings with parallel texts. Yet, at times, in trying to dethrone Derrida's exposition of key philosophers, Mikics devotes more space to other philosophers' writings than he does to Derrida's own. Derridean concepts receive little explication, and, on occasion, the book seems more about the author's own worldview than that of Derrida himself.

Nevertheless, Mikics' account is very insightful and highly readable, steering an admirable course between reverence and outright rejection. Parallel biographies include Jason Powell's more detailed, neutral account, and Geoffrey Bennington's post-structuralist dialogue, co-authored by Derrida himself. In contrast, Mikics' biography is written from an outsider's perspective, by one who is not of the deconstructionist school but is not afraid to challenge its founder.

Yet the question remains, *Who Was Jacques Derrida*? The "abstruse theorist" of his *New York Times* obituary, or the greatest luminary of the 'postist' era (244)? Mikics' answer is neither: "his thought was neither as world changing as his disciples claimed nor as dangerous (or absurd) as his critics suspected" (1). Derrida, the man, however, remains elusive, leaving the reader to speculate.

Book Review:
Hunter, *Boyle: Between God and Science*

Margaret McNay
The University of Western Ontario

Michael Hunter. *Boyle: Between God and Science*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-300-12381-4. 366 pages.

When Robert Boyle was born in 1627, the English Renaissance had crested; art, literature, intellectual life, and English society would, after the rich developments of the 16th century, never be the same. The 17th century, though, would also be a century of enormous intellectual development—it would be the century of science.

In the world into which Robert Boyle was born, Galileo, Descartes, Johannes Kepler, and William Harvey were preparing to publish the great works that would help to change how people studied, reasoned about, and understood the natural world. Francis Bacon had died the year before, and Robert Hooke and Antonie van Leeuwenhoek would be born a few years later. Isaac Newton would be born while the 15 year old Boyle was making his Grand Tour of Europe. We look back on these men and their works, and the 17th century, as marking, if I may be permitted the cliché, the dawn of modern science, in terms both of discoveries and of ways of thinking about the natural world.

Little wonder 17th century England has interested historians such as Michael Hunter. Director of the Robert Boyle Project at Birkbeck College, University of London, Hunter has devoted much of his academic life to editing Boyle's works, correspondence, and diaries, and to cataloguing the man-

uscripts, notebooks, drafts, letters, memoranda, and miscellaneous material bequeathed by Boyle to the Royal Society in London, of which he was a founder. For *Boyle: Between God and Science*, Hunter draws on this "vast resource"[1] of primary documents as well as on numerous secondary sources including earlier attempts at a Boyle biography. And he documents them meticulously. Of the book's 366 pages, almost a third comprise a bibliographical essay, end notes, and index. The book contains 46 plates, including several likenesses of Boyle, drawings of his famous vacuum pump and other pieces of equipment, figures from his notebooks, portraits of his contemporaries, and other illustrations which enrich the text and its content.

Readers will remember the name of the 'chymist' Robert Boyle from high school science classes where he was often touted as the Father of Chemistry; they may even remember Boyle's Law as one of several laws that describe the behaviour of gases. Boyle had observed that air has a "spring" to it—that it can be compressed, and that it exerts pressure. Boyle was not the first to describe a relationship between the pressure and volume of a gas, but—and this is the important point—he was the first to publish *empirical evidence* of the phenomenon. (The evidence appears to have been provided by the work of Boyle's assistant, Robert Hooke, but Boyle helped to ensure his own place in history by being the first to publish the findings.) Indeed, Boyle's contribution to the enormous development of science that took place in the 17th century lies not so much in his elucidation of the properties of air, or even in the entire corpus of his wide-ranging studies of colour, cold, hydrostatics, chemical analysis, and medicine; his contribution lies in his rigorous use of controlled experiments to study natural phenomena and in his meticulous documentation of those experiments. Bacon had written about the need for an inductive science; Boyle *practiced* it and published it.

Hunter is concerned not simply to know *about* Robert Boyle but to *understand* him, and therefore pays significant attention to major aspects of Boyle's life beyond his interest in experimentation, in particular his religious faith and his interest in moral philosophy. We learn that Boyle was a devoted Christian and that his interest in natural philosophy and experiment was developed as one way of, perhaps, proving the truth of the Gospels. Thus he stood, as the book's subtitle points out, "between God and science"—in a place where each was compatible with the other, and both essential to being.

Born into great wealth, the youngest son of the Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, Boyle lived in England for most of his life, supported by his family's Irish landholdings, but he appears to have been a tortured soul. He suffered a stutter acquired in childhood, perhaps owing in part to a beloved but demanding father and to his mother's death when he was three. "Melancholy" and uncontrollable "ravings" tormented him. (Hunter wonders if Boyle was mildly autistic, but surely bipolar disorder is a more likely diag-

nosis.) Boyle's religious beliefs seemed to afford him little peace; rather he was riddled with doubts, fears, and moral uncertainty. He practiced casuistry, the "detailed, almost forensic [and, in Boyle's case, apparently obsessive] examination"[2] of the moral and ethical implications of specific actions. By the time he was twenty, he had decided on a life of celibacy, later writing his first book on *Some Motives or Incentives to the Love of God*, and living in London with his sister for his last 23 years. He was deeply interested in alchemy and magic, and was gullible enough to be taken in by charlatans and swindlers. On the other hand, he was exceedingly cautious in drawing conclusions from his experiments, and given to equivocation, circumlocution, and tortuous reasoning in writing and speaking.

In the end, I have mixed feelings about *Boyle: Between God and Science*. I learned a great deal about Boyle and his life and times, and acquired a new appreciation for the 17th century and for Boyle's contribution to the birth of modern science. I am in awe of the depth and detail of Hunter's scholarship, which is certainly an outstanding resource for scholars. Yet for lay readers—and by that I mean readers such as I who may have a background and an interest in science, biography, or history, or all three, but who are not historians—the density of detail and documentation in the book is its downfall. The very feature that makes it useful to scholars makes it mind-boggling for laypersons, and I confess to sharing Brian Clegg's[3] disappointment at finding *Boyle: Between God and Science* such a painstakingly detailed "historian's biography"—just the facts, ma'am, *all* the facts, and in chronological order—rather than a more readable and engaging account, a more accessible, perhaps thematic, narrative that would have given me the image and understanding of Boyle that was Hunter's goal. As it is, I had to dig for it—by reading a good part of the book a second time, using the (excellent) index to find all the scattered references to particular topics such as Boyle's casuistry, and consulting other writings about Boyle, including Hunter's earlier book, *Robert Boyle (1627-91): Scrupulosity and Science*,[4] and his edited collection of papers, "Psychoanalysing Robert Boyle."[5]

Michael Hunter is without doubt the world's reigning expert on Robert Boyle. Perhaps no single person has ever known, or ever again will know, so much about him. Although *Boyle: Between God and Science* largely fails to capture the imagination or to retain the interest of the layperson, it seems to this reader at least a remarkable accomplishment.

Notes

[1] Michael Hunter. *Boyle: Between God and Science*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. p. 259.

[2] Michael Hunter. *Boyle: Between God and Science*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. p. 99.

[3] Brian,Clegg, Review - *Boyle: Between God and Science* - Michael Hunter. Retrieved on March 21 from http://www.popularscience.co.uk/reviews/rev497.htm

[4] Michael Hunter, *Robert Boyle (1627-91): Scrupulosity and Science* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2000).

[5] Michael Hunter, "Psychoanalysing Robert Boyle," Special issue of *British Journal for the History of Science, 32* (1999), 257-324.

Membership Form:
International Society for Educational Biography

Members of the International Society for Educational Biography receive current issues of ***Vitae Scholasticae*** as part of their membership benefits. Member dues are $75 per year. Please use the form below to join:

ISEB Membership Form:

Name_____

Institution_____

Address_____

City, State, ZIP, Country_____

Please send with your $75 check payable to ISEB to:

Lora Helvie-Mason, ISEB Treasurer
1907 Illinois Ave.
Kenner, LA 70062

Subscribe
To *Vitae Scholasticae*

❑ Please enter my subscription
for the next year of ***Vitae Scholasticae***

Name _____

Institution _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip, Country _____

_____

Type of subscription:
❑ Individual subscription ($50 per year)
❑ Institutional subscription ($100 per year)
❑ Add $40 if outside the United States

Method of payment:
❑ Check enclosed payable to International Society for Educational Biography
❑ Money order enclosed payable to International Society for Educational Biography

Mail completed form to:

Professor Linda C. Morice
Department of Educational Leadership, Campus Box 1125
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1125 USA
Telephone: 618-650-3278; Fax: 618-650-3808; Email: lmorice@siue.edu

Contributing Authors

Edward A. Janak is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Wyoming (U.S.A.).

Gera Burton is associate director of the Center for Distance and Independent Learning at the University of Missouri (U.S.A.).

John W. Hunt is an assistant professor of educational administration at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (U.S.A.).

Elizabeth Sherwood is an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (U.S.A.).

Amy Freshwater is an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary, Early and Special Education at Southeast Missouri State University (U.S.A.).

Sarah Winfield is a doctoral candidate at the University of Cambridge (U.K.).

Margaret McNay is associate dean of undergraduate and preservice programs at the University of Western Ontario (Canada).

Vitae Scholasticae

Information for Contributors

Vitae Scholasticae welcomes manuscripts dealing with all aspects of educational biography. The 15th edition of *A Manual of Style* from the University of Chicago Press is the final authority for most questions of style and structure. Manuscripts should be submitted via e-mail with author identification on the cover page only; the text of the manuscript should be in Microsoft Word.

For more information about *Vitae Scholasticae* visit the International Society for Educational Biography website at www.isebio.org or contact:

Professor Linda C. Morice
Department of Educational Leadership
Campus Box 1125
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1125, U.S.A.

Electronic submissions should be directed to: **lmorice@siue.edu**

All statements of fact or points of view in articles are the responsibility of authors and do not represent any official position of the International Society for Educational Biography or *Vitae Scholasticae*.

International Society for Educational Biography

Membership in the International Society for Educational Biography is open to anyone interested in educational biography. Dues are $75 per year, which includes issues of *Vitae Scholasticae*. See membership form on page 83.