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March 2001: A Gossamer of Light

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Focus

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A Gossamer of light

De mortuis, nil nisi bonum, the saying has it. Of the deceased, say nothing but good. I suppose the warning is to remember one's own mortality and so turn the other cheek. As I sat down to write this tribute to Peggy O. Crouch, I needed no warning. About her, only good can be said.

It's hard to know where to begin when speaking of another's passing. Donne strikes me as the right place to begin. In addition to being perfectly balanced in his approach, he offers a most apposite metaphor: "All mankind is of one author, and is one volume. When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice. But God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another." Peggy's life was not torn from us so much as it has been

translated into a purer, finer language than before.

Peggy's earthly translation was, however one looks at it, unparalleled. But then, Peggy herself was a woman without equal for those of us who knew her well. Pascal is right: "The strength of a [woman's] virtue must not be measured by [her] occasional efforts, but by [her] ordinary life."

Peggy's virtue lay most expressly in her everyday life for she was never any different then than at any other time. She always treated everyone with kindness and light. I'll never forget my arrival here in July 1999. As with all such changes, much nervousness abounded. Naturally, the unknown quantity had arrived (me), and Dacus faculty and staff really did not know what exactly to expect. At any rate, my first day here could easily have been fraught with difficulty. Peggy would have none of it. She knew no strangers.

From the beginning, she took me in as if I had worked here for years. She showed me around

the building, explained office procedures up to that moment, and then encouraged me to make any changes I saw fit.

I was part of the Winthrop family now and she made certain my welcome was warm, heartfelt, upbeat.

That was Peggy's way with everyone. Time and again correspondents have remarked in conversation or by letter about Peggy's pleasantness, charm, grace.

"Some in sickness," Donne writes. Peggy certainly knew illness, not just in passing, as most of us do, but continually, incessantly. Characteristically Peggy, however, it was nearly a week or more before I learned about her heart transplant, followed by a kidney transplant, followed by dialysis. Slowly, it all began to unfold. Peggy drove to Charlotte three

Peggy's virtue lay most expressly in her everyday life.

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Gossamer

days a week for dialysis, remaining there until late at night, then returning to her home in Chester. She scheduled her visits *after* work for she would allow nothing to interfere with work. Rarely did her late night visits mean she would not be at her desk bright and early the next day.

Her many health trials never interfered with work. Nothing about her illness got in the way of her zeal for life. Peggy took handfuls of pills each day, one to help with this or that difficulty, another to counteract the difficulty created by taking the first. All of this she did without so much as a sigh of discomfort. Clearly there were days when she made it to work with great difficulty. But you never knew it from her. And if you inquired about how she felt the answer was always the same: great, just great.

At least a dozen times since I arrived, Peggy had to make an emergency visit to dialysis, usually on a Monday, owing to some problem that had occurred over the weekend. Always she was apolo-

getic, and always she would make up her missed work hours. Never did she ask me for any special treatment because of her sickness.

I think what amazes me about her (and from what I can tell was her everlasting attribute) is her refusal to give in, to complain.

Last summer, for example, she had a great deal of physical trouble. Twelve years after receiving a heart transplant, she began to slide into rejection. Several hospitalizations resulted in the installation of a pacemaker. Last fall, she had to make more than the usual number of visits to the doctor for her *routine* heart tissue biopsies. When I commented on how sorry I was she was having so much trouble, she quickly and emphatically reminded me just how happy she was to be alive. It seems her favorite series of phrases were, "I love work, I love working here. I'm so glad to have the chance."

Peggy astounded me for a number of reasons, not the least of which was her excitement about the

commonplace, her exuberance about each day. Here was a woman who had every reason to fret over her life, to rail against its unfairness. She had been dealt more bad cards than any one person should have been. She had every reason to demand special treatment, to require special consideration, to shout for special favors. She wanted none. She asked for nothing but gave everything: a smile, some hilarious comment, her delight in life. If ever the phrase, *joie de vivre*, described anyone, it described Peggy Crouch.

Somewhere in Spender there are lines that ring so true of Peggy I can't help but think of them here. It strikes me as an apposite epitaph for all who knew her:

"Born of the sun [she] travelled a short while towards the sun
And left the vivid air signed with [her] honour."

Requiescat in pace

Mark Y. Herring
Dean of Library Services

Tour the library with Little Stuff

If it's been awhile since you were in Dacus Library, you may not know about the new virtual tour. To help students learn about the library, and to acquaint anyone who would like to feel more comfortable and competent using the resources, the library created a virtual tour.

The tour "walks" the patron through the library, stopping along the way to explain DOC (Dacus Online Catalog), key reference points, and other useful facts.

Your tour guide is a miniature version of the university mascot BigStuff. Little Stuff "flies" around

the building identifying locations and providing explanations.

Little Stuff debuted in the fall semester. Since then hundreds of Winthrop patrons have learned about the library from him. You can do the same by taking the virtual tour. It can be accessed from both on and off campus by logging onto www.winthrop.edu/dacus.edu and choosing Dacus Library Virtual Tour from a box in the lower right corner.

Lois Walker
Head of Government Documents



Little Stuff conducts students on a virtual tour of the library. You can take the tour from the comfort of your home.

Focus

Baseball fan has Hall of Fame summer

It is not often that one finds one's professional skills so nicely dovetailing with one's obsession. Such an opportunity occurred for me this past summer when I was granted a one-month internship to work in the research department of the National Baseball Hall of Fame Museum and Library in Cooperstown, New York.

Anyone who knows me knows that I live and breathe baseball.

The calendar for me is divided into two seasons: baseball and deep winter depression. So when in the fall of 1999 a colleague informed of the internship program at the Hall of Fame, I hesitated not a nanosecond in applying. The most agonizing thing was waiting several months before learning whether I had been accepted. Finally in the early spring of 2000 I received a call from my future supervisor informing me that I was accepted into the program. Through the support of the Dacus Library administration and my reference colleagues, I was able to spend the month of July in working in Cooperstown. It was the experience of a lifetime.

I began work on July 3, 2000, and was immediately stationed at the library's reference desk. This would serve as my base of operation for the next four weeks. The reference department handles hundreds of questions weekly, including walk-in, phone, and mail. The library maintains extensive book, photo, and clipping resources that cover all aspects of baseball. All are available for use by anyone.

I never knew who would phone or come in. It could be a group of guys calling from a bar in Cincinnati to settle a bet or a reporter from a major newspaper needing information.

Or it could be a former player or his descendants asking for information on his career. I assisted minor leaguers, major leaguers, former members of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League, coaches, trainers, and the general public.

One day I answered the phone and the person on the other end was Jim Bouton, former Yankees pitching great and author of the notorious *Ball Four*, the book that started the trend of tell-all player confessionals.

On my second to last day, I walked Hall-of-Fame pitcher Warren Sphan and his family. I assisted him by pulling his photo files for him to view. Whether helping the great, near-great, or just ordinary folks, it was a thrill to be so immersed in the world of baseball.

My final week in Cooperstown concluded with assisting at the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. Whether serving at a

public information booth in the Hall itself, taking tickets from those attending, or handing out water to the assembled multitudes, I enjoyed every minute of it.

I even got to go on stage during the ceremonies to help set up the stand that held the Hall of Fame player plaques. I was surrounded by the heroes of my childhood - Mays, Koufax, Feller, Killebrew and dozens of others- all the greats of the game. Talk about nirvana!

So, the next time someone asks me how I spent my summer vacation, I've got quite a tale to tell.

Bob Gorman
Head of Reference Services



The game of baseball has always been linked in my mind with the mystic texture of childhood, with the sounds and smells of summer nights and with the memories of my father.

Doris Kearns Goodwin

Focus

Portrait artist mystery solved

Nothing in life is more intriguing than a mystery. Dacus Library had its own mystery in trying to determine who painted a portrait which hangs in the library.

The portrait of Ida Jane Dacus, for whom the library is named, has graced the stairwell for many years. A generation of students going up to the second floor passed the picture. No one ever investigated who painted the picture until the Friends of the Library began preparing for a reception for Judge Jane Fender to be held in January 2001. Judge Fender was presenting the Friends of the Library with a second oil painting of her great aunt Ida Jane Dacus.

The artist who created the black-and-white

sketch of Miss Dacus and the newly-donated oil portrait was the same person. The signature “Jimmie Rawls” was clearly legible on both.

Dorothy Medlin, professor emerita of French and a staunch Friends of the Library supporter, set out to learn more about the artist. She asked retirees and faculty still on campus. When she came up empty-handed, she called and wrote to alumnae who might know the artist’s identity. When that failed, she searched the Internet. At that point she was still trying to determine whether Jimmie Rawls was a man or a woman. Again, she had no luck.

Determination fueled her desire to “get to the bottom” of the mystery. She had hoped to have the

information in hand to share with those at the reception. Instead she told her quest to find information to those present at the reception. No one knew the answer, but many were curious. Her tale added to the discussion as others shared their memories of Ida Jane and her days at Winthrop.

The mystery remained unsolved so Dr. Medlin took a long shot and contacted Webb Art Store in Columbia, South Carolina. Their name was on the back of the frame but since the picture was framed over 50 years ago, there seemed little likelihood they could help.

Surprisingly, the shop was still in existence. Even more surprising, the name had expanded to include the name Rawls. Webb-Rawls Galleries

and Fine Framing had branches throughout the city. Dr. Medlin called the Five Points store and an employee promised to investigate. The employee soon called back to say that Mr. Jimmie Rawls had been a portrait artist. He and his brother merged their business with Webb Art. Although Mr. Rawls died in the 1970s, the mystery, was solved.

Claire Clemens
Head of Bibliographic Instruction



Ida Jane Dacus