

Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2003



Faculty Meeting
April the Twenty-Fifth
Two Thousand and Three

BE IT RESOLVED: The faculty of Skidmore College expresses its profound appreciation and admiration for the following members of the Skidmore faculty who have this year expressed their determination to retire. The faculty further resolves that the following biographical highlights be included in the minutes of the faculty meeting of April 25, 2003 — as recognition and celebration of distinguished service and achievement.

Barry Goldensohn came to Skidmore College in 1982 with many years of experience in “alternative” education, first at Goddard College and later at Hampshire College, where he was dean of the School of Humanities and Arts. For twenty years now his alternative vision has enlivened the conversation and stretched the imagination of both students and faculty at Skidmore, while the embodiment of that vision in utterly distinctive poems has won praise from some of the most demanding critics, especially those who are themselves poets. As teacher, poet, and scholar, Barry has received awards from the Vermont Council for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the MacDowell Colony, the Djerassi Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Barry’s poems have been collected in three volumes: *Saint Venus Eve* (Cummington Press, 1972); *Un carving the Block* (Vermont Crossroads Press, 1978); and *The Marrano* (National Poetry Foundation, 1988). Through association with the Cummington Press, publisher of his first collection and of two later chapbooks, *Dance Music* (1992) and *East Long Pond* (1997), Barry enjoyed the sponsorship of Harry Duncan, esteemed as “the father of the post-World War II private-press movement.” Other discerning eyes have selected Barry’s work for publication in nine anthologies and numerous periodicals of the first rank, such as *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Yale Review*, *Southern Review*, *Harvard Review*, and of course, Skidmore’s own *Salmagundi*. In addition, Barry has published essays and criticism in *Salmagundi*, *American Poetry Review*, *Yale Review*, *Parnassus*, *Agenda* (London), and in the standard reference series *Contemporary Poets*. “Poetry is wonderfully diverse,” Barry stated in a recent essay, and to read over the diversity of Barry’s writing is to

engage in the process of “Rediscovering Wonder,” as he calls it in the title of a recent poem.

Similarly diverse and equally wonderful is the range of lessons Barry has offered in his courses. In Barry’s poetry writing workshops, students have recognized lessons they can apply to writing in general; even more important, they have learned to recognize themselves with deeper understanding and increased confidence. In Barry’s literature courses, students have discovered a cultural heritage extending beyond the confines of literature — including, for instance, the Christian iconography that the rabbi in Barry takes ironic delight in introducing as essential context for reading 17th-century authors. The spirit of wit as well as the love of learning with which Barry inspires students was captured in one course evaluation that described the professor as “a funny man, sometimes on cloud nine, but he rains brilliance.”

Barry has served the English Department for many years as director of creative writing, but that formal title cannot capture the spirit in which he has devoted himself to developing a community of writers among faculty and students. In addition to reading his own work, he has arranged numerous readings by visiting writers and encouraged student readings. Typically, these events have been capped by lively receptions held at the home of Barry and his wife, Lorrie, also a distinguished poet and critic. For our most talented students, Barry has served as a beloved mentor, patiently nurturing their progress as undergraduates and opening doors to graduate study by calling on his extensive network of fellow writers, as well as on his own experience teaching in the famous workshops at the University of Iowa. A student whom Barry has launched on such a career can be sure that Barry will keep in touch, taking

great pride in his former student's accomplishments. Now, as Barry at last approaches his graduation, his colleagues look forward to keeping in touch with him. We know that he will continue to make us proud.

Loretta Parsons came to Skidmore in 1973 as a teaching associate in the Department of Biology. She earned her B.A. in biology from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota, and her M.S. in physiology from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Ohio.

Loretta's training in anatomy, physiology, and medical science provides a metaphor for her career in the department. She has provided key support for the organization, communication, integration, coordination, homeostasis, structure, function, and health of the Department of Biology for thirty years. Loretta has taught labs and lectures for Anatomy and Physiology in Skidmore's former nursing program, and for Principles of Biology, Comparative Vertebrate Physiology, Cell and Molecular Biology, Biology of the Mind, Biology of Microorganisms, The Human Organism, and Introductory Botany. She was the department's first teaching associate to be promoted to the senior teaching associate rank.

Loretta's contributions include a leading role in support of and responsibility for safety training and compliance as the department's safety officer and representative on the College's Safety in the Workplace Committee. She was also a leader of the Phi Beta Kappa Members-in-Course Committee, organizer of the department's decade-long, annual Biochallenge Games tradition, organizer of BioCareer Day, and liaison with the Center for Talented Youth Program. She has maintained all the department's teaching microscopes and was the key organizer of every celebration and social occasion in the department over the past three decades (except for her own retirement celebration).

Loretta's professional contributions also include writing questions for national standardized science exams, reviewing textbooks, and training and cross-training across the discipline to keep up with new developments in her main field and acquire new skills needed by the department. These specialties include conferences and workshops on pedagogy, information technology, molecular genetics, biological clocks, and microbiology. Loretta's dedication to teaching and to the department is evident in the way she has used professional development — combined with impressive breadth

and depth of training and experience — to contribute integrally to curriculum design and development in laboratory instruction in most of the courses she has helped to teach.

Loretta's most significant contributions to Skidmore transcend individual courses and committees. She has been a constant voice of wisdom and perspective in department meetings and discussions on issues of pedagogy, policy, curriculum, administration, and procedure. She has also provided quiet, timely, and immensely valuable support for every new faculty member, teaching associate, and department chair, as well as for generations of students at every level of career development.

Nobody has taught in more courses across the biology curriculum than Loretta, and thousands of students have benefited from her expertise, skill, intelligence, and patience as a teacher. Loretta focuses on teaching students to answer their own questions, whether through experimentation or Socratic dialogue. She expects students at every level to go beyond memorization and technique and to focus more deeply on analysis, synthesis, and understanding.

Loretta has always done two jobs in Skidmore's Department of Biology: the job she was hired to do as a teacher, and all the contributions that are "above and beyond" what is required. Loretta does what is needed: extra untold hours running, organizing, fixing, finding, prodding, supporting, facilitating, being there, taking initiative, providing encouragement, and quietly playing a key role in keeping things running smoothly without official recognition. Many important and valuable things would not have happened at Skidmore and in the lives of many Skidmore students and employees without her.

We recognize, congratulate, thank, and honor Loretta for her immense contributions to Skidmore, and wish her well as she moves on to new challenges and rewards.

Lawrence R. Ries came to Skidmore in 1979 as an academic advisor in the University Without Walls prison program. Having earned his master's and doctoral degrees in English from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Larry held prior teaching and administrative posts at the University at Albany, State University of New York; Southern Illinois University; and Notre Dame International School, Rome, Italy. In less than two years, Larry was appointed coordinator and HEOP director of the Inmate Higher Education Program, building its academic reputation and involving

many new and tenured Skidmore faculty in this unusual teaching environment. Larry encouraged faculty to experiment with new materials and pedagogies in the Great Meadow classrooms, thus providing the Skidmore campus with the seeds for courses that were eventually incorporated into the College's residential curriculum.

In 1985 Larry became the assistant director of UWW. As UWW expanded both its regular and prison student populations, Larry continued to provide strong leadership to a growing staff of academic advisors and support staff.

Larry leaves as his primary legacy to Skidmore the creation and development of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies. In the late 1980s Larry became increasingly convinced that Special Programs was an ideal platform from which to launch Skidmore's only graduate program, a program that would draw on the College's unique strengths: a faculty highly committed to interdisciplinary liberal arts learning through its development of the Liberal Studies curriculum, a successful external adult baccalaureate degree program, and a philosophical commitment to nurture innovative educational programs. With a dedicated group of administrators and faculty, Larry laid the groundwork with the State Education Department and the College, and in June 1992, he became the first director of MALS. He successfully developed all aspects of the program – its policies, procedures, budget, and publications. In the fall of 1995 he successfully guided the MALS program through Middle States, New York State Education Department, and CEPP reviews.

During the spring of 1994 Larry served as acting dean of Special Programs. His leadership was also acknowledged at the national level in 1996, when under his guidance the MALS program obtained full membership in the graduate liberal studies professional organization, the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs, along with schools like Duke, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, and Oxford (UK).

Larry's membership on the Presidential Task Force

on Governance, the Middle States Steering Committee as well as the UWW and MALS faculty committees is a testament to his commitment to community service. He also turned his considerable energies to the larger Skidmore community when he chaired the Post-Retirement Benefit Committee in 1990-91. Larry was tireless and instrumental in wading through the mire of actuarial tables to make sense of FASB.

After leaving full-time administration and moving into phased employment, Larry returned to the classroom. Joanna Zangrando, director of Liberal Studies, welcomed Larry, with his wide range of interests and delight in ideas. His classical education, his travels and life abroad, and his love of languages and cultures provided a vibrant palette from which he enhanced readings and discussions. Joanna remembers enjoying the walk across campus with Larry after LS lectures: "His insights, responses, and questions were incredibly stimulating. Larry is a natural interdisciplinary thinker, and therefore he became an excellent Liberal Studies teacher."

His Liberal Studies students praised Larry for his fairness, tolerance, love of learning and excitement about ideas, but most importantly they thanked him for helping them to think beyond the readings and to make connections with new and diverse ideas. He added meaning to the course by bringing in outside references to help clarify vague concepts. His class discussions were lively, stimulating, challenging, and positive. His encouragement empowered students.

Throughout his years at Skidmore, Larry Ries has demonstrated that he is an innovative administrator. He is also a passionate teacher, a supportive colleague, and a warm and humorous friend. His staff at MALS and colleagues at Special Programs consider themselves fortunate to have worked with such a creative, caring person, one who enjoys every minute of his life and whose enthusiasm for all that he does is contagious to all who are lucky enough to be around him.