

# Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2016



Faculty Meeting  
April the Twenty-Ninth  
Two Thousand and Sixteen

## 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 29, 2016 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.



**D**ick Lindemann, a self-described *simple country paleontologist*, has been the backbone of Skidmore's Geosciences program for the past four decades. His bedrock presence and astute responses to extrinsic and intrinsic forces shaped today's department, and he has been instrumental in passing the baton from the 20<sup>th</sup> century geology faculty to the multidisciplinary geoscientists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over the years, Dick served on nearly every institutional committee, chaired the department with visionary perspective, developed courses both within and outside of the department, involved students in cutting-edge research, and provided extraordinary professional support for junior faculty. A geology department's greatest asset is its most experienced professor, so as we celebrate Dick's career and congratulate him on his retirement, we also recognize this moment as a major stratigraphic high-water mark in the Department's unfolding history.

Growing up in western New York, Dick became a geologist because, as a kid, he always walked with his head down looking at the ground! After dropping out of the seminary, Dick earned a BS from SUNY at Oneonta in a liberal arts geology program in 1972, by all accounts an extraordinary time to be a college student. This was in the years when Geology's unifying theory of plate tectonics was not fully established. Dick was part of a generation of geologists who lived through a scientific revolution, and thus, had to unlearn a good part of the theoretical underpinning of their early training. What remained constant were "facts you can hit with a hammer", the reality of deep time, and the history of life's adaptations to both change and stasis.

Dick spent the next several years of the geologic revolution studying with Gerry Friedman, earning a MS and Ph.D. in Geology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. When a hurricane destroyed the tropical field station that was to be his base for modern reef dynamics fieldwork, Dick shifted his research focus to the Onondaga limestones of upstate New York, and he's been tramping about these woods and roadcuts ever since. Dick arrived at Skidmore's Geology

Department as an ABD doctoral candidate in 1976, hired to teach introductory geology labs. Dick quickly became indispensable, and upon earning his degree in 1980, Dick was offered a tenure track job.

Dick brought to Skidmore a rare expertise in the Geosciences. Dick's research on dramatic episodes of global change is on the cutting edge of Middle Devonian biostratigraphy. Dick is recognized as the world's foremost expert in dacryoconarid systematics and their record of ecological turnovers known as bioevents. Dacryoconarid fossils are pinhead-sized cones; all that remain of tiny enigmatic, cosmopolitan animals that drifted by the zillions in ancient sunlit seas.

While inspecting minute features on microscopic fossils in dusty old rocks might seem dull to the uninitiated, Dick reads in those strata vivid stories of environmental upheaval that date back some 380 million years: ocean acidification, massive dead zones, climate changes, extinctions, even invasive species from the Old World. Relentlessly pushing back the frontiers of knowledge, he collaborated with David Domozych to acquire a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM). As a German colleague from the Senckenberg Museum put it, "he was - and still is - an extremely detailed worker on these little 'ice cream cones' he often tends to call our "little friends". He never gave up work on these strange critters (who hardly have a 'home' in the animal kingdom), even as it is rather easy for him to gather the North American Dacryoconarid Research Community by pouring himself a glass of good red wine!"

Many micropaleontologists would tote up a hundred or so microfossils and use that basis to describe a few dozen extinct species. But Dick wondered whether the different forms he noticed represented separate groups or end members of a continuum. After Dick painstakingly documented a hundred thousand dacryoconarids in one section, just a few species remained distinguishable. He described several new species, including one named for David H. Porter, *Viriatellina porteri*.

Dick's ground-breaking work is foundational to an International Geoscience Program Project to unlock the causes of environmental change hundreds of millions of years ago, under the auspices of the

International Union of Geological Scientists Commission on Stratigraphy, a subset of UNESCO. This work has recently been published. After retiring, Dick's work on Devonian bioevents will expand with collaborators newly converted to the cause, and hopefully soon an upgraded SEM.

Dick contributed generously in many ways to the College and community. Notable acts of service included the Honor Code Commission, CAFR, UWW, SMIC, and the Porter Scholarship Selection Committee, and supervising geological mapping of the new property north of campus. Dick shares his garden produce, even donating rocks from his garden wall to the Senckenberg Museum collection in Germany. Between organizing regional geologic conferences and trips, Dick gave innumerable lectures and field-trips to community groups, supported local high school projects, and has been active in the Town of Greenfield.

In the classroom, Dick is a master storyteller who weaves the golden thread of an idea through each lecture and course. His lectures are peppered with seeming tangents, but like a well-crafted sermon, each side-story curves back around to the main line to strengthen and give context to the central lesson of the day. "No student who's ever had a class with Dick is likely to forget the experience!" Dick's zany sense of humor is never far from the surface. Students who were fortunate enough to work with Dick gained entry into a realm where "creative thought matters" is a rigorous discipline. Bobby Reese wrote, "Dick Lindemann was my academic advisor at Skidmore while I was there as a non-traditional student in the University Without Walls program majoring in geology. I must have been the luckiest student in the program, because for two summers in a row I learned sed/strat one-on-one with Dick in the field. He took me out about once a week and taught me sedimentology by showing me outcrops all over the region, and testing my knowledge on real rocks. I remember him being so descriptive even on the drives, always getting me to visualize where we were in the system, "now we're exiting the river mouth and coming out on top of the ancient delta." Dick really made geologic processes come alive for me, which is not an easy thing to do with outcrop; his descriptions just placed you right in these systems millions of years

ago. His teaching style inspired much of how I teach my students today at Texas A&M.

Despite his 6:00 a.m. office hours, Dick has been the paragon of a liberal arts geology professor – teaching not just the fossils, but highlighting the pertinent lessons that one can draw from studying rocks about life. Jonathan Strauss commented, "Most importantly, Dick was instrumental in disabusing me of the romantic idea that nature is any less ruthless than humankind, or the conceited notion natural scientists are somehow immune to the temptations of hindsight bias, or acting like a gang of petulant schoolboys." Mary Patterson writes: "I'm now a middle school science teacher, and when I talk to my students about geology, the planet, old things, etc., I remember the final lecture in Professor Lindemann's History of the Earth class. I have to stop myself from going on a rant about how everything is always changing and there will someday be 100 times more carbon in our atmosphere and anyways the sun will explode... (Geologic nihilism is best left to college students.) But it never fails to make me laugh and remember how insignificant we all are. It reminds me not to sweat the small stuff and that even if things change, we can all make an impression (no pun intended) on the small piece of earth that we stand on." Rob Chesbro says "Somewhere in deep time is Dick Lindemann. A consummate time-and-space wanderer, and Star Fleet Academy dropout, the good doctor taught me a thousand things, but none so important as to embrace weirdness, and then extrapolate. He taught me how to love being a teacher, and so I became one." It's plain to see that many of the seeds Professor Lindemann sowed every semester fell on good soil and took root.

Time marches on. Ager was right: the nature of things is for long stretches of ordinary time to be punctuated by intervals of catastrophic change. As Dick exits the classroom as an honorary member of the class of 2016, the distinctive Lindemann biozone is coming to its' inevitable close, and the hallowed halls of Skidmore will never be the same. To quote our simple country paleontologist 'There is work to be done, stone soup to be boiled, and frontiers to be explored both at the microscope and in the canoe.' We know you'll be out there somewhere, enjoying more time in the Devonian and with Eileen. We wish you a long and hearty

retirement, punctuated occasionally with notable happenings. We hope most are happy ones. In closing, I offer these parting words from Neil Grasso, class of 1996: "So, thank you Dr. Lindemann, for being funny, inspiring, and a great teacher all these years. Future generations of geology students will be missing out on your wisdom and wit, but fear not, those of us who were lucky enough to have you will do our best carry the torch in your stead!"

**M**ary Zeiss Stange joined the Skidmore College faculty in 1990. Since then, she has been active in multiple areas of the college, in public life, and as a bison rancher in Montana. For over 25 years, Mary has combined the roles of teacher, scholar, mentor, community member, and public intellectual with remarkable vigor, dedication, success, and aplomb.

At Syracuse University, Mary majored in English and was elected Phi Beta Kappa before going on to complete an M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion. Her dissertation explored the production of religious meaning in autobiographical texts. Post defense, she went on to multi-year stints at multiple institutions as Assistant Professor of Religion, of English, and of Women's Studies. Recognizing her skills and experience, Skidmore hired Mary in 1990 to a position in Religious Studies with associated teaching and administrative responsibilities in Women's Studies. Mary was Skidmore's first interdisciplinary hire and proved this model of scholarship and teaching possible at Skidmore.

As the first tenure-line hire in Religious Studies, Mary was instrumental in the development of the program from minor to major. A long-time colleague remarked that Mary has been "a driving force and a mainstay of the religion program for most of its existence." Another colleague testified to her sustained influence on junior colleagues, saying as "a feminist activist... the insights from Mary's work continue to contribute to my understanding." Recently, when the Religious Studies program needed her leadership, Mary stepped back from phased employment to take on its directorship. Her leadership there has proven crucial

to the program's renewal and growth. In addition to the fundamental work of mentoring, teaching, planning, and leadership, Mary has tirelessly served as spokesperson for the discipline of Religious Studies. With her myriad contributions to campus events, she has demonstrated how religious phenomena are vital to the apprehension of our contemporary world.

For each and every one of her 25 years here, Mary has also been at the heart and soul of Women's and Gender Studies. She was the first official faculty appointee to the newly created Women's Studies program at Skidmore in 1990 and served as its director for that program's formative first decade. Under her leadership, the Women's Studies and Gender Studies programs have become robust, popular, and meaningful major and minor courses of study for many Skidmore graduates. In addition to shaping the core courses in Women's and Gender Studies, Mary created many innovative and enduringly appealing courses that span her two disciplines, including Goddesses and Amazons; Women, Religion and Spirituality; Feminist Theologies; and Ecofeminism. Mary has also been a tireless and compassionate advocate for our Women's and Gender Studies students, advising them as well as the many campus groups that came to her for guidance and help. Her absence will leave a profound hole at the center of the Gender Studies community, but her skillful and devoted efforts on behalf of that community leave it in a very strong place from which to move into the future.

Following from her feminist orientation, Mary's scholarship has advanced two related projects. The first is that of locating common ground among the discourses and politics of environmentalism, religious studies, anthropology, feminism, gun rights, religious rights, ecology, and hunting. The second has been that of recovering women's experiences, both present and historical, and especially those of women who hunt. The former endeavor has manifested itself in the publication of the books *Woman the Hunter* (1999), the co-authored *Gun Women: Firearms and Feminism in Contemporary America* (2000), as well as in numerous book chapters, reviews and scholarly articles. The latter project has also taken many forms. To name just

the books from this recovery project, there are: the co-edited *Multimedia Encyclopedia of Women in Today's World* (2012-13), the book series "Sisters of the Hunt (2003-05)," and *Hard Grass: Life on the Crazy Woman Bison Ranch* (2010).

Simultaneous to her scholarly work, Mary has enjoyed a parallel career as public intellectual. This calling has produced dozens of opinion pieces and reviews for high profile media outlets. It has also made her a sought-after public speaker and interviewee who delivers talks all over the globe. Sometimes these interventions have directly complimented her scholarship but, often as not, Mary has drawn upon her analytical skills, feminist methodologies, and deep understanding of American religious life to take up a position in relation to current controversies such as the right to gun ownership, the treatment of sex-offenders, and government intervention into family and religious practice.

Many of the arguments presented by Mary in her popular and scholarly work have been developed in classes where she worked through the relevant literature with her students. This synchrony has been enabled by Mary's attunement to current social problems and to student interest. Her aim in each class has been to work with students to understand the gendered, social, religious, and legal structures which affect us all and to give students the knowledge and power to one day effect these institutions and practices. A 2010 Women's Studies seminar, "Feminist Activism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," provides an example of this attunement. In this class, final research projects were suspended as students chose to take action concerning the campus crisis of sexual assault. Under Mary's guidance, seminar students harnessed the power of social media to organize a forum where experts and non-experts met to publicize and discuss the issue. This event galvanized sentiment and motivated our institution to address the issue of sexual assault well before it became a national issue.

In addition to her deep commitments to scholarship and teaching, Mary has continuously defended academic and personal freedom and rights. Advocating for all sentient beings, she sat for over a decade on the Animal Care and Use Committee and for 5 terms on the Committee for Academic Freedom and Rights. Since 2009, Mary also served on the Bias

Response Group. Former Dean Rochelle Calhoun had this to say of her service there: "Through her service... Mary worked to bring about an awareness at Skidmore that encouraged us all to embrace our collective humanity."

Across more than two and a half decades, as a citizen, teacher, scholar, mentor, and public intellectual, Mary Zeiss Stange's presence has been felt on our campus and her voice has made itself heard locally, nationally, and internationally. Even as Mary continues her role as scholar-activist, we wish her well in her next pursuits, journeys that will see her return full-time to the Ranch and to the family that she loves in Montana. We are grateful for and will miss her wit, her fierce energy, and her insights from which we as a community have so benefitted since her arrival a quarter century ago.

**I**n an interview a few years ago, Linda Glazer Toohey noted her satisfaction in "doing whatever I can to be of help and seeing the difference that lots of people working together for a common cause can accomplish." Having had the privilege of working for and with Linda for a number of years, I can state unequivocally that this, she has most certainly done!

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, she attended the University of Iowa where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Religion and a Master's in Journalism. After college, she worked for Gannett Corporation and arrived in Saratoga Springs in 1977 as publisher of the *Saratogian*, making her, at the time, the youngest female newspaper publisher in the country.

Linda joined the Chamber of Commerce in 1980 as Executive Vice President and spent the next 35 years there in a wide range of roles. She coordinated its tourism work, established and ran the Saratoga Film Commission, oversaw the Chamber's publications and public events, and created the Chamber's very successful volunteer leadership program – Leadership Saratoga – which was one of the first such initiatives of its kind and has become a national model with nearly 700 graduates.

Service to the community has always been at core of her being. She has served on (and often chaired) the

boards of numerous organizations. These include the National Racing Museum, Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga Community Hospice, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Empire State College, and Emma Willard School. She has led fundraising campaigns for the YMCA, Saratoga Hospital, and Emma Willard and served as a fundraising volunteer for a host of other organizations including WMHT, the United Way, Homemade Theater, and Soroptimists.

She served on the Board of Adirondack Trust Company, as a member of the Steering Committee of the Workforce Housing Partnership of Saratoga County, and as vice chair of the Saratoga County 21st Century Commission. She is past president of the Saratoga Springs Urban Cultural Park Commission (now called the Urban Heritage Area Board), a founder and past president of Soroptimist International of Saratoga County, and past president of the Hawley Foundation for Children. She is an active and much sought after speaker on leadership, board governance, and time management, a past member of the National Association of Community Leadership Organizations, and a life member of the Women's Press Club of New York.

She has served on Skidmore's Board since 2001. Prior to assuming leadership of the Board, she chaired the College's Infrastructure Committee and also served on its Budget and Finance, Executive, Special Programs, Strategic Planning, and Trusteeship Committees. She served as Vice Chair from 2008 to 2012 and assumed the role of chair in 2012. As chair, she has revamped the Board's committee and meeting structure, helped to coordinate the crafting of a new strategic plan, and participated in the launch of its current comprehensive fundraising effort: *Creating Our Future: The Campaign for Skidmore*.

As you might imagine for someone so dedicated to her community, her efforts have been recognized by many. In 1978, she was selected as one of 11 of our Nation's Outstanding Young Working Women by *Glamour Magazine*. In 1979 she received the Distinguished Young Alumni Award from the University of Iowa, and in 1987, she received the Jaycee's Distinguished Community Service Award 1987. In 1991, she and her husband Michael received the Outstanding Fund Raiser Award from the Hudson-Mohawk Chapter of the National Association of Fund Raising Executives. In 1992, she was named as Soroptimist of Saratoga County Woman of

Distinction, and in 1995, was inducted into the Saratoga Springs Pillar Society for her community service work.

Starting off the new century, in 2000, Emma Willard awarded her the Tangeman Medal, which recognizes individuals who best exemplify through service to their communities and to EWS those qualities of community involvement, dependability, and strength of character. Three years later in 2003, she was honored by the Rotary Club of Saratoga Springs, and in 2004, Business & Professional Women Tech Valley honored her as Woman of the Year. In 2006, New York State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno named her one of New York State's Women of Distinction, and that same year, the Saratoga YMCA named Linda and her husband Michael as two of their Volunteers of the Year. *Saratoga Today* selected her as one of 10 Women of Influence in 2009 and that same year the Saratoga Economic Opportunity Council honored her as its person of the year. And, in 2013, the *Saratogian* listed her as one of the City's women of influence.

How does one accomplish all of this? First is a tremendous work ethic. She is an early riser as those of us who receive her early morning emails know quite well, and she is 5:00 a.m. regular at the YMCA. One might also say that she comes by it honestly. "My grandparents and parents instilled in me the importance of giving back to one's community," she has said and as her many accomplishments would attest, that is a lesson she learned quite well. And all who have had the opportunity to work with her would also point to her integrity, honesty, and her passion for doing the right thing.

At the time of her appointment as chair of the board, her predecessor, Janet Whitman '59, observed that "her long experience in the nonprofit world, her knowledge of the Saratoga community and her understanding of Skidmore" made her "uniquely qualified to help steer the college forward at this time." Seeing all that Linda has accomplished, I believe that Janet had it exactly right. Linda has summed up her own approach to life as: "Be happy, be grateful, count my blessings every day, have fun, be organized, and give back to others." Today, I wish to say to Linda that she has made us tremendously happy and deeply grateful, and that I quite regularly count my blessings to have had the pleasure of working with her on behalf of Skidmore.