

Department of Classics
Monmouth College
Annual Report
1987-1988

A combination of circumstances resulted in a special but unusual year for the Classics program at Monmouth College in 1987-1988. While a sabbatical by Professor Sienkewicz presented some difficulties for the department, the highlight of the academic year was unquestionably the completion and dedication of the Capron Classics Room on October 15, 1987.

The Capron Classics Room.

This room, remodeled in 1987 through the generosity of Mr. Keith Capron, and already proven to be an area well-suited for the teaching of Classics, was formally dedicated on an appropriately classical date, the birthday of Vergil. The ceremony was attended by many close friends of the Classics at Monmouth. A salutatory address was given by Ms. Sylvia Zethmayr, '90, prytanis of Gamma Omicron Chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the Classics honor society. An invocation in three languages (English, Latin and Greek) was given by Dr. Robert Gillogly, '61, associate professor of philosophy and religion, and a former Greek student of the late Harold Ralston. The actual dedication was spoken by Dr. Bruce Haywood, President of the College. The ceremony concluded with an address by Miss Bernice Fox, Professor Emerita of Classics, who gave an illustrated, and highly enjoyable presentation entitled "A Short Excursion into Vergil Country."

The Capron Room itself is a living document of the Classics at Monmouth. In a central position hang both a plaque and a photograph honoring Minnie Billings Capron, in whose name the Classics chair was endowed by her son Keith. Nearby hang the photographs of several former Monmouth College Classics teachers, including professors Fox, Ralston, Telford and Gibson. On another wall hangs the charter of Eta Sigma Phi, founded at Monmouth in 1957 and which recalls the many students who have studied Classics at the college over the years. Most important is the educational function which the Capron Room has begun to serve at the college. The room, filled with Classical artwork and posters, is a handsome and pleasant environment in which to study the Classics. Faculty can now regularly supplement their lectures with slides and videotapes. Students have also used the same facilities to present oral reports and can use the departmental personal computer to drill themselves on Latin grammar. Sometimes classes have even met in special evening sessions in order to watch feature-length films in the classroom. Other times the classroom has been used for evening presentations open to the general public. The room is also used by Eta Sigma Phi for its initiation ceremonies. In these ways current and future Monmouth students of the Classics will come to

see themselves as links in a long classical tradition at the college.

Sabbatical of Dr. Sienkewicz.

Another event which affected the department in 1987-88 was the absence of Dr. Sienkewicz for two terms. Thanks to a long-term research grant from the Program for Inter-Institutional Collaboration in Area Studies at the University of Michigan, Dr. Sienkewicz was able to extend a one-term sabbatical into a six-month residence in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he worked on a book on the Sunjata epic of West Africa. A copy of Dr. Sienkewicz' sabbatical report is attached to this document.

During his absence the Classics Department functioned well, but at less than usual capacity. Bill Urban served admirably as acting chair of the department and tended to the many tasks Tom Sienkewicz left for him. The college hired Mr. Albert Watanabe, a graduate student in Classics at the University of Illinois, as a part-time replacement to teach Latin 101, Classical Mythology and Word Elements in the winter and spring terms. While Mr. Watanabe did an excellent job in the courses he did teach, the Classics program was compromised because fewer courses were offered during these terms and no elementary Greek or advanced Latin was taught. It is very difficult to maintain student interest in a program when such lacunae occur and it is very hard on Classics majors and minors who need to take advanced language courses. The college must seriously consider ways to minimize the adverse effect which sabbaticals have on academic programs.

The Academic Program.

In general course enrollments were about the same as last year. The number of students completing courses were: Latin 101, 7; Latin 102, 5; Directed Readings, 3; Classical Mythology, 15; Word Elements, 7; Ancient Family, 9; and History of Greece, 24. Noteworthy, however, is the increase in enrollments in Elementary Latin, which had only two students in the previous year. While still small, this year's enrollment is similar to that in previous years and confirms suspicions that the low enrollment last year was due to unfortunate scheduling.

There remains a constant scheduling problem for Latin, which is usually offered at 9 A.M. As a result, the course regularly loses at least one good student in second term because of a required Chemistry course which is taught in winter term at 9 A.M. These Latin 101 students either do not take Latin 102 at all or must wait until the following year to do so--neither alternative ideal. The scheduling of Latin at 1 P.M. was a disastrous attempt to deal with this problem. Next year one final attempt will be made by scheduling the course at 8 A.M. If this

change does not work, the department will reluctantly return to 9 A.M. Latin classes and accept the inevitability of scheduling conflicts.

It should be added that this year's Elementary Latin class was, as a group, without question, the finest class in recent memory. Nearly everyone enrolled worked conscientiously, appeared to enjoy the class, and managed to learn quite a bit of Latin. For this reason the inability of the department to offer these students advanced Latin in third term was particularly disturbing.

Advanced Latin, only offered in fall term as a half-credit Directed Readings course, had three students enrolled: a potential Classics major, a Classics minor, and a student who had high school Latin and who was fulfilling her Monmouth language requirement. This, too, was a good group of students who under the direction of Dr. Sienkewicz read a collection of Latin passages connected with the ancient family, including Cicero's famous letter on the death of his daughter.

None of these students would probably have been able to take any Latin that term if the half-credit option were not available. While the department would prefer that students enroll in full-credit courses, it would rather have students take only a half-credit course than none at all. There is no question that the half-credit Directed Readings course, introduced in 1986-1987, has already become a positive addition to the Classics curriculum.

This was the second time that the Ancient Family course was offered. Enrollment was the same (9 students). This is evolving into a good course, which uses the theme of family life as a vehicle to introduce the student to diverse aspects of ancient history and culture. As a group, students seem pleased with the variety of readings and the emphasis on slide material which this course offers. Students who have taken both Ancient Family and either Greek or Roman History have commented on the way that the these courses complement each other.

Next year, the department plans to offer an experimental (250) course called Sport and Recreation in the Ancient World., which will fulfill the general education requirement in smaller Human Societies. It is hoped that, like Ancient Family, this course will enable the department to use a thematic structure to interest students in ancient history and culture. While Dr. Sienkewicz had no personal interest in questions of ancient sport, he has enjoyed reading the materials needed to teach this course and is cautiously confident that this course will be one which will both appeal to Monmouth students and bring the Classical world closer to their own experiences.

Courses in the department maintain a high level of expectation from students. Elementary Latin students cover in two terms what students at other colleges do in one year. Students who have completed Latin 101/102 and who take their study of Latin seriously can usually read any text of Latin with the help of a dictionary. In translation courses students are expected to read extensively, to write weekly reaction papers and to prepare an individual oral class report on some aspect of the material.

Dr. Sienkewicz has worked conscientiously to maintain a great deal of flexibility in teaching these courses. He has frequently adapted his syllabus to the demands of a particular class. His goal is to create an informal atmosphere in the classroom where students feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their opinion.

While enrollments in Classics courses may always remain small, the department remains satisfied that it provides quality courses to those who enroll. At the same time, it is ever ready to adapt to new student needs and to find new ways to bring the Classics to other students at the college.

Another important milestone in the history of the department was the graduation of Karen Swank as a Latin major **cum laude** with departmental honors. Karen is an example of the type of student which the department is especially equipped to serve. She enrolled in Elementary Latin in the fall of 1984 with no previous experience in the language and intended to earn a teaching certificate as an English major. Gradually she became more and more interested in Classics and eventually became a Latin major. Over the course of four years she took nearly every course the department offered, including Elementary Greek, Classical Mythology, and both Greek and Roman History. She was also active in Eta Sigma Phi, both as officer in Gamma Omicron Chapter at Monmouth College, and on the national level as secretary. Karen was awarded the Classics prize at Honors Convocation in 1985 and again this year. She also won the Ralston Classics Essay contest last year. She is one of only a few students in Illinois to graduate this year with a teaching certificate in Latin. The department is very proud of Karen's achievements and is confident that she will be a good Latin teacher.

Once again, in 1987-1988, Dr. Sienkewicz taught Freshman Seminar. While this is always done in addition to his other teaching demands, the extra effort is usually worth it. This year was no exception. The class was enthusiastic and remarkably willing to express its opinions. A major concern of both the class and the instructor, namely the large number of readings, has already been addressed by Freshman Seminar leaders, who have reduced the reading list for next year.

Eta Sigma Phi.

Gamma Omicron Chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the Classics Honor Society, continues to provide a vehicle to recognize outstanding students in the Classics and to provide opportunities for students to participate formally and informally in college functions. Three students were inducted this year: Tracie Stahl, Robert Nelson and Kurt Fowler. Sylvia Zethmayr, prytanis of the chapter, also spoke on behalf of the Classics students at the dedication of the Capron Room in October and at the 1987-1988 Fox Lecture. In addition, Karen Swank, vice-president of the local chapter and national secretary, represented the chapter at the national convention, held in Baltimore in April.

Other Extra-Curricular Activities.

The departmental bulletin board in Wallace Hall continues to be a particular point of contact for the department with students who are not enrolled in Classics courses. Every attempt is made to rotate interesting and new material on the board which students are regularly seen reading.

The Classics Challenge, used occasionally in previous years as an attempt to reach students not enrolled in Classics courses, was especially effective in first term this year, when a new challenge appeared on a regular basis on the departmental bulletin board. These challenges offer a modest prize to the first person to identify the Classical context of some painting, quote, etc. Student interest was increased by the announcement of the challenge and the winners in Monday Morning. The success of this technique was proven when students actually began asking when the next Classics Challenge would appear.

The Ralston Essay Contest this year offered a prize of \$100.00 for the best essay on a question about Sophocles' Antigone. Only a few entries were submitted, nearly all from Dr. Sienkewicz' classes and none were judged worthy of the award. A small number of entries has been a pattern ever since the essay was established in 1984. Apparently students are not sufficiently motivated by the \$100. prize to submit an entry unless they are prodded by a faculty member to do so. The department is responding to this problem with plans to open the contest to all essays written for any course offered at Monmouth in 1988-1989 on any Classical subject instead of on a particular topic. This change should increase both the pool and the quality of entries.

The 1987-1988 Fox Lecturer was Mary L. Ryder, a former student of Miss Fox. The subject of Dr. Ryder's presentation was "The Universal and True: Myth in Willa Cather's O Pioneers!". The lecture, scheduled appropriately in winter term when both Classical Mythology and American Literature were being taught,

thus tied in well with the academic program and many students attended. Unfortunately, the lecture was postponed from the original date of February 11, 1988 due to a major snowstorm, and took place under more subdued circumstances on February 18, 1988.

The following are several excerpts from student papers reacting to Dr. Ryder's presentation:

Mary Ryder has opened my eyes to yet another great author that I'll have to read this summer: Willa Cather. Cather is a woman after my own heart: raised in beautiful country, she went on to appreciate the classics and use them in her writing. What an idyllic life!

What struck me the most is the extent of the parallels between Oh, Pioneers! and the classic myths.

Mary Ryder's interpretation of Willa Cather's Oh, Pioneers! brought to my attention the long lines of parallels between the novel and the myths of the Ancient Greeks. Will Cather uses many mythological ideas in her settings, storylines and characters.

For the fourth Bernice L. Fox Essay contest, open to high school students in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri, there were 81 essays from 31 high schools. The topic for this year's contest was "The Mythical Monsters of the Ancient Greeks and Romans--Were They the Ancestors of Our Modern Monsters?" The winner of the \$100.00 cash award was Tony Hinrichs of Dowling High School in Des Moines, Iowa. Honorable mentions were awarded, in alphabetical order, to: Jennifer Cegielski of Nazareth Academy, LaGrange Park, IL; Christine Mentzer of Central Catholic High School, Lafayette, IN; Julie Mudd of South Iron High School, Annapolis, MO; and Katy Tomlinson of Dowling High School, Des Moines, IA. The department is pleased with the large number of schools and students who participate in this contest annually and with the calibre of the entries.

The Western Illinois Chapter of AIA.

The department continues to serve as the driving force for the Archaeological Institute of America in western Illinois. Since 1984 efforts have been made to organize at several different institutions, but especially at Monmouth, archaeological programing which appeals both to academics, students and the general public. A solid core of paid memberships has been obtained and attendance at lectures is generally excellent, especially from the general public. The department feels strongly that these lectures allow Monmouth College to make

a valuable contribution to the intellectual life of the area and to supplement the academic curriculum of the college.

The following programs were sponsored by the archaeological organization. All but two of these events were held at Monmouth College: an exhibit of prehistoric ceramics of West Central Illinois from September 21 through October 5, 1987; an exhibit talk by Professor Larry Conrad of the Archaeological Research Lab at Western Illinois University on September 28, 1987; an illustrated lecture entitled "From Alexander to Augustus: Glass and Glassmaking in Classical Antiquity" by Professor David Grose of the University of Massachusetts on October 19, 1987; a videofilm entitled "Cahokia--A Prehistoric Legacy" on November 4, 1987; an exhibit of Panamanian archaeological artifacts from the collection of Major George Bush of Monmouth College from January 22 through January 28, 1988; an exhibit talk by Major Bush on January 25, 1988; an illustrated talk entitled "From Roman Legionary Bases to Modern Cities" by Dr. Thomas Watkins of Western Illinois University on February 15, 1988; "The Roman Forum" by Dr. William Urban of Monmouth College on March 31, 1988; and "What Mother Never Told Me About Dating" by Professor Peter Kuniholm of Cornell University on April 13, 1988.

Other Public Lectures.

Members of the department have also spoken in other contexts during the academic year. On October 13, 1988 Dr. William Urban gave a convocation address at the college on classical influences on the Constitution and followed this speech with an article in the Review Atlas. On Friday, October 2, Dr. Sienkewicz gave a presentation entitled "Creating Productive Ties between Schools and Colleges" at Issues for the 80's, the third annual Conference on Second Language and International Studies in Springfield, Illinois. On October 10th, Dr. Urban read a paper entitled "When a Roman Emperor Decides to Split" at the 50th anniversary meeting of the Illinois Classical Conference in Rockford, Illinois. At the same meeting, Bernice L. Fox, Professor Emerita of Classics, was honored as a past president of ICC. Other Monmouthians at the meeting included current president LeaAnn Osburn, '72; Marcene Holverson, '84; and Andrew Adams, '66. Dr. Sienkewicz, vice-president of ICC, served as Program Chair for the meeting.

In addition, Dr. Sienkewicz gave an International Luncheon talk at the college on "African Markets" on October 6th and spoke to the Monmouth Rotary Club about his recent travels in West Africa on October 26th. On April 6th he represented the college at a meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South, held in New Orleans, and gave a paper entitled "Performance and Audience in Traditional Oral Epics--A Comparative View". At this meeting two recently-deceased

individuals with strong ties with the Monmouth Classics Department were honored: Dr. Graydon Regenos, who taught Word Elements at Monmouth after the death of Harold Ralston, and Fr. Scoder, who lectured at the college on several occasions.

Since 1985 Dr. Sienkewicz has also made a policy of speaking at area high schools. These visits were also formalized last summer as part of the Illinois Humanities Council grant to run a summer institute in 1987 on "The Teaching of Roman Civilization in High School". As part of this grant, the Project Director, Dr. Sienkewicz, is expected to make follow-up visits to the high schools of participants. While his sabbatical and leave of absence made this difficult, the following visits were made: Keith Country Day School, on October 9, 1987 Westmer High in Joy, Illinois on November, 10, 1987; Macomb High School, on November 12, 1987; and Highland Park High and West Chicago High on February 19, 1988. Several more visits will be made in the academic year 1988-1989. These visits are an effective means of advertizing the Classics Program at Monmouth among Illinois high school students and also help Dr. Sienkewicz become a better teacher of Latin methodology by making him more aware of what is happening in the high schools.

Summary.

The department is confident that it is once again playing the significant role in campus life and in the state of Illinois that it traditionally played during the long and active career of Bernice L. Fox, who continues to make significant contributions to the department despite her retirement. The department is also grateful to Bill Urban for his constant aid, especially as acting chair during the current academic year, and to President Haywood for his regular support of the Classics. Finally, the department acknowledges its many friends, including Keith Capron and Mrs. Harold Ralston, who continue to show an interest in the Classics at Monmouth College.