

Lifetime Achievement Award - ICC
Dr. Thomas J. Sienkiewicz

Pliny tells us that "the true rewards for good works are in one's own heart, not in the acclaim of others." ICC periodically chooses to go against this adage, however, as it awards its Lifetime Achievement Awards to those individuals who truly deserve the acclaim of others, especially accolades from those in this organization. Therefore, It is with great pride then that we bestow ICC Lifetime Achievement Award tonight on Dr. Thomas J. Sienkiewicz of Monmouth College.

Tom has for so long been a fixture on the Illinois Latin scene, that it is hard to believe that he is just now getting this award. He has been involved in so many facets of Latin -- from teaching, to publishing, to recruiting, to professional development -- that not only his institution, but also our professional lives, and the reputation of this state have been enhanced by his work on behalf of all things classical.

Oddly enough, Tom is not a native of Illinois, but is originally from Hoboken, NJ. He attended school at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City, where his father had gone, and then later at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, with his master's and doctorate taken at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. It was at Johns Hopkins where he met his wife Anne, got married, and began raising three children.

Tom's first 9 years of teaching were at Howard University in Washington, D.C. That is where he started his research in oral literature and the Malian epic. He pursued this interest into writing and publishing *Rappin' and Homer*, with co-author Vivian K. Edwards.

In 1984 Tom and Anne moved their family to Monmouth, Illinois where he began teaching at Monmouth College. He was very excited

about working in a small college with the chance of forming his own curriculum in the classics. Bernice Fox, the long-time beloved teacher at Monmouth, had retired two years before, but within that short time, the classics department had deteriorated. Bernice's successor had been telling every student interested in classics to go to a larger school! As a result, there was one Classics major left, and even he dropped out of school shortly thereafter. Out of that situation came a lot of hard thinking and planning -- wrestling not only with the question about how to provide Classics majors with their necessary courses, but also how to accomplish that task with only one person in the department -- Tom himself!

His solution was the innovative and award winning Triad concept. Students in Latin, Greek and Classics signed up for the same class. Those who specialized in Latin had a separate meeting with Latin texts concerning the material, the Greeks students read Greek texts, and those interested in Classics read material in English. Besides teaching traditional introductory language classes, Tom taught these special sections which attracted students from a wide variety of disciplines. It was after his first year at Monmouth that Tom was named the Capron Professor of Classics, a post he holds still today. His once-floundering program began to grow and grow.

Miss Fox continued to help Tom by introducing him to great number of Latin teachers all over the state. She encouraged him to go out to speak at just about every school in the area where Latin was taught and those schools sent him wonderful students. The program grew to the point that today Tom has a full time colleague, as well as an archaeologist on the Monmouth campus.

Beyond the triad concept at Monmouth, a list of his other accomplishments is not brief. He is proud to be a member of not only

ICC, where he has held numerous offices and committee leadership roles, but also in Eta Sigma Phi, and CAMWS, where he recently took on the role of secretary-treasurer where he now expends most of his energy.

Still hard at work on his writing, Tom is currently working on getting his Rappin' with Homer back into print. He has also recently collaborated with LeAnn Osburn on the first books of the Latin reader series for Bolchazy-Carducci. But perhaps the one publication that would be dearest to him would be the college textbook, *Disce*, which he has co-written with Ken Kitchell, who coincidentally attended Holy Cross at the same time Tom was a student. Tom is able to utilize this text in his own classroom, and he continues to work on the on-line component which is forever in the process of creative regeneration.

On a more personal level, Tom served as secretary for the Faculty at Monmouth for many years. Those who follow him on Facebook know that he loves travel -- especially with students in tow -- as he introduces them to the sights and sounds of the places they study with him in class. Anne says that Tom is an avid gardener and most summers makes over 100 quarts of his famous tomato, basil, and garlic tomato sauce, as well as making a terrific chocolate cake which has annually appeared at family birthday parties. Tom is especially in his element with his young granddaughter and with his grown children.

All in all, Tom Sienkiewicz is the personification of the passionate study of classics. His tireless outreach goes far beyond the classroom walls. He had made the Classics program at Monmouth one of the best in the midwest, and by acts large and small he reminds us frequently of the continuing importance of Classics in our world. He celebrates the accomplishments of his students and his colleagues at his own table, year in and year out. Yet it is in the daily hard labor of teaching conjugations and epic poetry and ancient cultures that Tom's

dedication to the classics shines the brightest. In the words of one of his colleagues, "he is an extraordinary and compassionate teacher-scholar," and for his zealous promotion of the Classics in so many forums, he richly deserves the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Illinois Classical Conference.

Presented September 27, 2014
Chicago, Illinois