

The Tablet

The Newsletter of the Department of Religious Studies at Southwest Missouri State

The SMSU Department of Religious Studies 1969-1994 Celebrating 25 Years of Academic Excellence

And Now, ... The Rest of the Story

by John Strong

In the last issue, we began telling the story of the history of the department. The first part of the story began with the efforts of students in the late 1930s to obtain instruction in religious studies and paused with plans by the administration in the late 1960s to establish the Department of Religious Studies and hire Dr. Gerrit tenZythoff as the department's first head. In this issue, we continue with the story of the early years of the department and its growth.

When Gerrit came to campus to interview for the job as department head, he met with the president, Dr. Arthur Mallory, at the annual shrimp feast at the First Baptist Church. Dr. Mallory asked about Gerrit's position on the then current debate over which translation of the Bible to use, the RSV or the King James. Gerrit replied that if he had his wishes, he would use neither of these, but the students unfortunately could not read the translation of his choice. "Why is that?" Dr. Mallory asked. "Because I prefer the Dutch translation!" Gerrit responded, at which the entire table erupted into laughter. As it turned out, his answer told the administration something very important. First, religion was not merely an academic discipline for Gerrit, but something personally important. Second, Gerrit would bring a broad, international perspective to the topic. These elements continue to be hallmarks of the department.

In my conversation with Gerrit, he added an important footnote at this point. "People have asked me," he said, "whether we require a profession of faith to teach in our department." "Of course not!" he always replied. But he continued to state that it was important to recognize who the students were that sat in the classroom, and to be responsible to them. "I have no tolerance for a professor who does not understand and respect the faith of their students." From the beginning, then, the department of religious studies at SMSU has sought objectivity, seeking to understand the power and influence of religion in human life.

In the early years, the department consisted of Gerrit and a secretary. Who taught the classes? Again, the department owes a debt of gratitude to the campus ministers. They, with the permission of their denominations, volunteered their time and talents to the students and the university. John Wilson, Tom Raber, Jim Robinson, Charlie Johnson, (see his article in the last issue of *The Tablet*), and Douglas McGlynn all volunteered to teach classes without pay.

As he built the department, Gerrit addressed certain needs he saw in southwest

Missouri. For example, he knew that the Jewish community could not afford to hire a full time rabbi. Gerrit suggested that if the synagogue could hire a rabbi, he could have him teach a course, and supplement his salary. As a result, Rabbi Uriel Smith became the first full-time rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations in Springfield.

(Continued on the back page)

This is a new department, and replaces the Chairs of Religion, under which courses in religion were formerly taught. At the time this catalog went to press, the exact structure of the Department had not been finally determined, nor a Department Head appointed.

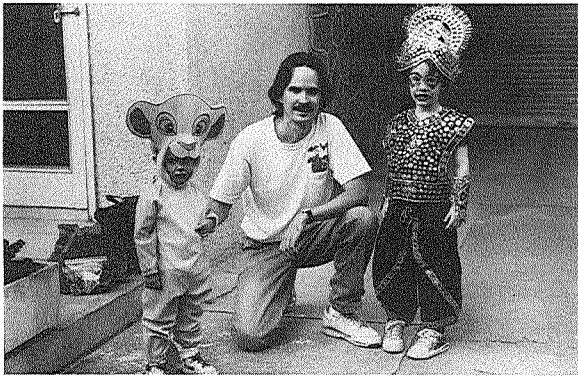
Thus read the opening paragraph for the Department of Religious Studies in the 1969-70 SMSU bulletin.

Visiting India with Ravan, The Demon King

by Jack Llewellyn

Jack Llewellyn is in India this year with his wife and two daughters. He is doing research in Delhi on the status of women in contemporary Hinduism with a grant from the American Institute of Indian Studies. Dr. Llewellyn sent us these notes on his experiences abroad.

If you ever have a chance to go to India, you should take along a two year old and a five year old. Only a few months ago I was not so sure about the wisdom of this proposition. Delhi is a



Bridget, Jack, and Margaret (i.e., Ravan, the demon king) Llewellyn

large, crowded, noisy, and dirty city. Yet it is also a place where there are many interesting things to see and do. I was unsure if my daughters would be able to master the trick of enjoying the good things while ignoring the bad. I am happy to report that they have done better than I had ever dared hope.

In fact, my kids think that India is a swell place. Where else can you see not just dogs and cats in the street, but also cows, horses, and the occasional monkey, bear, camel, or elephant? They particularly enjoyed Dussehra, which is a Hindu festival that fell in the second week of October this year. During Dussehra, the victory of good over evil is celebrated in neighborhood pageants that reenact the destruction of an ancient demonic king named Ravan. A couple of weeks later when Margaret said that she wanted to be a witch for Halloween, I countered with the suggestion that she dress up as one of the Dussehra characters, and she was game. I was not surprised when Margaret chose to wear the regalia of Ravan, the demon king himself. The costume was black velveteen with applique in pink plastic and gold foil—right up a five year old's alley. We added a little face paint and she looked very fierce indeed. This is a picture that I will cherish in my mind for a long time to come.

The person that I have to thank for my daughters'

relatively painless adjustment to India is my wife, Eileen. It was only because she was willing to put her own career on hold for a year that we were able to come here. And it is largely her attention to our well being that has kept Margaret, Bridget, and I healthy. The plague that you may have heard about on the news never amounted to much here in Delhi, though there was a severe epidemic in the western part of India. Still, day to day life can be hazardous to your health just about any place in India. I know that there are occasionally boil orders around Springfield, but you should try boiling all your drinking water everyday for several months, then you will have an idea how much my wife has had to tolerate.

My research has been going well. You have probably encountered horror stories about the way that women are treated in India, and some of them are unfortunately true. Nonetheless, in my work I have been fortunate to meet several women who are quite strong and independent. Despite my success, there have been days when even simple tasks have seemed almost impossible here. When that starts to get me down, I try to learn a lesson from my daughters.

A Snapshot of Religious Study at West Plains

by John Strong



The student-athletes of REL 101: (L-R) Kari Tracy, Scott Roberts, Tamara Turner, Chad Campbell

SMSU opened a branch campus in West Plains, Missouri in 1963. This campus is an independently accredited campus that has grown in enrollment to around 1,000 students. Presently, I am teaching two courses at the West Plains campus, alongside a local husband and wife ministerial team, Jack Emerson and Diane Cooke. Here is a page out of my diary describing my weekly trek to this tranquil arm of the SMSU system.

Out beyond my headlights, to the right and the left of the highway lie the rolling hills of southern Missouri. Tomorrow afternoon, when I return to Springfield, I will see the sun set over these hills.

But in the night, as I make the two hour journey east to West Plains, I have to view these hills through the eyes of my memory. As I check into the West Plains Motel, I chat briefly with my innkeeper, Sam Patel, who gives me a special deal as well as a comfortable room for the night.

Thursday mornings are always early and a little rushed. Still, I manage to eat breakfast at the Yellow Rose Cafe and arrive by 8:00 am for REL 101, *The*



Owners of the Ozark Cafe, Virgil and Noma Gabel.

Introduction to the Old Testament. Before class, I wrestle with the screen for the overhead projector. Those students who come early enough for the show get a pretty good laugh as I try to get it to lock in place. I finally tie it to a chair and proceed to call roll.

As I call roll, I note that this class, as many of the classes at the West Plains branch campus, has a large number of non-traditional students, i.e., older students who for a variety of reasons have postponed their college degree and are returning to school. For example, to the left side of the room, are Joe and Janet talking with each other. Joe is retraining for a career in computers after the shoe factory he was working in was closed. Janet is a successful business woman and real estate agent who has always wanted to go to school and is now fulfilling her dream.

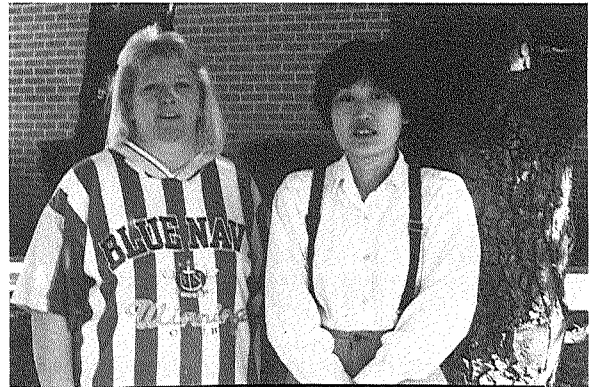
To the right side of the classroom sit a type of student new to the West Plains campus, the student athlete. Last year, SMSU-West Plains began competing in women's volleyball (the *Lady Grizz*) and men's basketball (the *Grizzlies*.) Both teams have enjoyed much success considering the young age of the programs. As with all of the student-athletes, my volleyball players and basketball players are kept very busy juggling practices and road trips with class work. College athletics looks glamorous on television, but my experience is that it takes a tremendous amount of discipline and character to be a successful student-athlete today.

After my morning class, I have lunch at the Ozark Cafe, just off the town square. This restaurant has been owned and operated by Virgil and Noma Gabel for 48 years. Noma gets up each morning around 4:30

am and makes six or seven pies from scratch. She keeps a close count of her pies, and has posted on a sign that she baked 6,002 pie last years. During her career, she has baked over a quarter of a million pies. I usually order a cheeseburger and a bag of chips (and a piece of pie when I think my weight can afford it). Noma knows most of the locals in the area, and I ask her about some of West Plains more famous natives such as Preacher Roe (baseball pitcher), Porter Wagoner (country music star and former singing partner of Dolly Parton), and Dick Van Dyke (who lived there for a short while as a small child).

At 12:30 my afternoon course begins. This is REL 102, *Introduction to the New Testament.* In this classroom, I see many students who have never really traveled much beyond this area of the state as well as a young Korean woman who grew up in Seoul, married a service man, and then moved to Missouri. The cultural diversity represented here makes a discussion of Western icons such as Paul and Jesus quite a challenge. Hopefully, a little patience and a dash of humor will make the class successful.

In the late afternoon hours, I meet with several students for interviews. In these short sessions, usually lasting no longer than 10 minutes, I try to get to know my students and also let them get acquainted with me. In graduate school, I imagined that teaching was the clear and accurate presentation of the material, and that students would somehow magically share my excitement about the subject. I have learned, however, that just as important as the content of the course is the personality, or better, the humanity of the teacher.



From REL 102: Sheryl Johnson and Aekyong Lewis

Thus, these interviews in which the teacher and the students become familiar with one another are crucial to the success of the course.

Around 5:00 pm I climb into my little red Suzuki jeep for the two hour journey home. I usually buy a cup of coffee at the nearby Git-N-Go to boost my energy level. As I drive, I see the beautifully rolling hills, which were dark last night, now illuminated by the setting sun. I replay the day as I drive, sometimes cringing at both what I said, and what I did not say.

I also replay what my students said to me. Students questions are always serious. I have learned that whether students initially realize it or not, they take the study of religion seriously. Religious Studies is not merely an academic exercise for these students, but something that affects their daily life—a lesson that I continually need to relearn.

Around the Department . . .

Presenting Kathy Pulley

Warm smile, quick wit, sharp mind, good friend are all descriptions of Dr. Kathy Pulley that easily come to the minds of her students and colleagues alike. Dr. Pulley contributes to the department in the areas of religion and society, especially women's issues. *The Tablet* cornered Dr. Pulley for a quick interview in order to give you a glimpse at her work and life.

Tablet: First of all, Kathy, how have you enjoyed SMSU?

Dr. Pulley: I have enjoyed both the students and the extraordinary collegiality among departmental faculty members. SMSU gives me an opportunity to have contact with students from different religious traditions who are curious and eager for serious dialogue about religious issues.

Tablet: How did you become interested in the field of Religious Studies?

Dr. Pulley: I grew up in a religious atmosphere, and being a part of a religious community was of utmost importance to the life of my family. As I progressed through my undergraduate course work I found myself more and more interested in religious studies, despite the fact that when I entered college I thought I would pursue a degree in either law or counseling. When I graduated I wanted to study religion in greater depth so I pursued an M.A. Later I had the opportunity to do some adjunct teaching at SMSU, and that is when I decided I wanted a Ph.D. and a career in teaching Religious Studies.

Tablet: What are your research interests presently?

Dr. Pulley: I am focusing on the changing roles of women, over the last hundred years, in conservative protestant churches. I want to investigate the specific ways in which culture and theology affect each other in regard to women's issues. When I am finished I hope to produce a monograph about the topic.

Tablet: You will be on sabbatical leave this spring semester. How will that fit into your research

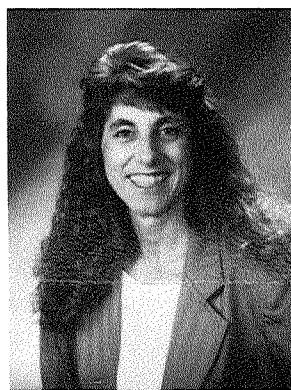
plans?

Dr. Pulley: First, I will be focusing on what I consider to be a pivotal period for changing gender roles, 1870 to 1920, and doing a comparative analysis with the post-1950s. There are many similarities between the women's movement of the late 19th century and that of the 1960s. Second, I have already begun to do some oral interviews about a particular female minister, Sadie Crank, who preached extensively in Christian churches in southwest Missouri at the turn of the century. She will provide a case study of how one particular woman dealt with the cultural and theological conflicts of pursuing a career "of the cloth"—a career usually open to men only.

Tablet: In addition to teaching and research, you are involved in a lot of committee work?

Dr. Pulley: Yes. The advantage of committee work is that it allows me to see how the University works,

and to get a microscopic look at the many complexities involved in running a University. However, committees are often quite time consuming.



Dr. Kathy Pulley

Tablet: In particular, you chair a committee dealing with NCAA accreditation. What is involved with that?

Dr. Pulley: The NCAA has begun a new national

certification. While some schools are a year ahead of us, SMSU will be in the second group of universities to be evaluated and hopefully certified by the NCAA. I am the chair of the University steering committee that oversees four sub-committees, each having about ten members. When the NCAA team visits our campus in March 1995 they will review all our programs and make suggestions for improvements. In March 1996 we will have a final NCAA review team come to campus to either confirm certification or to specify areas that need further improvement.

Tablet: You have also done a lot of travelling. Tell us about some of your journeys.

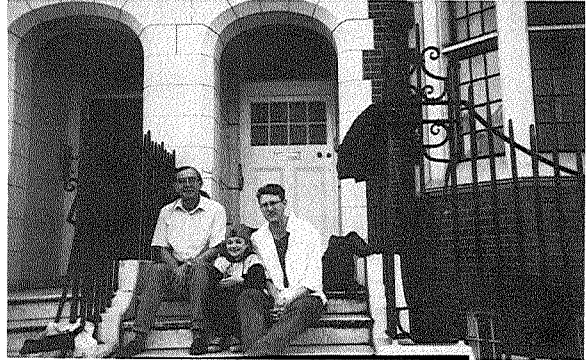
Dr. Pulley: I thoroughly enjoy traveling. When I was working on my Ph.D. at Boston University I was awarded a John M. Olin Fellowship and spent a year doing research in England. During that time, I traveled throughout Europe and the Middle East, including a trip to Russia—still the U.S.S.R. at that time. However, a trip to South Korea to study the Unification Church may have been my most unique travel experience.

Tablet: Besides travelling what are some of your other outside interests?

Dr. Pulley: I enjoy sports—especially the SMSU Lady Bears! Occasionally I find myself being a "general contractor" for some small remodeling projects on my house; however, my most rewarding outside interest is Spenser, my five-month-old nephew, who never ceases to brighten a day.

Islam, and Religious Dissent in England. Both met in the afternoon at Imperial College, a technical college a half mile or so from where we lived. Obviously I did a lot of walking as well as climbing stairs (classes met on the fifth floor too!).

My mornings were mostly spent studying at the Kensington Public Library, just opposite our apartment. I took my classes on field trips to the Jewish Museum, the old Portuguese Synagogue, the British Museum,



Three generations of Michaels men on the steps of 22 Horton Street

Religious Studies on the Other Side of the Pond

by Ramsey Michaels

Betty and I flew out of Boston early in January in the middle of what New Englanders call a "nor'easter," with a foot of snow on the ground and all westward traffic grounded. But we were headed east, across the Atlantic, and we landed in London the next morning to find not a trace of snow and temperatures in the fifties. That was how our London semester began. Tadeusz, our landlord, helped us carry our baggage up to our cozy fifth floor(!) apartment at 22 Horton Street in Kensington, west London. Once we entered, there was a bathroom immediately to our right, and yet another flight of stairs *inside* the apartment leading up to our living room/kitchen/dining area and two small bedrooms. There were no "lifts," as the British say, so in time those hundred or so steps became very familiar to us indeed.

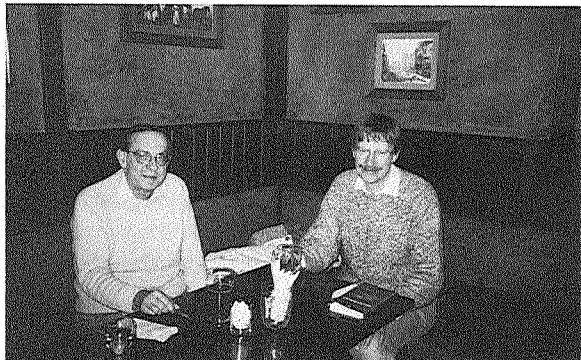
By mid-January the students had arrived and the academic program was under way. It was the largest London program ever, with 60 students. Our faculty team was much like a department, except that it represented six different liberal arts disciplines and six universities: SMSU, UM-Rolla, UMSL, and SE, NE, and NW Missouri State. I taught two courses, both new to me: *Three World Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and*

London Central Mosque, John Wesley chapel, and the Bunyan museums in Bedford and Elstow. Wednesdays there were all-day field trips to the East End, the Houses of Parliament, Stratford, Dover, Canterbury, Bath, Stonehenge, and Oxford. On weekends students traveled on their own throughout the British Isles, and there were optional group excursions to Paris and Amsterdam, and pony trekking in Wales. Then there was spring break. Students went everywhere, from Austria to the Canary Islands. One student in my world religion class had an audience with the Pope! And there were rumors that a couple of others spotted Dustin Hoffman on the street and got his autograph! For students and faculty alike, it was a semester to remember.

Scholarship Winners

The Department of Religious Studies is very pleased to offer three scholarships to students: the Boone, Robinson, and tenZythoff Scholarships totaling \$2750. We are presently raising money for the Wegner Scholarship, in honor of Dr. Walt Wegner, a former instructor on the West Plains campus. The following students are the 1994-5 winners:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Boone | Robinson | tenZythoff |
| Liz Barker | August Reichten | Russell McDarris |
| Stephanie Reeves | | |
| Tim Stagner | | |
| Melissa Gentry | | |



I and my Shakespearean colleague Arnie Preusner from Kirksville, in a pub.

... The Rest of the Story (continued from the front page)

Gerrit's eyes twinkle as he tells a story about a student who came into his office one day. "Do you know that my Old Testament teacher is a rabbi?" the student asked with excitement. "Yes, I do," came Gerrit's response. "Do you know that he is Jewish?" the student asked again. "Yes, I believe that is a requirement of rabbis," he said with a smile. "Well, do you know that this Jewish rabbi also knows the New Testament?" the student finally asked. "We would not have hired him if he did not," Gerrit stated.

In 1973, the department hired their first full time faculty members (other than Gerrit), John Wilson and Robert Cooley (shared with Sociology and Anthropology).



From the 1973 *Ozzarko*: Uriel Smith, John Wilson, JoAnne Brown, Douglas McGlynn, Gerrit tenZythoff, Charles Johnson, James Robinson (absent: Tom Raber)

In 1984, SMSU began offering a major in Religious Studies. This past fall, the department began to offer an M.A. in Religious Studies, the first such masters degree to be offered by a public institution in Missouri. In December, David Embree became our first graduate from that program.

The Department of Religious Studies began with the determination of a few students, and was sustained at every step of its transformation by dedicated individuals. From the beginning, Gerrit states, the department's goal has been to provide an education that students want to receive, and teachers want to teach. This goal has never changed.

About the Authors

Dr. Jack Llewellyn, a specialist in Hinduism, wrote his article from Dehli, India where he is doing field work. He has served on the faculty since 1989.

Dr. Ramsey Michaels, a specialist in New Testament studies, joined the SMSU department in 1984.

Dr. John Strong, a specialist in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, joined the department in 1992. He edits *The Tablet*.

The Department of Religious Studies Goes "On Line"

You can get the latest news and information about the Department of Religious Studies through the Internet. Simply access SMSU's gopher server by issuing the command "gopher nic.smsu.edu". Follow the menus to the College of Humanities and Public Affairs, and you

will find the department's entry. There you will find such things as our course offerings, professor's publications, information about excavations, a fact sheet, and other data about the department. Keep watching as the information will be updated regularly.

