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We Are...Marshall, December 15, 2006

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Carl Johnson
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office asking him for money to buy the IBM computers. My main point was as a trainer of teachers we needed to be a leader in the field of providing up-to-date technology experiences for our preservice teachers.”

Nitzschke liked the idea, Johnson says, and after finding out that $50,000 was needed to make the purchase, told him to “Get me your order.” It was on his desk by 10 a.m. the next morning.

Dr. Nitzschke had already taken a new job at another university and he didn’t have to come up with the money. However his successor, Dr. (Wade) Gilley, had to. He was not too happy about doing that but I already had the computers.”

He was also successful with Nitzschke on another request. As chair of the University Functions committee, Johnson felt more should be done for retiring faculty members. “We weren’t doing much for them at the time, so we talked Dr. Nitzschke into buying a captain’s chair or a rocking chair for retiring professors. It’s a small way of telling our retirees that Marshall appreciates the years of service they have given to the university.”

The tradition continues today, he says.

As interest as he is on laying concrete educational foundations, he’s just as adept at literally laying foundations of another kind. Johnson has been an enthusiastic Habitat for Humanity volunteer for more than 15 years, having worked on 8 houses.

His service began in 1986 when the church his family attends, the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, announced an ambitious program to build a Habitat for Humanity home every three years. He’s worked on some houses from the start to finish and kept volunteering even after the church’s program ended. It’s a valuable learning process, he says, like an apprenticeship where a volunteer can learn to work on all phases of building a structure from putting up a roof to working with sheetrock.

Actually, he’s a skilled woodworker who turns out fine furniture and clocks. His first piece was a grandfather clock made from scratch, which turned out to be enormously complex to build and become a test of his perseverance. His father-in-law was to have been his teacher, but illness forced him to bow out, so Johnson found another mentor. “I went to his house two times a week for 18 months before I got that clock finished,” Johnson recalls. Since then he’s put his skills to good use and has created a host of furniture pieces, including a computer table, bookshelves, a drop-leaf table, a headboard, a regular desk and a roll-top desk. “The roll-top isn’t so real-hard to make as it sounds,” he says modestly.

An avid sports fan, he played basketball and baseball in high school and at a community college. Today he can be found at noon three days a week in Galilean Hall with 10 to 15 other faculty members playing a spirited game of basketball.

The Johnsons have two daughters, Angela, who is a missionary in Mozambique, and Laura, who lives with her surgeon husband and their three daughters, ranging in age from one to five, in Boone, N.C. “If we had known they would be so much fun, we would have had them first,” he says, speaking like a doting grandparent.

He’s a positive thinker who tries to look on the bright side.

“People can always find something to complain about; I try to find things I can be thankful for,” he says. He’s analytical but very flexible, traits that have stood him in good stead in navigating his way through the rules and regulations of an organization. But it’s the people in the organization that are his real focus, he says.

“I like to think of myself as being student-centered. I make an error in judgment regarding some issue with a student, I try to make it in favor of the student. My number one objective as chair has been to create an atmosphere where EVERYONE enjoys coming to work. When that happens, then most of the other things you like to see accomplished at a university generally fall into place.”

A Night to Remember

December 12, 2006 will be a date long remembered in the Huntington and Marshall communities, as the Warner Bros. picture, “We Are Marshall,” made its debut at the Keith-Albee Theatre. Left: Hundreds filled the bleachers at the “Green Carpet” for a glimpse of the movie’s stars. Center: Matthew McConaughey responds to a reporter’s question on the Green Carpet. Right: “We Are Marshall” director McG and Marshall President Stephen J. Kopp at the pre-premiere reception.

Marker Unveiled During Premiere Week

Don Hill, Glenn Lacy Named Co-Employees of the Month

Don Hill, manager of physical plant, and Glenn Lacy, trades worker, both at the Marshall University Graduate College in South Charleston, have been named Marshall University co-employees of the Month for October, according to Jim Stephens, chair of the Employee of the Month Committee.

They were nominated by Kemp Winfree, Vice President for Regional Operations, who wrote: “Both Don and Glenn are exceptional employees who, as a normal part of their work behavior, go beyond what is required. They work to make certain the South Charleston environment is conducive to good student-faculty use. Creating such an environment helps these groups meet their goals and permits Don and Glenn to meet their own goals.”

Don Hill (left) and Glenn Lacy (right), pose with their Employee of the Month awards with Kemp Winfree, Vice President for Regional Operations, who made the presentation
Atlantis Grant Creates Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Psychology
Marshall University’s College of Liberal Arts has received a $1.27 million European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Postsecondary Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Higher Education and Culture (DGEAC).

Clark Egnor, executive director, Center for International Studies, said the Atlantis grant creates a new avenue to educate Marshall students by offering dual degrees to students who also attend European universities.

Egnor, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology, said Marshall students will have the opportunity to earn a bachelor’s degree from both Marshall and one of the European partner institutions.

"This grant will allow Marshall University to create a new dual degree program in psychology, which is an area of great need for our students," Egnor said.

American Sign Language courses offered by MCTC

According to Dr. Sarah Denman, senior vice president for academic affairs, the program will be the first of its kind at Marshall University and the state of West Virginia, funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture (DGEAC).

"This grant is a major accomplishment for Marshall University and a significant step toward accomplishing our strategic vision of internationalizing the university," President Stephen J. Kopp said.

Linda Vissian, MCTC program coordinator for Communicative Disorders and Deaf Studies, said this new program will improve the educational opportunities for both the institution and its students.

"This decision will allow us to bring forth a new cadre of specialists into the community, specifically those working in the field of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Studies," Vissian said.

The college of education and human services will continue to offer ASL courses and encourage students to consider a minor in the field.

Profile: Carl Johnson

A series on interesting Marshall University people.

Marshall University is one of those places where just about anything can happen — and it usually does. Just ask Dr. Carl Johnson, chair of the Department of Psychology. He has spent nearly 32 years at the university and who coined those sentiments: ‘If you ask something can be done, the answer is ‘no’; then all you have to do is just look around a little. You will find someone doing what you want to do.’

"I’ve been successful at navigating through the sometimes thorny and complicated administrative procedures that are the hallmark of most large educational institutions. Many changes have taken place at Marshall during the past 31 years that I have been on the faculty and most of them have been positive," he says. "One of the positives has been a change in the campus scenery. When I came here, the old women’s gym was located between Jenkins Hall and the Student Center. When that building was demolished, that was a ‘good’ change. Other areas of the campus have been beautified and now Marshall has a beautiful campus."

He also noted improvements in areas surrounding the campus. "There were a lot of dilapidated buildings along Sixth Avenue and the university bought those buildings and made parking spaces, which has been a big improvement," Johnson said.

Johnson has been chair of the SOE since 1989 after coming to Marshall University from Southern Missouri State University, where he held a teaching post. He has undergraduate students at the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. from Kansas State University. He met his wife, JoAnne, who supervises Marshall’s student health services, at MCTC, where they both followed their dream of becoming educators.

"I recognized that technology would be an important asset for education classrooms and was able to secure funds for one of the first computer labs on campus. I can recall with amusement that in the early days at least one dean regarded his hard-earned computer acquisitions as ‘mainly toys.’ But, he says, ‘When you only have $5,000 to start your lab, you do what you can. By the way, that first computer lab contained six TI 99s (purchased for $50 each as Texas Instruments was getting out of the computer market), four commodore 64s, As Atari computers, two TRs 80s and two Apple IIe computers. One common thread that we did have was that these different computer was to write programs using the BASIC language. That first computer lab was followed by an all Apple lab and finally a fully Mac lab.

Johnson learned not to be shy about asking for something to be done, to quickly and to go to the top if necessary. ‘One morning in June, 1990, the local paper reported that the state would use $7 million dollars of lottery money in four years to purchase IBM computers for public schools,’ he recalls. ‘By 8 that morning I was sitting in front of a friend who said, ‘Go straight to the president.’ I was Dr. Dale Nitzschke’s (continued on page 4)"

Hill and Lacy

In addition to their regular duties, they said they did exemplary work recently.

"Among 25 or 30 meetings during the time, an individual(s) vandalized the I-64 vista sign on the South Charleston campus by tearing off the letters ‘a-i-l’ from ‘Marshall. The additional damage was done to the steel backing on the sign. Total damage is $5,000. On Monday, August 29 Don and Glen designed a way to install a new 30-foot base with lights and proudly proclaimed ‘We are...Marshall.’ They devised a way to hang the new sign and improvised a system of ropes and quickly made stakest to anchor it in place, working until 7:30 p.m. on a 90-plus degree heat—not one word of complaint about the situation, but demonstrating an absolute determination to keep the vandalst out of the best of the situation and to put the Marshall name back out facing the 30,000 plus motorists who travel through the area each day and look up at our hilltop sign.

They each received a plaque, balloon bouquet, and a check for $100 from Winfrey.

Art Chair Has National Exhibitions

Artwork by Professor Byron Clerx, chair of the art and design department, was featured in three exhibits throughout the country.

The exhibits are:
- “Exploding/Exploring the Book” at the Art Institute of Boston. The exhibit was at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and runs through Dec. 22.
- “Fresh Paint: Process and Possibility” at the Arlington Arts Center in Arlington, Va. The exhibition dates are from Dec. 5 to Jan. 27. Clerx will deliver a public lecture at AAC at the end of January.

Two Employees Win Movie Package Giveaway

Alan Ward of Residence Services and Michael McCona of the Marshall Community and Technical College were winners of the Annual Fund Marshall Movie Package Giveaway provided by the MU Foundation and the Office of Development. Each received tickets to see the movie: "We Are Marshall" at the Keith-Albee Theatre, admission to the post-premiere gala, breakfasted with skiftton’s and a $50 American Express Gift Card.

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Among those who spoke at the ceremony were President Stephen J. Kopp, former Marshall assistant football coach Red Dawson, and Jack Hardin, former reporter for the Herald Dispatch. Signs will direct visitors to the site once they exit I-64 at Exit 1.