

**The Rhythm of a University Life ~ by Dr Don Morrow, Faculty of Health Sciences**



In less than 7 months, I will retire from working at Western. As a trained historian, reflecting back has been my academic *modus operandi* and it feels important to me to take some time to hold up a mirror to what this University has meant to me for almost 5 decades. Unabashedly and prefatorily, I want to be transparent that I have very much cherished my involvement with Western. It has not always been easy or fun; frustrations, sometimes anger, cynicism, and sadness were all part of my career. In 2015, as I write this, UWO is going through some difficult times, troubling circumstances, and considerable disquiet and dissatisfaction with our working environment, our administration, and our governance. And I would suggest that there is nothing new about people's perceptions, positive ones and negative ones, about this institution – its pulse and our pulses quicken and diminish with time, the times, and the cycles of this seemingly little cotton-batten world of academe. What I wish to explore here is my relationship to and with Western – a kind of introspection in retrospect – to offer parts of my academic story, some insights, word-images, and even pictures of what it is and has been like to

be intimately connected – some might say addicted – to a University, to move toward, to live, and to relish an academic’s life. What formative influences, people and forces, shape a person to become a university professor? What were the tumblers in my universe, the ones that unlocked my career to the realm of higher learning? What was/is it like both becoming and being *a prof* in a relatively non-traditional discipline, Kinesiology? For the most part, I have chosen to leave out my personal life and instead to focus on the meaning of the Western microcosm to me as we evolved over the last half century. In exploring my own path, my hope is that readers will reflect on their perspectives about work and life connections and your relationship to your work environment, the place, and its people – possibly others will be motivated to write their stories. Perhaps, to paraphrase a well-known “inspirational” poster, it just could be that the sole purpose of my academic life is to serve as a warning to others.

My first touch of the campus came as a London high school student at Beck Collegiate in 1967, my graduating year. Beck, now the London Board of Education offices, was a unique high school with respect to its teachers, staff, and students all of whom created and participated in a school culture devoted to the pursuit of excellence and immersion in all aspects of one’s school life. An Air-Force ‘brat,’ I had only known small towns like Centralia, Trenton, and Exeter when my family moved to London at the start of grade 9. School had always been both a thrill and an opportunity for competition and challenge in everything from school subjects (math games and spelling bees were my educational domain – I simply had to win) to music (I had no talent but Beck’s “singing auditoriums,” where we sat in sections by voice type and sang exuberantly in eagerly anticipated Friday events) to sport. And sport was my very special forte; in fact, throughout my life, I have always believed playing Sport was my mistress, my muse, and my comfort zone.

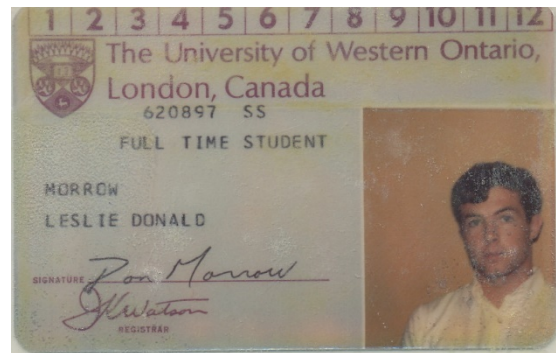
When I came to Beck, I thought there were only two seasons, baseball and hockey, the sequential, reverberating phases of my boyhood days. I had never even seen a gymnasium or a real cinder-track or a tennis court. Shy and small in grade 9, I drank up every single moment that I could spend learning new sports – basketball, paddleball, tennis, football, lacrosse, ping-pong, football, and even trampoline stunts – anything that involved my body moving. And yet the Beck protocol was such that I remember skipping some noon-hour intramural sport contests to attend optional Greek classes taught by Mr Groat, our school’s Latin teacher. Groat, perpetually, I felt,

clad in long-sleeved, starched white shirts and broad ties didn't just teach Greek literally; instead, he acted out Greek events and Greek history. I was at Beck, and very likely still am an athletic geek, a kind of Rousseau's *Émile* set down in the middle (sex county) of the twentieth century.

I observed anyone that moved and how they moved, male and female, and the more talented in sport, the more I sought to emulate and duplicate their movements until I believed I had achieved mirror-mastery. And, I was fully aware I did the same thing with school subjects, found the 'smartest' students, the most alluring teachers, and tried to be like them in demeanor and in learning. By grade 11 (high school went to grade 13), I was particularly attracted to and skilled at racket sports – tennis, badminton, paddleball, table tennis. Sometime in the Spring of 1967, I was playing in a tennis match on Beck's courts. Two men sat on the grass incline outside the courts; I noticed them and assumed they were someone's parents. When I finished, one of them called me to come over to see them. Both men lampooned the excessive height of my ball toss and seemed to marvel at how well I played in spite of this apparent flaw in my game. Slightly miffed at their criticisms and mocking tone, something must have compelled me to listen to what followed. Professors Dutch Decker and Jack Fairs invited me to come to Western to see and learn to play squash. I recall being amused; even with their explanation, I was only familiar with squash's vegetable form. Ironically, I knew generally that London's university was somewhere in the north end of the city but I had never actually been there or seen it.

Throughout that Spring and all Summer, at every opportunity, I rode my Yamaha 80 motorcycle to Western, at least to the newly-built Alumni Hall and the allure of six pristine 'American' or hard-ball squash courts located in the bowels of that edifice, directly across from the indoor gun or firing range. Jack Fairs spent hours with me, teaching me the intricacies and mysteries of the forehand and backhand strokes, body-positioning preparation, wall-angles, and especially racket deception and how to hold or freeze my opponent by showing him one apparent-stroke about to happen and then doing something else at the last minute. Some years earlier, one of my sport coaches at Beck, Mike Sharratt saw something in me of which I was unaware and introduced me to scholarly journals and articles about sport and physical education. Until then, I thought sport was a delightful verb, something one did for sheer pleasure; I had no idea there was an academic aspect to my love of play. With Jack's coaching and attention to my athleticism, and having been accepted to Western as a first-year Social Sciences' student, I

decided to take “Phys Ed” as one course on route to, or so I fully believed, my grand plan of a career in Medicine.



[don 21] *My first year student card, 1967-68*

In the Fall of 1967, I began my relationship with Western, ritually donned with a frosh-beanie hat – a long-standing tradition for all frosh, long since disappeared – and kissed on the cheek by a senior female student.



[don 24] *My frosh beanie*

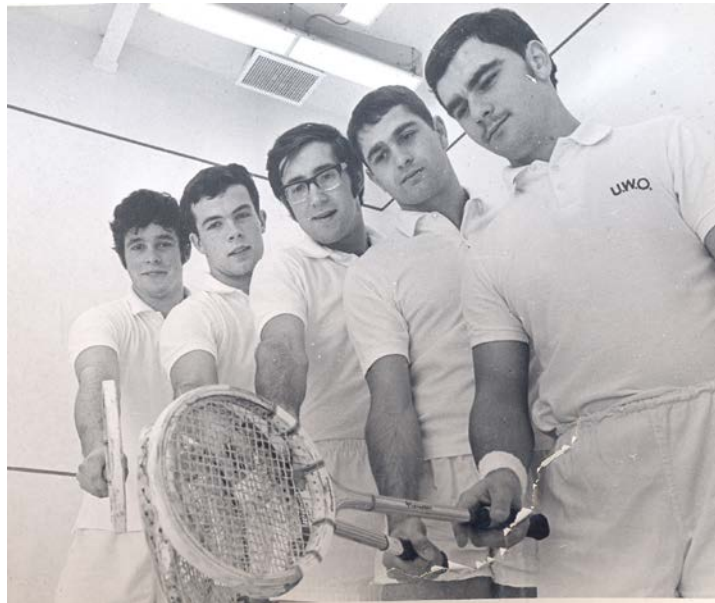
In retrospect, that kiss, from easily the most beautiful young woman I had ever seen, symbolically began my life-long embrace with Western. Incongruously, at a time when course timetables were filled out by hand, I missed the fact that my PE course actually had a lecture component; I attended all the ‘labs’ doing all manner of motor control and aerobic testing, learning new skills etc. In early November, some 6 or 7 weeks into term, I was walking up UC Hill with a friend who asked me how I felt about the mid-term coming up that day; mentally, I went through a checklist of my courses, English, Psychology, Biology, Philosophy, French, and of course PE, but could not remember a pending exam in any of them. When I asked ‘what

exam?’ Mark said, ‘you know, in PE.’ Turns out there were 2 lab hours and 2 lecture hours in PE, who knew. I sat the exam and achieved 17%, an early lesson about humility and academic awareness.

The campus in the late 1960s was lush and I was, as my new-found favourite poet, Dylan Thomas said, “young and easy...and happy as the grass was green.” Weldon Library, the University Community Centre, and the Social Sciences buildings were a half-decade away, their future-sites served as athletic fields and carried lush remnants of the Hunt Club Golf course that once surrounded the university grounds and could still be observed in the magnificence of the landscape – Western comes by its country-club reputation honestly. And I became more and more enraptured inside the bubble of my Undergraduate life and times. With a medical career still my north star, I decided that a double-major in PE and English would serve me well on my peter-pan journey. The two subject areas were a strange blend; no one else that I knew in any year of the Honors PE program took English courses beyond first year. For me, reading novels was my second passion; poets were word-athletes and essayists and play-rights enlightened my intellectual passion and fed my imagination. Western was like Beck, only bigger with more freedoms but still a venue of expansion of my mind and thrilling in my body.

I made both intercollegiate teams of badminton and squash and each day ended with 4 hours or more of practices for those sports (except for Fridays re squash; in the early years of Alumni Hall’s existence, it was believed that the smell of squash players’ sweat would permeate the Hall on concert nights). We travelled to different universities, some in the States, to compete and we had meal money and stayed in hotels or with billets. The university actually gave varsity athletes their gym apparel inclusive of treasured white wool socks with a broad purple band encircling each ankle and I had a sense of privilege and home-ness. For a young man who worked in the then-lucrative tobacco harvest to make and save money for my tuition, this was a taste of abundance I had not experienced previously. I coveted my life and drank up the content of my academic courses. Cadaveric Anatomy brought new, deep understandings about bodies and movements; Sociology of leisure gave me greater context of meaning about recreation and sport; and Yeats and Shakespeare and Conrad and Eliot and Dickens and many more of the literary canon were counterpoints of human understanding I felt I was starting to fathom. I was a

student of sport, of knowledge, of learning, of literature, of life in the microcosm of Western and I immersed myself in it.



[don 25] *The Western Squash Team circa 1968; I am 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left*

Professors fascinated me – from lecturers reading, literally, from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or from Guyton’s *Physiology* textbook; from Biology ‘taught’ via TV monitors in Natural Sciences 1 to Prof Havelka entrancing me, *sans* lecture notes, about theories of personality in Middlesex Theater; from one professor who lectured sitting down and often, afflicted by narcolepsy we learned, stopped talking and fell asleep only to awaken and continue on exactly where he had left off, to water polo classes in the Thames Hall pool and 12-minute runs. It was all magic and awesome and wonderful. I equated learning and being with Western, envisioning no other place to live or be or experience life in such style.

And then I met the other side of Jack Fairs, the intellectual, the academic, the thinker. Who else but Jack could write an instructive essay on the squash lob serve and entitle it, “A Portrait of the Phlegmatic Server!” In my third year, I enrolled in Jack’s Sport and the Body in Cultural Perspectives (likely a longer title than this, but that’s how I remember it now). Fairly certain my squash coach would provide an interesting course, I was unprepared for his and the course content’s impact on me. Jack went into his lecture room at least an hour before class and filled the blackboards with notes, often bringing in portable chalkboards to complete his work.

For each class, he handed out what seemed like reams of notes and diagrams and references that filled every page and each page was ‘run-off’ on his new-found teaching support device, the ditto machine. His delivery of material was as magnetic as his personality; he told stories that had nothing to do with content but always got back to the notes, digressed, reminded us about some event or some person and continued into content. If a student came to his lecture after a week or more of skipping class, Jack would stop talking, turn to the student, extend his arm to shake his or her hand and introduce himself as Jack Fairs, course instructor, and smile.

For me, it was some alchemical process that brought Jack’s affable, congenial, joking personality into the ‘gold’ of his course content. In retrospect, it was an amalgam of scholars’ thoughts and treatises on the connections between body and the soul throughout western history. Plato (I think) I learned said, “sweat is the doorstep to manly virtue;” Calvin was that “dour and profoundly unhappy divine who spent his life worrying that someone, somewhere was having a good time.” One scholar during the Protestant Reformation, if memory serves, opined that “God created syphilis to keep man’s nose to the grindstone.” Protestant tenets held that there were “marks of election” or good deeds believers could do – usually by renouncing bodily pleasure – to get into heaven. And yet another brilliant intellectual named Freeman R Butts actually asserted that the western world “has come through 2,000 years of higher education based on the notion that [hu]mankind is essentially a soul for mysterious, accidental reasons imprisoned in a body.” The course was an incursion into Cartesian dualism writ large about cultures that ennobled the body and those that disparaged it. Play, renowned anthropologist Johan Huizinga proclaimed, was both “superior and anterior to culture.” Could I have had any better affirmations of the marriage of intellectualism and the significance of the body to humankind and to my way of being, doing, and thinking!

I remember many associations and sensations connected to my years as a student at Western: the feel of the grip of my rackets and the seemingly facile court movements; sitting in the carrels in Lawson Library and staring at the flag pole atop University College, wondering what it would be like to sit on top of the pole in a winter storm; the formaldehyde odour that permeated my clothing after Anatomy labs and prohibited my ability to ingest ham sandwiches; the giddy vibrations of exchanging empty sugar containers with full ones from the Somerville House cafeteria; the eager anticipation of taking Dr Bill L’Heureux’s fourth year seminar course,

expecting some kind of Demosthenes-like orator; the embodied thrill of being a cheerleader and learning to work with a partner and a team; the joy of being so closely connected to the 54 members of my class through all our lectures, coffee meetings, parties, struggles, successes, failures....



[don 27] UWO *Cheerleading Squad*, Fall 1969; I am 2<sup>nd</sup> from right

When I wrote my last Undergraduate exam, fittingly in Alumni Hall, I vividly recall exiting the building and watching one classmate throw all his course notes up in the air and proclaim he would never have to open another book or take another course. I was shocked! My body and my mind knew I was just getting started; there was so much more for me to learn and this university was only beginning to inspire me. It all just was, and Western held me captive “though I sang in my chains like the sea.”

Going into Graduate School at Western to pursue a Master’s degree was a tautology for me. Determinedly, I finished my MA in one calendar year, six courses and a thesis. And, the process of doing graduate work merely whetted my appetite for more learning. Doing an MA thesis on a history of intramural sport at Western represented my interest in mass over elite or high level sporting endeavours; even more, the literature about Western, from primary sources like *The Occy* (*Occidentalia* yearbook) or *The Gazette* (originally, *In Cap and Gown*) to the quaint and very personal reminiscence, *‘Taint Runnin’ No More* by former UWO President W. Sherwood Fox simply reinvigorated my deep attachment to the university. And I remember the Head Reference Librarian giving me a key to Lawson Library so that I could go in at night and

stay as long as I needed in order to do my research. I cannot imagine that kind of access liberty being even considered today. Significantly, but without much actual reflection, going to medical school seemed to disappear from my radar. Physical Education (now Kinesiology or Kin), at first, a kind of academic ticket to a teaching career, became more of an accepted discipline within post-secondary educational institutions and increasingly, it was recognized as a legitimate area of research study. It seemed to me then and now that Kin borrowed from every mainstream subject area of the university – physiology of exercise, psychology of sport, biomechanics (physics) of sport, sport history etc – and studied human movement from the arts, social science, and science academic perspectives; Kin studied human movement/exercise/sport because no other discipline did.

As I entered Grad School in the summer of 1971, universities in Ontario were boom-centres in terms of enrolment and government funding for new buildings and expanding programs. For example, at Western, Weldon Library was just built and grad student offices, like mine, consisted of a brand new desk and a 3-drawer file cabinet distributed in kind of wide-open-concept on the main floors of the library. In retrospect, that year in Grad School heightened my interest in academe; I started to envision myself doing what I observed professors doing and I had greater one-on-one access to professors as a Graduate student. Writing papers for courses and doing my thesis proved to me that I had an ability to write and do research. Most of my Teaching Assistantship that year involved being apprenticed to the first dean of the newly-created Faculty of Physical Education; my assignment was to create coding cards for a search-retrieval system called Uniterm. It was tedious; however, it necessitated voracious reading of all manner of articles in my field. At some point in the Winter term, it struck me that doing a PhD was in my realm of possibility and I started to look into universities with PE doctoral programs in North America. The only PhD program in existence in Canada at the time was at The University of Alberta in Edmonton. Jack Fairs connected me with a potential advisor at U of A, Dr Peter Lindsay, and counseled me about the nature of advanced work in sport history; specifically, he recommended I read and absorb Robert F. Berkhofer's insightful and bold historiography, *A Behavioral Approach to Historical Analysis*. More than any other single work, that book, an essay more on methods than methodology, both reinforced what I believed about researching and writing on human behaviour in the past and deepened my understanding about

the importance of how we interrogate human behaviour both historically and just in general. I still use sections of that book in my graduate courses.

Having been accepted at U of A, I spent my entire Spring and Summer of 1972 doing two things – mowing lawns for a local school board to make money for more of my educational pursuits and writing the chapters of my thesis. I literally sat on a rider-mower during the day and then sat another 6 to 8 hours each night scripting my thesis. In 4 months of exclusively sitting, I gained almost 30 pounds. That Fall, I arrived at U of A, found a home to rent in Calder, a railroad community in northern Edmonton, and started my doctoral program by taking courses, mostly in the History Department. My new body went kind of un-noticed until one day, emerging from the showers at the University, I ran into a former student-athlete from Western, a wrestler. Seeing me, he stopped in his tracks, greeted me briefly, and then said, “Wow, it’s not that cold here that you need that much fat on your body.” I was devastated.

Turns out, that his comment on my corpulence inspired me to do something about my weight and start an activity that became so important and integral to both my personal and professional life. Squash was not widely played at U of A, but racquetball was and so I joined an intramural league in that sport. I knew enough from exercise physiology that what I really needed to do was control how much and what I ate and combine those dietary refinements with something aerobic. I hated running just for the sake of running; short sprints on squash or badminton courts were a means to an end. Nevertheless, with limited funds, running seemed the only practical alternative and I set out to add running to my body-repertoire. Long story short, starting with a mere few city blocks, I became semi-addicted to running, even doing hill workouts with a fellow doctoral student who was a professional boxer and very knowledgeable about running-as-training. Combining the then-popular grapefruit diet (one very low in carbohydrates), I lost weight quickly and became enamoured with running’s challenges, its quiet, reflective time gifted to myself, and the exhilaration of sustained body-movement.



[don 4] My doctoral class at the University of Alberta

My experience at U of A was quite profound in terms of funneling me even more toward the professoriate. It wasn't data or facts or information that inspired me, it was questions, thought-provoking queries that cultivated my imagination toward endless possibilities. Perhaps the most impactful question came from Peter Lindsay's grad class discussion of Postman and Weingartner's *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, a self-professed "assault on outdated teaching methods." The question that stirred me intensely was, "what is worth knowing?" At the time and ever since, that question has haunted and charmed me and lead me to all kinds of follow-up questions. For whom? What or who determines worth? What does knowing even mean? Often I have wrestled with the question and even faced it as one question on my doctoral candidacy exams. The latter are comprehensive written and oral exams that are kind of the first rite of passage into the folds of higher learning; mine were comprised of what seemed like reams of scholarly articles and books, devoured and underlined (the bane of the academic learning process) for 6 months prior to 2 full days of exams. If passed, one moves from being a doctoral student to a doctoral candidate, ready to create a research proposal for a dissertation. The whole candidacy exam concept is odd; it has many iterations across campuses and disciplines. For me, the experience solidified my interest in education, particularly physical education and how the body was literally schooled in public education systems. My sport history horizon expanded to what I regarded as more fundamental questions about learning, about what is taught, and to whom.

I spent only 18 months in actual 'residence' at U of A. Running lead me to take up a logical, Edmonton winter parallel, cross-country skiing – one more bodily avenue of experience.

At the university, for one grad class research assignment, I elected to do a paper on Dr Egerton Ryerson, a former Methodist “saddle-bag” or itinerant preacher who became Ontario’s first Minister of Education. Multiple secondary works on Ryerson existed, most of them reiterations of his principal biographer, C. B. Sissons. Ryerson’s allure to me were the volumes of correspondence he created during his career and in particular, *My Dearest Sophie*, a collection of letters from Ryerson to his daughter. I felt in studying Ryerson and his letters and trying to understand his life and times, I was doing what Berkhofer advocated, in this case, getting “inside the skin” of a person’s behaviour in the past. In fact, I became so enmeshed with Ryerson that for a time, I actually considered a career as a United Church minister.

I moved to Arnprior, a small town near Ottawa so that I could spend needed time at the Archives of Canada, and periodically, the Ontario Archives in order to focus on Ryerson’s and successive Ontario educators’ implementation of physical education as a curricular subject in public schools. Instead of a religious ministry, the upshot of my writing and research and exposure to different professors lead me to believe that becoming a high school PE teacher was the right path for me. The plan was to finish my dissertation and enroll in teacher’s college, the latter a kind of axiomatic process many of my Undergraduate friends had followed on route to the teaching profession. I felt I had done a kind of lateral arabesque in pursuing a PhD because it was important to me; I would be unique in having that degree as a secondary school teacher but it meant I might be able to teach at a university in the future.

In the Fall of 1974, I enrolled at Althouse College of Education in London. Universities were going through tremendous growth, expansion, and enrollment escalations. Within a few weeks, two different universities’ administrators contacted me to see if I would consider a limited term contract to teach. I was astounded and I vividly remember feeling like Robert Frost’s traveler facing “two roads that diverged” in an academic woods’ of choice; self-mockingly, I remember thinking of the play on words to Frost’s poem, ‘if you come to a fork in the road, pick it up.’ And I did what it has taken me many years to practice, I sought help from colleagues, friends, and family in making my decision. No one told me the ‘right’ thing to do; mostly, people asked me questions and let me decide. Somewhere inside me I knew I wanted to be a professor and in the end, I chose Western’s offer of a two-year limited term contract at an annual starting salary of \$12,500. Thus, in the Fall of 1974, at the ripe age of 25, I came back,

uroboros-like, to Western, the place that had so enriched my being as an Undergraduate and Master's student.

For non-science-based PhDs, doing a post-doc research fellowship in the early 1970s was rare; now, in many ways, a post-doc in most fields has almost become the new PhD. I think the proverbial jury is still out whether or not this is a good trend; perhaps it's one driven by the current academic job market – it is becoming more and more difficult to find full-time, tenure-track, post-secondary positions. Forty years ago, the situation was much different with Undergraduate enrolment growth and, relatively speaking, much lower numbers of graduate students and programs. My self-perception as a prof – likely fueled by my dissertation interests – was very much toward being a teaching professor, an educator first, researcher second. Coming back to the institution at which I had spent 5 years as a student didn't feel easy and sometimes I still hear jabs at just how nepotistic it was/is to be employed at the same university where one did any degree. Professors who taught me became my colleagues and transitioning to that change in status felt awkward for quite some time.

I was fully aware that it would be too easy to let my dissertation slide in terms of completion. Strategically, I knew I did not want to become another ABD – All But Dissertation statistic; tactically then, I resolved that the only way to ensure any chance of remaining a prof at Western was this: at the end of teaching classes each day, I worked on my dissertation until 9:30-10:00 pm and then started lecture preparation for the next day. My self-awareness was such that I knew it would be too easy to procrastinate on the dissertation if I waited until late in the evening to start to work on it. At the same time, I realized that my pride and sense of professionalism was strong enough that I would not skip class preparation; in fact, in my first year, I couldn't skip preparation – most of the time, I was just one lecture ahead of my students in terms of content. Preemptively perhaps, it worked. In the Fall of 1975, I graduated from U of A with my PhD and was concomitantly awarded the Assistant Professor rank.

I was exhausted most of the time in my first two years but just loved being a prof. Teaching workloads were heavier then, equivalent to 3 courses per semester in contemporary teaching loads. And if memory serves, almost all courses were full academic year courses and whether or not you had seminar or lab hours, the workload was the same. For example, I taught a 3<sup>rd</sup> year sport history class that had 2 lecture hours and 6 seminar hours with no teaching

assistant. And, in Kin, if you taught practical courses, that is, physical activity courses (as I did), they were 6 contact hours per week, also with no teaching assistant. Thus, preparation time and contact time meant it was difficult to carve out research and writing periods.

And the climate was very different. For example, we had a Faculty Club, a place faculty members, sometimes with invited Graduate students, could go to have a drink and relax on campus. Every new, and I assume, continuing faculty member's wife was invited to join the Faculty Wives club. I'm not sure where they met but it was intended to be a socializing experience and the implication or expectation was that not many women were full-time faculty members. I am quite certain there was no Faculty Husbands' group. In addition, there was no email system. All communication among staff and faculty was done either by phone or the ubiquitous memo-system. In the latter regard, in our Faculty, going to one's mailbox seemed a disappointment or at least unusual not to have a memo from our Dean who produced them endlessly from his Dictaphone, the most widely utilized dictation-recording device. Secretaries typed (literally, on a typewriter) these memos as well as the course outlines, handouts, and manuscripts we submitted for publication. The overhead projector was quite revolutionary in supplanting or supporting 'blackboard work' (and they were black or green, not white, and we used chalk not markers). Vividly, I recall in my early years of teaching that there was this electrical machine, about the size of a small, 2-drawer filing cabinet, that had a strong lamp and reflecting mirror such that if you stuck a book-page picture on its base and levered the book into focus, you could actually show that picture on a large, portable projection screen (there were no automatic screens in the classrooms where I taught) to the students. 16 mm film projectors were available but there were few film resources, at least not in the courses I taught. My solution within a few years was to create a bank of 35 mm slides to use with a slide projector, itself relatively new to academe. Night or evening classes were common, in large part to cater to elementary and secondary teachers trying to complete their degrees and/or upgrade their professional qualifications. The hierarchy was such that junior profs, like me, were most often assigned these evening classes.

Teaching then seemed both daunting and alluring. Here I was teaching in a prestigious institution of "higher learning" and outside of about 5 weeks at Althouse, I had virtually no pedagogical training whatsoever. Sadly, in my estimation, this is still true, for the most part,

today; we remain a professoriate with no teaching pedigree, merely, a research degree. In my situation, I was literally let loose on some 80-100 students, about 25 of whom were trained teachers in London, and I was trying to 'teach' them something significant, something worth knowing about sport history or sport in culture or the content of a first-year general or water-front course in PE. My main classroom was Thames Hall # 204, a very long, narrow room with fixed wooden seats in rows, an area designed to fit the building, not to teach students. And like most new professors, I was zealous about content; in short, I wanted my students to know what I thought I knew and spent far too much time on facts and theories without, at first, much real planning about how to teach concepts or how to ask questions or how to engage students in learning. I think I was kind of semi-conscious about 'teaching' nuances then, perhaps more so as I evolved as a teacher.



[don 7] *The earliest picture I have of me as a young prof, circa late 1970s*

My saving grace for teaching evaluations and continued employment was my resolve to have fun and use all my wits and observations of the teaching styles and techniques of profs who had taught me. For example, one cold Winter night, in the midst of explaining the political nuances of different countries' systems of PE and sport, I noticed the wife of a pair of teachers who was grinning and pointing to her husband who was sound asleep beside her. I smiled to acknowledge her and after winking at the class, climbed over 2 or 3 rows of seats and sat down beside this somnolent man all the while continuing to talk. He woke up within a minute or so, quite startled and we all laughed. On another occasion, I think in my second year of teaching, one class assignment was to create a project in concert with a research paper and present the project to the class. There were some stunning pieces of art, symbols, representations, and so

forth, some of which I still have thanks to the generosity of some students. For this assignment, one student had done a paper on the evolution of the female swim suit. To do her presentation, she came into class dressed in a very Victorian bathing costume comprised of about 4 yards of material, and a bonnet. What a perfect outfit, I thought, to match her paper's topic. She started her talk at the lectern and all was going well until she started to take off the costume and then more clothing (or less clothing) as she got to different evolutionary points. The upshot was, she ended up wearing what was then called the one-ounce bathing suit, something more diaphanous than any of us, certainly moi-même, had expected. She did it all very skillfully; you could hear a pin drop by the end, followed by resounding applause. I was sure someone would relay this scandal to my dean, and my job, at best, would be in jeopardy. At the same time, these and myriad other situations were co-created among my students and they fed my perceptions and experiences about the richness of teaching. Within a very few years, I realized, I was never teaching a subject; I was teaching students about a subject, and there is a huge difference operating professionally from that perspective.

For me, the 1970s, in particular my first 6 years as a prof, were a whirlwind of changes, adaptations, learning, elation, growth, disappointment, joy, and sometimes anger. Being a prof was systemized, but veiled. Like Jung's sense of the unconscious mind, I felt there were always things going on underneath the campus façade. People in power positions seemed to know the rules and in a non-union environment, those rules often seemed translucent. Creating a footprint within the system wasn't easy, but to me it was appealing and vexing all at the same time. I felt closer to students than I did to my colleagues, not surprisingly. Moving from a limited term to a probationary, tenure-track contract was competitive and political in terms of what senior administrators wanted versus my very likely inflated sense of my scholarly worth. As a young academic, I was certain I had so much more to offer than many of my "dead-wood" colleagues, at least those I reasoned should be vaulted over in my quest for academic sanction. In my mind, I deserved to be a prof and for a year or two, worried and aggravated by my Dean's clear intent to hire someone more senior than me, I looked to other campuses and offers of employment and yet I was resolved to be a Western prof.

When I was granted a tenure-track appointment, I distinctly remember strongly and consciously asserting to myself that I would become excellent at what I did and that meant, for

me, making my employment, my job my number one priority. As I saw my Universe, it was the University; everything in my life revolved centrifugally around my work. Two of my sons were born before the end of the 70s, and while they were tremendously important to me and I loved them dearly, still I saw family as dependent on my work at Western. It wasn't so much a misperception of work-life balance or the male breadwinner role as it was a case of very blurred lines of responsibility; they seemed enmeshed in and dominated by Western. By my third or fourth year as a prof, my teaching evaluations, that single, signal indicator of 'teaching effectiveness,' were quite good and I felt a sense of place and rightness as a teacher. As a researcher, I had adopted an ostrich posture, one which, thankfully, two of my colleagues noticed and both Jack Fairs and George Wearing sat me down for a reality check into my future. Publish or perish, they told me, in exactly those terms and they couched their advice in other language that grabbed my attention and I resolved to get my head into the publishing game/enterprise. By 1977, I was published with my first peer-reviewed article. Most young academics today achieve that landmark and more well before completing their doctoral degrees. For me, I remember getting that journal issue in the mail; I turned it over and over in my hands, re-read the article and others in the issue – my name in print, heady stuff. Other people would read what I wrote, imagine.

In my field, sport history, publications about some aspect of sport was the norm and it seemed like being an accepted historian and to continue being a prof meant accepting sport as the avenue of research inquiry. I knew a lot about so many things in my field and I knew where gaps were. My strategy was to find topics, questions to research that would feed my publishing life and, more important to me, enhance what I taught. To those ends, I applied for and was successful at obtaining a SSHRCC research grant. Fundamentally, that grant enabled me to do a history of what I knew to be one of the most prominent institutions in the development of organized Canadian sport, the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA). I knew its centennial year, 1981 was four years away and that it was still a prominent Club in Montreal. All I had to do was muster all my professorial wits and arrange a meeting with their board of directors and convince them to let me write a book telling the story of their club. They bought the idea and agreed to support me fully in any manner they could. It was fortuitous, almost completely so; I had no idea that the Club kept complete and detailed minute books, records, all

manner of primary documents – an historian's treasure-trove of primary sources. I knew I had inadvertently found my ticket to tenure at Western.

Over four years, I spent many weeks commuting by train to-and-from Montreal. My deal with the MAAA Board was that I would produce a book in time for their centennial celebrations; in return, they would provide me with all their sources, a room to do my research, meals, and accommodation while doing my work and I would be permitted to publish academic articles on the MAAA while I was doing the book. It was a perfect partnership and I grew to love Montreal. I started running again coincident with the establishment of my probationary contract. With the help of a very skilled and affable mentor, my colleague Jerry Gonser, I became quite good and even called myself a long distance runner. Turns out that I had chosen my parents wisely in that I had a very high capacity for taking up and using oxygen (a high maximum oxygen uptake) and could sustain aerobic performance over long periods of time. For my stays in Montreal, I was committed to both the MAAA project and, ensconced in my little office at the Club, I was 3 blocks from Mount Royal and the challenges of the snake-like road that scales one side of the mountain. Like some kind of Clark Kent, every noon hour, I used the Club facilities to change and 'do' the mountain trail up to the Cross and back, some 11 km. It was, for me, the perfect marriage of writing and running and I figuratively rolled over and buttered myself at my good fortune in creating the possibility of these co-endeavours.

The MAAA book was completed just in time for the Club's centennial; it was published privately and I learned more about editing and writing for public (versus academic) consumption from a *Reader's Digest* editor the Club hired to work with me in the final drafts of each chapter. I also learned about my passion for writing and my sense of history and its aliveness in this process. One warm, Spring day, I went out to the Westmount subdivision in Montreal, to the athletic field behind Westmount high school. I knew from my research that the grounds were the exact ones occupied by the MAAA for its team sports. The clubhouse was long gone but the track was in the same location and I remember standing in the center of the athletic field, the exact venue where the fabled and famous Montreal Lacrosse Club played in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and I wept from an indescribable connection to the past and its actors. Some essence, some element that day patted me inside and gave me a profound experience – this was hallowed ground, a place where the past actually happened and I was connected inextricably to

that time and place. As for the book, a couple thousand copies were printed and the title on the front cover, unbeknownst to most Club members, actually had gold flakes embossed in the words, *A Sporting Evolution: The MAAA 1881 to 1981*. The Directors were thrilled and invited me to be the speaker at the MAAA Centennial dinner. It was an elaborate affair of tuxedos, the very best sterling silverware, chandeliers, a full orchestra, dignitaries like the city's mayor and legendary Canadian novelist Hugh MacLennan (who very kindly wrote the Introduction to my book) and at the head table, the dais where I would speak. I rented an exquisite beige tuxedo with a brown cummerbund and piping and a cream-coloured shirt. Somehow, I had missed it was a "black-tie" event and although everyone was kind to me, I was mortified and felt like a non-black swan all evening, the perfect absent-minded professor.



[don 23] *Delivering the MAAA Centennial Address, beige tux and all, 1981*

Consumed willingly to the academic life and my new-found historical research prowess, I ventured into biography to do a study of one of Canada's most famous athletes, Lionel Conacher. As with the MAAA project, inadvertently, I happened upon a plethora of scrapbooks, press articles, and the availability and interest of the Conacher family. When I was not in Montreal or writing chapters for that project, I was obsessive about pouring over microfilm-reader newspaper accounts of Lionel's athletic prowess and dominance in some 6 different professional sports. I interviewed most of his children and one of my fondest memories to this day of doing history was my interview and time spent with Lionel's older sister, Victoria Conacher-Mayhue in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Victoria was a lady of such dignity and class and was completely open in

answering my questions. But what I remember most from my visit was her offering me a tray of petite, lobster-filled sandwiches, enough food for 10 people. The upshot of this completed project was unanticipated. My manuscript on Conacher was published in the top-tier sport history journal and Fitzhenry and Whiteside publishers invited a colleague, Frank Cosentino and I to write a book on Conacher, one that would be part of senior elementary school reading series entitled *The Canadians*. That book was published in 1981, the same year as my MAAA book and to this day, I still receive royalties on the Conacher book and I maintain it was huge lesson in writing to attract a public school student readership, much more difficult than writing for academic audiences.

With two books and some 8 or 9 single-authored, refereed publications, I applied for tenure and promotion in the Fall of 1981. Tenure looms ominously for young academics because it connotes lifetime job security. In many respects, it heralds the end of a very long apprenticeship toward the professoriate; at least 7 or 8 years of post-secondary education culminating in a PhD, followed by 5-6 years as an Assistant Professor in a tenure-track position and then applying for promotion to an Associate Professor with tenure. I knew, even at the time, that at its true level of meaning, tenure guaranteed university professors intellectual autonomy, the right to pursue controversial topics of research and express one's opinion without fear of negative repercussions, a freedom of speech right and privilege enjoyed by very few other professions.

To go through the tenure process, I was judged, like all professors who apply for tenure, by a committee of my peers, inside my discipline and outside my Faculty as well as by 4 professors in my field from other institutions. Curiously, but typical of university protocols, there is no defined standard or bar for being granted tenure. Each applicant's file is assessed on its own merit and the whole procedure takes months, a period of angst and what-if scenarios for most of us. One of my colleagues described the tenure process as one in which those with tenure who are elected to the committee to adjudicate your case, are ensconced on some secure platform a few stories above the applicant and instead of dropping a ladder of support to the young prof, the members sort of dare you to find the 'right' way to join them. My Dean gave me a copy of Jack MacLeod's *Zinger and Me*, a thinly-veiled account of a professor agonizingly and not so deftly going through the tenure process at 'Chiliast University' (unquestionably, a fictional University

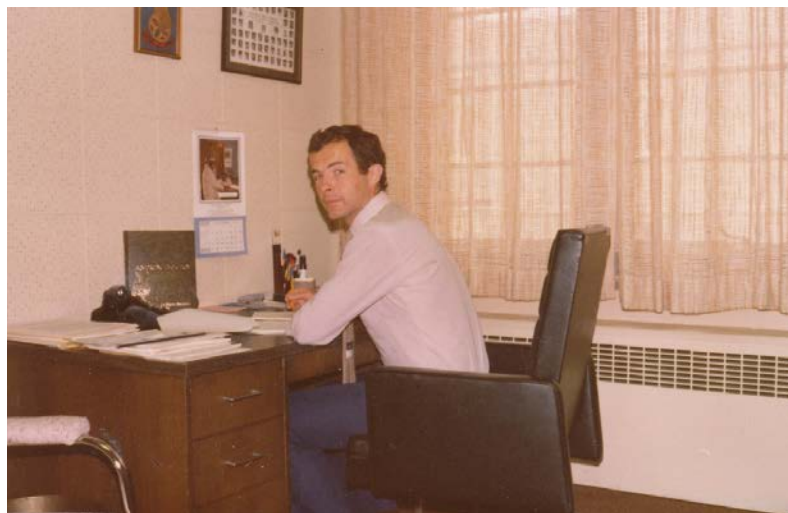
of Toronto). Getting tenure is a rite of passage, an important, and to me, an absolutely inviolate one that must be protected. And, I believe there are mechanisms now that do provide more support for profs going through the process even in cases of appeal and first-round vetting that consider denial of tenure. I recall the worry in going through the process and I also remember believing it was a foregone conclusion – I knew I could not have done anything more to warrant tenure and promotion.

The real truth is that for me, the obverse side of the tenure coin was that I was committed, wholly dedicated to the university enterprise; achieving tenure merely concretized my unswerving connection to Western. In many ways, it wasn't a healthy relationship and it took its toll on my family life, regretfully. At the time, being immersed in the academic environment was like swimming in a wide open pool of seemingly endless possibilities. It is the nature of being a professor. In many ways, the professoriate is an elite profession in terms of its time-privileges. There is a perception that we occupy an ivory-tower, aloof somehow from the real world, protected by tenure, and seduced by apparently inane research questions that amount to how many angels dance on the head of a proverbial pin. This stereotype has some truth. Professors are nerds, plaid sport-coat, elbow-patched, not-so-natty dressers – at least for men – and all. For the most part, we are paid to think. The whole concept of being a professor is centered on living an intellectual life. And the freedoms of that life go well beyond the meaning of tenure.

Within the first decade of my employment at Western, I realized that within some limits, I was completely in charge of my time. Aside from being in front of a classroom of students, I could do my research or class prep at 3 in the morning or 3 in the afternoon; there are very few professions where that kind of freedom or lack of restraint of time commitments is so wide open. And yet the irony is, there is always more to do. As I experienced it and gave myself over to it, the university always has had myriad tugs at my time, something more to write, to prepare, committees to join and fulfill. In fact, committees are the *sine qua non* and the bane of university existence. On the one hand, they permit democratic decision-making. On the other, they are time-consuming, frustrating, and if poorly lead or managed, endless in their tedious time demands. Moreover, committees are political, often driven by individual agendas of academics and or administrators who are highly trained to do one thing, their own research. We can come to a committee meeting armed with our own self-serving scheme of what we want to happen; on the

other extreme, we can come unattached to the outcome, prepared to let the discursive process take its course – and very likely everything in between those extremes. And committees are struck spontaneously, at the drop of an academic mortarboard – an *ad hoc* committee to look into X, a special committee or sub-committee to manage Y. And the process of committees arriving at decisions and then actually acting upon the decisions seems exceedingly snail-like. As with teaching, there is no training for professors in how to be functional in a committee process; we are supposed to get it osmotically. One of my colleagues frequently opined, ‘for God so loved the world, he didn’t send a committee.’

I found committees absorbing. It was almost fun to watch people maneuver and wax eloquent or not so coherently and it was also gratifying to see the results of good committee work. There was even a kind of glamour for me, so much so that coincident with receiving tenure, I sought out my first administrative position, a 5-year term as Undergraduate Chair in my Faculty, a post that revolved around committee-work. It seemed like the next logical step, to provide service to the institution and discipline that had supported my career. It was a large program in terms of numbers of students and Faculty and staff working in 3-year and 4-year Honors’ programs and the Chairpersonship carried two-thirds of a full workload commitment. I became an academic administrator, one devoted to, in my mind, the educational experience of Undergrads.



[don 17] *At my desk as Undergraduate Chair, 1983*

Again, it was a baptism of immersion; there was no leadership training. Within the Program office, I supervised 3 secretaries and an academic counselor. My predecessor in the position told me being a university administrator was like living as a kind of juggler with 20 or more balls or issues constantly in jangled orbit over one's head; suddenly, one of the balls drops in your lap, you deal with it somehow, and then toss it back up in hopes it would stay up for a while and hopefully before another one or two or three more could take its place. It was a cynical perspective, but one not far from the truth I experienced, at least, at times. I distinctly recollect being in my Thames Hall office by 8 am and going home, often at 5 or 6 pm with the clear sense that I had been very busy all day but always dealing with things for other people, often with nothing tangible to show for my days. It was administrivia, perhaps, and yet a service to people, students especially. My research output declined and I normally taught only one academic course per year and yet, I thoroughly enjoyed being a Chair. There were serious budget, workload, student travesties, academic and counseling issues and decisions to be made, constantly.

At the same time, I was and am still enough of an imp to have enjoyed practical jokes played on me and by me during those 5 years and the rapport I had especially with students but with staff too. One of my fondest memories is of the repartee between one of the office staff and me. She was so frustrated by my 'open' filing system that she threatened to reorganize the two massive, horizontal filing cabinets in my office – they weren't labelled, she decried. It became my mission to defy any attempt to change my helter-skelter system so I labelled the outside panel of each shelf, Drawer #1, Drawer # 2 etc. In retaliation, a few days later, a rejection letter from *Playgirl* magazine arrived in my mailbox; it told me that should there ever be such a degeneration in female body appreciation, the pictures "I" had sent might be of some use. It was very cleverly written and I still have it in my files. Those and many, many more seemingly trivial aspects of academic existence were so important in making meaning and creating an enjoyable academic life at work; there is a place in the Ivory Tower for people to act stupid together.

By the early- to mid-1980s, I became more conscious of patterns of behaviour in my academic pursuits. Writing manuscripts was always enjoyable but the process of doing them changed for me. As I researched a topic, particularly in the latter stages of research, I already knew what and how I wanted to write up the research; the actual drafting and drafts of the paper seemed tedious or redundant – I wanted to move onto the next paper or the next challenge. As

Chair, I sought new ways to approach traditional issues in running the Kin Undergrad Program. For example, getting almost 500 students into physical activity classes was always done by hand, was never easy, often random, and students complained about getting activities in which they had no interest. My solution was to contact the head of the Social Sciences computing lab to see what the new 'magic' of computer programs might be able to conjure. Doug Link, who later brought Marks Management and Scanex programs to the university, devised an algorithm such that each student had the highest, mathematical, and statistical chance of getting her or his top choices of activity classes. Also, with all of those students, we were cramped for gym space for blocks of 2 consecutive hour activity classes. My solution was to create a whole new time-slot from 6:30 to 8:30 in the morning! It worked and it was hard on both students and instructors.

About the middle of my administrative term, I took my first sabbatical for a 6-month term. I have come to believe that sabbaticals should be available in every line of work. They were not then nor are they now automatic for professors; you have to apply and have a research project approved. In essence, a sabbatical means that two of a professor's main workload components, teaching and service, are dropped as requirements and replaced by complete attention to graduate students' projects and one's own research and writing of manuscripts, books, and/or grants. The overwhelming feeling I have had with each and all of my sabbaticals over the years is one of disengaging from the immersion in all aspects of being a professor and a profound sense of a kind of relaxed focus on research and writing.

I applied for a study area, a small office in Weldon library. I had 3 projects in mind: one was to draft an outline for a book on Canadian sport history that I could use for teaching; the second was to finish the research on the sporting and cultural importance of snowshoeing in Montreal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stemming from my MAAA scholarship; and the third was to combine my interests in the fields of literature and history and create something from Shakespearean plays that examined the bard's perspective on play and sport. All 3 projects gave me enough scope to explore varied interests during the 6 months and although my sabbatical was in the mid-1980s, each project was not finalized with actual publications until the last two years of that decade. Of the 3, one of them persists as having tremendous satisfaction as I close out my career. I found a concordance of Shakespeare's use of imagery. In 1935, Caroline Spurgeon combed, by hand, all 37 of the bard's plays to ferret out every image he used and put them into a

classification scheme – a stunning taxonomical achievement long before computer usage and one heralded by full reprinting of her concordance just last year. My intrigue was with the manner in which Shakespeare used the word sport as a metaphor and I elected to look at quite an obscure but prominent aristocratic sport of the late Medieval period, that of hawking or falconry and analyze how Shakespeare used the sport's terminology, symbolism, and expressions within the early plays. It remains one of my favourite pieces of published research. And, I am not alone in my nerdy attachment to seemingly arcane scholarship. Whether it's something about a particular species of bugs, some new theory of learning, a medical research break-through, this is the stuff of one aspect of academe – our esoteric (or exoteric) work can be a good, even all-consuming part of our passion.

Unlike the elementary or secondary school systems, at universities, going into administration does not have to be a total career shift such that one stays in a management position. A professor can choose to make administration a vocation and move through the hierarchy into senior positions such as deans or vice-presidents. Most of us don't and at the end of my five years, I wanted to get back into teaching and new challenges. It was like returning to my pedagogical home; I was glad to be back in the classroom and to be a 'normal' professor. And, I was acutely aware of my next goal, to become a Full Professor, the highest of the 5 ranks of the professoriate, before I turned 40. As I experienced the realization of that objective and as I look back on my obsession with promotion now, it was a hollow, even Mephistophelian quest. It meant really redoubling my energies to my academic work and the soul that I sold was my family life.



[don 2] *Ties were a given for male profs; me sometime in the mid- to late-1980s*

At 39 years of age, I was awarded Full Professorship, coincident I'm sure with the publication of a book with Oxford Press, *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* for which I was senior author. I thought the promotion would bring more satisfaction than it did. At the time, it felt more like another notch on my academic gun, another achievement. I noticed about a year after my rank advancement that my salary was well under what was then the floor for Full Professors. Convinced this was clearly an oversight, I sent what I thought was a cute memo of appeal to the Vice-President (Academic), a Robert Browning scholar; in it, I quoted from a Browning poem though what it was escapes me now and of course I alerted him to the significance of earning the promotion at a relatively early age. His response was congratulatory regarding the achievement, but his decision on the salary appeal was couched in one of Browning's most famous lines, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp / Or what's a heaven for?" I was amused but miffed.

Years later, specifically in the last 15 years, being a Full Professor has come to mean a lot more to me; it is a mark of distinction and one I cherish and one that I hope all full time professors attain. It is emblematic of an international academic reputation, at least as far as research is concerned. And yet, in the late 1980s, it was more of another career hurdle. The whole decade seemed to be about searching for new pedagogical and professional adventures for me. For example, my cross-country skiing skills carried over from my University of Alberta days

and I sought certification levels from the national association of instructors in that sport, the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors. That accreditation prompted me to introduce the sport as an activity in our Undergraduate program, purchase a snow-tracking device, and to encourage students to attain first-level certification.



[don 5] *Teaching cross-country skiing in the old J.W. Little Stadium*

In the same vein, I launched an off-campus canoe trip as an activity course that took place during registration week about 50 kilometers east of Parry Sound. Since its inauguration, the course has been taught annually for about 25 years and for me, it was a great start to each academic year and an especially fine way to get to know 60 students in a more informal and fun learning environment. It struck me then as now, that these kind of courses and unique experiences enriched Western's Kin program.



[don 11] *Western and Kin's Canoe Camp war canoe group, mid 1980s*

And my thirst for novelty extended into research and service as well. Two learned societies or professional organizations attracted me. The North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) was my home association and its annual conventions in May of each year were opportunities for presenting my research but more important to me, to see and be with peers who shared my specific scholarly interests. The conferences were and are held in different cities across the United States and Canada and traveling to these venues, often in rented vans with graduate students, felt like a kind of corollary benefit. Who, in southwestern Ontario, knew that there was a Manhattan in Kansas! And, Western hosted NASSH twice. For me as well, the conferences fostered a friendship that was so important to me, one with Dalhousie professor and presenter/teacher extraordinaire, Sandy Young. I first saw Sandy in 1973 when he presented a paper at a Calgary conference and I watched in awe as he re-enacted what it must have felt like to be an Athenian warrior hearing the thunderous STEP-STOMP of the approaching vast hordes of Spartan fighters during different stages of the Peloponnesian War. There was Sandy, resplendent Blue-noser with his jet-black beard and piercing eyes (a not so old, ancient mariner) holding his audience in the palms of his animated hands as he brought history to life. I didn't see him again until I started going to NASSH in the late 1970s but we became fast friends and colleagues and always stayed a few days after the conferences to travel around whatever part of the country in which the meetings were held. Mostly, we laughed together, sharing the same sense of humour and for a while, we found a common sport participation ground. He was a very

skilled basketball player – he played first-string ball in high school on the same team as Wilt Chamberlain, now a legend in the sport – and fly-fisherman and my passions were racket sports and running. And so we engaged in Young-ball, an indoor racket-ball or squash court game played using a volleyball that the 2 players could kick or hit with our arms or hands, scoring the same way one acquired points in indoor court games. He usually won; he had invented the game. Sadly, Sandy died from pancreatic cancer in 2000 and I still miss him.



[don 9] *NASSH group of University of Alberta grads, late 1980s*

The other professional body that became an academic home away from my university home to me was the Sport Literature Association (SLA). For academics, professional organizations often bring stronger peer connections and ties than members of our own institution's home departments. In terms of research, we are so specialized in our areas of inquiry that professional organizations seem more amicable just because we are among like-minded scholars for compressed time periods. For me, the SLA had just that kind of allure. Founded mostly by English departments' academics in the early 1980s, it was a perfect organization in which to foster my dual interests in sport and literature hearkening back to my Undergraduate majors. Comparable to NASSH, I became an annual sojourner to SLA meetings and served as conference organizer at Western for the organization on two separate occasions.

Ironically, my enthusiasm for SLA quickly prompted me to propose a sport literature course, one to be offered jointly by the UWO Kinesiology and English departments. Proposing new courses at the time meant a seemingly endless process of going through committees. In this

case, convincing the two departments was relatively easy; however, when it came to the final arbiter, a Senate sub-committee, having submitted the formal proposal in writing, I was summoned to answer questions before the committee members. When I arrived for the meeting, the Chair of the Senate committee, a well-reputed English department scholar, introduced me to the members, and we sat down. He explained the process, reminded the committee of the nature of the course and then said he would like to start the ‘questioning’ by telling me that sport literature mattered no more than “a pig in a poke” and what did I think of that. I had no idea what he meant, was flabbergasted, and must have said something worth hearing because the course was passed and in its current iteration, is, I think appropriately so, the last course I will teach at Western.

With respect to service, it amounts to about 20 per cent of a professor’s workload. It involves working on committees at the department, university, and community levels. Rarely does it have much impact on salary increases or promotion but it is an expectation of us as professionals. Oddly, I liked the word ‘service’ and its connotation of helping or supporting or doing good work and I had been introduced to the concept at Beck Collegiate by becoming a member of the Key Club, a kind of Kiwanis Club for high school teens.



[don 6] *Academic service can mean presenting to service clubs as above*

After serving as a Chair for 5 years – administration itself is classed as service – I probably had been a member of every Faculty committee in existence and therefore I sought committee membership and service outside my Faculty and in my community in north London. With a third

son born in 1984, I felt becoming a Cub leader was one outlet and coaching hockey another. My ecumenical interests stemmed from my work on Ryerson and even from my childhood devotion to collecting United Church Robert Raikes' Sunday school attendance pins and awards (one wore them like military medals) and lead me to serve as Board Chair for a local church for 6 years. On campus, an avenue of intrigue was the Faculty Association. It was optional at the time to become a member and pay dues and we did not become unionized until 1998. Somehow, I managed to become a member of the executive board around 1986, worked on several sub-committees inclusive of its salary and benefits negotiating committee, the group tasked to meet annually with senior administration to discuss alterations to our pay and associated remunerations and benefits. The Association had very little power, more nominally than in actual fact, but it was service to the wider professoriate at Western.

For the year 1990-91, I was elected and served as UWO's Faculty Association President. I cajoled my Executive and the membership that their leader was a jock. My teaching and research workloads were released to the exigencies of the administrative position. Housed in the top floor of an old house on Western Road, a small cadre of elected professors, a secretary, and an administrative officer ran the Association. For me, it was an enlightening year of learning so much about other academic units on campus, issues of rights and equity, bargaining, and meetings with and getting to know the University's senior administrators. In the latter regard, I met biweekly with the President and intermittently with the Vice-President (Academic). We talked about issues and any concerns we had about working conditions, people, and/or events. The number of times I was told, 'this is off the record,' or, 'I will never admit this openly,' seemed matter-of-fact and made for very candid conversations.

Two major issues come to mind about my year as UWOFA President. One was being asked to resign by the University President when I brought one dean's concern about the dean's alleged Presidential reallocation of building funds. Though rattled, I was confident I had done nothing wrong, certainly nothing warranting resignation; I had stated the dean's unease as purported and considered it part of our regular conversations' candor. I felt vindicated later when some facts became public that supported the allegation and the resignation issue just kind of fizzled.

A more profound issue to me was a deeply felt concern about tenure and its true meaning of intellectual and academic freedom. Phillippe Rushton, a Western Psychology Department professor had published extensively about racial differences in intelligence, crime rates, and physical measurements. A chance media interview after Rushton did a conference presentation resulted in public uproar to the extent that there was a demand for Western to respond and even to fire him as an overt racist. It was intense on Western's campus and even prompted a debate between Rushton and David Suzuki at a sold-out Alumni Hall. A few busloads of detractors from a variety of cities, like Detroit, came to protest Rushton and his work. For me, it meant hours of meeting with university officials and with Rushton and it shook me to the bone about the meaning of tenure.

I did not appreciate Rushton's choice of intellectual inquiry and most certainly, I was judgmental about his apparent obliviousness to the impact of his work and some of his conclusions. At the same time, his work was published in well refereed journals and therefore subject to full academic rigor and vetting, he was well funded, and he was stunningly calm and eloquent about and confident in his research. As President, I was asked constantly by the media about the professoriate's view of him. My responses were always some variation of defending what tenure meant and soft-peddling what I believed about his, in my view, lack of awareness of social responsibility. Apparently my viewpoints on tenure and Rushton stirred more than academic attention. I went to run a 10-mile road race in Watford, a very small, rural community about 40 minutes west of London. By chance, I was offered a ride to the starting line by the race organizers, the Caley brothers. We never introduced ourselves by name though I knew from previous races who they were. They brought up the Rushton issue and asked me what I thought of that professor don morrow actually defending a racist. I was somewhat concerned for my welfare and did not reveal my name to them. Throughout all the turmoil, I upheld the academic process, not Rushton, and it was probably one of the most difficult of all my academic experiences.

By the early 1990s, I had become enamoured with the nature of the print media about sport and had written several articles about different sports writers and their craft and impact on sporting culture. The sportswriters that attracted me were those who commented on the meaning of sport, its followers, its forms of expression, and its shadier side and I sought out methods to

analyze and write about what such media personnel had done within the sports pages of major newspapers and the potential impact of their journalism. After finishing my year as past-president of UWOFA, I was awarded a sabbatical. I arranged this time to rent our London home and move our family to Vancouver for the full year. The University of British Columbia became my away-from-Western home and I spent the entire research-time analyzing the columns of two prominent journalists. While I utilized a lot of what I found that year in my teaching, I never did as much with publishing what I researched as I had hoped to do. In point of fact, that whole year was stultifying for me. I liked Vancouver and UBC and I knew I was burned out and lacking in personal and professional satisfaction. My father died, not unexpectedly, the year before my sabbatical and I suspect part of my detachment was that I had not fully grieved his death or what he had meant to me. I felt quite alone in Vancouver and I found that long-distance running was the only thing that seemed to bring me out of my numbness, or at least provide temporary relief.

Maybe it's because I am in Kinesiology, but I believe an intellectual pursuit like a professorship needs a physical counterpart of some kind. Starting with running to lose weight in Edmonton, the activity became a daily discipline, at times likely an addiction. By the late 1970s, I became a really good runner competing in the annual Springbank 12-mile road races, lots of shorter events in southwestern Ontario, and even ran my first marathon in Ottawa in 1977. Long distance runners were an anomaly at the time. Drivers were so captivated at seeing a runner on country roads that inadvertently, they often steered toward me out of curiosity, I suppose. Good running shoes were really hard to find – I actually ordered my first pairs from the Karhu shoe company in Finland. I had a great running mentor and friend in fellow-Kin prof, Jerry Gonser, and with the time-freedom we had as professors, we were able to go for 8- or 10-mile runs and only be away from our campus responsibilities for about two hours.

Running was easy and hard but always important to me. It was mostly about feeling in my body, pushing myself, experiencing what it was like to be very aerobically fit, watching my body morph into litness when we ramped up training for marathon events for the 8-10 weeks leading up to race dates. I was both talented enough and fortunate enough to qualify to run the Boston Marathon 3 times in my running life and some 20 other marathons during my career. Boston was unique, still is I think, in that it seemed like the whole city stopped and came out to watch us traverse the 42.2 kilometer course packed with people, often 6-deep.



[don 15] *The Boston Marathon, my proof, wearing a Western t-shirt, 1980*

Unlike most marathons, Boston was 17 miles of slight downhill, then 4 miles of hills and plateaus followed by the last 5 miles of a downhill grade. It means runners spend most of the race kind of braking and controlling their stride on the constantly declining roads. The toll of Boston on runners' thighs is well known to those who have done the race and I was no exception. Every year I ran it, I spent most of the following week, walking backward down any set of stairs in Thames Hall; it felt as though the lactic acid muscle by-product of the endurance event just would not leave my legs and seeing me on the stairs brought great mirth and clever comments from students and colleagues alike.

Running was and remains such a passion to me. Merging it into my life as a professor was seamless in that I could go for a run anytime with no facility or membership dependence. When at conferences, it was a way to learn about the cities I visited. With students, it was a means to be with them that was more informal than the classroom. And, it very much was something worth knowing. It gave me time to be and get away, to reflect – even to write, oddly; I have drafted more manuscripts while running and ‘solved’ more problems on country roads than I ever imagined could be done. I’m not sure I ever felt the so-called runners-high or endorphin rush of running; it was just natural body movement and it was something that became for me, a must-do in my daily life. It wasn’t without repercussions; injuries were debilitating and having to

ride a stationary bike or row on an ergometer felt so anathema to me. To a runner, there is absolutely nothing that is equivalent to running.

By the time I went to Vancouver on sabbatical in the mid-1990s, I had been running long distances for more than 20 years. The burnout I felt mentally was in my body too and my body knew its limits had been met. I developed a hairline fracture within one of the small, round sesamoid or ‘floating’ bones just under my right great toe; it is the one of the last points of push-off in a running stride and I had tried everything to ease the pain, even a hypodermic steroid injection, hypodermically “stick-handled,” so the Clinic surgeon joked, into the arch of my foot toward the digit in question. Thinking I could somehow run through the pain, I entered the Vancouver marathon. By the 18<sup>th</sup> mile, I was hobbling and had to drop out, devastated that I might have done permanent injury and even a bit ashamed at not-finishing. A few months later, I was told by doctors at Western’s renowned Fowler-Kennedy Sport Medicine Clinic that they could surgically remove the offending bone. My belief was the bone was put there for a very good reason and I did not like the idea of excising the offending structure and the adjustments my foot would have to make to compensate. And my question was, what kind of a running life might I be able to enjoy sans surgery. What they told me was marathon running was now out of the question and even doing hill- or speed-work would be far too much stress. If I wanted to enjoy running as a lifelong activity, I could do so with an orthotic and a commitment to more moderate mileage. My decision was not difficult at all; running was always about the process of running not how fast I could run or how many races I completed. It was a choice I never regretted and running has remained a career and life habit and joy for me.

While I managed the bodily fatigue and injury, I knew both during and after my sabbatical that there was a more general angst within me, an emotional and mental down-ness and I did not know its source. I was not happy in my personal life and it impacted my professional life. When I returned to Western, colleagues, including my Dean, reflected that I seemed angry and I did feel on-edge, un-motivated, perhaps even mildly depressed. I felt the same at home and at work. It was a dark time in my career in the mid- and late-1990s. And I did seek professional help and had done a lot of personal ‘work’ for about 10 or more years before that time. In some ways, I relied on running not only as a physical discipline and bodily pleasure but also as a form of therapy. At the university, I felt I was coasting and not giving anywhere

close to my potential to my teaching, research, or service. I learned very early in my career, from a friend and peer, that not to decide something is actually to decide. Indecision and fear cramp the heart and soul and I felt the indecisiveness in myself. I was acutely aware that a re-focus was necessary and what I decided to do was devote myself to what I knew I enjoyed best about my job, teaching.

By the mid-1990s, I had learned a lot about how to be an effective instructor inside and outside the classroom. I knew then as I know now that I learn from teaching and I believe teaching to be one of the very best forms of learning. It wasn't just the course material or factual learning, it was also how to have impact on students in a room. Questions, I found, had far greater effect on students than presenting information at them. In some respects, what I determined from doing research was the power of a well-crafted research question; everything in a study, from its design to final publication hinges on the accuracy of the question being asked. It is no coincidence that the Jeopardy television program, where panelists' answers have to be framed as questions, has always attracted and challenged me. One of my mentors and friends, one of the most astute academics I have ever met, Dr. Alan Metcalfe at the University of Windsor, constantly chorused, 'it all depends on your research question' and I think I finally got it sometime in the mid-1980s. My interrogative eureka, I knew could be carried to teaching as well. And, it wasn't necessarily brilliant questions built around elaborate theories; instead, it was finding questions that fostered critical thinking or pointed students in a new direction. Sometimes, as professors, it is tempting to assume that it is questions beginning with 'why' or 'how' that probe the intellect. They might, and yet I found more and more that questions starting with 'what' brought greater possibilities of answers and discussion, much more so than trying to glean the 'right' answer with kind of crowbar questions. I believe to this day that the most appropriate symbol for any university is a question-mark.

Fortuitously, I had the opportunity to watch masterful teachers from the time of my Undergraduate years to working with Western's Business School faculty on executive education courses. My role in the latter was to teach a wellness component to the executives who came to Western, eventually to the Spencer Hall facility on Windermere Road. For about 20 years, each Spring for 6 or 7 consecutive weeks, I got up at 6 am to take the course participants on a run, hired graduate students to take some of the executives on an exercise walk and taught classes on

nutrition, designing fitness programs, and stress management – even doing yoga classes although the woo-woo stigma attached to the word, yoga, at the time meant that I had to call those classes ‘stretch and strength.’ Nonetheless, what I taught was pure hatha yoga. It was extra remuneration for me and completely voluntary for the course participants.



[don 16] *Taking Ivey Continuing Education executives for a run*

Working with executives meant I had to be fully conscious of designing classes that would be meaningful and useful and of interest to them and I learned so much about designing courses and classes for people rather than for curriculum or merely for information dissemination. Most of all, I found the professors in the School were outstanding classroom managers and teachers who utilized case-method. And, with their permission, I often sat in on specific cases and classes to observe. They were, to a person, magicians in working the classroom, drawing out discussion, engaging the participants, explaining the complex in elegantly simple ways. I learned to teach, really teach, I believe, from those observational experiences. And it showed. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, I was privileged to win our Faculty’s annual Teaching Award of Excellence on four separate occasions. The award was determined by students’ voting and I suspect there was and is always a popularity component to such awards. Of the four I was bestowed, my greatest sense of accomplishment was with the third one, the year the students gave the award to two of us in a tie-vote; the other person who won was Garry Lapenskie, a colleague I deem to have been one of the very finest teachers I have ever witnessed and had the privilege to call colleague and friend.



[don 19] *Receiving the 1990 Kinesiology Teaching Award*

Armed with what I knew about teaching, I applied for an advertised position to become an instructor attached to Western's Educational Development Office (EDO), now the Teaching Support Centre. To be granted the appointment, I had to have full support from my Faculty's administration because it was a full-time secondment, meaning I would not teach more than a one-semester course in Kin and most of my service component would be with the EDO. I assume funding for some portion of my salary was contained within the EDO budget and that Kin would receive funding to hire part-time instructors for the courses I normally taught. I was awarded the position for four years, from 1996 to 2000. Along with the Director and one other Faculty member recruit, my job was to work with professors who wanted assistance in improving their pedagogical skills and classroom performance. It seemed to be the change I needed to reinvigorate myself and I thoroughly enjoyed running seminars on teaching techniques, working with individual professors to guide them toward the kinds of teaching skills and changes they wanted to make in their classes, and writing instructional articles for the EDO publication, *Reflections*.

Midway through my EDO years, I was honoured to win the Edward G Pleva Teaching Award of Excellence, Western's highest teaching award, as well as the Bank of Nova Scotia/University Students Council Teaching Award of Excellence, a university-wide Student-Council accolade initiative. I felt humbled and grateful for the awards and for me, they seemed to represent an affirmation of my decision to get myself out of my professional and personal funk

by dedicating myself to teaching in its broadest sense. In addition to classroom teaching and EDO-related instructional initiatives, I put more time and energy into working with graduate students both in teaching graduate courses and in recruiting and supervising students in their research projects or theses. Kin had no doctoral program in my field until the early 1990s; however, as soon as it was implemented, I started to accept PhD students and ramp up the number of Masters' students as a supervisor.



[don 12] *The USC / Bank of Nova Scotia Teaching Award, 1998*

For professors, working with graduate students is such a rich experience, a very symbiotic relationship focused on the research aspect of our jobs. My perspective has always been that graduate students work with me; they are not “my” students. It may seem like a small matter of semantics, but to me, it is an important distinction. Graduate students choose us as supervisors because they have an interest in the areas we research. In some ways, most Undergraduate curricula are geared toward graduate work in that professors teach in our areas of expertise and what feeds us intellectually. Therefore, it seems logical that part of what we teach and publish will attract top performing students to continue their academic work. And the relationship between professors and the grad students we supervise is a special one, in my view. We teach, within grad classes and on research projects, graduate students how to assess research, the body of knowledge in their field of choice, and how to create and complete major research projects like theses and dissertations. For graduate students, it is a kind of academic

apprenticeship in doing all aspects of research. For professors, guiding and supervising graduate students is extremely rewarding – after all, they have chosen our specific research interest to study. And it's also challenging and stimulating. Often, students who worked with me expanded my research horizons with analytical tools like content analysis, personality scales' implementation, novel methods of assessment, and styles of writing like auto-ethnography. I started supervising graduate students in 1976 and I will be working with 2 or 3 doctoral students likely for a year or more after I retire. It has been an aspect of teaching and the professorial environment that has constantly fed me and often, thrilled me with a variety of answers to my perpetual question, what is worth knowing.

Near the end of my assignment with the Educational Development Office, my focused attention on teaching in its broadest sense led me to the most challenging pedagogical endeavour of my career. Western invested considerable financial and personnel resources to launch 'superclasses,' that is, classes of one thousand or more students in one room. One of my co-instructors in the EDO taught the first of these courses, dubbed Super Psych, the Psychology Department's investment in its huge first-year Psychology introductory course. My dean approached me to see if I would be interested in creating a first year superclass for both Kin and the new School of Health Studies' students. Skeptical that one could 'teach' 1200 students at one time, I was open-minded enough to go and watch two of my colleagues and was pleasantly surprised at their use of high tech equipment and the methods they used in their superclasses to engage the students. For the university, the superclass concept was a financial gain; one prof, one room, hundreds of students, audio-visual technical support staff – likely an inviting combination if the teaching could be effective.

For me, it seemed like the next best and logical challenge in my career. With respect to content, I loved teaching first-year students; in fact, the very first class I taught was a Physical Education introductory, Continuing Education course given in the town of Clinton one summer prior to my appointment at Western. I lived in Grand Bend and commuted daily the 10 miles to and from Clinton by bicycle to teach the course. And, I continued to teach the course in its many iterations during my first 7 or 8 years at the University. While the course had been a kind of 'waterfront' or general introduction to most areas of Kin, my superclass assignment needed to be a kind of primer for Kin and Health Studies' students. My decision was to use wellness as the

course umbrella, a concept that could include both groups and build on what I knew from teaching wellness topics to executives. I asked for some workload relief and a year to plan the course.

As with most aspects of my career, I dedicated a huge amount of my time and energies to developing the course. My idea was to teach in the large classroom and offer a more conventional and I hoped, more intimate experience by creating a one-hour tutorial to complement the 2, 90-minute lectures each week. That meant having a small army of graduate teaching assistants and hiring a Tutorial Director to develop the tutorial concepts and work with me and the teaching assistants in teaching the tutorials; with 30 students in each tutorial and some 1100 – 1200 students, that meant 40 tutorial sessions each week; finding rooms, let alone developing curriculum from scratch was daunting. Over the year, I poured myself into developing course content, learning how to use Powerpoint, and working with the Tutorial Director to match that content with tutorial concepts, readings, experiences, and discussion ideas.

Fittingly, as my association with Western began in the building, Alumni Hall became my classroom. The room was the Hall's auditorium with fixed, theatre-style seating for students but with nothing to write on (no desks, no one-arm writing platforms, just seats). Jutting out from the aisle at the bottom of the first row of seating was T-shaped platform or runway akin to those used in clothing-fashion displays. The platform ended at the top of the 'T' (the symbolism of the squash 'T,' was not lost on me then or now) out on the gymnasium floor and on that part of the raised area was the latest in computer and sound technology. Across the rest of the floor, over the stage was a huge projection screen, the size of one in a theatre and behind that device was a very expensive rear-projection system. The room was built to be acoustically solid and professors wore a head-set microphone that would make any stage performer proud. My description of what would occur in that classroom was entertainment with content and content with entertainment. My overall objective became centered on how to hold and build on the attention of 1200 first-year students in pursuit of learning about wellness.



[don 8] *The Kin / Health Studies first-year 'superclass' in Alumni Hall, circa 1998*

I never prepared so much or put the kind of effort and planning into anything in my professional work as I did for that class. Constantly, I considered what my impact would be and tried to imagine how I would feel and react were I one of the students attending my lectures. I calculated that my greatest challenge would be to capture the attention of 1200 students at the start of class. It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable aspects of my planning and preparation. I determined that my way to do this would be to develop 2-3 minute video-clips that were either directly or indirectly thematic to the day's lecture. Exactly at class-start time, I would dim the lights from my platform console and play the sequence. For example, for one of the units on nutrition, rather than technical information on food, I excerpted a sequence from the movie version of Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* wherein the actors experienced the exquisiteness of tasting a sumptuous and delicately prepared meal; both the intended and actual impact was palpably sensuous. When I turned up the lights, it was clear students had arrived mentally and I had their attention. Thinking back now, I can't even imagine how much time I spent finding those clips, editing, creating, and then refining them in the instructional media centres on campus.

Teaching those classes for six years was so much fun and symbolically, such a transition in my life and parts of my life were in turmoil. And yet, my resolve was that no matter what was

happening in my life, my attention had to be on delivering an outstanding educational experience to 1200 students. To set me in that frame of mind, I developed a simple mantra to say in my head as I turned up the lights after every video-clip at the start of class – it's show-time, this matters, and this alone. And for me, a lot was going on. I was separated in my marriage and going through a divorce process; two of my sons were enrolled in other universities and the third was in high school and it was hard for all of us. It was a tumultuous time for me, in the fullest sense of that word and it was a needed change in my life.

Teaching the superclass was like instructing a small town; in fact, it was both fun and disconcerting to watch some first-year students, likely ones who literally came from a small town, walk into the auditorium for the first time and be stopped in their tracks trying to absorb the fact that their classroom was an auditorium with more than a thousand other people. In an effort to instill some sense of connection, each year I created a unique hand-gesture signal so that when they passed me on campus or anywhere, they could use that gesture to tell me they were in my class. Over the years during the classes and many times since, I have had those hand signals given to me out running, on streets throughout the country, and in visits to my office when students came back to events like homecoming at the university.

My sense was that the superclass concept worked and yet in the various departments that offered the courses, the time and resource demands were huge. Sometime around 2003, Western administrators decided to revert to smaller first-year classes and re-assign the Alumni Hall space to Kin for its activity course demands. My School made the decision to make first year a direct entry into Kin rather than a general year with second-year entry. While I was offered the choice of continuing to teach the course as an optional course, I felt like I had given a significant portion of my professional time to first year teaching and preferred to move back to more normal teaching assignments and also redevelop my research program and graduate student supervision. Clearly, to me, teaching the superclass had been invigorating and draining in the half-decade of doing the class. And over the time period, it was a dynamic and huge transition in my life, personally and professionally. In the latter regard, in the late 1990s, I was elected to the executive boards of both the North American Society for Sport History and the Sport Literature Association and served as President for both of those organizations. In addition, I took on the role of Editor-in-Chief of one my field's major journals, *Sport History Review* and the time

commitment to that venture was very demanding as a service component of my workload. And, the *American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education* bestowed a lifetime award to me as an 'International Fellow.' As the century turned, it struck me then as it does now, that I was moving into the senior years of my tenure at Western and that I was recognized for my academic achievements and skills in all 3 aspects of teaching, research, and service. Thus, it seemed like a propitious time to move my efforts into greater scholarship inclusive of different levels of teaching.

In the Spring of 2003, I re-married and that partnership and my wife have become such precious components of my life. Symbolically and literally, it marked a whole different sense of aliveness for me. For the first time in years, I felt the thrill of being a professor, grounded in the contentment and commitment of a new way of being in a relationship. To use Coleridge's expression from *Kubla Khan* – and I have often thought about the resonance of this line – I felt like “it was a miracle of rare device.” And there was a parallel tipping point connected to my relationship with and to my professional life. On the one hand, I sought to expand on one section from my superclass curriculum to develop a senior course in Alternative and Complementary (or Integrative) Health; in parallel, I was choosing a very alternative way of life. The course became a regular component of my teaching load for the next 12 years at a time when the Faculty of Health Sciences' new program in Health Studies was growing in popularity. More profoundly, my belief in the use of well-framed questions to prompt critical thinking in teaching and to direct sound research endeavours of my own and those of graduate students working with me was profoundly reinvigorated in learning about and becoming certified in life coaching.

Curiously, in the field of Kinesiology, coaching is used as it relates to sport whereas the kind of coaching (called co-active coaching) in which I became certified was a very different way of being in communication with people than traditionally used in sport-coaching. However, I do believe there is a lot about life coaching that could be used by sport-coaches to be even more effective communicators. For me, learning life-coaching skills strongly reinforced my belief and practice in using sound, well-derived questions to foster critical thinking in the classroom and in designing research questions and protocols. Learning to ask more open-ended questions in communications at any level and having a system that fostered greater listening to students, research subjects, and colleagues really heightened my interactive abilities. Following our

certification in coaching, my wife – also an academic, a health behaviourist at Western – and I decided to start a research program and design study interventions that utilized coaching as a way to motivate people who struggled with issues such as overeating and obesity, smoking addictions, and physical inactivity. Our first step was to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the model of co-active coaching to ensure that it was theoretically grounded; our findings served as our initial publication in the area and our platform from which to create a graduate student research program. At first, we accepted Masters' students into the Kinesiology graduate program and later, when a new Health and Rehabilitation Sciences' Graduate Program was created, we accepted MSc and PhD students into the field of Health Promotion with a specialization in coaching research.

While it might, on the surface, seem odd for a trained historian to become immersed in a qualitative, individually-based form of research, it really was a logical blend, just a different forum in which to apply questions. We joined the largest, global professional organization in the rapidly-growing coaching field, the *International Coaching Federation (ICF)* and started to present our research at ICF pre-conference workshops. Very quickly, the ICF executive realized that having research evidence to support coaching's proclaimed efficacy was vital and I had the good fortune to be elected as the ICF's first Chair of its Research and Education committee, a post I held for 4 years. As our research program at Western progressed, it became quite a popular attraction for graduate students and we found we have had to limit the number of graduate students we could admit. In addition, it was clear that the skills we learned in co-active coaching were those inherent in a very similar style of health-related communication for behaviour change, motivational interviewing. Our research program and ability to teach and instill motivational interviewing has resulted in all manner of invitations to present our work at professional conferences within Canada, the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia.

As a researcher and graduate student supervisor, my involvement in coaching meant there were two aspects to my research: one in Kin regarding sport and sociocultural history; and the other in Health and Rehab Sciences in the field of health promotion and motivational interviewing. Western, in the last 10-12 years, has really worked to develop its graduate programs across campus and admit a greater number of students. Thus, the time was propitious for me to expand the number of students I agreed to supervise in both areas. While I have been

delighted to work with so many bright and enthused graduate students, it has been a kind of double-edged sword regarding university-wide graduate student admissions. In many fields, there just aren't full-time academic jobs right now because of budget cuts to universities, the impact of economic recessions, and escalating tendency for post-secondary institutions to hire more part-time faculty. This hiring trend has created an even thicker, non-gender specific version of the glass ceiling effect and impact of employing part-time instructors; while such contracting is expedient and likely cheaper than full time hiring and tenure commitments, it creates a lot of uncertainty for those teaching on a part-time basis. There is very little in the way of job security; contract salaries on a per-course basis are relatively low; and it is very difficult for part-time professors to maintain, let alone develop a research program that might support their case for full time positions when they do become available. Thus, in my view, admitting greater numbers of graduate students has become a kind of ethical issue – how can we continue to proliferate the vast cadre of convocated graduate students with very dim prospects for consistent, full-time employment?

Graduate student enrolment issues aside, academic life at Western in the new millennium was a flourishing time for me. Over my career, there were many times when I experienced a duality sensation of having one of the finest jobs I could imagine along with a niggling feeling of fraud. Surely, I thought, I would be found-out at some point and I wondered, rhetorically, what would a sport historian cum motivational interviewing researcher do in the real world? Conversations with both colleagues and doctoral students at all academic levels over the years have convinced me that this sense of it's-just-too-good-to-be-true and who am I to be privileged to be working in academe is common. Perhaps it's a kind of internal reality-check most of us experience in the academy of our employed existence. I also became more conscious of the fact that retirement would happen at some point. Part of that awareness was fueled, likely, by discussions around the 2006 change in the Ontario Human Rights Code whereby employers could not terminate employment at age 65. At the time of the repeal of this stricture, it didn't mean much to me other than confirmation that I would be in charge of making any retirement decision. I felt committed to all my roles as a professor and very satisfied and happy in my life.

Over the last ten years, I continued to teach in the areas of sport literature, sport history (although almost exclusively at the graduate level), integrative health, and even health promotion

at the graduate level. In addition, the Director of Kin asked me to take on and re-style a senior Undergraduate course called Sport, Exercise, Health and the Body in Western Culture to be offered jointly to the Kin and Health Studies' programs. It was a curricular effort to involve more science-oriented students in a different course experience that was related to their field but more arts' and social science in its perspective. It felt like my academic wheel came full circle in that it was and became an updated and re-formatted course that stemmed from Jack Fairs' Sport and the Body in Western Culture course and the Undergraduate experience that had virtually launched my interest in becoming an academic. And, it was new and fun and offered another rich involvement with Undergraduate students.

In terms of service, in 2006, I volunteered to work as Acting Director of the Bachelor of Health Sciences Program for about a year. In addition, I became active with the UWO Faculty Association, once again, via being elected to serve on its Grievance Committee. In the unionized environment, such a committee is important in ensuring academic rights are maintained. My role on the committee was pretty much dovetailed toward working one-on-one with professors seeking promotion and/or tenure and whose cases had been flagged for possible denial of those advancements. By the time I joined the committee, I had served on almost all Faculties' promotion and tenure committees across campus and was very aware of what was needed for successful files and I relished working with 'tough' cases. It has been some of the most satisfying of my service roles – to assist academics struggling with the uncertainty of career and even job security.

Surviving and thriving at Western has not always been easy. Some of my best friends and colleagues have been released from university employment; others retired and left the university environment completely; and some, like my good friend Dr. Barbara Brown, passed on or succumbed to different health issues. Some years ago, my wife was diagnosed with and surgically treated for melanoma and although her recuperation is complete and she is cancer-free, it is those kinds of moments when life happens and stands me up straight in my awareness of all people and things precious in my world. Six years ago, my sister, younger by 4 years, died of an illness from which she kept her whole family unaware; her death really rocked me to my core and each year since, in sadness and in reverence, I celebrate her life, softly, on her birthday. Almost three years ago, our first grandchild, a boy of infinite magnificence was born. The

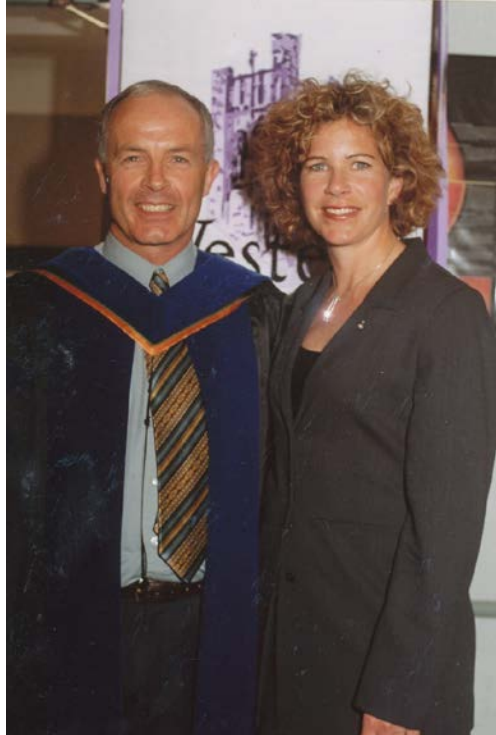
cadences of life spiral around me with abundance, sometimes sadness, and most often with abiding and effervescent ecstasy that keeps me in mind of the wonder of the thirteenth century mystical poet, Rumi's lines, "The drum of the realization of the promise is beating / we are sweeping the road to the sky."

In my mind's eye and in my body's awareness, as I come closer to my retirement, I consider how important have been the cycles and rhythms of my life within the universe that is Western. One exact cycle that comes to mind is the penny-farthing bi-cycle I purchased in the mid-1980s, the one with a huge, 54-inch front wheel and diminutive back wheel that I had my students try to ride to give them a feel for history literally in motion.



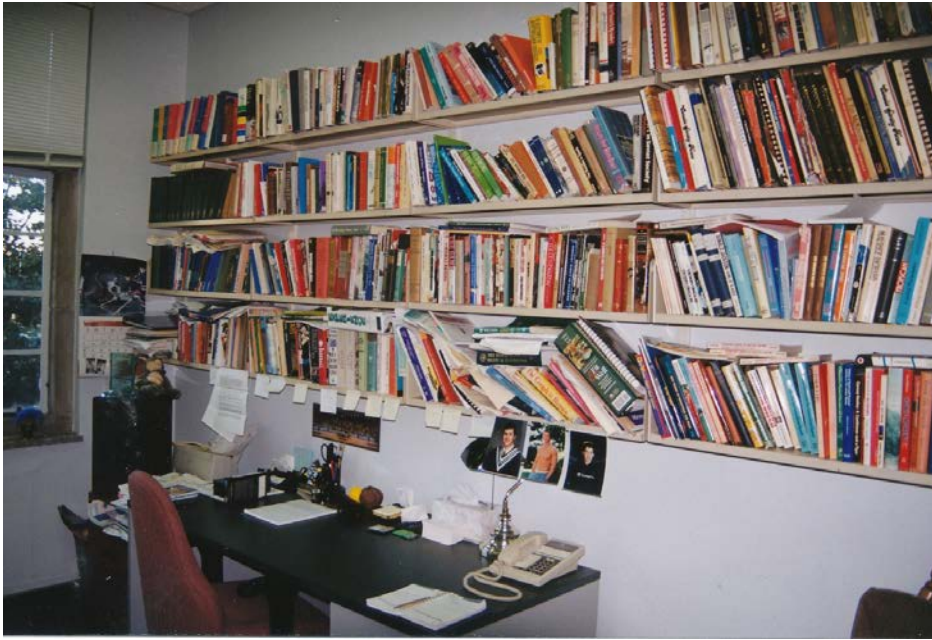
[don 18] *Demonstrating riding the 'farthing to my class outside Thames Hall*

When I was awarded tenure, I purchased my academic regalia, the University Alberta's black gown invested with the 3 royal blue stripes on either sleeve and its green and gold-piped hood and tassel-topped mortarboard. One of the last great rituals performed at my institution is Convocation and for 3 decades, I have cherished being in the academic 'party' and serving as Public Orator to announce student names as they cross the stage commemorating their graduation or to 'hood' them as they knelt before chancellors and pro-chancellors. It is pomp and circumstance writ large and a rite befitting my institution. Twice at those ceremonies I have been privileged to introduce two outstanding recipients of one of Western's highest awards, an honorary doctorate – one to Jungian psychologist, Dr Marion Woodman and one to my coach, colleague, friend, mentor, and intellectual, Dr Jack Fairs.



[don 10] *In academic regalia, posing with Dr Marnie McBean*

And I think too of the incomparable feeling of the first day of classes, the transoms of first-year engineering students, the banter of purple-painted, excited frosh and demure upper-class students. In sharp contrast, the peace and splendour of the campus in the 4 months of Spring and Summer – the bliss of seeming solitude – when most students are gone, working somewhere to save for the next academic year's expenses. I conjure proctoring exams; I envision myself in some 17 different offices I had over my career (my last office is located in the south end of the fully renovated Thames Hall classroom in which I taught my first course at Western)



[don 22] *One of my Thames Hall offices, circa the late 1990s*

and the amazing, difficult, invigorating people I engaged with in those offices and the quieter times, even the power-naps after long runs in those spaces; I remember the excitement of pay-raises and getting articles published after seemingly endless revisions and re-drafts; I marvel at the technology we have at our disposal and the broad freedoms of time and choice professors enjoy; I distinctly recall even the weekly successions of grabbing the *Western News* every Thursday to see what was happening campus-wide; I think of all the celebrating of student achievements in grade performance, outstanding papers, their hallmark learning moments, their acceptance into Medicine and Graduate Schools and full employment; and I treasure when students send me emails or letters of gratitude for whatever impact they perceive I had in working with them. Students, each new year I noticed, never grow old and I firmly believe they kept my thinking both young and open. Like J. Alfred Prufrock, I too have measured out my life with [Tim Horton's] coffee spoons, but I vow never to wear the bottoms of my Lululemon trousers rolled.

I will remember every aspect of my relationship with Western – the year-round bicycle commutes to and from the University for 12 years before I could afford a second car and bring motorcycles back into my life. A decade ago, some of my friends with whom I play hockey weekly, decided that that concrete island on which I parked my motorcycle should be signified;

for many years, “The Island of Dr Morrow,” a quip on the H.G. Wells’ science fiction novel and concomitant film, graced the light-post on my parking island.



[don 28] *My Island outside the Health Sciences building*

In 1975, when I went back to the University of Alberta for my dissertation defense, I chanced to play a couple of games of squash with a new doctoral student, Craig Hall; two or three years later, Craig was hired at Western and we have played squash together on weekly basis for about 40 years. For some reason, the memory remains vivid of going to the Personnel office in the admin building to get a form to register my third son’s birth for taxation purposes. The staff member who came to assist me at the counter was a diminutive young woman wearing a dress clearly ensconcing her near-full term pregnancy. As I filled out the form, she kept asking me what it was like to have children, goading me, as I later learned, until I asked, “And when are you expecting.” A hush fell over the whole office of some 25 or 30 people and the staff member seemed white with shock and was momentarily speechless. She responded that she wasn’t pregnant and turned away from me to go back to her desk. I was mortified and I don’t embarrass easily. I felt so low, so devastated that I had upset her so very deeply. I skulked out of the office, got part way down the hall, and stopped and propped myself against the cement wall, sweating from my sense of hurting the feelings of another human being. I must have been in that pose for several minutes when I heard the uproar of laughter from the personnel office. Turns out, I was

the brunt of their joke; I just happened to be the person who walked in when they contrived to enact the scenario. Eventually, I did laugh.

I will recollect the early mornings, the late nights, the hours and hours of class preparation – over-preparation, I’m both proud and stunned to realize – and writing chapters for textbooks that would, on a per-hour of time basis, glean me about \$2.00 per hour of time invested...and grading essays. For about 15 years, I taught a second-year, required and designated essay course with 225 students each year. My belief system was such that at no time did I have grad student teaching assistants grade essays for me; it has always felt like my responsibility to oversee student writing projects. I tried every conceivable method to grade essays expediently – from devoting 3 whole days over a weekend to cram them to completion (very unfair to me and more so, to the students) to the system I eventually adopted of ‘budgeting’ a certain number per day, usually 6 or 7 until they were done. For probably 30 or more of my years as a professor, I have taught mostly essay courses; I consider writing to be an art and something one learns over time and often I felt like kind of an academic voyeur, fortunate to get a glimpse inside the minds and sometimes hearts of students through their essays. If I were to cite the single most important course I ever took on route to becoming an academic, it would be high school Latin – it has enriched every aspect of my writing, of understanding the English language as well as using languages like Italian and Spanish when I travel, and fostered my affinity for Anatomic nomenclature, most of which is derived from the “dead” language of Latin.

I continue to run at noon; symbolically, my favourite route is one encompassing the trails along the river of the campus’s eastern and western boundaries; encircling the university regularly seems so apropos to my sense of the rhythms of this university. I will think of course evaluations, performance evaluations (that great, systematic, yearly flaunting of one’s academic accomplishments for relatively minor rewards – merit, we call it; the reality is there is no merit in merit), peer evaluations, manuscript evaluations, and self-evaluations from all of these and the many yardsticks by which we in academe are measured and take stock of ourselves. And I will recall the pride of being able to include Western’s logo at conference presentations, keynote speeches, community speaking engagements (one at The London Club to the medical-membered Harvey Club and another at the Hunt Club and still my favourite, to the Take-back-the-Night group in Ailsa Craig), and workshops when off-campus, anywhere in the world. Being a

professor from a 'research intensive university' with the reputation Western enjoys is and always has been a privilege. And I vow and am committed to finishing the project I started and worked on for my last two, six-month sabbaticals – my first piece of pure fiction, a novel called *Tumblehome*. At the same time, I have learned and believe firmly that writing history is not far from writing fiction.

Finally, I am concerned and excited for beginning and future academics who choose the academic life. Many years ago, in the late 1970s I think, one of Western's Science professors wrote a short essay he titled, 'Edubus.' In the paper, he decried how much higher education was moving toward a business model, to the detriment of its educational mission, in his view. I think his essay still holds truth and is worth reading and pondering. Expectations of young professors are huge, work pressures are omnipresent, magnified and intensified, I believe, by the demand for and expectation of consistent grants' acquisitions, the more robust the funding, the 'better' the grant and the greater the accord given the academic investigators. I wish for a university motto to frame a far more collegial relationship among everyone on campus, one that would be phrased something like, what can we do to support you? And yet I am confident that current and future professors will navigate their careers in ways that suit them best, making decisions with trepidation and confidence, engaging with their university and their students in ways that suit and serve them best. As for me, as I turn the corner on my career, still, far greater than any joy I ever felt as a professor, I will remember and miss what it feels like to be in front of classroom of students; even going to those classrooms, not once have I ever been not-nervous. And in those sacred spaces, engaging with students, co-creating the culture that is formed with each and every class, learning with and from them, and helping them to find out what is worth knowing for them – they were the tumblers of my university.