11-4-1999

UA12/2/1/2 Teaching Career Steals Heart of Journalist

Jason Ragan

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records/488

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in WKU Archives Records by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.
Teaching Career Steals Heart of Former Journalist

Scattered among the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves in a Cherry Hall office is the evidence of a hardworking, dedicated man.

History professor Carlton Jackson has a career that spans close to 40 years, 50 countries and nearly 20 books.

It all began as a story when he was a reporter for an Alabama newspaper, the Birmingham Post-Herald, in the mid 1950s.

“I told my editor that I would like to go teach for a year and then come back and write a series of articles about what it was like to be a teacher and I just never came back.”

His first teaching job, schooling fifth graders at Birmingham University School, began his four-decade teaching career. And he never looked back.

“I don’t have very many regrets about going to teaching,” Jackson said. “It is the only profession that I know anything about that lets me do the three things I love to do the most: teaching, researching and writing, and traveling.”

Over the years, Jackson has had the opportunity to be a guest lecturer in places ranging from Poland to India.

In 1951, Jackson was in England during a four year tour in the Air Force.

“Everything I have today I owe to having been in the Air Force,” he said. “It gave me a wife, it gave me a house, it gave me an education.”

This father of four met his wife Pat during his tour in Europe. It quickly became like a second home to Jackson, who has visited more than a couple of dozen times.

“While it was true that the Air Force was paying my tuition, we still had a lot of expenses,” Jackson said. “I had to pay rent every month and put food on the table, and we came perilously close to running out of food on more than one occasion.”

Jackson was a reporter for the Birmingham Post-Herald to support his wife and two children while going to school at Birmingham-Southern College in 1957.

He received a bachelor’s degree in history and political science and a master’s degree in history and literature from Birmingham-Southern. He obtained his doctorate from the University of Georgia.

While at Alabama, he taught fifth graders at Birmingham University School. Before coming to the Hill, he served a short stint at the University of Montevallo.

His career at Western began in 1961. In 1996, he became a University Distinguished Professor, an elite group of Western professors.
Jackson teaches history at Western with his main emphasis on U.S. social history. He has taught it on the graduate level for the last 25 years and on the undergraduate level for the last five.

He is proud of all of his books, but one stands out: “Forgotten Tragedy: The Sinking of HMT Rohna,” a World War II tragedy in which 1,015 American soldiers were killed. Jackson found the German pilot of the plane who shot the missile.

“I wish this never had to be written, but it needed to be written because no one ever heard of the Rohna,” Jackson said.

Jackson wasn’t the only one in his family called to teaching. His son, Daniel Jackson, has been an Industrial Technology assistant professor since 1991.

Jackson’s students have praised his work. History instructor and former student Paula Trafton said she enjoyed her class with Jackson in 1995, calling him a “wealth of information.”

“He has a way of stimulating a conversation,” she said.

Jackson said he likes students who are responsive, and is not angered by disagreement, but feels if backed with factual information, it is a great tool.

“Ninety percent of the problems in this world come from people who express opinions without any factual information behind those opinions,” Jackson said. “That’s what causes racial prejudice, religious bigotry, hatred of all different sorts. I want students to learn how to express opinions based upon factual information.

“I want students to learn how to form opinions themselves based upon the work they themselves have done.”

Additional information regarding Carlton Jackson:

Butler County and Green River Republican Banner


Louisville Courier-Journal


Park City Daily News


‘Gone with the Wind’ Analyzed Completely and in Minute Detail,” August 19, 1990.


“WKU Professor Contributes Much with Bio of Feminist,” September 14, 2008. Child of the Sit-Downs: The Revolutionary Life of Genora Dollinger


“Professor to Teach Abroad,” August 15, 1985. Teaching in Bangladesh.

“Scotch Irish History Explained,” August 29, 1983. A Social History of the Scotch Irish

Stringer, Donna-Lin. “Finland to be Year’s Home for Bowling Green Family,” August 27, 1989, p. 2B.

“Two Named Distinguished Professors,” May 2, 1996.


“WKU History Prof Authors War Book,” October 21, 1979. *The Great Lili*

“WKU Prof to Teach in Austria,” May 4, 1981.

“WKU Professor Examines the Works of Zane Grey,” April 28, 1974.

“WKU Professor of History to Lecture in South America During Bicentennial,” March 31, 1976.


WKU Press Releases UA11 Faculty, Individuals

Young, Al. “‘I’d Rather Play a Maid Than Be One’,” New York Times, October 15, 1989. Book review *Hattie: The Life of Hattie McDaniel*

These and other sources are available in the Harrison-Baird Reading Room at the Kentucky Building.