Interview with
Winifred Bryan Horner

Lynée Lewis Gaillet and Shelley Aley

Win Horner is a master teacher. She is able to introduce her students into the realm of what Gary Tate, her colleague at Texas Christian University, calls “the discourse of...the educated community” (McDonald 41). We noticed this quality as students in her literacy and orality seminar at Texas Christian University. We were nearly defeated by the dispersion and messiness evident in the course as she had designed it. Our educational experiences up to that point had been more traditional: lecture courses in literature that mainly disseminated information. This was not always the case, but literature courses at the time we were completing our M.A.s had traditionally privileged a particular canon. In Professor Horner’s class, we were treading on entirely new ground—shifting ground, unstable ground—or so it seemed to us. And who was there to tell us what to think? Not Win Horner.

During our semester in her seminar, we discovered that a master teacher doesn’t tell students what to think; she introduces students to the conversations taking place in an educated community, much in the way a host introduces new guests at a social gathering. A master teacher enables students to open their ears to the babble of discourse that is taking place around them and to make sense or non/sense of it as they will—according to their varied experiences, goals, and interests—eventually mingling their voices with those of the others. Win Horner is a master teacher in this wonderful way, and, as such, she has served as a model for what it is to be an outstanding teacher, scholar, mentor, colleague, and friend to both of us throughout our years at TCU and beyond.

Like many of her former students, we have remained good friends with Win Horner. Following our panel presentation on nineteenth-century Scottish rhetoric at the Conference on College Composition and Communication this year, we lunched and visited with her, catching up on old times and planning future projects. Out of this conversation among friends comes the following interview, and we must admit that it is with deep regard for Win Horner that we sought and undertook this assignment.

Dr. Horner completed her A.B. in 1943 at Washington University and her M.A. in 1961 at the University of Missouri–Columbia. She began her career in 1960 as a part-time instructor at Missouri, eventually
becoming a full-time tenured instructor in 1969. Describing Horner's struggle for recognition as a non-traditionalist in a male-dominated, traditional field, Theresa Enos states,

Dr. Horner is both a role model for and mentor to many of us, especially the women who make up the majority of those working in rhetoric and composition. Without the many kinds of support she has given to us victims of professionalized gender bias, we might not be the staunch but weary survivors some of us have become. (9)

Horner served as the assistant to the Director of the Composition Program at MU from 1974-1980. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1975 and was promoted to full professor in 1984, a position for which she had to fight. In 1985, she accepted the Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition, the first twentieth-century chair of rhetoric and composition. She was the first person to hold the Chair (from 1985-1993) and the first woman to occupy an endowed chair at TCU. Presently in partial retirement, Horner serves as the TCU Cecil and Ida Green Distinguished Emerita Tutor and Lillian Radford Chair of Rhetoric Emerita.


Dr. Horner holds numerous awards. In 1982, she won the University of Missouri Alumnae Anniversary Award for her Outstanding Contribution to the Education of Women and was made Fellow in the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh in 1987. Also in 1987, she won a National Endowment for the Humanities Research Award. In 1990, she won the Award for Distinguished Alumna from the University of Missouri, and in 1991 she was honored with a festschrift edited by Theresa Enos. For the support Horner has given women, *Rhetoric Review* honored her by naming the 1990-91 award for best essay "The Winifred Bryan Horner Award."

Dr. Horner lectures extensively both at home and abroad. She has presented papers in Amsterdam, Aberdeen, Gottengen, Edinburgh, Oxford, Tours, and Shanghai. She served as president for both the Rhetoric Society of America (1987-89) and The National Council of Writing Pro-
gram Administrators (1985-87). Not having had a mentor of her own, Dr. Horner is aware of the importance of playing this role in the academic lives of her students. What is most notable about conversations with her is that she never neglects voicing interest in and listening to others. “And what are you working on?” she will always want to know. And then she will lend an educated ear and offer suggestions. Among her many achievements as a master teacher, exemplary scholar, mentor, colleague, and friend, this interest in others characterizes her as an outstanding role model.

LLG/SA First of all, you are well known for your teaching, your scholarship, and your service to the discipline, but how would you describe yourself?

WBH I often feel like an incompetent. I often feel as though maybe somebody, or lots of people, are going to find out that I really don’t know so much, particularly in my classes, and then here (CCCCC), when I give a paper. I have the sort of typical lack of self-confidence that I think many people have, and particularly women. But I love being reassured, over and over again.

LLG/SA Do you think that vulnerability in a sense is maybe a strength for you, or do you perceive it as a weakness?

WBH Oh, I don’t know. It gets to my stomach sometimes. But it makes me realize that everybody feels vulnerable.

LLG/SA Do you see yourself more as a teacher or as a scholar?

WBH I really have trouble separating them, because, when I was negotiating this appointment at TCU, this new appointment, the vice president said to me you don’t even have to teach, and I really didn’t like that because I realized that most of my good ideas come in my teaching, from my students. Teaching is a two-way street. So I think if I gave up my teaching I would sort of dry up on the scholarship. I truly believe that.

LLG/SA Your students repeatedly cast you in the role of mentor. How do you feel about that responsibility?

WBH I’m going to write an article for Betsy Irvin on mentoring, and I think the thing about mentoring is that it’s like being a parent. It’s very important that you learn to let go. I really think that you mentor students until they don’t need it anymore. And that can happen when they’re first-year graduate students or it may not happen until they’re ten years out in the field. But I feel that then it becomes an equal relationship, and I almost think it gets to the place out in the world where your students are helping you, so that finally you are being mentored in a way by them. You’ll find that in your relationships with your own children and graduate students. There comes a time when you’ve got to let go. And they’re ready to be let go.
LLG/SA You’ve said that you were self-trained in rhetoric. How did you come into this field? What most influenced your theory and your practice?

WBH I came into the field because I was teaching writing as an adjunct, and I was even supervising the TAs who were teaching writing, and I didn’t know anything about it. My first idea was to go into linguistics. I really knew nothing about rhetoric. Then I had a friend in the speech department, and she said I should study rhetoric. I classified myself at that point as in rhetoric and linguistics. Actually my degree was in English language and linguistics. I took most of my courses in the speech department.

LLG/SA What do you see as your contribution to composition and rhetoric and how do you feel about it?

WBH I’m glad you asked me that. I feel my contribution is to reexamine our history as teachers of composition, as people interested in teaching a communication skill to students. That’s where I started and that’s where I am now. I am in organizations where the history of rhetoric has been separated from the teaching of composition, and I feel so strongly that we are together in this and that the teaching of composition should never be isolated from rhetoric and the history of rhetoric.

LLG/SA Gary Tate says that several years ago if you tried to give a paper at CCCC that didn’t include Aristotle, then the rhetoric police would come in and censure you. He thinks they divorced composition from everything but rhetoric. How do you see yourself fitting into Tate’s description of the climate of rhetoric in the 70s?

WBH Well, I think I’m one of those, what do you call it?

LLG/SA The rhetoric police, the KGB of composition.

WBH I’m sorry, but I wanted to divorce literature from composition, but I had different ideas about that. Ed Corbett talks about it in his article in *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap* (1983). What I had experienced was training TAs; all of our teachers of composition were TAs in literature. All they studied was literature; we had no courses in composition. I wasn’t capable of helping them. I used to conduct a three-day workshop, and I didn’t know anything about composition theory or rhetoric theory. I just winged it. So I was eager to get literature out of the comp course, because the TAs spent the whole time teaching literature. They didn’t know how to teach a composition course.

LLG/SA And they didn’t want to teach it. That’s lowly grunt work.

WBH Exactly. And when they’d been in the program a few years then they got to teach a sophomore English literature survey or a sophomore American literature survey, and they’d arrived. We used to recruit people—and I should make it clear this is not my present institution—we used to recruit people by saying you’ll never have to teach composition
here. So I carry, I think, some bitterness, which I think may be inappropriate right now, about literature.

**LLG/SA** So how do you now see the composition class? As utilitarian?

**WBH** Now I see the composition classroom as a place for learning how to use language and through using language—both reading and writing—connecting to your culture and empowering yourself, if that’s the word, to operate in the culture and to understand more about your thinking process. I love to do that in the NIGHT course that I’m teaching. We keep talking about what happens when we write, whether we write on the kitchen table or in bed, very mundane things. One of the things we were talking about was where you get your ideas, and it came from them, not me, that the physical act of writing—physical and mental—generates ideas.

**LLG/SA** Writing as discovery, writing as learning?

**WBH** Writing is all of those things, and you can’t separate it, I don’t think, from your thinking. Language is it, as far as I’m concerned. It’s also what separates us from the other animals. I used to say lower animals, now I say other animals. It’s our ability to use language. I have almost a mystical admiration and respect for the word, which is the way the Bible started. In many religions it’s the beginning of the word, which is language. And language is what separates us.

**LLG/SA** OK. Let’s move on. What do you see as the “final analysis” of *Bridging the Gap*?

**WBH** I don’t really know.

**LLG/SA** Of all your work, that one gets cited most often.

**WBH** If it does it’s because it includes the work of many people. They’re really impressive—Wayne Booth, Richard Lanham. That was my idealism. Start out with the most respected scholars in literature, who I knew taught composition, and get the connections that they see. The book started out as a session for MLA. I was in charge of the teaching and writing division program. The first person I called was Wayne Booth, and when I telephoned he was grading freshman themes. He started talking to me all about the paper he was grading. He wouldn’t be on the program, but during the conversation I asked if he thought the program idea could be made into a book. He said, “Oh, it would make a wonderful book. The University of Chicago Press wants to publish more things like that. Be sure to call them.” I had a call within two hours from the University of Chicago Press. Then when you call other people and say Wayne Booth is contributing, everybody says, “Oh Yes.” To answer your original question, I don’t know, really. Probably it is the work most cited.

**LLG/SA** It certainly is a point of departure in the current debate of lit/comp. Everybody starts with your book.
WBH I've been asked to give talks to strong literature departments. They're trying to get their people to be interested in composition, and I'm not sure I'm a good representative of that.

LLG/SA Let's talk about your most recent book, *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric: The American Connection*. We see it as an introductory work inviting a structuralist approach that calls for a historical and social contextualization of nineteenth-century rhetoric studies. What do you perceive will be the long-term effects of your work on the history of nineteenth-century rhetoric? Do you see it shedding any light on problematic concepts of the period that now exist, and what directions would you suggest for future studies in this area?

WBH I hope it opens up a new area that proves to be very fruitful. This book will be followed by actual excerpts from three of those important people—Aytoun, Jardine, and Bain. I see new interest in the period, but again, I think it's got to be connected to what we're doing in the composition classroom today. I believe you must have a connection in history of rhetoric and composition studies. Getting back to the nineteenth-century, I think it's a crucial period if we are going to understand what we are doing in the classroom today, and understand composition theory. I think the mark of that is an increasing number of young scholars in this area. You two are the best examples of this. It's a wonderful feeling, and I think it will just open up new things. There's a lot of material just waiting to be looked at in Scotland and in this country, too. The Scottish influence in this country needs to be explored more. I'm fascinated with why Jardine didn't have more influence. I want to hear more about that.

LLG/SA It's been said that your textbook *Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition* is perhaps the only truly classical rhetoric designed for beginning writers. Could you talk a bit about the conception and reception of that work?

WBH That was a very interesting and exciting project. It was very hard to write. At the first CCCC after it came out I was actually lionized. People would come up to me and say, "Oh, I love it!" These were professors, and one instructor said to me, "I got it right before I left and I put it in my drawer and locked it, so nobody would get it because I want to read it as soon as I get back." That's kind of the story of what happened to it. The instructors loved it, but they were afraid of it, afraid to teach it because they felt so unsure of their knowledge of classical rhetoric. It's never been a best seller, but it's had steady sales and now they are going up.

LLG/SA We would think so, now that you have a basis of practitioners who are educated in classical rhetoric.

WBH That's right. Students of rhetoric like it. The students say, "Why do I need this first chapter?" It sort of had a life of its own, and it's now picking up sales, and when you think of all the second-hand copies that are out there, that's sort of remarkable. This morning a man came up
to me and said, "I'm using your textbook and I'm just thrilled with it. I think it's the best," and so forth and so on. He was using it in a graduate course. And of course that's what happened to Ed Corbett's book. It will be interesting to see how this new book by Sharon Crowley [Ancient Rhetoric for the Contemporary Student 1994], which follows in that tradition, fares.

LLG/SA I think it's interesting that the book is coming into its own, in a sense.

WBH Yes, because there are more people in the profession who have studied classical rhetoric. They're more comfortable with it. But I think I am known more through that book than for anything that I've done. People say to me, "Oh, I've read your work," and nine times out of ten that's the book they're talking about.

LG/SA What about your work with Harbrace Handbook? Harbrace is widely adopted because it gives us what we want, I mean we as a profession, but I don't see Harbrace making any great strides. That may be just my own bias. Do you see your other works influencing your work with Harbrace?

WBH That book has been changed markedly over the years. But we changed it in such a way as not to be offensive. That book has led the field in many ways, and people don't realize that. One of its strengths is that they don't realize it. Look at the example and exercises just two editions ago. That's only about six years? And look at the current one and you will be amazed. The examples are multicultural. We made a list of names, so that in the exercises we don't have John, Bill and Mary anymore. We have Drema, we have Sholanda. So it has changed, and we were one of the first handbooks to mention anything about sexist language. In fact, we were highly criticized when we said that "Everyone pick up their books" was acceptable. We got hot letters. The Harbrace is one of the most widely used handbooks in the field. It's not nearly as conservative as people think it is. It's also the way composition is taught by 90 percent of the people in the country who teach composition, and they're not here at CCCC.

LLG/SA They don't have the time or the money.

WBH They're teaching four and five and six classes of composition. They're teaching inner city kids. They're in a different, much more difficult world. They want and they need rules. Is it right or wrong? The instructors want to know that, and there is a lot of new stuff slipped in there. I think it has a tremendous influence for the good. The book got bad press.

LLG/SA It got bad press because of the way it's been employed or appropriated by practitioners who are not really able to change what they're doing. If you treat something like a Bible it becomes one.

WBH It also serves their purposes. They're not trying to teach people how to write great literature.

LLG/SA Just how to get a job or to get out of college.
WBH So I have always had trouble with that. I think CCCC does a very good job of serving a lot of those people, but there are a lot more that never get to CCCC. The Harbrace should probably be used as a reference. I have trouble with the rhetoric section. I tried to make a lot of improvements in that.

LLG/SA We know you were very conscientious about including more discussions of process pedagogy, things that practitioners are doing that relate to process pedagogy, in the book this time.

WBH Also we have introduced a rhetorical element very carefully. But we don’t say that outright. We quietly incorporate it into a so-called rule.

LLG/SA Next question. You’re a founding member of the coalition of women scholars in the history of rhetoric, which has been in existence for how many years?

WBH Just two or three.

LLG/SA How do you perceive your role in this organization? Tell us what the goals are.

WBH Our goals are twofold. One is to help younger women in the field get established by encouraging their publications. And secondly by helping them negotiate the political scene that everyone faces, and particularly women. So it’s a kind of support group. I thought the other night we had wonderful perspectives on race and gender by four African-American women speakers.

LLG/SA I thought it interesting though that African Americans were all on the panel; few were in the audience.

WBH I sat next to an African-American man, but you’re right. They outnumbered the ones in the audience. We don’t have many African Americans in our profession. The difficulty if you’re an African American is to study English literature and a standard European American language.

LLG/SA So how do you perceive your role in this organization. As a mentor?

WBH The mentor term bothers me, but just to help people when I can.

LLG/SA So people reading this article can contact you for guidance?

WBH We’ve made that very clear in the profession—that they can contact any of us, and I think you would truly find these people helpful. Andrea [Lunsford], Kathleen [Welch], we’ve all been through it and survived, so we have learned a few survival techniques. And the men have a little trouble with that. We are establishing a therapeutic old-girl network, borrowing the best part of the old-boy’s network, if you can find a best part.

LLG/SA That leaves us with how has this organization affected the direction of your own work, if at all?
WBH I had a wonderful time at an all-day feminist workshop where I talked on Wednesday. I think I was asked to talk because I was a full professor; the title of the talk, which they gave to me, was “Full Professor Reflects on her Career.” I came out of that session so revived and enriched, and it was because there were two full professors there and that was it. The rest of the participants were young people in the profession.

LLG/SA About fifteen people present?
WBH Yes. It was limited. We reached our capacity. But they were all young people, many of whom I did not know. That was a wonderful chance to get to know them, and we talked about political issues: What are you willing to do to survive before tenure? What are you willing to do, what must you do, what are you not willing to do, and how do you NEGOTIATE through those things?

LLG/SA What is your best advice to them?
WBH I think as Kathleen [Welch] was saying, read your department; you have to know your department. You have to be a good listener. And then you have to sort of negotiate. I think my advice is not to take on every issue. Save yourself for the big issues or you lose credibility. You just become a kind of a nag. I cringe when I hear people call me “dear,” and I cringe when I hear “lady.” But I finally realized that I shouldn’t take up those issues. Wait until you can really do something or you’ll lose your credibility.

LLG/SA Yes. We have friends who constantly call people on their language usage.
WBH I did that. The reason I know all these things is because I did them. Looking back, I know what a mistake it was. I also think women are inclined—I know this because I did it—to fuss up and down the halls and not take action. We should shut up and do our work. And you have to do some dumb things. And overlook some dumb things, even in yourself. When you make mistakes, you then pick yourself up and start over.

LLG/SA Try to regain credibility where you may have lost it, or hope nobody paid that much attention.
WBH That’s right.

LLG/SA Another interesting part of your career is your international travel and involvement in international rhetoric. Over the last several years you’ve traveled extensively around the world, as the people-to-people ambassador to China, you’ve been to Italy—
WBH And I’ve been to Russia, strictly on tour.
LLG/SA But you spoke to people about rhetoric on the train?
WBH Undoubtedly I did. Don’t you always? Actually I went with a group from the University of Missouri, so there was a lot of discussion. We had music on the boat every night. They were more interested in that
than I was, Russian opera. But I love to travel. And when people are figuring out their research, they ought really to think about where they want to go. I have a colleague who’s working on Mark Twain, and he “gets” to go to Hannibal, Missouri. Whenever I travel I feel somehow bigger, smarter. I get fascinated with the culture and the people.

LLG/SA Particularly when you go to observe as a recorder rather than a tourist?

WBH I’ve found traveling without some purpose is just deadly dull. Just one museum after another or one cathedral after another. I like to go with some design.

LLG/SA So what effect has your involvement in international rhetoric studies and your travel had on your perceptions of North American composition studies?

WBH In the history of rhetoric?

LLG/SA OK. Do universities in other countries that do not have composition programs have an advantage or a disadvantage over our system of education in this country.

WBH The places where I have been have the advantage that the schools and the universities are smaller. I just find this so cliché but tremendously broadening. When I came back from China I had always taught my course in the history of rhetoric, and then it became the history of western rhetoric. I realized, hey, I’m just teaching the rhetoric of a very small proportion of the world.

LLG/SA Has it humbled you, in a sense?

WBH Oh, yes. And it’s made me realize how terribly provincial we are. In my class now I have a woman from Mexico and a woman from China, both extraordinarily intelligent. Whenever we talk about something in the teaching of composition, I say, “How do you do it in Mexico, and how do you do it in China?” And I really try to draw on those experiences, and the differences are always very interesting to me and other students. We need to enrich what we do.

LLG/SA We might be jumping around here now. You’ve done a great deal of work in writing across the curriculum. What insights can you offer someone interested in this area, and what is the future of writing across the curriculum, as you see it?

WBH I think writing across the curriculum is the way to go. And it’s the philosophy behind it that I think is important, that we stop relegating the teaching of writing to one course, or two courses even, or to one department. Writing should be incorporated into every course in the university, and all professors should be responsible for the writing of their students. And if the students can’t write about a subject, then they don’t know it. I feel very strongly about that. In fact at one point Peter France at the University of Edinburgh said, “Oh, our students write so
poorly. I think we ought to think about putting in a composition course,”
and I said, “don’t.” Because now all the professors in the university
concern themselves with the writing of the students, and students will
flunk the course if they can’t write. They will flunk in biology and
chemistry and history, whatever it is. If students can’t write, they flunk.

**LLG/SA** You think that’s good, to get back to the question of
composition?

**WBH** I think that’s the way it ought to be. I think too often students
think that once they’re past freshman composition they will never have
to worry about writing again.

**LLG/SA** When do you think we will get there?

**WBH** I think we’re heading in that direction. One of the problems
is the political situation. The TAs are supported by the comp course, and
that’s why the English department will not give up composition. Other-
wise they would not have their students in their Milton seminar. It is
strictly economics. I am finally a Marxist.

**LLG/SA** Do you have any suggestions for how we might still keep
the money in the English department by being more inclusive of other
disciplines? Is that feasible, put graduate students from other disciplines
in the English program?

**WBH** Some universities are doing that, and actually I think that’s
the way it should go, because I think we’re turning out too many literature
PhDs, and maybe we’re getting to the point that we ought to watch how
many rhetoric and comp PhDs we turn out. That’s one of the reasons I left
the university where I was. I was surrounded by graduate students who
were not getting jobs. That was the first question I asked when I came to
TCU—do students get jobs? They do. I made up my mind that I was not
going to be associated with a discipline that turned out people who could
not get jobs. I went to an MLA meeting one time when the department had
gotten a room for our graduate students, where they could receive calls
and hang their coats and stuff like that. A number of our students went
there with no interviews and no papers to give. I saw those students sit in
that room for four days in New York City waiting for a phone call. They
never even got a phone call. I said then I am not going to have anything
to do with this. As long as this economic situation continues, we will
continue to turn out too many PhDs. The doctors are smarter than we are.
They have limited the enrollment in med school. I think we need to do that
in English.

**LLG/SA** We were talking on the telephone recently, and you told
me that in an address at the TCU composition symposium, you stated that
freshman composition should not emphasize the personal essay. What in
your opinion should replace the personal essay in freshman composition
and why?
WBH I think it should move from the personal essay to an argument, or whatever you want to call it. You have a thesis, a main idea and you support it. I think the temptation is that it's fun to teach the personal essay. In my night class for older students—

LLG/SA Auto/biography?

WBH It's just wonderful, because they don't have to produce arguments. Usually students can write much better in their personal voice. It's just natural; you're telling a story. So instructors and students hate to move out of that mode. That's the danger. It's just like literature. It's so attractive; it's so much fun. I love to teach the night course because their stories are interesting, and in that mode they realize they are doing well. I can talk to them about how to write better, and they pick it up right away. I like to read it, I like to hear it, they like to write it.

LLG/SA Because their subject is themselves.

WBH Or others—it's personal. You'd be interested to know, a third of them instead of writing autobiography are writing biography. Two of them are writing about friends. One of them is writing a biography of her daughter. Two of them are writing biographies of their grandparents. So the focus has shifted a little bit.

LLG/SA Oral histories, which we all find fascinating.

WBH That's right. And they love to do it; I love to hear it. It's much happier than trying to write an article supporting or not supporting a crime bill. That's just not that interesting usually.

LLG/SA So you're encouraging composition instructors to move away from the personal forms and tackle the argumentative—

WBH I think that's what they're going to have to do. Let's talk about the new book I'm writing; it's very germane to this. It's a reader, it's a textbook. It's going to have four sections. The first section will be diaries, then letters, then autobiography, and then biography—excerpts. It's based on two ideas. One is moving from your personal experience to objective examination, outside your own experience—and also reading your audience. The diary starts with your own personal experience and also yourself as a reader/listener/audience. With the letter you have one other person usually, and you're still talking about your own experience. In the autobiography you're still talking about your own experience, but you've moved out into a public audience. And then in the biography you have to go outside of your experience and your audience is a general one. I see that as a way in a writing course to move students out.

LLG/SA And you have students write essays based on those forms?

WBH Not yet, but I plan to start.

LLG/SA This would be a text for a composition course?

WBH I don't know whether it would be a course for freshmen or upper level students. My new interest is autobiography. One very inter-
estng thing I’ve discovered about this book is that diaries and a lot of the letters are women’s ways of writing.

LLG/SA Biographies are by men and about men?
WBH Yes. You’ve got this progression. I’m finding all sorts of diaries, by the way, published and in manuscript form. All sorts of letters, and you begin to get a few more men in letters. But they write a different kind of letter. You have a feeling that they might be published someday, beginning to see more of an audience—particularly the nineteenth-century letter writers. But the women are really writing letters to one person, and then it moves out. You get more men writing autobiography, and then in biography, they’re by and about men, for the most part. I’m interested particularly in women’s autobiography. But I’m just starting.

LLG/SA And do you see yourself doing something historically? For example, are these going to be excerpts from a historical work?
WBH It’ll be varied.
LLG/SA I think you ought to have a section on the way autobiography and journal writing and letter writing place into the development of our whole rhetoric of nature. Look at Selborn; all of our nature writing comes out of diaries, journals and letters. Have you got a publisher for this work?
WBH Yes. Blair Press.
LLG/SA What’s the title of your new work. When can we look forward to seeing it?
WBH I’m not sure yet. Maybe Life Writing. I call my night course “auto/biography.” But that doesn’t quite cover this. Maybe Moving Out.
LLG/SA When can we expect to see your book?
WBH I’m supposed to have it finished by October.
LLG/SA So early next year. O.K. This is our last question—a very generic one. What is the future of freshman composition studies? What should be the future, if there is a difference?
WBH I would see it moving out, in most schools, of its present location as a freshman course, and I would see the teaching of writing being spread across the curriculum and up and down the curriculum.
LG/SA And you feel that’s what it should be?
WBH Yes, I do.
LLG/SA What did we neglect to ask you?
WBH The question I get asked most often is, “How do you balance your personal life with your professional life?” I have seen that change so dramatically. I remember being approached by colleagues at one time when our graduate students had requested that their courses end when school let out because so many of them had children who they wanted to get home to. My colleagues’ reaction to that was, “You must tell these women students not to ask for special consideration.” I think that kind of thinking is gone, that both men and women should be given consider-
ation to take care of children, elderly parents, a sick partner, or whatever. The old idea was never mention your personal life; don't mix it up with your professional life. I don't think we believe that anymore. I have a wonderful and supportive husband, but I never used to mention him. But I've changed that now. We just celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary, and I like to brag about that. His influence has not only helped me but in many ways made my career possible. We must make allowances for satisfying and fulfilling personal lives along with our professional lives for both men and women.

LLG/SA And the profession? Do you think we've got happy people—

WBH Yes, of course. We'll help people stay in our profession. We can't continue to try and do it all and not speak about our personal lives. I see that trend going away. Again, men and women are entitled to personal lives, and in the end it will sustain and enrich our professional lives.

LLG/SA In looking back, what has been the most rewarding aspect of your career?

WBH I think the most exciting thing that has happened to me is seeing my students and other young scholars carry on the work I have started. For example, there is Paul Bator, Linda Ferreira-Buckley, and you two—building your work on the research that I started—the archival research in Scotland. And of course I built my work on the rich material of the scholars who came before me—Ed Corbett and Jerry Murphy. My students are carrying on my work just as I am carrying on their work. That is something that we all share. Finally it makes it all worthwhile—the digging through moldy manuscripts for days and weeks on end, the cold and rain in Scotland. That is the real reason for research and it's all bound up with teaching—the ongoing conversation between students and teachers, and among scholars and researchers all over the world.

Lynée Lewis Gailet
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia

Shelley Aley
Cottey College
Nevada, Missouri
Works Cited

