

LIFE AFTER RIVIER

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*After a combined total of 50 years of teaching at Rivier, **Sharon Dean and Art Kubick** bid their students and colleagues farewell. In retirement, both plan to continue to pursue answers to the questions that have inspired them throughout their careers.*

Dr. Sharon Dean has shared her passion with students



PHOTO BY ART DURITY

English Professor Sharon Dean loves literature, particularly American literature. That passion for her discipline and her love of being around young people seems to have kept her “fresh,” even after 35 years of teaching literature and writing classes.

As retirement nears, Dean is happy to reflect on an academic career filled with variety—she taught a wide range of students from freshmen through graduate students—and a wide span of topics within her discipline, from freshman English to graduate seminars on Hawthorne and Faulkner. “I’m glad I had that opportunity,” she says. Working at a small college has been an added plus. “I was able to see individual students improve and to see breakthroughs in their writing and their insights.”

Former student Kirsti Sandy, now an English professor at Keene State College, says that instead of devoting time to an assignment, some English students simply try to mimic their professor’s views on a book. “That approach would never work with Sharon. She would see through it in about ten seconds!” Sandy says her own teaching has been inspired by Dean’s creativity in the classroom. “One semester she had us sketch costumes for a Tennessee Williams play and then write about the choices we’d made. I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed an assignment more.”

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Adjunct Professor Bill Maniotis, a onetime graduate student and now colleague with Dean in the English Department, says, “Sharon brings intensity about her discipline to the table. She is really good with inquiry and she’s a master at discussion.” Maniotis recalls, “When I first came to Rivier, she exposed me to a whole new realm of literature I had never experienced before, particularly women writers.” What’s more, “she commands respect from her students because she treats them like fellow intellectuals.”

Dean, who first joined the faculty part-time in 1973 and was hired full-time in 1982, is largely credited with building Rivier's program in American literature. Through her research and her writing she also brought national visibility to a previously obscure American author, Constance Fenimore Woolson. She and other likeminded academics co-founded the Constance Fenimore Woolson Society and Dean has authored three books on the writer, with a fourth in progress.

Her retirement "to do" list is "long enough to last the rest of my life," she laughs. She will finish editing a book of letters by Woolson and will start work on a fifth book about 19th century gardening technology. She also plans to spend more time with her family, including a daughter in Oregon and a son in Brunei in Southeast Asia. No matter how busy she is outside the classroom, Dean says, "I will *definitely* miss seeing students every day."

For Dr. Art Kubick, a central question remains



PHOTO BY ART DURITY

When Art Kubick retires after 15 years of teaching religious studies at Rivier College, he will continue to explore the same question he's been asking in one form or another for more than 40 years: What does it mean to walk in solidarity with the poor?

Kubick, Associate Professor and Department Coordinator of Religious Studies, recalls a trip to southern Mexico that he took with his wife Beth five years ago. "We stayed in a remote village with a family of six who lived in a tiny house, about the size of my office at Rivier. Antonio and Eva insisted we sleep in their house while they slept on the ground in a small kitchen area nearby." They didn't have much by American standards, "but they were ready to share all they had with us."

For Kubick, the experience was just one of many in a lifelong personal commitment to "walk with the poor." Since he first traveled to a remote Mexican community as a Catholic University student more than 40 years ago, he has worked with various groups to bring about systemic change for those who live in poverty. His numerous trips—to Mexico, Cuba, El Salvador, and Guatemala—have informed his world views

and his teaching. "I first thought I was going there to help the poor and soon realized I was the one being helped, I was the one being changed."

In recent years, he's served as an election observer in El Salvador; spent time living in a 'colonia' in a Mexican border community; and also worked with an organization called SHARE to bring about economic and political change in El Salvador.

He has quietly shared with Rivier students and colleagues his compassion and his call for justice for the poor. Senior Michael Keene of Nashua says, "Dr. Kubick has that unique ability to draw from within a student the desire not only to learn about but to advocate for and educate others about the poor and oppressed."

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In 1996, Kubick founded the College’s Peace and Social Justice Center, which hosted a Power of One series and a summer institute for nearly a decade. The program brought in a wide range of speakers, from Catholic activist Daniel Berrigan to Mahatma Ghandi’s grandson, Arun Gandhi.

“It’s been incredible to work with someone like Art,” says longtime friend and colleague Virginia Ryan, Associate Professor of Religious Studies. “He’s one of the most humble and, at the same time, one of the smartest people I know.” More than anyone else on campus, says Ryan, “Art has *lived* the mission of Rivier College.”

In retirement, Art and his wife Beth plan to spend more time with their four grown sons and their families—all living in New England. They also hope to study Spanish in South America and will return to Central America to continue their work among the poor. No matter where Kubick finds himself, however, one thing is certain: he will be asking, as he has for his entire life, how does what I’m doing *right now* impact the poor in our world? ■

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