

How OCC Language Prof Teaches: 'You're A Sharer'

By CORINNE ABATT

There's a quiet revolution going on in the Farmington home of Bernard Reilly, assistant professor of English at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

For the past year and a half, Reilly has been working on his doctor's degree in English. It has been an unusual experience.

For one thing, he is in a program at the University of Michigan which is unique in the state and still a rarity across the country. Upon completion, he will be awarded the degree of doctor of arts in the teaching of English.

Reilly is one of 19 in the first program of its kind at the university. The emphasis is on the teaching of English in a community college, so essentially Reilly is researching his own job.

He took a leave of absence to do the course work for his degree during the 1971-72 school year, came back to teach such a program, and Orchard Ridge in the fall of 1972 and was granted a sabbatical leave for the 1973 winter session.

This 15-week leave from teaching duties, granted by the college to faculty who have taught for three years, entitles him to work on research for his degree at half pay.

Reilly will resume his full-time teaching position at Orchard Ridge when the spring semester starts.

He returns with much confidence and a fresh insight about his position and goals, infinitely richer in what he has to give and how he wants to give it.

"Instead of being geared to research, our program at the University of Michigan was geared to literacy - how to help the student love his own language and be proud of what he possesses. We start with the idea that they have language abilities and what we want to do in the classroom is enhance it."

He explains the role of the teacher: "Then you're not becoming a corrector, you're becoming a sharer."

Even though Reilly is a specialist in the field of grammar, he doesn't feel that the study of grammar, per se - diagramming sentences, the parts of speech, the technical terms of construction - really contributes to the individual's ability to express himself.

White in service, Reilly took extension classes through Florida State University. He received his bachelor's degree at Central Michigan, took his graduate work at Wayne State and earned an advanced degree as a reading specialist from Eastern Michigan.

Berg Memorial Scholarship Is Awarded

Jill Farber of West Bloomfield and Joseph Corcoran of Northville are recipients of the Gary Michael Berg memorial scholarship for the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

The scholarship was started in Berg's honor by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harold C. Berg of 29268 Franklin Hills Dr., Southfield.

Berg died in a scuba diving accident in Pine Lake a year ago. He was a sophomore at Orchard Ridge at the time.

Miss Farber, a graduate of North Farmington High School, and Corcoran, a graduate of Northville High, are straight "A" students at Orchard Ridge.

Madonna Gets Award Winner

Carol Ann McHenry of Blissfield has been awarded a \$750 scholarship to attend Madonna College in Livonia. Miss McHenry's award is the highest available from the Alvin M. Bentley Foundation, which provides scholarships to Michigan high school graduates on the basis of academic excellence and financial need.

In a sense, he is turning his back on many of the traditional methods of teaching English. The turn-around began before he began his doctoral work.

"I was enjoying some interesting experiences with students before I went into the program; I had begun to realize that you shouldn't be so demanding on a precise way of doing things. I was ready for something different."

The program at the University of Michigan answered Reilly's need.

"It really seems surprising that a tradition university like Michigan would engage itself in such a program."

The program is not in the standard tradition, under the education department. It was conceived and developed by the English department faculty, and Reilly says they fought many battles and jumped many hurdles to bring it to reality.

Carnegie Mellon University was the first to institute such a program, and a few universities on the West coast now offer the doctoral degree in the teaching of English.

Reilly's 19-member doctoral group took several classes together and then each chose others - not necessarily from the English department - which they felt would enhance their skills in sociology, or anthropology for instance. Reilly took a course in modern Afro-American literature, another in modern fiction, and several in linguistics, the science of language.

The latter, he found significant in reinforcing his feelings about language.

Traditional grammar is just one grammar. There are all kinds of grammars."

He remarks frequently, as he speaks about his studies, that English teachers "really do not know what we want to do." He is impressed that Reilly is very close to knowing what should happen in English classes in a community college.

Community college students are people who are not necessarily going to school full time. They are employed, living and working in the community. Our student doesn't leave his environment; he stays in it - that's a problem in itself. He wants to lead the same life he led in high school, but he's taking on another activity. Many don't know how to handle it."

He sees little difference in the abilities of students away from home from those at a community college - different circumstances, no less desire to grow and learn, no less ability.

He is three or four chapters into his dissertation, aiming to complete it this summer. After an analysis of the factors in and functions of any message, he is building a series of exercises in English designed to enhance fluency without benefit of terms such as "objective," "objective," "gerund" and "participle," and many, many more which may serve

to block expression rather than further it.

His exercises include asking the student to do similar things in construction as shown by example - to take a series of short factual sentences and work them into an informative paragraph that is cohesive.

It involves taking the basic elements that reside in all communication and deciding how to get across the message, clearly and effectively.

"I don't want to talk about right answers," Reilly says as he explains his work. He looks at one page of exercises and says, "This of-

fers a range of choices, and the questions to the student will revolve around, 'Why did you choose this? How does this choice fit with your other choices? The choices they make are the ones they will have to live with!'"

Everything is aimed toward making language interesting, building fluency in reading and reading using the student's skills as the basis.

Reilly calls it "a better appreciation of the components so the person won't be ashamed to read or write or express himself."

Reilly doesn't hold any im-

mediate hopes for a broad-based departure from traditional ways of teaching English. "I don't think it will happen until we really know what we want to do."

He takes a flexible view of the entire area of language - written and spoken. As he feels there are no right answers to written expression, he says there are no right ways to the spoken word. He mentions the National Council of Teachers of English desire to accept whatever dialect a person speaks.

Engagement, enrichment, growth, expression - these are the words that Reilly favors as he talks about teaching language.



BERNARD REILLY, assistant professor of English at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College, will return after a sabbatical leave with a fresh approach to teaching language.

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