

And the Beat Goes On ... and On and On, for This Alum

Life is for living, despite our age or condition. If we can sing, we should sing. If we can write, we should write. We should always be in search of a new experience. Always be ready to commit ourselves to a new interest.

Those are the words of her father, noted Columbus, Ohio, journalist Mardo Williams, but **Kay Williams '55** has most emphatically made his philosophy her own.

With her first suspense novel, *Butcher of Dreams*, still hot off the presses [see Fall '07 *Bulletin*], she and co-author Eileen Wyman are already at work on a sequel, another mystery, that opens in Leningrad in 1991.

Meanwhile — in another enterprise — Kay and her sister, Jerri Williams Lawrence (an OSU grad), are taking their show on the road. When Mardo Williams died in 2001, at age 95, he left behind an incomplete novel, *One Last Dance: It's Never Too Late to Fall in Love*, called by one reviewer “a sweepingly elegant romance [which] celebrates the importance of living in the moment and never giving up in the search for love.” Kay and Jerri finished it and had it published in 2005. It promptly won Best Regional Fiction for the Great Lakes region in the 2006 Independent Publisher Book Awards. Since then, the sister act has been appearing at libraries, senior centers, book clubs and women's organizations to discuss the ideas



Kay Williams (left) and her sister, Jerri Lawrence, are intent upon showing the “over-60 crowd [who] feels invisible in our youth-dominated society” that “they don't have to sit in a corner and wait for life to happen.”

behind the book and their role in finishing it. In addition, they have created a video program, which includes a humorous dramatic reading from the book.

It's no wonder Kay's having trouble finding time to work on the new book, but odds are she will. She has been a successful multi-tasker ever since her Western graduation. She received a B.Sc. in education from OSU and taught high school English in Columbus — directing the junior class play — while writing movie and theater reviews for the Columbus *Dispatch*.

But her longtime dream was to be an actress. She quit teaching, tried living in New York City but after nine months opted for San Francisco, where she got her equity card and landed choice roles in such plays as *Miss Jaius*, *Great God Brown*, *School of Scandal*, *Hamlet*, *The Balcony* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (with the then-famous San Francisco Actors Workshop) and *As You Like It* (for the Santa Clara University Shakespeare Festival).



Kay as Cybel, in O'Neill's *The Great God Brown*

Next came two years with Vanguard Theater of the Pittsburgh Playhouse, then back to New York. There she lived in a six-floor walkup (“a women's residence that provided free breakfast!”) while auditioning for regional repertory theaters — and was hired by the Jackson, Mississippi, Theater Center to replace Mercedes McCambridge as Regina in *The Little Foxes*.

“It was an exciting time for theater in NYC,” Kay says. “I acted in a number of new off-Broadway plays ... more challenging and more fun than acting in a play that had been successfully produced and ‘set in stone.’ ... When Manhattan Plaza (‘The Miracle on 42nd Street’) became available, I was lucky and qualified for an apartment, by now loving New York. At that time, the neigh-

The Meily Society, named for distinguished alumna and benefactress **Olivia Meily Brice, Class of 1866**, was established in 2001 to honor our **Wise Able Vital Elder** alumnae who have celebrated their 50th reunion and to recognize and encourage the knowledge and energy they bring to the WCAA. “The Anchor” is a periodic newsletter published exclusively for its members.

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A Compelling Mystery in a Theatrical Setting

Sara Lee Burneson, *A reviewer, 08/20/2007:

I loved it. I was pulled immediately into the tension of the mysterious and frightening events. The behind the scenes life of the theatre and the complex personalities who staff it create a fascinating setting as the mystery develops and the suspense becomes unbearable. Suspicion as to the perpetrator builds in many directions and I found myself wanting to talk to the lead character, Lee Fairchild, to advise her. Eventually I succumbed. I ignored the world around me and read to the end nonstop.

*That would be **Sara Babcock Burneson '55**, reviewing *Butcher* on the Barnes & Noble web site.

borhood was pretty seedy — even dangerous — but living here eventually became one of the catalysts for *Butcher of Dreams*

[see box below]. And hey, the apartment was great (still is) — not too small, with a balcony overlooking the Hudson. The neighborhood has gone so upscale that we now have a Starbucks in our building.”

A stint as assistant to an award-winning independent filmmaker allowed her time during the day to audition, gave her production and acting credits, and took her to both the Cannes Film Festival and Leningrad International Documentary Festival (which, as mentioned, figures into the work-in-progress).

Exit actress, enter writer. Feeling the need “to take a ‘real’ job so I wouldn’t be destitute after I retired,” Kay joined a physician as he set up a Primary Care Residency Track at NYU Medical Center. (She still works there part-time.) Full-time employment put an end to her auditioning, so she turned to writing — short stories at first. “I soon found that I didn’t miss acting all that much. With fiction writing I had total control and could play all the characters!”

So, true to her father’s philosophy and inspired by his example, Kay Williams — Mystery Writer — is learning a new role.

The idea for this book [Butcher of Dreams] came after we moved into Manhattan Plaza, a housing complex for performing artists in Hell’s Kitchen. ...Live nude shows, erotic bookstores, x-rated movies were just a block away from our apartment complex. Crack cocaine was sold by dealers in the streets. Prostitutes blatantly solicited. In the mid-’80s, 42nd St. between 7th and 8th avenues was considered one of the worst blocks in the city for crime. By the time we finished the book, the Disney Corporation had renovated the Amsterdam Theater, moved in The Lion King and Hell’s Kitchen was well on its way to being gentrified. Now our area is one of the safest, cleanest neighborhoods in New York City.

— Kay Williams and Eileen Wyman

From Scrapbook and Album

More from Kay Williams ’55 as she looks back at her senior year as a theater major:

*I have very warm memories of **Ruth Limmer** and her playwriting class. (Her first year at Western was my senior year and to me she was like a breath of fresh air.) With her encouragement I wrote my first play. I still have the note she wrote me: “...The last act is great. The whole play is great. Now start casting...” She wanted me to direct it and present it as my senior theater project. Unfortunately, **Bill Duncan** didn’t agree. Ruth became a lifelong friend.*



Kay’s “Kid Show,” Alice in Wonderland

*Alice in Wonderland became my senior project. That turned out well because I met **Kathy Piper** [’58], then a freshman, also a theater major. She designed a gorgeous mask for the White Rabbit, played by **Mary Sicer Moore** [’55]. At one of the first rehearsals, Mary (wearing the mask) stepped off the apron of the stage and broke her arm. None of us realized the eye holes were too small for clear vision. Of course, the mask had to be scrapped (and I believe we had to cast someone else as the White Rabbit while poor Mary recovered — I’m not sure). Kathy and I became close friends and remain so to this day.*

I loved playing Andromache in The Trojan Women my senior year. It was beautifully directed by Bill Duncan and was warmly received by Western audiences. I’m only sorry we didn’t get to perform it outdoors in the nature theater. That would have been a real treat and I’m sure, very challenging. I auditioned for Denison Summer Theater the year I graduated from Western using Andromache’s moving speech (before the Greek soldiers throw her young son over the wall to his death).

And 1937-38 was a good year! '38 classmates Jane Noble Miller and Mariana Reed reminisce:

Jane: *Closing the dorm, McKee Hall, was my responsibility as house chairman every evening. A couple of girls, who dated regularly, were prompt in their "good nights." I praised them later — only to find that both were married at the time and had kept it secret as it was not permitted. ... I also got to flick all the campus lights 15 minutes before the dorms closed, as the switches were in McKee.*

Mariana: *While I was reading, and enjoying, this latest edition of "the Anchor" [Winter 2007], the article concerning Edgar Stillman Kelley recalled for me his anthem "Israfel," which during most of the 1930s, at least, was sung by the Western College Choir every year at commencement. It was an unusual composition, with words from a poem by Edgar Allan Poe; and it was hard to sing, but exciting, too.*

I well remember that in 1938, when there was a threat to the continuation of the tradition, we members of the Choir who were seniors entreated our director to let us sing "Israfel" that one last time, at our own commencement — and she did.

We love receiving pictures, especially when they come with idents! Look what Diane Heckert Staub '50 found during a recent down-sizing:



Back in the days when Fountain Girl presided over a real drinking fountain, here are Fiftians **Helen Anne Noftsger** and **Sara Gillham** drinking, while **Nancy Clee** and **Marilyn Jones** look on.

*We will give a decided nod to Western's strong theater tradition at Reunion 2008. Please come for "Play It Again, Western" June 13-15! And remember: We want **your** memories — whatever they are — for the pages of "The Anchor."*

The Catharine Gerber Award

At the time of their daughter Cate's death, Don and **Betty Sipe Gerber '52** looked for a way to honor her memory and support students pursuing interests similar to hers (which were many!). Moved by the support she and they received from her online community, they endowed an award, made annually and supported in perpetuity, to a Western student who com-



petes with the best proposal for use of technology (defined broadly to include computer and digital equipment as well as visual media, sound recording and broadcast production) in aid of a course assignment, field experience or project. Awardees to date are Jon Pliske (photography) 2006; Thad Kerosky (database design) 2007; and Greg Cook (computer hardware design) 2008.

Betty Gerber says that she and Don are very happy with the first three recipients and feel that Cate would be very pleased.

The plaque reads:

The Gerber Award for Creative Use of Technology established in honor of Catharine A. "Cate" Gerber by her parents, Elizabeth Sipe Gerber (Western College 1952) and Donald A. Gerber (Miami University 1951). Catharine Gerber (1955-2004) graduated from Michigan State with a degree in communications and had a long and distinguished career in the advertising industry. Her special interest in and knowledge of electronic media extended well beyond her career to include a wide circle of internet friends who were involved in many projects together, exemplifying her creative use of technology.

Establish Your Own Named Endowment

Perhaps you have thought of creating an endowment in honor of an important person in your life but are not certain how it works. There are several ways it can be done, all listed on the enclosed card. You can even create an endowment and have income returned to you for life!

To learn more, send the enclosed card to the WCAA today!

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**“Wise Able Vital Elder” Meily Society members
at our Reunion Luncheon, June 16, 2007**

Join us June 14 for Reunion Luncheon 2008!