

# DOCument

The Combined Integrated Doctoral Program Newsletter

\*A Special Tribute to *Dr. N. William Walker*, retired from JMU in August 2007\*

Volume 6, Issue 3

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A Tribute to Bill Walker- fond memories from colleagues, students, and alums

## We miss you, Bill!



Greetings from the Director! We hope you enjoy this special tribute to Dr. William Walker. Bill, we miss you and hope you are continuing to enjoy your retirement.

Best,

Gregg

### Dr. N. William Walker

Dr. William Walker attended Rutgers University for his schooling and received his Bachelors degree, his Ed.M., and his Ed.D. in School/Clinical Psychology from Rutgers by 1975, after which he spent time obtaining postdoctoral training in the field of Neuropsychology. Dr. Walker served as a professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and also at North Carolina State University. Dr. Walker held numerous leadership positions on Neuropsychological Clinical and Services Boards while continuing to practice and train other psychologists. James Madison University recruited Dr. Walker as Professor and Director for the Doctoral Program in Clinical/School/Counseling Psychology in 1994. During this time Dr. Walker helped shape the program and guided its direction towards successful accreditation by the American Psychological Association. Dr. Walker was also the Director of the Neuropsychological Services Clinic at James Madison University, a position he held until 2000. Dr. Walker then accepted the position of Dean of the College of Graduate and Outreach Programs and the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs for JMU. Dr. Walker remained active in the C-I program and continued to supervise students and teach Neuropsychology.

Bonnie Walker, Dr. Walker's wife, served as Administrative Assistant to the Department of Psychology throughout their years at James Madison University, and often graciously hosted faculty and students in their lovely home.

Bill and Bonnie Walker decided to "retire" in August 2007, and have since moved to Greensboro, North Carolina. They report that they are enjoying relaxation time and have taken up golfing in between Bill's consulting gigs. They are deeply missed by administrators, faculty, and students at James Madison University.

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## An Interview with Bill Walker

By Jenna Holt



Pictured above: Bill and his wife Bonnie

*What have you been up to since retiring?*

“We are still in the process of moving and unpacking, which takes forever. Things are just beginning to fall into place in that aspect. We have moved to a community that is very much into golfing, so my wife and I are just starting to get involved in golf. I’m also still involved with JMU and Eastern Carolina University, mainly doing consulting.”

*What was your philosophy in the development of the C I program?*

“This program was one that was in development before I even came to JMU, so I had little to do with the original philosophy of the program. I was just trying to produce the best clinicians I could and get them as much experience as possible so they could hit the ground running upon completion of the program. The students entering the program had already completed their master’s degrees and came in with a considerable amount of experience. That was the really fun part of it, just reshaping and deepening the skills of those students.”

*What did you enjoy most as director of the C-I program?*

“Well, you know, I did a lot of coaching when I was younger, mainly baseball, and I feel like there are a lot of parallels between that and being Director. When you get someone coming into the program, you have a bit of a hand in rounding off some of the edges and then sending them out into the world again. They’re kind of your children in some ways and that’s a great feeling. It was also most challenging ... Coming in, many people who had been considered professionals out in the field were dropped down to that ... student role, and so there was always that period of head knocking and learning about each other that occurred. It’s tough for students, because they really have to scrape by with the money they’re making to live. Sometimes the students...were just bone tired. So there was a lot of empathy there for them.”

*Do you have any reflections on faculty and students?*

“I only have good things to say. The faculty was always very supportive. Shortly after we started, we added some more folks involved in other programs and ended up pulling together a solid core faculty. We all had different skills and various perspectives, and it was a treat to see all these approaches. One advantage to having faculty working together with so many approaches is that students can be made aware of many different viewpoints and pick and choose what they want to do.

The students have been the greatest experience and I really miss that part a great deal. I loved to supervise the most, because I got a great sense of working with them and seeing them grow and feeling like I had a part in that. Each student seemed to have a unique set of buttons, and I had to learn which ones to push to make them grow, and which to stay away from. Looking back, so many of them have walked out the door and gone on to do some really incredible things.”

*What do you see for the future of the field of neuropsychology?*

“Neuropsychology is a field that has exploded recently, and now there are actually doctoral programs specific to neuropsychology. There’s a list serve that I’m a member of and it goes all around the world, and it’s incredible to have witnessed and been a part of the growth.

At this point in time, neuropsychology seems to be mostly assessment and diagnosis, and there really should be more of a role for treatment. Those who have brain injuries need treatment and I personally spent a lot of time working on that aspect, and that part of the field hasn’t grown as quickly. It seems to get a bit more medical each time I look at it, and so it hasn’t yet met my expectations.”

*For those considering academia as a career, do you have any advice?*

“I think it’s great. It depends on whether you want the coaching part of it or whether you want to be involved specifically with clients and patients. I never thought of doing this when I first started grad school, or even when I finished, and it was ... kind of serendipitous the way it ended up working out. You need to be able to take that step back and see how what you’re doing is affecting the field and not just how it specifically affects a client. If you can take that approach, academia is a great way to go. If not, it’s frustrating because you can’t see the immediate gratification. You really need to enjoy the art of teaching, and I happen to be a ham so it came easily to me.”

*And finally, do you have any advice for current students?*

“The toughest thing about grad school is actually getting in. From there on, it’s the program’s and student’s responsibility to get as much out of that experience as possible. The doctoral program is the last opportunity you’ll have to get constant feedback, and it’s a great growth period. People who work it to death can really get a lot out of it, and they always come out ahead and do better in the long run. You have to want to do it. The time goes by in a heartbeat and you’ll kick yourself in the rump if you don’t take advantage of the opportunities that are put in front of you.

I would also caution against specializing too early in the game. Try to get as much variety as possible. You may think you know what you want to do, but you may not.”

## Student and Alumni: Favorite recollections of Bill Walker:

"As a C-I student entering the program in 1998, I had Bill for neuropsychology. The exposure to neuropsychology and neuroanatomy, along with Bill's training manual, was an invaluable piece of training in the program, and I have been able to implement this knowledge with patients I have seen since then who have been compromised neurologically.

Rarely a week goes by that I don't remember my favorite Bill Walkerism, "Write this on your eyeballs." He said this to us when there was a piece of information that he considered incredibly important to remember, and it provides such a great mental picture. Overall, I am so grateful for Bill's encouragement, instruction, and ideas and wish him all the best."

*Judith Reifsteck* ('04 graduate)

"Bill was a fantastic supervisor and mentor. One of the many valuable lessons I learned was how to think "big" and write concisely. Impressive systemic conceptualization: \$50, Commitment to self reflection and lifelong learning: \$100, 2-page major findings style report: priceless. Thanks, Bill."

*Jennifer Gilbert* (intern)

"The thing I always remember Bill with is his saying to us in class that a good rule for conceptualizing an assessment and thinking of good recommendations is to think-" if we were to have one thing changed in a client, what would that thing be?" I really grew to appreciate this statement more and more as it taught me to focus my thinking amidst the myriad of factors we encounter in an assessment.

Another thing I remember him with is his telling me when completing my self-assessment that I had over-rated my assessment skills. This may not sound nice but I truly appreciated it. It was simply true (and)... his saying that and in the thoughtful way in which he did helped me appreciate where I was creating a challenge within myself to keep improving and learning.

I guess what I am trying to say is that Bill has a way about being direct and to the point which I very much admired and learned from. I wish him all the best."

*Ghena Ismael* (post-doc)

"I always liked the phrenology head in his office and his statement "think about your dissertation topic while sitting in a dark room with a glass of wine." "

*Mike Blanchard* ('03 graduate)

"I always found Bill to have a tremendous amount of wisdom and integrity. He is extremely thoughtful and has a great sense of humor. Bill always looked out for me and has supported me tremendously at every stage of my career. I always appreciated how bright, yet down to earth and straightforward he is. I always knew where I stood with Bill. I miss him greatly and my only regret was that I did not cross his path earlier so I could have had more time to learn from him and collaborate with him."

*Bill Ernst* ('03 graduate, Assistant Professor at JMU through December '07)

"Bill was my clinical supervisor for two semesters. He is an amazing clinician, with a tremendous wealth of knowledge and a wonderful ability to make students feel supported. Bill was both a supervisor and a teacher, providing feedback on therapy and assessment cases and sharing new methods of interventions for students to utilize. One funny story about Bill: when he shaved his beard and one of us would comment on it, he'd mention how perceptive we were...and that we must be psychologists!"

Megan Fiore (intern)

"I can't say that I have a smart anecdote to share about my time with Bill, but will always remember how much I respected him as a psychologist and as a person. I recall meeting with him the year prior to my starting the program, when he was still the director of the Doc program. I drove all the way from NC to spend just an hour with him to gain more info about the training offered at JMU. I recall the kindness he displayed toward a very nervous student-to-be. After our meeting, I knew for certain that I wanted to attend JMU's Psy.D. program. I later interviewed and was accepted into the program. Bill's (and the core faculty's) decision to accept me into the program truly set my life on a very rewarding path that I continue to follow today. When I came time to begin my dissertation, I looked to Bill for direction and ultimately chose him as my co-chair. I could always trust that he would provide me with solid advice while allowing me to gain the fruits of self-exploration. Bill served in this role, even though he had stepped down as the director of the Psy.D. program to take another job at the university. I recall the day he made the announcement and the sense of loss that I felt; a loss the entire program acknowledged. I can't think of my wonderful JMU experience without thinking of Bill.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Bill's kind wife, Bonnie. I think she was as much of a fixture in the psychology department as was Bill. Bonnie was *always* kind, but a bit prettier than Bill. I wish Bill and Bonnie the very best in retirement and will always think of them both fondly. Thank you for making my JMU experience a fulfilling one. You have contributed to my growth as a psychologist and a person."

Gary Hann ('03 graduate)

"I fondly remember all that he did to shape the Psy D program at JMU during those "early years" and the advantage of having his expertise in Neuropsychology (our mutual interest)...also recalling the many hours spent refining the dissertation while seated adjacent to him in his office, and his big hug after my defense. As for Bonnie, I so enjoyed her elaborate, unsurpassed "spreads" at the yearly holiday party."

*Vivian Begali* ('96 graduate)

## Faculty and Administration: Favorite recollections of Bill Walker:

“After serving with distinction as the Director of the university’s first doctoral program, Bill Walker joined the leadership team in the Office of the Provost as Dean of the Graduate School, which later became the College of Graduate and Outreach Programs. He was also an Associate Vice President and served as a major liaison for the university to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). In his role as Graduate Dean, he systematically transformed the role of graduate education at James Madison University moving it to prominence in the university’s core objectives. A number of important graduate programs were developed under his leadership including new doctorates in Communication Sciences and Disorders and in Music. A new sense of vitality emerged across the entire graduate enterprise. Much of this can be attributed to Bill’s leadership, his tireless efforts in promoting the importance of graduate education, and his ability to undertake careful strategic planning for the future of graduate education at JMU.

In many respects, the growth and direction of our graduate programs of today can be attributed to planning and leadership that Bill provided during his tenure at JMU. On a personal note, Bill announced his retirement on more occasions than any individual on my senior staff in recent history. He would come to my office, announce that he was retiring and then reappear the next day and announce that he had changed his mind. This went on for a period of four years. Finally, one day he appeared in my office and said, “I’m leaving town” and he did. Of course, this just highlights the strong commitment that Bill had to the university, his colleagues, and to his students.”

*Doug Brown, Provost*

“It is an honor to write a few remarks regarding Bill Walker and his service to James Madison University. Bill was sought out and recruited to serve as the inaugural director of the C-I doctoral program. He had already distinguished himself in graduate program development and was a noted practitioner. We were most fortunate to lure him to serve in this role at JMU. Under his leadership, the C-I program received an almost unheard of full accreditation from APA in its first review. This solid foundation has continued to serve the program well. But Bill's talents and contributions went well beyond the C-I program. He was subsequently tapped to serve as the Dean for the College of Graduate and Professional Programs. Bill turned his talents toward assisting graduate program development and the advancement of all graduate programs at JMU - a contribution that continues today with the growth of graduate programs and education at JMU.”

*Jerry Benson, Vice Provost for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*

“My best memories of Bill are related to his role as dean of the Graduate School. I learned a lot about leadership from Bill. One of his first moves was to open up the membership of the Graduate Council, and thus ownership of graduate education at JMU, to all the program directors. We would not rubber stamp anything. We would not be kept in the dark. We would engage in a meaningful process. “Why do we have this policy?” he would ask often. If no one could answer the question, out went the policy. This clear headed and forthright approach transformed the graduate school and brought in an era of optimism and confidence among our graduate programs. We felt empowered to imagine that our programs could strive to be the best of their kind, and that the university would support us in our efforts. We will miss the many ways in which Bill, and Bonnie, made a difference to the life of our community.”

*Sheena Rogers, Head, Department of Graduate Psychology*

"It's difficult to know where to begin in recognizing Dr. N. William Walker's pivotal contributions to the university, and his profound impact on me and so many of us at JMU. I came here because of the "combined" doctoral program that he was directing, which for me, represented the best of what the field and profession of psychology could and should be, emphasizing twin pillars of self-awareness and critical thinking. Bill successfully steered this innovative and integrative program through its first APA site visit and accreditation—no small feat, given its unique profile and mission—and did it with great diligence and skill. With plenty of help and support to be sure, Bill built this extraordinary program from the ground up, and we all owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his many years of stellar commitment and superb leadership to the C-I doctoral program.

As a teacher and supervisor, Bill modeled the highest and best; each student was to be known on his or her own terms, and every effort made to "build" the program around their unique background, talents, and aspirations, a trademark characteristic of our program that distinguishes us still. Of the complex decisions that students must make during their journey through an intensive doctoral program like ours (e.g., dissertation topic, where to apply for internship, which position to accept), Bill's advice was to "sit alone in a dark room with a glass of wine"; not only did such guidance prompt life-changing epiphanies for our students, the spirit of it was valued for what it implied about answering the big questions of life (e.g., first and foremost, to know thyself).

A highly respected school psychologist and neuropsychologist, Bill impressed upon students the need to see and experience our clients as human beings, and not to be overly enamored with the latest schmanzy assessment device or intervention fad. At the same time, because he was also "older than dirt," Bill's knew from real world experience that who we are as people is always more important than what we know or do as professional psychologists. I have never forgotten this lesson, and how Bill walked this talk on a daily basis with his students and all of us.

By his own admission, Bill could become "easily bored," and ready for a new challenge, which came in the form of his deanship of the newly constituted graduate college. Since I had been privileged to work so closely with Bill for so many years, I knew that he was ideally suited to this role, as the administrative system of graduate education at JMU needed a great deal of thoughtful explication. I also remember the skepticism and fatigue felt by so many graduate program directors, who understandably questioned what if anything could be done to improve the situation on the ground.

As he had done so ably with the doctoral program, however, Bill stepped back and took a long range view, focusing first on getting the lay of the land through personal conversations with program directors; then, more fully informed, Bill moved deliberately and methodically toward the creation of a truly representative structure—the Graduate Council—an open and inclusive forum for thoughtful deliberation, debate, and planning. With full support from Provost Brown, the academic deans, unit heads, and program directors from across the university, Bill established a healthy and functional administrative system, promoted excellence and innovation in our programs, and championed the rightful standing and status of graduate education at JMU. In addition to our respective programs and students, the university as a whole has been immeasurably strengthened by his wise leadership and effective advocacy in this crucial domain.

Many more superlatives (e.g., his abiding humility, dry wit, and curmudgeon-like response to tributes like these) and fun facts could be revealed about this Renaissance man (e.g., Bill is also a professional guitarist and talented painter), but I will leave things here, by ending on a personal note. Bill, you mentored me with great kindness and patience through many trying times as I tried to fill your large shoes as C-I program director. I am grateful for your steadfast friendship and abiding support.

(con't from page 7) You richly deserve what I know will only be partial retirement, and I hope that you and Bonnie live it to the hilt. I speak for all of us here in offering heartfelt thanks for all you are, and all you did, to build our academic home and enrich our learning community. Don't be a stranger, and I'll bring the wine.

Your comrade in arms,"

*Craig Shealy, Professor and Executive Director of the IBAVI*

"I remember shortly after I became Director, Bill kindly offered to grab a cup of coffee with me and proceeded to share his perspective on the program. It was clear to me that he had a deep sense of affection and pride in the program and had an extremely valuable historical perspective. He also encouraged me to act with conviction as the new leader of the program and gave me confidence to proceed. I always appreciated that talk."

*Gregg Henriques, Professor and Program Director*

"I had the privilege of being one of the early groups through the C-I program. I believe some of the early groups through were affectionately referred to as 'pioneers'. During those early days, I have fond recollections of Bill's leadership as a program director, professor, and mentor. I particularly remember Bill as an active listener and who genuinely wanted to hear about our experiences in the program and our personal and professional growth. I learned much from Bill's passion for health and wellness and exploring innovative ways for mental health to take leadership roles to help address some of the complex issues of the health care system. There are many other memories and stories about Bill's earlier days in Newark and the rich experiences he shared with us about his own journey. It is a privilege to know Bill as a teacher, mentor, and friend and look back fondly with such wonderful recollections."

*Tim Schulte, Professor and Director of Counseling and Psychological Services and Interprofessional Services for Learning Assessment*

"My recollections of Bill include memories full of admiration-admiration for his ability to make steadfast progress in building the doctoral program, to forge authentic relationships within departments and across the colleges, to create complex supportive and responsive administrative structures, and for his ability to host a great party.

Bill and Bonnie invited the students and faculty of our beginning doctoral program to their home each year for delightful food and conversation. At one of the first gatherings, I brought our young children along (not many children were around at that time). Bill was a busy host but made time to talk with Zander and Hannah. Later, both children excitedly informed me about this new yummy food they had been given by Dr. Bill! They wondered if I had ever heard of hot dogs? So, our family association with this accomplished leader in psychology is that he gave Zander and Hannah their first, and certainly not their last, hot dog.

So thank you Bill and Bonnie, for all the hard work, for believing in the vision of the program, and especially for introducing the children to hot dogs.

With warm wishes for a delightful new adventure together."

*Anne Stewart, Professor*

"N. William Walker, Ed.D.: School Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist, Neuropsychologist, Doctoral Program Director, Graduate School Dean, musician, artist, baseball player, extreme tool man, supportive colleague, tell-it-like-it-is friend, "Jersey tough guy," (nephew of Uncle Vinny), you are the quintessential Renaissance Man, Bill. Thank you for everything.

Here's to you and Bonnie—I miss you both and I'm so glad you are enjoying your new life chapter in North Carolina!

Love,"

*Harriet Cobb, Professor*

**In conclusion, thanks to Bill and Bonnie for all you've done for the program and for so many of us personally. Best wishes for the future, and please visit anytime!**

#### **Donations:**

As you well know, the cost of completing dissertation research can be quite high, especially participant costs for incentives and outcome measures. Following in your footsteps, our students continue to produce quality dissertations. Donations to support their research would be deeply appreciated!

Your contribution can be accepted online at the [JMU Online Donor Form](#). When making a donation, indicate your desired designation in the "Other Designation" field to specify in the donor information section (In this case, it would be the Psy.D. program).

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Thank you so much for all of your donations, past, present, and future!

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