

THE ROEPER SCHOOL

BOARD OF TRUSTEES & FACULTY

ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE
THE APPOINTMENT OF

Lorene Porter
Janice Haines
&
Pat Vance

AS

Faculty Emeritus

THIS DISTINCTION RECOGNIZES
THEIR YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE SCHOOL
AND ACCORDS THEM THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES
THAT THEIR DEEP COMMITMENTS
TO THIS COMMUNITY DESERVE

9 June 2004

FOREWORD

The pace is a little slower. No bells ring. Students don't form lines between classes. Outside, some open their mouths to feel snow's first arrival on their tongues. The Roeper School, where George and Annemarie Roeper's unique vision of creating a school for gifted kids to grow academically as well as thrive socially and emotionally, exists here, in this corner of the world. On the Lower School campus remain the famed Domes; inside every building — in the Upper, Middle and Lower Schools — are extraordinary students supported by an equally extraordinary, devoted faculty.

Although Roeper is a private school, it doesn't feel like an institution; people here would never speak about "producing" a certain kind of student. In fact, there's nothing at all in the Roeper vocabulary that would be in alignment with "turning out" students, as if they're in a production line. Roeper, at its very essence, is a heart-centered school committed to encouraging students to discover who they are as they learn about the world at large, and what unique qualities they have to offer up to this world. The school's philosophy wittingly defies any preconceived notion of how their students should be, although students are supposed to question the status quo, and academics here are thorough. As many students have said in speeches, they savor "being allowed to be who we really are." Kids are taken seriously here. In a culture caught up in appearances and superficial trappings of success (a certain kind of house, a type of car), this level of honesty is refreshing.

Such down-to-earth philosophy is backed by teachers whose passion for their work is infused with love for their students. In fact, teachers know students so well that it's a Roeper tradition during graduation for each student to have a speech both written and delivered about him- or herself by a teacher of his or her choice.

In this mode of thankfulness, we offer the first in our series of outstanding faculty — *Faculty Emeritus*: three spectacular women devoted to the Roeper community who, sadly for us, have retired or are now moving on. We wish them well in their endeavors and acknowledge their inimitable mark on our community.

The Community of

THE ROEPER SCHOOL

*is deeply grateful
to the author of these articles*

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Lorene Porter

LOWER SCHOOL DIRECTOR
1988 – 2004

In 1989, when Lorene Porter was learning about the job opening as Director of Roeper's Lower School, she was intrigued by the depth and complexity of Annemarie's philosophy, including the concept of nurturing the whole child. She was delighted to accept the job because Annemarie's beliefs resonated such a strong chord within her. Lorene came with 19 years of experience from the Berkley Public Schools, where she taught, created workshops for educators and also worked with gifted students. Bringing great perspective, she understood innately how to combine tradition with innovation. She welcomed Roeper's smaller size, which helped create an intimate atmosphere and allowed her to get to know students well. With such knowledge, she would also be able to figure out the most effective changes to implement.

Still, Lorene wasn't prepared for seeing kids revel in their childhood with the freedom Roeper offers. She remembers, on an autumn day early in the semester, her initial reaction to hearing her first name called out by a student, as she was entering the Domes: "A young boy yelled, 'Lorene, Lorene, HI!' And my spirits flew — right up to a cloud. It was a freedom both for him and for me. Delicious."

While helping to create a safe environment with a challenging curriculum, Lorene dove into the community, approaching it with happiness and empathy. She reveled in the opportunity to have "real, true deep conversations with the kids — that's my joy — when they're expressing themselves honestly, creatively, intently, earnestly and passionately. I love earnestness in all its forms — whether it's naïve or sophisticated. It has the best kind of naiveté, not a foolish one but an innate optimism about life's possibilities."

Elyssa Juni, an eighth grader, recalls being in the Lower School, "Lorene is really nice! She'd stop us in the hallway just to give us hugs!" Such warmth also exudes from the sound of Lorene's laughter, easily recognized by anyone in the Domes. Comfortable with who she is, she'll readily

relate anecdotes about her own grandchildren when speaking with Roeper parents so that they can identify and feel her support. Married over 40 years to her husband Porter, Lorene has three daughters and four grandchildren.

"She's one of the most intuitive people I've ever met — both with kids and adults," says Sue Williams, a Roeper parent and staff member, who notes Lorene's outstanding reputation, which reaches far beyond the Roeper community. The odd time a student is sent to her office, Lorene knows it's not the behavior that's the actual cause, but an underlying issue, so she views the visit as an opportunity to help the student gain both clarity and resolution. Once during such a talk, she and a boy were going over what he had done, how normally he's very decent and kind, then, suddenly, he'd been cruel. Lorene recalls, "He responded, 'I learned today about Bernoulli's principle — why planes lift and fly and I want to know why I do the things I do.' He wanted to understand his contradictions. Scientific understandings are important and so is the knowledge of self. That's what Roeper's about — the knowledge of things in the world and in the self." Lorene's door is always open, so kids — whether they're in Stage II or Stage IV — often come into her office to show her an art project or bat around ideas. She also traverses the campus, dropping in on students so that she can engage in their learning, participating in a class spontaneously.

Among her most treasured memories are conversations with the kids. "Once, after a long talk, an 11-year-old boy said, 'Lorene, thank you so much. You have a real gift for talking with children,' which said as much about him and his graciousness," she laughed, "as his intelligence!" She speaks about the support she's received here, and its many levels: structurally, philosophically and conversationally. "We remember the school's philosophy, about helping each other know what is best in us and furthering that in any way we can in a supportive, intelligent and creative environment. Assist the world by acknowledging that we're human, we have our vulnerabilities, our joys and angers and we're there for each other throughout it all. This takes a certain amount of courage because our world is filled with cynicism. Roeper helps kids feel so strong about themselves that they don't need to engage in that, instead taking a longer, higher road to making a real difference."

She also talks about her gifted colleagues, noting they love significant work, "I encourage people to take a look at how important the work is — not how important we are — then to step back, reflect in the joy of the work, and know how valuable it is. It's really the joy of the work."



Janice Haines

VOCAL MUSIC INSTRUCTOR
& FINE ARTS COORDINATOR
1986 – 2001

"I taught music, but what I really did is teach kids to nurture their souls through the arts," Janice Haines says, reflecting on the 15 years she taught at Roeper, "so when their souls needed to be fed, they'd reach for the arts." Today, three years after officially retiring from her position as Director of Middle and Upper School Vocal Music and Fine Arts Coordinator, she notes how she's returned to direct the music for *Godspell* and a recent production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

"Respect the kids," is a phrase Janice heard early on at Roeper. She realized that respecting the kids means, first and foremost, respecting herself, which translates into "intense examination of what it means to be settled in your own skin when you're dealing with students, young and old."

Janice and husband, Dick, have been married for over 40 years and have five grown children (two of whom are Roeper grads). Thinking back to her early dreams, she envisioned herself as a musicologist studying "in the bowels of a library in Italy" – never imagining how incredibly fulfilling her life would become in southeastern Michigan instead.

When she first got her Roeper job, she figured the private school in Oakland County would have ample facilities and affluent kids. Instead, she found a warm, down-to-earth campus with out-of-the-world students and "great diversity in the student body — not just socio-economic — each individual here is so rich." Soon she was transmitting her passion for music to students while frequently giving her "talk about the importance of academics." She's quick to point out that students here like to sing, and singing is an acquired skill, noting several devoted students who currently study music professionally.

Janice rebuilt the school choir and encouraged vocal groups to form. Under her tutelage, Roeper's small ensembles blossomed and "seemed to self-generate." Kids who weren't close friends — even those with big personality differences — chose to stay in ensembles together, learning tolerance and celebrating differences, complimenting one another. A multitude of groups come to mind, from "Kaleidoscope" to "Polytonality" to Roeper's beloved girl's trio, "SaReM," whose members graduated in '01.

Mimsy Sherry, Class of '99, says, "She challenged us by giving us lyrics in French, Spanish and German, beginning in Middle School; her trust in our competence was always flattering! We learned very sophisticated pieces, and she managed to keep us together, including Schubert's *Mass in G*, for which we had an eight-hour rehearsal! Yet learning was fun, and she was also willing to listen; I'd go to her for emotional support — she was like a favorite aunt. She was a great homeroom teacher, wanting us to feel like a group, she worked hard creating a warm, friendly atmosphere (even bringing in her incredible homemade turtles). We developed a bond between us, and we loved her for it."

Janice admires Roeper's well-rounded philosophy; "Know me as a person. Don't put me in a box — just know *me*." She wants to be acknowledged for who she is, not for her accomplishments. Fortunately, the two go hand in hand. Janice's passion for her work helped students go far, whether they were performing in *Figaro*, *Quilters* or *Pippin* — or even with Donnie Osmond at Detroit's Music Hall in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

"Anybody who teaches at Roeper will tell you that you learn as much about yourself as you do about the kids," Janice smiles. It's the students, she insists, that make the school enormously special. They're "so bright they're like a hothouse feeding off each other." She remembers when she was a music specialist in the Lower School, hearing children in Stage II conversing about their favorite illustrator.

Today, although she's retired, she can't stay away from the school that pulls at the strings of her heart. She still lunches with former students, and they call to say, "Happy Mother's Day!" Janice has not only returned to help with musicals, she also volunteers in the Development Office. Off campus, she directs the Macomb Children's Chorus — which she founded in 1989. There, she's "Mrs. Haines," although she's a lot more comfortable being Janice.

Pat Vance

SCIENCE & HEALTH INSTRUCTOR
1982 – 2004



“If you want us to stop caring about you at 3:30, you’re in the wrong place.” — Pat Vance’s response to a student who wondered why she inquired about a Saturday night party rumored to get out of hand.

Pat Vance. The mere mention of her name brings to mind some of the school traditions she’s created during her 22 years here, from which the community-at-large has benefited. First, there’s Mole Day (October 23 because a mole is 6.02×10^{23}) when her students show their “mole” creations. Some sew moles, like Molezart, a mole dressed in a tux with white curly hair at a piano; others make mole food, like moledy cheese and moleded Jell—O. Then, there’s the Holiday Assembly, when her students sing their renowned “Chemistry Carols” each year.

Students gravitate to her because they not only learn about chemistry, they learn about life. Pat has said that “chemistry made the world make sense to me,” yet she’s well aware, “You don’t teach a subject; you teach people.” Students learn about themselves as they learn how to study, and all that transcends whether they learn chemistry. That said, it’s a rare student who graduates Roeper without taking chemistry because Pat’s love of the subject is contagious, and she knows how to connect it to everyday life.

Representing the embodiment of the Roeper philosophy, she’s devoted to community and constantly improving it, while thinking outside of the box, and quick to credit other teachers for their collaboration — whether it’s Sandy Shoshani, Linda Pence or Nancy Webster, Pat says “we.” Pat was a major force in designing the Science Wing; she laughs at the amount of labor, “I felt like I was having a baby for the next few years!” She was also integral in forming the Middle/Upper School Health curriculum, which “is still evolving, as any good curriculum should.”

As Roeper student Britt Harwood says, she is not only the fairest teacher she has ever had, she has an “incredible understanding of gifted children Some teachers have only one method of teaching Pat always has four ways of teaching — if the first one doesn’t work, instead of simply repeating it louder, she will try another way She’s not interested in grades or scores, but is truly dedicated to helping her students understand the material and learn to care about it.”

Still, Pat doesn’t pretend to have all the answers. “When teachers think they know how to teach, then they ought to quit,” she says — although she quickly points out that she’s “not retiring. I’m leaving Roeper to be closer to my grandkids.” She’ll also spend more time with Bill, her husband of 40 years, and their two sons (both of whom are Roeper grads) — without her three hours of nightly homework!

The best parts about being part of the Roeper community? Disparate memories come to mind. “The homeroom that sang the theme song from *Gilligan’s Island* every morning to start their day! People like Chris Bradley — one of my first students, and we’ll be friends all our lives.” Chris credits Pat, in large part, for becoming a teacher himself. “One of the things I’ve loved about being here is the personal growth I’ve experienced, which the school encourages.”

“As far as the kids are concerned, it goes back to the school — the structure supports our establishing relationships with the kids — every minute of their time isn’t scheduled — that’s the point to free periods — so the kids and I have access to each other. There’s freedom for teachers, too. Nobody tells you how to teach, so I can go to conferences, come back and implement an idea without a committee’s approval.” Grateful for the time and money Roeper has spent allowing her to learn outside school, she talks about the difference it’s made. Reproductive health education, substance abuse and suicide prevention are some of the subjects of conferences she’s attended.

At the substance abuse conference, Pat learned about Claudia Black’s studies of alcoholic families and learned what it meant to be the child of an alcoholic, which “hit me like a two-by-four.” Later, she and a colleague went to Al Anon meetings together for adult children of alcoholics. Open about discussing less-than-perfect lives, she’s a committed Christian who’s known to be non-judgmental and has a reputation for helping kids in trouble and keeping confidences; “Those are the very times I won’t talk about,” she says matter-of-factly. She does, however, speak in generalities — mentioning a note she received tucked into an invitation to a student’s