Psychology Happenings:

Psych Club students joined Goshen Student Women’s Association for its first annual Healthy Bodies Week in early February. The discussion focused on the importance of mental health, nutrition and the relationship between cognition, affect, and behavior.

Following tradition, the Goshen psychology department joined Bluffton University and Manchester University for their annual Psychology Student Paper Day. The presentations covered a variety of topics, with particular research interest in religion and politics, coinciding with this year’s presidential election.

April opened with a roundtable discussion. Jeannie Ewing, a high school counselor, and Jay Shelter, a clinical psychologist, joined Psych Club to discuss how a psychology degree can be applied “in the real world.” The evening was full of good conversation, helping to realize some of the positives and negatives that accompany working within the domain of psychology. And as the end of the semester draws near, graduation has arrived for the 2009 psychology majors and minors. Wish them luck as they begin their new journeys outside of Goshen College. Not pictured: Bryce Bow, Nikita Fairweather, Sara Schrag.

Tina Histand

Seth Birky

Meaghan Ketcham-Bylsma

Natasha Alhaganananthan
News of Grads:

Emiliy Habschmidt ('08) is working at Oaklawn as a Case Manager in their Therapeutic Foster Care program.

Hannah Johnson ('08) works at Crossroads Counseling Center in Harrisonburg, VA, as a Behavioral Support Specialist.

Sam Moyer ('07) is working with Mennonite Mission Network’s Bridge Builders program in Europe.

Words for Vic:

As the end of Professor Vic Koop’s teaching career at Goshen College has finally arrived, students, faculty, and alumni were invited to share stories and words of appreciation for Vic. The following letters represent only a small portion of the great impact Vic has had on the Goshen College community.

It was the late 1970s. Atlee Beechy, my mentor and later co-faculty member, was retiring. The psychology department announced a search. After considering 5 candidates, the decision was made to reject them all, muddle through the next year (and a real muddle it was), and re-advertise the position. This time the advertisement generated 3 strong candidates. One of them was a Victor Koop, a Canadian with clinical experience.

When Dr. Koop arrived for his presentations and interviews, he came to my office (I had met Vic previously in a meeting Vic will be happy to describe for you). I asked if he was comfortable with the schedule for the day (which had been mailed to him many days earlier). He asked “what schedule” and we quickly ascertained that he had not received the mailing and had no idea he was to give a class presentation in an hour. Vic calmly asked if there was a quiet place he could go to prepare for the class. The class never knew that the well-organized, content-filled, articulate lecture they heard had been prepared in the preceding 45 minutes! Vic was offered the position.

Vic arrived at Goshen College in September of 1982. He immediately showed his considerable talents by preparing hamburgers for his colloquium group, his first official duty as a GC faculty member! Since then he has made many more substantive contributions to the psychology department and to the college. Students remember and give thanks for stimulating lectures, intriguing class demonstrations, and engaging discussions. Some even give thanks for the considerable learning hidden in large amounts of red ink on written assignments and grades issued with actuarial precision (love those z scores).

Vic’s commitment to scientific psychology and his passion for getting students to consider graduate school have contributed to an outstanding departmental legacy. Vic’s skill at critical thinking and asking the right question made him an invaluable member of many committees (give thanks the student apartments are not along College Avenue) and an essential participant on many search committees. He was instrumental in helping to found the Association for Mennonite Psychologists (now deceased) and more recently the GC, Manchester College, Bluffton College student paper conference. And his commitment to opportunity for all led to building soap box racers and the movie Miracle in Lane Two.
Vic—it’s been a great run. I couldn’t have asked for a better colleague these past 26 years. Thanks. - Duane K

Thank you so much for everything you have done for the psychology department here at Goshen College. I would never have even considered being a psychology major if it wasn't for your General Psychology class my freshmen year. You made psychology come alive. It was exciting and fun. You have touched so many student lives in such big ways. Thanks so much. And, now you have lots of time to Golf. Move somewhere warm so you can golf 365 days a year! - Alli Hawkins

Happy retirement and good luck, Dr. Koop. Your classes were among the best I had at Goshen College; you truly had a gift of imparting knowledge through your enthusiasm, humor, storytelling, and commitment to discourse. I always remember you saying that you wouldn't limit yourself to making birdhouses when you retired, so best wishes for all of your future contributions to the field and the intellectual stimulation that awaits. - Jeff Bontrager

I sometimes recall Vic's quips while at my work in psychiatry (e.g."Ritalin is speed!") but I think of him in a much more Gestalten way. Vic is amazing and wonderful. He has made a great professor. - Joel Nofziger

Congratulations and best wishes to Professor Koop – a.k.a. Dad. Years before declaring psychology majors at GC, we (Jenn (’97), Lisa (’99) and Greg (’06)) were the subjects of an in-house longitudinal study. From early ages, we innocently played “Memory” with our dad, drew family portraits each Christmas and eagerly allowed ourselves to be strapped to the lie detector machine while Dad asked about our elementary school crushes. We later learned we were providing fodder for classroom discussions; usually in Development Psychology, but probably, on occasion, in Abnormal as well. As we grew, we learned about approach-avoidance conflicts and that Freud is bad and empiricism is good. We learned correlation does not equal causation; that actuarial data trump clinical intuition; and that regression equations can be useful in selecting spouses. Most of all, we learned the importance of critical thought in our lives outside the classroom. Dad’s seamless integration of faith and psychology allowed us to see the miracle of the ordinary. God is ever present in Dad’s psychology: his faith guides his science and his science informs his faith.

When we began studies at GC, we each selected fields of study other than psychology. We dabbled in Biology, English and History. Regardless of whether or not our initial avoidance was intentional, it was to no avail. Each of us eventually added psychology as a major. In doing so, we were all required to take many classes from our dad. Never did we work harder than when we knew he would be grading our papers. Despite the ingenious “coding” of papers (i.e., class-wide use of self-selected numbers rather than names on papers), we were convinced he immediately would know which paper was ours. In addition to meeting his high expectations for us, we desperately wanted to avoid the dreaded red line after which no more reading would be done. Although we were particularly aware of his academic hopes for the three of us, Dad held similar expectations for all his students. His encouragement and support of students’
aspirations to attend graduate school led to a significant increase in applications (and acceptances) over the last decade or so; a real coup for a small midwestern liberal arts college.

As his children, we are excited as Dad begins retirement: We have many, many woodworking, house improvement, grandchild watching, golfing and traveling expectations for him. As former students, we congratulate Professor Koop on his long tenure and express sincere gratitude for all the ways that he has shaped our academic, professional, and personal lives. We love you. - Greg, Lisa, & Jennifer Koop

Professor Koop’s stories always brought laughter and smiles each day in his 9 am class last semester (Fall 2008). As a first year student, I enjoyed his class and appreciate every bit of useful studying and learning techniques he has taught. I wish him luck in his future and I hope he lives happily. - Jessica Camacho

One thing I've thought about numerous times in the nearly 15 years since I graduated from GC was Vic's encouragement and positive comments about a test I took for one of his classes. His positive remarks about that test have stayed with me and have given me the self-confidence I needed to hang in there through grad school and my post-doc. At times when I was afraid I didn't "have what it takes" I remembered Vic's encouragement. – Alice Schermerhorn

My time in your classes was nothing short of awesome. The stories and depth of knowledge you had about each topic, and the humor and insight you brought to every discussion made each class a joy. Also, your advice and support through my basketball career and different aspects of life on campus have been more valuable than you know. I am lucky to have had the chance to learn from you. You will be greatly missed. Thanks again for everything. – Bryce Bow

I have had the unique experience of having you as both a professor and a colleague. My memories as a student make me smile as I remember you advocating Tickle Therapy in Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy. I remember your reassurance and support when my Internship was not quite what I expected. But, my eight years as one of colleagues has truly been some of the most wonderful years of my career. Our conversations were always spirited, including anything from theology, psychology, family life, home repair, and lawn care. You have taught me the importance of laughter, of compassion, of fire in the belly, of faith, and of integrity. I will miss our regular "department meetings" that happened spontaneously. Thank you for being my mentor and colleague. I know that you will continue to be a positive influence in the work you do outside of Goshen College. God bless you. – Julie Reese

Although I am not working in a specifically psychology-related field, I am constantly grateful for the education I got under Vic. I remember Vic stressing that we would not remember any specific thing that he could teach us and that all he could do was to teach us how to think critically. This approach stands out to me above all of my other memories and is one that I hope to pass on to anyone I work with in a teaching setting. These skills
were Vic’s greatest gift to me. I pray for a blessed and peaceful retirement. –Anna Liechty Sawatzky ('01)

What strikes me most about Vic were his words of wisdom. The advice he gave us as undergraduates I still pass on to my current undergraduates at the University of Illinois – Springfield. The (paraphrased) ones that stick out most to me are “hold your beliefs tightly, but loosely,” “don’t be surprised at the number of screw-ups who will be your classmates in graduate school,” and my favorite: “never be surprised how childish the people you think should be adults can act.” This last one is in reference to faculty teaching in graduate programs. - Marcel Yoder, PhD

Vic was my advisor, and in one of our last meetings, he said, "I don't know how you did it." "What?" I said. He stated, "I don't know how you got out of here with a psychology degree without ever taking one of my classes!" And it's true. I graduated as a psychology major in 2003 without ever taking one of Vic's classes. It wasn't on purpose; it was just the way the schedules worked out. I loved my time at GC and the education that I received, but I do know that I missed out on one of the experiences that made GC's psychology program so special. Thanks for your insight, Vic. Even if it was never delivered in a classroom. - Kristin Rusk

It may be Jungian synchronicity, I am not sure. While toiling away at developing a paper for yet another class to satisfy my doctoral program, I began thinking of you, Vic. However, this theory would need to be predicated on the idea that it is rare for me to be thinking about you. As a college professor here in the great white north of Manitoba, I am conscious of the adage that you teach as you were taught. Recently, our president here at Booth College reflected that when he recalls all the people that caused a transformation in his thinking, he always thinks of teachers. What do I recall of you? Well, I had returned to Goshen College after an incomplete stint towards a music degree. Being a little older than my peers I was a bit self conscious and very anxious to restore a shaky GPA (from the halcyon days of my music degree). Trying to finish the degree in as short a time as possible as I was already working, I overloaded on the psych courses. This gave me a deeper appreciation of you as I got to hear some of your jokes twice in the same day. Almost like a standup comedian, your material was rehearsed but appeared spontaneous. That said- there were days when the jokes weren’t so good the first time around.

Seriously, you are one of the teachers I think about as you have a profound impact on my thinking. I almost could feel the ground shifting literally as old presuppositions and assumptions about the world were being called into question. You also managed to tick me off. This is something I am very grateful for. I think it takes a special kind of teacher to be willing to risk doing this with students. This didn’t just include your refusal to take substandard work from me, sending it back for revisions until I got it right (something that I believe has made it possible for me to get as far as I have in academia) but also your candor. You challenged me and the class to think and question our view of the world. I remember in psych seminar, you asked us to come up with a definition of the good life. You said that the DSM does not capture this. I almost imagine the negative of a film being the DSM - capturing the shadows, failing to bring the light into focus. I have
found this to be immensely useful as I have asked students to do the same. So frequently we get caught up in diagnostic work-ups and forget that normative categories are not what they are cracked up to be.

I could say you are ornery in my recollection, but this would be an oversimplification. When you decided it was my turn to take some lumps, you would usually ask me (in front of the class): “You have the ego strength, right?” Before launching into it. I think that this is again something I value. Good teachers are willing to have fun with students, employ humor, and take an interest in them. I remember how you gave advice to my graduating class. You told me to keep going, to not stop my schooling and go for the PhD. Well, it was a long and winding road. It may not have gone as expected but I got published and am on my way to completing my PhD here at the University of Manitoba. Did I mention that it will be in Social Work, not Psychology? Sorry about that. But thank you for everything - so far. Best wishes as you pursue a new chapter. - Alex Sawatsky