Worked magic

By Henry M. Yaple, former student at the School of Librarianship, College Librarian Emeritus, Whitman College

If memory serves correctly, and it may not after all these years, Dr. Grotzinger was not one of my first semester professors at the WMU School of Librarianship. However, she was always in her office, door open, attired professionally and busily reading, writing, or speaking with a student. Although not enrolled in any of her courses, she always greeted me cordially when we met in the hall and made me feel welcome. She projected through her manner that she was an entirely competent professional. Becoming that seemed a distant probability, but she clearly suggested it should be a goal.

Second semester Dr. Grotzinger was my Science Reference professor. As a veteran student of literature, the subject matter did not seem appealing. She changed my mind very quickly, made each class stimulating, answered all our questions fully, taught us to use the various keys to respective fields of science, and patiently explained the intricacies of such reference tools as The Science Citation Index.

In the first 14 years after library school, I worked in acquisitions. Science reference questions never penetrated those precincts, and there were few opportunities to meet patrons. However, when I became Library Director of Whitman College’s Penrose Library her example guided me perfectly. I opened the office door, always dressed correctly, welcomed anyone who wished to see me, made a point of speaking to everyone on campus whether I knew them or not, and tried to be as responsive as possible in any discussion. It worked magic, Laurel—thank you so very much! Much later, I learned that my predecessor had always kept his door closed.

Science reference became an imperative because our staff of librarians was limited. I elected to work at night, and that created two benefits: my acquaintances among students increased exponentially, and it required I clean the rust off my knowledge of various reference tools. I owe Laurel a vast deal of credit for the basic foundations of my success at Penrose Library.

Librarianship was a wonderful, fulfilling career, and Dr. Grotzinger was the sine qua non for so much of my success. All best wishes for many wonderful years of retirement.

Supportive of critical thinking

By Diane Worden, former student at the School of Librarianship

In the academic year 1970-71, while in Western Michigan University’s School of Librarianship with Dr. Grotzinger, not only was I among those learning library administration and management from her, I also accepted her extended opportunity to support a research project of hers and William Smith’s. Both of these occasions remain with me for different reasons.

Once, mid-lecture Dr. Grotzinger paused and addressed me directly with her gaze amid the 15 or so students in class. “I can see the wheels turning in your head,” she stated with a chuckle. “What have I said that you’re shortly going to question?” Even today, listening evokes a comparison of what I hear with what I remember of perhaps seemingly unrelated bits and pieces, a decided annoyance to some fellow listeners. They anticipate some nugget will be brought into a question being silently formulated. I have always considered Dr. Grotzinger’s class challenge that day as being supportive of critical thinking. She encouraged questioning and made class lectures fun. Similarly, she modeled that characteristic for me as I too have come to lead, and intentionally provoke in that particular way, classes or workshops or committee meetings since then.

Allowing me to help collect and organize basic data was also something Dr. Grotzinger did, even paying me handsomely for it as I remember. It introduced me to what I’ve had occasion to use many times since. Community study groups, whether for PTA, church, League of Women Voters or municipal recreation purposes that I’ve worked with during intervening years, all had data to collect, summarize, and include in various reports for action or advocacy—just my cup of tea. I’m grateful for her awakening what has become an enjoyable, fiendishly distracting, and long-time interest of mine.

Shortsightedly, retirement usually refers to a stop in being paid for time, effort, and results. The longer view refers to absolute freedom to pursue one’s interests. Using personal time and effort to produce results that promote selectively meaningful causes still gets you out of bed in the morning, this time without an alarm. Retiring completely is unfathomable; let the fun continue as long as requisite ability concurs.